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FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMPOSING PROCESS. (VOLUMES I AND II)

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1986

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FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMPOSING PROCESS
VOLUME I

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
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CHAPTER I
CONSIDERING A DIALECTICAL WORLD VIEW

Introduction

The primary focus of this dissertation is the composing process. A distinction is currently being made between the process and the product approach to teaching composition. The process approach is a reactionary movement which claims that the product approach emphasized error and only dealt with the finished product rather than addressing the composing process which brought the paper into existence. The process contingency advocates such things as teaching prewriting techniques, doing several drafts of a paper, and using peer editing. Most followers of this approach break the composing process down into four discrete stages: prewriting, writing, rewriting and editing. The process movement is having a small impact upon the profession. The National Writing Project which grew from the Bay Area Writing Project has attempted to spread the process approach across the nation by retraining composition teachers in an intensive workshop setting. Elementary, middle, and high
school composition teachers attend sessions taught by enlightened teachers who guide the teachers through a series of writings experiences, utilizing the process model for composing.

Although the process approach has been adopted by some teachers across the nation, the majority of composition teachers still favor the product approach. Even if there was wide-spread, national acceptance of the process approach, there is some doubt whether the new process approach really offers much of a departure from the old product approach.

The current distinction between the product and the process approaches may only be a superficial one. The process model has become little more than a reified, four-step version of the old product model. Thus, the writer must now produce four products for the teacher's scrutiny rather than just one final product. In practice, students turn in jot lists or brainstorming sheets much like the traditional requirement for an outline to be turned in with every paper. Similar to the product approach, peer editing emphasizes error with the only difference being that the students rather than the teacher are hunting for the errors. Teachers following the process approach often still assign the same types of written assignments and still teach the same grammar lessons; they just require a few more steps along the way.
Whether the proponents of the process approach intended for their ideas to be carried out in the manner in which they are being practiced in the composition classrooms is a moot point. For example, Donald Murray (1982), who is one of the originators of the process movement, published an article in 1972 entitled, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," which listed three distinctive stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. However, within the same article he cites some specific implications for teaching the composing process which are rarely heeded by the teachers who follow a rigid three or four step model.

There are no rules, no absolutes, just alternatives. What works one time may not another. All writing is experimental. (p. 17)

In 1980, Murray (1982) then slightly changed his terminology by labeling the three step process as: rehearsing, drafting, and revising, but once again he describes a process which should not have been interpreted into a lock-step procedure:

During the processes of rehearsing, drafting, and revising, four primary forces seem to interact as the writing works its way towards its own meaning. These forces are collecting and connecting, writing and reading. Writing may be ignited by any one of these forces in conjunction with any other; but once writing has begun, all of these forces begin to interact with each other. (p. 21)

What follows this statement is an eloquent description of how these four forces continually interact during composing. In both of these excerpts, Murray describes a model of the composing process which is far more dynamic than the model which is currently being touted as
the latest innovation in the composition profession. Regretfully, Donald Murray’s description of the composing process is not what is being taught in those few classrooms where teachers are practicing the new process approach. The so-called new approach to teaching composition does have some benefits: this movement has drawn attention to the teaching of composition which had previously been a neglected area in many classrooms. However, the process approach does not offer what its name implies: it does not offer the classroom teacher a methodology which emphasizes the process of composing over the written product.

Although creating a third, more dynamic model of the composing process would be a useful endeavor for the profession, just creating a new model would not address the issue of why traditional teaching practices are so entrenched within our culture. This issue has even more significance when even the most innovative approach ends up being carried out in the classroom much like the old, traditional practices. The new, process approach should be considered problematically; but even more importantly, the persistence of traditional practices should be critically examined. In other words, our cultural perspective of the composing process must be changed, not just the current model of the composing process.

A culture’s world view limits the types of innovations which can be proposed. Thus, a person can only conceive of a model for a process which is in harmony with the current cultural perspective of
the world. Our western, positivistic world view provides limitations which prevent a more dynamic view of the composing process. In contrast, dialectic theory offers a completely different perspective which is capable of describing composing as relational, holistic, contradictory, historic, developmental and empowering.

This dissertation examines how teachers and students have come to accept an artificial model of the composing process when, at the very least, the reality of their own experiences should indicate that this model is false. Teachers have allowed their job to be deskilled, basing their decisions about what and how to teach on the pressures from administrators and public opinion while, on the other hand, students have become mere factory workers who mindlessly produce assignments and are alienated from their own composing processes. Critical theory and particularly the concept of hegemony will be used to analyze this false consciousness about composing.

A dialectical perspective of the composing process will be developed in part one, "Dialectical Theory and the Composing Process. The dialectical perspective can empower both the students and the teacher to create a new description of the composing process which is more dynamic than the current models. Students can develop their own individual methods of composing while the composition teacher can develop individual methods for teaching composing. A dialectical perspective does not offer one rigid model of the composing process for all to follow; instead, it provides the world view from which new
approaches can be conceived.

In part two, "The Sociology of Knowledge," our cultural notions about knowledge are critically examined. Knowledge is envisioned as a positivistic commodity and as a dialectical process. Dialectical theory believes that emancipatory knowledge is incomplete and that by seeking praxis each individual can take part in the creation of new knowledge.

Part three, "The Organic Intellectual," considers the importance of the teacher's role in the creation of knowledge. Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual is discussed. Oppressed groups need to develop scholars to lead their group in the creation of new social relations. Composition teachers are described as the organic intellectuals of their profession. The concept of the organic intellectual is also applied to the students who come from an oppressed race, class, or gender group. Learning to write can be a part of developing the critical consciousness of students who may later become the organic intellectuals for their own group.
The current models of the composing process are unsatisfactory because they do not capture the dynamic nature of composing. Interestingly, Mike Rose (1983) asserts that attempting to describe the composing process is in itself a foolhardy enterprise.

"Knowledge of any complex process—like knowledge about composing—cannot be adequately conveyed via static print. As soon as such knowledge hits the page of a text, its rich possibilities are narrowed and sometimes rigidified." (p. 208)

The assumption which Rose makes is that there is one composing process which everyone is feebly trying to describe. This indeed would be a useless enterprise; however, describing the many different composing processes available is well worth doing. A description of the many unique variations of the composing process would encourage the writer to consider all the possibilities available rather than being forced to try to fit into one, artificial mold. Therefore, the problem with describing the composing process may not be in our ability to describe one complex process as much as it is in the composing process which we envision describing.
Any theory of composing is based upon a certain set of assumptions about the world. These hidden assumptions are rarely debated since most members of the culture tacitly accept the same belief system. If a new model of the composing process is to be proposed, then a new world view may first need to adopted. Since the reigning positivistic world view has been unsuccessful in creating such a model, a dialectical world view should be considered. A dialectical world view has a radically different set of assumptions about the world which provides the framework necessary for a more complex understanding of the many ways through which people create meaning on a piece of paper.

In order to demonstrate the potential that dialectical theory holds for developing a new model of the composing process, ten qualities which differentiate a dialectical world view from a positivistic world view are examined. Naturally, these ten features are frequently misunderstood by members of our western, positivistic culture. In the following sections, ten features of dialectical theory will be discussed:

1. relational
2. social
3. dynamic
4. holistic
5. based upon a socially constructed reality
6. a unity of opposing forces
7. historically situated
8. economically and politically grounded
9. a reflection of the dominant ideology
10. continually striving for praxis
These ten features reflect current thinking about dialectical theory. Scott Warren (1984) traces the historical development of dialectical theory through the works of the major thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Other historical discussions of social and political theory can be found in Richard J. Bernstein (1976, 1983) and in Henry A. Giroux (1983). If the concepts discussed in this section are new to the reader, further explication can be found in Bertell Ollman (1976), Robert Heilbroner (1980), and Madan Sarup (1978).

The problem with explaining these ten features then becomes one of how to write about dialectical theory dialectically. Reducing dialectical theory to a linear set of propositions which can be handily defined totally separate from one another would be a description in positivistic terms. Instead, the interrelationship of these ten features must be emphasized.

In order to create a dialectical description of an entire set of interactive relations, a writer must first sketch out the whole for the reader and then describe that whole from various perspectives. Each of the individual features provides a vantage point from which to discuss the union of relations. The unity remains the same only the angle of view changes. Therefore, the relationship among the elements of dialectical theory is essential, for this relationship provides the whole from which to understand the parts. Not understanding the relationship among the features may
preclude one's ability to comprehend the features themselves. Bertell Ollman (1976) underscores the importance of understanding such relations in his philosophical introduction to *Alienation*:

To properly understand concepts which convey a particular union, we must be at ease with the quality of this unity, that is, with the way its components combine, the properties of such combinations, and the nature of the whole which they constitute. (p.13)

However, describing a myriad of relations simultaneously becomes a difficult task indeed.

In an effort to provide an overview of the whole, two diagrams are provided which demonstrate the relationship among the features of dialectical theory. It is not necessary to understand the individual concepts and terminology at this point; rather, the reader should concentrate instead upon the relationship among the features.

Figure one is more linear than figure two. The purpose of figure one is to demonstrate that the relational quality of dialectical theory is a key component. The first strand elaborates upon the social quality of these relations while the second strand elaborates upon the dynamic quality of these relations. Following the first strand out from left to right: social relations(2.) are a type of relations which permeate our everyday lives. Furthermore, these social relations to a large extent determine our perceptions of reality(5.). And that social construction of reality is a continual process that has a living history(7.) which is reflected in any given
The Social Relations Strand
2. social
5. based upon a socially constructed reality
7. historically situated
8. economically and politically grounded
9. a reflection of the dominant ideology

The Dynamic Relations Strand
3. dynamic
4. holistic
6. a unity of opposing forces

Two Elaborations Upon the Relational Quality of Dialectical Theory
moment in time. Particular social relations, economic and political relations(8.), have more of an impact than other social relations upon the creation of reality. These economic and political social relations create one version of reality through which hegemonic forces becomes the dominant belief system(9.). Following the second strand out from left to right, social relations are dynamic(3.), and these dynamic movements constitute a whole(4.) which is made up of a unity of opposing forces(6.). Both of these strands move outward toward praxis(10.). Praxis resides in the future, and the struggle to achieve it is never completely realized. For the social relations strand, this praxis is an ability to rise above the hegemonic forces to create an improved version of reality. For the dynamic relations strand, this praxis is a tenuous balance between opposing forces which threaten to rip apart the unity.

Figure two portrays a more dialectical relationship among all of the features than figure one. This diagram emphasizes how these ten features interpenetrate and influence one another. Dialectical theory sees the world as an undulating mass of movement caused by a dynamic tension among many social relations which are the result of the dominant ideology; through insightful reflection there is the opportunity to create new social relations which will in turn create a better reality.
1. relational
2. social
3. dynamic
4. holistic
5. based upon a socially constructed reality
6. a unity of opposing forces
7. historically situated
8. economically and politically grounded
9. a reflection of the dominant ideology
10. continually striving for praxis

figure 2
The Interrelated Qualities of Dialectical Theory
Each of the following ten sections briefly describes a distinctive feature of dialectical theory. Then each section concludes by giving an example of how this feature of dialectical theory could be applied to the composing process. Many of these issues will be developed more extensively in the later chapters. As the foundation for this dissertation, dialectical theory will be used to analyze current teaching practices and to propose future changes.

1. Dialectical theory views the world as being relational.

Positivism professes that reality must be objective, devoid of human influence. Dialectical theory does more than just place itself in direct opposition to this view. In other words, dialectical theory does not just simply view the world as being subjective. Dialectical theory believes that reality is relational, a dynamic interplay between object and subject with each influencing the other. The relationship between subject and object is so essential that it is considered to be cocreational. In this regard, we create the objects which we possess such as a car or a house; likewise, we use the objects, the car or the house, to define ourselves, and in this sense, the objects create us. Subjects create the objects while at the same time objects create their subjects.

Dialectical theory is somewhat reactionary because it asserts that total objectivity can never be achieved. No matter how refined the instrument, that instrument is still created by a human whose
beliefs and biases created it; moreover, that instrument is put into use by a human whose beliefs and biases will also influence the results. Whether the instrument is an intelligence test or a microscope, subjective belief systems are still involved. Dialectical theory describes the relationship between subjects and objects as the primary means for understanding the interconnectedness of reality.

The relation feature is so central to dialectical theory that each concept under examination is viewed as a cluster of relations rather than just the result of one solitary relation. Warren (1984) begins his study of this point with the work of Kant and traces its development through Hegel, Marx, Gramsci, Lukacs, and Strauss. One of the clearest explanations of the importance of relations can be found in Ollman’s (1971) discussion of Marx:

The relation is the irreducible minimum for all units in Marx’ conception of social reality. This is really the nub of our difficulty in understanding Marxism, whose subject matter is not simply society but society conceived of 'relationally.' Capital, labor, value, commodity, etc., are all grasped as relations, containing in themselves, as integral elements of what they are, those parts with which we tend to see them externally tied. Essentially, a change of focus has occurred from viewing independent factors which are related to viewing the particular way in which they are related in each factor, to grasping this tie as part of the meaning conveyed by its concept. This view does not rule out the existence of a core notion for each factor, but treats this core notion itself as a cluster of relations. (pp. 14-15.)

According to this world view, composing can never be viewed scientifically as an objective behavior. Therefore, the one-true composing process does not exist preformed out in reality, just
waiting for the right microscope or rhetorician to be created in order to perceive it. Composing involves a relationship between subjects and objects, a constantly changing relationship between people and things. Thus, in the composition classroom, the teacher should be aware of the many types of relations which are manifested through language. The composing process is interconnected to the social, political, and economic relations which have and are currently being lived within the culture. These relations, like language itself, are not neutral but represent conflicting ideological beliefs.

As subject and object, a cocreational relationship exists between the writer and the word wherein they create one another. In *Word, Self and Reality*, James Miller (1972) writes about the many ways that word, self and reality interact to create one another. In this passage, Miller explains how the writer actually creates self through words.

In the process of sorting through his [her] thoughts, or of disentangling and examining his [her] tangled experiences, he [she] is in effect defining himself [herself], outlining himself [herself], asserting and proclaiming himself [herself]. There can be no more vital activity for the individual; the results and the actions (new thoughts and new experiences) proceeding from it will further define her identity, not only for him [her] but for the world he [she] inhabits. (p. 111)

In the traditional classroom, words are considered as objects which are isolated from their relation with people. Dialectical theory can be used to emphasize the dynamic relation between words and people in order to teach composition. Through analyzing the interconnectedness
between people and language, students can better understand how to use language to create the types of relations which the students desire.

2. Dialectical theory views the world as being a manifestation of social relations.

Dialectical theory views the relation between objects and subjects as a primary source of reality. Thus, each person is a composite of many different social relations which are interconnected with one another. These social relations do not just exist outside of the individual; they become embedded in the person's consciousness and are finally manifested in that person's actions. Similar to a phenomenological viewpoint, dialectical theory does not interpret an act as solely an isolated behavior. The act's meaning is more complex, for it can be analyzed as a reflection of other social relations. For instance, a specific interchange between a mother and child may mirror the mother's relations with her mother, the child's father etc. To examine just an isolated act without considering the many social relations expressed through it is to be restricted to a one-dimensional interpretation.

In opposition to the positivistic emphasis on individualism, dialectical theory stresses the social quality of the individual's existence. This perspective can be witnessed in the writings of Karl Marx (1973):
I am social because I am active as a man. Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being... Above all we must avoid postulating "Society" again as an abstraction vis-a-vis the individual. The individual is the social being. (p. 137)

Marx even made reference to the social quality of language. The social quality of intellectual activity is a central point to Soviet Psychology originating in the work of L. S. Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) clearly states that higher psychological functions originate as social activity:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 57)

Thus, according to Vygotsky, writing becomes an outgrowth of the child's earlier social development of language.

Dialectical theory can be used to understand the many social relations which are contained within the composing process. These social relations can be imagined as a group of silent voices which continually speak through the writer's use of words and thus carry on a dialogue with the writer which is hidden behind the words on the page. Whether the writer is aware of it or not, many other voices influence what the writer says.
Michael Bakhtin (1981), a Soviet scholar, has written extensively about the dialogue of social relations which influence the use of language. Bakhtin uses the term "heteroglossia" to represent how language is full of many past, present and future dialogues:

Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying "languages." (p. 291)

Bakhtin's ideas about the dialogical nature of language are only beginning to influence western literary and composition theory. At the 1985 Modern Language Association Conference, over sixty papers were delivered which mentioned Bakhtin in their title.

Writers do more than just put words upon the page: they are involved in a dialogue which reflects many complex social relations within their lives. Writing is an expression of relations between people. Thus, a student's relation to his/her parents and the student's relation to the larger society affect that student's voice in a classroom essay. Obviously, students seldom excel in written essays when they are disregarded at home and held as unimportant by those who are powerful in society. Although it appears to be a solitary act, composing involves the writer in a mental dialogue with many other people. A colleague, James Zebroski (1985), has extended this idea of social dialogue by comparing this dialogue to a
quarreling of internal voices, struggling for control. Writers who do not like their own writing often complain that their writing does not sound right, meaning that is does not sound like them. These writers are bemoaning the fact that their writing has been possessed by an alien voice with which they do not feel comfortable.

The composition teacher should not ignore the many social relations which live through the students' writing. Rather than being possessed by voices that the students cannot control, the teacher needs to help the students see the significance in these voices. These voices reveal the hidden social relations of the culture which can even be a part of the content of the students' writing. Both the teacher and the students need to consider how these social relations affect learning to write.

3. Dialectical theory views the world as being dynamic, in a state of constant flux.

Positivists stop the world in order to describe it. This makes reality easier to describe, but far less dynamic. If positivists attempt to describe any relations at all, they reduce these relations to a one-to-one correspondence, a direct cause and effect.
Dialectical theory provides the framework which makes it possible to envision more complex relationships. Relationships are realized as manifestations, expressions and reflections of other people or things rather than being just a direct result of something else. For example, it would be too simplistic to say that divorce causes children to do poorly in school. The child’s adjustment to divorce is far more dynamic, necessarily including other factors such as: the child’s self concept, the character of the relationships between each parent and the child, the effect of the parents’ fighting upon the child, etc.

Not only is a dialectical reality more complex than a positivistic one, it is less static. Describing a complex phenomenon is difficult; thus, describing a moving, complex phenomenon becomes even more difficult. Heilbroner (1980) elaborates upon the dynamic quality of dialectical theory and the difficulty of describing it:

... the ultimate and irreducible nature of all reality is motion, not rest, and that to depict things as static or changeless is to disregard or violate the essence of their being. .. The difficulty comes when we try to subject this intuitively right grasp of things to systematic examination. Then we find the very characteristic of changefulness that commends a dialectical viewpoint to our imaginations renders it awkward for our cognitive faculties. It is difficult to "think" about change, even if it is natural to imagine it... Therefore when we turn to philosophic discussion we find ourselves naturally inclining toward a view of the universe that stops its processes, like so many frames of a motion picture, in order to allow us to examine things as if they were actually suspended motionless in space and time. (pp. 32-33)
The movement is more than just spacial and temporal, a natural evolution over time. The challenge is to describe a fluctuation that may make one feature seem more prominent or may permit one feature to actually transform itself into another. Because of this disequilibrium, a dialectical description must portray a whole range of possibilities. To extend the previous divorce example, imagine that the child in question is an adolescent whose primary psychological agenda is to break from the family unit. A divorce may provide the opportunity to assert independence; however, the opposite of this may be true -- the adolescent may need a strong, secure family unit from which to take the first tentative steps. In this example, the need for independence transformed into a need for security. Dialectical theory is the only worldview which attempts to capture the dynamic, fluctuations of reality.

To return to the earlier quote by Mike Rose, a dialectical theorist would agree that composing, like all other human activities, is extremely difficult to describe. Nevertheless, this dynamic quality is so highly valued by dialectical theory that it becomes the motivating force for attempting to describe the elusive nature of composing rather than a reason for not doing it.

Any dialectical model of the composing process must be dynamic enough to acknowledge that there are many different composing processes, perhaps as many as there are people. A dialectical model
would classify composing as idiosyncratic. Subsequently, each person's individual composing process would also vary from one writing experience to another.

Professional writers have long recognized the idiosyncratic nature of composing. They court their own individual styles, never expecting their composing processes to conform to an artificial, rigid set of expectancies. In addition to the uniqueness of the composing process, professional writers respect the fluid quality of composing as well. The Paris Review is full of insights about how the composing process moves. One indication of this is how professional authors use totally different terms to describe composing than do composition teachers. Professional authors talk about "being on a roll" or "things coming together" while teachers talk about "thesis statements" and "subordinate conjunctions."

In the traditional classroom, only one sanctioned version of the composing process is taught to the students. Some teachers might argue that adopting the belief that there are many possible composing processes would cause a severe managerial problem since classrooms are easier to control when everyone is doing the same thing at the same time. However, expecting every student to follow the same lock-step procedure may lead to a high degree of frustration for both the students and the teacher. By acknowledging that there are many different composing processes, the teacher increases the students' opportunities for success. Students can concentrate on developing an
effective, individual composing process rather than trying to learn a
procedure which has been artificially constructed for the purposes of
the curriculum.

4. **Dialectical theory views the world as being inherently holistic.**

Dialectical theorists do not discount fluctuations in reality as being an interesting aside or as a simple matter of a few exceptions to the rule. To the dialectical theorist, this dynamic movement is essential because it is the force which binds social relations together to form a whole. A complete dialectical analysis includes more than a pointless discussion of one fragmented feature. Removing one part from the whole to study it in isolation destroys the complex interaction of the parts. These interactions are the glue which binds the parts together thus becoming a necessary condition of the whole. To use a frequent analogy, if you dissect a frog in order to study one part of that frog, the dissection kills the frog. In order to retain the dynamic quality of a process, the necessary relationships among the parts must be considered. It may be possible to describe a part in isolation from a whole, but when that part is ripped from the whole, it becomes something completely different. Examining a fragment of a process is like examining a dead organism.

To the dialectical theorist, the whole is contained within each of the parts. This may be easier to understand if we consider the case of a holographic negative. If the photographic plate of a
hologram is broken, each piece is not just one part of the whole picture, but rather each piece is a reflection of the whole image. Dialectical theorists find over-simplifications unacceptable because the whole picture is not represented.

For dialectical theory, the relation among the whole and its parts is the focus. Warren (1984) uses the work of Hegel to establish the mediated quality of the whole:

It is neither the whole nor the parts which is ontologically fundamental, but the relations among them. This notion is essential for grounding a dialectical theory of knowledge. Henceforth inquiry should delve into neither an abstract whole nor apparently independent and separate parts of the whole. What "holds together" the parts and the whole in this manner is a "mediated negativity" where the part is both what it is and what it is not. Thus Hegel's recovery of "totality" not only expands the limits of knowledge but offers a view of reality where the "concrete" is the mediated whole of relations and the "abstract" is the immediate specificity of separated parts of the whole. It is this view of reality that seems appropriate to a dialectical theory of knowledge. (pp. 45-46)

Applying dialectical theory to the composing process would mean that the composing process could not be broken down into four tidy stages or procedures such as: prewriting, writing, revision and editing. Each feature would have to be regarded as an integral part of all the other stages. Applying this perspective to revision, for example, would dramatically expand the current notion of revision. During the prewriting stage, the writer may need to make several mental revisions before the pen ever reaches the paper. The writer continues to revise while composing by crossing out or even discarding ideas and words internally as they begin to take shape.
upon the page. Revision can be a necessary part of editing as well, for a sentence may not be easily corrected with a single punctuation mark or a word substitution: it may require recasting the whole sentence or even an entire section. This whole argument about the concept of revision is somewhat academic because dialectical theory would not embrace this positivistic, four-stage model to begin with. The dialectical viewpoint would see revision as an inseparable part of the whole process of composing. From the earliest, budding thoughts to the last backward critical appraisal, the writer is constantly engaged in creating meaning. That meaning evolves as the process of writing clarifies the writer's thoughts. What positivists condense into one sanctioned period for revision, dialectical theorists would expand into a whole evolution of meaning.

A dialectical stance would demand a totally different way of teaching composing than is traditionally practiced. Composing would not be reduced to learning an isolated series of skills such as constructing thesis statements or identifying noun clauses. The fact that these activities have been severed from the composing process and have become an end in themselves precludes the possibility that they can ever become part of the whole composing process again. It is not surprising that research studies show that the formal study of grammar has little or no effect upon composing performance. The study of grammar is therefore the study of something totally different than the study of composing. Teachers should not waste time with drilling concepts which are taught in isolation from the
context of real communication.

5. Dialectical theory views the world as being socially constructed.

The social construction of reality is an extension of the first two features of dialectical theory which discussed the importance of the relational quality (1.) and the social quality (2.) of reality. Social relations begin as external relations which are then embedded within the individual's consciousness. Once internalized, these social relations influence the individual's perception of the external world. In this way, the individual projects internalized beliefs back out upon the world which are then perceived as a physical reality to that person.

However, it is important to emphasize that each person does not manufacture his or her own private version of reality totally independent of other people. Dialectical theory contends that reality is a social construction which is defined through the collective social relations of a culture. This culturally accepted version of reality is then passed on from generation to generation through the process of socialization. Thus, through the social relations of everyday life, a person learns the appropriate version of reality to perceive. This idea is discussed at more length in the works of Berger and Luckman (1966), and Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1969).
Dialectical theory would consider the traditional model of the composing process as a social construction. As a cultural creation rather than as an uncontested absolute, the beliefs that we share about the composing process should be viewed problematically. Dialectical theory can be used to penetrate the cultural common sense about composing.

Even though our cultural knowledge about composing may not be irrefutable fact, this knowledge is still the most pervasive form of knowledge in a culture, and teachers should recognize it as the ruling force in their classroom. Therefore, composition teachers should be familiar with the beliefs that students bring with them to the classroom about composing. Teachers need to be equally aware of how these same beliefs have become embedded in their own consciousness as well. When these cultural beliefs about composing are viewed problematically, the teacher and the students can analyze the usefulness of these beliefs. The natural conclusion of this type of dialectical analysis would be for the teacher and the students to become active in constructing their own personal models of composing. Thus, the teacher and students have changed from being the passive, uncritical receivers of a socially created reality into the active, authentic creators of a new reality.
6. Dialectical theory views the world as being a necessary unity of opposing forces.

During an earlier section about the dynamic nature of reality (4.), there was a discussion about how one need could transform itself into something quite the opposite from the original need. As an extension of this point, dialectical theory believes that incompatible forces can coexist. Thus, two opposite things can be true at the same time. In oriental cultures, this unity of opposing forces is expressed as a single drawing which represents the ying and the yang. It is the dynamic tension between these two polarities that is of greatest interest to the dialectical theorist. A classic example of two opposing forces which drive us on to a response are the fight or flight response. What factors lead a person to choose one response over the other response is the subject of dialectical inquiry.

This dynamic tension between two opposing forces is considered essential to the phenomena under investigation. In other words, without the opposing forces the phenomena would not exist. These forces form a unity which is never static. The tension between these forces pulls the polarities together while at the same time threatens to push them apart. To continue the preceding psychology example, without this fight or flight response, the person might not respond at all. It is the tension between the two choices that
forces the person to react in some manner. Even if the decision is to surrender, the tension between the two polarities is what provokes the response. Translating this into a real life situation, I may have to decide whether to go to college or not. This tension will drive me on to react in some fashion even if my response is to get drunk, drive home, get stopped by the police and end up in jail. The tension can pull the opposing forces together to be resolved in a temporary harmony, or they can explode into a violent, irreversible separation of the forces. Either way, equilibrium is not reached for long: a new set of polarities soon arises, leading to resolution or revolution. Reality, being in constant flux, contains forces which are in disequilibrium.

Dialectical theory believes that opposing forces make up the essence of reality. However, not all contradictory elements are essential, the important ones are those which create a dynamic tension which creates the context of the social process under investigation. In this citation taken from Heilbroner (1980), the author tries to clarify just what type of contradictions are important to dialectical theory:

In dialectics, the word [contradiction] does not refer to the simultaneous assertion and denial of the existence of static things; instead, it refers to the nature of those conflicting elemental processes that are believed to constitute the essence of reality itself . . . . Contradictions therefore refer to the idea that all of reality is changeful because it consists, in its very innermost being, of the unstable coexistence and successive resolution of incompatible forces. . . . The social world, like the natural world, is full of opposing forces, most of which have no more "contradictory" significance than the chance encounter of two particles or the clash of two wills.
Contradictions refer to those oppositions that are both necessary for, and yet destructive of, particular processes or entities. . . . Thus the task of a dialectical inquiry is not to make sweeping statements about the omnipresence of contradictions, but to identify the particular contradictory tendencies, if any, within a given social process. (pp. 35, 39)

Once again it is the relation between these two opposites which is important to dialectical investigation. Paul Diesing elaborates upon this relationship:

Two concepts are dialectically related when the elaboration of one draws attention to the other as an opposed concept that has been implicitly denied or excluded by the first; when one discovers that the opposite concept is required (presupposed) for the validity or applicability of the first; and when one finds that the real theoretical problem is that of the interrelationship between two concepts, and the real descriptive problem that of determining their interrelations in a particular case. (as cited in Heilbroner 1980 pp. 41-42)

Unlike the positivistic world view, the dialectical world view recognizes that two totally opposite things could be true at the same time. Dialectical theory offers the means to understand the creative tension between contradictory forces.

Numerous opposing forces can be identified as integral to the composing process. The writer must strike a balance between the desire to create boundless ideas and the need to mold these ideas into some recognizable form. The writer has to satisfy both a personal desire to create sense for one's self and the pragmatic reality of having to communicate this sense to another person. The writer is even caught between the constraints of the former uses of a word and the possibility of creating a unique, new turn of phrase. The power of two opposing forces should not be underestimated. These
forces have the potential to bring the words together to form a masterpiece of meaning or to push the words apart so that they convey nothing but nonsense. In an essay about the dynamics of language, Bakhtin (1981) uses the metaphor of centripetal and centrifugal forces to portray the powerful, opposing forces which work to shape the utterance:

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of hereoglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. And this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing systems of a unitary language. Every utterance participates in the "unitary language" (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces). (p. 272.)

When dialectical theory is used to analyze the composing process, the contradictory forces can be analyzed so that the writer can strive for either a peaceful harmony between the forces which may produce a satisfying piece of writing or an explosive disequilibrium which may produce a new realization about the composing process.

Since a writer may experience a whole range of emotions from the heights of euphoria to the depths of despair, the writing teacher must be prepared to help the students' deal with their emotional responses to the opposing forces within their own composing processes. Composition students are often prone to emotional
outbursts. A student's anger should never be lightly dismissed, for it has profound effects upon the composing process. The act of writing often generates powerful emotional energy. This energy can spur a writer on to create a long document in a few hours of concentrated effort, or this energy can be the destructive force which causes the writer to abandon a piece of writing or even worse yet, rip it to shreds.

7. Dialectical theory views the world as being historically situated.

Feature number five examined why dialectical philosophers believe that reality is a social construction. To extend this point further, reality is not simply a one time creation: reality is continually being created by society. Reality therefore becomes an open-ended concept which changes in character as society evolves. Any particular point in time is situated within a whole history of that culture. Conversely, the whole history of that culture is reflected in the social relations of that one moment. In this frequently cited passage, Marx (1977) discusses the dialectical tension between history and humanity:

[at each stage in history there appears] a sum of productive forces, an historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital funds and conditions, which on the one hand, is indeed modified by the new generation, but also, on the other, prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a special character. It shows that the circumstances make men [women] as well as that men [women] make
the circumstances (dass also die Unstande ebenso sehr die Menschen, wie die Menschen die Unstande machen). (p. 172)

Hegel, Gramsci, Merleau-Ponty and Kolakowski have also written extensively about the importance of history to critical analysis. For these reasons, dialectical theory examines the living history of social relations expressed through a given phenomenon.

Dialectical theory can offer a historical perspective to an examination of the social relations which affect writing. Words themselves contain much of a culture's history within it. One word can be described as a microcosm of that culture. A word reflects more than just its etymology; a word represents a history of that culture's attitudes and beliefs. An etymology only traces the history of the word's phonetic, graphic and semantic changes rather than its social relations. For example, to know the Greek root of the word "charisma" and to trace any changes in its meaning over time does not adequately reflect the social relations connected to it. In the 1960's, "charisma" was frequently used as a descriptor for John F. Kennedy. The word was very popular during this time period, but more recently, the word has been over-used and now some consider it to be passe'. Words are indeed historically situated. Just as words develop historically within the culture, they also develop historically for the individual person, or ontogenetically. The Soviet scholar, Alexander R. Luria (1981) includes an extended discussion in his book, Language and Cognition, of how a child's word meaning develops dynamically over time.
This same historical perspective can be applied to the composing process. The current practices related to composing are historically situated within our culture's evolving beliefs about composing. Composing has evolved from a practice which was done only by the clergy and the ruling elite. More recently, writing proficiency has become associated with success in college and upward mobility. Certainly, our culture's notion of the composing process will be affected by the rising popularity of the computer and word processing. Some composition teachers fear that the computer age will foster texts which have had their sections juggled around rather than coherently rewritten while other composition teachers foresee that the computer will make revision less of a punishment since changes are easier to make. The only thing that is certain is that the nature of composing will change.

Not only does a historical perspective add to an understanding of words and composing, a historical perspective can add to knowledge about the growth of an individual student's composing process. Composing is too often treated as a simple skill which should be proficiently mastered by a specified age. Adopting a historical perspective would mean that composition would have to be viewed developmentally. In fact, a writer would be viewed as developing a composing process over the period of a lifetime. In other words, a writer is continually learning to write, continually developing and refining new strategies—never quite finishing the task. Consequently, if my students expect me to teach them to write,
they have an unrealistic expectancy. For I can only start them on a journey, introducing them to a terrain that will take them a whole lifetime to traverse. To continue this metaphor, each writer will have to make his/her own way, blazing an individual trail rather than following a prescribed path which often ends up being nothing more than a wild goose chase.

Each individual student also has a unique, personal history of composing, an ontogeny. Current composing theory does not account for the student’s past writing experiences. Past successes and failures as well as past classroom experiences with learning about composition can greatly influence current performance. For instance, when I walk into my composition classroom on the first day of the quarter, I am always struck with the impression of how crowded the room is. Not only is the room filled with my students; there are the ghosts of all their former English teachers. Of course, there are all of the ghosts of my former English teachers as well. All these ghosts make the room very crowded with the ghosts far outnumbering the mortals. This can cause many problems. If I criticize formal grammar instruction, a huge outcry will probably arise from a myriad of former teachers whose life’s work had been the propagation of grammar terms. To go on and not acknowledge these voices would be foolish, for they would certainly drown out my own puny voice. Whether the composition teacher expects it or not, there will probably be several incidents when he or she will be confronted with the historical nature of the teaching of composition.
8. Dialectical theory views the world as being economically and politically grounded.

An important part of the world that a culture creates for itself are its economic and political systems through which its members distribute wealth and power. The question is not whether economics and political systems are a social creation, but whether they should be considered when analyzing social relations. Marx's investigation of the effects of economics upon social relations has had a great impact upon later philosophers. Marx studied the conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Although other Marxists have since criticized Marx for his vulgar economic materialism, there is no denying that economics influences social relations. Merleau-Ponty (1964) clarifies the role economics should play in dialectical theory:

Economic life is not a separate order to which the other orders may be reduced: it is Marxism's way of representing the inertia of human life; it is here that conceptions are registered and achieve stability. . . . economic phenomena make a greater contribution to historical discourse—not that they explain everything that happens but that no progress can be made in the cultural order, no historical step can be taken unless the economy, which is like its schema and material symbol, is organized in a certain way. (pp. 108, 112)

Economic and political factors are often intertwined with federal, state and institutional decisions directly influencing the economy and vice versa. Dialectical theory emphasizes the importance of economic and political relations upon other social relations such as those involved with composing.
Economic and political issues have a great impact upon language use. Standard dialect is a perfect example of how language and wealth and power intersect. In our culture, the prestige dialect is labeled as the "standard" dialect while all the other dialects are considered to be "nonstandard." Dialects, of course, are characteristic of particular subgroups within a culture. Some of these subgroups have economic significance and can be defined by race or social class. Standard dialect can therefore become the means by which we can discriminate against race and class differences. Language differences have been shown to affect scores on intelligence tests because these tests are all written in standard dialect. Through the act of grading papers, particularly by marking usage errors, composition teachers are making decisions about the value of one dialect over another. Consequently, it is no surprise that upper class white students fare better in freshman composition than do lower class black students.

Economic and political conflicts should be a concern in the teaching of composition. English classrooms are often the arena for conflicts over standard dialect. Since language is so closely tied to self concept, to find all but one dialect deficient means that people who speak other than the prestige dialect often feel that they are rejected by their teachers. The teacher's rejection of a student would not be such a tragedy if school success were not so closely tied to economic and political success. Upward mobility is a hidden
issue which lies behind the teaching of composition. Some teachers try to smooth all this over by grandly proclaiming that no one dialect is better than the other; however, it is no coincidence that students must use standard English in the classroom. Ignoring the economic and political influences upon language and composing will not make them go away.

9. Dialectical theory views the world as being a reflection of the dominant ideology.

In a socially constructed reality, it is not possible for everyone to hold a totally independent system of beliefs. Our belief systems are created by a continual process of socialization. When looking at an entire culture, there is always a belief system or ideology which is dominant over the others and benefits one group more than another. However, this is not to imply that ideology is exclusively a creation of our conscious mind. Althusser (1969) argues that ideology is more a part of the unconscious mind than the conscious mind:

It [Ideology] is profoundly unconscious, even when it presents itself in a reflected form. Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with "consciousness": they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men [women], not via their "consciousness." They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men [women] in a process that escapes them. Men [Women] "live" their ideologies as the Cartesians "saw" the moon at two hundred paces away; not at all as a form of consciousness, but as an object of their "world"--as their world itself. (as cited in Giroux 1983 p.81)
Hegemony is a process through which the dominant ideology of a culture weaves itself into the fabric of our everyday lives, thus becoming accepted as common sense. Gramsci (1971), an Italian Marxist, is most frequently cited for his writings about hegemony. Hegemony describes the way that the lower classes internalize the beliefs of the upper class, therefore needing no watchdog or police force to keep them in line. The lower classes mentally police themselves through these adopted belief systems. In this quotation, Sarup (1978) summarizes how the dominant ideology uses hegemony to control the masses:

Ideologies start as a partial view of the world and remain unaware of their presuppositions. Second they refract reality via pre-existing categories selected by dominant groups and acceptable to them. Third, they generate special and limited interests. Fourth, they have a significant part in maintaining order without force by securing the assent of the oppressed and exploited to their own situation. They do this by creating images for the dominant class or group. (p. 63)


Hegemony can lead to a pervasive status quo which is never questioned. The lower class tacitly accepts the ruling class's model for reality even when that reality does not serve their own best interests. False consciousness presents a false awareness of the way
that society works.

The way out of false consciousness is to critically question those things that are taken for granted in our everyday lives. The dialectical philosopher carefully examines social interactions which previously may not have even been acknowledged in order to reveal the influences of the dominant ideology. Conducting this type of analysis requires much rigorous reflection.

If indeed it is one of the functions of dialectic theory to be critical, then one of the questions composition teachers should be continually asking themselves is: "Is what I am asking my students to do what real writers do when they write? For instance, do real writers always compose their texts in a straight line from the first word to the last? Or is it often the case that some writers, even some very good writers, compose parts of their texts out of sequence with the beginning often being the very last thing that is composed?"

A classroom where only the teacher develops a critical perspective of composing would be of little value since only the teacher would be reaching critical consciousness. In order for the students to reach critical consciousness, they will have to participate in the debunking of the positivistic model of composing. If the teacher does all the work for them, then the students will not learn how to critically examine their future composing conflicts in order to continue their own development.
The classroom becomes the perfect site for decoding the current model of composing. The agenda is to critically examine composing. This is accomplished by both the teacher and the students becoming conscious of and sharing their own composing processes with one another. Critical consciousness isn't just a matter of getting the right answer—it is a continual process of critical reflection. The composition classroom should be the site of continual questioning where research into composing never ends.

This ability to gain insight into the relations between people and things can be more than just a tool to gain knowledge about the composing process: critical reflection can become the means by which students can penetrate the veneer which covers their everyday existence. Students can use writing to develop their own critical consciousness about the interconnectedness of social relations. By focusing on one object, the simplest object within a culture can become the portal through which a whole spectrum of social relations can be viewed. Thus, writing becomes both the object of critical reflection and also the means through which critical reflection is developed.
Critical consciousness makes problematic that which others accept without question. This practice allows the viewer to penetrate the hegemonic fog which hangs over our daily lives so that the viewer can see the inner workings of society. This new insight often comes with a small catch. Necessarily, this new vision of the world is somewhat harsh, frightening and maybe even depressing. The viewer may begin to feel that life is hopelessly controlled by forces which are ultimately out of the viewer’s control. Such villains might be the administration, big business, the government, or the ruling class. People can become disillusioned soon after they find out how institutional decisions are actually made. Such an awareness can make a person feel powerless. On the contrary, critical consciousness can lead to empowerment rather than powerlessness. For this to happen, critical consciousness must not be an end in itself. Critical consciousness should be the vantage point from which to launch informed action.

Praxis is authentic action: action which is motivated by a critical awareness and is not the result of hegemony. Paulo Freire is known for his work around the world in developing literacy skills and critical consciousness. Freire (1971) describes the uniquely human ability to create one’s own history. Each person’s life is viewed as the act of becoming--becoming that which the person has
decided to become. Furthermore, dialectical theory does not believe that praxis is ever completed. Since praxis is incomplete, people have the lifelong vocation of creating themselves. Consequently, praxis is future oriented, always directed toward improving society. Through praxis, students can transform the world that they had previously felt helpless to change. This act of empowerment will lead to the emancipation from the circumstances which were once oppressive. Giroux (1981) gives an overview of the emancipatory quality of praxis:

Praxis . . . suggests more than a struggle against the forces of oppression; it further suggests a struggle that defines freedom in social and not merely personal terms. Emancipation is linked in this case to groups of people struggling against the social forces that oppress them. It also suggest that the struggle affirms the power of human agents to act in a self-determining fashion out of a context that is as deeply historical as it is critical. Praxis, then, typifies a conception of freedom that analyzes the content and form of existing struggles within the context of their historical genesis and development. (p. 117)

References to praxis can also be found in the works of Marx, Horkheimer, Habermas, Merleau-Ponty and especially in the work of Gramsci. Through dialectical theory people can become empowered to create their own praxis.

Emancipation can be achieved in the composition classroom by empowering the students to develop their own composing processes. Students can be freed from trying to conform to the reified composing process suggested by their textbooks and teachers. Their emancipation will lead them to the lifelong task of creating their own individual composing processes.
Most composition classrooms are not the site of emancipatory practices. Instead, these classrooms often encourage an artificial type of writing which is only done in school. Macrorie (1970a) has become the number one arch enemy of phony writing. In fact, he coined the term "Engfish" which denotes artificial, pretentious writing which is only practiced to impress teachers. Macrorie's assessment was appreciated by many freshman composition teachers who had read all too many trite themes, a sort of pseudo-writing which was a bastardization of the real thing. Macrorie equates this Engfish writing with not telling the truth. Most students don't start out wishing to write pointless essays. Instead, they are slowly socialized into writing what they think that the teacher wants. Soon, these students have no truth to tell because the desire to say something important has been substituted for the mercenary desire to get a good grade. These students characteristically lose their voice and begin to sound like encyclopedias. (A form of institutional writing wherein there is no person evident so that twenty people can write a set of encyclopedias and each paragraph will read the same. The information is sanitized, transferred as clinically as possible to the reader with all emotion and personal bias removed.) This type of writing is writing where there is no writer present. When student writers can complete the technical task of writing without being present, we have created mute monsters--students who write with no voice at all.
Writing should have something to say. It can become the tool for working towards meaningful change, a change agent. This type of writing is highly meaningful to its author because it is not a dummy classroom exercise; moreover, it involves a personal commitment to a goal which requires true communication to accomplish. When students feel true ownership over what they are writing, they will genuinely want to go learn enough about writing in order to express their personal meanings. If writing has no role in praxis, it is not worth doing. Praxis can be the motive for learning to write.

Part Two

The Sociology of Knowledge

The False Subject-Object Dichotomy

Part one established some of the major differences between dialectical theory and positivism. Each of these differences has several implications for education and the teaching of composition. Teasing out the complex differences between these two opposing world views would not be in itself provide an instant panacea for education.
However, the issue of what our culture views as valuable knowledge is central to education and is a topic through which teachers can examine their own views. In the subject-object dichotomy, knowledge can be viewed as the object while teachers could be considered as the subject.

According to the positivistic world view, knowledge would be the objective, static quantity which already exists in reality. On the other hand, the dialectical perspective would be that knowledge is the object with which teachers have relations. Teachers can create and define knowledge, and conversely they are defined by the object of knowledge. To elaborate, all objects are created by the subjects, for the subjects name them, use them, and manipulate them. Teachers spend a great deal of their time managing knowledge; they generate lesson plans, handouts, tests, and curricula which are all manifestations of this knowledge. Likewise, knowledge is used to define the teacher. The type of knowledge that the teacher works with labels his or her job such as a seventh grade English teacher. The teacher's merit is judged by how much of the knowledge he or she knows and how well he or she can transfer that knowledge to the students. In this way, knowledge becomes the subject and the teacher becomes the mere object of the subject. Teachers would agree that in the worst of circumstances, they feel that they cannot do what they really want to do because they must instead stick to the curriculum and cover the information which they are obligated to teach. This
set of circumstances is in itself ironic. The subject who originally created the object now finds that he or she has been turned into the object of the subject. Thus, teachers are controlled by their very own creation. The simple solution seems to be for the teachers to change this relation and become the subject again. The teacher should ask, "Who is to be in charge of this classroom, the knowledge or the teacher?" Then, the teacher should proceed to alter those things which give the knowledge the power over the classroom rather than the teacher.

Teachers can feel a sense of empowerment from this type of analysis, but regrettfully, the subject-object dichotomy oversimplifies the complexity of the social relations involved. Dialectical theory would not define the world in terms of subjects and objects but in terms of social relations. Before we view the dialectical representation of knowledge, it would be helpful to examine the positivistic view of knowledge.

Knowledge as a Commodity

Positivism considers knowledge as an objective object. As an object, knowledge can be manufactured in books and curricula and housed in libraries. As a commodity, knowledge can be given to others, withheld, and even be given an exchange value in money and power.
In the classroom, teachers own knowledge, and students do not have it. If the students respond appropriately by sitting still, being quiet, and having the right attitude, the teacher may give them some knowledge. Teachers become very angry when the students do not behave in the manner previously described. If the students do not behave, sometimes the teacher refuses to give them knowledge. An example of this is when the teacher says, "Alright, I'm not going on with the lesson until you get quiet. Remember this information will be on the test, so if you aren't listening, you won't be able to pass."

Supposedly, all students have equal access to the knowledge that the teacher distributes, but many students do not receive their quota. Either the teacher or the student is blamed for this problem, but never the knowledge itself. Knowledge is always considered to be easily accessible—just waiting for the learner to memorize it. Our culture takes great pride in believing that everyone could own the knowledge if they just decided to learn it. We have public libraries and public schools for this purpose.

Since knowledge is viewed as a possession, the student can be tested for ownership of it. By asking a series of questions, it can be objectively determined whether the student has the knowledge or not. These tests are used for entrance to certain professions and for certification purposes. In this way, knowledge has an exchange value for money and power. Although we consider knowledge to be a
free commodity in our culture which is available to all, knowledge does have a price tag. Not only do books themselves cost, the right to attend certain schools carries either a direct price or a deferred price connected to the price of one's home.

Students assume that teachers own knowledge since teachers are given the power to distribute knowledge and certify those who have obtained it. However, teachers do not actually have the power to create knowledge. Rarely do teachers ever write textbooks, design classroom materials, or even write the curriculum. Some school districts do assign the task of writing the curriculum to the teachers, but the task is more of a secretarial one, for the knowledge has already been determined for this grade level; the teachers have only to transfer it from another source, usually the state department mandates or the table of contents from the textbook. Not only are teachers powerless to determine the content knowledge for their course, they also are not permitted to develop the knowledge about their own profession. Education experts come from universities and private corporations to sell the latest educational innovations to teachers during inservices or conferences.

Educational textbooks and other materials are a multi-million dollar business, and teachers become the consumers. Teachers always seem to be shopping for a new innovation to plug into their classrooms. These educational companies used to be paid directly by the schools for their products. However, teachers often find that
they have to supplement their classroom materials out of their own pocket, so a new line of stores has opened across the nation called "teacher stores" which supply a whole gauntlet of teacher supplies from pre-printed ditto masters to reward certificates. Few other professions have stores to supply them with needed materials which must be purchased by the employee. There are no doctor stores to supply scalpels and surgical masks which are needed to provide services.

Critically analyzing knowledge as a commodity can give teachers some valuable insights into their everyday activities.

Knowledge as a Process

Dialectical theory would not conceive of knowledge as a commodity. The dialectical perspective would characterize knowledge as a process of social interaction through which the knowledge is created. Believing that knowledge must be created is a totally different stance from positivism which believes that knowledge is a pregiven reality.

To this way of thinking, knowledge is not a mass-produced commodity which can be guaranteed through quality control and can be handily distributed to students on a nation-wide basis. Knowledge is an individual creation which is valued for its uniqueness and its personal usefulness. Each learner then becomes in charge of his or
her education with each person generating private knowledge about math, composition, working, etc. which only that person can create. Certainly, this viewpoint has its drawbacks. Teaching children fractions would take a lot longer if the teacher considered each student as the creator of his or her own personal knowledge about fractions. However, this scenario may already be the case without the teacher being aware of it. To return to the fraction example, even though the teacher may do a presentation about simple fractions to the students, that knowledge is recreated differently in each student's mind. For instance, one student may visualize the exact teaching aid that the teacher held up in class, another may visualize a pizza, or measuring cups or bar graphs, or circles or even the numerical symbols themselves.

The teacher should not ignore the associative quality of memory. All new information which enters the brain must fit in with the conceptual framework which already exists. When a person is presented with information that conflicts with this conceptual framework, there is only one simple solution: the persona rejects the new information and says something like, "That doesn't make sense to me." The brain simply rejects information which does not fit in with previous knowledge.

An interesting example of this point is an occasion when a teacher was reading a story about a dog with her students. It just so happened that the dog was an afghan hound and the students were
inner city children. The book very conveniently had a picture of an afghan hound in it. But this picture caused all the problems. Since these children lived in the inner city, they were not familiar with afghan hounds. They knew a lot about dogs including a great deal of information about pit bulls and the terror of rabies, but they knew nothing about this particular type of dog. One of the well-read students who often frequented the school library saw the picture and raised his hand to blurt out that he knew what the picture in the book was about. He claimed that he was looking at a National Geographic magazine and had seen one of these in an article about South America. According to his memory, this afghan hound was actually a "llamie," or llama. The rest of the students immediately agreed that this made sense to them. The teacher then spent the rest of the period trying to convince the students that this was indeed a dog. The best she could do was to convince a few more pliable students that it was a dog—but those students insisted that it must have been a descendant of the "llamie." This example humorously demonstrates how new knowledge must fit in with the old knowledge.

The most interesting feature of this proposition is to try to imagine what happens when a person does indeed learn a new piece of information which conflicts with what has been learned before. In this particular case, learning would be revolutionary as the new concept is assimilated by the mind and would disrupt the other information that was stored there, causing the information to be reorganized in some way. The Soviet psycholinguist and author of
Thought and Language, Lev Vygotsky (1962) discusses this type of learning in his chapter on "scientific concepts." Vygotsky differentiates between scientific concepts, which are learned in school, and spontaneous concepts, which are learned from everyday life. In this citation, he discusses how scientific concepts work from the top down to modify the other concepts:

The new, higher concepts in turn transform the meaning of the lower. The adolescent who has mastered algebraic concepts has gained a vantage point from which he [she] sees arithmetical concepts in a broader perspective . . . . In this as in other instances of passing from one level of meaning to the next, the child does not have to restructure separately all of his [her] earlier concepts, which indeed would be a Sisyphean labor. Once a new structure has been incorporated into his [her] thinking--usually through concepts recently acquired in school--it gradually spreads to the older concepts as they are drawn into the intellectual operations of the higher type. (p. 115)

Thus, the entry of a new concept into the mind causes a chain reaction of change to take place in order to accommodate a new perspective. Teachers often have little regard for how revolutionary learning is to previous knowledge. For a child to believe in negative numbers, a whole different perspective has to be taken. Many children refuse to accept a new illogical perspective. For example, when presented with the idea of carrying over numbers to the next column in addition, my own child threw a raging tantrum and declared that, "You can't do that with numbers." I can remember how disorienting it was to work with negative numbers in algebra for the first time. New concepts sometimes require a whole new orientation toward reality from the student— which is by no means a simple task.
Accepting new knowledge involves the creation of a new relationship between some of the old concepts. True learning is not passive. It requires the active mental participation of the student in the creation of new knowledge. Each time the student learns something new, that new concept must be recreated in the student's mind.

The Creation of New Knowledge

The problem with the previous discussion is that the whole learning situation is based on the positivistic assumption that knowledge is a pregiven reality separate from the learner. The last section developed the premise that even if the knowledge was premanufactured, the student would have to manufacture it all over again in his or her own mind in order to learn it. But the real question still remains, "Where did the knowledge originate from?" Dialectical theory does not profess that knowledge exists separate from human beings; it asserts that knowledge is created by human beings for their own purposes.

A most important assumption about knowledge should not be overlooked: knowledge is incomplete, thus giving human beings the necessary life-time job of creating it. This single assumption has profound implications for the classroom. The teacher would no longer be obligated to busily try to cover all the material in the curriculum guide in order to be sure that the students learn the
cultural's most revered body of knowledge. Instead, teachers and students might better engage themselves in the more useful process of generating new knowledge. Only when knowledge is viewed as incomplete can learning be a true discovery process.

To apply this to the composition classroom, the teacher would not spend classtime presenting the existing, closed-set of information about the best way to construct an essay. The teacher and students might critically examine this information, but they would only view it problematically. The majority of the classtime would be spent in the pursuit of new knowledge about composing which has not yet been created. Certainly, the existing knowledge about composing is valuable and thought provoking, but scholars by no means have exhausted the potential to know more about how we make meaning with words. Since researching one's own composing process does not require sophisticated laboratory equipment, there is no reason why students cannot be involved in researching the composing process.

The implication that students should have a role in researching the composing process is an easy one to make, but how this idea is carried out in the classroom can make the whole enterprise nothing but a useless exercise. For instance, in science classes, students are often engaged in acting out the charade of experimentation. They conduct experiments, yet they do not generate any useable information. The whole process loses significance when there is no motive for doing it. Likewise, students can be asked to
examine their own composing process in order to fill a class requirement or to please the teacher, but once again, there is little need to do so. In order for research to be meaningful, the teacher and the students must genuinely be seeking information together. The teacher must value what works and what does not work for the students when they compose rather than only valuing what the teacher believes is the right way to go about composing. In this case, the teacher would not need to have the students present in order to carry out such research, for only the teacher's knowledge is what matters. The creation of knowledge should be the center of the composition classroom with both the teacher and the students having an important role in its production.

A New Metaphor for Learning

In an earlier discussion about learning new concepts, adopting a new perspective was discussed as being important in order to get the learner to accept new information. A new perspective is even more critical if a new form of knowledge is to be generated rather than just accepted. If a radical new form of knowledge is to be created, then knowledge needs to be perceived in a totally new way. Dialectical theory offers a different world view from which a new perspective can be used to create knowledge.
Changing to a new world view is not an easy task since people do not readily give up their conceptual framework even if they are faced with contradictory information. The perfect example of this is the case of the primitive rain-forest tribe members who were taken out onto the plains by an anthropologist. The anthropologist saw some animals on the horizon. He pointed these animals out to the tribe members, and they immediately assumed that he was a witch doctor. Thus, the natives were presented with contradictory information, and they solved the problem in the only manner that they knew how. Because the animals appeared so small on the horizon, the tribes members assumed that the anthropologist had shrunk them by magic of some sort. They made this assumption because they had never been out of the rain forest before, and they had never seen animals at a great distance in order to know that objects at a great distance appear smaller. Like the tribes members, positivism limits our perspective about knowledge.

One way that humans use language to describe a particular perspective of a concept is to use a metaphor. Metaphors are very interesting linguistic devices for not only do they provide the information that the speaker wishes to convey, they also convey a whole viewpoint of the concept. Two very negative metaphors for learning have pointed out the limitations of the positivistic perspective. Paulo Freire (1971) introduced the banking metaphor for learning in his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He explains
that teachers make deposits of knowledge in students as if the students were banks which would then retain this knowledge. Freire chose this metaphor to express the passive role of the oppressed student.

The factory is another metaphor for learning which has been popular with those who are critical of education, particularly those of the 1970's who were part of the new sociology of education movement. According to this metaphor students are the workers who not only come to school to learn a well-defined body of knowledge but who learn the routine of factory life as well. Thus, students are trained through their factory work in school to go out into the larger society and assume their passive role in the real factories.

These negative metaphors for education are very enlightening because they foster critical reflection. However, more challenging than creating another negative metaphor for education might be to create a positive one. The coaching metaphor for learning is frequently used to describe the composition teacher. This metaphor contains the suggestion that the athlete's performance is the central issue. The coach's whole purpose is only secondary—just to help the athlete to achieve a better performance. The problem arises with the goal of the relationship. Winning is the satisfaction gained from a sterling performance. Certainly, education is more than just obtaining success at one game or for one test or paper. There is much more to be gained from education than just a good performance.
The metaphor needs to contain the potential for the creation of a new, valuable entity—knowledge.

The metaphor of an orchestra has interesting possibilities because the end result is the creation of a musical work of art. This metaphor would place the teacher as the orchestra conductor whose job it is to call on the musicians in sequence in order to create a beautiful harmony. The idea of having students sing out in class is a positive image of expression. The fact that the work of art is a mutual creation is important. A problem with this metaphor, much like the problem in school itself, is that the musical score has been created by someone else in advance, and the students and the teachers only act it out for the benefit of the audience. Much like the curriculum, the orchestra leader and the musicians can make music but they can't create it.

Similar to the metaphor of the orchestra, Elliot Eisner (1979), a curriculum theorist, has written about the usefulness of art as a metaphor for education. He suggests that the teacher be viewed as the artist and that the classroom situation be evaluated as if it were an art form:

It is these four senses—teaching as a source of aesthetic experience, as dependent on the perception and control of qualities, as a heuristic or adventitious activity, and as seeking emergent ends—that teaching can be regarded as an art. (p. 155)

This is indeed a powerful metaphor with the lofty image of creating something extraordinary to everyday life. Thinking of a painting in
particular, an interesting quality is that the work of art is often unpredictable. However, the metaphor breaks down when one tries to consider what role the students might play in this metaphor. Are they the canvas or the paint? The problem is that only the artist has a meaningful role in the creation of the masterpiece. If this metaphor is modified to allow the student to become an equal artisan to the teacher, then the creation of knowledge could be viewed as a mutual masterpiece.

A plant metaphor presents the pleasant image of a growing life form. Knowledge can be viewed as the plant with the teacher playing the role of the planter who brings in the seeds of an idea to be planted in the fertile field of the students’ minds. The teacher should not merely bring in a fully grown plant to transplant but just the seeds so that the students can participate in the growth of an idea. The students should work with the teacher as an equal partner to help the knowledge to grow. Each provides a necessary ingredient for the plant to reach fruition. The problem with this metaphor is that the life form is determined in advance by the teacher’s choice of the seed although the plant metaphor does allow for some variation in growth depending upon the participation of those involved.

The point of discussing the various metaphors for the classroom is to demonstrate how the relationship between the teacher and students should be carefully considered so that knowledge remains an unpredictable, mutual creation of both the teacher and the
Part Three
The Organic Intellectual

Elite Intellectuals

The question might very well be: "Who authors the knowledge which is presented in the traditional classroom?" The students are certainly not the authors of any type of knowledge which would be revered in a traditional classroom. Within the institution of education, the teacher's role is equally as oppressed as the student. Teachers seldom have the chance to determine what is worth knowing in their classroom. The authors of knowledge are imagined as some elite group of intellectuals who are far removed from the mainstream of everyday life. Whether this elite group really creates traditional knowledge is questionable. Indeed the traditional knowledge may actually create these intellectuals for the sole purpose of having its own authors to represent it. Authorship may not be as important an issue as representation.

Elite intellectuals do not represent the interests of the teacher or the students. They represent the interests of the dominant ideology. Members of the elite do not understand the needs of those who are oppressed. Antonio Gramsci (1971) was an Italian
Marxist who was interested in the role that education and language could play in causing social change. Gramsci felt that elite intellectuals were poor leaders for the masses:

The intellectual’s error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for the object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated—i.e. knowledge. One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation. In the absence of such a nexus the relations between the intellectual and the people-nation are, or are reduced to, relationships of a purely bureaucratic and formal order; the intellectuals become a caste, or a priesthood (so-called organic centralism). (p. 419)

Gramsci asserts that elite intellectuals cannot represent the masses because they do not understand or "feel" what the masses need. This is a larger problem than what it might at first seem. If the elite intellectual does not understand the circumstances of the daily lives of those whom he or she represents, then that elite intellectual will not feel obligated to offer solutions which will be of any real assistance. Elite intellectuals tend to disregard the uncomfortable issues for which the masses need answers.

To apply this to the case of teaching composition, the composition profession is lead by an elite group of intellectuals who do not represent either the teachers or the students adequately. These intellectuals teach composition infrequently if at all. They
do not know what it is like to teach five or six classes of eighth graders a day, serve a duty like study hall or cafeteria surveillance and have 28 minutes for lunch. When Donald Murray (1985) includes a schedule for how a composition teacher could have individual conferences with each student, he is painfully unaware of the type of lives that the graduate students live who teach freshman composition at most universities. He is even more unaware of what the eighth grade teacher would think of even trying to have an individual conference with five of his or her students about their writing.

Beyond this misconception of what real teachers have to face on a daily basis is the misconception of what problems students have with learning to write. People who has grown up in a literate environment finds writing to be a natural, simple process. These people have no problems forming perfect sentences which are acceptable to the teacher. These people do not know what it feels like to be told to write without slang when using slang is a vital part of their communication process. Moreover, elite intellectuals do not have the same needs to graduate from college as the remedial students do. These intellectuals do not see freshman composition as the pivotal point upon which they will rest all of their hopes and dreams for being successful. To the elite intellectuals, anyone who has errors in their writing must not have really tried hard enough. Such a student is imagined as a shiftless character who allows errors to go unnoticed because of sheer lack of concern. Thus, the teacher has every right to boldly write "careless errors" across the top of
the page. This "careless error" syndrome represents the elite attitude that those students who cannot write are just not really trying to do so.

By the sole virtue of their intellectual knowledge, these members of this elite group of people are given the power to decide what teachers will teach and students will learn in the classroom.

Gramsci's Organic Intellectual

If one can see the drawbacks to allowing elite intellectuals to decide what happens in the classroom, then the logical alternative might be to allow the students and teachers to determine what should be learned. This brings up the opposite problem, the masses may feel what the problems are, but they do not have the knowledge necessary to make useful decisions. In this often quoted sentence written during the last few years of his life, Gramsci (1971) expresses the two sides of this problem:

The popular element "feels" but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element "knows" but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel. (p. 419)

Gramsci solves this problem by proposing a new leader who will embody the best traits of both of these groups: the organic intellectual. Thus, the organic intellectual both knows and feels what should be done.
Gramsci sees the organic intellectual as the leader of a group of people who were formerly not defined as a group. Gramsci so valued the role of the organic intellectual in organizing the group that his *Prison Notebooks* both begins and ends with a section about the organic intellectual. In this citation from the later part of his notebooks, Gramsci explains why the masses need intellectuals:

A human mass does not "distinguish" itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is not organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people "specialized" in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas. But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried. (And one must not forget that at this early stage loyalty and discipline are the ways in which the masses participate and collaborate in the development of the cultural movement as a whole). (p. 334)

Gramsci believed that a group of people could not assert themselves into society against the dominant hegemony without the aid of organic intellectuals.

To return to the question of representation, any intellectual, traditional or organic, would fit into Gramsci's previous discussion of a person who represents a theoretical perspective. The real problem is whether these intellectuals represent the masses. Requiring that the organic intellectuals come from the masses is not enough, for as was demonstrated earlier, false consciousness can cause members of the masses to act against their own best interests. In order for the organic intellectual to
represent the masses there has to be a continual dialectic between the leader and the masses:

The process of development is tied to a dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses. The intellectual stratum develops both quantitatively and qualitatively, but every leap forward toward a new breadth and complexity of the intellectual stratum is tied to an analogous movement on the part of the mass of the "simple," who raise themselves to higher levels of culture and at the same time extend their circle of influence towards the stratum of specialised intellectuals, producing outstanding individuals and groups of greater or less importance. (pp. 334-335)

Thus, no matter what social class the intellectuals come from, they must continue to interact dialectically with the masses in order for the development of both groups. The real problem occurs when there is a separation between the two groups. Through a continuous dialogue, both groups must have an influence upon one another. Gramsci maintains that a crisis occurs when the masses are no longer represented by the dominant group.

Gramsci's goal is for the organic intellectuals to lead the masses into forming a unitary group which he labels as a "historical bloc":

If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then only then is the relationship one of representation. Only then can there take place an exchange of individual elements between the rulers and ruled, leaders and led, and can the shared life be realised which alone is a social force--with the creation of the "historical bloc." (p. 418)

The historical bloc is Gramsci's hope for the masses in the future. Gramsci holds this group as being the only one strong enough to
develop an ideology which will challenge the current hegemony.

The Role of the Organic Intellectual

For Gramsci the organic intellectual can come from the broad base of all human beings because they all are intellectuals:

Each man [woman], finally, outside his [her] professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he [she] is a "philosopher," an artist, a man [woman] of taste, he [she] participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought. (p. 9)

Consequently, this natural intellectual capacity need only be developed in order for these intellectuals to take a more active role in their group. Gramsci was most concerned that education be used to develop these organic intellectuals in the factories as well as in the schools.

From this discussion of the organic intellectual, two main duties have been outlined. First, the organic intellectual must continually, dialectically interact with the masses. Because this interaction is dialectical, the organic intellectuals actually modify their thinking based upon their interaction with the masses. Second, the organic intellectual must become educated in the literate tradition in order to create a new tradition. This group must necessarily become the highest educated group of the masses. The third duty of the organic intellectuals is to combine their feeling for the masses and their knowledge of the world and take social
Organic intellectuals cannot rest on their laurels by inertly expounding upon the problems in society. They must carry through their wisdom into political action praxis, action which is based upon their critical reflection. Gramsci explains in this one sentence how the organic intellectual must move beyond the traditional role of the intellectual:

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit); from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains "specialised" and does not become "directive" (specialised and political). (p. 10)

All these activities are necessary for the organic intellectual to develop into a useful part of the masses struggle for representation in the traditional culture. The organic intellectual helps to develop the ideology which will guide the group into recognition. Unless the mass's ideology is sufficiently elaborated, they will never be able to overcome their own false consciousness.

The Teacher as the Organic Intellectual

The institution of education must have the representation of the various groups for which it dictates. Teachers are not currently represented in decisions related to knowledge in the classroom. The
teaching profession needs to develop organic intellectuals who can both understand the feelings of the teachers and the traditional knowledge about education in order to generate a new, active knowledge about what learning should be. More specifically, teachers will have to be clear about what has gone on in the past, what is happening now in the schools, and what they want to have happen in the future. Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) are worth quoting at length on what teachers will have to do in order to become transformative intellectuals:

For if radical educators are going to take seriously the need to develop workable alternatives to the current forms of schooling, they will have to investigate historically the nature of the teaching field itself, as both a moment in the labor process and as a particular cultural form for learning. They will also have to investigate how the teaching field has evolved under conditions where race-, gender-, and class-specific practices have become part and parcel of the teaching profession. This suggests that teachers be prepared not only to produce oppositional forms of knowledge and social practice, but that they also be prepared to struggle and to take risks in fighting against injustices however deeply ingrained that may be in the schools and other social spheres. At the same time, if the notions of social control and cultural production are to be taken seriously, they will have to be developed within a language of possibility that can raise real hopes, forge new alliances, and point to new forms of social life that appear realizable. As difficult as this task may appear, the stakes are too high not to fight for it . . . . Such a task does not mean debunking existing forms of schooling and educational theory; it means reworking them, contesting the terrains on which they develop, and appropriating from them whatever radical potentialities they might contain. (p.161)

Aronowitz and Giroux call for critical consciousness on the part of teachers, but they end their plea by stating that teachers need to take action to make transformative changes in schooling. They refer to this arena of educational transformation as the "curriculum theory of cultural politics." In other words, teachers are the organic
intellectuals who will provide the leadership for changing the educational institution.

Not only should there be teachers who become the organic intellectuals for the whole institution of education, but each individual teacher needs to become the organic intellectual for his or her particular classroom. The analogy to the organic intellectual can be carried out for all three of the functions. First, the teacher would have to remain dialectically aware of the students' everyday life in order to make appropriate classroom decisions. Additionally, the teacher should be influenced by these students' "feelings" about life. Next, the teacher would have to be more advanced in content knowledge than the students. Not only would the teacher need to be aware of the traditional body of knowledge about a topic such as composing, but the teacher would also have to be knowledgeable about the real life experience of writing and teaching writing. Third, the teacher would have to assume an active role in determining what would be best for the students to learn and how that learning should take place. As the organic intellectual, the teacher would be the only person who could determine if teaching a particular piece of information would serve the ultimate needs of the students or not.
The Students as Organic Intellectuals

According to Gramsci's conception of an intellectual, everyone has the potential to develop their intellectual capacity in order to function as an intellectual in society. The ultimate goal of education would be to create persons who could go out into their collective groups and assume the position of the organic intellectual. The teacher as educator of these new organic intellectuals would need to encourage all three functions of being an intellectual: to have a dialectical relationship with the feelings of the masses, to pursue an understanding of the knowledge of the culture and of experience, and to participate in the creation of new emancipatory relations.

Traditional education only pursues the second of these functions by exposing the students to the traditional storehouse of knowledge about the world. It might even be debatable whether the students gain knowledge from active participation in intellectual experiences or not. Students need to gain a respect for the other two functions of an organic intellectual in order to assume their role in society.

This point deserves further explanation. School does not always value the everyday life of the student. Instead, the student is taken into the school environment and is taught to respect the
dominant ideology. For example, the student may learn to value traditional art and music at school, but the student will not be taught to value their own cultural art and music or even street art and music. In order for the student to return to the masses as an organic intellectual, the student must never lose his or her respect for the masses. Otherwise, education serves only to try to reproduce the dominant ideology in the students.

In regards to political action, students need to learn how to use their knowledge in an active way in order to restructure society. Education should be continually geared toward improving society rather than reproducing the status quo. Students need to be groomed for their future position as change agents. They need to learn how to go about changing social institutions.

Of course, not all students will be the organic intellectuals for their social group, but each student should be treated as if that were the case. The future of this planet is precarious enough that we need to send out as many organic intellectuals as possible to look out for the interests of the many social groups that are now being ignored by the dominant group.
Chapter Summary

Chapter two is titled: "Hegemony and Traditional Composition Methodology." This chapter examines the concept of hegemony as both a subtle form of socialization and as a potential for political praxis. This theoretical discussion is closely tied to the composition classroom by using the specific example of traditional grammar study for purposes of analysis.

Chapter three, "The Reality of Experience," is a biographical description of the author's professional experiences which provide the data for this theoretical work. Included in this chapter is a copy of an essay written for students which discusses ten common myths about composing.

Chapter four, "Impediments to Critical Consciousness for the Teacher," discusses the social, economic, and political factors which influence the composition teacher. The concerns of both university and high school composition teachers are considered. This chapter also includes an examination of ten factors which encourage false consciousness and impede critical consciousness.

Chapter five is the compliment to chapter four since it considers the students' false consciousness about composing. An analysis of the "Myths" demonstrates how these common beliefs about
learning to write impede the students' development.

Chapter six, "Praxis in the Composition Classroom," explains how critical consciousness can be developed in order for both the teacher and the students to escape the limits of their own false consciousness. Praxis is described as a journey through five levels of expanding consciousness: reflection, intention, interaction, liberation and transformation.

This dissertation is a critical analysis of the everyday life of the composition classroom. This analysis attempts to make a dialectical connection between theory and practice, teachers and students, and the classroom and the real world.
CHAPTER II
HEGEMONY AND TRADITIONAL COMPOSITION METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Hegemony has become an avant-garde term used and misused by current educational reformists. Its meaning has become blurred from unclear usage: hegemony is most frequently used to describe the hidden process which the ruling class uses to manipulate and control the working class. From this type of usage, hegemony has gained a negative connotation which many leave a casual reader imagining that the upper class has clandestine meetings where they overtly plot to ruin the lives of millions of middle and lower class Americans. The worst part of such an interpretation is that it leaves the reader in a depressing circumstance, for hegemony is portrayed as being so powerful that those at the bottom could never escape it.

This chapter will develop a more accurate understanding of hegemony based primarily upon the writings of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist who was both a scholar and a political activist during the first two decades of this century. Gramsci was a significant scholar, for he extended classical Marxism beyond simple
economic determinism by considering how social relations are influenced by other factors such as ideology and culture. Most political and educational theorists credit Gramsci with developing the concept of hegemony. What is not widely understood is that Gramsci used hegemony to represent two very different but related concepts, one with a negative connotation and one with a much more positive connotation. On the one hand, Gramsci described hegemony as a subtle and dynamic form of socialization through which the ruling class dominates the masses by willful consent rather than violence. On the other hand, Gramsci defined a new type of hegemony which could be an activist response to the first more negative connotation: Gramsci explained that hegemony could become the last stage of the working class's political praxis in which the workers could create a new hegemony. This new hegemony would be an alternative to the oppressive version which currently restricts the working class's active participation in civil society and the state. This chapter will carefully consider both of Gramsci's definitions for hegemony.

Although the purpose of this chapter is to explore several abstract social and political concepts, it is important that this discussion does not move too far afield from the daily reality of the composition classroom. In order to avoid this pitfall, this chapter has one strong organizing thread which appears at the end of each section to tie each discussion of a social or political concept to what really happens in most composition classrooms. The classroom practice which will be used as the organizing thread is formal
grammar study, the most fossilized, traditional teaching practice related to language and composition. Traditional grammar study is an interesting case because this practice has become the norm in the majority of English classrooms throughout the country even though the National Council of Teachers of English and an entire body of research dispute its value for learning to write. By ending each section with a discussion of formal grammar study, the generalized discussion of hegemony will be continually grounded in the reality of the specific case of the most commonly practiced composition methodology. The whole reason for discussing the social and political concepts in this chapter is to foster a closer examination of how routine procedures in the composition classroom become uncritically accepted as the only possible course of action. We cannot hope to institute changes in pedagogy until we understand why composition teachers persist in practicing methodologies which have been proven to be ineffective.

This chapter is organized into three large parts: part one is "The Social and Political Foundation for Hegemony," part two is "Hegemony: A Subtle and Dynamic Form of Socialization," and part three is "Hegemony: An Act of Political Praxis."

Part one introduces several important social and political concepts which are necessary prerequisites for a full understanding of the complex concept of hegemony. Part one begins with a discussion of the power that common sense exerts over society as an
undisputed source of knowledge. The school's role in handing down this traditional knowledge to society's youth is viewed critically as a political act. Through the overt and hidden curriculum students leave school certified to assume the same relative social class position that they had when they entered school. The writings of Bakhtin (Volosinov), Rosen, and Labov are used to point up how the issue of social class dramatically affects the students' ability to master the prestige dialect.

Part two focuses on the negative connotation of hegemony as a process by which the working class comes to willfully accept the social, cultural and moral values of the ruling class. The work of Gramsci is introduced in this section. Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony to explain how the working class is subtly persuaded through the social relations of daily life to accept the ruling class's ideology which even operates against the working class's own interests as in the case of false consciousness. Gramsci's discussion of hegemony is amplified with the recent writings of Giroux and Apple where they add the dynamic dimension of resistance to the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is discussed as an incomplete and uneven process with several types of resistance being demonstrated both actively and passively in school.

Part three develops Gramsci's positive interpretation of hegemony as a form of political praxis for the working class. Since Gramsci was a political activist, the thrust of his scholarship was
dedicated to the participation of the working class in the transformation of society. Gramsci outlined three basic stages for the establishment of a new hegemony. He traced the development of a social class from an economic-corporative stage, to a class consciousness stage and finally to the hegemony stage in which alliances are made with other groups in civil society. Part three concludes with an application of Gramsci's theory of political praxis to one of the areas of the culture where he felt that cultural reorganization would have to take place, the language.

Part One

The Social and Political Foundation for Hegemony

A Case in Point

The concept of hegemony will provide a model for understanding why traditional composition teaching practices persist despite massive evidence that such practices are not effective and may even be harmful. The obvious example of this point is that of teaching grammar, defining and identifying parts of speech and drilling usage rules. The grammar controversy is an old argument which continually raises its ugly head. The academic community is weary of this issue and feels that it has been abundantly addressed in the literature and through numerous research studies. One of the most frequently cited quotes is taken from the 1963 NCTE report, Research in Written Composition by Richard Braddock, Richard
Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer:

In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing. (pp. 37-38)

Another more pointed condemnation comes from Dean Memering (1978).

There is no way to teach students grammatical terminology and a set of rules for describing the language that will have any effect on writing. No amount of practice in analyzing, dissecting, or diagramming sentences will change student performance in composition. It makes no difference whether we teach Latin, structural, transformational, stratification, tagmemic, or any other brand of grammar: endless efforts to show that grammar does too affect writing have repeatedly come up with the same weary findings -- no significant difference. This finding has been advertised since 1906 when Hoyt concluded that there was "an absence of relationship between a knowledge of technical grammar and the ability to use and interpret language." The same results or worse have been noted more or less consistently by researchers since that time. . . If we know anything at all about composition, we know that students can't be 'grammared into better writers. (p. 559)

Numerous well-written articles have appeared on this topic in various NCTE journals and can be found in the bibliography. Famous Last Words by Harvey A. Daniels (1983) is an enjoyable book which addresses this topic and several arguments related to it.

Despite the preponderance of evidence to the contrary, the mandate to teach grammar endures, causing composition teachers great personal anguish. I have experienced this conflict on three levels: as a classroom teacher, as a graduate student and as a teacher of teachers. First, I had the ridiculousness of this practice fly in my face when I would try to answer the inevitable student question, "Why
do we have to learn all this junk anyway?" After several unsuccessful attempts to tap dance around the issue, I began to critically examine my own beliefs about teaching grammar. It took me years to work through this issue both intellectually and pragmatically in the classroom. I have progressed from a first year teacher who forced students to keep a grammar notebook in which they wrote definitions and rules a prescribed number of times. Now, I begin my freshman composition course by debunking the popularized notion that grammar is the cure-all necessary to make poor writers write better. From my recent work with Columbus teachers, I have come to believe that issues related to grammar and correctness arise naturally in the context of a real writing task. (A discussion of this can be found in Action Research by Nancy Mack; also see Sharon Dorsey's (1985) dissertation.) I reached my own personal, critical awareness through lots of classroom experimentation, theoretical readings and graduate seminar discussions.

On a second level throughout my graduate education, I have witnessed haggard English teachers expose the pain that they have suffered from being "forced to teach grammar." For over a decade, I have listened while fellow teachers have grappled with what to do about grammar. The issue's entrance into a seminar's discussion is never a gentle one; instead grammar is usually brought up by a teacher who virtually explodes with pent up anger and frustration. Teachers rail about the administrators, curricula, textbooks, colleagues, parents and students who demand traditional grammar
study. Classroom incidents are related where hours of grammatical drill are not sufficient to exorcise student errors. Such teachers’ problems cannot be magically resolved with pat answers. Each teacher must work through the process of becoming critically aware individually, reaching his or her own informed action, or praxis. For some this praxis was to leave the profession, while for others praxis came through changing textbooks, rewriting curricula or initiating new classroom projects.

On a third level as a teacher of teachers, I have watched enlightened education students armed with a strong background in composition theory come to an abrupt stop when faced with the traditional expectancies of their cooperating teachers during student teaching. Although the student teachers may at first question whether grammar should be studied, in a matter of a few weeks my brightest methods students are adroitly socialized into teaching pronouns in isolation through traditional worksheets. The student teacher’s main motive is to assume the new role of being a teacher. Most student teachers will gladly pantomime any teacher activity which has been previously defined by our culture as being part of the teacher’s role. Whether it is supervising students in the bathroom or giving a pretest over linking verbs, student teachers welcome the chance to play teacher. By the end of the quarter these new teachers soon have internalized traditional teacher behaviors. They often leave student teaching believing that traditional grammar study is the same thing as teaching students to write. They can no longer
imagine an alternative course of action. The student teacher’s socialization into teaching grammar does not originate with the student teaching experience. Although the pressure to teach grammar may come from the cooperating teacher during this immediate experience; if there had not been strong corroborating pressures from a myriad of other sources within the culture, the cooperating teacher’s wishes would simply be disregarded as bizarre. The fact that such a change can take place so efficiently is a testimony to the power of hegemony.

For both the student teacher and the veteran teacher, grammar makes an ideal case for critical examination because it represents the most fossilized teaching ritual among English teachers. As Dean Memering suggested, this issue has been laid to rest in English journals since 1906, yet it is still a very real source of conflict for the practicing English teacher. For this reason, the grammar issue should not be dismissed lightly; this issue can serve as a pivotal point of insight for the teacher. The process of critical examination matters more than the issue itself. Each teacher can reach critical consciousness by going through the process of doubting a traditional practice, researching relevant theory, constructing a new belief system, and creating alternative classroom activities. Further discussion of ways to foster the professional growth of composition teachers will be reserved for chapter six. Since so many English teachers must repeatedly wrestle with this hoary issue, grammar is the perfect Goliath to be slain.
The Power of Common Sense

The evidence against formal grammar study is so overwhelming that one wonders what force could be strong enough to supersede it. The hours spent at the university indoctrinating education students in the latest features of composition theory soon evaporate. Even if curriculum directors mandated abandoning traditional grammar study, which few would ever do, school districts could not afford to police teachers carefully enough to insure compliance. In our culture teaching grammar makes good sense because it is in keeping with what everyone already knows to be true. Common sense tells us that school children should be taught grammar in order to learn how to write. No one needs to think through the reasoning behind teaching grammar -- even if one decided to think about the logic of teaching grammar, common sense conveniently provides numerous arguments for it. Our culture slowly and continuously socializes us into feeling comfortable about the teaching of grammar as a way of learning to write. In other words, common sense is more powerful than university coursework or school district policies.

In The Social Construction of Reality Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman (1966) discuss the power of common sense knowledge:

Among the multiple realities there is one that presents itself as the reality par excellence. This is the reality of everyday life. Its privileged position entitles it to the designation of paramount reality. The tension of consciousness is highest in everyday life, that is, the latter imposes itself upon consciousness in the most massive, urgent and intense manner. It is impossible to ignore, difficult even to weaken in
its imperative presence. Consequently, it forces me to be attentive to it in the fullest way. I experience everyday life in the state of being wide-awake. This wide-awake state of existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life is taken by me to be normal and self-evident, that is, it constitutes my natural attitude. (p. 21)

Thus, through the reality of everyday life a person's general attitude towards an issue is firmly created. The fact that we learn this knowledge through everyday life rather than from a teacher in a classroom or any other singular circumstance makes this knowledge all the more powerful. In other words, the evidence of everyday life is overwhelming, but what teachers say is not. Common sense is always a more powerful source of information than the classroom. Until teachers recognize the importance of common sense, they cannot hope to penetrate their own daily lives critically nor can they hope to help students to critically examine their own lives.

Various features of common sense knowledge make it difficult to penetrate. Earlier the importance of its construction from everyday life was cited. Another important feature which adds to its permanence is the social nature of common sense. Common sense is constructed through one's daily interactions with others. To cite Berger and Luckman (1966) again:

The reality of everyday life further presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others... Most importantly, I know that there is an ongoing correspondence between 'my' meanings and 'their' meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality. The natural attitude is the attitude of commonsense consciousness precisely because it refers to a world that is common to many men. Commonsense knowledge is the knowledge I share with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life. The reality of everyday life is taken for granted 'as' reality. It
does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply 'there,' as self-evident and compelling facticity I 'know' that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life. (p. 23)

Once again, the interesting feature of common sense is how powerful it is. After it is accepted by members of a culture, common sense knowledge is not doubted or reassessed; it is regarded as an objective truth. Getting teachers and students to critically examine what they already know to be true is extremely difficult. There are always subtle pressures from the other members of society who take this common sense knowledge for granted.

Since teachers have to take a back seat to common sense, their own and that of their students, an understanding of how common sense is constructed would be helpful. Common sense knowledge does not have to be constantly regenerated from scratch for each member of a society. Once some aspect of common sense knowledge becomes widely accepted, that knowledge becomes institutionalized so that it can be efficiently handed down from generation to generation.

The process of institutionalization is crucial to understanding how a practice becomes tacitly accepted as common sense knowledge. It is hard to imagine a time when something which seems so natural and logical to us now was not automatically assumed to be true. Berger and Luckman carefully trace the process of institutionalization in the second section of their book. The process begins when an action becomes a habit. Any action which is repeated
frequently may begin to follow a pattern. Establishing a pattern enables the person to recreate the activity with a minimum of effort. Thus, the person does not have to make several conscious decisions along the way. Interestingly, in order for an action to become a habit, thinking is the part of the action which is economized. Next, the habit becomes reciprocally typified by members of a particular group. Such an action could thus be anticipated by one of the group members. All during this time the action evolves into a habit within the confines of a particular shared history. A habit is greatly influenced by the character of what has happened before in that particular culture. As a habit becomes part of history, it begins to become a thing separated from its actors; it begins to take on an existence of its own, an objectivity. The action is no longer a human product; it becomes externalized into an objective reality which humans experience. Once an action becomes objectified and externalized, it becomes a piece of knowledge with a life of its own. This shared knowledge can be elevated to the position of objective truth as it becomes legitimized within the group. The action in question must be sedimented within the members of the group so that it can become a tradition which will then be handed down from generation to generation.

Let's stop here and apply this process of institutionalization to the traditional teaching of grammar. We know that traditional grammar study was handed down to us from practices used to teach Latin as a foreign language. When the Roman empire
expanded and conquered other countries, Rome's rulers demanded that their subjects learn the language of the new government, Latin. One can suppose that grammar study all began with a solitary teacher who decided that conjugating verbs would help teach Latin to these new subjects. This teacher felt that the practice was effective and repeated it several times. Other teachers also shared the practice by either conjugating verbs with their students or expecting other teachers to do this activity in preparation for their courses. Of course, during this time period, what was taking place in the schools and the culture fostered this process. Efforts were being made to standardize curriculums and learning Latin formally was considered to be an important part of a young man's education to be a political or religious leader. Soon conjugating verbs was a legitimate part of learning Latin. It was no longer just a practice being done by a few people; it became a part of the knowledge to be mastered in the process of being educated formally within this particular culture. Since this knowledge was considered necessary for the students' education, people who wished to become teachers were trained in continuing this practice. Soon parents and students alike expected verb conjugation to be a part of what students did while at school.

This practice continued in Europe for centuries. Latin was an integral part of British curricula long after the language ceased to be a language spoken by the citizens of Rome. Latin had an eminent place among ruling class occupations in Europe. It was an important part of the higher learning necessary to become a priest, a
lawyer or a doctor. When British subjects began to populate America, they brought their beliefs about education with them. Benjamin Franklin was the first American to suggest that Latin be dropped from the curriculum of public education and that it be replaced with the study of English as a language. And quite logically, the study of English proceeded with the same type of methods once used to teach Latin. Thus, verb conjugation can be found in the earliest English textbooks. Interestingly, English verb conjugation requires breaking down verbs into cases and tenses even when the verb ending itself does not change at all. Nevertheless, the practice of verb conjugation is still required in many English classrooms. Recently, one of my student teachers was assigned the task of giving the cooperating teacher’s four-page test over verbs. The test required that the students identify the verb in each sentence and label it as either present perfect, past perfect, present progressive, past progressive, present emphatic, or past emphatic as well as indicate whether the verb was active or passive. This test was for seventh graders. Today, some teachers teach English in much the same way that the Roman empire taught their new subjects Latin.

The Legitimizing Function of a Conceptual Framework

It is impossible for one piece of information to exist comfortably within a person’s mind when it is in direct contradiction to other pieces of information. In order for a person to accept a
new piece of information as truth, that piece of information must have some relationship to that person's other knowledge about the world. In other words, new information must exist in harmony with old information. This old, comfortable, common sense knowledge is shared by the other members of society. In many ways, the system of existing knowledge that we use to understand our world directly limits what new knowledge we will accept. We will only accept that information which makes sense in terms of what we already know.

Common sense knowledge provides a conceptual framework from which we understand the world. This framework is our belief system or theory about how reality exists. Our theory of reality reinforces individual bits of knowledge about that reality because all the pieces of information fit together so nicely. Therefore, when we need a reason why one piece of knowledge is true, we need only look to the other knowledge within our framework. In this way, the whole system legitimates any piece of information that is in harmony with the system.

From time to time knowledge must be overtly legitimized in order for it to be accepted by the members of society. If the members question common sense knowledge, there must be a way to explain why this knowledge has come to be regarded as common sense. Berger and Luckman (1966) explain that there is often a need for such legitimation when this knowledge is passed down from generation to generation:
The problem of legitimation inevitably arises when the objectivations of the (now historic) institutional order are to be transmitted to a new generation. At that point, as we have seen, the self-evident character of the institutions can no longer be maintained by means of the individual's own recollection and habitualizations. The unity of history and biography is broken. In order to restore it, and thus to make intelligible both aspects of it, there must be 'explanations' and justifications of the salient elements of the institutional tradition. Legitimation is the process of 'explaining' and justifying. (p. 93)

Berger and Luckman (1966) demonstrate that this process of legitimation involves naming a practice (linguistic objectification), creating maxims about the practice (theoretical propositions), and establishing a differentiated body of knowledge about the practice. But the most significant form of legitimation occurs when this knowledge can be integrated with other bodies of existing theoretical knowledge to form what Berger and Luckman call a symbolic universe.

It is important to note that when a practice becomes part of our symbolic universe, it has been totally removed from the reality of our daily life experiences. Legitimating a practice abstractly is not the same as legitimizing it through our everyday experiences. When our logic is restricted to an abstract world, we conveniently do not have to face any contradictions which would naturally arise from our everyday life. For example, in education the curriculum is created from bodies of knowledge which are completely abstracted from the student's daily life. Consequently, grounding this knowledge in everyday life is not necessary since this knowledge has a status of its own. Thus, memorizing the curriculum matters more in school than being able to perform the activity in question in the context of
everyday life. Curriculum sanctioned knowledge is only needed for school. The student needs to learn what the curriculum dictates in order to be successful in the next grade in school. Thus school knowledge perpetuates itself. Kevin Harris (1982) explains how schools legitimate the type of knowledge that they peddle as being more prestigious than other forms of knowledge.

Whether schools pass on the only worthwhile knowledge is largely a matter of definition. Schools certainly pass on the ideas generally legitimised as 'the only rational universally valid ones,' but even more important than this, schools pass on the knowledge necessary to pass school exams and gain school certificates. And since passing exams allows one to continue on with schooling and gain higher certificates, and since years of schooling and certification are highly instrumental in achieving future life success (as commonly defined), it is easy to see how 'school knowledge' comes to be regarded as worthwhile, and as far more worthwhile than other knowledge which does not lead to passing exams etc. (p.110)

The function of our conceptual framework in legitimizing common sense knowledge may become more clear when applied to the case of traditional grammar instruction. Grammar has been abstracted from an isolated, humanly-created practice to a legitimate body of knowledge. The question of abstraction may be a crucial one in regards to grammar because it may explain much of grammar's abysmal failure to improve student writing. In a recent English Education journal, Robert Small (1985) asserted that the study of grammar may well be a fourth level abstraction:

Then, too, grammar may well be the ultimate abstraction. Language is an abstraction of experience. Words represent things and ideas, actions and attributes. That is abstraction level one. Then cluster of words -- phrases and clauses -- represent relationships between and among those things and ideas, actions and attributes. That's abstraction level two. But then scholars create grammar to describe those relationships
between words. That's abstraction level three. Throw in diagramming — a symbolic representation of the description of those relationships — and you have a level four abstraction.

(pp. 176-177)

Small goes on to discuss briefly that intensive grammar study should be introduced, if it must be introduced at all, on the college level rather than the middle school level. Certainly, Piagetian scholars would argue that middle school students are not capable of such abstract thinking. A better case could be made for the fact that anyone regardless of age would have trouble transferring knowledge that was learned on a fourth level abstraction to the concrete experience of trying to formulate and communicate one's thoughts to someone else.

As an abstract body of knowledge, grammar is in keeping with Berger and Luckman's discussion of the process of legitimation. Grammar has specialized terms and definitions. Grammar has maxims or theoretical propositions. Grammar is an imperfect rule system with countless exceptions and contradictions; however, its rules are still considered to be basic knowledge without which one cannot survive. Grammar has become a differentiated body of knowledge totally separated from everyday life. This body of knowledge has been entrusted to English teachers to pass down to the new generation. Grammar no longer needs everyday life for its application; it exists totally in isolated school exercises. The fact that accomplished writers do not use formal grammar terminology to generate sentences or to discuss their work does not come in conflict with our cultural obsession to teach it to our children. Nor is it considered
contradictory that formal grammar instruction does not enhance student abilities to write; instead this failure is attributed to an apparent slacking off in the teaching of the basics. Everyone knows that grammar is considered to be one of the most important basics that students need to learn — and the sooner the better. For this reason, grade schools were often referred to as "grammar" schools. Grammar has become an abstraction with a life of its own, separate from the human activity of language which created it. Grammar is a school practice rather than an activity related to real-life language production.

One very distinctive feature of an activity which has been abstracted and legitimated is that the meaning of its linguistic marker changes as the practice becomes further and further removed from real life. Since we are discussing common sense knowledge, it is important to note that popular use of the word grammar varies. A person who asserts that a child needs to learn "grammar" could mean several different things as Russell Tabbert (1984) so aptly points out in an *English Journal* article:

1. These kids need to study grammar. They can't even put together a basic English sentence.

2. These kids need to study grammar. They can't even diagram sentences or identify the parts of speech.

3. These kids need to study grammar. Their speech and writing are full of mistakes. (p. 38)

Tabbert follows these typical arguments by showing the differences between the assumptions about grammar and whether studying grammar
will indeed cure the problem. He explains that the first argument calls for a "Grammar - 1" which he defines as a "set of organizing principles which native speakers intuitively follow." Tabbert points out that there are only a very few children who because of some congenital defect do not have mastery of this intuitive knowledge.

In the second argument grammar is used to represent a different type of knowledge. "Grammar - 2" is used as a "the theory of that (underlying) structure, the concepts, terminology, and analytic techniques for talking about the language." This of course is a different matter because students do have problems learning this abstracted knowledge about the language, but whether this knowledge will improve their writing is questionable. The third argument assumes that grammar is a sort of "linguistic etiquette" for the language. "Grammar - 3" is a collection "don'ts" which are deemed objectionable by society's elite. Tallbert ends by questioning whether "True literacy is more than the negative virtue of not making mistakes." The blurring of these three different meanings for "grammar" demonstrates how grammar has come to represent a lot more than an intuitive system of syntactic organization. "Grammar" has accrued the additional, popular meanings of a body of theoretical knowledge and a socially legitimized way of using language. The public wants much more than the word "grammar" may at first imply: the public wants its children to be trained in the traditions and rituals created for its language. Thus in school, it becomes more important to learn grammar than to learn to communicate.
Reproduction of the Workforce

One of the functions schools serve for a society is that of handing down traditions. In terms of what has been previously discussed, schools both transfer and legitimize common sense knowledge. The school’s role in the transmission of knowledge can be viewed as a positive one. Societies could not exist without agencies of socialization which distribute cultural norms and values to its members. These cultural norms and values are necessary for maintaining order and social harmony and ultimately regenerating the existing social structure. Teachers are altruistically portrayed as helping students gain the knowledge that they will need to be successful in society.

The problem with this interpretation of reproduction is that it views reproduction as an apolitical act, where teachers dispense a neutral body of knowledge equally to all the members of society. Proponents of the new sociology of education view reproduction problematically by critically examining the school’s relation to power and social control. Their early work borrowed heavily from Marxism by emphasizing the relation between the mode of economic production and cultural reproduction. According to Marxist analysis, schools play an important role in producing a trained workforce, handily sorted and certified to suit the capitalistic division of labor. This is best expressed by the writings of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in their book, *Schooling in Capitalist America*. 
The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system we believe, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self presentation, self image and social class identifications which are crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education -- the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and their work -- replicate the hierarchical division of labor. (p. 131)

This critique of schooling has been labeled the correspondence theory. The basis of the theory is that the mode of production in a society is necessarily mirrored in the daily activities of the classroom. In other words, the classroom reflects the structure, relations and patterns of the workplace. Michael Carter expresses this thought succinctly:

The forms and structures of work and schooling act and react upon one another, but the importance of the work process so much outweighs the importance of the schooling process that the motion of the former ultimately determines the motion of the latter. (as cited in Giroux 1981 p. 95)

English teachers can testify to the emphasis placed upon preparing students for the workforce, for English courses are often selected as the course in which to do a formal unit about careers. English teachers do more than just talk about future careers, they play a primary role in sorting and certifying students for the workforce. Grammar is one of the key skills which English teachers feel students will need to get a job. English teachers threaten that job interviewers have a fetish about grammar skills. English teachers claim that an error in usage or spelling can ruin all
chances for landing a job. Whether job interviewers really ask prospective employers to name the five state of being verbs is not the issue, our culture believes that grammar skills are one of the basic criteria for getting even the lowest level job. The refrain of "get a job" is constantly hummed in the English classroom. Hiring practices are used to justify classroom practices. Thus, English teachers beat their students with grammar drills. English teachers mean well: they only want their students to get good jobs. Grammar is justified through the "I'm-doing-it-for-your-own-good" system of logic.

The Student's Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is an important concept which the new sociologists have adapted from Marx's writings to clarify how reproduction is unequally carried out so that working class children end up assuming their place at the bottom of the pay scale. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) explains that cultural capital is a set of information that children learn as they are growing up from the class position of their family. This information is not just factual; it is a whole orientation toward life. It can be evidenced in the child's style of dress, tastes in music and food, social manners, linguistic habits, modes of thinking, general disposition and self concept. All these habits have a relative value because of one's position within the economic class system. For example, growing up listening to Bach rather than Motley Crue has a higher economic value
within our culture. Elements of culture can therefore function as capital within a class system.

Bourdieu further points out what happens when children bring their various cultural capital with them to school. Schools reward certain types of cultural capital by providing a curriculum which builds upon skills that only executive class children will have. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) documented how Tracktown children were at a disadvantage in school when it came to something as simple as playing with toys because they had learned to play by using toys for various purposes while the kindergarten teacher had apoplexy when the Tracktown children used toys for other than the specified function. Heath goes into extraordinary detail making a connection between school success and the quality of an infant's life. Heath includes everything from when and where the infant sleeps to how it learns to speak.

Working class children face a sort of double jeopardy in school: the school faults the child for not learning a type of knowledge that the school doesn't offer equal access to. As Bourdieu explains:

[The school] offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the system of predispositions that is the condition for the success of the transmission and of the inculcation of the culture. By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what they (the schools) do not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be
produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (as cited in Giroux 1983 p. 89)

The real point here is that children who are impoverished, in terms of real or cultural capital, end up being treated differently in school. These students' social relations with teachers result with the students being labeled deprived, delayed, disadvantaged, disruptive, dyslexic or learning disabled. The terminology changes from time to time but the results are the same -- the students who enter school without the sanctioned cultural capital are penalized. However, teachers are not always aware that their actions subtly reward one type of cultural capital over another. Teachers represent one particular type of knowledge as being more valuable than another. Although this decision has been institutionalized in the form of curricula and textbooks, teachers are the classroom brokers for one particular form of cultural capital.

Grammar can be considered to be a form of cultural capital. Certainly all students have some intuitive knowledge of grammar since the ability to speak depends upon using some type of grammar. The difference lies in the type of grammar used since each dialect has different grammatical rules. Black English follows its own complex rules of grammar although speakers of the standard or white, prestige dialect claim that black dialect speakers do not know grammar. This lack of knowledge about grammar is blamed for the black dialect speaker's differences in linguistic habits. Speakers of the prestige dialect do not even acknowledge that their speech patterns are part of a dialect. Instead they simplify matters by labeling the way that
they speak as "standard English," and they label the speech habits of anyone different from themselves as "non-standard." Although various euphemisms have been substituted for these terms, any dialect differences from the prestige dialect are considered errors.

Issues related to dialect are volatile because of their strong connection to social class. In an article in College English, Richard Ohmann (1982) discusses the dialectical relationship between dialect and social class:

...we are dealing here with a phenomenon that is dialectal as well as dialectical. The power relations of a society permeate speech and shape it while speech reproduces or challenges the power relations of the society. Please don’t take me to be saying that class is only an artifact of the ways we talk to one another. But it would be equally wrong to say that the ways we talk are only an artifact of our class. The two are embedded in each other. Speech takes place in society and society also "takes place" in our verbal transactions with one another—which of course are inseparable from the economic and other transactions we enter. (p. 14)

The unavoidable connections between social class and dialect are not always acknowledged by English teachers. Many teachers would rather believe that their classrooms are neutral territories where social status does not make a difference.

Whether teachers acknowledge it or not, children who do not enter school with an intuitive knowledge of standard dialect are at a great disadvantage. All tests, textbooks, and dialogues with the teacher follow the rules of standard English. Children who do not speak standard dialect not only may perform poorly on assignments and tests but may also feel that their thoughts are not valued in school.
In this excerpt from one of the students in my methods course, this student poignantly explains how a dialect is part of a person's identity.

I've been aware of dialectal differences all my life. My parents were born and raised deep in the mountains of Appalachia. When they were married 25 years ago, they moved to Ohio. So, my brother and I were exposed to what we like to call the "northern" accent of Ohioans and the "southern" accent of our parents and their families. My brother and I picked up the "northern" accent (I didn't know why until I took a linguistics course here at OSU), so we were both struck with the differences between the two dialects. I can remember asking my mother to say "flower" and giggling when she would say "flahr." My parents are both very proud of their Appalachian heritage, and never did anything to play it down in front of my brother and me.

A dominant dialect is important to a culture because it practically is the culture. A dominant dialect is a way in which those people express certain things in their own way. It's so hard to explain, so maybe I can give an example. Since my parents are from the mountains and "hollars" of Virginia, I've been there quite often. As a result, I know the depths of the dialect and hold it dear to my heart. Hearing that type of accent anywhere I may be evokes strong images of my own family. I feel the warmth of my grandmother's home, I hear my aunt's sweet voice, I hear my uncle's southern drawl. In one of my classes, one of the students is from North Carolina, and she has that accent. As you can guess, I love to hear her talk. I'm not real fond of country music, but when I do hear it, it can pacify me and make me think of my family . . . .

Can you see how deeply rooted in me that dialect is? And it's not even the dialect that I speak! Can you imagine what it must mean to native speakers? It's so much a part of me that I didn't even know my grandmother's name was pronounced "Id a" instead of "Id ie" until I was 12 or 13! That's also the time I found out that a "hollar" was really a "hollow."

The child whose identity lies with a dialect other than the prestige dialect used by the teachers in school will undoubtedly feel excluded from the school as a community. In a very real sense, the dialect issue forces students to choose sides.
Class conflicts can arise in different aspects of our culture. M. M. Bakhtin (1973) described language as a prime "arena of class struggle." (This quote was taken from Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, a book that Bakhtin published under the name of V. N. Volosinov.) For a complete discussion of whether Bakhtin did author this work see Clark and Holquist (1984). Bakhtin points specifically to the sign, or the individual word as being a reflection of ideology. Bakhtin explains this distinction by tracing the path of a sign: a sign springs from human consciousness, which itself is derived from a society that is organized in a particular way and then that sign is projected from consciousness back upon reality. When different social classes use the same signs in communication, these different ideologies collide at the intersection of the sign.

In the English classroom the manipulation of these signs magnifies the conflict. In some social circumstances these conflicts over sign usage go unnoticed; however, the English classroom is one of the major places where a person can be severely reprimanded for using a sign in a way which represents the working class ideology. When a teacher corrects a student's grammar or pronunciation, that teacher is reinforcing the social class system. In an interview for the English Journal, Harold Rosen (Anderson 1982) explains why teaching standard dialect to working class students is not the panacea that it might seem:
I think that it's very hard to get across to people who have not had to change their code what it means to do it. And so you get all these bland comments like "Oh, the aim should be that they speak Standard so they're accepted in the wider society, and another dialect so that they're accepted in their own society. And everything in the garden will be lovely." I mean, it just isn't right. That doesn't even take into cognizance that dialects, and particularly where they're class associated, do not exist as separate enclaves—they actually clash in an encounter with each other. (p. 26)

Students who speak a minority dialect are forced to learn the grammar of the culture's dominant dialect group. Specifically, black students are taught white grammar because it is felt that these students do not know grammar when in fact they do know grammar, the grammar of their black dialect. Linguists have shown that the grammar of black dialect is not inferior; black grammar is a prescriptive rule system which serves the same function as white grammar. In fact, a case could be made for the superiority of black grammar. For example, conjugation of the "be" verb is more specific in black dialect. "He done been doing his work." is more temporally clear than "He has been working." In school white dialect is more valuable; thus white grammar is more valuable. The worth of one dialect over another in our society is not determined by an evaluation of its grammar system but rather by its social class identification.
The Unequal Distribution of Knowledge

Schools perpetuate differences in cultural capital so that working class students leave school with a different amount and type of knowledge. Knowledge is unequally distributed in the classroom through two basic channels, overt, academic curriculum and the hidden curriculum.

Schools very blatantly offer differing access to academic information and experience. The community's social status determines the quality of the education offered there. Thus, the more affluent school districts can offer biology fieldtrips to the Bahamas, swimming teams, several types of foreign languages, academic competition such as the Olympics of the Mind, and advanced placement courses where students can earn college credit in high school. The quality of the education varies within the school building as well as between school systems. Students who are judged to possess the acceptable cultural capital are often grouped together for management convenience. This practice is known as tracking. Programs used for tracking have different names such as: college preparatory, honors, gifted, remedial, basic, general and career-related. Acceptance into the upper level programs is based upon intelligence test scores and grades, both of which reward students who enter school with the prestige cultural capital. Conversely, students who do not possess the valued cultural capital will be placed into the bottom track from
which they rarely escape.

In addition to the academic curriculum, the day to day classroom interactions with the teacher reinforce the student's social class position. These daily social relations with the teacher form another kind of curriculum which teaches behavior rather than content. Although this curriculum is not explicitly written down in guidebooks and adopted by the school board, students are taught traditional norms, values and beliefs just by the way the classroom environment's social relations are structured. This underlying rule system for how students and teachers interact is called the hidden curriculum.

Through the hidden curriculum students from different social classes learn to behave in a way which will help them to assume their predetermined role in relation to capital when they are adults. Fitzclarence and Giroux (1984) express this idea in more concrete terms:

... working class students learn how to be punctual, how to follow the rules, and how to adjust to the alienating demands of unskilled and degrading work, whereas upper-middle and ruling class students learn how to exercise leadership functions, think creatively, and work with a high degree of autonomy. (p. 466)

At first this quote may seem a bit severe. However, behavior is a critical issue in schools; consequently, students may be placed in the remedial track solely because they are considered to be discipline problems. Thus, it is important for the student's success that the student behave in a manner which pleases the teacher. For
this reason, the students who accept what the teacher says without question are more likely to be viewed by that teacher as academically superior. Nell Keddie's (1971) ethnographic study of a high school that had students from a wide range of social class backgrounds emphasizes this point about the relationship between social class and classroom behavior. Dr. Keddie studied the teachers' reactions to teaching the same course to students who were tracked into three different ability groups, which generally corresponded to the students' social class position. Keddie draws a connection between ability grouping and the student's willingness to passively accept what the teacher says:

Ability is an organizing and unexamined concept for teachers whose categorization of pupils on the grounds of ability derives largely from social class judgements of pupils' social, moral and intellectual behaviour. These judgements are frequently confounded with what are held to be rational values of a general nature. There is between teacher and A pupils a reciprocity or perspective which allows teachers to define, unchallenged by A pupils, as they may be challenged by C pupils, the nature and boundaries of what is to count as knowledge. It would seem to be the failure of high-ability pupils to question what they are taught in schools that contributes in large measure to their educational achievement. (in Hargreaves an Woods 1984 p. 120)

The student's social class influences the teacher's perception of the student's behavior. In fact, Keddie found an instance when a teacher interpreted a C student's question as a challenge, and then later the teacher responded that if the same question would have been asked by an A student, the teacher would not have interpreted the question as a challenge but rather as a genuine request for clarification. As in this example, Keddie found that the student's social class/ability grouping determined whether the teacher's response would be positive
or negative. There is a dynamic interrelationship among social class, classroom behavior, teacher perceptions and ability grouping.

Moreover, the assumptions teacher's make about their students become the basis for daily action. The teacher's decisions about what a particular group of students will learn and what types of activities they will engage in are greatly influenced by the students' social class. One of Jean Anyon's studies (1980) documents how the teacher's embedded beliefs about the students' social class not only affected what happened in the classroom but ultimately lead to the perpetuation of the existing social class system.

Jean Anyon conducted a study of the classroom social relations in working class and elite class elementary schools. She found that the social class of the students influenced how the teachers selected assignments, structured the lesson, evaluated work, phrased their questions, and formulated their expectations for the students. In working class schools following the rules or prescribed steps was more important than what was learned; in addition, the teacher's questions merely checked for correctness and comprehension. In the more elite schools, students were expected to think more critically about what they were learning and assume a leadership role in the classroom. The social relations in the classroom mirrored the social relations within the social class system: working class students were taught to be passive rule followers while upper class students were taught to be thoughtful leaders. Differences in the
student's cultural capital determined the amount and type of knowledge that the student learned as well as the quality of social relations that the student had with the teacher. Anyon's study demonstrated that students learn much more than factual knowledge at school; through the hidden curriculum, students learn how to assume their predetermined position in society. The hidden curriculum takes care of socializing the working class students into a suitable place at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Studies such as those done by Keddie and Anyon are important because they help teachers to see the subtle ways in which working class children are socialized into accepting the part of a second class citizen. The formal study of grammar plays a supporting role in this classroom drama. For both the working class students and the executive class students, grammar serves to entrench their social positions.

As was discussed in the previous section about cultural capital, working class students often have problems succeeding in school because they speak what the school considers a non-standard dialect. Because of these dialect and behavior differences, working class students are often placed into remedial English courses where they are treated differently by the teacher. In an interview for the English Journal, William Labov (Louis Rosen 1979), noted sociolinguist, tries to clarify why the dialect that black children speak is not the source of their language problems:
Now there's been pretty good observation that freedom to speak leads to better reading. There's been a lot of confusion about this because many people somehow became convinced that what was needed was to change the way children speak. If changing the way children speak is going to lead to better reading and writing, then it might be worth trying, but that hasn't been shown. What has been shown is that the way black children speak is not necessarily different in a structural sense. It isn't that Black Vernacular is profoundly different— that it's a foreign language. It is symbolically different. The way you speak is very important to your concept of yourself and your personality. If you meet a teacher who reacts to your way of speaking in a very hostile way, then your choice is either to change your personality to suit her or else sit in the back of the room and become one of those people who should "at least be quiet" while everyone else is learning.

Labov goes on to explain that the real problem lies in the teacher's unconscious negative reaction to the student's dialect:

Our research shows that the primary reason for the failure of the schools to educate black children does not lie in the fact that black children have a different language and therefore cannot learn Standard English. Rather we find that the stereotype the teacher already has about black children is triggered into action by the teacher's unconscious reaction to the child's speech and behavior. In order to put into practice the idea that children will learn more rapidly if they are free to express themselves, there has to be a profound new look at the relationship between the child and the teacher. I have no great confidence in the idea that printing a new book or a new method or a new description of the language is going to solve the educational problems of the inner-city. (p. 16)

In most cases, when the English teacher has unconsciously determined that the working class student's dialect is inferior, the immediate prescription is a strong dose of grammar. For the remedial student, the majority of classroom time is spent studying grammar. In his recent study of the American school system John Goodlad (1984) reports the difference between the lower track and the upper track English classes:
lower track classes tended to emphasize the mechanics of English usage, whereas high track classes were likely to stress the intellectual skills of analysis, evaluation, and judgment especially through literature. The low track classes were unlikely to encounter the high status knowledge dealt with in the upper tracks and normally considered essential for college admission. (p. 205)

The rationale which is used for this heavy emphasis upon grammar is that learning to speak and write correctly is the minimum that should be expected from these lower-ability students. The underlying assumption, which has already been shown to be erroneous, is that rote grammar study will lead to improved speaking and writing competency.

This judgement that the student's dialect necessitates spending the majority of classroom time working on grammar drills may indeed impede this student's language development. The issue now becomes one of discrimination: because the child speaks a different dialect, this child is denied the rich experience of communicating with his/her native dialect; instead, the child is required to fill out endless paper puzzles which involve little or no communication at all. The student is lost in an elaborate Catch-22 system which simply stated is: "Since you can't speak and write like we want, we won't let you speak or write." Harold Rosen (Louis Rosen (1978) makes a strong point that children need to express themselves in their native dialect:

It is in the child's own vernacular speech, which in many pupils is often very far away from standard, the he's [she's] the most powerful, the most comfortable; this is where all his [her] richest meanings lie. If, at school, there's not only this writing bit, which is rather curious, but in addition he [she]
picks up a message that somehow this speech of his [her] is defective too, then he’s [she’s] being disabled in two different ways at the same time, and this will certainly pick up on the writing. (p. 52)

Denying students the right to their own language not only undermines their ability to speak and write but also their ability to make meaning—since we use language to construct meaning rather than simply coughing it up whole from our gut upon command.

The educational system ends up impeding the natural language development of working class children. These problems occur in many areas of language arts instruction besides just writing—which, of course, have a negative affect on writing instruction as well. For example, practices for remedial reading instruction often have the student doing everything but reading. An interesting article by Patrick Shannon (1985) in *Language Arts*, Shannon reviews recent reading research and carefully explains how remedial reading groups are treated differently by the teacher. Shannon cites several studies which demonstrate that remedial students are interrupted more, spend less time reading, spend more time on phonics instruction, given more difficult materials, and monitored differently than the regular reading groups. Thus, in cases like these, the teacher’s remediation strategies come in conflict with the student’s natural language development. It is as if the language arts teachers get carried away with their clever activities and become overly infatuated with the importance of their activities. Soon the teacher-created activity is valued more than the original goal of being able to read and write well. To return to composition,
teachers have become so enamored with naming parts of speech that they have forgotten that real writers do not construct texts by first determining the part of speech for each word that they write. Harold Rosen (Anderson 1982) extends this logic a bit further and concludes that if studying grammar is so helpful to learning how to write then the greatest writers in the world should be linguists. He points out that it is the opposite case which is true: that most great writers know nothing about grammar.

For the working class student, the English classroom is much like factory work where they assume their spot on the assembly line and mindlessly circle or underline dittos as they pass by. Doing the exercises out of the textbook or parroting jargon definitions takes precedence over reading and writing. James Herndon (1971) came to an early realization about this when he was in school:

Flax is what school is all about. In my own old-fashioned geography books I went to various countries in the company of Bedouin and Greek and Turkish kids and the thing that most remains in my mind now about those imaginary kids is that they always grew flax. I myself put flax on my maps alongside corn and wheat and coal; I wrote down flax to answer questions about the products of countries. I never knew what flax was, but I knew that if I kept it in mind and wrote it down a lot and raised my hand and said it a lot, I would be making it [in school]... it showed the school who among the students was willing and able to keep flax in mind, to raise his [or her] hand and say it aloud, to write it down, and put its name on maps. So that in the cumulative records of each child the teacher could write down for the next teacher the information that

| Child reads flax, writes down flax and says flax | Leader |
| Child sometimes remembers flax | Nice Kid |
| Child can't remember flax | Child is black and/or deprived |
Child digs flax, but inadvertently says "chili-dog" instead. Brain-damaged?
Child don’t dig flax a-tall Reluctant learner

I think you could make up an entirely new Achievement Test, doing away with expensive and tedious vocabulary and graphs and reading comprehension, doing away with special pencils for IBM scoring and doing away with filling in all those rows. Just pass out a sheet with the word flax printed on it in big letters and count the seconds it took for a kid to raise his [or her] hand. That would tell you everything that an Achievement Test is designed to tell you. (p. 107-108)

Regretably, just like Herndon’s witty discussion of flax, grammar has become more of the same type of obscure knowledge which matters solely for the school’s purpose of labeling students. The worst part is that we substitute mastering such useless trivia for activities which would develop the student’s language skills through meaningful communication.

On the other hand, grammar study has a completely different significance for executive class children. Comparatively, executive class children spend less time studying grammar. Once again the student’s native dialect makes the difference. Students who speak the same dialect as the teacher not only respond better to teacher instructions, but these students quite naturally can do a superior job of answering questions about their native dialect. For the executive class child, selecting the correct irregular verb for an example sentence is often a simple matter of silently repeating the sentence and then determining if it "sounds okay," whereas the working class child is expected to figure out the word’s part of speech, determine its tense and remember that particular verb’s conjugation. The working class student cannot use the same strategy
as the executive class student, for what "sounds right" to the working class student will most probably be wrong. An activity which is little more than aural recall for the executive class student is in contrast a complex set of grammatical procedures for the working class student. Grammar becomes a series of rules which the working class student must master in order to succeed. Consequently, this school experience is similar to the rule following that the working class student will one day have to do on the job.

Beyond the executive class student's superior academic ability, there is another important difference which affects grammar mastery. Executive students can see a reason for memorizing all grammatical jargon and becoming proficient at the textbook exercises. These students see the connection between these activities and standardized test scores. Executive class children learn early in life that one's test scores determine the quality of the university one will attend and ultimately one's earning potential. This is why SAT test coaching has become a lucrative industry. A computer software program has been developed for this specific purpose and was the number one selling home software program in 1985. Executive class students have learned the strategy of taking the test several times in order to increase their scores. It is not uncommon for students in affluent school districts to start taking college placement tests in seventh grade. (As a working class student, I never even realized that one could study for such a test or even take it more than one time.) For the executive class student, grammar
becomes a socially important game which they are motivated to master.

Much as Nell Keddie discussed in the quote cited earlier in this section, executive class students do what it takes to get ahead and they do so without asking questions. A colleague of mine when I was teaching middle school used to delight in asking his honor students to do impossible tasks because they would do virtually anything that he asked for a grade. He once told them that they were to write a novel which would be exactly five chapters long. Each week he would bring in a new picture for the students to work into the plot of their current chapter. He was beside himself with glee one day when he found a shirt advertisement in which there was a picture of several well-dressed men standing beside plaid sheep. He reported that many students solved the problem by having a character have a terrible nightmare. Things got out of hand once when he requested that his little lemmings write down all the nouns that they knew for the next day with the added pressure that he would only give an A to the student who had the highest total. (Of course, copying the local phone book would have been a good source of proper nouns.) The next day he was greeted with stacks and stacks of papers upon which these crazed students had stayed up all night in order to write down their nouns. Honors students are often grade mercenaries.

Although executive class parents may be more likely to articulate a complaint about unreasonable teaching practices, executive class parents do not see grammar busywork as unreasonable.
They are willing to accept grammar drillwork as sort of a fraternity hazing one must pass through in order to be admitted into the upper echelon.

Working class and executive class students have different experiences with grammar. Beyond the difference in the amount of time spent on grammar in the classroom, the difference in the students’ attitudes is significant. For the working class student, grammar is an alien, senseless, degrading experience to be suffered through while for the executive class student, grammar is a traditional, sanctioned, parlor game at which to excel. Grammar serves as a school activity which handily reproduces the existing social class system.

The Sorting Machine

The last section briefly mentioned how teachers use various labels to discriminate against the children who do not possess the prestige cultural capital. In school, labels such as “disruptive” may influence other teachers’ behaviors and the child’s self concept, but these labels may not be public knowledge in the world outside of school. However, schools do provide an ultimate form of labeling which is very useful for prospective employers -- that of certification. These certificates become the license necessary in our culture to obtain most jobs. It is important to note that these certificates do not document specific job training as much as they
document the right to be trained for a particular job. Kevin Harris (1982) writes about the role certification plays in the economy:

... entry to employment is mediated by school certificates which are accepted by capital as legitimate (possibly the only legitimate) forms of licensing. What we find, then, is that schooling delivers up to the job market pre-sorted stratified people, ready by means of the length and content of their schooling to enter either factory work or clerical work or managerial work or professional work. Now given that the skills and knowledge gained at school are not necessarily related to specific jobs, this does not save the employers from having to provide on-the-job training. What it does save the employers from, however, is training in basic skills (for instance, reading and writing) and in attitude and value formation: it also saves the employers the time and expense of having to do the sorting themselves. Thus reproduction costs are dramatically lowered; and since schooling systematically ensures that most children will finish up in much the same places as their parents, reproduction of the relations of production is also neatly controlled. That schooling rather than employers does the sorting and controlling is also a matter of great ideological significance. (pp. 89-90)

Schools serve to reproduce the inequalities of wealth and power already embedded within our culture. Schools do not offset the limits set by the child’s home, neighborhood and peer environment. Because of their role in certification, schools tend to legitimate and therefore make less offensive the economic and class differences between children. For example, we cannot deny a person a high paying job simply because of that person’s race, but it is socially acceptable to deny a person a job because that person does not have a particular school degree.

Americans take great pride in representing their country as the land of equal opportunity. Kevin Harris (1982) makes a dramatic point about the fallacy of believing that our social system could
survive providing everyone with an equal educational opportunity.

... [Educating all of the children] would leave us with a
different and far greater problem on our hands: How could we
possibly integrate whole new generations of Educated people into
a system of social relations which requires the vast majority of
its participants not only to spend the greater portion of their
lives engaging in alienating, routine, dull, mindless and
meaningless labour (or, given present circumstances, no labour
at all) but also to accept the lack of social privilege
presently attendant on performers of such labour (or on the
unemployed)? How could we induce these Educated people to sweep
the streets, work on production lines, and operate the
check-outs at supermarkets let alone clean floors and toilets in
office blocks, especially while these jobs are given low social
status and relatively low financial remuneration? Put simply,
our existing system of social relations could not handle new
generations of universally Educated people: and if we were to
overcome all the immediate problems we would also have to
restructure our entire social system as well. (pp. 14-15)

Americans will not have to face the disruption of the existing
economic and social systems because Americans believe that they
already offer educational equality. Until Americans can face the
fact that everyone does not have an equal educational opportunity,
changes cannot be instituted to improve circumstance for working
class students. We use ideology to help us rationalize this
contradiction between what we ideistically want and what we can
realistically tolerate. For instance, we rationalize our failure to
educate all of the students by blaming the victim. Chapter three
will delve into the elements of ideology which our culture uses to
deal with its necessity to create failure. The paradox educators
face in attempting to offer an equal opportunity to students is
pointed out by R. C. Rist (1970):

It appears that the public school system not only mirrors the
configurations of the larger society, but also significantly
contributes to maintaining them. Thus the system of public
education in reality perpetuates what it is ideologically committed to eradicate — class barriers which result in inequality in the social and economic life of the citizenry. (p. 449)

Although ideologically schools want to offer everyone an equal opportunity to succeed, they must instead end up serving the existing economic system by reproducing the inequalities of wealth and power.

Grammar, vocabulary and reading represent the English discipline's major role in the certification procedure. Grammar skills are particularly emphasized on standardized tests used for determining ability grouping and college entrance. Through these functions grammar becomes an important tool for schools to use in order to rank students for their future places in the social class system. Grammar tests fulfill this function of sorting students by social class so well because they are an accurate indicator of standard English.

Although some tests include a section on naming parts of speech, most standardized tests format their language section as a series of sentences in which students must find and correct the usage errors. It is important to note that all types of usage errors are not equally represented on these tests. Test constructors do not have an equal number of types of errors presented nor is there an effort to put randomly generated errors. It could be said that there is a politics of error since certain errors are considered more significant than others. For instance, errors which black dialect
speakers are likely to make are premium errors to be assessed on these tests. Examples of such errors are "be" verb usage and the omission of the auxiliary verb "had." Errors which might indicate a second language speaker are not even included, such as misplacement of verbs and omission of prepositions, neither are errors included which would indicate a British dialect, such as word choice (ie. lift) and spelling variations (ie. colour). The errors selected to test are most often committed by members of the working class. These tests do not check for errors in general such as reversal of determiners and adjectives because this type of error wouldn't be significant since it is not commonly made. Test writers use errors that people do make, not just any people but people who speak what is considered to be a non-standard dialect. Standardized tests are an accurate indicator of social class.

However, it is not just standardized tests which discriminate between various types of errors. The scoring of writing samples can be just as discriminatory. While teaching in a university writing program, I witnessed one of the few conflicts over social class discrimination. During a holistic grading training session for grading placement tests, we were clarifying our reasons for ranking one paper higher than another. The consensus seemed to be that glaring grammatical errors should lower the student's score. Errors such as misspelling very large words were not acknowledged. All the graders seemed to be in total agreement until we graded a paper which has obvious black dialect errors in both "be" and "had" verbs. A
black teacher ranked this paper much higher than all the other teachers who were white. She then proceeded to demonstrate how the black student’s paper was more coherent and better developed. Finally, she compared the black student’s paper to the highest ranked paper and demonstrated how this paper was not as coherent or well-developed as the paper in question. The teachers had to agree that the highest ranked paper was filled with big words and flowery descriptions which jumped around and really didn’t make a point. The black teacher was then refuted by a white teacher who ended the argument by declaring, "I’d prefer to work with a student who knew how to make writing sound good while saying nothing than a student with a bunch of grammar errors." Both standardized tests and writing samples discriminate against working class students who speak a non-prestige dialect.

After examining the evidence about using grammar as a means to teach writing and the evidence about how grammar is used on standardized tests, it appears that grammar is a better tool for sorting students than teaching them. Being aware of grammar’s role in certification, English teachers who work with working class students often sell grammar skills as a means to achieve upward mobility. Teachers promise that if students learn usage rules, they will get a better job. Students are told how grammar is often the determining factor during a job interview. The promise of upward mobility is a false promise for teachers to make because it is one which teachers have no way of fulfilling. Harold Rosen (Anderson
1982) labels this sort of false promise as a "con."

... there are two things. The first is that "prestige dialect" does not give you access to power. It may be a necessary condition, but it is not a sufficient condition. Secondly, if it did give you access to power it wouldn't give everyone power because of the way power is organized in our society. The whole point is that some people will have more power than others. ... That's all part of the whole school rat-race business. It's a con—and it's a disgraceful con, really. Everybody knows it isn't a race in which everybody can be winners. Inevitably, some percentage--60 percent or 70 percent or 80 percent or 90 percent--could learn to speak like "Whitey" and it wouldn't make the least bit of difference because they can't all succeed in the present school system. (p. 25)

Executive class hiring procedures may have more to do with social contacts and possibly even the status of the prospective employee's institution of higher learning or greek organization rather than the employee's verb conjugation skills. Working class students have many betraying mannerisms which reveal their social status. As in Pygmalion a teacher may be better off working on pronunciation skills, body language and clothing selection than grammatical workbook exercises. As an aid to social mobility grammar may be a failure; in contrast, grammar is an effective tool for sorting out the working class students. What other test could ferret out working class members as well?

In order to underscore grammar's effectiveness for sorting students by social class, imagine that one intentionally wished to keep working class students out of college. High tuition might at first seem to be the answer. However, problems develop when working class students obtain scholarships and begin working part-time jobs
during high school in order to save money for college. Next, one might decide to use pronunciation and body language as a sorting criterion, but the amount of time needed to judge such factors would not be cost effective. Sorting students by clothing brands might appear to be a workable solution, especially since some sororities have found it useful to check the coat labels of prospective pledges while welcoming them into rush parties. Recent heightened awareness of prestige brands now makes it more difficult to determine working class members. Additionally, using clothing as a criterion is not subtle enough since clothes can readily be associated with economic status.

Grammar stands above all these other possible criteria for excluding working class students from improving their social status. Grammar is consistently useful because of the difficulty students have in denying their native dialect. Grammar is cost effective because it can be easily measured by tests which can be scored by machines or a handful of holistic graders. Grammar is discrete because it gives the illusion that the evaluation was based upon intelligence rather than social status. The best feature of grammar is that working class members willfully submit to its use as a determinant of their position in society.
Hegemony: A Subtle and Dynamic Form of Socialization

Class Domination through Hegemony

The question of domination naturally arises when examining the social class system. It is hard to understand how one social class exerts control and maintains its power over another. Hegemony is a concept which dialectically describes the consensual domination of one social class over another. Hegemony is considered to be the opposite of a violent dictatorship where control is exerted through the military, the police and the legal system. The process of hegemony enables one class to maintain control over another class through moral and intellectual persuasion. Moreover, this persuasion is very subtle with the ruling class's beliefs being woven into the social fabric of the dominated class's everyday lives.

Hegemony (egemonia) was first used by the Greeks (Raymond Williams 1976 b) to describe a ruler of a country other than his own. In the nineteenth century, hegemony represented the political power one country exerts over another. Currently, hegemony is used to describe one social class's domination over another. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, is best known for the development of this concept.
Gramsci lived from 1891 to 1937 and devoted his life to political activism. In his early years he worked for the socialist party, and then in 1921 he helped form the new Italian Communist party. Gramsci chose a position opposing fascism and Mussolini for which he was imprisoned from 1926 until his death in 1937. At Gramsci's trial (Adamson 1980) the prosecutor declared, "We must prevent this brain from functioning..." Ironically, it was during Gramsci's imprisonment that Gramsci did his most significant writing about hegemony which was published posthumously as *Prison Notebooks* in 1947. The study of Gramsci's work has been extensive in Italy. More recently, Gramsci's writing has become popular among the new sociology of education writers beginning in the mid 1970's.

Gramsci's scholarship is significant for several reasons. First of all, Gramsci was a revolutionary leader of the working class who came from "a social background much poorer and lower than that of any Marxist intellectual in Europe, whether Western or Eastern, before or after the first World War." (Anderson 1976, p. 54) This means that Gramsci did not conceive of his ideas exclusively from his readings but rather through the reality of his experience as a member of the working class. Secondly, Gramsci's scholarship sprang from his political activism, where he was first involved in setting up worker councils and later tried to be the guiding force for a socialist revolution. Interestingly, Gramsci's great academic strides did not occur during his politically active years; they
occurred during his years of reflection in prison. Thirdly, Gramsci made great philosophical contributions. He took classical Marxism beyond economic determinism by considering how other factors such as ideology and culture serve to reproduce social relations. Gramsci also extended the idealistic interest in culture by showing the interconnection between culture and politics.

In order to understand how the ruling class can nonviolently dominate the working class, it is important to understand that through hegemony the working class willfully accepts the beliefs of the ruling class. As James Joll (1977) points out, the working class adopts the values of the ruling class:

Gramsci saw, in a way that few other Marxists have done, that the rule of one class over another does not depend on economic or physical power alone but rather on persuading the ruled to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share its social, cultural, and moral values. (p.16)

The values of the ruling class are not perceived by the working class as being the beliefs which belong to an antagonistic group. Instead, the ruling class's values have become embedded in the working class's unchallenged, common sense assumptions about reality. The working class is not even aware that the ruling class's ideology influences them. Raymond Williams (1976 a) explains how the ruling class's ideology totally saturates the daily lives of the working class:

It is Gramsci's great contribution to have emphasized hegemony, and also to have understood it at a depth which is, I think, rare. For hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural,
like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of commonsense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure. For if ideology were merely some abstract imposed notion, if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, or a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has been or is. This notion of hegemony as deeply saturating the consciousness of a society seems to be fundamental. (p. 204)

As Williams contends, hegemony moves beyond simple ideology to something far more subtle and pervasive. If hegemony were directly equatable with ideology, it would be much easier to penetrate and reject. Hegemony is the totality of a lived experience rather than an isolated indoctrination of the ruling class’s beliefs. Hegemony is reflected in the totality of one’s social relations. Gwyn A. Williams (1960) emphasizes how hegemony operates through all social relations in this definition:

[Hegemony is] an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations.

Hegemony’s power is so diffuse that Raymond Williams (1977) suggests that hegemony should be thought of as something as all encompassing as culture:

It [Hegemony] is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a
lived system of meaning and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (p. 110)

When a person first becomes critically aware of the ruling's class's influence over the working class, this person may conclude that the ruling class members are overtly acting in a conspiracy to keep the working class from succeeding. For instance, a few inmates, whom I taught in prison, were aware of the high amount of money that the state was spending to support their incarceration; these inmates then drew the conclusion that the state only wished to imprison them to make money. Hegemony is far more complex than a clandestine meeting of a group of upper class fat cats who gather periodically in order to think of ways of keeping people unemployed and on welfare. If our social, economic and political systems were run this simplistically, change would be a simple matter of identifying the knaves and removing them from power.

This chapter about hegemony began with a discussion of how common sense is created, citing Berger and Luckman's (1966) concept of the social construction of reality. There are many similarities between the notion of the social construction of reality and Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Both concepts trace how a practice done by one group of people can become legitimized and institutionalized until the majority of the society accepts this
practice as common sense. The difference between the Berger and Luckman’s concept of the social construction of reality and Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is that Berger and Luckman’s concept is neutral and lacks critical analysis, having connections to phenomenology. Berger and Luckman make no comments about the economic and political significance of one group’s practices becoming the common sense for the entire culture. The fact that the ruling class’s beliefs are accepted wholesale by the working class is not considered at all, nor is it criticized as a form of domination. The concept of hegemony goes a step further than the neutral creation of common sense. Hegemony is founded on the assumption that reality is a social construct, but it points out that the version of reality which is widely accepted in the culture is the version of reality which belongs to the ruling class and therefore benefits that class’s interests.

Hegemony is hard to analyze because it cannot be isolated into easily perceived, overt acts. Hegemony is a social process which occurs continually throughout a person’s daily life. The process of hegemony is most effective when it operates through the society’s socializing institutions such as the school, the home and the workplace. Gramsci explained that this socializing process is essentially an educational process: “Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship.” (Gramsci, 1971 p.350) In this regard, working class members are continually being educated through their daily social relations to willfully
assume their predetermined subordinate role in society.

Now we shall turn once again to the case of grammar and examine the relationship between grammar and the process of hegemony. The discussion about grammar thus far in chapter two has made four main points about grammar which demonstrate how hegemony operates through grammar to aid the ruling class's domination over the working class. The first point about grammar is the most basic one: the grammar which is being taught in school is not just any grammar, but the grammar of the prestige dialect. Grammar is not a neutral commodity with no connection to social class. The fact that standard English is the dialect of the executive class is no accident.

The second point about grammar is that the traditional teaching of the ruling class's grammar to the working class serves to reinforce class divisions. The teaching of grammar as a form of domination can be classified as an act of symbolic violence upon the working class. Schools are structured in such a way that the dialect of the executive class is highly valued, and the dialect of the working class is considered a detriment, an error in speech and writing. It was demonstrated earlier that when the dialect of one group is discounted by the school, the student from that group often feels that his or her entire cultural heritage has been rejected. This rejection can profoundly affect the student's self concept. Each negative encounter with dialect differences sends the powerful message to the student that his or her place is at the bottom.
Besides putting the working class student in his or her place, the teaching of the prestige grammar reproduces the ruling class's superiority over the working class. The third point about the traditional teaching of grammar is that it can lead to arrested language development. Previously in this chapter, it was argued that the development which occurs naturally through communication contexts can be impeded when students are forced to spend classroom time engaging in obscure grammar activities. Of course, no teacher intentionally teaches grammar to thwart the working class student's language development; however, the results are the same: the working class student leaves school at the same social and economic position at which the student entered.

The fourth and last point about traditional grammar study involves the role that grammar plays in the certification process. The prestige grammar is used as a criterion for justifying the working class student's predictable assignment to a working class career. Through the guise of standardized tests, grammar legitimates the existing social class system. John Harwood (1980) explains how standardized tests become part of a powerful fiction used to give the illusion of fairness:

A powerful fiction is thus created, and this fiction takes on explanatory power. It explains that because schooling was ostensibly open to all and because school offered to all the opportunity to acquire an education that led to success, one's position in society "could be portrayed as the result not of birth, but of one's own efforts and talents." Rich and poor, strong and weak, blue-blood and immigrant—all were to be
subject to this natural law. The notions of merit and competition could be used to explain widespread failure and thus rationally consign the vast majority of children, especially minority, immigrant, and lower-class children, to jobs with limited futures and meager wages. The challenge was to convince most students to lower their aspirations rather than to question the basis on which privilege was denied or bestowed. Thus, "if a person is convinced that he [she] is not able to do well, he [she] is less likely to rise up against the social system than if he [she] believes that the system is unfair and based on class." What could be fairer than an assessment of ability, one that yields a two-or-three-digit number, by which students are rank ordered? The hat-trick is to convince people not only that the principles of merit are uniformly applied (that is, there is equal opportunity for all) but that the principles themselves validly assess the "suitability" of particular persons for particular activities. (p. 32-33)

Grammar plays a large part in this "hat-trick." It almost seems impossible to imagine that working class students could be convinced that they should not have access to higher paying jobs based partially upon their scores on a standardized test over usage errors. Grammar is accepted whole-heartedly by the working class as a fair device for evaluation because of a powerful hegemony which has established its precedence through years and years of subtle conditioning.

Before we make curriculum decisions about what role grammar should play in our schools, we must consider what relationship grammar has to the distribution of power and wealth in our society. As a school subject, grammar may indeed have a more direct role in reproducing the existing social class system than do many other disciplines. Unlike math or science or physical education, grammar is more closely connected to language, and language as Bakhtin (1973) was cited earlier as saying: is a prime "arena of class struggle."
False Consciousness

As was noted at the end of the last section, it seems hard to fathom that the working class could be turned against itself to willfully accept practices which impede its member's economic and political success. Moreover, besides this passive acceptance, working class members often actively initiate practices which lead to their own domination. Both these passive and active practices are rooted in an embedded belief system which benefits the ruling class. The Marxist term for this conscious decision to act against one's inherent best interests "false consciousness." Madan Sarup (1978) discusses the manifestations of false consciousness:

Some actors may be deliberately misled, so that they do not see what is in their class interest. In other words, there may be macro-features which have an independent reality of which actors or participants are not aware. There may be forces that influence, or determine, the thoughts and actions of participants, and produce consequences which they did not intend. (p. 88)

The actor is mislead because false consciousness prevents the actor from critical awareness. Thus, working class members often unknowingly contribute to their own domination. Paul E. Willis (1977) explains false consciousness in terms of how the "them's" are internalized into the "us's":

One of the time-honored principles of cultural and social organisation in this country as it is enacted and understood at the subjective level is that of 'them' and 'us'. That the 'them' survives in 'us' is usually overlooked. This internal division should not be surprising. In a peaceful social democratic society with real class divisions, the 'them' and
'us' can never be starkly clear... Even the most 'us' group or person has a little of 'them' inside. It is this which allows the 'us' to properly betray itself. Ideology is the 'them' in 'us'... The hall of mirrors of the national will needs each small mirror. Here we have looked at the construction and the interface of just one. (p. 169)

The term "false consciousness" implies that each person possesses a dual consciousness: one which is true and one which is false. Yet, false consciousness is not as simplistic a concept as the terminology might suggest. False consciousness is the process which allows hegemonic rule to become embedded in our brains and accepted as truth. Gramsci (1971) discusses the idea that we have two consciousnesses which work against each other:

The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as he transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (p. 333)

To elaborate upon Gramsci's notion of a contradictory consciousness, although the reality of one's experiences could potentially reveal situations which lead to one's domination, one's inherited representation of the world clouds one's ability to draw this conclusion. This inherited representation of the world is not an accurate portrayal. It is instead a representation which serves the ruling class. Williams (1976) refers to this as selective tradition:

... there is a process which I call the selective tradition: that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as 'the tradition', 'the
significant past’. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture. (p. 205)

The result of this selective tradition is a distorted sense of reality which ultimately serves the ruling class. The truly interesting feature of this selective tradition is how pervasive it must be in order to over-rule any contradictory elements.

False consciousness is a very necessary and efficient element of hegemonic rule. Through false consciousness, the ruling class’s domination is maintained without the need for overt control. False consciousness internalizes the element of control so that the oppressed person actually carries around the oppressor in his or her mind. In this sense, the oppressed becomes his or her own oppressor. Freire (1972) begins his book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, with an extensive discussion of how the oppressed "... are at the same time themselves and the oppressor whose image they have internalized." (p. 47) In the following quote, Freire explains the process of "prescription" which he uses to explain how the oppressed learn to behave in a manner which the oppressor expects:

One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one man’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (p.31)
Not only do the oppressed internalize the behavior that is prescribed by the oppressor, Freire goes on to explain how the oppressed begin to think of themselves in the way that the oppressor sees them:

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitess. (p. 49)

Through passive acceptance, prescribed actions and self-depreciation, false consciousness insures that the working class members will remain in their lowly social position.

False consciousness provides a whole network of reasons why grammar should be taught in school even though years of research and daily experience support the opposite point of view. An interesting twist of logic occurs when some adults credit their success at writing to the traditional study of grammar. First, it might be interesting to conduct a critique of these adults in order to determine if they really do write well and frequently, or if they only want to see their children suffer the same traditional methods which they experienced—the do-undothers-what-they-did-to-me philosophy. Next, it might be interesting to trace their success with language, if there is indeed any, to its source—perhaps, their native standard dialect or extensive experience with writing. Sometimes adults credit their worst English teacher for their academic success simply because that teacher is the most memorable, in a negative way. False consciousness tells us that the people who
work us the hardest are our best teachers. False consciousness makes it possible for parents, administrators and even English teachers to credit grammar instruction for something it did not single-handedly cause.

Even the students themselves come to school with the same false consciousness about grammar being the only way to learn to write. Moreover, the students who have had trouble learning to write do not fault traditional grammar instruction but instead blame themselves for not trying hard enough on their grammar drills. In the introduction to her book about basic writers, Mina P. Shaughnessy (1977) discusses how remedial writers actually ask for more grammar study:

... even to request more of the prescriptive teaching they have had before in the hope that this time it might "take." (p. 8-9)
Indeed, many students still insist, despite the reluctance of teachers who have lost confidence in the power of grammatical study to affect writing, that they need more prescriptive grammar. Perhaps, as some would say, the propaganda of a long line of grammar teachers "took." (p. 11)

Students often will not recognize any other classroom activity than grammar workbook exercises as being legitimate work for an English classroom. A colleague, Sharon Dorsey (1985), found that even though her students were engaged in an extensive writing project, they did not feel that they were "doing English" because they were not circling nouns and underlining verbs. I have noted similar prejudices in college students. My prison inmate students were rather blunt about their expectancies that I should be having
them do grammar worksheets. On the third day of class one quarter, my remedial writing students demanded to know if I had been fired from my previous job. Upon further questioning, I found out that they had assumed that I was fired for being an inadequate English teacher and was sent to prison to teach since no one else would hire me, and all of these assumptions were made because I had not brought in any grammar worksheets yet.

False consciousness uniformly supports the teaching of grammar. Adults credit grammar with their own personal "successes" with writing and remedial writing students place the blame for their failure on any source other than traditional grammar study. The working class students are duped by their false consciousness into demanding another round of grammar work.

Counter Hegemonic Resistance

Up until this point, the discussion of hegemony has been very one sided, presenting a static image of hegemony. Although it is important to respect the power that hegemonic domination can exert over the working class, we must recognize the human potential for resistance. Understanding the forces of hegemony can potentially be a very enlightening or a very depressing experience depending upon whether the analysis stops with a mere critique or continues into a plan for liberation.
The potential that a rudimentary understanding of hegemony has for creating despair and cynicism should not be underestimated. Scholars who have focused on the pervasive control exerted by hegemonic rule can become trapped in a pessimistic quagmire. It can be frightening to consider how insidiously the beliefs of the dominant class creep into the consciousness of the people whom they subvert. The worker's fate becomes hopeless in the face of such an omniscient opponent not unlike an Orwellian Big Brother. Workers can become demoralized once they realize how they have unknowingly been manipulated into serving the ruling class as well as working against their own best interests. Bitter anger and destructive self-pity are not unreasonable responses to such a dismal portrayal of hegemony. The most damning response of all is that of skepticism to change because once the worker and/or the scholar believe that the existing class structure of society will be unilaterally reproduced, there is no longer a reason to resist. Thus, an examination of the workings of hegemony which does not consider resistance can end up perpetuating the very social processes that it hopes to reveal.

As was referred to earlier, the proponents of a new sociology of education were the first educators to use the concept of hegemony to analyze the political and economic influences upon the classroom. These scholars' first use of hegemony was very naive. Recently, both Michael W. Apple (1982) and Henry A. Giroux (1983) have extended their earlier writings about hegemony to include a discussion of
resistance. In this statement from the beginning of his new text, Apple directly criticizes his earlier writings:

After reading the prior section of this chapter, concerning simple reproduction theories and their problems, it is probably clear to you that part of the problem was the very fact that the dominant metaphor behind most of the analysis that went into Ideology and Curriculum was the idea of reproduction. . . It saw schools, and especially the hidden curriculum, as successfully corresponding to the ideological needs of capital; we just needed to see how it was really accomplished. What was now more obviously missing in my formulations at this time was an analysis that focused on contradictions, conflicts, mediations and especially resistances, as well as reproduction. (pp. 23-24)

Giroux makes similar criticisms of reproduction theories:

The point here is that there are some serious deficiencies in existing theories of reproduction, the most important of which is the refusal to posit a form of critique that demonstrates the theoretical and practical importance of counter-hegemonic struggles. (pp. 76-77)

Broadly taken, resistance can represent many different activities which disrupt the prevailing hegemony of the dominating social class. These activities can be of two main types: those which are consciously or unconsciously directed against the current system of hegemonic rule and those which are consciously directed towards the formation of an alternate hegemony. We will deal with the first type of resistance in this section and the other type of resistance in the next section.

Considering the forms of resistance which occur during the process of hegemony makes the analysis of hegemony more dialectic. Dialectic theory includes an understanding of the necessary unity of opposing forces. To conceive hegemony as a dialectical force, one
must consider the social relations which affirm it and those which reject it. In this regard, domination can never be total, affecting every working class member in the same way. And those workers who do comply do not do so instantly nor do they comply in every circumstance. Thus, domination is a process with uneven results. Giroux (1983) speaks in particular about how the dominant culture is mediated in school:

Needless to say, it [the dominant culture] is not simply inscribed or imposed in the consciousness or ideologies of the oppressed. It is always mediated—sometimes rejected, sometimes confirmed. More often than not it is partly accepted and partly rejected. The issue here is that class and power intersect within the relations of domination and resistance in the form of lived experiences that accommodate and contest the dominant school culture in a complex way. What is crucial to recognize is that schools represent contested terrains in the formation of subjectivities, but that the terrain is heavily weighted in favor of the dominant culture. (p. 66)

Domination is more complex than just simplistic reproduction; domination is mediated through social processes which involve both compliance and conflict.

In school, students demonstrate a wide range of different types of oppositional behavior. This oppositional behavior can be divided into two subgroups, that which is active and that which is passive. Students who demonstrate active oppositional behavior overtly reject those things which the school and the teacher try to accomplish, not just the academic lessons but the school-sanctioned values as well. Michael W. Apple (1982) lists some of the active ways that students resist the system:
Students become quite adept at ‘working the system.’ Large numbers of them in inner-city and working-class schools, to say nothing of other areas, creatively adapt their environments so that they can smoke, get out of class, inject humor into the routines, informally control the pacing of the classroom life, and generally try to make it through the day. In these same schools, many students may go even further. They simply reject the overt and hidden curricula of the school. The teacher who is teaching about mathematics, science, history, careers, etc. is ignored as much as possible. Also, the covert teaching of punctuality, neatness, compliance and other more economically rooted norms and values is simply dismissed as far as possible. The real task of the students is to last until the bell rings. (p. 96)

Thus, the students not only reject what the teacher is teaching but how the teacher wants them to behave. Of course, the students cannot afford to be caught displaying such resistance to the system, or they will be punished. Paul Willis (1977) in his brilliant ethnography of British working class students gives some of the most vivid examples of how working class students ("lads") conspire against the teacher. His descriptions are very dramatic:

‘The lads’ specialise in a caged resentment which always stops just short of outright confrontation. Settled in class, as near a group as they can manage, there is a continuous scraping of chairs, a bad tempered, ‘tut-tutting’ at the simplest request, and a continuous fidgeting about which explores every permutation of sitting or lying on a chair... There is an aimless air of insubordination ready with spurious justification and impossible to nail down. If someone is sitting on the radiator it is because his trousers are wet from the rain, if someone is drifting across the classroom he is going to empty the rubbish ‘like he usually does’. Comics, newspapers and nudes under half-lifted desks melt into elusive textbooks. A continuous hum of talk flows around injunctions not to, like the inevitable tide over barely dried sand and everywhere there are rolled back eyeballs and exaggerated mouthing of conspiratorial secrets.

During class teaching, a mouthed imaginary dialogue counterpoints the formal instruction: ‘No, I don’t understand, you cunt’; ‘What you on about, twit?’; ‘Not fucking likely.’; ‘Can I go home now please?’ At the vaguest sexual double meaning giggles and ‘whoas’ come from the back... In the
corridors there is a foot-dragging walk, an overfriendly ‘hello’ or sudden silence as the deputy passes. Derisive or insane laughter erupts which might or might not be about someone who has just passed. It is as demeaning to stop as it is to carry on. (pp. 12-13)

Through Willis’s writing, even the most naive observer of student behavior can’t help but see the conspiracy to resist which becomes an undercurrent in many classrooms where working class students put in their time.

Active oppositional behavior is a lot easier to understand than passive behavior. Students who evidence a passive oppositional behavior intentionally give the overt appearance of going along with what the teacher wants. These students charade the behavior that the teacher wants in order to get by without really doing the required work. Such students may cause no overt problems to the teacher, but their seeming compliance is contradictory. The student may sit quietly through the work time without doing the assignment or reading the material in order to be left alone by the teacher. The student may even open books, scribble on the paper and smile at the teacher in support; however, the student does not participate in the lesson or do the assigned work. In a sense such students can be viewed as choosing ignorance over knowledge. However, this choice may be more intentional than just an act of shiftlessness. The student may be only rejecting the teacher’s knowledge, knowledge which is valued by the dominant social class, and not all forms of knowledge. Shoshana Felman as cited in Fitzclarence and Giroux (1984) points out how this passive behavior can actually be acknowledged as an active rejection
of certain types of knowledge:

Ignorance, in other words, is not a passive state of absence—a simple lack of information: it is an active dynamic of negation, an active refusal of information. (p. 475)

To this way of thinking, failure can be seen as an active refusal of the student to learn the particular type of knowledge which belongs to an antagonistic social class.

Passive behavior can be refusing to work when asked to, but it can also be a refusal to interact with the teacher on any level. Sometimes this passive behavior seems to be motivated by a desire to become invisible to the teacher in order not to be punished for not complying. Some students shut down their interaction with the teacher because they don't want "their minds messed with by the teacher." Passive students may refuse to answer questions even if they do indeed know the answer. When pressed for a response or an opinion, such a student may answer, "I don't know." Nonverbal cues may even more strongly indicate that the student does not wish to communicate with the teacher. For example, a passive student may even refuse to get eye contact with the teacher when the teacher is speaking directly to the student.

These examples of both active and passive behavior belie an explosive core of hostility against the teacher or what the teacher represents to the student. This hostile behavior may indicate a true clash of social classes where the working class student is resisting the dominant class in the only manner available. The real question
here is whether these acts of resistance will lead to liberation of the working class student or not.

Acts of resistance can be viewed as moments when the powerless exert their power over those who dominate them. The problem is that these assertions of power are often feeble and inconsequential to the larger machinery of the school. Even if the acts of resistance are effective, such acts often only serve to reproduce the class system rather than liberate the working class students from their lowly position. For example, if a student rejects the routine of school by getting drunk at lunchtime, the student may be successful at resisting school but ultimately hurts himself or herself through self-destruction. In this way the student’s act of resistance only serves to reproduce the existing social class system. These acts of resistance do not lead the working class students into liberation but instead boomerang them back into willful domination. Willis (1977) labels the mental process which turns an act of resistance back upon itself as "partial penetration." The critical insight which caused the desire to resist gets distorted into an action which is against the actor’s best interests. Willis characterizes these acts of penetration as self-damnation:

... it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power we may say that there is an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism. However, this damnation is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriations, and as a form of resistance... a partial penetration of the really determining
conditions of existence of the working class. It is only on the basis of such a real cultural articulation with their conditions that groups of working class lads come to take a hand in their own damnation. The tragedy and the contradiction is that these forms of 'penetration' are limited, distorted and turned back on themselves, often unintentionally, by complex processes ranging from both general ideological processes and those within the school and guidance agencies to the widespread influences of a form of patriarchal male domination and sexism within working class culture itself. (p. 3)

One might query who is essentially better off in school: the lemmings who do anything that the teacher wants or the troublemakers who can see through the class system but whose only actions backfire against themselves. The good students who have no critical insight have a chance at getting ahead while the troublemakers who have limited critical insight have no chance. Consequently, there is a real danger in only being partially critical of the social process of domination.

The acts of resistance we have discussed thus far have not lead to liberation; instead these acts have only turned against their actors and lead them further into the service of the ruling class. Acts of resistance can indeed be liberating; however, these acts require a higher degree of analysis and self reflection in order to insure that the action chosen leads to liberation. Henry A. Giroux (1983) in his new book, Theory and Resistance in Education, discusses how acts of resistance can be directed toward emancipation:

Thus, central to analyzing any act of resistance would be a concern with uncovering the degree to which it speaks to a form of refusal that highlights, either explicitly or implicitly, the need to struggle against the social nexus of domination and submission. In other words, resistance must have a revealing function, one that contains a critique of domination and
provides theoretical opportunities for self-reflection and for struggle in the interest of self-emancipation and social emancipation. To the degree that oppositional behavior suppresses social contradictions while simultaneously merging with, rather than challenging, the logic of ideological domination, it falls not under the category of resistance but under its opposite, i.e., accommodation and conformism. The value of the resistance construct lies in its critical function, in its potential to speak to the radical possibilities embedded in its own logic and to the interests contained in the object of its expression. (pp. 108-109)

The real difference between an act of resistance which liberates versus one which dominates lies in the depth of the reflection which motivated it and in the direction of thrust which sets it to work either for or against itself. The acts of opposition which fail are those which are only partially realized. They are motivated by the actor's frustration which results from a partial insight into his or her domination, but the action itself is never realized for after the act, the actor is no better of than before. A true act of resistance is both a struggle against the forces of domination and an act of emancipation.

In order to explicate the potential of an act of resistance to either work for or against the actor, we need to turn to specific examples. The examples used will continue our critique of traditional grammar study. In the earlier quote from Willis, he described many of the classic student rejections of grammar study such as wandering around the room, reading something else, talking, etc. These acts of rejection are so common that they become unnoticeable, almost a normal part of the routine when formal grammar study is in progress. However, there are two overt acts of student
Every time that I have ever taught grammar, the activities only seem to proceed for a short period of time before someone raises his or her hand usually right in the middle of drillwork or review for the test to ask, "Why do we have to learn all this garbage anyway?" This question is a direct act of resistance which has the potential for further insight; however, it is generally answered with reasons dredged up from a pool of common sense logic which the students readily acknowledge as accurate. For instance, teachers counter with justifications such as "You'll need to know this in order to get a job." or ". . . to get into college."--depending upon the social class of the student. The only variation on this theme which teachers have great difficulty responding to is the assertion by an executive class student that he didn't have to learn all this junk since he would one day have a secretary to correct all of his grammatical mistakes.

The real tragedy is that students can be placated with the response that they will need grammar in order to get a job. Certainly, there are very few job interviewers who ask prospective employees to conjugate verbs. Even if employers did indeed ask for verb conjugation, it could still be classified as an act of sorting not unlike standardized tests which were discussed in an earlier section. The object is never whether the person in question can
speak and write well; the object is to sort out those who make mistakes often caused by differences in dialect. Although this direct question about the value of traditional grammar study will probably never result in a teacher responding that there is little evidence that such study will improve writing ability, such a question may have the potential to lead the teacher into critical reflection about the relative merit of traditional grammar study. It was just such an angry question raised in my classroom during my second year of teaching which lead to my reassessment of teaching grammar.

The second type of direct student confrontation is usually in response to a difference in word choice often provoked by usage drills or a correction marked on a student's essay. What transpires is that the teacher gives the correct word choice according to the etiquette of standard dialect, and the student protests, favoring his or her own word choice which coincides with his or her native dialect. The typical teacher reaction is to "teach" the correct answer by retracing the grammatical reason for the answer, creating a smoke screen of jargon with such terminology as "singular," "present tense," "subjunctive mood." The real issue which is one of dialect superiority based on social class domination is never addressed.

Even though students are seldom insightful enough to discuss dialect differences, some students will occasionally hold their ground in protest. An example of such a case can be found in Sharon
Dorsey’s dissertation (1985). Loren, an LTF student teacher, was working with one of the seventh graders who was working on a section of a student ethnography about themselves. Loren was diligently helping the student edit his writing by correcting all the errors for the student. They came to a particular sentence which Loren handily reworded into standard dialect. The student protested. Loren countered that his version sounded better than the student’s whereupon the student flatly stated that it did not and changed his paper back to the way he had originally written it. Perhaps the student was willing to challenge Loren’s authority since he was just a student from college and not yet a full teacher. Or perhaps the student was willing to challenge Loren because the student had more ownership over his writing than a student would normally have had with a traditional writing assignment. (These students felt that they were authoring a book about themselves and had more ownership in this project that they would have in a routine writing assignment which is generally only assigned in order for the teacher to check for errors.) I also found that my inmates, who were less socialized into the appropriate classroom behavior, were more likely to protest teacher corrections in their writing particularly, when slang words were corrected. Occasionally, the inmates would argue that there was no other word which could explain a phenomena as well as a slang word.
Once again these disagreements about language can be the fertile ground from which to nurture insights about social class and domination, or they can just be another skirmish where the teacher wins simply because the teacher is more powerful—the old because-I-say-so argument. Acts of opposition can be stripped of their political potential or they can be the basis for a small moment of insight which can eventually lead to empowerment and emancipation. In both of the cases cited here, the teacher's role is the one which makes the difference. A spontaneous act of resistance can be the subject of a whole lesson about language and social class conflict—if the teacher can see the potential. The composition teacher must make a conscious decision whether language study will be motivated by domination or emancipation.

Part Three
Hegemony: An Act of Political Praxis

Liberation Through the Creation of an Alternative Hegemony

Developing the concept of hegemony to include the notion of resistance has been an important recent addition to the critical theory scholarship generated by the new sociology of education camp. However, even with the inclusion of elements of resistance, there is still a huge gap between how these educational theorists use the term
and how Gramsci, whom they often cite as the father of the concept, envisioned hegemony. Certainly, concepts should not remain static and be restricted to the definitions ascribed to them by sage scholars from decades ago. The point is not that these new educational scholars should remain faithful to Gramsci's interpretation of the concept, but that these scholars have overlooked an important positive interpretation of the concept of hegemony.

Currently in these educational critiques, hegemony has a definite negative connotation. Educational writers portray the social process of hegemony as the villain in the working class's domination. Such a representation comes dangerously close to labeling hegemony as a form of powerful mind control used exclusively by the ruling class to manipulate the working class into willful submission. Gramsci focused the least upon this negative connotation of hegemony. Instead, Gramsci devoted the thrust of his writing to explain how the working class could create an alternative hegemony which would give the workers control over their own destiny.

Thus, Gramsci conceived of two entirely different types of hegemony: one that served the ruling class's domination of the working class and one that could become the vehicle for the working class's emerging class consciousness. The difference between these two interpretations of hegemony is more than just a question of the affiliation of the viewer. Gramsci was critical of the eroding
hegemony of the ruling class because of its lack of foundation in consensual rule which he felt should involve the active participation of the subordinate groups. It is this element of democratic representation which Gramsci held as crucial to the functioning of hegemony. This point is well represented by this frequently quoted passage from Gramsci (1971):

In a hegemonic system, democracy between the ruling group and ruled groups exists to the extent that the development of the economy, therefore of the legislation which expresses that development, holds open the channels for the ruled to enter the ruling group. (p. 1056)

Conversely, it is a lack of democratic representation which makes the rule by the upper class fail. Gramsci described the hegemonic rule of the upper class as a "revolution from above" or a "passive revolution" rather than a building of alliances from below or a "war of position." Roger Simon (1982) explains this point when he describes Gramsci's opposition to the ruling class's "passive revolution":

Gramsci suggests that a strategy of passive revolution is the characteristic response of the bourgeoisie whenever its hegemony is seriously threatened and a process of extensive reorganisation is needed in order to re-establish its hegemony. A passive revolution is involved whenever relatively far-reaching modifications are made to a country's social and economic structure from above, through the agency of the state, and without relying on the active participation of the people. Social reforms which have been demanded by the opposing forces may be carried out, but in such a way as to disorganise these forces and damp down any popular struggles. It follows that the appropriate strategy for the working class is an anti-passive revolution founded on the continual extension of class and popular-democratic struggles (... the war of position). (p. 25)
It is important to remember that Gramsci did not write about hegemony as an idle political theorist. Gramsci was a political activist whose whole life was dedicated to changing the structure of the Italian government in favor of the working class. For Gramsci, hegemony offered an analysis of society which could potentially be used by the working class to win the "war of position." Gramsci used his time during his imprisonment to further his political analysis. Gramsci very carefully outlined the steps through which the working class could create a powerful alternative hegemony. The working class's control over their own destiny was not to be gained by violence but through the creation of an alternative hegemony. Gramsci was primarily concerned with the way that the workers could be educated as a group and the psychological process by which the individual could reach awareness. Both of these changes involve critical thought processes; this is why Gramsci's more militant critics parodied him as believing that the working class could think themselves into a revolution.

Figure three outlines Gramsci's stages of political praxis. Like earlier Marxists, Gramsci believed that historical conditions made a society ripe for revolution. However, Gramsci did not feel that these conditions were purely economic. Gramsci felt that a state of organic crisis would place the ruling class's authority in question. Gramsci explained how the working class could then evolve into a state of political praxis. Gramsci's writings were primarily
The present ruling class exists in a social crisis in which the authority of the ruling class is in question. The ruling class is in the process of ceasing to be a social class.

First Stage Economic-Corporative

The individual becomes interested in his economic level. The individual is interested in economic power, but purely on an economic level. The individual is willing to fight for individual rights of legal and political equality within the existing social structure.

Second Stage Class Conscioumess

The individual becomes interested in his class level. The individual is interested in political power, but purely on a political level. The individual is willing to fight for collective identity, active role in political struggle, in opposition to the existing social structure.

Third Stage Hegemony

The individual becomes interested in the individual. The individual is interested in self-consciousness. The individual gains further understanding of the social relations, but not of the history of all the past.
devoted to elaborating upon this praxis as a social movement, but he
did give some brief indication of how such a transformation might
take place on an individual level.

As a social class, workers would evolve from small groups
which were organized on an economic level into a class group which
was organized in order to gain economic and political reforms within
the existing social structure. Finally in the stage of hegemony, the
working class would begin to affiliate with other classes and social
groups in order to form a national-popular collective. The working
class would lead the other groups but would not promote its exclusive
interests. The intellectual and moral interests of all the groups
would evolve into a collective will which would be based in civil
society and thus influence the state. Gramsci's discussion of the
development of the individual can be viewed as a more detailed
explanation of what takes place individually during the hegemony
stage. During the catharsis stage, the individual brings to
consciousness a definition of himself/herself in relation to the
present social class system and in relation to a history of that
system. The individual reaches praxis when he/she begins to operate
from an informed perspective rather than from the basis of sheer
common sense.

To summarize, Gramsci wrote about hegemony as a
political-organizing strategy aimed at social change. Hegemony has a
positive connotation for the working class, for it can be the means
by which the working class will lead the other social groups. Roger Simmons (1982) states that in some passages of the prison notebooks, Gramsci often used the words *egemonia* (hegemony) and *direzione* (leadership, direction) interchangeably (p. 21). It is this sense of active leadership which current educational writers overlook.

Keeping Gramsci's positive connotation of hegemony as active leadership in mind, we can return once again to an examination of the formal study of grammar. Using Gramsci's three social stages of political praxis as a heuristic, grammar study can be examined in relationship to a growing awareness of the economic, political and historical significance of language study. A representation of grammar study as related to Gramsci's stages of political praxis can be seen on the next page.

The traditional study of grammar can be viewed as progressing through the years into a higher level of awareness. During the first stage, grammar study was tightly connected to future careers. This emphasis upon economic success was used to motivate students to master grammatical terminology. Grammar was viewed as a primary skill necessary for even the most basic employment. Therefore, writing was reduced to a basic skill with the emphasis upon correctness and error reduction rather than upon content. Grammar study was differentiated for those students who were the general or vocational tract and those who were in the college preparatory tract. More currently, there has been a differentiation in composition
A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRANSCI'S STAGES OF POLITICAL PRAXIS AND FORMAL GRAMMAR STUDY

General Trends

First Stage Economic-Corporative
Grammar skills are related to career groups.
The motivation for studying grammar is purely on an economic level.

Second Stage Class-Consciousness
Grammar is related to the larger concept of dialect.
Dialects are considered in relationship to the social class system.
Individual rights are championed through legal and political channels.

Third Stage Hegemony
Interests are expanded to include other groups besides just social class groups.
Reforms move beyond economic and political interests and are aimed at larger intellectual and moral concerns.
Acts are conscious rather than spontaneous and are based upon thoughtful reflection about the social and historical dimensions of language.
Organic intellectuals lead the education of the working class.
The working class creates a national-popular, collective will based in civil society which consequently influences the state.

Specific Developments

First Stage Economic-Corporative
Traditional grammar drills are used with an emphasis upon usage errors.
Grammar is more heavily emphasized with the non-college bound students.
Courses are developed which are geared to specific job needs such as technical writing.
Students are told that they need to study grammar in order to get a job.

Second Stage Class-Consciousness
Teachers are aware that student difficulties with language skills may be related to dialect differences.
Students of the working class are taught edited American English as if it were a foreign language.
On a political level, NCTE takes a stand on dialect differences and issues a statement, "The Students' Right to Their Own Language."
On a legislative level, a lawsuit challenges the negative classroom treatment of Black English, the Ann Arbor case.

Third Stage Hegemony
Issues of race, gender, doublespeak and civil liberties emerge in relation to the teaching of language arts.
Literacy and emancipation become a focus of scholarship through the writings of Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Nan Elsasser, Shirley Brice Heath and Henry Giroux.
Classroom teachers make judgments about lesson plans based upon an understanding of the economic, political, and historical significance of language study.
Working class members become educated and lead the scholarship in language study through action research and teacher written ethnographies.
Working class members assert a new paradigm for teaching writing which spreads through grass-roots organizations such as the National Writing Project.
in composition courses on the college level based upon the student's intended career. Business writing and technical writing courses have proliferated. Grammar study seems to be following Gramsci's discussion of the economic-corporative stage with language study being very closely connected to specific career groups.

Language study can be viewed as making limited progress into Gramsci's second stage of development, the class-consciousness stage. In this stage language scholars would be more concerned with the topic of social class rather than isolated career groups. The pioneer work of William Labov and Basil Bernstein focused language study upon issues related to social class. As an outgrowth of this new interest in helping the disadvantaged, the term "standard English" is now considered discriminatory. This heightened consciousness indicates progress into Gramsci's second stage. Usage differences are seen as differences in dialect rather than as errors in correctness. Gramsci describes conflicts on this level as arising in political and legislative arenas. In the political arena, NCTE has issued a landmark statement of position called "The Students' Right to Their Own Language." In the arena of legislation, a few legal cases were directed at the issue of dialect discrimination with the Ann Arbor case being the most notable. Progress into this second stage is concerned with economic and political equality while a growing sense of class consciousness emerges.
According to Gramsci's model, the movement of language study into the hegemony stage would see a growing interest in other subordinate groups and a moral and intellectual unity in purpose. Movement into the third stage of hegemony may not be as pervasive as I would like to believe since very little change has reached the majority of English classrooms across the nation. However, there are several indications that progress will continue to be made.

First, there does seem to be a growing concern with various subordinate group interests. Issues of race and gender have become important to language study. Multicultural and bilingual education have been growing areas of interest. The rejection of sexist language in publications reflects an area of social conflict which may have a long-term effect upon the language. Additionally, NCTE has formed a Doublespeak group which criticizes the state's abuse of the language for political purposes. These subgroups could be seen as a collective who have similar interests and who are generating conflicts which can potentially affect classroom language study.

Second, language scholarship is addressing intellectual and moral concerns. Literacy has become a growing area of scholarship where literacy has been more broadly defined than just the ability to decode print. Writers such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux have led study into a new area of emancipation. The moral significance of teaching someone to read and write is just now being addressed.
Last, changes in teaching methodologies have been spreading on a grass-roots level, reflecting a national-popular collective of English teachers. The National Writing Project starting with the Bay Area Writing Project has educated thousands of teachers across the nation, utilizing teachers as the experts to lead progress in teaching composition as a process rather than as a product. This use of teachers as leaders is significant and is compared to Gramsci's term "organic intellectuals" in chapter one. Even the act of conducting research has changed from an upper echelon activity to a more teacher-oriented task. Ethnographies of natural classroom environments have changed the focus from quantitative studies to more qualitative ones. Action research has empowered the teacher to actually assume the role of the researcher. Whether these new intellectual and moral concerns will become realized in action on the classroom level will determine whether an alternative hegemony will be created or not.

Discussing the relationship between formal grammar study and Gramsci's stages of political praxis is different from discussing how grammar study should be conducted in the classroom. The next section will provide a closer look at Gramsci's comments about grammar study and what further conclusions about grammar study can be drawn from an understanding of a positive connotation of hegemony.
Gramsci's View of Grammar Study

Gramsci's writings on linguistics are seldom acknowledged. This is probably because most Gramsci scholars are more interested in his political writings than the extension of his theory to cultural life which Gramsci felt was crucial to creating an alternative hegemony. Gramsci wrote about science, aesthetics and language as areas where he felt that cultural reorganization would have to take place. In fact, the English translation of Gramsci's prison notebooks edited by Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (1971) is incomplete, leaving out much of Gramsci's discussions about grammar; obviously, these editors felt that such discussions were unimportant. I was only able to find one recent analysis of Gramsci's work in linguistics by Leonardo Salamini (1981). Salamini translated the quotations from Gramsci himself. The majority of citations from Gramsci in this section come from Salamini's work.

Salamini identifies Gramsci's opinions about linguistics as being in part a reaction against positivistic neo-grammarians. Gramsci was not in favor of studying strict linguistic laws which separated language, thought and history from each other. However, Gramsci did not identify with idealist scholars such as Croce who reacted against positivism by suggesting a subjectivist conception of language. Gramsci wrote critiques of several of his contemporaries. Gramsci argued that linguistics was missing an important historical
and political dimension. These two quotes indicate Gramsci’s position; the first is in response to a positivist and the second is in response to a subjectivist:

... the absence of a critical and historicist conception of the phenomenon of language, can lead to many errors in both the scientific and the practical field. (Gramsci 1971 p.451)

What are words when they are isolated and abstracted from a literary work? No longer an aesthetic element, rather an element of history and culture, and as such the linguist studies them. (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 186)

Gramsci is a linguist who is concerned with the cultural content of the language as it relates to political praxis. In his letters to friends and relatives, Gramsci wrote during the early years of his imprisonment that he intended to devote a whole manuscript to explaining a new conception of grammar as a historically determined mode of expression. Regretfully, we only have Gramsci’s notes on this subject and not a completed manuscript.

The next page provides a summary of Gramsci’s propositions about linguistics as compiled by Salamini. This list can provide an overview to Gramsci’s position. Salamini’s representation of Gramsci emphasizes how Gramsci’s theory of political praxis is reflected in his writings about linguistics. Salamini views Gramsci’s writings as a whole. In this way, Gramsci’s discussion of linguistics can be viewed as an extension of his concept of cultural hegemony. From this list, we can see that Gramsci is most concerned with the history of the changing hegemony of a culture through its language. A closer examination of Gramsci’s thoughts about the historical and political
GRAMSCI'S PROPOSITIONS ABOUT LANGUAGE

Linguistics concerns itself with the history of languages.

The history of languages is the history of semantics, itself an integral part of the history of culture.

The source of 'meanings' in language is history, more specifically, the political praxis of a given group.

Meanings are always 'ideological,' they reflect the interests of a given group.

Meanings are 'critical' in so far as they indicate the presence of elements derived from old or new conceptions of the world.

There is a dialectics of meanings, reflecting a dialectic taking place in society.

Linguistic truths are established by the political praxis of a dominant group.

dimension of language will follow.

Gramsci views language as a social product of a culture. As each culture changes, a history of those changes can be traced through that culture's language. The history of a language can be viewed as a series of linguistic innovations which reign for a particular period of time. Gramsci discusses these linguistic innovations:

This history of languages is the history of linguistic innovations, but these innovations are not individual (as in the case of art). They are innovations of a social collectivity which has renewed its culture, and progressed "historically." (as cited in Salamin 1981 p. 184)

An important point is that these linguistic innovations only have relative permanence. In contrast, many linguists have written about language as if it were an objective given which remains perpetually static. Gramsci writes about language as being in a continual state of change. To Gramsci language is both living and dead as it contains elements of both current and past changes:

[Language can be] at the same time a living thing and a museum of fossils of life and civilization. (Gramsci 1971 p.450)

To study one particular moment of a language's history would be to freeze the continuous movement of language for a moment. Gramsci used the metaphor of a photograph to describe the study of grammar:

The grammar is 'history' or a 'historical document': it is the 'photograph' of a specific phase of a (collective) national language, which was formed historically and continues to develop, or it is the fundamental traits of that photograph.
The question, in the practical sense, can be: what is the purpose of such photograph? To write the history of one aspect of civilisation or to modify an aspect of civilisation? (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 190)

The previous citation ends with a very provocative question. This question can be directly applied to the teaching of grammar in school. Do we teach grammar as an effort to understand one aspect of civilization, or do we teach grammar in order to try to change an aspect of civilization? I doubt that many teachers teach grammar as a historical photograph, even on the college level. The connection between grammar and history is seldom made. Instead many teachers and parents hope that teaching grammar to students will in some way prevent the language from decaying. Obviously, language will continue to change, but those who fear that the language is being destroyed are actually only fearful that their conception of the language will be harmed. The issue isn’t change but change of a particular type where the power over the language will pass from the hands of the elite into the hands of the masses. A specific example of this fear is the conflict that has ensued over whether "ain’t" should be included in the dictionary. The stigma that this one word carries with it is an indication of the conflict of power between social classes. It is interesting that one word can embody such a heated conflict over social issues. I was made aware of the degree of conflict that such a word can elicit when early during my first year of teaching a student casually said "ain’t" during a classroom discussion. The room fell totally silent and all eyes were on me as if I were going to go on a tirade and beat the student who had uttered the taboo word. Gramsci describes such conflicts as being
indicative of the reorganization of cultural hegemony. In other words, the language conflict over a single word could indicate a jockeying for position between the old and the new hegemony:

"Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or the other, it means that a series of other problems are beginning to emerge: the formation and expansion of the ruling class, the necessity of establishing closer and firmer ties between the leading groups and national-popular masses, that is of reorganizing cultural hegemony. (as cited in Salamini 1981 pp. 188-189)

This notion of political conflict brings us to the second dimension of Gramsci’s linguistic writings, the political dimension.

To Gramsci, the history of a language is an important source of knowledge, for it describes the affirmation of one linguistic system over another. Through such a history, one could witness the struggle between competing hegemonies. Gramsci hoped to define the role of linguistics in the social transformation of a culture. Gramsci’s emphasis on history was not an infatuation with the past but rather a desire to provide a system of historical analysis which could be used to direct the future. At the root of Gramsci’s scholarship was his political activism which strove for the creation of an alternative hegemony by the working class. Gramsci’s interest in language was for the role that it could play in this struggle.

Gramsci believed that a social class first had to build up its cultural hegemony before it could win the consent of other groups. Gramsci described how linguistic changes revealed the ascension of a particular social group:
Every new social stratum, which emerges to history, organizes itself for a struggle. Instills in the language new currents, new usages, thus breaking up the fixed schemes which grammarians established for practical and opportunistic reasons. (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 193)

These changes in innovations precede changes in power. Gramsci further explained how changes in a word’s meaning helped to align the language more precisely with the emerging ideology. Gramsci described this process as metaphorical absorption where the new meaning of a word becomes the metaphor for an old meaning. The new group coins new words and may borrow words from other languages; however, such borrowing always changes the meaning of the old word to suit the new hegemony:

Language is transformed with the transformation of the whole civilisation, through the acquisition of culture by new classes and through the hegemony exercised by one national language over others, etc., and what it does is precisely to absorb in metaphorical form the words of previous civilisations and cultures... The new ‘metaphorical meanings spread with the spread of the new culture, which furthermore also coins brand-new words or absorbs them from other languages as loan-words giving them a precise meaning and therefore depriving them of the extensive halo they possessed in the original language. (Gramsci 1971 pp. 451-452)

Gramsci would argue that changes in words are used to create changes in ideology.

Gramsci directed most of his writings about the history of language towards the specific case of his native country, Italy. Gramsci made extensive notes about the political significance in the change from Latin to Italian:
Gramsci argues . . . that the emergence of new dialects represents a dramatic break with medieval culture and feudal institutions and values. The conflict between the Latin language and the new dialects was the manifestation of a more profound conflict between two conceptions of the world. On the one hand, there was an aristocratic-feudal intellectual world, attached to the Roman antiquity and expressing itself in Latin; on the other hand, there was a new, progressive bourgeois-popular civilization expressing itself in new languages to affirm new exigencies and values. (Salamini 1981 p. 194)

Gramsci used Italian to explain how changes in language belie profound changes in the way that the world is perceived.

Gramsci’s emphasis on the historical and political dimensions of language influence his position on the teaching of grammar. Gramsci explains that the teaching of grammar has a normative feature. Normative grammar is used to establish standards of correctness and incorrectness which ultimately serve to create national conformity. Normative grammar is seen not as the only grammar but as a conscious choice, a proposition that one group is more worthy than another. To cite Gramsci’s own words about the creation of a new normative grammar:

It is evident that a writer of normative grammar cannot ignore the history of the language, of which he [she] wants to propose an ‘exemplary phase’ as the ‘sole’ one worthy of becoming ‘organically’ and ‘totally’ the ‘common’ language of the nation, in struggle and competition with other ‘phases’ and types or schemes already in existence (tied to traditional developments or inorganic and incoherent attempts of forces, which, as has been seen, operate continually in spontaneous and immanent ‘grammars’ of the language). (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 191)

Gramsci’s emphasis on the organic nature of a new normative grammar is an important personal distinction. Gramsci uses the word
"organic" to denote something which arises from an educated group within the general populace rather than from an elite minority.

Since grammar has the potential to become a linguistic policeman serving the political interests of a particular group, Gramsci labels the decision as to which grammar will be taught a political one:

Written normative grammar thus always presupposes a 'choice', a cultural orientation, and is therefore always an act of national-cultural politics. There can be discussion of the best way of presenting the 'choice' or 'orientation' so that they could be accepted willingly, that is a discussion of the most suitable means to attain the end; there can be no doubt that there is an end to attain, which necessitates proper and suitable means, this it is a question of a political act. (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 191)

This passage can be taken as a warning from Gramsci. Teachers too often discuss the best way to teach grammar overlooking the fact that they have already made a political decision regarding which grammar is the best one to teach. This political decision often goes unnoticed. Therefore, the decision not to teach grammar is also a political decision. However, instead of avoiding the issue, a decision not to teach grammar only serves to reinforce the existing social stratification.

Through Gramsci's writings about language and political praxis, four strategies can be suggested for the teaching of grammar. (See the next page.) The first strategy is related to whether a child should be allowed to communicate in his or her native dialect. Gramsci makes it clear that during this critical time period of
FOUR STRATEGIES SUGGESTED FROM GRAMSCI’S WRITINGS ABOUT GRAMMAR

1. Children should be allowed to communicate in their native dialect since this practice will foster their intellectual development.

2. Adults should be able to communicate in the national-popular language in order to expand their understanding of the world and to give them access to the knowledge possessed by the intellectual strata of society.

3. A historical perspective of grammar should be taught with attention given to the struggles between various social groups for power over the language.

4. Students should be engaged in the active use of language with the ultimate goal being the transformation of society.
language development, the child should not be bothered with learning
the dialect of the dominant social group. Gramsci made this point in
a letter to his sister about his advice concerning his nephew:

I hope you'll let him speak Sardinian and not pester him about
this. It was a mistake it seems to me not to let Edmea [his
niece] speak Sarinian freely when she was small. This was
detrimental to her intellectual development and put her
imagination in a straitjacket. . . . I entreat you not to make
this same mistake, and to let your children pick up all the
'sardisms' they wish and to develop spontaneously in the natural
surroundings where they were born. (as cited in Entwistle 1979
p. 24)

Although Gramsci's nephew was only two at the time, Gramsci's point
is that a child's intellectual development can be impeded by denying
the child the right to speak his or her native dialect. Since
Gramsci gave no indication when this practice of allowing the child
to speak his or her native dialect should be terminated, it is safe
to assume that the child should be entitled to do so until language
development can no longer be harmed.

The second strategy is closely associated to the first
strategy about native dialect can be inferred from Gramsci's writings
about education. Gramsci favored that the educated adult learn to
communicate in the national-popular language. His reasoning in the
following passage has several similarities to Bernstein's points
about restricted and elaborated codes:

If it is true that every language contains the elements of a
conception of the world and of a culture, it could also be true
that from anyone's language one can assess the greater or lesser
complexity of his conception of the world. Someone who only
speaks dialect, or understands the standard language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the world which is more or less limited and provincial, which is fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thought which dominate world history. His interests will be limited, more or less corporate or economistic, not universal... it is at least necessary to learn the national language properly. A great culture can be translated into the language of another great culture, that is to say a great national language with historic richness and complexity, and it can translate any other great culture and can be a world-wide means of expression. But a dialect cannot do this. (Gramsci 1971 p. 325)

This strategy of learning the national-popular language need not be in conflict with the previous strategy of allowing the child to speak a native dialect. Gramsci believes that learning the national-popular language can lead to emancipation rather than domination by entitling the working class to a better understand the history of that culture and the world. Gramsci argues that only the national-popular language can give the masses access to the high culture of the intellectual strata of society. Gramsci wanted the popular masses to increase their intelligence and to expand their restricted common sense knowledge of the world. Not being allowed to learn the national-popular language would exclude a person from his or her culture's intellectual heritage. Gramsci discussed in his history of the Italian language how language separations between the elite and the masses had served to give the aristocracy a monopoly on intellectual knowledge. Learning the national-popular language was not for the purpose of conformity but solely for the purpose of access to knowledge and intellectual development. If Gramsci was strictly for conformity, he would not have championed the emergence of the Florentine dialect as the national-popular language over Latin which remained the language of the ecclesiastics. Gramsci further
clarified this point when he explained that it was necessary for the intellectuals who represented the masses to write both in Latin and the Florentine dialect until they had asserted their cultural hegemony. Gramsci indicated that after the subaltern class had learned the standard language of the incumbent hegemony, they can then attack the assumptions embedded in the existing language. In other words, the working class should learn the standard language in order to be better able to challenge it.

Gramsci's strongest assertion about grammar and the third strategy in this discussion is that grammar should be taught as part of a historically determined mode of expression. Gramsci states that no such history of grammar has been written, for Gramsci envisions a history of grammar which correlates linguistic innovation with fluctuations in cultural hegemony. His efforts to record the social class struggles over the Italian language were an effort in this direction. In his history of the Italian language, Gramsci discusses social class maneuverings critically, and he did not just present a sanitized version of history which portrayed the aristocracy favorably. Consequently, a historical discussion of English would require a critical analysis of the social class struggles for control of the language. Teachers could make this point more real to their students by identifying areas of recent conflict within our language. These linguistic conflicts can be discussed as struggles between social groups for power. For example, there have been movements to write laws and legal documents in more understandable prose. The
various names used to identify particular subgroups reveals a conflicting ideologies, for instance whether you call someone "colored" or "black," "prisoner" or "inmate," "adolescent" or "middle schooler," "Miss" or "Ms." etc. Comparisons between different languages can reveal cultural biases in gender and race. The teacher's role in historical language study would be to stress that language is not a neutral absolute but rather that language is often the site of changing social processes which play an important role in conflicts for cultural hegemony.

Of course, the classroom may be the site of tremendous linguistic conflict between the dialect of the teacher and that of the students. Gramsci warned that the teacher must be aware of the potential for this type of conflict between the culture of the students and that of the teacher. He even suggested that the teacher should understand the student's dialect as a means to heighten understanding. (Gramsci 1971 pp. 35-36) It would be of little use to destroy the student's self concept in the name of learning grammar. Gramsci does not hold a punitive stance in regards to grammatical errors. He explained that a grammatical error was simply a lack of understanding of the historicity of language and not an indication of the student's innate stupidity (as cited in Salamini 1981 p. 190).

The fourth strategy is related to Gramsci's ultimate goal of the social construction of a new intellectual order which was to grow "organically" from the working class. Gramsci believed that the
working class should be engaged in the active use of language. Students should use language to achieve something real rather than just for the artificial purpose of being graded. Gramsci's own use of language is indicative of how language can be used to transform society. As a young man, Gramsci wrote for a political newspaper. Even his writings in prison were all aimed at transforming society. The early linguistic efforts of any child are similarly aimed outward in an effort to understand and control the world. For students, writing must offer such a potential or it is hardly worth learning. The experiences of Vera John-Steiner and Nan Elssaser (1977) working teaching the poor women of the Bahamas is a strong example of how language learning can be used to reach out and reshape the world. As a culminating activity, these women wrote a letter to the newspaper demanding better treatment by men. In chapter six there will be further discussion of other meaningful contexts for active writing.

To summarize, Gramsci comments about grammar may at first seem contradictory, but a careful interpretation of his writings about grammar demonstrates that there is a connection between Gramsci's larger theory of political praxis and his position on grammar. Harold Entwistle's interpretation of Gramsci in his book, *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics* (1979), does not keep this necessary distinction in mind. Entwistle tries to make the point that Gramsci's discussion of schooling does not support the propositions of the new radical educational writers who often cite Gramsci. It seems safe to conclude that Gramsci could not
conceive of the specific details of the type of school which would serve the present day British and American working class students best. Such textual wild goose chases are useless. However, Gramsci was clearly for empowering the working class to transform society. It seems certain the Gramsci would support the position of these radical writers for they have the same goal in mind.

By applying Gramsci’s theory of political praxis to the study of grammar, we can see that Gramsci hoped for increasing the intellect of the working class linguistically so that they could in turn use the language to transform society. This transformation may necessarily require the working class to learn the language of the current ruling elite, but it in no way should serve to lessen their sense of class consciousness. Instead, language learning should be used to foster an understanding of the history of social class conflicts and the active construction of a new hegemony. Grammar should never be defined as a simple case of right and wrongs determined through isolated drills; grammar should be portrayed as historically determined through the strugglings of competing hegemonies. Grammar must always be connected to culture and cultural change. It would be easy to twist Gramsci’s words and cite him as a proponent for teaching standard English; however, it is clear that Gramsci would in no way support a methodology which would alienate the working class from the development of their own language skills and impede their ability to create their own future.
CHAPTER III
THE REALITY OF EXPERIENCE

Introduction

One of the tenets of good writing, which is extolled repeatedly from Moffett to McCrimmon, is that the writer must always select a topic that is personally meaningful, the idea being that the writer will only be able to weather the storm and stress of the composing process if guided by the beacon of deep personal conviction. In contrast, most students view writing as an elaborate game playing exercise in which they must guess what the teacher wants in order to win. The notion of selecting a topic that is personally meaningful would be in direct conflict with the rules of the game. Richard Ohmann (1976) expresses the futility of the situation quite succinctly when he says: "... the student has no compelling interest in his initial subject but wants, primarily, to write a theme." (p. 138)

Many fellow Ph. D. candidates, who by the virtue of their status must be expert players of the game, have repeatedly warned me not to treat the dissertation as if it were a significant piece of
writing but to consider it as simply another assignment in need of doing. Trying to write something that is personally meaningful is often admonished in this manner, "You're making it too hard on yourself." This warning seems all too real when I consider how many undergraduate and graduate students I have watched abandon an unfinished piece of insightful writing because of the stress involved in writing about something meaningful. It is frightening to consider how many important things have been left unsaid while endless, unimportant things have been reiterated again and again. Consequently, students find it far easier to play another round of Trivial Pursuit than to rip out their guts by writing about something that they really care about.

The writer's motive can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can empower the writer with the mightiest weapon of all while on the other hand the writer can slip and fall and become impaled upon the very sword that could have lead to victory. As I have seen in my classes, it is often the most sincere student with the most meaningful mission who trips and falls while the fools rush in.

It is for these reasons that this dissertation is more than just an assignment; it is a reflection of my professional development. Therefore, it becomes necessary to situate my dissertation in the context of my own ontological development. (The converse of this is also true: my development is wrapped up in the
doing of my dissertation.) This biographical chapter will briefly discuss my professional development which has become the real life data upon which I base this theoretical work.

Public School Teaching Experience

Just days before school started, I was hired to teach seventh and eighth grade English at Reynoldsburg Middle School. Teaching jobs were scarce and especially teaching jobs in English. I started teaching the Monday after my graduation from Bowling Green State University. I had graduated at the end of summer quarter because I had rushed through my undergraduate education in just three years rather than the prescribed four years. I took all the prescribed courses, but I managed to pack them all in by taking extra hours each quarter and by going to school for several summer quarters.

It was at the beginning of my first year of teaching that a wise colleague told me that although I would be struggling all year just to keep my head above water, I should try to do just one thing that was original and of my own design. Near the end of the year, I remembered this advice and ventured a brave lesson plan—one which did not come from the textbook, the teacher's guide, the district's curriculum, or the expectancies of the administration, my fellow teachers, or the parents as I had internalized them. I was like the tiny protozoa sticking out a flagella into an unknown domain. It was a very bold act because it forever changed the shape and form of my
organism. From this one small prodding out into the unknown, I
became empowered with the belief that I could determine and create
the lessons that I taught. I soon embarked on the second year of
teaching, determined to create everything that I taught by myself.
Not long after this, I was planning a whole new course, Language
Expression, which incorporated all of my new ventures such as
creative dramatics, photography, group discussion and media. After
two years of teaching my self-designed course with the aid of another
colleague, we moved into a new, open-space building. With the new
environment came many new opportunities: becoming the English team
leader, designing interdisciplinary units, writing the curriculum for
eighth grade English, participating in massive school trips to
Washington D. C. and Philadelphia, and expanding Language Expression
into three electives for the ninth grade (Visual Arts, Performing
Arts, and the Art of Reading).

I learned a great deal from all these classroom experiences.
Most of all I learned to believe in my ability to decide what was
valuable to learn and how it could best be taught. I discovered what
worked and what didn’t, often by sheer accident. Throughout all this
classroom experimentation, my graduate education provided the
framework from which my successes and failures could be analyzed and
from which new adventures could be launched. Since finances have
always required that I continue teaching while pursuing my graduate
degrees, I have had the good fortune of having a classroom in which
to try out a practical version of some theoretical point that I was
studying. In addition, the contradictions of being both a student and a teacher at the same time have added to my perspective.

One particular success in the classroom was my use of teacher-produced visuals. I often created large cartoon representations of the concepts that I was attempting to teach. I began to investigate the reasons why these visuals seemed to have such a positive, long-term effect upon my students. The visuals served as metaphors which made the abstract concepts more concrete. These visuals made the unfamiliar, new concept seem less frightening to the student. I explored right and left brain hemisphere functions and enjoyed studying theories about how information is processed in the brain. My next insight was that these visuals were only successful when the metaphor was meaningful to the student. For a concept to be accepted, it had to draw from and be in harmony with the student's knowledge. I became interested in the students' unique perceptions of what they were learning.

Teacher Inservices

Besides all these classroom activities, I started doing presentations for teachers. I developed several cartoon slide shows about teaching and became in demand for workshops across the state, participating in several association conferences and school district inservices. I was involved with the Middle School Association from its inception. I enjoyed sharing my visual metaphors and
motivational strategies, but I wanted teachers to see that there were larger issues at stake than just being entertaining. Rather than harping on all the problems in education, my presentations were very positive. I emphasized that teachers possessed the power to create their own answers. In the content of my presentations, I stressed that teachers needed to begin from the students' perspective of the world. I wanted teachers to reconsider our cultural beliefs about knowledge. Instead of treating knowledge as a commodity manufactured by textbook companies and curriculum guides, I suggested that knowledge was an interactive process between teacher and students. This viewpoint requires participation from both the teacher and the students in order to create knowledge, a mutual masterpiece.

I have continued to do workshops for numerous professional organizations and individual school districts. My presentations have been about student motivation, teacher-produced materials, action research and the composing process. For six years in a row, I have been the keynote speaker for a seminar in middle school for the Akron University. Through humor, I try to get teachers to think more critically about traditional teaching practices.

University Composition Teaching Experience

After deciding to pursue a doctorate degree, I accepted a teaching assistantship with the Writing Workshop, the remedial writing section in the Department of English at the Ohio State
University. I taught various levels of remedial composition and freshman composition on both the Columbus and the Marion campuses. From these classes and my readings, I began to question just who became the remedial writers and what factors caused these students to be relegated to the bottom of the barrel. In addition to the regular students at OSU, I taught one class a quarter to a group of inmates who were allowed to take college courses in Marion Correctional, a state, medium-security, male, penal facility. Besides learning much about the inmate subculture, I learned a great deal about teaching composition from these non-traditional students. My experiences with the inmates were simultaneously being juxtaposed with my new experiences with departmental politics. In many cases the inmates' ethics were more admirable than the staff members. As my knowledge of critical theory grew, all these real life experiences were excellent cases for analysis. I was reading Paulo Freire, Richard Bernstein, Madan Sarup, and Kevin Harris. I also became interested in the curriculum reconceptualist movement and the writings of Michael Apple, Rachel Sharp, and Henry Giroux.

A Collaborative Ethnographic Study

Ethnography was another area of increased study, as I became interested in the anthropological methods for conducting research. I soon began to feel that ethnography was more than just a means to an end; I considered ethnography to be a basic teaching skill. Ethnography offers an insightful perspective from which to understand
what really happens in the classroom. This heightened ethnographic perspective helped me to notice my students' favorable response to the writings of their peers. This rich feedback from my students was leading me to make great changes in my teaching strategies.

Shortly after this time, I had the opportunity to triangulate my point of view with the insights of another ethnographic researcher. A fellow graduate student, Robert Coughlin, wished to do an ethnographic study of a remedial composition class. I volunteered my classroom and became the teacher in Robert Coughlin’s research for his dissertation. Through our mutual data gathering, I became increasingly aware of my students' perspectives of the composing process. I saw how they internalized my classroom explanations as something entirely different than what I had intended. The power of their own beliefs about composing were far stronger than anything that I had said in the classroom; in fact, the students misconstrued my words and used what I had said as corroboration for their own belief systems.

Professional Conferences

Reading more extensively into the school of Soviet psychology helped me to be more critical of my own model for the composing process. I was influenced by the works of Vygotsky, Luria, Leontiev, Sokolov, Akhutina, and Markova. These authors wrote from a different world view which believed that the composing process was more dynamic.
than the reified four step version (prewriting, writing, rewriting and editing), popular with our positivistic culture. My recent writings have lead me to delivering five different papers at four consecutive Conferences on College Communication and Composition.

Reprints

Classroom sharing of student writing evolved into a biweekly newspaper for all the students of the Writing Workshop called Inprints. Since some writings were more useful for discussion than others, I created a permanent anthology of student writing called Reprints.

While I was teaching in the Writing Workshop, my insights about composing found an outlet in my work on the second edition of Reprints. I researched the opinions of both the teachers and the students. The second edition originally was to contain some explanatory material and several student activities which utilized samples of student writing to be discussed or rewritten by the reader. Because of a change in administration, the second edition was published without the explanatory material or the student activities. Some of this material is included here but is still unpublished although it has been distributed to teachers as sort of an informal teacher’s edition.
For the second edition of Reprints, I decided to write a section devoted to debunking the popularized beliefs about composing that many of my students brought with them when they entered the classroom on the first day. I chose to express my critique of their distorted notion of the composing process as ten myths. Each of the ten myths plus their introduction will be included here as they were created for the first edition of Reprints.

**MYTHS**

You don't come to this class as an empty vessel ready to be filled up with all the knowledge we have about writing. In living your life, you have acquired a great deal of knowledge about the act of writing, very little of which was taught to you formally in a writing class. Compared to the rest of your life, the hours that you have spent in a classroom being instructed in how to write are quite a few. Where does the majority of your knowledge about writing come from? Daily life is our greatest teacher; through it our culture trains us by socializing us into believing what the others in our culture already believe. This culturally transmitted knowledge is passed from one member to the next. Soon this knowledge becomes so widely accepted that we label it as common sense.

Problems can develop when this common sense knowledge is misleading or downright wrong. A widely popular incorrect belief is a myth. The fact that the myth is not true does not affect its widespread popularity. It is easy to find only facts that support the myth, disregarding all other information. Sometimes facts aren't even needed; often a myth can exist without any supporting evidence. For instance, many people in our culture believe in the myth that memorizing terms means that a student is learning something. Textbooks give lists of terms, parents expect students to memorize terms and students expect teachers to give them lists of terms. Actually, learning about a concept requires more sophisticated thinking skills than the simple recall of a few words. Memorizing a definition for photosynthesis and understanding how photosynthesis takes place in plant life are two different things. Memorization does not mean instant understanding. But students who memorize lists of terms and spit them back on tests actually think that they have learned something. If these students go on to become successful, they may feel that memorizing the terminology for their field was a
critical factor. It is as if once a belief starts, it perpetuates itself.

You may be totally unaware that there are widely held myths about composition which can affect your attitude toward learning to write. Far too often, beginning writers expect the impossible from themselves. Consequently, the writer can only fail when attempting to imitate an unrealistic model for the composing process. By examining popular cultural myths about writing, you can stop being concerned with what everybody else believes and start concentrating on what you can learn from your own personal experiences with writing.

The ten myths which follow are not an exhaustive list of misconceptions about writing, but they will be enough to get you started thinking independently. Try to ground your beliefs about composing in the reality of your own experience. It may even turn out that these myths themselves have been what has kept you from being able to write well.

1. The Whistle-While-You-Work Myth

This particular myth might be responsible for starting your writing experiences in the twilight zone of unreality. In other words, you might not be able to write very well if you have unrealistic expectancies for yourself. Do you really believe that good writers are supposed to be ecstatically happy when they are writing? Do you imagine a good writer sitting at a desk writing merrily away while humming a few bars of "Whistle While You Work"? It's easy to assume that everyone else in the world finds writing to be a lot easier than you do.

Certainly there are people who love to write, but many writers despise the task. Many professional writers will state publicly in interviews that they have to force themselves to write. Agents for professional writers can vouch for the fact that they have had to literally beg some authors to finish a book. It isn't only famous writers who hate to write; we live in a society where people avoid writing at any cost. We'd much rather buy a card or send flowers than try to write out our inner feelings in order to send them to someone. Therefore, it is not abnormal for you to hate writing.

We mistakenly associate a well-written piece of prose with a person who enjoys writing. Not all good writers find writing to be a simple task. Quite often, writing is hard work. There may be many frustrating moments during composing when the writer actually dislikes what was just written. But the writer who keeps struggling may finally reach satisfaction. Perhaps the greatest pleasure a writer receives doesn't happen while composing but when the process is finally completed. A real sense of accomplishment can be gained from finding just the right word or sentence structure for a
difficult passage. Like many writers, you may not enjoy writing, but you may enjoy being done. This is most obvious in elementary school where the writers often end their composition with a huge "The End" at the bottom to signify their great pride in just having lived through the task.

It's no wonder that many students hate to write. It's hard to enjoy something that you are constantly being criticized about. The fact that beginning writers keep on trying to learn to write may be more amazing that the fact that they hate writing. Students often suffer from something similar to shell shock from having their writing constantly under fire from their teachers. Seeing what you considered to be a masterpiece ripped to shreds is disheartening. It isn't easy to get the gumption to try again.

I once met an assistant dean, a person second in command at a university, who confessed that he hated to write and was actually scared to death to do so for fear of being criticized for making a mistake. Oddly enough, English teachers may suffer from this syndrome as well. The pressure of having everyone expect you to be perfect is frightening. You may have experienced this feeling of fear. Teachers and students alike may suffer from a fear that their writing isn't good enough. This fear of writing can get out of control, and a blank piece of paper can literally terrorize you. Keeping that fear under control is important. Writing something—even if it isn't very good—may be better than sitting there in terror. You can always change your mind, erase or cross out.

Falling in love with writing isn't a prerequisite for learning to write. But it would be nice if you could control some of your fears by putting them in the back of your mind, rather than in the forefront where they can get in the way and hassle you when you are trying to compose. These fears may seem to haunt you with a little voice that keeps saying: "This isn't very good. This is a dumb idea. The teacher won't like this." Learn to shut up that little demon who keeps you doubting yourself. When you can keep your fears in check, you may find that you can begin to write with a true willingness to explore and experiment. Your writing experiences in this course are supposed to be learning experiences rather than a continual series of torture.

It would be nice if writing could always be a joyous event, but it is more likely that many of your writing experiences will be full of agonizing mistakes and gut-wrenching problems. In fact, so many writers have actually suffered through their greatest writing experiences that some of them refer to writing a masterpiece as giving birth. No delivery will be totally painless, but such pain isn't purposeless because it can lead to the birth of a fine offspring. You may take comfort in the fact that writing is difficult for even the best writers. Organizing many complex thoughts can cause great stress while just finding a good topic can
be sheer hell. Such pain may be unavoidable, but perhaps you can learn various techniques to improve your tolerance.

Fretting over sentences and moaning over a good ending may be quite natural for people when they learn to write. It would be nice if you were superhuman and could do everything perfectly with no problems, but then again you might be a little on the weird side.

2. The Manifest-Destiny Myth

Some people are very good writers. But were they always good writers? Didn't they go through a time when they wrote incoherent garbage? Were they born that way? If they were, then maybe we should test everyone's genes at birth to determine the good writers so that only good writers will be allowed to go to college.

Thinking that writing is an inborn talent does have some benefits. It can make a handy scapegoat. Any time you don't like what you write, you could blame it on the fact that you aren't talented. It's no fault of yours if you aren't talented. May people firmly announce, "I just can't write." But is it true that some people can't write? In our culture we sometimes think like a binary computer—yes or not—right or wrong. According to this logic a person either can or can't write. Like having acne or a cold, you either do or you don't have the ability to write. A college admissions office could line up all prospective college students and label them "CAN" or "CAN'T", depending upon their writing abilities. Thinking about yourself in these terms is a little destructive. Half the battle may be in believing that you can write.

The notion that writing is a talent makes the act of writing somewhat mysterious. Talents are never fully understood by anyone, even scientists. Some think that talents are a gift from an almighty god. The ancient Greeks had gods for everything, water, war, love, etc. So quite naturally, the Greeks thought there were poetic muses in charge of giving out ideas for written things like poetry. Having to appeal to a goddess for an idea might seem a little ridiculous to you, but believing that writing is the rare talent of a select few is just as mythical.

Learning to write isn't magic; it's a developing process. And that process may never end. As a child, your early drawings weren't just pictures; they were whole stories that only you could read. When you grew older, you learned to write many different things from secret notes to a friend to chemistry lab reports. Your ability to write will keep growing. It doesn't just stop dead when you pass freshman composition. Just as you continue to learn new words here and there, you will also learn new things about writing—much of which will be without the aid of a teacher. A written advertising slogan or a cheap novel may get you to start thinking about your use of words to be descriptive. One sentence, written by an important scholar whom you respect might cause you to
think about using a colon or a dash when you write. Learning to write is a lifetime process.

Learning to write takes time. We live in a culture where we expect instant results. No one wants to wait twenty minutes for a meal to be served, nor will we tolerate a medication that doesn’t make us feel better immediately. In some cases, quick fixes are to be doubted. If a salesman would guarantee that he could sell you a course in speed writing that would get you to write 50 page reports in less than two hours, wouldn’t you have some doubt about his credibility? Don’t expect the impossible from yourself.

There aren’t any short cuts to learning to write. You’ll need to put forth a lot of effort and time. You’ll need to write and rewrite many essays before you begin to feel comfortable with your new skill. Don’t expect miracles. One zap of the teacher’s red pen will not transform you into the Cinderella of academic prose. It may sound like a nice fairy tale, but believe me it isn’t true.

3. The Miracle-Cure Myth

Some students believe that grammar is an automatic cure-all for any writing ailments. These students come to college expecting to get a new dose of this bitter medicine in the hopes that it will cure them this time. They didn’t like it the last time that they took it, and circling nouns and verbs didn’t help them learn to write, but they still have blind faith in the grammar remedy. Students wouldn’t want a dose of grammar if society hadn’t convinced them that they needed it. Like caster oil, many parents believe that a dose of grammar is what is necessary to keep a child’s writing system running smoothly. And those few people who do learn to write, of course credit their health to this folk remedy—even though their cure may be totally coincidental. In our culture grammar is good medicine.

This particular myth has been around for a long time. People believed in grammar as a cure-all during the early one room school house days. Researchers have tried repeatedly to prove that learning grammar rules fosters learning to write, but there is no statistical correlation between the two.

Part of the problem with grammar might not be with grammar itself, but how it is taught in our schools. This rule system is often the only instruction in composition that many students receive. In other words, students do grammar exercise after grammar exercise, yet they never are given much of a chance to actually write something. (This might be quite understandable since most teachers see over 150 students in one day’s time. To grade 150 themes once a week, might take as much as 70 hours of time or more.) The biggest drawback to doing grammar work is that it is substituted for actual writing. Learning grammar yet not having much writing experience might be comparable to memorizing basketball rules yet not actually
ever playing basketball. Many students can parrot the definition for a noun, yet they can't write several coherent paragraphs. Grammar exercises in workbooks are generally made up of isolated sentences rather than a whole piece of writing. There can be no substitute for the experience of writing. In this case, experience is the best teacher.

Teaching grammar is based on the false assumption that most students don't know grammar. If you were asked, you might even say that you don't know grammar. For some reason many people in our culture are paranoid about their lack of knowledge about grammar rules. When I am introduced as an English teacher to an average person, the standard response is: "Oh no, I'll have to watch my grammar." People believe that English teachers correct grammar in every printed or uttered sentence that they come in contact with. Believe me, we have better things to do with our lives.

Any person who can talk in sentences knows grammar. A person has to know a lot about grammar to talk in sentences. Talking requires that the speaker comprehend such concepts as nouns, verbs, plurals, verb conjugation etc. Reading requires much the same principles; just the fact that you can read these sentences and understand them proves that you know grammar.

Perhaps a couple of examples would convince you. The following sentence is mostly nonsense words, but it will be quite easy for you to figure out the parts of speech. The glork slagged across the big nuga. "Glork" and "nuga" are nouns and "slagged" is the verb. The "ed" on the end of "slag" was a clue as well as where the nonsense words were located in the sentence. Here is another example. If you were asked the form the plural of a noun could you do it? Of course you can. If you had one monster you might call it a Wallup. If you had two, you'd say, "I own two Wallups." It's as simple as that. Forming plurals isn't as hard as it sounds. You have an exorbitant amount of information about grammar already tucked away in your brain. You don't choose words to say in a sentence by random selection. For instance, you wouldn't use a "the" or an "is" just anywhere in a sentence. There is a logic to your use of words. That logic is grammar, which by the way, you already know.

This is not to say that you don't occasionally use the incorrect verb form or have ambiguous pronouns. These slips occur for specific reasons, none of them your lack of knowledge about parts of speech. Through writing and discussing your writing, you may find that your little sentence errors begin to fade away. I have probably worked 200 grammar exercises about the difference between who and whom, but it wasn't until I actually was writing my own essays and really needed to know the difference that I learned it. Forcing grammar drills down students' throats doesn't mean that they will write perfect sentences. Grammar is no miracle cure. Grammar may be helpful to learning how to write, but it can't teach you to write. Engaging in writing is the only way to actually learn to
4. The You’ve-Got-to-be-a-Mind-Reader Myth

Pleasing the teacher is an important part of being a student. Early in your academic career you learned to sit up straight and look like you were paying attention. You probably also learned to say what you thought that the teacher wanted to hear. When asked your opinion of a short story, you might dutifully respond that it was the best story that you have ever read and that you could hardly put it down. Only a fool would respond, "This story sucks." Saying what the teacher wants to hear is a necessity if you hope to succeed.

The only problem is that these types of answers are a form of prostitution. Before long it may be very hard for you to formulate and opinion about something before you read the look on the teacher’s face or construe from the teacher’s comments what sort of answer would be acceptable.

The worst side effect of this form of scholarly prostitution is that students learn to write themes that are totally devoid of any personal commitment. Somehow these students believe that teachers want to read themes on air pollution, abortion, or transportation. None of these topics are totally bad; it’s just that the themes that students write about them are bland and predictable. Such writing rarely utilizes personal experience. Students prefer instead to sound like lifeless encyclopedias. The student may try to please the teacher by having tightly laid out paragraphs. But the whole paper often adds up to nothing. Here is an example to illustrate:

In today’s society modern man has had to face many problems; not the least of which is transportation. My paper will be about our three most popular forms of transit: the airplane, the boat and the automobile.

Since the early days of our nation, the airplane has served us well. It has been used to transport both people and products from one part of the country to the other...blah blah blah.

For a while this kind of prose might sound good, but soon you realize that any moron could write this, and that the writer didn’t really have any opinion or point to express. Why bother writing this paper? Can you imagine what reading 150 of these vacuous pieces of prose could do to your mind? Some college teachers can be pretty rude when they read such drivel. Maybe this type of writing was a big seller in sixth grade, but now your professors will expect you to have a mind of your own.

Your first consideration when selecting a topic for a paper should be to choose something that you are linked to personally in some way. It should be a topic that you have a vested interest in, something that you have experienced. Along with this close
connection to the topic should be a genuine reason to write about the topic. A teacher might say, "So you water ski! Big deal! I’m happy for you, but why should I read your paper?" You must have something that you want to say about your topic. Formulating an opinion about your topic is a critical part of the composing process.

Sometimes you have to kick several ideas around before you can come up with a topic. Students will often grasp for the easiest topic available. It takes deep thinking to come up with a good topic. You may even have to write about the topic for a while before you discover exactly how you feel about it.

Allowing the teacher to make all of the decisions may seem like the easy way out, but you are left with no way to judge your own work. If the teacher’s opinion is the only one that matters, then you can only wait helplessly for your grade because the teacher’s opinion becomes the only way that you can evaluate yourself. However, when you are your own judge, you can guide yourself by a genuine sense of what would be right. Then you can evaluate each part of your writing by your own perceptions as you write.

Some students feel that the success of their writing rests solely on their ability to guess what the teacher wants. Soon the students no longer have anything to say; it’s all a matter of jumping through hoops. In other words, the students’ only goals are to do what the teacher wants whether it be ten dollar words, a series of introductory questions or some flowery adjectives. Succeeding becomes only a matter of guessing what the teacher wants. The worst part of reducing writing to a mind-reading act is that the students no longer strive to make meaning; instead, they only strive to make the teacher happy.

These students are constantly in search of the right answer. They assume that somewhere there exists a right way to do things that once discovered will settle everything. I’ve had many a student shove a paper under my nose with the simplistic question, "Is this right?" These students want to give over all their responsibilities as writers to the teacher. They want the teacher to decide what they should say and how to say it. It is much harder to have to work all this out for yourself. Maybe instead of wondering what the teacher wants, you should be wondering what you want to say. Writers who cannot judge their own prose cannot guide their own work. They can only flounder, begging the teacher for help.

It may be disillusioning to find out that the teacher doesn’t have all the answers. Some students think that the teacher has the answers but just enjoys keeping them a secret. Realizing that there are no right answers can be devastating. Each writer should determine his or her own right answers. The teachers may be able to help you in your quest for the answers, but the only right answers are the ones that you create for yourself.
5. The Waiting-to-be-Struck-by-Lightning Myth

This myth appears to be a true statement. Certainly no one could dispute the fact that a good idea is a useful thing to have when a person is beginning to write. The problem is that many writers act as if ideas have minds of their own with the ideas deciding whether to present itself to the writer or not. This leaves the writer helplessly waiting for the idea to make its grand entrance. Therefore, the idea has all the power since it decides when and how to present itself. This idea is much like a headstrong child who sometimes will and sometimes won’t cooperate. A writer can only sit and wait, with a pen poised, hoping for an idea to strike like a bolt of lightning out of the blue.

This waiting for a flash of inspiration could be called the Ben Franklin Theory of getting an idea for a paper. Like Ben Franklin discovering electricity from a flash of lightning, many writers wait for an idea to strike them. This theory worked for Ben Franklin, but if you intend to get all your ideas for papers by sitting around waiting for them to happen to you, you may end up waiting for a long time.

The misconception that ideas have a life of their own has probably been perpetuated by the way in which new ideas come about. New ideas seem to come to us in a moment of insight, totally unconnected to the idea itself. For example, a great scientist may decide to take a bus home after working fruitlessly all day on a complex chemical formula. While reading the newspaper sitting in an easy chair, the scientist may suddenly come up with the solution. Whether the idea came out of the blue or not is debatable. The bus driver who was totally unaware of chemical formulas could not have gotten the formula by mistake. Only the scientist, because of all the prior work, could have come up with the solution. Putting the problem aside and relaxing may have allowed the brain to make unconscious associations that the scientist could not have made consciously. No matter what the reason, the fact remains that ideas don’t just appear independently; they are stimulated by other thoughts and experiences.

You can learn to nurture ideas and do the groundwork necessary to make them appear. Scientists read and do experiments in order to discover great theories. They don’t just sit around waiting for the idea to find them. Likewise, you can use various techniques such as freewriting, brainstorming and clustering to help you generate your own ideas. When you don’t have a good idea for a paper, you can do something about it rather than spending all your time kicking yourself for not having one yet.
6. The Translation Myth

Most people probably believe that a person thinks first and then writes. Like the old quip, "Can you walk and chew gum at the same time?" it is easy to assume that thinking is a separate act from writing and that the two cannot be done simultaneously. This theory of writing is very similar to translating a foreign language into English. The writer thinks up an idea and then translates it into words on paper. Of course, if a writer wanted to be very good, the writer would take great care to think the idea through before writing it, much like the old adage, "Think before speaking." A writer using this system would have to stop and start while composing, proceeding haltingly down the page. First the writer would think a sentence, then write it—think, write, think, write, stop and go like a driver who couldn't get out of first gear.

Ideas aren't totally independent of words. Sometimes our ideas take shape as we put them into words. Without the words, the idea may just slip away. Have you ever groped for a word because you wanted to say something but couldn't go on without that one key word? You might have gotten so frustrated that you couldn't go on without that one key word. Ideas aren't just translated into words; ideas come into existence through words. The thought and the words interact with each other. During this hazy stage, both the idea and the words develop together as they merge to create a sentence.

Students often underestimate how important writing is to discovering what they want to say. They moan and groan about not knowing what they want to say about their topic as if they could work it all out without lifting a pen. Very few writers can work out a whole paper in their brains and then just make it appear instantly on paper like a rabbit out of a hat. Writing makes the magic happen. Without writing you may not be able to formulate your thoughts. In other words, you may not know what you have to say until you say it. The art of writing forces you to make sense. Who knows, you may discover that you actually have more to say about a topic than you thought. Waiting to write until you've got it all straight in your mind may put you in a state of paralysis. Writing can help you discover what you have to say.

Writing has a lot to offer you. Through writing you can bring thoughts into existence that otherwise might not have taken shape. Writing is a form of thinking, perhaps the most fully developed form of thinking available to us.

This discussion of thought and words may seem pointless, but if you are laboring under a misconception about how writing happens, you may not be able to make sense on paper very well. Understanding what happens in your head while you compose is important because composing is much more than just writing down words.
7. The Neatness-Counts Myth

Have you ever written the first sentence of a paper over and over again to get it just right? I have seen students use up eight or nine sheets of paper to get past that first sentence. Each rejected effort is wadded up into a neat little ball until the writer begins to look like a worker in a snowball factory.

Writers like this are overly critical of themselves. They can write down one word and reject it before they even get to the second word. Expecting perfection in the first draft of a paper is ridiculous. Do you really think that famous writers only made one error-free draft of their writings? Mark Twain wrote several drafts of *Huckleberry Finn*. Ernest Hemingway changed the organization of *The Sun Also Rises* several times before he was satisfied. There is a chapter from the original version of *Dracula* that was rejected because the author changed his mind. Hundreds of misspelled words had to be edited out of William Faulkner's books before the final draft. Nobody is perfect—especially not the first time through.

Regrettably, you only see the final version of famous works of literature. So quite naturally, you assume that the final version is what the first draft looked like. Some authors have saved their early drafts which are housed in special archives at different universities, but very few people see these messy, early drafts. Whether they have been preserved or not, for every completed literary work there are several rough drafts that helped it come into existence.

It was not possible to reproduce all the drafts of a famous piece of writing, but we have included several pieces of student writing with rough drafts. Looking at the rough drafts of students' papers rather than those of famous authors will give you a more realistic view of composing. You may begin to see how important rough drafts are to a final copy. These rough drafts will give you some insight into the work that went into producing a finished piece of writing.

There was a problem with reproducing the drafts of some pieces of writing because they were such a mess. Things were crossed out, words were hard to read, arrows were drawn to connect ideas, and even some pages were cut apart and taped together again. But messy drafts are not bad; in fact, they are quite normal. The drafts were just difficult to reproduce in a textbook. Most rough drafts had to be recopied, so that you could read how the ideas changed. Don't be misled by the neatness of the rough drafts in this text; the originals were quite messy.

Although it is quite normal to have messy rough drafts, students often feel ashamed of their rough drafts and went to hide them from the teacher. Perhaps this guilt comes from the neat handwriting complex drilled into grade school students. Remember how
important handwriting was in grade school? You could be asked to recopy an assignment if the handwriting was bad. In grade school, handwriting counted more than what you had to say.

Handwriting is still important in college because a teacher can’t read a paper that is illegible. But handwriting doesn’t count until the final draft. The rough drafts of a paper are more for the writer than for the reader, so it is only reasonable that you might write the first draft in your own style of shorthand. For instance, in the rough draft you might abbreviate a long word that you have to use over and over, but in the final draft you would be sure to spell it out each time.

Striving for beautiful handwriting, perfect spelling and flawless punctuation in a rough draft can interfere with your composing process. If we imagine the brain as an electrical generator capable of producing only a certain amount of voltage, a writer would have to be careful not to use up too many watts. If the writer had the correct speller appliance plugged in and the perfect handwriter on and the idea computer going full tilt, then the whole circuit could short out. If you are too worried about spelling in a rough draft, you may not be able to generate enough energy to help your idea get going. Don’t overload your brain with unimportant tasks when you are composing a rough draft, or you may short circuit your ability to generate ideas. Then your brain will shut down, and you’ll left with nothing to say. Allow yourself the freedom to not cross a few t’s or dot a few i’s if you’ve really got a roll going and the sentences are cranking out of your head faster than you can write them down. The final draft is the place for neat handwriting, not the rough draft. Don’t be afraid to make a mess. In order to emerge from a writing session with a perfect copy, you will have to leave behind pages and pages of crossed-out, rewritten work. Masterpieces often emerge from mess. Copying a draft over in neater handwriting may be necessary, but it may not be as creative as composing the first draft. Making a mess is the most creative part of the composing process.

8. The Only-Idiots-Make-Mistakes Myth

This myth is very similar to the last one, but it has more to do with grammatical errors and misspelling that handwriting. Writing teachers have various symbols and abbreviations that they use when they correct student’s papers. One pet phrase that teachers use is "careless errors." This phrase is a very interesting one. It implies that a student made the errors because the student didn’t care about the paper. It’s hard to imagine a student intentionally spelling words wrong because of a lack of concern about an assignment. The student most probably cared about the assignment or the student would not have turned it in. Generally, what teachers mean when they use the words "careless errors" is that errors on the paper are so simple that the student should have been able to correct them by proofreading the paper for errors before turning it in.
Many people have misspelled their own name before. This may be because a person rarely takes great care to put each letter down one by one, nor does anyone double check the spelling of his/her own name. Errors occur because the brain is busy elsewhere. Short term memory can only hold five items or less. When writing a long sentence, it is quite easy to forget where you were, causing you to leave out a word. Sentences often get garbled because for the first five words the writer was composing one sentence, and from the sixth word on the writer was composing a different sentence. Here are a few examples of natural errors which happen because of the limits of short term memory:

1. If the workers cannot be guaranteed a contract, only a contract can guarantee fair hiring and firing procedures.
2. The problem with the administrators were worse every year.
3. A worker can only rely on their own resources when it comes to safety.

In all three sentences the errors occurred because the writer’s brain temporarily forgot what had been written before the comma and started constructing another sentence after the comma. Errors like this frequently happen in longer sentences. In the second, the writer forgot that the subject was singular when the writer was choosing a verb. This type of error happens in sentences where the subject and verb have several words separating them. In the third, the writer forgot that the subject was singular and chose the handy plural pronoun. Errors like this happen when writers use a singular noun to represent a collective group of people; when referring back to this group in their minds, writers remember their subject as plural when actually they had chosen a singular subject.

We will discuss techniques for catching these errors later, but it is important that you stop beating yourself for making them. Most common errors have logical reasons for occurring or they wouldn’t appear so often. Making these errors is in no way a sign of feeble-mindedness. Making careless errors doesn’t mean that you are stupid; it just means that you haven’t learned how to watch out for them and correct them. You have the intelligence to correct most of these errors; it’s more a matter of being aware of them than it is a matter of ignorance.

This fear of making mistakes can influence what you write. Some students write short papers or really simple sentences to avoid making mistakes. Most beginning writers would never use a semicolon or a dash for fear of getting it wrong. Taking risks is an important part of learning something new. Very few people can do something correctly the first time. Mastery of a skill takes practice, and practice sessions are loaded with mistakes.
If we could all learn to be a little less paranoid about making mistakes, then we could begin to see them as learning experiences. Mistakes can provide important information. After you become aware of semicolons, you might start using them too frequently, in all the wrong places. But by observing your mistakes, you can program your brain with some new features of the semicolon. Seeing your mistakes may make you cringe, but being upset doesn't help. Analyzing the reasons why you made these mistakes can lead you into learning something.

Having the teacher circle all your errors doesn't purge them from existence. It takes a long time to analyze a mistake. You need to figure out why the incorrect version seemed correct to you at the time. For instance, you might always put semicolons before the word "and." A semicolon can be used in place of "and" when the "and" joins two sentences. Therefore, the wrong answer was on the right track; it was just slightly confused. The human mind makes logical mistakes, so in a way, most mistakes do "make sense." Understanding your own errors will help you to finally gain control over them.

Oddly enough, mistakes can even be a sign of growth. Having problems with semicolons can only occur when a writer is striving to compose long sentences. Third graders rarely have any problems with semicolons because they just don't know how to write complex sentences. Our culture has taught us to be frightened of errors rather than to see them as a normal growth process.

9. The Security-Blanket Myth

Writing seems like such a difficult task for some people that they get desperate and look for the easy way out. Instead of learning how to improve their own composing process, these people look for a gimmick that will guarantee their success. The only problem is that there is no handy gimmick that will do it all for you.

Believing in a gimmick gives you a false sense of security. You begin to believe that nothing else matters. You start feeling that your gimmick will automatically cause your success. It becomes your security blanket.

The biggest security blanket that high school students bring with them to college is a set formula for organizing a paper. These students often write worthless papers on useless topics but feel that they are safe because their paper follows a prescribed format like comparison-contrast. Such students may write flawless paragraphs comparing a foreign car to an American car, but the most that they end up saying is that one is made in a foreign country while the other is not. Having something to say matters a lot more than the format that you follow.
Another problem that develops when writers follow a prescribed format is that they often force the format upon their idea as if one format could fit every idea. The five paragraph theme is one such format. These writers chop up their idea into five handy sections and think that they have a perfectly organized paper. But not all ideas fit into a five paragraph format, nor will the number five magically make these paragraphs become organized. This formula approach to organizing a paper wrongly assumes that the writer can pick the method of organization out of thin air before the idea has even been developed.

Most writers have to write for a while before they can begin to organize their writing. If you think about it, it would be hard to organize a chest of drawers if you didn’t have any of the things that you wanted to put in it. You need to size up the things that you wish to organize in order to come up with a good plan of organization. To go back to the example of the chest of drawers, many people would go about this task by spreading the clothes all over the room first. Then a decision could be made about how many drawers it would take for socks, underwear, sweaters, etc. In other words, many people have to make a mess before they can get organized.

Writers seem to need to see some of their ideas on paper in order to decide what to do. Sometimes it is hard to transfer a whole concept onto a flat linear piece of paper. After writing a while, the writer may suddenly discover a good beginning. Writing may actually help a writer to discover a pattern of organization. Donald Murray, a Pulitzer Prize winning writer, once said that he had to feel that he invented his own mode of organization each time he wrote, as if he were the very first writer to even think of using comparison/contrast, etc.

Organization is something that each writer discovers. Each pattern of organization depends a lot on what the writer wishes to write about. Organization can’t exist independently from the ideas themselves. The ideas and the pattern of organization dynamically influence each other. In other words, what is going to be said influences how to write about it and vice versa. Organization is not a mold into which all ideas can be poured. A pattern of organization does not exist apart from the ideas like an insurance policy which will guarantee your success. In writing there are no guarantees. Writing is a process that you have to work out for yourself. You can’t buy a blueprint from someone else and expect that it will work on your paper. Finding the most effective way to organize a paper is a part of the composing process for each piece of writing. Getting organized is an integral part of composing and not an act which can occur on its own.
10. The Chiseled-in-Stone Myth

Let's suppose that you asked a builder to make you a house. When you saw the house, you realized that there were problems. You told the builder to enlarge the kitchen, put a skylight in the attic and knock out the wall between the living room and the dining room. When you come back several days later, you find that the builder has replaced the glass in the front door, neated up the lawn and painted the kitchen ceiling. Needless to say, you'd wonder if the builder had been listening to you.

This is how many teachers feel when they ask a student to revise a paper, and the student returns with a paper that has simply been copied over in neater handwriting. It isn't that the student wants to aggravate the teacher; it's just that most students are taught that when a teacher says, "Do this paper over," the teacher means that the handwriting is unreadable. It's hard to give up old habits.

Revision is more than merely correcting handwriting, but it is also more than just correcting spelling and punctuation errors. This misconception may also arise because of past experiences. High school teachers often hand back papers with all the errors circled. Since these were the majority of the marks the teacher made upon the paper, the student may logically assume that they teacher only wants these types of errors corrected. It also may be that fixing the spelling of a few words is a whole lot easier than improving something more difficult like coherence.

This type of error correction reduces writing to a simple matter of right and wrong. Revision is only necessary if the writer has made a mistake. Improving a piece of writing is a far more complex task. Revision requires the writer to re-see what has been written. The writer doesn't just nit-pick the fine details; the writer re-thinks the whole thing.

Revision takes courage. It is not easy to take your first draft and throw away three whole paragraphs. For most students just writing the first draft was an awesome task. These writers treat their writing as if it were chiseled in stone; consequently, they find it very difficult to go back and change anything that they have written.

Good writing is actually a continual process of revision. Ideas evolve while you are writing. Only if writers expect to make revisions will they have the stamina to stick with the composing process long enough to work out their ideas. Writing is a process of experimentation. The writer tries out a word, a sentence or a paragraph. If it doesn't seem right, then changes must be made. The results can never be know in advance. You can only try it and then see if you like it.
One of the interesting things about change is the fact that one change often leads to many other changes. Let's say that you decide to tear something out of the middle of your paper and put it at the beginning. This may require more than a simple cut and paste operation. The new beginning may not fit exactly right. It may need to be reworded in order to become a suitable introduction. Or, this new introduction may cause the whole tone of the paper to change, leaving the whole paper to be rewritten follows. Perhaps the writer who can make the biggest changes is the most successful, for with every draft this writer learns something. The writer who can see no changes to make may be stifled and unproductive. Change is often a sign of growth. Even if you don't like a change that you have made at least you learned a little more about what you want the paper to be. Knowing what you don't want is knowing something.

Writing offers you the opportunity to keep working at your message until you have created what you really wanted to say. When we speak, our words evaporate before we can take them back or change them. What we have to say seldom comes out perfectly the first time. Students may be unaware how useful rewriting can be. Regrettfully, rewrites are cast aside, and you only see the finished product everything in its proper place. What you think is good writing may just be good revision.

A more extensive analysis of these myths will be developed in chapter five. I felt that these myths were in direct conflict with a student's desire to learn to write. One particular teacher waltzed me down the hall after she read my "Myths" because they expressed the problems that she frequently had with her students. I decided to center my composition course on the students' increasing awareness of their own composing process. To do this, I began to supplement classroom dialogue with assignments for students to write about their composing processes in their journals. Soon the journal became totally devoted to composing and was renamed a process journal. These journals and classroom discussions gave me the rich data which resulted in the excellent student commentary about composing that I
interspersed throughout the second edition of Reprints.

My efforts to get the second edition of Reprints published brought another bout with university politics which renewed my interest in the connections between ideology and power. I continued my readings in critical theory and dialectical theory and began to explore how this false consciousness about the composing process was fostered within our culture. Many political and economic factors influence which version of knowledge becomes accepted as common sense.

The Action Research Group

Through my readings in critical theory and my own ethnographic research attempts, I became interested in action research. I recognized the need for teachers to become researchers, conducting research in their classrooms and becoming empowered by the results. Last year I worked with a group of Columbus middle school teachers who had worked the previous year with professor Donald Bateman, discussing current theory about the composing process and ethnographic research. Each teacher conducted his/her own research study. I edited a publication, Action Research, which contained these teachers' language studies.
I also worked closely with Sharon Dorsey who wrote an ethnographic dissertation about using letter writing and a publication project with middle school students to foster language development. The study that Sharon Dorsey did was a collaborative effort with a classroom teacher, Shelia Cantlebary. The publication project that the students did was an ethnography of middle school students which they named, Fresh Talk (Baker et al. 1985). This publication has been so popular that during the year following its publication, it has been a big hit among both teachers and students.

Teacher Education Experience

My primary teaching position for the past two years has been with English education majors. I worked with student teachers, LTF students (Looking to the Future, an alternative, field-based English education program), and students in a language instruction methods class. Many of these English education students are just coming to terms with their beliefs about teaching composition. They had to work through great conflicts among the teaching practices of all their former English teachers, their recent readings in current composition theory and the traditional practices of the teachers who are now in the field. Taking the time to deal with these conflicts is important. In the worst circumstances, the conflict surfaced during student teaching as a skirmish between the views of the student
teacher and those of their cooperating teacher. The LTF students often worked through their feelings prior to student teaching in a seminar where we critically examined the experiences of several students in the field. The methods class also provided a forum prior to student teaching for heated debate about sticky issues ranging from dealing with dialect differences in the classroom to grading student writing.

Conclusion

Over the years I have had a vast amount of teaching experience. I have taught for eight years in a public school setting and for seven years in a university setting. I have taught students of many types: middle school, high school, college, teachers, remedial, honors, adult-returning, and inmates. All these experiences in the classroom have been combined with extensive reading and my graduate work at the Ohio State University. I have also participated with a small network of scholars who are interested in intensive language study. The totality of these experiences have provided the data which the rest of this dissertation will analyze.
FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMPOSING PROCESS
VOLUME II
DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Nancy Geisler Mack, B.S., M.A.

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CHAPTER IV

IMPEDEMENTS TO CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR THE TEACHER

Introduction

If the implied goal of dialectical theory is to reach praxis, then how does one begin the journey? This same question would be a valid one of Freire, who hoped to achieve the Herculean task of making peasants literate as well as masters of their own fates. For both dialectic theory and Freire the road to the future is largely through a deeper understanding of the present. If we accept things as they are without question, then we have no choice but to go on as we are. In order to be inspired to create a new history, one must be critical of the way things are.

To dialectical philosophy, criticism is more than the popularized, negative connotation of a unilateral fault-finding, based primarily upon one's own sense of right and wrong. If this were the case, dialectical theory would be little more than the subjective side of the subject-object dichotomy. Criticism is the close examination of the many social relations which influence the topic under investigation; more specifically, criticism is an effort
to understand how social, political and economic relations shape accepted practices.

Dialectical philosophy is not interested in a wholesale condemnation of the status quo. It wishes instead to reveal the dynamic relations between things which often go unnoticed. Dialectical philosophy makes the present problematic. In this way, studying the present can provide information about the way things come into being so that this understanding can be used to create a new way of being. As chapter one makes the knowledge about composing problematic, chapter four makes the teaching of composition problematic.

Unpacking why traditional composition teachers do what they do is an arduous task, but one well worth doing, for the act of analysis itself can increase an individual teacher's awareness. However, simply reading one author's critique of the teaching of composition will not cause awareness in itself. Critical consciousness must be an individual process whereby each person actively struggles to create a new critical awareness of everyday life. This individual quest for awareness is an important activity for both the teacher and the student.

Chapter four and five provide a more critical look at what happens inside of the composition classroom. Chapters four and five restrict themselves to examining the belief systems of composition
teachers and composition students, respectively. These chapters focus upon those factors which impede conscientization and ultimately alienate both the teacher and the student from the learning process.

Chapter four is separated into two parts: part one, "The Teachers Who Carry the Piles of Papers Home;" part two, "Impediments to Critical Consciousness for the Teacher."

Part one is a critical analysis of the social relations which influence the composition teacher. This section is divided into two sections, the college teachers and the high school teachers, since at each level the pressures are quite different. The hidden social, economic and political factors will be analyzed in order to reveal the hegemonic forces which frame what is taught in the composition classroom.

The part two is devoted to exposing the impediments to critical consciousness for the composition teacher. These forces continually socialize the teacher. Before the end of student teaching or at least by the end of the first year of teaching, the new teacher becomes little more than a shadow of what could have been, instead becoming a carbon copy of the teachers who were there before. These hegemonic forces are woven within the warp and woof of the fabric of a teacher's everyday existence, keeping teachers from learning from the reality of their own experiences in the classroom. Ten impediments to critical consciousness will be discussed: 1. The

Part One

The Teachers Who Carry The Piles of Papers Home

Introduction

There are many approaches that could be used to examine current practices in teaching composition. This chapter will not rely heavily upon statistical information about the teaching of composition for several reasons. First of all, such statistics may not even exist. They may never have been collected because of their explosive nature. For instance, no statistics are readily available about the faculty status of directors of freshman composition on the college level. Such information might be too revealing. Second, the methods used to gather such information are suspect. A simple task such as counting the number of composition teachers within a school
district is difficult, for as will be discussed later, who is tallied
as a legitimate composition teacher and who actually teaches
composition are often two different things. Third, statistics, if
they do exist, can be easily manipulated to serve any master. As
James Moffett (1985) so candidly observed in a recent article titled,
"Hidden Impediments to Improving English Teaching":

John Mellon and I spent a good part of two years during
the 1970's trying to prove that cognitive development would
result from small-group discussion -- an impossible task because
there is no one-to-one correspondence between thought and
language that would enable improved thinking to show
scientifically in transcripts. Then I realized that we weren't
trying to discover something that no one knew: we were
convincing already, as anyone would be who had spent much time
teaching or observing children or observing his [her] own
discursive processes. What we were really trying to do was come
up with scores that would embarrass schools into instituting and
honoring serious oral-language activities. The experts in
research quantification whom we consulted said, "Why sweat it?
Just tell us what you want to prove, and we'll show you how to
make the figures come out right. It's all bull anyway." (p. 52)

Several colleagues, who have been equally candid about their own
positivistic studies, have expressed severe doubts about the validity
of their results. But the larger issue behind doing statistical
research is that it is based upon a positivistic world view which
believes that reality can be best analyzed with numbers.

Moffett (1985) goes on in this article to question the whole
enterprise of doing research:

The current reliance on research distracts us from the true
causes of ineffectual and irrelevant methods of teaching.
Partly, this preoccupation with research is a kind of whistling
in the dark to keep up our courage. Partly, it simply supports
some educators and researchers who depend on it for funding,
academic recognition, and career advancement. I say these
things with considerable sympathy; some of my best friends are researchers. (p. 52)

In these two quotations from Moffett, he questions both the validity of the research being done and the motives of the researcher. Educational research has a minimal effect on classroom practices at best. Improving the teacher's critical consciousness would be a more valuable tool for provoking change in the classroom than producing research studies which contain questionable data motivated by questionable purposes which are totally ignored by the classroom teacher.

This description of composition teachers on both the college and the high school level will be more ethnographic than statistical in nature. Many of the traditional teaching practices which are discussed have been gleaned from personal observations.

This discussion will be a critical one, emphasizing the social, economic and political issues which influence classroom practices. An emphasis will be placed upon making connections between what happens in the classroom and what happens in the larger society. Discussions about educational issues often artificially examine school practices in isolation from the rest of society. We need to analyze these connections critically. As Michael Apple (1979) suggests:

We need to place the knowledge that we teach, the social relations that dominate the classrooms, the school as a mechanism of cultural and economic preservation and distribution, and finally ourselves as people who work in these
institutions back into the context in which they all reside. All of these things are subject to an interpretation of their respective places in a complex, stratified, and unequal society. (p. 11)

In keeping with this thought, an overt theme throughout this chapter will be to place the teaching of composition within the larger context of society, particularly the composition teacher's social, political and economic relations.

ON THE COLLEGE LEVEL

Graduate Students and Part-Time Help

Without a doubt, it is graduate students and part-time faculty who teach composition at our nation's universities and colleges. It is rare to find a full professor teaching a freshman composition course. Perhaps, at some smaller institutions senior faculty members may teach composition in order to fill their class load, but the unquestioned preference is for literature courses. Within larger English departments there is a hierarchy among the courses offered—British literature courses are more prestigious than the American literature courses. Thus, whenever possible, whether it be at a major university, a branch campus, a small community college or a technical school, part-time faculty are used to fill the teaching positions for the lowly freshman composition course.
All undergraduate writing courses are staffed in a similar manner. Research paper classes, advanced composition classes, honors classes, technical writing classes, and even courses incorporating writing and literature are overwhelmingly relegated to graduate and part-time staff members.

Perhaps even more alarming than the staffing problem is the fact that directors of composition at the vast majority of colleges and universities are not full faculty members. Only at a few major universities are the directors full faculty members. The job descriptions in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* will often clearly state that the position of directing freshman composition is non-tenure track. This means that these employees will not be reviewed in order to gain full faculty status. Such contracts are generally on a two to three year basis. This is especially true for directors of remedial writing programs and directors of writing labs.

The Status of Composition as a Discipline

Part of the composition teacher's lack of status departmentally may be due to the fact that composition itself has not been regarded as a legitimate, academic discipline. Until recently, composition has not been sanctioned as a valid area for scholarship. James Moffett (1985) underscores this problem when he states that:
This is especially true [the need to scientize their work by casting it as research] in the field of composition which has seldom been regarded in universities as more than a menial trade that—lacking the body of content characterizing such fields as history, literature or physics—cannot be staffed (as these subject fields are) with tenure-track faculty members. (p. 52)

Faculty hiring practices are just one of many ways that this prejudice against composition impedes progress in this field.

Another area where composition comes up short is in graduate degrees. Although composition has been a required course of study at every university and college since their inception, very few universities offer graduate programs in composition. And those who do often require more course work in literature than in composition. (Ohio State University only offers 4 graduate courses in composition, two are for linguistic analysis and one is for training new freshman composition T.A.’s.) James Zebroski (1986) has written about the historical evolution of composition as a discipline. He refers to three generations of composition experts. The first generation, the Corbett’s, the Winterowd’s, and the Kinneavy’s were a different type altogether because their academic work was in literature and New Criticism rather than composition. The second generation, the Emig’s, the Flower’s, and the Shaughnessy’s, were transplants who were still schooled in literary theory but later in their careers decided to devote themselves to composition. Only the new, third generation of scholars, the Connor’s and the Perl’s, are fully committed to composition as a discipline and have begun their
academic careers in the study of composition theory. It is interesting to note that several current, major figures in composition were not originally English composition majors. For instance, Donald Murray is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist; Donald Graves is an education major who at one time was a minister and then a principal; O'Hare and Moffett are also education majors. For these and other reasons, Maxine Hairston's (1982) use of the term "paradigm" in her frequently cited article, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," might be a little too generous to fit into Thomas Kuhn's (1970) use of the term in his famous analysis of the history of science as a discipline. Composition would more likely be labeled as pre-paradigmatic by Kuhn.

Whether we consider composition as undergoing a paradigm shift or as being pre-paradigmatic, the professionalism of composition teachers should be of great concern. Maxine Hairston (1982) offers an explosive indictment of composition teachers:

... the overwhelming majority of college writing teachers in the United States are not professional writing teachers. They do not do research or publish on rhetoric or composition, and they do not know the scholarship in the field; they do not read the professional journals and they do not attend professional meetings such as the annual Conference on College Communication and Composition; they do not participate in faculty development workshops for writing teachers. They are trained as literary critics first and as teachers of literature second... (p. 78-79)

Hairston goes on to fault the administrative attitude in regards to the qualifications necessary to teach composition on a college level:
Out of necessity, apathy, and what I see as a benighted and patronizing view of the essential nature of composition courses, English department administrations encourage this unprofessional approach to the teaching of writing. In the first place, they may believe that they have so many writing classes to staff that they could not possibly hire well-qualified professionals to teach them; only a comparatively few such specialists exist. Second, most departmental chairpersons don’t believe that an English instructor needs special qualifications to teach writing. As one of my colleagues says, our department wouldn’t think of letting her teach Chaucer courses because she is not qualified; yet the chairman is delighted for her to teach advanced composition, for which she is far more unqualified. The assumption is that anyone with a Ph.D. in English is an expert writing teacher. (p. 79)

It has been my experience that the administrative opinion about the qualifications necessary to teach composition is considerably less than Hairston’s view. Hiring practices bear out the opinion that any graduate student can teach composition. It is doubtful that composition will gain respect as a legitimate discipline until those who teach composition are regarded as professionals.

The Widening Gap between the Literature and the Composition Factions

One might say that the conflict between the literature and the composition factions in college English departments has progressed from a slight rumbling to all out war. As Corbett (1985) suggests in this statement from College English, the problem has become more conspicuous recently and has received a lot of attention at various NCTE conferences and in various NCTE journals:

The other problem [rifts that have developed in English departments] that has concerned the College Section Committee has been slower in developing and has been less conspicuous until recently. But rumors of hostilities and even internecine
feuds developing in some English departments between "literature factions" and "composition factions have been circulating in the last couple of years. According to the reports that were bruited about, the literature people were claiming that the teaching of composition was pre-empting a disproportionate amount of the department's energy and budget, and the composition people were claiming that the literature people were being vindictively resentful of the booming enrollments in composition courses. Sometimes the feuding got so nasty that decisions about promotion and tenure or about the approval of new programs were decided along partisan lines.

It has been impossible to estimate just how widespread this situation is, but even the faint whispers about such factional disputes have alarmed the members of the College Section Committee. They fervently believe that the health and welfare of our profession depend upon the maintenance of amity and cooperation among the three provinces that constitute the field of English--language, literature, and composition. As the first step in propagating that belief among our colleagues, the committee will stage at the next MLA Convention in Chicago two panels--one of them cosponsored by the Association of Departments of English (ADE)--that deal with the general theme of reconnecting the aims and the efforts of college English departments. (p. 509)

One might wonder how serious the efforts of the College Section Committee will be since in the same statement the only other and first problem addressed was to limit the number of composition panels at the NCTE Annual Convention in favor of more literature panels.

For English department chairs, writing courses are a colossal headache. Student numbers are high, staffing is a problem and there are continual conflicts over grades and plagiarism. (Ohio State has one ombudsman who is exclusively devoted to conflicts in freshman English.) Dealing with the students who take these courses is often difficult. Charlene and Arn Tibbets (1978) have called them "unwashed, unpleasant and unteachable"--not the kind of people that one would wish to dirty one's hands with. For these and many other reasons, the literature faction may be quite pleased to see the
composition people leave. (Recently, Ohio State has removed the ESL program from the English department.)

In an article titled "Literacy in the Department of English" Jay L. Robinson (1985) questions whether composition teaching should be housed in the English department:

Recent arguments for bridging the gap between composition and literature like those in a recent collection of essays sanctioned by MLA (Horner) can be seen, if one wishes to see them, as attempts to enrich the intellectual content of composition courses, thus raising their status in the English profession—something that could benefit teachers of composition, though not so much as English departments themselves. But will such bridge building benefit students? I do not think so. (p. 485)

Robinson points out that what English departments classify as literacy is not what composition teachers mean by the term. Robinson explains that the English department people have an elitist conception of literacy while the composition people see it as an outcome of "the productive exercise of available and developing competencies with language ... to make meanings that count for something":

I know of few English departments, and none in major research-oriented universities, that have deliberately made a comfortable home for those teacher-scholars who which and are adequately prepared to teach composition and reading and do research in the various domains of literacy and its uses. English departments mean by the term literacy one particular and quite specialized thing: an easy familiarity with a certain body of texts, a particular attitude toward them, and special practices for reading texts so that they will yield the appropriate attitudes—attitudes that might lead a professor to call one student "cultured," another "urbane," and still another a "candidate for graduate school." It is literacy thus defined that English departments strive most energetically to institutionalized: through allocation of budget resources,
through vigilant protection of the tenure-track and of tenure itself, through always watchful graduate admissions, through exclusive course offerings, through careful limits placed upon what counts as serious discourse in the discipline—upon what one may say and where one may safely publish. (p. 484)

In this quote Robinson goes beyond establishing a difference between what English departments and what composition people mean by literacy. Robinson demonstrates how English departments manipulate what composition people can and cannot hope to do. He warns that two such differing perspectives cannot be easily resolved:

In our present world, privileged definitions of literature, of reading and of writing, will serve neither students nor the world of ideas. Such definitions cannot compatibly be wedded to emerging definitions and descriptions of composing and comprehending, or to emergent definitions and descriptions of literacy and its uses in the world. What one fears, of course, is that a shotgun marriage will take place, because it is clear in present circumstances who owns the key to the armory.

The limitations that the English departments impose on composition teachers may have been what motivated Maxine Hairston (1986) to suggest at the 1986 Conference on College Composition and Communication that it might become necessary to house composition in a different department entirely. Hairston suggested that the communications department would be a better choice although she pointed out that at one university the composition courses were moved from the English department except for the creative writing courses—suggestion that the other composition courses were non-creative. The political issue of where composition courses are housed can have a far reaching effect upon the profession.
Notably, one of the respondents to Hairston's speech was a composition teacher who came from a university where the composition courses were housed in a department called freshman studies. For many administrators, housing composition with other freshman foundation courses seems all too logical and convenient. This type of classification points up a hidden assumption which is a grave problem for the composition profession. The damning assumption is that composition is little more than one of the lowest level, rudimentary skills. Therefore, learning to write is reduced to the mastery of a few elementary rules and simplified procedures. To this way of thinking, writing has little to do with the formulation of thought and the creation of meaning.

Classifying writing as a basic skill may at first seem to be complimentary since a basic skill must be one that is considered to be essential to becoming educated. Writing is indeed essential to becoming an educated, literate citizen. However, writing should not be labeled as a basic skill because that label implies that writing is somehow a low-level, routine, task which by this definition must not require much in the way of thought processes. After all routine tasks can be performed mindlessly—without thinking. Of course, writing can become a routine task, where we write things without being aware of the complex procedure that we go through to create ideas through words, but composing thought requires a great feat of intelligence, perhaps our greatest use of intelligence. We must not
forget that it is through writing that we make meaning, define ourselves and change our world. It is through language that we become conscious of the world, that we create consciousness itself. Language is a very special ability which elevates humans from other animal forms. We have only begun to tap its resources.

Teaching writing becomes something different when we perceive it as a basic skill. Learning to write is reduced to a menial procedure, requiring little in the way of high-level reasoning. In contrast, teaching writing as a high-level, intellectual process can only happen when we conceive of writing as the making of meaning. Learning to write can then be considered as a life-long, dynamic interaction with language. Our theoretical understanding of the act of composing has very little hope of progressing until we can accept writing as a complex, intellectual act.

Where the composition courses are housed is fast becoming a heated political issue in English departments across the nation. As long as composition is regarded as a basic skill, it cannot hope to be treated as little more than a service course for the more serious disciplines such as literary criticism. Composition courses have become the janitorial services for the English department. Janitorial work is seldom appreciated even when people find themselves in great need of its services. Janitors have no status; they are considered the lowest of all staff members. The people who are employed as janitors are seldom noticed by other classifications
of employees; they come and they go without much call for concern. The graduate students and part time staff members who teach the composition courses get very little notice from full faculty members. When teaching composition is no longer considered menial, transient work, the composition profession may finally move out of the basement.

Characteristics of English Graduate Students

Since it is the English graduate students who are the labor force for the college and university composition classes, this section will be limited to the social relations that these composition teachers have in common. This section will demonstrate how these social relations lead to the reproduction of the traditional composition classroom and the inevitable perpetuation of the status quo. There are important links between what happens outside and what happens inside of the classroom. In other words, the relations that these graduate students have with the larger society are dialectically reflected in their pedagogy. The graduate students relations to the larger society can be seen in their training, academic interests, social class, economic security and involvement in university politics. The influence of these societal issues upon classroom practices is seldom considered.
Although this discussion focuses only on the English graduate students, it is important to remember that many staff members may come from other disciplines such as education or communications. It is possible that the largest part of the staff may be part-time or even full-time people who are not currently graduate students. These teachers are an odd mixture of temporary help. Some may be M.A. and Ph.D. degree holders who cannot find desired employment. Others may be wives of full professors who seek university employment. (Interestingly, I have even seen the husband of a full faculty member so employed.) It would be unfair to assume that the English graduate students were more qualified than the teachers who come from other disciplines. I have taught with an anthropologist, a journalist and a Spanish major who were better teachers of composition than many of the English graduate students whose expertise was in Victorian literature or some obscure author. This discussion will only focus upon the English graduate students because they are the department's preferred employees.

Training

Since most English graduate students have only recently received their degrees, they come to their jobs with no teaching experience and little or no previous other employment experiences. These new graduate students begin teaching composition with less field work and educational course work than a traditional high school
student teacher. Therefore, one cannot assume that the higher the grade level, the more qualified the teacher. These graduate students are literary scholars who pursue one degree after another; they are not former teachers of high school who have been promoted to this level because of their teaching expertise.

Besides an absence of teaching experience, English graduate students have done very little course work in composition. They are not required to have any special courses in writing or composition theory in order to teach freshman composition. Their acceptance into the English graduate program is the only credential necessary. Of course, there are no undergraduate courses in composition theory, even if they would have wished to have taken one. Surprisingly, no additional writing courses other than freshman composition are required of English majors whereas education majors are often required to take one more composition course. All this means that the source of English graduate students’ pedagogy lies in their last classroom experience as a student of composition. Since graduate students in English are often exceptional undergraduate students of English, they probably tested out of freshman composition, making their last class in composition a Senior English class. Quite understandably, these graduate students often practice the same traditional teaching methods that they experienced in high school.
Many larger universities offer training sessions in how to teach composition for their graduate students. This large workforce must be trained cheaply and expediently. Training sessions may only be a few brief meetings prior to fall classes. (As mentioned earlier, Ohio State offers a three hour graduate course for its T.A.'s.) Most require adoption of a departmental syllabus and offer some discussion about grading standards. However, more time is often devoted to drop-add procedures than to theory or methodology.

On the average, English graduate students have little experience in composition courses, minimal training in theory and methodology and no teaching experience. It only seems reasonable that in a competitive market such unqualified workers would be replaced by more qualified workers. As was suggested by Hairston in the quote cited earlier, it may be doubtful that a large pool of trained composition experts exists at this time. Even if more qualified composition teachers were available, English departments wish to employ their own graduate students. Beyond this sort of academic nepotism, English departments do not perceive their graduate students as being poorly qualified; therefore, they see no need to even improve the training of their composition teachers.

From an administrative point of view staffing composition courses with competent people could even cause problems. "We want people who will teach, not people who will think," was the maxim.
This comment by a former English department chair reveals more than the departmental attitude toward training. It also reveals the English department's low opinion of teaching in general. Education majors are viewed as being less competent than English majors because scholarship is more highly valued than teaching ability. The quoted statement above posits teaching in opposition to thinking. In other words, the desire is not to employ scholars of composition, just people who will do the job.

Academic Interests

At best, teaching composition is only temporary employment for these graduate students. Necessarily, teaching composition is not a priority. Their own academic careers are far more important. Their future employment will depend upon their scholarship rather than this particular teaching experience. Since they are required to take a full course load, graduate students have difficulty finding time to grade the required number of essays let alone finding time to research theoretically based teaching strategies or lesson plans.

English graduate students are more likely to be majoring in literature than composition and rhetoric since there are very few composition majors comparatively. For the majority, composition has not and will not be a focus of their studies. In an article titled, "The Status and Politics of Writing Instruction," Richard Hendrix (1981) comments that teachers trained in literature do not always
Writing instruction could be a boon for under-employed humanists, a large and influential group. But teachers trained in literature may not necessarily be well situated to work with beginning students, nor to prepare students for the kinds of writing tasks they will likely face after school. English professors are not even necessarily good writers themselves, and their commitment to specialization has been at least as strong as any other discipline's. (p. 56)

Literature majors often find that they suffer from an odd conflict of interests: their coursework and their academic reading lie in traditional works of literature while their livelihood buries them in prose written by inexperienced writers who seldom reach the ranks of even the lowliest pulp writer. These composition teachers find student papers distasteful. It is safe to conclude that teachers who loathe virtually everything that their students write will have great difficulty creating classroom environments which nurture the composing process.

Social Class

English graduate students' attitudes toward writing are influenced by a more pervasive factor than just their current training and interests. Attitudes toward language are strongly influenced by one's social class. Graduate students are generally upper class or at least upper middle class members. However, such labeling is not in itself revealing. Kevin Harris (1982) in his book, Teachers and Classes, is quick to point out that this type of categorization should not serve as an end in itself:
People living within a social formation can be categorised into whatever groups we might want to divide them into. We could, for instance, speak of upper, middle, and lower classes based on height; or study the respective life-styles of people with different eye colours. What is important, of course, is not the means of categorisation perse, but what the particular categorisation can reveal to us about the workings and dynamics of the society in question and the place and function of the chosen groups within the overall dynamic. (p. 33-34)

It becomes more important to look at the ways in which the social position of the English graduate student's interferes with the teaching of composition than just to terminate the discussion with a labeling of their social class.

First of all, the graduate students' language skills may be due in part to their social status. Certainly, standard dialect was the norm in their home environment. Although their language skills are an asset to their academic success, these graduate students may only have intuitive knowledge about how to speak and write well. They may know what "sounds" right but may not be able to explain usage and grammar rules, making their contact with remedial students especially troublesome. English graduate students must, of course, be able to write well since grades in most literature courses are determined through analytical essays rather than multiple choice tests. Once again, it may be hard for these graduate students to articulate what they do automatically to remedial students who are having problems.
Traditionally, there are very few minority English graduate students. Consequently, these predominately white graduate students find many cultural and class differences between themselves and their undergraduate students, particularly the remedial students. Remedial students often come from the working class and often speak another dialect of English rather than the standard dialect. Dialect differences such as the black dialect's "be" verb usage can influence a student's placement in remedial composition. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) in her book, *Ways with Words*, has shown that social class differences affect many other language features than just grammar and usage. For instance, the students of a lower social class had an entirely different conception of how to tell a story than did the students from a higher social class. There are many implications from Heath's work for freshman composition classes. For instance, students from a lower social class like Heath's Tracktown subjects might do the following: begin a narrative by boasting about oneself, use extreme exaggeration, not use chronological order, not have a moral to their story and intersperse the whole essay with grand "I" statements unrelated to the story. Heath demonstrated that language habits such as these are a carry over from oral story telling rather than an indicator of intelligence or language deficiencies (pp. 166-189). Different social classes have different conventions from verb selection to coherence. However, dialect differences are often the criteria for sorting students into various levels of composition classes. It is no accident that working class students and
minorities swell the ranks of the remedial composition courses.

In addition to having conflicting attitudes toward language, English graduate students and working class students have different motives for being at the university in the first place. The students who have trouble with freshman composition are frequently working class members who are resting all their hopes and dreams for upward mobility upon their efforts to gain a college education. These students often represent the hopes and dreams of their entire families as well. Thomas J. Cottle (1977) in College: Reward and Betrayal documents several case studies of the many different types of students who feel that their whole future depends upon their "making it" in college. On the other hand, graduate students are sometimes born into the upper class and do not have to struggle for social position. Appreciation of classical literature, music and art are all part of their upbringing, so much so that they have chosen literature as their avocation in life. In contrast to this, the working class students are steeped in street culture and wish only to gain enough language skills to be accepted into a particular vocation in order to ultimately earn enough money to pass into a higher social class. In many ways English graduate students are the elite of the elite who guard the gates to the next social class, for they determine who may and who may not pass.
Economic Security

Although English graduate students may come from a higher social class, their graduate employment may plunge them to near the poverty level. Non-graduate student staff members are at an even greater disadvantage for their salary is often even smaller than the graduate students. Furthermore, teachers below the rank of assistant professor do not receive health benefits, vacation time, sick leave, maternity leave or any other traditional benefits. Society benefits economically from the fact that graduate students defer their entry into the economy and continue to earn a low wage for several additional years. Paying graduate students a low wage in order to teach a large number of students increases the university's financial stability. Many people benefit economically from the graduate student's willingness to accept a low wage for teaching services.

In addition to making a low wage, composition teachers have very little job security. Characteristically, staff members who teach composition classes are only given contracts on a short term basis. (Ohio State University hires its freshman composition staff on a quarter to quarter basis.) Contracts are generally for a year or two years at the most. These contracts stipulate that the position teaching composition is only temporary and that the staff member will not be rehired. Sometimes staff members are told that they may reapply for their own position at the end of the contract, but few
are ever rehired. Decisions are generally made upon the graduate status of the employee. For instance, a current graduate student in the English department would be preferred over a part-time staff member. An education graduate student with a specialization in composition and previous teaching experience may be passed over because of the administrative desire to support its own graduate program. Even past English graduate students who have a Ph.D. were not preferred over current English graduate students. Therefore, decisions are not based upon teaching experience, teaching ability, scholarship, etc. This is one of the factors which has given rise to what has been called "the gypsy scholar," who travels from university to university seeking faculty status.

The decrease in granting tenure is partially a reflection of current economic conditions and demographics. Universities are constantly looking for areas where they can cut spending since federal support has dramatically decreased. Some smaller colleges are even on the verge of bankruptcy. Meanwhile, the competition for the limited positions is keen. (Applicants for a low level composition position at an Ohio State branch campus numbered well over 100.)

Often there are no written procedures for determining who has seniority or how many classes are assigned to whom. It is not uncommon for staff members to have to wait until the day before or even the morning of the first day of classes to find out how many
classes they will be teaching or that they did not have a job at all. Similar to factory jobs, hiring and layoffs are strictly determined by supply and demand. Enrollment numbers vary greatly from quarter to quarter, with fall quarter having the largest number of sections and spring quarter shrinking down to a meager few sections. Many staff members are left scrambling for a job spring quarter. There are also very few sections offered summer quarter if any at all.

In addition to not being compensated as a full faculty member, graduate students are not treated like faculty members. Graduate students are not permitted to attend faculty meetings. It has been my experience that a graduate student cannot even make an appointment to talk to a dean. Mailboxes, offices, secretarial services, xeroxing, phone privileges, and travel reimbursements for attending national conferences all reflect the graduate student's lowly position.

With the large number of students enrolled in freshman composition, one might expect that the lot of composition teacher would be better; however, sheer numbers alone does not make a difference. There are several reasons why composition teachers outnumber literature teachers in the English department. Required freshman level courses consistently have a high enrollment. (At Ohio State freshman composition is the only course universally required for graduation of all students regardless of their major.) In contrast, the number of students majoring in the humanities or even
electing to take literature courses is dwindling since the current college students are more interested in courses which can be readily translated into financial security such as business, engineering and computers. Consequently, if all staff members of university English departments were granted voting privileges, composition teachers would have the clear majority of votes. The likelihood of this happening is extremely remote since even one composition faculty member rarely reaches full faculty status, let alone a majority. (At Ohio State University there are three voting faculty members who have a specialization in rhetoric and composition.) Selecting composition as a career choice is somewhat of a precarious decision since the position itself is regarded as only a temporary one.

The low salary, lack of benefits, job insecurity, unclear hiring practices, high competition, fluctuating job market, and poor treatment leads to a low morale among staff members. It is extremely hard to make advancements in curriculum and methodology when teachers fear for their jobs.

University Politics

Enrollment numbers are not exclusively determined by supply and demand. Administrative decisions which are often contingent upon budget allotments, admissions requirements, placement procedures, course offerings, politics and economics determine the number of composition teaching jobs. Remedial education is in a particularly
tenuous position since its funding is a highly contested political issue.

Since many administrators feel that universities should not be in the business of remedial education, funding to remedial programs has been drastically cut. A dean at a major university was known to refer to the basic writing program as the Cadillac of the English department since it ate up so much of the funding. (At Ohio State remedial writing courses are funded separately from the regular university courses by the Board of Regents.)

Another way that remedial students are excluded from the university is to tighten up admission requirements and placement procedures. The number of students who fail to reach entry requirements for freshman composition may be growing because of a backlash against the civil rights movement and open admissions policies instituted during the 1960's. It is no secret that universities do not want these ill-prepared students now. (Currently, Ohio State is only admitting these remedial students "conditionally" until they complete the necessary remedial courses.) Additionally, state standards for English have been raised so a drop in the number of remedial English students on the college level is expected. The Board of Regents agrees and feels that the need for remedial courses should only be a temporary one until high school standards can be raised. In other words, technically, remedial student should not exist; therefore, keeping the numbers down is a
priority whether it is done through changing admission requirements, altering placement standards for freshman composition or increasing high school standards. The attitude has changed: during the sixties all people were entitled to a college degree; now, only those who measure up are entitled.

Even more insidious than these actions to exclude the remedial student from being accepted by the university are the ways in which the number of sections offering remedial composition are cut so that the remedial student gets closed out of taking a course. The number of courses is severely limited even though the demand for the courses may be quite high. (In the past Ohio State has closed out hundreds of students from the remedial courses because the policy was to limit the number of sections offered.) Consequently, the number of students taking remedial composition has decreased on paper while in reality the number of students needing composition has increased. Even subtle factors, like the fact that remedial students are not made aware of the complicated procedures for adding a remedial composition class that they were closed out of, reinforce the odds that the remedial students will give up and go home, especially since passing freshman composition is a prerequisite for so many other courses. The remedial student soon gets the message to go home and drops out of college and off the official head count of the number of remedial composition students.
There has been a reduction in the number of remedial writers, but it may be attributed to other factors outside of the university such as politics and economics. Student loans and public assistance to underprivileged students has dramatically decreased while tuition costs have sky-rocketed. Since remedial students have many financial problems, government policy changes and inflation help decide whether remedial students can afford to go to college.

Administrators are not concerned with the needs of the composition student or even composition theory in general. They are more interested in maintaining the charade of elite standards. Traditionally, college students are required to take freshman composition their first quarter of enrollment, and as was mentioned earlier, every student is required to pass freshman composition in order to continue in college. Since so many freshmen flunk out their first year or even their first quarter, passing freshman composition is a matter of academic survival. In many universities freshman composition is labeled as a "flunk-out" course by the students. The student folklore is that the instructors are required to meet a quota of failures in order to keep the administration happy. From the teacher's point of view, the teacher has only ten weeks (on the quarter system) to produce a good writer who has been inoculated for common usage errors. Whether this is possible or not is no longer the question. The question is only whether the student measures up to the standards or not. The goal isn't to teach writing but to weed
out those who aren't college material. Learning new skills isn't really the issue; meeting the requirements is. Since whether a person is deemed college material or not is determined long before one reaches college, freshman composition becomes only an exercise in playing out the hand which has already been dealt to the student. To the administrative point of view, freshman composition is more for sorting than for teaching. Perhaps this is why more energy and money are spent on placement procedures and grading standards than on improving teaching.

In sum, graduate students are meant to be temporary help; therefore, teaching composition is only the indentured servitude required of those who are pursuing a graduate education. Priorities need to be changed from enforcing standards to fostering learning. When the majority of staff members have little or no training, experience or even an interest in teaching composition, the quality of education can only suffer. Until composition is treated as a legitimate field of study and its teachers are granted full faculty status, little can be done to increase the quality of the pedagogy.
ON THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

The Paragon of the Department

Composition may and definitely should be a component in all English classes on all grade levels, but many school districts pigeon-hole composition into one solitary course which is only offered to college-bound seniors. This discussion of the high school composition teachers will be limited to the teacher of senior composition because this teacher is considered by the administration, other staff members and students as a "composition teacher." Although other teachers in other disciplines may ask students to write, it is only this teacher who is labeled the "composition teacher." Of course, it is quite possible that teachers of history, science and math assign a greater amount of written work than the official "composition teacher." Even elementary teachers who have students write stories and poetry are not invited to most composition inservices, if there are any. English departments do not include elementary teachers; elementary teachers are generally lumped together into one department of their own with no subject area divisions since all teachers are considered to be teachers of all subjects with the exception of art, music and physical education. Composition is treated as the exclusive domain of the high school.
However, not even all English teachers are referred to as "composition teachers" regardless of whether they do indeed teach composition within their courses. These teachers are simply labeled "English teachers." These "English teachers" may be expected to teach writing but not as a primary goal like the senior composition teacher. Even the journalism teacher is not bestowed with the title of "composition teacher." Journalism teachers are not commonly thought of as experts of teaching writing; journalism is viewed more as an extra curricular activity like the yearbook or putting on plays even though it is a legitimate course where the primary activity is writing. (In most school districts the senior composition teacher and the journalism teacher are rarely the same person.) The high school English teachers' skills are very fragmented with little integration of the language arts: there are individual teachers in charge of literature, composition, journalism and speech. Their roles are narrowly defined, and the teachers are often somewhat hostile toward one another because they have to fight to keep their territory of courses exclusive from the other English teachers. There is seldom any rotating of duties or much interaction about pedagogy. The senior composition teacher is the only legitimate title holder of "composition teacher" in the English department.

In no way is this focus upon the high school composition teacher meant to cause the reader to construe that these teachers are the only or the best teachers of writing. The importance of
composition instruction on other grade levels will be discussed in a later section about when composition is taught.

The high school composition teacher’s plight is far different than that of the college composition teacher. On the college level, the composition teacher is not even considered a faculty member; in stark contrast to this, the high school composition teacher is often the paragon of the department. It is highly possible that the senior composition teacher also acts as the department chair. Junior high, middle school and elementary teachers are seldom chosen to be department chairs. This may be due in part to the fact to the cultural belief that high school teachers are more knowledgeable than teachers of the lower grades. As corroboration of this, I have never heard of anyone other than a high school teacher being named chair of an English department or any other department for that matter. Composition teachers often rise to the top of their department.

The High School Hierarchy

Senior composition teachers fight their way up to this position and then stay there until they retire or leave the system. When new teachers enter into the high school, they generally start at the lowest grade level and work up. The next page depicts the hierarchy of high school English courses ranked by grade level, student ability, subject area, and course content.
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</table>

**GRADE LEVEL AND ABILITY GROUPING**

*figure 4*

*The High School English Teacher Hierarchy*
The first criterion was alluded to in the introductory paragraph to this section. It is a commonly held belief that the higher the grade level, the smarter the teacher. Prestige is also connected to the ability level of the students; therefore, the reasoning is that the higher the ability level, the more qualified the teacher. For example, teaching ninth grade general or remedial students is less desirable than teaching college bound students of the same grade level.

Among the literature courses the same hierarchy exists with high school teachers as it did with college teachers: British is preferred over American literature. Courses using a thematic approach or adolescent novels may actually be more popular among the students; however, the teachers generally view the survey courses as being more academically rigorous.

Whether teaching composition is considered more prestigious than teaching literature is debatable. There are numerous reasons why teachers should prefer teaching the literature courses. One of the most pragmatic reasons is the fact that teaching composition requires more time for grading papers than teaching literature. Additionally, English teachers have a stronger background in literature courses than they do in writing. Given only these two factors, it seems illogical that many teachers aspire to the position of senior composition.
Culturally, prestige is connected to that which is considered to be intellectually more difficult. There is much evidence that our culture views composition as being more formidable than literature. Students believe that composition teachers are more demanding than their counterparts. Composition teachers have a reputation for being sticklers for correctness and are well known for failing students who do not measure up to the teacher's strict standards. Another indication of this cultural bias can be seen in our attitudes toward preparation for college. Composition is valued as an essential skill for college whereas literature is not. The importance placed on the need for a strong writing ability in college is born out in the folklore about freshman composition being a flunk-out class. For this reason, high school composition teachers often try to keep in touch with what is happening in college freshman composition courses whereas high school literature teachers seldom check to see what grades their students receive in their literature courses in college. High school composition teachers in affluent suburbs are particularly interested in which of their students test out of freshman composition at which universities and pride themselves on this accomplishment. In our culture the issue of competency at the college level focuses on writing ability rather than any skills related to literature. Composition is considered to be essential to the student's success in college. Perhaps this emphasis on writing competence gives the composition teacher a slightly higher degree of respect than the literature teacher.
The question of prestige is further complicated by the fact that there are usually not enough sections of senior composition in most high schools to fill up one teacher's schedule. Senior composition teachers usually teach other literature courses rather than teaching other lower-level composition courses. This may be because of the major concern that a composition course demands a large amount of time for grading student assignments. Grading compositions is considered to be so time consuming that no one teacher usually teaches more than one grade level of composition—if composition courses are offered on more than one grade level. As was stated earlier, many high schools only offer one course delineated as a composition course. Composition teachers almost always teach at least as many if not more literature courses than they do composition courses.

Within the teaching of composition courses the hierarchy is quite clear. (See the next page.) Rated at the top of the list is the advanced placement, A. P., course, offered by the more elite school districts. A. P. is designed to help the college senior test out of freshman composition since most universities grant this option to the more advanced students. Then the rest of the courses are ranked below senior composition by grade level. The lowest level writing courses are the most practical courses designed for channeling students into careers which do not require a college education. Such courses might be named: Business English or On the
THE HIGH SCHOOL COMPOSITION TEACHER HIERARCHY

Advanced Placement Composition

Senior Composition

The Research Paper

Creative Writing

Business Writing

On the Job English
Job English. As far as content within the courses, the research paper is deemed as the king of the academic realm with creative writing being viewed more as the court jester, an entertaining buffoon not to be taken seriously. Creative writing is looked upon as a frivolous, peripheral endeavor, a hobby of sorts, whereas the research paper is regarded as a necessary academic tool.

In sum, senior composition teachers hold one of the highest valued positions possible for a high school English teacher. This lofty position is coveted for its grade level, student ability level, subject area and content. Teachers who gain the throne enjoy their status and seldom relinquish their rule until death or retirement.

Characteristics of High School Composition Teachers

Although high school composition teachers have much more prestige among faculty members than do their college colleagues, this prestige does not result in many differences in teaching practices. Both high school and college composition teachers become little more than a clone of the same traditional teachers that they once had. The high school and the college teachers share the same values about teaching composition. High school and college teachers both promote the status quo even though they don't both share the same status within the society. To illuminate the societal influences upon high school composition teachers, their training, selection, social class, economic security and involvement in school district politics are
Training

The majority of practicing English teachers were only required to take one composition course beyond the required freshman English course. Both of these courses are performance courses and never discuss pedagogy. Until recently, most universities only required one methods course for English teachers and the bulk of this course was always devoted to teaching literature. (At Ohio State there are two methods course devoted to language and composition.) Several universities are currently training their English majors in composition theory. However, when these students do their standard student teaching experience, they find that teachers in the field expect them to teach grammar and assign writing exercises in a traditional manner. Cooperating teachers often complain about their student teachers' lack of knowledge about parts of speech and usage rules. Student teachers, in turn, complain about their cooperating teacher's barbaric teaching practices.

I finally asked Mrs. _____ why she is so "ditto happy" with all of her question sheets and info sheets that she hands out to the students. (Of course, I worded the question a little more respectfully!) Anyway--she said that she has learned through the years that if you give the students something to write on, since they seldom come very prepared for class, then they won't write in the books or on the desk. She said that she used to discuss stories with them and have them take notes on their own, but they would write in the books. (from a student's field experience journal)

It is more than ironic that these student teachers often end
up becoming the same type of teacher that they once despised. This problem perplexes many education professors because all too frequently these professors must watch their students forget their recent coursework while instead they become just like the traditional teachers who are already out in the field. It is hard to conceive that there are sources of training more powerful than all the required education courses. Dan C. Lortie (1975) in his sociological study of teaching draws attention to the time that teachers spend as students. He sees this time as a subtle form of teacher training. Lortie refers to this type of teacher training as an "apprenticeship of observation." Just the sheer number of hours spent as a student adds validity to this argument:

Those who teach have normally had sixteen continuous years of contact with teachers and professors. American young people, in fact, see teachers at work much more than they see any other occupational group; we can estimate that the average student has spent 13,000 hours in direct contact with classroom teachers by the time he [she] graduates from high school. (p. 61)

During all these hours in the classroom, students not only become socialized as students, they also learn to internalize the role of the teacher as well. Lortie (1975) explains how students subconsciously learn to think like the teacher:

In the terminology of symbolic interaction theory, the student learns to 'take the role' of the classroom teacher, to engage in at least enough empathy to anticipate the teacher's probable reaction to his [her] behavior. This requires that the student project himself [herself] into the teacher's position and imagine how he [she] feels about various student actions. (p. 62)

Lortie goes on to indicate how this process of internalization may even be stronger for those who hope to succeed and go on to college,
which indeed all teachers do.

All of us base our current actions upon our previous life experiences. The problem is that we do not critically analyze what we experienced. The student's viewpoint of the classroom is necessarily distorted. To cite Lortie (1975) again:

What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles. Imagining how the teacher feels and playing the role of a teacher are different experiences; the difference is intensified, moreover, because children have not yet acquired sufficient emotional experience to make accurate empathetic attributions. Students have no reliable basis for assessing the difficulty or demands of various teaching acts and thus may attribute teachers' actions to differences in personality or mood....Lacking a sense of the problematics...they are not likely to make useful linkages between teaching objectives and teacher actions; they will not perceive the teacher as someone making choices among teaching strategies. There is ample indication of affective responses of liking and disliking, identifying with or rejecting, but there seems relatively little basis for assuming that students make cognitive differentiations and thoughtful assessments of the quality of teacher performances. (pp. 62-63)

This is only a brief indication of how hegemony works through our experiences as students to socialize us into the role of the traditional teacher.

With composition teachers, the embedded practices such as circling errors and teaching parts of speech have continued to perpetuate themselves even when methods courses have condemned them. The composition teacher's subconscious repertoire of past experiences offers up traditional practices to the conscious mind before the teacher has time to analyze them. I found this to be all too true
personally. One day I heard my voice angrily assigning writing sentences as punishment in a class where my main goal was to get students to enjoy writing. This was not the first time that I had caught myself being possessed by demons from my past school experiences. I had forced students to write spelling words ten times a piece and to keep grammar notebooks with the rules mindlessly inscribed upon its pages until one day it finally dawned on me how destructive these practices were. It seems that it took a long time for my critical conscious mind to reject the practices that my subconscious kept automatically suggesting from my past experiences.

Another source of observational training are those experiences we all have had as writers. However, there is a great difference between being a student writing papers in a traditional composition classroom and being a writer constructing sense for a real purpose. English teachers seldom engage in real writing. Since they spend a great amount of time grading papers, teachers feel that writing is a hobby that they just don’t have time for. Experience as a real writer could offer the opportunity for teachers to consider classroom assumptions about writing more critically. To extend this further, it is perfectly plausible that an English teacher would continually teach an unrealistic composing strategy since the teacher has no current writing experiences to help point out the contradictions.
Since teachers are not writers, the only reality that the teacher has to operate from is the reality of that teacher's past experience. And these experiences are not as a writer but as a student in a traditional classroom.

Selection

Filling the position of high school composition teacher is an administrative decision involving the building principal, a curriculum supervisor and perhaps the superintendent. The teacher is selected from the teachers currently teaching at the high school. Administrators choose their senior composition teachers very carefully. They are somewhat concerned with public relations and how the community views the capabilities of the teacher who will be teaching college bound students. Parents of college bound students are more vocal and affluent, so selecting a non-traditional teacher would bring numerous parent complaints. The teacher is expected to be a safe risk in the school district.

Coursework, undergraduate grades, graduate status or knowledge of composition theory are not decisive factors. The ability to spot errors and knowledge of college standards are considered more valuable. The teacher's success at getting students to write or even enjoy writing is not as important a consideration as the teacher's commitment to excellence or in other words, the desire to maintain high standards. Principals expect composition teachers
to be eccentric in this regard. If a composition teacher has been known to fail students on an essay because of one spelling error a principal is more likely to justify this behavior because of school district's high standards rather than censure the teacher for unreasonable behavior.

Departmental politics in regards to becoming the senior composition teacher often border on the intrigue of courtly royalty. Having senior composition taken away is comparable to a dethroning. A high school composition teacher must work his/her way up to this position, and is never a first year teacher or even a new teacher from another school system. Having allies in the administration is crucial. Administrators are impressed by tight discipline. Exhibiting a demanding, aloof demeanor in the classroom is helpful. A candidate for the composition teacher's job should be interested in upper class pursuits since working with college bound students puts one in contact with the elite members of the community. For these and other reasons, the high school composition teacher is often an older, female of a slightly, higher social class than the rest of the faculty.

Administrators choose the very teachers who would have the most traditional approach to teaching composition not because they are concerned with the quality of education but because they are concerned with the response of the community's elite. The teacher most likely to perpetuate the status quo is the favorite choice. The
selection of the high school composition teacher has a similar effect upon the other teachers within the district.

The power of the composition teacher over curriculum and pedagogy is widespread. If the composition teacher is also the department chair, the department chair is at least partially responsible for assigning courses and may even be consulted in hiring and firing procedures. Teachers who do not measure up to the department chair's expectancies may never move up in grade level or be assigned the more desirable courses. In keeping with public opinion, this matriarch of the English department often finds the state of student competency deplorable. The standard conclusion is that the teachers beneath the senior composition teacher are not doing their job teaching parts of speech and usage rules. I have witnessed a department chair giving the edict that no one is to teach a piece of writing longer than a sentence beneath the high school level since in her words, "None of them can write a grammatically correct sentence anyway!" Lower level teachers strive to please the high school teachers' expectations even if it means spending the majority of the school year studying parts of speech and saving "all the good stuff" for the last six weeks.

The wrath of the ruling matriarch is greatly feared within the school's kingdom; therefore, all the lesser dukes and duchesses strive to keep their heads. For this reason, the courtly stance on the teaching of composition proliferates.
Social Class

Although the high school composition teacher may be at the top of the high school hierarchy, public school teachers are ranked considerably beneath college teachers. An angry voice from a public school teacher is a clear testament to this fact:

Perhaps most obvious is the continuing low status of the public school teacher, a situation prospective teachers notice early in their undergraduate years. An English major, for example, quickly discovers that one who considers a public school teaching career is often perceived by professors and peers as not having "the right stuff." . . . In my undergraduate days the "hot" English majors did not become public school teachers (myself excluded, of course); the hottest of them all is now in Hollywood writing screenplays. The next not-so-hot group went to graduate school in English. It was the lowest group -- the tepid, the barely-warm -- who, tacitly and explicitly, were encouraged to teach in public schools. (Daniel Dyer 1985 p. 28)

The author of this quote goes on to fault college professors for discouraging the "best and the brightest" from going into public school teaching. The discouragement comes from many other sources as well. The whole culture regards teaching as a mediocre, albeit respectable career. It is common knowledge that a person does not go into teaching for the money. Teachers are not viewed as part of the upper echelon in our society. They are not comparable to other professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and corporate executives. Yet, teachers are not lower class, manual laborers toiling with their hands, being paid by the hour in factories, along the highway or in fast food chains. Teachers are somewhere inbetween
in the middle class.

Lortie (1985), a sociologist, likewise places teachers within the ranks of the middle class; however, he sees many people becoming teachers not because they are middle class members but because they are aspiring to the ranks of the middle class from the upper lower class:

Teaching is clearly white-collar, middle-class work, and as such offers upward mobility for people who grew up in blue-collar or lower-class families. (p. 35)

Lortie differentiates between males and females with women more often originating from higher-status homes than men which is in keeping with Lortie's observation that women generally have lower aspirations than men. This difference will be examined more carefully in the next section about economics. In my particular case, teaching has indeed offered the enticement of upward mobility since my father is a blue-collar worker with only an eighth grade education and my mother is only a graduate of a trade school.

Upwardly mobile people are necessarily preoccupied with all the beliefs and mannerisms of the class to which they aspire. So, instead of clinging to their own former lower class values, these social climbing teachers vigorously adopt the mores of the middle class. This may in part be why black students often claim that black teachers are the most demanding. Teachers who came from the lower class tend to perpetuate the Horatio Alger myth. The reasoning being that if the teacher had to sweat blood to make it, then those who
wish to follow must also pay their dues. This logic is not much
different than that of the fraternity hazing ritual: a true test of
the pledge's metal is if the pledge can withstand the horrors of the
rites of passage. Composition teachers who have moved up to the
middle class are staunch proponents of traditional teaching methods.
These teachers strive to stomp out nonstandard dialect with grammar
and usage drills. The teachers highly value these grammar and usage
rituals to which they attribute their own success. Practices
connected to writing are also fossilized in the newly middle class
teachers' minds. If the teachers as students were told that writers
must create a rigid outline before the paper is begun, then when they
become teachers they demand the same torture of their students if not
more. These teachers feel that someday their students will thank
them because the teachers are only helping the students to have an
easier time getting to the middle class.

The teachers' perpetuation of the status quo is very
connected to their job and its place within the class system. The
best source of information about the teacher's position within
society is Kevin Harris's (1982) book, *Teachers and Classes*. Harris spends the major part of his book conducting a careful Marxist
analysis of the teacher's position in relationship to the capitalist
mode of production. In a chapter devoted to each of the following,
Harris analyzed the class location of teachers in relation to
economic, political and ideological identification. Kevin Harris
summarizes his work this way:
Teachers belong to neither of the major opposed groups in contemporary class struggle, and they are in the contradictory position in that, while their objective economic conditions very closely approximate those of the working class, their political and ideological relations within the ongoing production process support the capitalist class in its domination of the working class. It would be of more than passing interest to line this location up against the broader "social function" which teachers have performed since the beginnings of compulsory universal schooling: teachers have battled to improve the individual and collective conditions of the working class—there can be no doubt about that—but they have done so generally within the existing constraints of capitalism. Or in other words, and herein lies the basic contradiction underpinning both their social function and their technical job, they have sought to make things better for the working class while at the same time supporting and reproducing the social relations underlying capitalism itself." (pp. 130-131)

Part of the culture's expectancy for the teacher's job is that the teacher will become an agent of socialization, insuring that this culture's children will leave school with the traditional values. Harris (1982) explains some of the complex reasons why teachers end up reproducing the system and becoming a primary force in the process of hegemony:

In the first place, existing social relations have been so structured that teachers themselves have to be highly schooled, and this greatly increases the likelihood that teachers will be well-constituted ideological subjects, bearing dominant ideological relations, and motivated on account of their own personal success (at school) to reproducing the conditions of their own making. Second, the very act of becoming a teacher is likely in itself to entail support for the overall structure and ideologically perceived function of schooling: some people do enter teaching for the deliberate purpose of subverting the system, but people generally do not become part of structures they are fundamentally antagonistic to. Third, once in the schools, teachers have to survive and also get results, and so they are most unlikely to give up their political and ideological power. They are more likely to exercise it, and thus support the function of the school. Finally, although not exhaustively, teachers have to justify themselves to themselves: and this is likely to entail extolling schooling as a good thing, which in turn would entail teachers becoming subject to
the very illusions which they serve, and in practice serving the same illusions which they are subject to. (p. 125)

This long quote serves to explain why teachers can't help but become part of the traditional way of doing things.

Therefore, according to the machinery of the class system, it isn't the job of the composition teacher to foster rampant self expression; instead, it is the job of the composition teacher to teach the skills which the culture deems as necessary for the student to assume his or her position as a worker in that society. A premium is placed on filling out forms, correctness in spelling and punctuation, and report writing. Writing as a way to create meaning and critically analyze something are not necessary skills for the working force. Interestingly, writing skills for the job are not as valued as much as the writing skills necessary to pass the tests to obtain the certification (diploma, SAT scores etc.) which is used to get the job. Teachers must teach for the test because that test certifies one's place in society. Once again sorting becomes more important than learning. Composition teachers educate their students to survive within the system not to become a writers.

Teachers adopt traditional pedagogy partially because of their middle class status. Moreover, their role as teacher prescribes that they become agents of socialization for the system. In other words, teachers are not just influenced by the system, they actively work to reproduce it—whether they are aware of it or not.
Economic Security

Comparatively, high school composition teachers as a group have a more lucrative job than do the college composition teachers. The high school composition teacher is probably at the top of the pay scale because of the seniority necessary to land the position whereas college composition teachers are at the bottom of their pay scale. In addition, high school teachers have standard job benefits including sick days and summer vacation. There is even better job security on the high school level than on the college level. Tenure is often available and because of strong contracts negotiated through teacher's organizations, firing procedures must be done formally, according to written procedures. As was mentioned earlier, the possibility of a composition teacher being demoted to another type of English course is quite rare.

The main threat to the high school teacher's job security is due to teacher cutbacks caused by decreasing enrollments and budget cutbacks due to failed levies, inflation, etc. These cutbacks cause "rifs" where the teacher with the least seniority is not rehired. In Columbus Public a few years ago, the rifs reached teachers with as high as eight years experience. These rifs do not take teaching abilities into consideration. Needless to say, such rifs have a demoralizing affect upon the teachers. However, because of the seniority necessary to hold the exalted position of composition teacher, these teachers do not need to worry about losing their jobs.
In the areas of salary, benefits, and job security, high school composition teachers come out ahead of their college colleagues. This is only because lecturers, graduate students and part-time faculty make very low salaries even in comparison to high school teachers. In contrast, high school teachers make considerably less money than do full professors. Teaching is strictly a middle class vocation. It might be revealing to determine whether teaching is treated as a job or a career in our culture. In so far as it requires a college education and involves extensive responsibility for the welfare of students, teaching could be considered as a career, but the take-home pay makes teaching seem more like a job.

The low salary of teachers is a well-known consideration even to the young who are just making career decisions. Economic factors influence which types of people would choose a less lucrative career. To cite a sociologist again, Lortie (1975) reasons that teaching appeals to women more than men because women do not have the opportunity for higher earnings while men do. Lortie explains that men often feel that they have had to make a material sacrifice to become a teacher. Lortie then concludes that this resentment can influence teaching in a negative manner:

... their sense of loss has a depressing effect on the recruitment of younger men. We can reason that male teachers will have greater material motives for regretting their fates and are thus less likely to project high enthusiasm for their work. (p. 34)

Lortie (1975) is equally as insightful about how economics affects
the types of women who choose to become teachers:

Women have somewhat different reasons to appreciate the security of teaching. Fewer women grew up in economically vulnerable homes and even fewer would have expected to play the role of principal breadwinner. Employment security can, however, be meaningful to both single and married women. The single woman is assured of a predictable income without having to compete aggressively with men. For those who marry, the economic aspects of security are probably less important, but there are psychological and family-connected benefits. The absence of employment anxiety after tenure has been attained helps to make teaching compatible with marriage and motherhood. If these married women were forced to compete actively to hold their jobs, it would be considerably more difficult for them to balance the rival claims of work and family. Employment security makes it easier for married women "to keep work in its place." If they must miss time at work, as when a child is ill, they need not fear discharge. Given the complexities which confront women who combine marriage and motherhood with full-time employment, security gives leverage in an intrinsically delicate situation. (pp. 36-37)

The suggestion is that women who become teachers are nonaggressive types, and those who have children probably suffer great stress from trying to be both teacher and mother.

If a person who became a teacher was not aware of the low salary prior to becoming a teacher, a few years on the job would be convincing enough:

There are no promotions in public education, only transfers, changes. One can move into administration, or to a "cushy" suburban school; one can stick around a few years, thereby "earning" through seniority the privilege of teaching the college-prep classes; one can obtain "media specialist" or "guidance" credentials and have no more papers to grade or lessons to prepare . . . If I want to be an English teacher, not an administrator, my past and my present are also my future, and my union sees to it that, no matter how talented and dedicated I am, I receive no more pay for my labors than the dodo who has managed to endure the same number of years as I. Is it any wonder that a recent survey discovered than most public school teachers wish they had chosen another career. (Daniel Dyer 1985
The only way to make more money is to get a part time job, certainly not a move that will increase the teacher's ability to cope with the needs of students. The lack of financial reward leaves the veteran teacher looking down a long dark tunnel where leaving the profession appears a lot smarter than sticking it out until retirement.

The problem of the teacher's poor salary is compounded by another economic problem, that of class size. As school districts suffer continued financial difficulties, a feasible solution is to increase already large class sizes. For instance, at a recent local conference I met a high school composition teacher from an expanding suburb who has 190 students. Veteran teachers develop ways of coping with both of these economic realities. A colleague of mine began to resent the amount of time and energy that the poorer students took from her. She decided to seat all of these students on the far side of the classroom so that she would be less likely to even look at them, which she reasoned might cause her to have to devote even more time to them. She seldom passed out books or dittos to them since she felt that they would only lose them anyway.

Years of teaching take their toll and many teachers compensate by dropping their enthusiasm and switching into a survival mode. Teachers necessarily take the easy way out. They recycle old lesson plans and tests, they teach from the book and they make grading as simple as possible. They soon learn that assigning even
one essay per student means hours of work grading them. If a teacher has six classes with 30 students that equals 180 students and if that teacher takes 15 minutes to grade each essay, grading one set of papers means 45 hours of work! Veteran teachers laugh at the new teachers who create hours of work for themselves. They've been there before. They know that it won't be long before the new teachers have to face the fact that it isn't humanly possible to teach that way.

Both of these economic factors, underpaid teachers and oversized classes, lead composition teachers to traditional practices that cost the teacher very little in time and energy. Trade and grade usage drills are the optimum solution in this bad situation. Such practices are even lauded by the administration as we will see in the next section, so the teacher has nothing to lose by taking the easy way out.

Involvement in School District Politics

School district administrators have to answer to a school board made of elected officials from the community whose expertise in education is little more than the experiences that they had as students. School board members answer to the general public in the form of elections, so the guiding force in the school system is to please the expectations of the public.
The alarming fact is that both school board members and parents make decisions about schools based upon their memory of their experiences as students. A previous section on teacher training pointed out the inherent dangers in operating from the memories one has of uncritical judgments made as a student. The result is that the public expects what they remember most clearly from their school days, even if they only remember a practice because they hated it so much. Parents want book reports and grammar worksheets because they did book reports and grammar worksheets when they were in school. If you ask these same parents if they currently read classic literature for pleasure and write expository prose as a way to better understand their lives, they most certainly would answer, "No," yet these very same parents want us to torture their children in the same unproductive ways that teachers tortured them. The logic used is same kind of logic used to perpetuate fraternity hazing, "If they did it to me, they should do it to you." Once again, traditional teaching methods are reinforced.

The public does not have many opportunities to evaluate its schools. The primary source of informations that the public uses to measure its school is the standardized test scores. Standardized tests are designed to measure certain skills. Standardized tests cannot measure how well a student writes; they can only measure a knowledge of grammar terminology and the student's ability to spot punctuation and usage errors in sentences written for that purpose.
These tests have a large influence over curriculum. Whole units are devised to teach parts of speech or punctuation rules as isolated skills unconnected to writing. Teachers rarely deal with the pressure for students to do well on tests by teaching directly for the test. This practice is considered to be unethical.

In the more affluent school systems these test scores are considered to be even more important since they are used to determine college admission. In these districts, teaching for the test is more common. Some school districts even offer private classes after school to coach the college bound students in skills necessary to do well on the ACT or SAT tests.

Although school boards, district administrators and parents are very concerned about test scores, individual school principals are more concerned about the daily realities of lunch duty and school discipline problems. These administrators spend more time on issues related to classroom control than on issues related to learning. A principal will not fault a teacher for being boring or teaching unimportant trivia; instead, a principal will fault a teacher for having a classroom that is too noisy or for having a student chewing gum in class. Naively, student teachers design lessons which utilize classroom discussion as a means for learning. However, these student teachers meet great resistance when they allow the students to participate freely. The emphasis on discipline requires that discussions be carefully legislated so that the dialogue is little
more than a canned question and answer session. Even more control can be maintained when the teacher writes the questions on a ditto and has the students answer them silently at their individual desks. It doesn't take long for the student teacher to be socialized into putting a priority on controlling student behavior.

When the school district's primary concerns are for high test scores and tight discipline, composition is often reduced to a skill-drill activity which can be easily tested and easily controlled.

To summarize this section on the high school teacher, the composition class is generally the isolated domain of a solitary teacher who was promoted to that position because of that teacher's elitist, traditional teaching style. The composition teacher's methodology does not come from overt college training but rather from the powerful hegemonic influence of years spent as a student observing other teachers. These traditional practices are compatible with the teacher's social class. An important function of the teacher role in this social institution is to produce students who are sorted and certified and willing to accept their particular place within that society. Additional financial and political pressures assure that the teacher will take the easiest way out, thus becoming another in a long line of composition teachers who teach isolated skills rather than nurturing the student's individual composing process.
Part Two

Impediments To Critical Consciousness for the Teacher

Introduction

This chapter offers an examination of the composition teacher which is more dynamic than traditional descriptions which offer little more than an idealistic list of good teaching traits. The first part of this chapter has situated the composition teacher within society and revealed the teacher's complex social, economic and political relations which in turn have a significant effect upon the classroom. Conflict is a dynamic part of a constantly changing society. Teachers cannot ignore their role in this life drama. This quote by Ira Shor reveals how school is the site of great societal change:

All the conflicts of American life converge in school turning, education into what the other giant institutions of America are--battlefields for the conflicting interests of the state and the people. The successive layering of mass education is one key feature of this chronic irresolution. Business and government keep acting to stabilize social life, yet it remains in constant need of new adjustment. Initiative in this flow of forces still eludes working people. They are captives of the institutions which they sabotage by getting all they can. Labor reaction sets the parameters for the action of corporate and state policy. This tug and pull drives American society backward and forward at the same time. (p. 40)

All of these societal struggles manifest themselves in the classroom and demand teacher response to their complexities.
Whether teachers can respond to these conditions independently from the very society in which they exist is doubtful. Teachers can only respond within the confines of the existing beliefs and mores of behavior. They are each guided by an ideology which is unaware of its presumptions. The dominant ideology influences perception so that the teacher can only perceive what fits within existing categories. Henry A. Giroux has repeatedly discussed the influence of ideology in his writings. Here is a definition of ideology from his most recent book (1983):

... ideology does not simply refer to a specific set of doctrines or meanings. It is a much more dynamic concept that refers to the way in which meanings and ideas are produced, mediated, and embodied in forms of knowledge, cultural experiences, social practices, and cultural artifacts. Ideology, then is a set of doctrines as well as the medium through which human actors make sense of their own experiences and those of the world in which they find themselves. Ideology as a system of meaning, whether inscribed in consciousness, cultural forms, or lived experiences, exists in a dialectical relation with reality. That is, it is a mediating force that can either distort or illuminate reality, therefore resisting reductionist accounts that simply limit it to false consciousness. Treated in dialectical terms, ideology becomes a useful construct for understanding not only how schools sustain and produce meanings, such as what counts as literacy, but also how individuals and groups in concrete relations produce, negotiate, modify, or resist them as well. (p. 209)

As pervasive as the influence of ideology is upon our daily actions, we seldom stop to examine our beliefs nor do we consider how those beliefs were originally formed, how they change or how they influence action. Ideology can disguise itself so that we do not recognize our own biases. Our hidden ideologies can become major impediments to our ability to think critically.
Reaching critical consciousness is difficult for many reasons besides ideology. The treadmill of daily life is so consuming that a person hardly has time to consider what has happened let alone contemplate carefully what will happen. Reflection is the first step in understanding what is happening in one's life.

One of the most apparent reasons people give for not thinking things through carefully is a lack of time. There is no room for reflection in the dizzying pace of most of our lives. Shor (1980) describes how the acceleration of life fostered by mass culture keeps us somehow strangely removed from understanding our own lives.

In this quote, Shor discusses how empty the lives of the average citizens have become:

The pace of stimuli and demands keeps people off balance and exhausted, yet so addicted to the destructive speed of life that they keep looking for more . . . As an anti-critical force, acceleration realizes the cliche' of "going nowhere fast." It is reified motion, action without progress. People are kept very busy rushing through a crowded social field, at the end of which they feel no more whole or free than at the beginning. They finish the day as powerless as when they started. Their self-doubt has not been resolved. Tired from running, they remain in debt, looking for a better job, caught in traffic, wondering how to make ends meet, searching for a good mechanic or doctor or larger living space, or needing a more fulfilling love life. Liberatory culture has to wedge itself into this contradictory crack. (p. 65)

The fast pace of teaching is just as hectic as the rest of our lives if not even more so. Cooperating teachers often insist that their student teachers teach all of their classes and serve all of their duties because they feel that to do anything less is to give an unrealistic portrayal of what it means to be a teacher. Of
course, such a trial by fire does not do much for expanding the student teacher's knowledge of teaching. Instead the student teacher strives only to survive just as many teachers feel that they did during their frenzied first year of teaching.

The sheer number of students, often 150 or more, robs the teacher's ability to respond to them individually. Just remembering the names of 150 people would be enough to exhaust many people, but teachers are expected to understand the educational, psychological and emotional needs of each student in the classroom—not counting the multitudes of students encountered in the halls or during lunch duty or the students from the years before who return for periodic support and advice. Dealing with all of these people's problems is draining. In addition to the teacher's obligation to the students are the obligations to parents, administrators and curriculum directors. Add to this a maze of grading and record keeping, and you have an unavoidable case of sensory overload. Many excellent teachers go into other professions because of this very strain. Critical consciousness is not a luxury for the idle rich; it is a necessity for teacher survival. A discussion of the process necessary for reaching critical consciousness will be considered further in the remaining chapters of this work.

Part two will restrict itself to examining several impediments to critical consciousness which are often embedded in teacher ideologies. Ten common impediments are considered:
Many of these impediments to critical consciousness would also apply to the students as well as the teachers.

These impediments arise from our subtle assumptions about the nature of reality and the nature of schooling. Understanding our underlying ideologies can be a first step toward critical consciousness. In the conclusion to his most recent book Giroux (1983) sings praises to having teachers examine their own ideologies:

Teachers cannot escape from their own ideologies (and in some cases should embrace them), and it is important to understand what society has made of us, what it is we believe in, and how we can minimize the effects on our students of those parts of our "sedimented" histories that reproduce dominant interests and values. Teachers work under constraints, but within those constraints they structure and shape classroom experiences and need to be self-reflective about what interests guide such behavior. Put another way, as teachers we need to reach into our own histories and attempt to understand how issues of class, culture, gender, and race have left their imprint upon how we think and act. (p. 241)

Ideology serves us as a subliminal guiding force. Not being fully aware of the beliefs which are guiding us can stymie our ability to think critically. Ideology can blissfully lead us in the wrong direction on misguided missions which leave us acting against our own best interests. We need to examine our ideologies not only for the
well being of our students but for our own welfare as well.

The Horatio Alger Ideal

An important part of the American dream is that anyone, no matter how humble his or her beginning, can make it big here in the land of equality. This brass ring is supposedly within the reach of everyone, not being contingent upon one's of race, nationality, religion or creed. Instead, or so the story goes, the person's success will be determined by effort alone, by the merit of one's struggle. This interpretation of success is not based upon illogical determinants such as luck or pagan animal sacrifices, but it is based upon the reasonable conclusion that the people who get ahead deserve it because of their hard work and determination.

Americans believe in their idealistic model for success so strongly that they take great pleasure in hearing Horatio Alger stories. Reporters are willing to travel great distances to seek them out. Publicity agents are therefore obliged to fabricate the such stories or at least to modify them in order to boost their client's popularity. However, Americans do not believe that these are isolated cases where a random person here or there succeeds by sheer intestinal fortitude alone. Americans believe that everyone can succeed by such single-minded dedication.
The evidence does not support such an ideal claim. Biographies of famous success stories do not show that the doors of opportunity were always flung wide open. There would be no reason for civil rights or equal rights laws if this were the case. When considering the data of personal experience, most people find that the popularized maxim of "it's not what you know but who you know that counts" is quite true. Many colleagues find that jobs are landed through personal contacts and political maneuverings rather than the merit of one's abilities. The "good old boy" network often controls the means by which one is judged. For example, if you don't personally know the editor or someone on the editorial board of a journal or at least an influential person, chances of publishing in a major journal become rather slim. Kevin Harris (1982) points out the empirical fallacy of this type of logic:

The difference, of course, is that these claims [anyone can, therefore everyone can] point to what can be rather than what is, and are thus much more tentative and conditional, but they are instances of the very same fallacy . . . . It has been commonly suggested that if Abraham Lincoln could go from log cabin to White House then everyone can, or if a grocer's daughter can become Prime Minister of Britain then everyone can. Here we have two shining examples of the fallacy in operation, purporting conclusions which are clearly false and which, because of their specificity, cannot even be excused as tautologies . . . . These fallacious arguments . . . . impute to everybody, as discrete individuals themselves, things which not all of those discrete individuals could achieve when put together in the same situation. (pp. 17-18)

Not only does this 'if anyone can then everyone can' fallacy prove to be faulty logically and empirically, the opposite case can often become the rule. Thus, if anyone can become a college
professor, then the standards will be raised because of what must be a terrible slip in competency and accountability. Moreover, if the standards cannot be changed, then other ways are found to close the open door of opportunity. An example of this might be the requirement that employers consider applicants of all races and genders. But such considerations are often a charade: females and blacks are often granted token interviews for positions which have already been filled in order that the interviewing procedure give the illusion of fairness.

Believing that merit rather than issues such as social status, gender or race makes the difference is a soothing assumption. Our prejudices become more palatable. We can deal with our conscience without facing conflict. Stress is further reduced because the world appears logical and fair to us. As teachers, we do not have to make excuses to our students for the world, and we can even motivate them to work harder by calling upon the fact that the world operates on the basis of merit alone. The American dream is part of the human agenda to make sense of the world. Equal opportunity is a simplistic, efficient explanation for a complex, contradictory reality. It has a tidy, one-to-one correspondence; hard work equals success.
Living in Cultural Isolation

Most middle class teachers up until the time that they become a teacher do not have to come in close contact with members of diverse subculture groups. Communities and classes are strictly isolated from one another. White people can condescendingly itemize their limited contacts with blacks. We do not know what it means to be hungry or to live in poverty. We do not even know what it feels like to be uncomfortable: we travel from air-conditioned homes in our air-conditioned cars to our air-conditioned places of employment. Jonathan Kozol (1975) argues in his powerful book, The Night Is Dark and I Am Far from Home, that most children grow up having a difficulty believing that one could suffer physical pain because they are totally insulated from it themselves. Kozol demands that we bring pain into the classroom. Kozol tells a moving personal narrative of a time when he was forced to face the pain of poverty of one of his students. I understand Kozol's point because of my experiences teaching in a correctional institution left me numb from culture shock.

For years I found it difficult to articulate to others what I had experienced. And I, more than most college instructors, had seen street life. I had seen a mother push a sick three-year-old child out of the house and into the cold to later faint from a fever on the street, and yet I still had trouble dealing with the pain in the
inmates' lives. Rape and V.D. were so rampant in prison that they could not be officially recognized in any medical or disciplinary records. The prison employees' lives were full of pain as well. It wasn't so much that I couldn't deal with what I experienced, but that I knew that everyone else around me was incapable of understanding these people's lives. My friends would have enjoyed hearing stories about my experiences like they might enjoy reading the headlines from The National Enquirer while safely waiting in line at the grocery. My friends were curious, but they could not begin to empathize with these people's lives. I still find comedies about people in pain annoying. A recent movie about a homeless person who suddenly is befriended by a Beverly Hills family left me cold. I do not find homeless people fodder for humor.

Understanding the lives of people who live in pain can never be a pleasant endeavor. For most teachers, it is far easier to steel oneself to the pain or cope with poverty's victims with one of many rationalizations. However, some teachers know more about their students' home lives that most social workers or parole officers could ever hope to know. But far too many teachers make no effort to understand the culture from which their students come.

How the teacher responds emotionally to dealing with students who live in poverty is crucial. Kozol stresses that pity is an important reaction to pain because it is an empathetic reaction whereas most people do not respond at all to the pain of their fellow
humans. However, pitying one's students can cause several potential conflicts. Pity can get in the way of teaching because the person pitied is always ranked far below the person doing the pitying. This means that the teacher views the students as being less than the teacher, and in some cases the teachers even view these students as subhuman. Many teachers entered the ghettos in the seventies as urban missionaries, determined to enlighten the heathens with their superior white, middle class culture. Others clutched their less-fortunate ghetto students to their breasts and tried to 'love away' their students' pain with syrupy, condescending smiles. Pity can preclude respect for the positive features of the student's culture. To be effective, a teacher must value the student's culture. A teacher must view the student's culture as being equal to the teacher's culture with each respective culture having its own positive and negative virtues.

When I taught the inmates, I genuinely liked and respected them. In many ways they and their culture were superior to that of the white middle class students whom I had taught on main campus. The inmates were honest, responsive students who often initiated feedback for my teaching. (It was their candor which gave me much of the information that I use in part three when I discuss the students' view of composing.) Inmates of the same age as the college students were far more mature and responsible. They had seen more of life than their sheltered counterparts. The inmates were very interested in psychological and sociological analyses of society. Their
writings were often full of high-level abstractions about life which they could back up with dramatic life experiences. The inmates had a high degree of personal integrity. A man would be willing to die in order to keep his word—and often did. They had a clear code of ethics, and in many ways, my personal safety was the result of their vigilant protection. They sponsored charitable events, and they wrote insightful, counseling letters to my husband's learning disability students. They came from matriarchal families, and several inmates had lucrative industries near Mother's Day, selling poems, cards and presents. Some of my students were great writers. Several of them submitted their writing to main campus to be considered in a quarterly contest. Their writings consistently won over the regular students. Yes, they were criminals, and many were murders and rapists. Yes, the majority of them suffered severe sexual, physical and emotional abuse as children. But, they were also amazingly fine human beings. I felt that if I could not see the value in these students, then I could not ethically teach them. Meaningful social relations depend upon mutual respect.

The Compartmentalization of Teaching

Teaching is a very lonely profession. Cooperating teachers often welcome a student teacher for the opportunity to have contact with another adult. These quotes from two teachers reveal how many teachers feel:
If you stay with the students too long, you get to talk like them sometimes. You don’t come in contact with too many adults ...

I just think you sort of stagnate in a way. You could stagnate more if you wanted to let it happen, if you did not read, etc., but I would just like to give and take with adults once in a while. Just to be able to be in [a large office building complex] once in a while and be talking to someone in my same age bracket. (as cited in Lortie 1975 p. 98)

Education is an unusual profession where employees have very little contact with one another. Each teacher works in a separate classroom with the door closed. Traditionally, schools are not structured in order for teachers to plan together, share insights or work together on problems. Staff meetings which are infrequent and devoted to administrative announcements are often held before or after school since there is no time or scheduling possibility for getting all the staff members together at once. Lortie (1975) discusses why it has historically been to the school district’s advantage to keep teachers isolated from one another:

... throughout the long, formative decades of the modern school system, schools were organized around teacher separation rather than teacher interdependence. Curricula assumed such mutual separation and served coordinating functions by aligning the contributions of teachers in different grades and subjects to student development ... This type of organization meant that each teacher was assigned specific areas of responsibility and was expected to teach students the stipulated knowledge and skills without assistance from others ... It was easier for those governing schools to see them as aggregates of classroom units, as collections of independent cells, than as tightly integrated "organisms." They could cope with expansion of the student population by adding new classrooms and new teachers--it was not always necessary to create new schools to absorb increased numbers. They could deal with the steady loss of experienced teachers without severe organizational shock ... Such flexibility was possible as long as teachers worked
independently; but had their tasks been closely interwoven, the
comings and goings of staff members would have created
administrative problems. (pp. 14-16)

In all schools above the elementary level, teachers are
further fragmented from one another by discipline. Even many middle
schools are departmentalized. This means that there is
characteristically no interdisciplinary efforts between teachers.
The writing across the curriculum movement is an answer to a very
real need. Teachers in many other subject areas assign vast writing
assignments with no knowledge of composition theory. The converse is
ture also. English teachers do not have the benefit of the
historical expertise of the social studies teachers nor other subject
area teachers. Regretfully, the idea that most subject area teachers
have of working together with a composition teacher amounts to asking
the composition teacher to grade a paper assigned in their class for
mechanics and spelling. The problem is that the teachers of subject
areas other than composition believe that composition teachers deal
exclusively with error reduction. This type of stereotype should be
resented. A math teacher once dumped his paper for a graduate course
in front of me in the teacher's lounge, gleefully assuming that I
would enjoy proofreading it for him. I had a mind to pass him my
check book to balance. The compartmentalization of disciplines
fosters unrealistic stereotypes of the other areas.

Not only are subject area teachers isolated from one another
but support area personal are perhaps even more isolated. Learning
disabilities, special education and guidance staff members have
limited contact with other teachers. The logic of assigning one staff the exclusive task of counseling may seem flawed—not because a full position is not needed for this task but that putting one person in charge of this responsibility assumes that the other teachers do not also engage in counseling. There is a movement in middle school education to give teachers more time to counsel students on a daily basis. Many teachers would vehemently argue that the opposite case is true: that regular classroom teachers do more counseling than the guidance counselors because these counselors have little time left to do counseling since they are often in charge of standardized testing and scheduling. In contrast many classroom teachers refuse to deal with their students' personal problems because they feel that "It is not my job to hold hands."

Another damaging form of compartmentalization happens in the classroom, where lessons are fragmented from meaningful, coherent activity. Many teachers do not make a connection between one day's lesson and the next. Although teachers may indeed plan their lessons by units or by the week, they do not stress to their students how one lesson builds from an earlier lesson. Part of the problem may be related to the curriculum and textbooks. Subject areas are broken down into easily listable contents. Students suffer through a lesson on punctuation, a lesson on nouns and then they write a descriptive paragraph with each lesson having little in common with the next. The time within each individual class period is also similarly broken down: students may write on journals for a few minutes, then have a
brief spelling lesson and finish the period by reading a story. For the students, the point is to do your work; they do not try to understand the overall game plan. This sad fact may be true for both the teacher and the student. The teacher may feel obligated to cover the curriculum and in doing so may have the students do hundreds of isolated lessons about grammar, spelling, punctuation, paragraph structure etc., but the larger goal of teaching students to write may never be considered. Teachers seldom see that these isolated curriculum goals could be accomplished while the students were engaged in meaningful writing. Teachers are pressured to cover the curriculum as it is printed—in a methodical list-like form.

This type of fragmentation can eventually infect one's thinking process. Teachers and administrators can start viewing problems in isolation from the larger context of the school environment and society itself. Addressing problems as discrete small units changes the tactics that one will employ to solve the problem. For instance, viewing discipline problems in isolation from the context of the classroom, the community and the society can lead one to believe that discipline problems can be cured by just clarifying the teacher's rule system. This simplistic solution, which is the basis for the assertive discipline system, does not consider the student's home life, the power relations in the classroom or the student's position within the existing social class system. Discipline also becomes a matter of individual cases rather than a matter of national social problems. For instance, the
question becomes how to control one belligerent black student rather than why black students become belligerent in white schools. We tend to focus on the immediate problem rather than the long-term social issues which are involved. Harris (1982) explains how viewing a problem in isolation can ultimately perpetuate the problem itself:

What is being suggested, then, is that there is far more to the problem than simply identifying and overcoming immediate 'isolated factors... these immediate factors cannot simply be overcome: rather than being discrete isolated factors they are intricately tied up with much larger and far more basic issues; they cannot be attended to in isolation, and any serious attention to them must have ramifications reaching right into the very core of our basic social (and economic) relations. (p. 14-15)

Seeing an isolated problem as a reflection of current societal conflicts may be very helpful. How limited our perspective is when we view a problem can determine how successful we will be when solving that problem.

In sum, compartmentalization has had far-reaching negative effects upon education. Teachers have become isolated from their colleagues. Divisions between subject areas have limited the amount of interdisciplinary work done in schools. In areas like counseling, specialization has prevented teachers from offering needed assistance to their students. Compartmentalization has even effected the daily organization of the classroom so that lessons are fragmented from one another. We even tend to view problems as immediate, isolated concerns rather than treating them as symptoms of a larger societal problem. This type of ideology can prevent teachers from becoming fully aware of their potential to initiate change.
The De-skilling of the Teacher

For many teachers, the job of teaching is not as rewarding as it once was. This may be due to the fact that the nature of the job of teaching has been rapidly changing over the past few years. Teachers are not expected to perform the same tasks that they once did. Michael Apple (1982) explains how the tasks performed on the job can be de-skilled in order to make the job require less complex skills than it once did:

... deskilling is part of a long process in which labor is divided and then redivided to increase productivity, to reduce 'inefficiency,' and to control both the cost and the impact of labor. It usually has involved taking relatively complex jobs (most jobs are much more complex and require more decision-making than people give them credit for), jobs that require no small amount of skill and decision-making, and breaking them down into specified actions with specified results so that less skilled and costly personnel can be used, or so that the control of work pace and outcome is enhanced. (pp. 141-142)

The benefits to management are clear; they can employ cheaper labor and better control the outcome. Teaching is being de-skilled by forcing the teachers to rely more on teaching materials produced by educational companies, curriculum specialists and outside experts.

A very important part of teaching is the instructional planning that teachers do for their classrooms. Generally, this form of deskillling does not take place by someone coming into the classroom and forbidding the teacher to do his or her own planning. Instead, teaching materials are slowly introduced into the classroom
which ultimately usurp the teacher's right to plan the classroom's activities. The first thing to displace the teacher's planning abilities was the textbook. For decades, teachers have felt obligated to follow the order of the textbook, giving over their decision making powers to the supposedly knowledgeable textbook publishers. However, the authors of such textbooks are not as knowledgeable as the advertisers claim. The authors often are employees who only have a college degree, perhaps not in the subject area of the textbook that they are writing, and these employees may not have had any real teaching experience. I once did consulting work with a well known educational materials company. The president proudly introduced me to their employee with the most educational experience, a man who used to sell tape recorders to school districts. The pride and joy of the company was little more than a salesman with no teaching experience whatsoever. A colleague, who is an expert in old English, once wrote an entire math textbook for a publishing company while he was a graduate student; moreover, he had never taught math. Part of the problem is that publishing textbooks is not a wise move for college professors who wish to get tenure because textbooks are not considered to be scholarly publications. Many times textbooks carry the name of a nationally respected professor when in actuality the textbook was written by another staff member or graduate student.
Publishing companies have expanded their influence upon the classroom with the manufacture of various total, curriculum packages. Apple (1983) describes how these curriculum systems take over the classroom:

The best examples of the encroachment of technical control procedures are found in the exceptionally rapid growth in the use of prepackaged sets of curricular materials. It is nearly impossible now to walk into an American classroom, for instance, without seeing boxes upon boxes of science, social studies, mathematics, and reading materials ('systems' as they are sometimes called) lining the shelves and in use. Here, a school system usually purchases a total set of standardized material, one that includes statements of objectives, all of the curricular content and material needed, prespecified teacher actions and appropriate student responses, and diagnostic and achievement tests coordinated with the system. Usually, these tests have the curricular knowledge 'reduced' to 'appropriate' behaviors and skills. (pp. 143-144)

Among publishers, such systems are designed to be 'teacher-proof,' the meaning being that the series is designed so that even the most stupid teacher can use it in the classroom. I attended planning sessions for products where discussions like this were based on the assumption that teachers are total idiots, and therefore classroom materials need to be able to teach concepts completely by themselves. These protective measures can get out of hand. A colleague, who teaches in a school district which just adopted a reading series, was given a timer and a script with the strict instructions that she was not to say anything that was not printed on the script for fear that she would mess things up. This type of teacher-proof materials is frightening because to this way of thinking, the teacher is a detriment rather than an asset to the classroom. Certainly, most
teachers know far better than most national companies what would work with their students. Teachers are the best informed source about the capacities of a particular group of students, from a particular community, on a particular day, during a particular class period. Only the teacher knows which concepts should be introduced and when and how it should be done. A good teacher seems to know instinctively which examples the students will understand. Teaching materials are seldom as perfect as they hope to be: they often contain distractions which can totally derail an entire group of students from being able to stay on track with the given materials. The real problem is that teachers do not realize that they are the real experts when it comes to designing curriculum materials.

One common feature of deskilling is that new experts must be created to assume the position of the skill once performed by the teacher. In many school districts this new position is held by curriculum supervisors who are in charge of making curriculum decisions for the school district. Over the years, these positions have mushroomed. School districts first had one curriculum supervisor for the whole district; now it is not uncommon for school districts to have several curriculum supervisors, one for each curriculum area. Large school districts may even have a whole pool of language arts curriculum specialists from which to draw support for individual classroom teachers. These supervisors can provide many helpful services for the classroom teacher. But they are not aiding the classroom teacher when they totally take over the
teacher's important role in curriculum design. Classroom teachers are now seeing a whole parade of educational experts come into their schools in order to tell them what to do. Textbook companies will fly in experts to vaunt their current series of books to the teachers. School districts provide in-service training session where they ship in university experts to tell the teachers the latest way to do this or that. Teachers are released to go to conferences to hear the same experts lecture about new techniques or to travel to another school district to observe a new program. Principals and supervisors travel to conferences and return home with great innovations which they often dump in the laps of their teachers to institute. The problem is that teachers from their own school district are never utilized as resident experts; the experts must always come from some outside source. Harris (1982) explains how these new experts deskill teaching:

Teachers will not, of course, sit around all day doing nothing while pupils learn from modules or computers. What will happen is that as teacher have less to do with, and less control over, the instruction process, they will have more to do with other tasks: tasks concerned with routine maintenance of the schooling process (recording, filing and other paper work) and with the overall control of pupils (organisation, discipline, checking that equipment is not damaged, inculcation of values and attitudes). Here we see a classic form of proletarianisation: the introduction of new technology calls for new expert skills from a small number of teachers (those concerned with designing and programming) while at the same time a general devaluing of skilled labor power as well as de-skilling is brought about within teaching itself. As this occurs what we shall find is a literal dehumanising of the instruction process, and a 'humanisation' of the control process. (p. 136)

In other words, the new experts are in charge of curricular decisions while the teachers are left to be in charge of the more menial tasks.
When this crucial part of teaching is taken from the teacher, many problems can arise. One problem is that planning is totally separated from the act of teaching. There is no dialectical relationship between what happens in the classroom and what the plans are. If the plans come from an outside source, the lessons proceed without any consideration to what is actually happening in the classroom. It is essential that planning be responsive to student needs so that changes can be made from one day to the next and even midstream during the individual class period as well. When lesson plans exist separate from the dynamics of the classroom, bad results can pile up day after day while the teacher is obligated to follow the prescribed plans. Michael Apple (1982) further argues that "... what were previously considered valuable skills [will] slowly atrophy because they are less often required." (p. 146)

Deskilling can alienate the teacher from the process of education because the teacher is no longer an integral part of the classroom. The teacher becomes the easily replaceable part with the lesson plans proceeding right on course no matter who is trucked in to be in charge. Teachers are alienated from their special talents which make the job of teaching meaningful. Teachers become separated from the intrinsic rewards which may have been their reasons for becoming a teacher in the first place. As the teacher's job is deskilled, the teacher will need less and less contact with other teachers. When the curriculum materials come from an outside source,
less interaction between teachers is needed. Nothing needs to be discussed; one only needs to assume one's proper position on the assembly line. Furthermore, the teacher's contact with the students is also minimized. As the curriculum materials take over the role of the teacher, the teacher is not needed to introduce concepts, give instructions or even answer questions. The materials supposedly take care of all of these tasks. The teacher is only left to distribute and collect materials.

Teachers must recognize the benefits that such deskilling offers the school district in order to fight against this trend. First of all, there are strong economic benefits for the school district. The district can afford to pay the few curriculum specialists higher salaries because the larger number of employees, the teachers, will earn the smaller salaries. Secondly, school districts feel that the quality of education will be higher and more predictable if curriculum experts do the planning for the whole district and if the content and the curriculum materials are coordinated with the other grades—i.e., nouns and verbs in the third grade and adjectives and adverbs in the fourth grade. To this way of thinking, everyone in third grade should learn the same lesson from the same materials on the same day so that student performance can be managed better across the entire district. Even more importantly, incompetence on the teacher's part can be guarded against because the materials supposedly guarantee success.
We must also not forget the financial benefits of deskillling to the publishing companies who manufacture the textbooks and other curriculum materials. These curriculum systems are so extensive and require so many components, such as workbooks, tests, equipment, audio visual aids, etc., that the companies increase their profit margin. Many systems require the continued purchase of expendable materials in order to bring the company additional funds. When new systems are purchased, the old systems are automatically considered obsolete so that hundreds of textbooks and other materials are literally thrown away. But are the new materials always superior? Ironically, my school district threw away one textbook series one year, purchased a new series and then several years later threw out the current series and almost purchased the original series with a new cover. Moreover, this textbook with the new cover had a copyright date of prior to 1950 because I had used the very same text when I was in eighth grade. I cannot be specific about the original publishing date because the text did not include it, but the grammar exercises and cartoons are identical, including the same errors in the practice exercises. Curriculum materials may be a necessity for school districts and a gold mine for publishing companies, but they carry the potential to deskill the teaching profession.
The Feeling of Powerlessness

Many teachers leave the profession after a few years of service. Teachers call this phenomenon "burnout." Frequently, there will be a presentation at teacher conferences about combating burnout. Such sessions and have found that they are devoted to topics like time management and relaxation exercises. These sessions offer useful knowledge to teachers, but teachers generally do not make the difficult decision to leave the profession just because of overwork and stress alone. These two problems may be contributing factors, but there is a larger issue which seems to influence the teacher's very emotional decision to leave the profession. This larger issue which frustrates the teacher's efforts to help their students is the feeling of being powerlessness to make the necessary changes which could improve education. It is important to remember that teachers are highly dedicated people. They have their students' interests at heart and often devote long hours before and after school to helping students in many different ways. Teachers are altruistic people and are not likely to pack their bags simply because they have too much to do.

Since they are so altruistic, teachers have to feel that what they are doing is meaningful to their students. A highly dedicated teacher can be totally demoralized by the feeling that, "It doesn't matter. It won't make any difference." This despair reflects a
feeling of powerlessness. Teachers are willing to work against incredible odds, in the worst of circumstances, but they have great difficulty giving this much energy to a task which they feel has become pointless. This section will explore several sources for the teacher's feeling of disillusionment. Teachers often blame individual administrators or groups within the school system in particular or the educational system and/or the social system in general.

Teachers feel frustrated when they feel that their role is unimportant. Feeling that one is only part of a huge system which has gone awry can thwart the teacher's efforts to make a difference in his or her students lives. George Lukacs (1971) describes this dilemma:

Neither objectively nor in his [her] relation to his [her] work does man [a person] appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he [she] is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He [She] finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him [her] and he [she] has to conform to its laws whether he [she] likes it or not . . . the personality can do no more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system. (p.89-90)

The feeling of powerlessness comes when the teacher realizes that all the important decisions in education are made by other, more powerful people and will never be made by the individual teacher. Teachers often speak of the 'they's' who keep the teacher from doing something meaningful: "They won't let me . . ." These people whom the teachers feel will not allow them to do what would make conditions
better in the classroom are either principals, supervisors, school boards or parents. When the teacher feels that these people will not allow the teacher to make necessary changes, the situation becomes hopeless so that the only alternative is to leave the profession. Former teachers who have left the profession often blame the 'they's' for preventing them from making specific changes. For example, the teachers fault the 'they's' who wouldn't let them reduce the class size or the 'they's' who wouldn't let them choose a better textbook; the list can go on ad nauseam. Teachers feel that they do not have the power to make the changes that could make their role more effective.

It is this lack of power to make decisions which makes the teacher feel like a spectator rather than a participant. The teachers feel like their hands are tied. They are asked to do a tremendous task and then not given the power to carry out the task to the best of their abilities. The only way that teachers can see to get this power is to change jobs because teachers are not entitled to this power. Many teachers do indeed become supervisors or administrators in the hopes of being able to finally gain the power to make the decisions that will better the teaching profession.

However, teachers may view the idea of becoming a supervisor or an administrator as just "becoming the enemy." These teachers feel that if in order to gain power you have to become one of the people who subverts teachers from power, then some teachers say that they would rather quit first.
Discovering the real reasons why teachers have chosen to leave the profession is difficult. There are many handy rationalizations for justifying quitting when the teacher actually feels disillusioned about his or her role as a professional. Salary is always a handy scapegoat. But as Lortie (1975) repeatedly points out, teachers knew before they entered the profession that the salaries are small. The really tragic loss to the profession is when a teacher, who was once inspired and devoted to teaching, decides to quit. This teacher has not just happily decided to move on to another profession; this teacher is leaving the profession because of a broken spirit, a disillusionment with the whole system.

The teachers who become disenchanted with the whole education and/or social system may potentially be more likely to look for another profession. Those who are only angry with one particular group of the 'they's' may indeed be more likely to stick it out, choosing to fight for change in one arena or another; however, those teachers who feel that the whole 'system' is at fault more often choose to leave the profession. For example, some teachers see the funding system of education as being at fault. Harris (1982) discusses the governmental problems of funding:

Teachers can continue to defend things like their salary structure, but they are relatively powerless to do anything about the decisions which affect them in a major way like massive cuts in educational spending or major redirections in educational expenditure. When capitalist governments make such moves they are not going to be diverted by teacher protests, and the only possible long-term reaction for teachers still in
Failed levies and governmental policy changes in education can dramatically alter the circumstance of teaching over night. Since teachers who are affected by these unforeseen changes may feel that education will never get the funding that it needs, these teachers may then feel that there is little point in going on.

Other teachers may become depressed that the whole structure of society is at fault. These teachers feel that society stacks the deck against their students. Such teachers often champion the minority, poor, and/or remedial students. These teachers devote inordinate amounts of energy and even personal expense to helping these students until they may begin to realize that nothing can save their students from inevitable destruction. Maxine Greene (1973) argues that teachers must act as if their students are free agents in order to be able to help the students improve. When a teacher believes that the 'system' will never let their students get ahead, then there can be no reason to struggle to educate them.

The argument keeps returning to whether the teacher can actually change the 'system' or not—whether that system is an individual department, school building, school system, the American educational system or the structure of the American social system. Willis (1977) suggests that teachers can work on two levels, one in their classroom and one in the larger society, in order to provoke change:
If we have nothing to say about what to do on Monday morning everything is yielded to a purist structuralist immobilising reductionist tautology: nothing can be done until the basic structures of society are changed but the structures prevent us making any changes. There is no contradiction in asking practitioners to work on two levels simultaneously—to face immediate problems in doing 'the best' (so far as they can see it) for their clients whilst appreciating all the time that these very actions may help to reproduce the structures within which the problems arise. Within the doom the latter seems to place on the former there are spaces and potentials for changing the balances of uncertainty which reproduce the living society. To contract out of the messy business of day to day problems is to deny the active, contested nature of social and cultural reproduction: to condemn real people to the status of passive zombies, and actually cancel the future by default. To refuse the challenge of the day to day—because of the retrospective dead hand of structural constraint—is to deny the continuance of life and society themselves. It is a theoretical as well as a political failure. It denies the dialectic of reproduction. The necessary tension between short term actions taken in good faith in relation to barely understood laws of growth and transformation and their unpredictable long term outcomes is a common feature of life for all social agents... There is no reason why we cannot ask those whose work is social and caring to operate under the tension and irony of the relationship between two levels in their activity. (p. 186)

Willis contends that this conflict between two levels of effectiveness is a necessary trait of social agents. Therefore, the irony between the changes that the teacher can make with the students on one level and the larger society on the other level can either leave the teacher immobilized or empowered depending upon the teacher's level of awareness. If the teacher sees the larger social system as being unchangeable, then the task of helping the individual student becomes impossible. But on the other hand, if the teacher sees ways that the social system can be changed, then helping the individual student can be a small part of that change. Having a global plan of action, such as Gramsci's model for political praxis, which was outlined in chapter two, can give the teacher a feeling
that changes can be made. However, Gramsci's plan is just one
possible method of social change. Once the teacher reaches critical
consciousness, the teacher can then determine how to best take action
on the larger, societal plane.

The Conflict of a Juggling a Private Life

There are few professions where the employees devote as much
time, energy and commitment to their clients as teachers do. As
humanistic as doctors are supposed to be, they do not give their time
freely to their patients. Teachers spend a great deal of time
outside of the classroom, non gratis, providing support in many ways
to their students. For instance, teachers coach sports, advise
groups, supervise special events and counsel troubled students. The
devotion of teachers to their students cannot be compared to any
other profession. Teachers take their students home with them in
their minds and spend an entire evening worrying about how to reach
just one of them. Some teachers even allow their students to call
them at home so that they can offer emotional support.

Teachers give much more than their time to their students.
Many teachers buy all types of materials for their classroom and
travel to conferences at their own expense. Some teachers even buy
small rewards and pay for treats for their students. One teacher in
Columbus won a "good apple" award in his district for purchasing new
tennis courts for his tennis team; it seems that he just got tired of
the poor quality of the old ones and decided to foot the bill himself. Teachers frequently spend hundreds of dollars each year in order to supplement the materials provided by their school system.

Energy is another expenditure that teachers make on a daily basis. It takes a high degree of energy to keep the interest of every child for just one class period. Students demand attention before and after class as well. A teacher can hardly sneak down to the cafeteria to get lunch without having to counsel or discipline or instruct a student. In addition, teachers come in contact with a multitude of germs each day and are subject to catching most viruses that are in circulation. Since teachers often get up early and stay up late just to get all of their work done, this type of lifestyle can lead to a low resistance which increases the odds that the teacher will get ill. Teachers characteristically need breaks and vacations in order to stand the physical strain of working with well over a hundred students on a daily basis.

One of the very real problems of teaching is dealing with the conflict between one's home life and one's school work. Teachers find that they spend a great deal of personal time at home grading papers and planning lessons. For many teachers, it becomes a question of whether they can have much of a commitment to their home life when their job demands so much of their at home time. One way to judge this might be to examine how long it takes one teacher to grade a set of themes. If a teacher has thirty students, which is a
low estimate for many teachers, and assigns only one theme per week, that teacher may have between 150 and 180 papers to grade, depending upon the teaching load. If we take the low end of the estimate and multiply it by 10 minutes per paper, then that teacher would have to spend 25 hours grading those papers. To make matters worse, very few teachers can evaluate a theme and provide meaningful feedback in 10 minutes. Moreover, teachers have other papers to grade and other teaching work such as progress reports and lesson plans. Many teachers who assign journals can tell horror stories about trying to read every page of every student's journal. Many teachers do not carry brief cases simply because brief cases are not large enough to carry all of their papers home. Many settle instead upon transporting their papers home in cardboard boxes or large canvas tote bags. This type of time commitment on the teacher's part has got to cause a problem in the teacher's personal life. Teachers with families find it extremely hard to juggle both roles. The public needs to be made aware of the fact that teachers spend this much time, energy and expense on their profession.

The Reification of Education

Reification is an important but difficult concept to understand. When familiar with this concept, a person can use reification to analyze his or her circumstances in order to penetrate those practices that have become far removed from their original
intent. The concept of reification is based upon the assumption that reality is a social construction. Reification points out that there can be a great problem when we start to believe that our representation of reality is a natural law rather than a social construction. In other words, human beings create great abstract terms, concepts and institutions, but we can create severe problems for ourselves when we act as if our creations are absolute truths rather than human inventions. When a figment of the human imagination becomes reified, it begins to have a life separate from that of the humans who conceived it. It begins to have power of its own which once only belonged to humans. Humans can eventually become subordinate to the reified concept and find themselves serving the reified concept rather than themselves. In this way the product begins to control the producers; the subject and object switch roles. For example, instead of education being the product of the teacher; the teacher begins to serve the institution of education as an insignificant part, an object, and education begins to have the power as if it were a subject.

An important aspect of this interpretation is that reification leads the human beings into accepting this representation of the world without questioning it or tracing it back to the original intent of its producers. Sarup (1978) explains the historical and political dimension of reification:

Reification has been described as 'that historical and political process wherein the products of human practice, men and nature, become alienated from the actual producers and thus appear in
consciousness as independent and autonomous things.’... Reification means taking conventional activities and treating them as natural entities which have a separate existence and operate independently of the wishes of social actors. (p. 94-98)

Many scholars attribute Georg Lukacs (1968) with developing the notion of reification from Marx’s discussion of commodity fetishism. Lukacs explains reification as the process through which relations between human beings become objectified into relations between things. Lukacs relates reification to the capitalist mode of production. He feels that reification traps consciousness within a society that objectifies social relations. In this way, reification can serve the dominant ideology by elevating a self-serving concept to the role of ultimate truth.

In this section, three human creations which have become reified will be examined: educational labels, educational knowledge and the institution of education itself. These human creations have begun to mean more than the people whom they were originally meant to serve.

Perhaps the easiest level on which to observe reification is that of the individual word and how one word or label can become a powerful reality—so powerful that it begins to dictate to people instead of vice versa. In education there are many labels which change students from people into measured units which fit into one particular category. Soon these labels are the sole representation of those students to teachers, administrators and parents. The current labels which abuse students are those of ‘gifted’ and
remedial.' These labels stress differences between students rather than similarities. Whether these differences actually exist or not is debatable, especially since these differences are based exclusively upon test scores which are computed from tests which sole function is to create differences. Such labels can be more than self fulfilling; these labels are so powerful that they can determine the whole future for a student. Sarup (1978) traces how these labels limit the student's chances in life:

'Labeling' imposes an identity on a pupil by organizing the expectations of teachers, parents and others, in their interactions with the child. It sharply reduces alternative ways for the pupil to relate to it. Classification then forecloses alternative interpretations of an individual or situation. It is a mode of control. After all, it is not the student's own classification that is used, but of those who have power to 'label,' the 'reality-definers.' Through classification of pupils into different categories teachers and administrators define 'success' and 'failure.' Once given, the labels tend to remain fixed and lead to differential treatment, as so many of these studies show . . . Once written, objectified, the reports represent the truth; they influence not only teachers' perceptions of pupils, but also pupils' perception of themselves. There is then a close connection between educators' categories and pupils' careers, because, ultimately, labeling affects pupils' life chances. (p. 73-74)

The student must bear the burden of being the label. I once listened to a panel of gifted students, explaining what it is like to deal with the stress of being gifted. The students explained how hard it was to live up to everyone's expectations. The students are expected to become the stereotype of their label. In this way, the term has gained more importance than the individual student. The student feels obligated to live up to the term. The problems that gifted students feel being stereotyped as gifted are of a totally different nature than those of the students who are labeled as being remedial.
Remedial students have to deal with everyone's expectations that they are deficient in some way. The pain that these labels exert is hardly worth the benefits. These labels end up destroying students' lives when in actuality they were originally conceived to aid student success.

The whole way that our culture perceives knowledge can change the very nature of schooling. Knowledge has become a reified commodity which doesn't live within and among people but lives instead upon the shelf in libraries, frozen for time immemorial. Schools revere knowledge so highly that it is easy for knowledge to become elevated to the position of absolute fact or divine law. Knowledge becomes more than a human creations; it becomes a powerful entity which exists on its own above and beyond humans. Somehow we forget that each piece of hallowed knowledge was originally an exercise of human imagination. Teachers forget that all the terminology which we are so very fond of is nothing but words which during this particular time period have been deemed to be of great importance. Terminology can be viewed historically as merely this generation's mental toy. Learning this terminology becomes a life death matter in some classrooms. Reification becomes much like a Frankenstein creation; a bit of human creation which turns back upon its creator.
Mastering terminology often becomes more important than learning a process—as in the case of grammar. In many English classrooms, students pass or fail on the basis of whether they know grammar terminology or not rather than on the basis of their writing performance. In this case, the grammar terminology is no longer a human creation to aid language analysis; it becomes a substitution for language learning and in this way begins to manipulate the teacher. The teacher begins to feel obligated to teach grammar; grammar becomes the thing in power with the teacher serving its needs by teaching it, testing it and giving the students representative scores for their performance on the tests. Covering the grammar material becomes more important than the role of the teacher as educator. In this case, it is more important to cover the material than it is to work with the students' communication skills; in fact all communication must stop in order that the grammatical content can be covered.

Another interesting English classroom methodology which has become more powerful than the educator is the teaching of vocabulary. A method that teachers have used to supposedly teach new words to students has become reified into an absolute procedure which much be done on a regular basis. But when this practice of vocabulary teaching is examined, we find that children do not learn words through formal study but rather in the context of genuine communication. However, classroom teachers often operate on the
assumption that looking words up in the dictionary and writing down definitions is the first step to learning a new word. Vocabulary study has a life of its own and exists independent of people. It exerts great power over the classroom teacher and has generated a whole industry of workbooks and other types of materials. Teachers can no longer conceive of teaching new words in any other way. In both the cases of grammar and vocabulary, the school has decided what knowledge counts and is valuable enough to be studied formally in school.

The appropriate knowledge to be learned is always listed very clearly in the curriculum guide. The curriculum is then chopped up into bite size pieces and which are represented in lesson plans in the form of behavioral objectives. For many teachers these objectives have become more important than the process of learning; the objectives become more important than our obligation to the students.

The sanctioned school knowledge can also be found in the textbook. Textbooks house this knowledge for the students and thus become the authority on the subject rather than the teachers. Jean Anyon (1979, 1980) has researched the types of knowledge presented in social studies textbooks and has demonstrated that these textbooks are biased and present many social, political and economic myths. Students wholeheartedly believe that what is said in textbooks is true. Students are dumbfounded to find that textbooks often contain
outright errors and misrepresentations. Students greet such a realization with all the horror that they felt when they found out that there was no Santa Claus. Teachers are also easily intimidated by textbook knowledge. They likewise are lulled into believing that textbooks are the ultimate source of not only correct information but the only valuable information which must be relayed to students. Personally, I found myself teaching an entire chapter on question formation to eighth graders. The chapter listed the steps necessary for making a statement into a question. I had the students memorize these steps and then spit them back to me on a test. I also had students change statements into questions. I suddenly came to the profound realization that all native speakers of English can form questions without any difficulty at all. Learning the steps for making statements into questions was a useless enterprise since the students already unconsciously knew how to structure a question. The real problem was that I did not question the textbook's authority to tell me what my students needed to know and how I should teach that material to them. Incidents like this one helped me to realize that textbooks were not the divine authorities on knowledge that they purported to be.

One of the ultimate determinants of valuable knowledge is the standardized test. The bits of information which are supposedly tested on these tests becomes the subject for both textbooks and whole curriculums. Teachers stand in the shadow of these all important tests. Teachers necessarily must become subordinate to
such a power and therefore find themselves teaching for the test. On
many levels, the curriculum, the textbooks and the tests, knowledge
becomes reified into something that is both inhuman and inhumane.

The whole institution of education has become reified into
something more objectified and rigid than a system devoted to the
development of human potential should be. The institution has the
power and not the humans who labor within it. The institution
decides who will be certified and what they will be certified for.
Consequently, the public believes that these certificates represent
knowledge; thus, school must be the only place where one can obtain
an education. Education is not a life process of learning; it is a
commodity one obtains only at school. Only the institution of
education has the power to determine who is and who is not educated.
Teachers and students learn to assume the role that the institution
delineates for them rather than the institution being forced to
become what the teachers and students decide for it to be. Teachers
and students realize that they have the power to change reified
terms, knowledge and the institution of education itself, for these
things are after all only human constructs which were created by
humans and are thus within the realm of the human potential to be
changed.
Becoming a Disciplinarian Rather Than a Teacher

Teachers characterize discipline as the least desirable part of their job. It is considered the dirty work that one must do in order to have the students under control so that instruction can take place. Teachers complain about discipline and consider it a headache. Duties that require discipline rather than instruction are highly disliked, such as cafeteria duty, hall duty, study hall, bus duty, etc. Some of these duties are very difficult to handle, like assembly duty where a handful of teachers are expected to ride herd over a thousand kids in a darkened room while they are forced to watch a cultural event. The least desirable duty that I have ever served was bathroom duty. For it I was expected to make a surprise visit into the girls restroom, peak in between the partitions of the toilet stalls and apprehend a smoker in the act of smoking. Besides the fact that peaking into toilet stalls is a very demeaning task, the cracks between the partitions were not very wide, thus hindering my surveillance. I facetiously suggested that staff members be given pogo sticks in order to better view the potential villains.

Teachers do not want to assume the role of the police in the schools. However, the duties that teachers already perform could be classified as police behavior. Kevin Harris (1982) explains how teachers carry the power of the police into the classroom:
The work of police-type control within the classroom revolves around such things as maintaining order and administering punishments for varied misdemeanors; and activities like stopping pupils talking, finding out who threw the ruler, calling for attention, removing privileges and putting pupils on detention, clearly have more in common with the field of law enforcement than they do with curriculum instruction. Teachers do have such powers (they actually function as police, judge, jury, and correction officer all embodied in one person) and pupils acquiesce to this. And the power and the acquiescence to it are present even in idyllic situations where order and discipline are not a problem, as long as it is recognised by both parties that the person at the blackboard talking about the rivers of Africa can also step in to control any classroom situation which may arise. Police do not necessarily have to make arrests in order to function efficiently as police. (p. 95)

Harris describes how teachers have been ascribed a great deal of power over the students in their classroom whether they use it or not. For all intensive purposes, teachers are the police in the schools. Even though teachers do not like acting as the police, it is a role that they do assume well and often. In order to verify this, a teacher need only walk down the hallway of almost any school building because students respond to teachers as if they were the vice squad. Students elbow one another and caution, "Shh . . . here comes a teacher."

Teachers may find their role as police increasing because of the effects of deskilling. As discussed in a previous section, deskilling has lessened the teacher's function as an instructor. When teachers no longer are the people who create the lesson plans, those lessons may be less likely to hold the students' attention. Consequently, teachers will have to become better controllers in
order to make the prepackaged materials work. This ability to control will need to be developed in order to face this change in job requirements. Michael Apple (1982) labels this development 'reskilling' and explains that reskilling is often the natural compliment to deskilling:

While the deskilling involves the loss of craft, the ongoing atrophication of educational skills, the reskilling involves the substitution of the skills and ideological visions of management. The growth of behavior modification techniques and classroom management strategies and their incorporation within both curricular material and teachers' repertoires signifies these kinds of alterations. That is, as teachers lose control of the curricular and pedagogic skills to large publishing houses, these skills are replaced by techniques for better controlling students. (p. 146-147)

Indeed Apple may be right since in the past ten years many teacher inservices and even university courses have focused on the topic of control. Teachers, however, are not likely to be happy with their newly increased role as disciplinarian. Since discipline is the least desirable part of teaching, teachers may be more likely to become frustrated with their jobs and leave the profession rather than becoming interested in learning to better control their students. Teachers do not enjoy being the controller rather than the educator.

Discipline has become so important to the job of teaching that this skill is often rated above other teaching skills, such as instruction, when an administrator is evaluating a prospective or current teacher. New teachers know that they must be able to prove that they can maintain classroom control before they will be given.
the right to teach. Questions are asked about discipline during the job interview, and student teacher recommendations are expected to itemize the prospective teacher's ability as a disciplinarian. Administrators generally prefer to hire a male over a female since the (male) administrators feel that men are better disciplinarians. To underscore this point, females have great difficulty being hired as assistant principals or principals in any schools other than elementary schools because of their assumed lack of ability to discipline.

If teachers are unaware of the importance of discipline before they are hired, they soon learn its precedence in the school after they are hired. During my first year of teaching, I discovered that teachers were looked down upon for sending their discipline problems to the office because teachers were expected to be able to handle their problems without running to the assistant principal for help. During fire drills and assemblies, teachers and administrators check to see which teachers have weak control. Administrators' inspections are often surprise visits, sometimes carried out by eavesdropping by standing just outside of view from the classroom door or by listening in over the intercom system. Other teachers and even students can pressure teachers into a certain style or method of discipline. When I started teaching in 1970, "swatting" or corporal punishment was the basic form of discipline in my particular building. It was considered to be quick and effective and didn't cause scheduling conflicts with the buses like giving detentions.
would. It was so prevalent in fact that at the beginning of the period my students would pause until the sound of the swats being given in the hall to the students who had not done their homework died down so that we could begin our lesson. Also during my first year of teaching I was repeatedly pressured by students and teachers to give swats. On one particular day, a male colleague who supervised the cafeteria study hall informed his study hall that he would swat any boys who misbehaved and I would swat any of the girls. I was not present at that time and did not know of his policy until there was a knock upon my door and I was faced with an errant girl, a paddle and the teacher, all three expecting me to carry out the punishment. Somehow I had managed to allude such a conflict before that time so that everyone quite naturally assumed that I had been swatting my students to keep them under control. Needless to say, I failed the test: I wound up, swung the paddle and barely tapped the girl on the bottom. The other teacher and the student then turned around and laughed in my face. Everyone in the building, from the teachers to the students, had expected me to use swats to control my students. I found that I just couldn't ethically inflict pain on the students whom I was trying to help. This incident demonstrates that there is strong pressure in schools to become a disciplinarian rather than an instructor.

The totality of control that teachers are expected to exert over their students is unique. Teachers not only dictate when students can get out of their seats, talk and sharpen their pencils;
teachers also demand certain attitudes, tone of voice and mannerisms from their students. Kevin Harris (1982) itemizes how teachers have extended their control over every aspect of the students' behavior:

Thus, although it is the case that teachers have little, if any, control over the process of schooling, they do have virtually all the control and all the power within the operation of schooling; and often this extends far beyond its legal and humanitarian limits--teachers have been commonly known to extend their power to govern pupils' emotions ('wipe that smile off your face!') and pupils' bowels ('no, you can't go to the toilet; you've already been once this lesson!')... Thus, in virtually every way imaginable, relations of political dominance enter (or rather, are built into) the whole of the schooling process, of which the teaching-learning or instruction process is but a part. (p. 94)

Harris points out the role that controlling students plays in their political domination by teachers. By maintaining strict control over the students in school, the teachers are preparing their students for their future role in the economy as a passive worker. As was mentioned in chapter two, students are taught good work habits such as punctuality, respect for authority and following instructions so that they will more readily suit their employers' needs.

Over-emphasizing discipline in the classroom helps to prepare the student for domination. Classrooms where discipline matters more than instruction prepare students to be mindless factory workers rather than independent thinkers.

The teacher needs to make a conscious decision about how to balance the dual roles of instruction and discipline. If teachers do not enjoy the discipline part of their job, then they need to spend less of their time and energy upon such tasks. Not only do teachers
lessen their role as instructor by becoming disciplinarians, but they also may be fostering the students' role as dominated worker. Teachers must question whether their primary obligation is to produce docile workers for big business or critical thinkers capable of creating their own futures.

Becoming a Sorter Rather Than a Teacher

Another way that teachers inadvertently serve big business is by emphasizing their role as a sorter in opposition to their role as instructor. Teachers expend a great deal of their time and energy assigning numerical and letter grades and otherwise rank ordering their students. The crucial factor for both the issues of discipline and grading is one of time. If teachers find themselves spending more time on these things than on meaningful interaction with students, then things are out of balance. If a teacher puts off planning a new unit because of grading or walks into the classroom overly tired from staying up late grading papers, then the proverbial cart has been put before the horse once again.

However, this is not to say that grades could be easily done away with. The whole educational system depends on grades to determine who is allowed to move on to the next level. Students, teachers, administrators and parents are all conditioned into needing grades for some of their most basic functions. Grades are used to
motivate students: students are threatened with quizzes, tests and even points off of their final grade for the course if they don't do some specified activity or learn a particular group of facts. Part of the teacher's authority in the classroom in closely related to the teacher's ability to give out grades. Administrators strive to raise the grades on standardized test so that their school system looks good to the community. Parents receive grades as the major form of communication between them and the school about their youngster. To remove grades from this system would surely cause chaos. All parties concerned would not know how to keep the system running without them.

One of the most important functions of grades is as a report to those who need to know how the student is doing. But who is it who really needs grades, point averages, percentiles, and stanine scores? Yes, parents want evaluation, but certainly they would be better served with a discursive explanation of their child's progress rather than a series of numbers to decipher. If we trace the hierarchy of people who need grades from the next grade level to the next and so on, we find that we end up with the future employer being the ultimate authority in need of grades. In other words, one of the primary reasons why teachers spend hours grading papers, calculating final course grades, gridding in scan sheets, justifying grades to students and interpreting grades to parents is in order to keep big business happy.
Grades serve big business in several different ways. Primarily, grades provide big business with a handy means for schools to sort prospective employees in advance. Businesses do not necessarily look carefully at a prospective employee's grades, examining what grade that person earned during a particular year or course. Employers do not have to bother with such a time consuming practice. Employers can rely instead upon a more global representation of these grades, the certification of graduation from particular institutions. The various certificates available at different levels (high school, college, masters, technical school, etc.) are all that is necessary to exclude what has been readily labeled as the 'unqualified.' However, these certificates do not indicate that these students can assume any particular job automatically without a period of further training. In fact, most employers find that their business has to have a training program in order to prepare new employees for the job in question. If these certificates and grades do not indicate ability to do the job in question, then just what do they indicate? Kevin Harris (1982) argues that these certificates only certify that the person who holds them has the right personality type for the company:

... it has been suggested that what employers are actually seeking is 'character types,' and since school certificates contain an affective factor, employers, by focusing on ostensibly cognitive certificates, are able to choose people with appropriate 'characters' for placement in particular jobs. Along with this it has also been suggested that, out of the common pool of (say) Higher School Certificate holders, employers are then able to pick the particular people they want on other grounds—namely sex, race, religion, and social
This reliance upon certification has been very efficient in the past at weeding out those who should not be applying for the job. People who don't have the right credentials for the job do not even need to be told that they don't qualify because they know that without the credentials, they need not apply. Employers are saved the time and expense of having to deal with these sorts of people. Certification and grades all make the employers' search for a proper employee much easier. Harris (1982) again suggests that the reason that things run so smoothly is only because certificates give the illusion of fairness:

We can conclude, however, that the meritocratic theory serves a very strong ideological function in making job allocation appear to be fair, with each person appearing to get his or her rightful lot. This would not be the case if jobs were allocated by lottery or according to shoe size—which would appear to be just as reliable as predictors—in which case some sort of social unrest might be expected. We can also ponder, in a wry sort of way, about the very future of schooling if employers did face facts and ignored school credentials. (p. 109)

Schools do serve an important function for employees: they sort students by personality type, label them and do so in a socially accepted manner so that these people accept their labels, jobs and positions within the social system willingly.

The sorting function of schools is so intricately tied to big business that from time to time, big business demands that schools become more cost effective. Big business demands that schools institute some form of quality control over their products. Such movements are translated into the jargon of accountability and
competency testing. These forms of checks upon the quality of the product make the certification process more useful to big business.

It is interesting to ponder the ways in which big business dictates to the schools. Various career training movements have made strong efforts to supply the type of employee that big business wants. Technical schools maintain a close relationship with big business. They even pride themselves on placing their students directly into jobs, and now these schools are even advertising that they employ big business executives as teachers. Schools may be moving closer and closer to control by big business.

All this means that teachers need to take a long, hard look at what function grades serve within the institution of school and within society itself. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages so heavily that it is worth the amount of time that teachers spend on various aspects of grading? Are grades a true asset to instruction? Do teachers frequently evaluate and change instructional methods based upon student performance? Are grades really used as a diagnostic tool to get extra help and guidance for certain students without any overriding negative side effects? Do graded papers provide instruction for students so that they actually learn concepts from just looking at their graded papers? Or do the disadvantages outweigh the advantages? Do grades demand an inordinate amount of a teacher's time, exhausting much needed energy and thwarting creativity? Is meaningful instruction pushed to the rear in order to
bolster test scores? Do grades tear at the students' self concepts
and close the doors to higher education? Do grades perpetuate the
inequality already existing in society? Harris (1982) eloquently
draws connections between home environment, economic position,
grades, school success and the student's future economic position:

The plain fact of the matter is that large numbers of
'intellectually meritorious' children from the working class are
not being selected into those jobs . . . which are allegedly
more difficult and responsible and requiring of 'intellectual
ability,' and which certainly offer greater financial
remuneration, simply because these children are not receiving
the requisite grades in school. But what appears to be the case
is that the cognitive ability or general merit, expressed in
terms of 'intelligence' and 'diligence,' which is rewarded by
success at school is defined in such a way that it is virtually
equivalent to coming from a privileged background . . . The
distinct possibility emerges that what is rewarded in and by
schooling is that which has been structured by capital, and that
the real measure of merit involved in the chain of
success—longevity at school > appropriate grades > high-paying
job—is largely a matter of choosing the right parents. If this
is the case then not even equal chances are being offered. (p.
107)

The Teacher as an Agent of Hegemony

It is very difficult for teachers to escape the dominant
ideology which they were socialized into. Part of this difficulty
may be because teachers themselves were previously very good
students. As good students, they did what was expected of them,
followed the rules and modeled the ideals that were presented to
them. Perhaps one of the very reasons why people become teachers is
because they are comfortable in a school environment and are
successful there. Seldom were teachers poor students. Teachers were
the type of students who may have fit the mold all too well. This ability to be easily socialized into behaving which at one time helped teachers to be good students may now hamper the teachers' efforts to critically analyze what happens at school. Since teachers were such pleasers as children, they may feel more pressure as adults to do what others expect. And those others--students, other teachers, administrators, parents and even the teacher himself or herself--expect the teacher to embody the dominant ideology, almost to an exaggerated extent, for teachers are supposed to be the ideal, the most upstanding citizens for truth, right and the American way.

Teachers cannot help but perpetuate the status quo: that is almost their job definition. Harris (1982) lists three strong reasons why teachers feel obligated to champion the reigning ideology:

In the first place, existing social relations have been so structured that teachers themselves have to be highly schooled, and this greatly increases the likelihood that teachers will be well-constituted ideological subjects, bearing dominant ideological relations, and motivated on account of their own personal success (at school) to reproducing the conditions of their own making. Second, the very act of becoming a teacher is likely in itself to entail support for the overall structure and ideologically perceived function of schooling: some people do enter teaching for the deliberate purpose of subverting the system but people generally do not become part of structures they are fundamentally antagonistic to. Third, once in the schools, teachers have to survive and also get results, and so they are most unlikely to give up their political and ideological power. They are more likely to exercise it, and thus support the function of the school. Finally, although not exhaustively, teachers have to justify themselves to themselves: and this is likely to entail extolling schooling as a good thing, which in turn would entail teachers becoming subject to the very illusions which they serve, and in practice serving the same illusions which they are subject to. (p. 125)
Teachers find that they are expected to represent the dominant ideology on a day to day basis to their students. Teachers are the loco parentis who are given the task of socializing students to fit into the existing society. The teacher's job success is highly dependent upon that teacher's ability to transfer the reigning ideology to the students.

Since much from the teachers past, present and future success depends upon that teacher's ability to act as an agent of socialization, it is highly unlikely that a teacher could readily turn his or her back on the accepted ideology. The process of hegemony depends upon people like teachers to educate students in the current norms of the dominant social group. Since students spend hundreds of hours being influenced by teachers, teachers unknowingly become one of the primary agents of hegemony. All these factors insure that teachers will have to traverse an uphill path in order to reach critical consciousness.

Conclusion

After examining just ten of the many possible impediments to critical consciousness for the teacher, the question might still be: how do these impediments hamper critical consciousness when the teacher still has the rich environment of the classroom from which to learn. Certainly, the knowledge currently coming from ethnographies of naturalistic classroom settings should indicate that teachers
could indeed be learning a great deal just from classroom experience alone. The reason why teachers do not utilize this daily source of rich information is because they have been alienated from their work as educators. Alienation happens when a worker feels removed from the products that they produce; such workers become nothing more than objects to the production of capital. Likewise, teachers have been alienated from the process of educating students. Because teachers have had their power to make decisions in the classroom usurped, their ability to trust their own judgements has subtly been eroded.

Besides the deskilling of the teachers expertise by textbooks, curriculum systems and curriculum supervisors, teachers have had their confidence shaken by national experts who attack teacher credibility from the news media. Many teachers take these attacks very personally and find themselves defending the educational system to a myriad of people in their everyday lives besides the usual attacks from misguided parents. The problem is that the these explosive reports, written by nationally recognized experts, never consider the teacher's perspective. I have made it a habit to examine the credentials of the members of such studies as they receive national attention, and I have yet to find one that had a public school teacher on its panel—not the whole panel mind you, just one real teacher. The reoccurring theme of these studies is more time on task than anything else. Recently, one such study called for longer school days; in retaliation a teacher remarked, 'If we're doing such a bad job of educating these students, then why
would they want the kids to stay any longer with us?" In many ways teachers have lost the confidence that they can learn things from their classroom; for after all, the experts are the ones making all the grand generalizations and getting all the attention. Teachers begin to believe in experts rather than believing in themselves.

Teachers have been alienated from their classrooms as a source of knowledge, insight or even feedback. Such information is not necessary when important decisions about education are made by other people who are never present in the classroom. Teachers lose touch with the life of their classroom. Thus, teachers become mere workers going through their paces half asleep. They become alienated from the most fulfilling part of their job--from the real life experiences of the classroom.

Teachers do not expect themselves to be critically conscious of what they are doing. It is not a job requirement; in fact, being critically conscious can cause great mental anguish so that one may indeed be better off not fully understanding the circumstances of one’s classroom. Critical consciousness needs to become a necessary skill for teaching. A teacher should constantly be using his or her critical consciousness daily to make an evaluation of what is happening in the classroom in order to make informed decisions. Pre-service teachers should be trained in this perspective, and practicing teachers should be rejuvenated with it. Critical consciousness offers the teacher the power to make meaningful change
take place.
CHAPTER V

IMPEDIMENTS TO CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR THE STUDENT

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the forces which socialize the teacher into perpetuating traditional teaching methodologies were examined. Students provide an additional, strong socializing force for the teacher. Learning works two ways: just as the teacher's expectancies pressure the students into compliance, the students' expectancies do the same for the teacher. Both teachers and students play dual roles; they are receivers of society's dominant ideology just as they are active senders of the same ideology. Although they assume both an active and a passive role in socialization, students like teachers seldom critically examine their role in the process of education.

Just expanding the teacher's critical consciousness will have little effect upon the classroom since the students can potentially socialize the teacher back into traditional practices. In order for there to be an dramatic change in the status quo, both the teachers and the students will have to undergo a revolution in thinking. The
teachers and the students will have to critically examine their embedded beliefs about the composing process. After this critical examination has taken place, both parties may then be empowered to create a new way of conceiving composition which will ultimately give all students regardless of race, gender, and class the opportunity to construct a new reality through writing.

Chapter four focused on the teacher and the impediments to critical consciousness for the teacher. Chapter five will be the natural compliment to chapter three and will focus on the student and the impediments to critical consciousness for the student. However, chapter five will also discuss our culture's traditional image of the composing process which is an impediment for both the teacher and the student.

This chapter discusses the current, cultural model for the composing process which enters into the composition classroom through the minds of the students—and possibly even the teachers as well. These myths about composing were included in chapter three. In order to elaborate upon the students' perspective, this chapter will analyze each of the ten myths in more detail. These myths were originally written for the second edition of Reprints.
Students Are Not Empty Vessels

Many composition instructors begin preparing for their course by itemizing all the information that the students will need to know in order to become good writers. Although such instructors have never met with the students before, these instructors can easily produce a syllabus for the first day of class which will predict not only when each assignment will be due but what topic will be covered during each class period for the entire course. Since the students' needs and abilities are secondary, the instructor is operating from the assumption that the students come to the class as empty vessels ready to be filled with new knowledge. In reality, the metaphor couldn't be further from the case with the students actually coming to the classroom with so many previous beliefs about composing that when the teacher pours in some new information, that new information becomes so diluted that no trace of its original content can be found.

The content about composing that the students bring with them to class is based primarily upon the culture's reigning model for composing. In other words, if everyone in the culture assumes that to learn to write one must suffer through endless workbook exercises on grammar, then students come to class expecting the same. The teacher needs to carefully examine the students' past beliefs about writing because whether the teacher acknowledges them or not, these
beliefs create a precedence in the classroom that will make it hard for the teacher to build a case against. The students' beliefs about writing are so firmly planted in their minds that little can be done to uproot these fully blossomed myths.

Since students come to the classroom full of myths about composing, it becomes necessary to bring these hidden beliefs to their attention in order to critically analyze them and thus debunk these myths. The teacher must actively lobby against such myths or surely the students' past beliefs will drown out the teacher's puny voice.

The ten myths will be analyzed in order, starting with the introduction to the myths. For the original text of these myths see chapter three. The analysis of each myth will include important features within the myth as well as past student reactions to each of the myths.

Introduction to the Ten Myths about Composing

This introduction tries to lay a foundation for critical analysis by discussing two sociological concepts which were considered in chapter two, the power of common sense knowledge and the legitimization of common sense (referred to in the text as the perpetuation of a myth). Admittedly, these concepts may be very hard for the students to grasp, but jumping right into the myths would
probably be less successful without these introductory concepts. This is not to imply that remedial students should have remedial content; in fact, these same myths have been used with more advanced classes, and they have received similar reactions. The last two points, the need to examine one's real writing experiences and how such myths can impede learning to write, set up later classroom activities aimed at getting the students to acknowledge and then improve their own idiosyncratic ways of writing.

The use of the term "myth" was chosen in order to appeal to the popularized connotation for the word. Thus, for the purposes of this discussion "myth" will mean a false cultural belief. This definition is somewhat misleading since it in no way refers to the literary use of the term which refers to cultural stories about gods, etc.

Student responses to these myths were gathered by assigning the students to write non-structured responses, by assigning structured responses and through informal classroom discussions. Students generally selected one or more of the myths and responded by explaining how they used to believe in that myth. It is interesting that this use of past tense, 'used to believe,' was largely unwarranted. Such students actually had not previously terminated practices related to the myths but were classifying their beliefs as being in the past as if to announce that the students would no longer continue that practice in the future. The few responses that were in
disagreement were generally limited to one particular myth and argued a point. These disagreements were responded to in a positive manner through a supportive comments written on the student papers and through classroom discussions which credited the student’s wisdom for bringing up a valid point. This was done in order to foster critical examination—even if it meant outright disagreement with the teacher. Such disagreements might help the students to be more aware of the controversy of such issues. Since classroom discussions of these myths generally took place during the first few days of class, the discussions were often halted as if the students did not fully trust that the teacher would allow blatant criticism of traditional practices to be discussed out loud in the classroom.

1. The Whistle-While-You-Work Myth

The primary purpose of this myth is to deal with the writing anxiety which is all too prevalent and goes unaddressed in most composition courses. Many students can be seen sitting in fear of a blank piece of paper, unable to commit themselves to the first word. One might label this fear as a sort of threshold terror where the writer is frightened of the whole thought of beginning the paper. Characteristically, basic writers may be more prone to this type of immobilizing fear than the more experienced writers since basic writers have has fewer successful writing experiences. In the Writing Workshop at OSU, we found many students suffering from writing anxiety; Ed Lotto and Chris Hayes, who were then director and
assistant director, video taped one of my most frightened writers to show at a Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1982 to demonstrate the severity of the problem. This student had great difficulty writing anything.

Through the written explanation of the first myth, the goal was to help the students to understand that it was okay to hate writing, and that they would not be punished for their feelings. In order to achieve this goal, it was even revealed to them that professional writers are sometimes afraid to write. Ironically, some of the most anxious writers are composition teachers. In contrast to this focus on anxiety, one of the Writing Workshop teachers objected to a piece of student writing included in the first edition of Reprints which developed the point that writing is hard work. This teacher felt that we should not publicize any negative opinions of writing. She did not want to advertise writing as purely pleasurable, but she did want the hard work reference removed.

This dialectic of love-hate emotions toward writing is an important point which is not fully address in this myth. The last two paragraphs of this myth try to prepare the students for the overflowing of emotions which they will probably experience while writing. In a paper delivered at a 1985 Conference on College Composition and Communication entitled, "Motive and Composing: The Writer's Struggle to Find Voice," I addressed the role that emotions play in the composing process. The paper drew from several Soviet
scholars from the Vygotsky school. Alexei A. Leontiev (1981) described motive as an "affective-volitional tendency" with the word "affective" meaning an emotional reaction to a specific event or a general state and the word "volitional" meaning a matter of will. In other words, motive is a willful reactionary state. Students are often a victim of their own emotions, suffering a runaway roller coaster of ups and downs during their composing processes. Students need instead to value their emotions as a necessary and useful source of motive. Writing without a motive, without an energizing source of willful response is practically impossible. Motive originates in a state of disequilibrium and thus causes movement. For the inexperienced writer, this disequilibrium can be uncomfortable or even frightening. Perhaps this inarticulate state of confusion needs to be welcomed as the first inkling of the growth of an idea.

Emotions can even be utilized as the writer's personal guidance system. Vygotsky (1962) described inner speech as a dynamic movement of thought through a series of inner planes (p. 125). This movement has to be guided in some way and perhaps motive guides the thought while it traverses through these inner planes, telling the writer when the idea is or is not developing on course. This sort of emotional gut feeling or "felt sense" is described by Sondra Perl (1983) in her article, "Understanding Composing." The writer's felt sense or motive is an important motivational and self-correcting system.
Beginning writers have trouble trusting their emotions as a source of inspiration and guidance for their writing. Instead, the beginning writer circumvents the healthy use of these emotions so that they intensify with a lack of self confidence until they explode—sometimes even within the presence of the teacher. These volatile beginning writers may come to class or a conference with a pressure cooker of emotions which erupts into anger or tears. These writers often have unrealistic expectancies for themselves which only lead into damaging self criticism. Students expect that they should have a totally blissful smirk on their faces the whole while that they are composing. This student's comment reveals that such students feel that professional writers can glibly produce perfect prose without any problems or frustrations:

I thought that famous writers didn't have trouble writing, and that's why they became famous. But I think it's because of all the trouble they went through to do it.

Recognizing that writing necessarily causes an outpouring of emotions may be the first step in learning to harness emotions for useful purposes while writing.

Another very real source of anxiety is the folklore which is associated with writing classes, especially freshman composition. Many high school teachers threaten their students with how hard it will be in college. In the student writing sample below, the student discusses how her perceptions about writing were altered by what her friends had told her:
I Hate Writing

There have been people who have led me to believe that writing is difficult. In high school I would talk to friends between classes or at lunch lots of times we would complain about classes, assignments, teachers etc. One of the subjects we would complain about was English. Everyone hated English and hated to write. One begins hearing this often enough and begins to believe it himself. It's kind of like being brainwashed. You put your mind to do something and of course you're going to do it. I still really hate to write. I don't like having to put everything in order and make it organized. Then, I'm always switching paragraphs around and taking a long time to write. Ideas just don't come easy for me. I have to think again for a good opening statement, and topic sentence, and thesis, and all my supports. I'm starting to have the same problem now. I don't have any idea of what else to say. I'm going to have to think a bit before I can write something else. Think, think, think, what can I write about now. I hate peanut butter. See, I'm already getting off the subject again. I started out saying that people have led me to believe that writing is difficult and I end up telling about peanut butter! Oh well. I think I better quit now.

Students need to recognize that these perceptions contribute to their doubts about themselves rather than their confidence.

Confidence is an important issue discussed in this myth. Paragraph four points up that students may have suffered great pain in the past in regard to their writing. In their writing histories, which will be discussed in chapter six, the students often pour out horror stories about their negative experiences with writing. These students come to class not only with scars from their past writing experiences but gaping wounds, still festering and in need of attention. One student angrily relating how the teacher constantly attacked her even when she had written a good paper: the teacher had ordered her out into the hallway and vehemently accused her of plagiarism. Beginning writers have suffered many past indignities.
which may be their biggest hurdle to overcome—more than comma
splices and run-ons; these students may have damaged egos which must
be repaired before any new information can be assimilated. Dealing
with these past pains may be an important step toward building a new
self confidence with writing.

This myth includes a small section in paragraph three which
suggests that there are some pleasures to be associated with writing.
This is an important point which deserves much discussion in the
class. In order to seriously engage in writing, students need to see
writing as something worth doing. After withstanding the storm and
stress of making meaning through writing, the student needs to
visualize the pleasure that comes from successfully bringing a
thought into being through writing.

2. The Manifest-Destiny Myth

This myth addresses our cultural assumptions about writing
which set students up for failure. Believing that writing is a rare
talent possessed by only a few gifted people necessitates that the
vast majority will perform miserably. Our culture perpetuates this
myth through anecdotes and stories about talented people who are
'discovered.' The use of the word 'discovered' implies that these
talented people were originally born with their rare talents in fact,
and then they had to hang around unappreciated until one glorious day
they were discovered. We believe that talent is a unique ability
which exists independently from human influence; thus, the person judging the talent does not influence what is or is not deemed as talent nor can talent be taught to someone or learned from someone else. Talent is considered to be more of a matter of luck: if you are lucky, you have it; if you are not lucky, you don’t. The label of ‘gifted’ has similar connotations. The word ‘gifted’ implies that talent is a special present given from above to the chosen few. Since the gift is mysteriously bestowed, there seems to be no criteria for being chosen. One can’t work up to being gifted, and you certainly can’t study for it—even though one can be tested for it. Supposedly, the tests are only used to discover those who at some previous time were handed out special talents or an extra helping of brains.

If all these assumptions about gifted and talented apply to writing, then being a good writer has very little to do with classroom learning. Students come to class already either possessing or not possessing this talent. Certainly, some people are far better writers than others, but the assumptions behind the gifted and talented myth are just too simplistic and too self-defeating for the student. Students need to be pressed early in the course to examine their assumptions about writing to see if their assumptions are giving them permission to be a good writer or not.
Another interesting feature of this type of reasoning is that it mystifies writing for the student. Like the beliefs surrounding gifted and talented, mysticism restricts those who have access to the magical power of writing. Consider how our culture has shrouded writing in secrecy. Students generally do their written assignments out of class in seclusion from one another. If they are expected to do written assignments in class, then they protectively hover over their work as if someone else wanted to steal it. Students learn early in school that they are not to share their writing with one another. Some even believe that such sharing should be considered cheating. When students do their work outside of class, they return to class with their written work hidden deep within their notebooks. Papers may be further concealed within theme folders. During class, the papers are surreptitiously passed down the row with no one daring to take a peek at someone else's writing. Except for the few atypical teachers who practice peer editing, students never see one another's papers. The teacher's comments are even written privately outside of class and then silently passed back without any whole group sharing. The majority of the sharing is unsanctioned and is done outside class with such sharing generally being restricted to an oral exchange of final grades and not the papers themselves.

Using student writing samples in a writing class can remove some of the secrecy. While researching student and teacher opinions for the second edition of *Reprints*, it became apparent that the
students read the textbook when it wasn't assigned. Teachers reported that when they would assign a student sample to be read for the next class meeting, one or more students could often give a personal testimony to the merit of the piece because they had already read it. This was considered to be quite remarkable since the students rarely read what was assigned let alone what wasn't assigned. Why students read the textbook is an interesting question. Students frequently read selections from the anthology of student writing when they were most frightened—before they would begin a new theme assignment. As the student sample below testifies, seeing what other students had done seemed to give the students comfort as well as ideas for their own writing:

Selecting A Topic

Using the examples of papers previously written in class is a helpful tool in picking a topic. If my freewriting or any of the other methods have failed to help me choose a topic, reading these papers that other people have written will often help me choose one. I don't use the topic they used, but their paper often gets my mind going in the right direction so that my freewriting will now be more helpful.

Reading the writings of other students dramatically affected the students' anxieties about writing. Seeing real writing can help remove the mysticism from writing. Even more importantly, students should see the rough drafts of student writing; this point will be taken up again in a later myth.

The freshman composition class is an institution in higher education which is also enshrined upon some false assumptions about writing. The task of learning to write becomes far more difficult
when it is forced to meet a ten-week deadline. The university administration as well as the students expect that learning to write can be tidily accomplished in one quarter or semester. Freshman composition is one of the first, universal requirements of students since it is assumed that the student needs to get it out of the way early in order to insure that the student can do the writing required in the other courses. In contrast, this myth explains how writing is a life-long process. The assumption that passing freshman composition certifies one as an acceptable writer changes the whole context for learning to write to passing the course. Students don't want to discuss and develop their individual composing processes. They just want to do the required number of papers necessary to pass the class. Teachers frequently run into students who want to treat freshman composition as a correspondence course, delivering their papers on the appointed day without ever attending class.

Students enter a college composition course expecting that the teacher will "teach" them how to write in ten weeks. Regretfully, this feat will probably never be accomplished—not because learning to write is so difficult but because the task is never complete since all writers are continually learning about writing.
3. The Miracle-Cure Myth

The issue of traditional grammar study is such a powerful one that it should be addressed early during the course since the issue will still be hiding within the students' minds ready to reap havoc at any moment. Chapter two contains several sections devoted to grammar study which explore the hegemonic forces which legitimate grammar study as a matter of cultural common sense. The description in the first paragraph of this myth makes grammar study sound like a masochistic perversion on the student's part. The incendiary rhetoric was chosen intentionally because many students are the victim of their own false consciousness about writing. Students overwhelmingly insist that they should be doing grammar drill work in a composition class. These students willingly condemn themselves to a purgatory of endless dittos. They believe strongly that grammar is the miracle cure, yet this very grammar study works against them when it is substituted for actual writing experience. Moreover, students may actually prefer to do grammar drills rather than to engage in real writing experiences. This preference may be due to the fact that writing makes many students feel uncomfortable. If the students already have a long history of filling in dittos about grammar, then quite understandably doing more of the same is desirable because it is so predictable and non-threatening. For the student, it is far less difficult to label parts and circle words than it is to wrestle with words in order to make sense and create meaning.
Substituting grammar drills for real writing experience has been the rule rather than the exception in most English classrooms for many years. Not only did I witness as well as participate in this practice while I taught in public school, but I have read hundreds of writing histories written by students who lament the same problem, a lack of experience with writing. In reaction to this myth, students frequently lambaste their high school English teachers’ abilities to teach composition. The writing sample below explains one student’s rage after she realized that she had been taught grammar instead of writing:

Grammar

I never did understand why they force grammar down our throats from 1st grade to 12th grade. All I did was memorize the stuff long enough to take the test then I’d forget most of it. We never would learn the grammar then write papers to put it to good use. This made me mad when I got A’s and B’s in grammar then in 12th grade when I wrote my term paper I received a C on it. When we did write compositions, they’d give us examples of famous writers then say, O.K., write. If they’d mix more writing into English, I feel we’d learn a lot more.

It seems highly unlikely that a student will learn to write when that student is seldom allowed to write. However, there are complex reasons why teachers do not assign more writing. This discussion needs to be handled carefully since the students’ attention needs to be focused on cultural myths rather than just focusing on making the high school English teacher as the handy scape goat.
The teacher who does assign loads of written work becomes a martyr. Since teachers must endure terrible class loads and sizes, setting oneself up to have to grade hundreds of papers is not a wise decision. This student writing sample details one student's plight with trying to get help from his English teacher:

English Problems

Many high school students from Kenton cannot write well because the classes are too large. First of all, with thirty or forty students in the same classroom, the student will not be able to get individual help before class. My teacher told my class the first day of school that she wouldn't answer any questions before class, because if she did for one person, everybody would ask something, leaving no time for class. Second, the teacher doesn't have just one large class to teach, but four or five large classes, making it almost impossible to get in and see her after class or after school. One day, I had a paper due the next day, and I was having a problem getting everything to come together, so I was going to sign up to see my teacher after school, but her schedule was already full for the next three days leaving me out in the cold with a bad paper and not knowing what to do. Finally, a student in a large class is more likely to goof off than a student in a small class, making it very possible for him or her to miss something of value. English class was the only large class that I had, and it was also the only class that I goofed off in. Also, it was the only class that I didn't do very well in. It may not be a reason for everybody, but for me, the large class is why my writing skills aren't very good.

Notably, the student even underestimates the number of classes that the teacher must teach—most teachers teach five or six classes and not four or five. Inexperience with writing is a serious problem; however, Mina Shaughnessy (1977) may not be correct in her assumption that students are poor writers simply because they lack experience with writing (p. 5). Inexperience is one of the major hurdles for the students, but the quality of the writing experiences and other
4. The You've-Got-to-be-a-Mind-Reader Myth

The students tended to agree with most of the ten myths; however, this was the only myth that seemed to elicit an occasional objection. The objection was always the same: the students felt that doing what the teacher wants is a necessary part of doing well in school. In this myth, I tried to acquaint students with the ingenuine type of writing that Ken Macrorie (1970) calls "Engfish"—writing which follows formats and conventions yet says nothing. In paragraph four, I over stated my case by telling the students that artificial writing will not be tolerated in college. The students have made me reconsider my position. Regretfully, I now admit that they are somewhat right about this issue: this type of writing does sell with a lot of teachers. Perhaps, this myth discusses more what I wish were the case than what actually exists in the majority of classrooms. I no longer will accept vacuous prose from my students, but since most teachers focus on error reduction and formulaic writing, this type of writing often merits an acceptable grade.

A few critical moments with various students has helped to change my thinking. I finally realized that for many students playing the game matters far more than having something to say, and I also began to reconsider my role in the perpetuation of this problem. One such moment happened with a student of mine who was in my class when I was participating in a collaborative research project with Robert
since it had a thesis statement and topic sentences etc., but it was terribly boring and pointless. Such incidents as these have helped me to rethink what I was doing in class because my students were often valuing format more than content.

The real problem here might be with what the teacher values rather than just with what the students value since the students try so tirelessly to mimic what they think that the teacher wants. How the teacher responds to student writing has a profound effect upon student performance. For instance, when I was reading student writing to see if it followed format, I soon started teaching for format—in the hopes of getting the students to do better on their evaluations. Inadvertently, evaluation was changing what I was teaching so that format mattered more than content. And of course the students obliged me by giving me exactly what I had said that I wanted. Peter Elbow (1978) suggests in an early article of his entitled "Why Teach Writing" that teachers should respond to student writing like readers rather than like teachers. An important assumption that Elbow makes is that the teacher can sincerely enjoy student writing. Unfortunately, I have met all too many teachers who find student writing to be nothing but hopeless drivel. Teachers have to become connoisseurs of student writing in order to do a good job of evaluation. Otherwise, teachers will find themselves only responding to errors rather than content. Reading about a Friday night drunk or the death of a grandparent may not be the teacher's idea of great literature, but unless the teacher can appreciate the
content of student writing, little more than the format will ever matter.

Perhaps it was unrealistic to suggest to the students that they shouldn't play the classroom game by giving the teacher what he or she wants. Admittedly, playing the game is an important part of making it in school. When I rewrite this myth, I will have to amend my point of view to explain that playing the game is indeed important, but changing the game may be more important. My point is similar to the one that Willis (1978) makes in the citation in chapter four about teachers: while working within the confines of the system, the person in question should be considering the larger picture and how to change it. Thus, to extend this to the student, even though the teacher asks for a very restrictive format like the traditional research paper, the student must strive to find a topic that will give that student the latitude to be expressive. The trick is to bend the assignment to suit oneself. The student writing sample which follows gives a specific example of what one student did to change a rigid history assignment into something that she could enjoy doing:

**Doing What The Teacher Wants You To Do**

Writing a research paper on Shakespeare while I was in high school was the hardest paper I had ever written. It was also a complete flop. I thought that since my English teacher adored Shakespeare, it would be the best thing for me to write on. I learned, however, that selecting a topic my teacher liked didn't mean I automatically got an "A" on the paper.

In order for students to write good, interesting papers, the thoughts must be of their own. They can write a much more creative paper if it is especially interesting to them. In a
history class on year, for our final exam we were to write a research paper on anything we wanted, but our teacher said he would prefer us to try and write it on something that pertained to history. I decided I didn’t want to do mine on someone like Abraham Lincoln or George Washington. I wanted to do mine on something interesting to me, which was Hare Krishna. My teacher thought it was so good and interesting that he put it in the school newspaper. It was the best paper I had ever written and I got a "A+" on it because it was fun and interesting to me. I really learned from writing it.

I have also written many papers on different topics that I thought would impress my teacher. These always seemed to be the ones I would put off until the last minute and do the worst on. Since I had procrastinated so long on these paper, I never learned from them because I would usually write about the same thing the book had in it. Never did I write my own personal opinions for fear of disagreement with the teacher. These papers were so blah and pointless it was almost embarrassing to have to turn it in. These are also the papers that to this day if anyone were to ask me to explain the paper to them, I couldn’t because I can’t even remember what they were about. I never learned from them because they were too boring.

Selecting a topic from your own head and not being afraid to write a paper. I have learned that in order to have a good paper, it must be unique and creative, a paper that makes one think "Hey, this was really kind of fun to do!"

As another example, my husband modified a traditional research paper format in order that he could do his paper as a play. He wrote a play about reading instruction methodologies in which several teachers were arguing in the teacher’s lounge about reading instruction—all of course while the school was burning down.

For the student, the deep issue here is one of the author’s integrity. If the constraints of the assignment make it impossible for the student to write anything meaningful, then the student should contact the teacher and ask for an exception to be made. In most cases, I have seen the teacher enthusiastically welcome a new approach to a hackneyed topic. Students don’t realize that they can change the rules of the game. I can remember how angry I was in
grade school when I discovered that another student had made a cover with pictures cleverly traced from the encyclopedia for her report. I was angry because the teacher had not told us to make a cover and now this rival was going to receive a higher grade. Certainly, making a cover with a visual isn’t a guerrilla tactic aimed at overthrowing the classroom teacher’s power, but the act of altering the assignment to suit one’s interests and abilities can enhance the student’s performance. And as teachers, we cannot deny that great writers are great partially because they break conventions. Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has a play within a play, and in *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain has the main character step forward and address the reader one to one. To cite a media example, Alfred Hitchcock concluded *The Birds* without really ending the story. Although students are capable of understanding this subtle ability to judiciously break conventions for effect, they are not entitled to break from these conventions mainly because of their lowly status as students. Teachers need to make written conventions problematic for their students rather than falsely portraying them as indisputable absolutes.

Another important feature the argument against treating writing like scholarly prostitution is the negative effect that this attitude can have upon the writer’s thought processes. The more the student gives all decisions about writing over to the teacher—form, content, and even evaluation—the more that the student will lose the ability to satisfy self. A writer must continually be able to make
decisions from the reader’s point of view. But if the writer envisions the teacher as the ultimate reader, then mind reading is the only course of action possible.

Writing to please the teacher is actually writing without a motive. Of course, one could say that the motive is to please the teacher or to get a good grade, but actually the writer has no personal reason to say something. Students get so used to writing without a reason that they lose touch with what it feels like to write with a motive. Some might even charge that the students never had the opportunity to write from their own motives to begin with. The students write only because the teacher wants it. Therefore, the teacher is supplying the writer with the motive.

To make things even more difficult, motives often have to be developed; they don’t often reside fully formed within the writer. Paragraph six describes how the writer may have to write about the topic for awhile before the writer’s motive will finally surface. Many times a writer has to compose a first draft that does not say what the writer wants to say in order for the writer to be able to finally articulate what he or she really wishes to say. Students must be lead to realize that this terrible first draft was not a mistake but a necessary part of developing a motive. In other words, writing itself can be a way for a motive to evolve—if the writer is seeking what he or she wants to say rather than seeking what the teacher wants. This genuine inner motive can then guide the writer
as the writer constructs the text. It also provides the writer with a source for continual self evaluation—the ability to correct a problem before it is publicly displayed. The ultimate goal, of course, is to create writers who can guide themselves and who can write as they must someday do—without the teacher. By elevating the teacher to the ultimate judge on everything from style to the number of words used, the student is never taught to function independently.

5. The Waiting-to-be-Struck-by-Lightning Myth

It is very difficult to get students to consider prewriting as part of their composing process. Students can be forced to engage in prewriting activities, yet they will not consider these activities as part of their own individual composing processes. In the classrooms where prewriting is utilized, it is generally administered under the control of the teacher. The teacher decides which prewriting technique will be used and when it will be used. Students are rarely given a choice of prewriting activities. Most of the few teachers who use prewriting seem to have a favorite technique such as outlines or jot lists on the high school level and tagmemics or Burke's pentad on the college level. Students follow the pattern which is currently in vogue in a lock-step fashion. Interestingly, students who participate in prewriting activities in the classroom may not make the connection between what they are doing and the real act of composing. To the student, a prewriting assignment may be
just that, another assignment rather than a legitimate way to
generate ideas. Students seldom question the teacher's motives for
any particular assignment; they are conditioned through years of
schooling to be the worker and not the planner. In fact, students
are likely to misconstrue a prewriting activity as a waste of time.
Many teachers have heard their students make distressing evaluations
of prewriting activities as they leave the classroom. For instance,
after a lively classroom discussion, the teacher may hear a student
give this synopsis of the class meeting to a member of the next class
period: "We didn't do anything important. We just talked all
period." Students have a real difficulty in recognizing a prewriting
activity as anything more than another assignment or a waste of time.

Besides all this confusion about prewriting in the
composition classroom, students rarely engage in prewriting
activities independently, say for a paper for another class. Even if
students do utilize a prewriting strategy such as talking to someone
else or doodling, they probably will not consider this activity as a
valid part of writing. Just as with the classroom example, students
may actually consider such activities as a waste of time. Not only
do students seldom practice prewriting activities outside of class,
they may not even acknowledge such activities as prewriting. Thus,
this myth falls upon deaf ears.
In paragraph three of this myth, the argument is raised about the fact that although ideas appear to take form from thin air, actually they are fueled by a person's past thoughts and experiences. Students often do not believe that their own thoughts and experiences can be the source of ideas for a paper. Perhaps, the standard notion of prewriting is a little too rigid for a discussion of how ideas come about. Wallas's (1926) well-known description of the creative process is somewhat more useful: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. Prewriting can be considered as a time period of preparation as the writer gathers together past thoughts and experiences and attempts to make sense of them. Prewriting techniques will be most useful if they are interpreted more loosely as only heuristics for the purpose of discovery. Any of a large number of techniques can be used to do some mental exploration with the preference being that of the writer rather than that of the teacher. The objective should be to generate a large quantity of raw material rather than to follow a dictated procedure. When best utilized, a heuristic device can cause the writer to create a new thought which comes to life through writing. Arthur Koestler (1964) uses the term bisociation to explain how two previously unrelated ideas on two totally different thought planes can intersect, forming an unexpected relationship which will spark a new idea. Explaining the many heuristic devices available is avoided since this myth is only meant to begin a change in attitude. Chapter two in the teacher’s edition of Reprints details several different
heuristic devices: freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, bisociations, listing, talking, and visual planning.

Part of the prewriting time should be devoted to reflection. Wallas's (1926) discussion of the incubation stage is relevant here. Incubation occurs when a person spends a calm period of time mulling over ideas in a nonthreatening way as if only time were necessary for the ideas to germinate into maturity. To use another metaphor, the writer must place the ideas for the piece of writing on the back burner and let them simmer for awhile. During this time, the writer must be open to new possibilities which might arise. Regrettfully, most students do not have the confidence and/or the time to let their ideas incubate. Instead, students spend much of their thinking time criticizing themselves.

Characteristically, the time prior to the first draft is a very stressful time for the student writer. The writing sample included below discusses all the fears which haunt this student while facing the blank sheet of paper:

Worry

Sometimes when I pull out a piece of paper to write on I just sit there and stare as if it doesn’t exist. One reason for this is that I can never choose a topic that I think the readers would be interested in. Also, I’m afraid that once I start writing, I will run out of material to write on when I am half through the paper. Then I worry what other people will say about my story, and if I know somebody has looked at it other than the teacher, I tend to tense up. Also I worry whether it is too long and stupid or if it will be too short. Furthermore, I worry whether I am doing it the way the teacher wants it done.
This time period is equally stressful for teachers as they try to motivate each student to begin writing. Typically, a teacher circulates around the room, stopping at each desk in order to check to see that each student has a topic to write about. The teacher often finds the majority of the students are unprepared. As the teacher becomes both disappointed and angry, the level of stress for both parties begins to rise. Students display a wide variety of emotions while explaining their dilemma to the teacher. In one row a teacher may face a student who bursts into tears after being asked the simple question of "What are you going to write about?", a student who flies into a belligerent tirade about the teacher and school in general, or a student who is avoiding the whole issue by performing a sit-down comedy routine for an audience of several other students, who are all without an idea for their papers. Likewise, the teacher can cry, fume or laugh the whole thing off, but usually the teacher feels obligated to dream up a topic for each student. The teacher can do so from a vast knowledge about each student’s interests, abilities, and so on. In this scenario, the teacher painstakingly moves around the room, up and down each row, stopping at each desk, to drop to one or both knees in order to methodically perform the prewriting stage for each student individually. The students may never learn how to generate ideas on their own partially because the teacher must finally do it for them, either as a whole class or individually, in order to maintain sanity and to move on to getting the assignment completed. Teachers will have to address not only how the writer dreams up ideas but how the writer deals with the
stress of self doubt if these students are to have more success
during this time period when they are supposedly trying to come up
with an idea for a paper.

One of the reasons why students do not have great success
with performing activities which are supposed to give them access to
their own wealth of knowledge is that they will let a frightened
interior voice tell them that they cannot succeed. I portray this
voice of self doubt to my students in cartoon form as a little devil
who mysteriously appears on the writer's shoulder in a red suit
complete with a tail and a pitch fork. The devil tells the student
how stupid each idea is, that the teacher would not like any of
these ideas, that the student is really quite stupid, and that it
won't be long before everyone finds out and the student is kicked out
of school. I use humor to dramatize to the students how self doubt
can get out of control and turn into immobilizing fear. Students are
extremely judgmental and will frustrate themselves during times when
they need to generate ideas by harshly criticizing each idea before
they get a chance to fully develop a thought. For example, a student
will try to start a paper by constructing a perfect opening sentence,
word by word. Giving self doubt full reign, the student will cross
out each word several times, creating wads of discarded paper which
rest upon the desk and the floor like an arsenal of snowballs ready
to be flung at the teacher or any other infidels. The student's self
doubt gets so out of hand that it totally fills up the student's mind
with self condemnation, leaving no time or energy for productive
experimentation with potential ideas. It is as if all this negative energy overloads the circuits of the student's mind, and the whole thing blows a fuse and shuts down. Many students become catatonic at this point and just sit, staring at the blank piece of paper as if there were no hope of ever putting the first word down on the page.

Why students are consumed by their self doubt is a question which is seldom considered. To adequately address this issue, we would have to examine the social, political and economic relations which put the student in the subordinate role. This myth about getting ideas and the previous myth about pleasing the teacher both demonstrate how power relations directly affect the students' ability and motivation to write. Part two of this chapter develops an explanation of how the student's power relations with the teacher, the family and the larger society, oppress the student into becoming disenfranchised from having something to say.

6. The Translation Myth

The writer's mental image of how writing 'should' take place has a significant effect upon composing. I still have trouble letting go of the old stereotype that writing should be fully formed before the writer begins to put pen to paper. My realization that writing should be considered more fluid and unfolding came from the work of L. S. Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1962) has several haunting passages in *Thought and Language* which push me to consider language
more dynamically. (See the next page.) In a discussion of inner speech, Vygotsky clarifies the relation of thought to word. I have elsewhere attempted to analyze the major components of inner speech in a paper entitled, "Motive and Composing: The Writer's Struggle to Find Voice," delivered at Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1985. In the following paragraph, some of Vygotsky's work in regard to thought and word has been briefly summarized and expanded upon.

Thought and word dynamically interact so that a thought may lead the writer to a word, and that word may act back upon the thought and thus change it and so on. In this way, thought is actually created by words and not merely vice versa. Thought gets its form, its external existence, through words, for without words, a thought will die within the recesses of the writer's mind. A thought develops through words; consequently, speaking and writing both cause the person to create thoughts that otherwise would never have come into being. Thoughts and words interact so powerfully and rapidly that their movement is almost imperceivable to the writer. The writer will feel an emotional reaction to the words that are written only after they are formed upon the paper. The writer may be unable to react to the dynamic fluctuations between thought and word until the interplay has ended, and the victorious words have appeared upon the page. Then the writer passes judgement upon the results of that interplay which happened almost beneath the writer's consciousness as if the words belonged to someone else. If the writer does not like
VYGOTSKY'S DISCUSSION OF THE RELATION OF THOUGHT TO WORDS

The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process the relation of thought to word undergoes changes which themselves may be regarded as development in the functional sense. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. (p. 125)

Thought and word are not cut from one pattern. In a sense, there are more differences than likenesses between them. The structure of speech does not simply mirror the structure of thought; that is why words cannot be put on by thought like a ready-made garment. Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form. (p. 126)

Behind words, there is the independent grammar of thought, the syntax of word meanings. The simplest utterance, far from reflecting a constant, rigid correspondence between sound and meaning, is really a process. Verbal expressions cannot emerge fully formed but must develop gradually. (p. 128)

... while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words die as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less firmly delineated components of verbal thought. (p. 149)

Thought, unlike speech, does not consist of separate units... In mind the whole thought is present at once, but in speech it has to be developed successively. A thought may be compared to a cloud shedding a shower of words. (p. 150)

Verbal thought appeared as a complex, dynamic entity, and the relation of thought and word within it as a movement through a series of planes. Our analysis followed the process from the outermost to the inner most plane. In reality, the development of verbal thought takes the opposite course: from the motive which engenders a thought to the shaping of the thought, first in inner speech, then in meanings of words, and finally in words. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine, that this is the only road from thought to word. The development may stop at any point in its complicated course; an infinite variety of movements to and fro, of ways still unknown to us, is possible. (p. 152)

The relation between thought and word is a living process; thought is born through words. A word devoid of thought is a dead thing, and thought unembodied in words remains a shadow. The connection between them, however, is not a preformed and constant one. It emerges in the course of development, and itself evolves. (p. 153)
what has been written, the interplay between thought and word may be
generated again and again until the writer is satisfied or gives up
trying. Teachers discuss this turbulent, chaotic process which
results in words upon the page as a static, logical process where
there is a tidy, one to one correspondence between thought and word.
Few people discuss the dynamic interaction between two constantly
fluctuating polarities which often stretches both thoughts and words
to their limits. Creating thought in writing is an imperfect
evolutionary process which will necessarily take time and which may
produce words which do not represent thoughts and thoughts which
remain unrepresented in words.

It is hard to make students aware of the revision process
which takes place upon the page let alone the inner revision process
that takes place before the words come to the page. Vygotsky (1962)
makes it very clear that inner speech can be considered as a mental
draft for writing:

In written speech, lacking situational and expressive supports,
communication must be achieved only through words and their
combinations; this requires the speech activity to take
complicated forms—hence the use of first drafts. The evolution
from the draft to the final copy reflects our mental process.
Planning has an important part in written speech, even when we
do not actually write out a draft. Usually we say to ourselves
what we are going to write; this is also a draft, though in
thought only . . . this mental draft is inner speech . . . inner
speech functions as a draft not only in written but also in oral
speech. (pp. 142, 144)

The problem is that students do not recognize inner speech as a
legitimate way of drafting a paper. Instead, students imagine that
their papers should reside in their brains fully formed. Thus, the
writer needs only to transcribe one word at a time from this mental, final draft down onto the paper. Not only do students expect the impossible from themselves, they lessen their ability to draw words from their brains by not being able to tolerate the mental fluctuations between thought and word. For example, during their self evaluation after they had turned in their final draft, most students resolve that next time they would get their ideas straight before they start writing as if both internal and external revision were not a necessary part of making thought come to life. To the student, thoughts should exist prepackaged in the brain just waiting to be routinely translated into words. They need to understand that words cause the thought to exist and that the interplay between the two is one of the most exciting and yet necessarily unsettling parts of composing. Words give the writer the special ability to compose thought.

This myth ends by pointing out to the students that it is this dynamic quality of thoughts and words which makes writing worth doing. Writing can clarify thought by helping the writer to make sense of things which were previously troublesome or underdeveloped. Moreover, writing can itself generate thoughts which were never previously considered by the writer. And, the quality of those thoughts can be far superior to those which are not written. Writing forces the writer to develop meaning more thoughtfully than there is time to do when speaking. Vygotsky (1962) discusses the difference between speech and writing:
Communication in writing relies on the formal meanings of words and requires a much greater number of words than oral speech to convey the same idea. It is addressed to an absent person who rarely has in mind the same subject as the writer. Therefore it must be fully deployed; syntactic differentiation is at a maximum; and expressions are used that would seem unnatural in conversation. In written speech, as tone of voice and knowledge of subject are excluded, we are obliged to use many more words, and to use them more exactly. Written speech is the most elaborate form of speech. (pp. 142, 144)

It is important that students be made aware of the benefits that writing has to offer. Regretfully, students do not conceive of writing as an exciting opportunity to formulate thoughts which may indeed be more elaborate than they have ever created of before. For the student, writing is the primary mode through which they do assignments in order to receive grades. When writing is more exploratory and more of an effort to make sense rather than to make grades, students may participate in writing in a different way.

7. The Neatness-Counts Myth

A colleague who is a curriculum director for a large city school district was taken aback recently when she discovered what an elementary principal thought of her new writing curriculum. The principal patiently listened to an hour's presentation before making a comment. The principal's comment revealed that he considered writing to be handwriting and not composition; therefore, during the whole meeting, he had assumed that they were talking about how to teach handwriting.
Examples such as the previous one point out how handwriting is regarded as more important than content in many elementary schools. A child's first exposure to writing is generally through exercises in handwriting where what the student has to say doesn't matter at all, just how the lines of the letters look. It is no small wonder then that students have trouble later in using rough drafts to their advantage. For students, a rough draft is little more than the best final draft that can be produced at this time. The difference is that rough drafts should be more exploratory and abbreviated— and messy than final drafts. Students apologize for the condition of their rough drafts. Many of them scrawl 'So sorry so sloppy' across the top of the page as if it could make them exempt from being punished. Students will even recopy their rough drafts in neater handwriting supposedly in order to please the teacher.

Students believe that composition teachers have a fetish for neatness. In defense of such teachers, when a teacher has to read 150 papers in a short period of time, the more standardized they are, the easier the task is. But at what cost to the student? Many students believe that writing should come out of their heads in ink, every other line, one side of the page, no pencil, no felt pens, no ragged edges, no cross-outs, and no insertions with the prescribed five line heading in the upper right hand corner of the first page. Certainly, neatness in the final copy is important, but students need to be made aware of why neatness counts in one place and does not count in the other.
Students may feel so strongly that neatness counts that they may even totally reject the idea that real writers ever use rough drafts. This misconception about professional writers has been perpetuated by the fact that rough drafts are inaccessible to students. Such drafts are rarely published and are often housed in university archives available only to elite literary scholars. This practice is done not because anyone intentionally wishes to hide these drafts from the public but because it is felt that few people would be interested in such things. However, the necessity of keeping students from seeing these drafts fuels their unrealistic belief that writers produce perfect prose the first time that they set pen to paper and that anyone who doesn’t do this must be abnormal. In fact, many students and even some professional writers throw away their rough drafts either because they are embarrassed by their rough drafts or they feel that such scratch paper would be useless to anyone. When Sharon Dorsey (1985) showed her rough drafts to her middle school students, one student blatantly accused her of making them up with the sole purpose of trying to make the students feel better. The student would not believe that she actually wrote that way. The fact that a student would challenge direct evidence as being fabricated for some other intent demonstrates that this myth is very institutionalized within our culture. Students can become as dogmatic as their teachers are about their belief that all writing should be flawless.
Reprints does include many writing samples with rough drafts. In fact, several of these selections include more than one rough draft. Two include an early sheet which might be considered a jot list or brainstorming sheet, and one is photocopied in its original state. I now feel that more of these rough drafts should be included, especially in their naturalistic state. For John Hobson's narrative, I had a work study student recopy the rough drafts in a neater handwriting, including all the cross-outs and insertions. This practice may be misleading to the students, for the student may believe that rough drafts should be this neat and tidy. What I thought would aid the students' ability to read the rough draft may in fact mislead the students about writing. Reproducing rough drafts in a textbook in their naturalistic state is difficult; however, such an effort may foster a more realistic impression of composing. At least one sample could be included which showed every page of a student's drafts. Other rough drafts might be reduced or photographed in front of the writer to indicate their visual quality. It is most important to let the student see how messy they are and how some writers use arrows, cut and paste, draw doodles in the margins and so on.

Students have to be educated that changes on rough drafts are not merely mistakes or accidents; these changes are necessary to the development of thought—they are the life's blood of thought. Changes are not just little inconveniences to the writer; they are necessities. Once again Vygotsky's work on inner speech is useful...
here. As Vygotsky stated in a citation in the last section, there are some relationships between inner speech and rough drafts; however, it would be inaccurate to say that there was an absolute correlation between the two; however, the similarities between the two need to be studied more carefully. Vygotsky (1962) portrayed inner speech as being syntactically disconnected, incomplete, abbreviated (namely predicated), simplified, condensed, and reduced in the number of words used. Vygotsky clearly details the semantic quality of inner speech as well: sense predominates over meaning; the agglutination of words; and the combination of the senses of words so that one word may be saturated with sense. Vygotsky's analysis of inner speech may be too complex for the average reader, but his work on inner speech can help to explain the fragmented quality of rough drafts and validates the usefulness of its abbreviated quality.

Rough drafts must necessarily be in an idiosyncratic form of shorthand which only the writer can interpret. (Of course, many writers can even recount that their shorthand has reached the point of being indecipherable to the writer as well.) Rough drafts must be described to the student as being abbreviated, fragmented, and messy. Some drafts even have a distinctive symbolic quality. By symbolic, three different types of symbols are possible: as a visual, as a code, and as a literary metaphor. Visually, the writer may use symbolic drawings to represent a concept. Writers also use non-linguistic codes such as arrows, circles, asterisks, numbers and
the like to represent an organizational pattern or a change in sequence. On a more linguistic level, the exact words chosen for early jot lists and drafts may have a powerful, metaphoric representation to the writer. For instance, in writing about this myth in my early notes, the word messy carried several different qualities for me: a messy looking piece of paper, a state of disorganization, a sense of being uncomfortable or disoriented, a hard to explain phenomenon, and something which elicits a repulsive response. As Vygotsky noted, a solitary word can contain a myriad of senses for the writer. Sometimes one word can be a vortex which is the source of energy which sets all the other words in motion.

Composition teachers rarely discuss the importance of the necessarily messy quality of rough drafts. This messy quality is important if it is used to stimulate thought. Students can be educated about the potential that rough drafts have to liberate thought rather than freeze it into words that don't fit its shape. It is important to explain to the students that there is no one right way to make a rough draft. Discussing the many ways that rough drafts can be used may help the students to see drafting as a tool to develop, organize, and liberate thoughts.
B. The Only-Idiots-Make-Mistakes Myth

This myth discusses many different types of writing errors and the reasons behind making them. In this section, my analysis of these differences will be more extensive than it was in the text of the myth. The purpose of the myth is to help the students see through our cultural over-emphasis on error. Students are intimidated by errors so much that being confronted with a closely marked paper can cause many students to become despondent. Students sometimes give up writing because they are so afraid of the humiliation that their errors will bring them. Even worse, students think that errors are negatively correlated to intelligence so that errors are a direct sign of ignorance.

Certainly, intelligence is a far more sophisticated attribute than a punctuation or usage test could ever measure. Regretfully, many standardized tests such as the SAT and the ACT do indeed treat intelligence as if it were directly correlated to a lack of error. In contrast, in many instances intelligence causes error. For example, it is very hard to discipline one's mind to read something for errors rather than for sense. Thus, an intelligent person might wish to deal with the complexities of sense rather than the menial, subordinate task of contemplating letters and punctuation placement. We reinforce this notion in the workforce by relegating the lowly job of proofreading in the business office to one of the employees who is
Dealing with error reduction in composition classroom must be considered very carefully. Since students can hamper their composing process by their preoccupation with error, the amount of class time devoted to error should be minimal to the amount of time spent on activities related to generating thoughts through writing. Most classrooms spend a great deal of time working on error in unproductive ways. Chapter two addresses how teaching definitions of grammatical terms and usage drills does not yield significant results. Many teachers make a serious attempt to circle all errors on each student’s paper in the hopes that doing so will automatically reduce errors. I affectionately call this method of grading papers the ‘Lady Macbeth theory.’ It works under the ‘Out, out damn spot’ principle. According to this theory, if the teacher circles all errors, just this act of circling will cause improvement. Imagine this scenario, the student receives a paper with a spelling error circled. The student looks at the circled error (which may be a fallacy in itself), has a flash of immediate insight, and then jubilantly remarks, “Eureka! I now understand spelling so much better. From this day forward, I will never have another problem with spelling ‘ie’ words.” It is hard to imagine that we have built up a whole tradition about grading papers based on the assumption that circling errors can cause learning to take place.
Nonetheless, the issue of error can be addressed successfully in the classroom if the assumptions about errors are changed. Errors should be viewed as minor problems which are made by basically intelligent people instead as major problems which reveal a great ignorance about the basic elements of the language. English as a second language (ESL) teachers are the only group of teachers who seem to assume that their students are making intelligent mistakes. Of course, this may be because the majority of ESL students at the university are considered to be exceptional students in their native language. Since ESL educators often have a strong background in linguistics, they have led the field in error analysis. Thus, a pattern in the student’s errors is analyzed for a syntactic explanation. Looking for patterns in errors is very useful for diagnostic purposes, but we should also consider the psychological explanations as well. The psychological reasons why students make certain errors may be more significant for increasing student awareness than the syntactic explanations which are currently utilized. The text of this myth contains several references to psychological reasons for errors. In addition, these reasons will be discussed in more detail here than was the case in the text of the myth. However, there is not room here for an exhaustive discussion. The psychological reasons for error which will be considered here are: slips of the eye, the limits of short term memory, overcompensation, semantic confusion and developmental growth.
The type of error which has the least to do with intelligence is the one which is caused by a slip of the eye. Thus, this error could be easily corrected by the writer if the writer would have seen it. In the text of the myth, a good example of this slip of the eye is cited, an error made in signing one's own name. Of course, this error may be somewhat due to a slip of the hand as well. Once very dramatically, a student produced a driver's license entombed in plastic which revealed that he had horribly misspelled his own name and was doomed to carry his error with him wherever he went for years and years.

The fact that the writer does not see this type of error is an important point. The writer is not suffering from temporary blindness. This selective blindness is caused by the nature of reading. Frank Smith (1978) in Understanding Reading very clearly explains how the eye moves during reading. In order for the reading rate to be functional, the reader cannot visually read each individual word. Therefore, the reader skips many words and simply fills them in mentally because of the predictable nature of sentence structure. In the case of proofreading a text, the reader may be quickly reading a text in order to reach a deadline and would therefore not actually see many of the words on the page with the odds being that some of these words will contain errors and will slip by unnoticed.
Another important feature of proofreading which was mentioned earlier is that a reader who is reading his or her own text has an understandably strong interest in the text and attends to sense far more than error. A writer needs to read his or her text for sense several times after finishing before the writer will be able to proofread the text. Since a text is written sentence by sentence, line by line, the writer can easily lose a sense of the whole. Reading the whole text from beginning to end for sense is an important part of the writer's need to create sense. This task has such importance to the writer that the writer may not be able to tolerate a more cursory proofreading until this reading for sense has been completed. And, if the reader is displeased by this reading for sense, then it is highly unlikely that proofreading will be done diligently until the sense of the text is revised. In other words, when a writer finishes a text that leaves the writer angry, the writer will probably not be able to attend to errors in that text. In fact, such writers may defiantly turn the paper in without proofreading because they don't care about it anymore, muttering something like, "I hate this paper," or "The assignment was dumb anyway." Chapter ten of the teacher's edition of Reprints offers some suggestions for separating reading for sense from reading for errors. Students can be taught that proofreading is a special kind of reading which can only be done after the reading for sense has been accomplished.
The second type of error, the limits of short term memory, has the longest section in the text of the myth, including three examples and an explanation of those examples. In *Errors and Expectations* by Mina P. Shaughnessy (1977) presents an interesting new perspective about errors. Shaughnessy discusses a blurred pattern sentence error which most teachers will just label 'awk.' or will tediously rewrite the entire sentence for the student. Awkward is a very vague term for suggesting improvement since it just means that the writer constructed a sentence which doesn't sound quite right. Shaughnessy demonstrates that the writer often combines two parts of a sentence which may even be grammatically correct independently but together obscure the meaning of the sentence and cause a problem in syntax. Here are a few examples from Shaughnessy:

By going to college a young person could get an increase his knowledge about the world he lived in.
Blurred forms:
could get an increase in...
could increase his knowledge

If they (jobs) decrease in great number At least I can say is that I will have a college degree.
Blurred forms:
At least I can say that...
The least I can say is...

My classification of this type of error includes Shaughnessy's blurred pattern errors as well as some instances of subject verb agreement and pronoun agreement errors. All these errors have a similar psychological source which may be connected to the limits of short term memory. In Shaughnessy's examples and the
ones created for the myth, the writer seems to make an illogical change in course mid stream in the sentence. Like a child’s erasable slate, the brain can only hold five to seven units in short term memory. When the slate is erased after five or more words, the writer may have trouble remembering the beginning of the sentence unless the writer rereads the beginning of the sentence before moving on. Many beginning writers do not make a habit of rereading any of their text while writing even though this habit may seem like a necessity to many more experienced writers. Longer sentences, like those with subordinate clauses or extensive modifiers, may push the beginning writer’s syntactic knowledge to its limits so that even if the writer rereads the sentence, the writer may have no idea how to fix the sentence.

Many students are already familiar with the limits of short term memory from their science classes. Regretfully, their ability to reword a garbled sentence cannot succeed on awareness alone; it requires some linguistic maturity that many beginning students do not have such as using subordinate clauses and adverbial conjunctions. Exercises like sentence combining might help increase the likelihood that a student will be able to conceive of a sentence pattern which could solve a complex sentence problem. More important than just increasing syntactic choices is the student’s need to develop the confidence to stick with a sentence until he or she can finally reword it. As a more mature writer than my students, I have the faith that given enough time and patience, I can juggle a troublesome
sentence of mine around enough so that I will finally discover how to put the pieces together so that they move smoothly across the page. Rewording a sentence is an important strategy for fixing an awkward sentence, but this rewording may take a great deal of confidence and endurance on the writer’s part.

The third type of error classifies several writing problems as overcompensation. The most global form of overcompensation occurs when a student is so afraid of making errors that he or she avoids errors by writing simple sentences filled with words which are easily spelled. This strategy is often used by male, high school athletes who needed good grades in order to play on the team. I recently read a confusing draft written by a college freshman about a personal experience in which he was knocked unconscious. When I commented about how confusing the draft was, the student admitted that he had problems because he decided not to use the word ‘unconscious’ since he wasn’t sure how to spell it. The omission of that one word made his whole essay very difficult to comprehend. In cases like this one, the student avoids using certain words or sentence structures for fear of making errors. The student samples which follow demonstrate how students try to avoid errors to the point that they negatively affect their ability to communicate:

To me writing has been a task to be avoided or put off for my personal fear of all the mistakes I dislike to lay on paper before others.
Spring Quarter Classes

I fear English. This inordinate fear of English stems from several aspects; I have spent some time attempting to analyze the situation with some results. Yet generally I am still baffled. Inside I feel I can write. I have good command of the English language with a relatively large vocabulary. I have little trouble expressing my opinions and more importantly getting them across to other people. I nearly always received A's in high school on the content part of my papers. It seems to me that my major problem arises in the area of grammar. I have always tended to be less than perfect. Well, frankly it really is rotten. I live in dread of writing a sentence because it might be too short, or heaven forbid a run-on. There have been times I have scrapped a really good idea just to avoid trying to make it grammatically correct. I guess this is the path-of-least resistance principle. When I think of all the errors that are conceivable when writing one sentence, let alone an entire paper, I don't get writer's, I become catatonic. Oh no, I think that sentence was a run-on. I cannot recall, but it is possible that some callous English teachers bludgeoned me with a dangling participle or whatever they're called. Even though this is possible, I find it extremely difficult to handle. I truly desire to be a good writer. I have often felt the urge to write something, anything. In fact, even though this may seem ludicrous or even crazy, I think, no, feel deep down inside of me there is a Hemingway, Steinbeck, or Michener struggling to be released. Maybe everyone feels this way, I don't know. It frustrates me so. I hope this course will help me break down this fear of writing. I know I must break down this fear. My first urge after one class of English was to drop it. But that would not resolve the problem, only delay it. I can do it; I know I can. Oh here comes that urge to go back and correct my grammar. Got to fight it off. I have my hand writing; I wish I could type this.

Students need to be warned that such practices may damage their ability to make sense and will therefore only serve to lower their grades rather than raise them.

Another more specific type of overcompensation involves the over generalization of a given rule or a misconceived rule. In the first case, the student over applies a teacher-given rule such as "put a comma where you pause." Such a student does not randomly use
commas; instead, the student takes the rule to the most ridiculous extreme. For example, a student might feel the natural break between a prepositional phrase and the rest of the sentence and may therefore choose to use a comma after every prepositional phrase. This type of error is not considered to be a major problem. On the contrary, some students who take this vague rule to an even further extreme; they put a comma between all subjects and verbs. There is indeed a division between subject and verb, but this natural division is not marked with a comma. It is important to note the students' motives for making such mistakes. These students are very sincere about their effort to follow the rules. In fact, they could be labeled as overachievers.

The other type of over generalization happens when the student makes up his or her own rule from some real life information. In virtually every remedial class that I have ever taught, I have always had a small number of students who put a comma after a coordinate conjunction such as 'and' instead of in front of it. Since one can hardly construct a sentence where this would ever be the case, I asked one student why he persisted in placing the comma after the 'and' instead of before it. He quite logically informed me that the book had it that way. Deciding to take this argument to its logical conclusion, I smugly asked him to show me the page. He did, and he was right. There in the book the rule was printed this way: "Place a comma before and, but, or or when it joins two sentences." While the sentence linguistically stated one thing, it visually
showed the student to put the comma after the conjunction. Asking the student why he or she repeatedly applies an erroneous rule system may reveal amazingly logical rules. In another instance, I had a student who wrote the worst, underdeveloped sentences that I had ever seen. After trying several tactics to get him to develop his ideas, I felt morally obligated to inform him that he was in danger of failing the class. He was shocked. He explained that he was doing his paragraphs right, and that I was the one who was mistaken. He then proceeded to inform me that all newspapers and magazines have paragraphs that are about five lines long. I later looked at a newspaper and concluded that the student was indeed right. Newspapers intentionally have short paragraphs in order to increase white space for ease in reading. Some newspapers even employ a computer program which will start a new paragraph automatically after five lines. Taking the time to find out the student’s private rule system will make reteaching far easier than if this information remains unknown.

Errors which are caused by semantic confusion are much harder to spot because the pattern may not be as clear as in the previous types of errors. These errors happen because the writer not only has the syntax confused, but the writer is also confused about the sense as well. In these cases, when the writer straightens out the sense, the syntax is automatically corrected. To illustrate, I once had an adult returning student who was a perfectionist. Even his rough drafts rarely contained an error of any type. On one particular
occasion when I reached the last paragraph of his paper, I noticed an abundance of simple errors. I did not correct them on the paper since I knew that he was quite capable of correcting them himself. During his individual conference, I asked the general gambit, "What is happening in this paragraph?" He blurted out that he wasn't sure what he wanted to say in that paragraph which was his conclusion. After simply telling me what he really meant to say in that paragraph, he went back to his desk and returned in a few minutes with a flawless conclusion. It suddenly occurred to me that because he was confused about the sense of that paragraph, the syntax was also necessarily confused. I have since found several students and even myself having the same close relationship between sense and syntax. I can even spot a break down in sense by the tell-tale sign of a break down in syntax. I now make it a policy to address sense rather than syntax in a rough draft since an improvement in sense always seems to make the syntax follow suit.

Some more specific examples of semantic confusion can be noted in student writing when they wrestle with tense shift and pronoun shift. In narrative writing, the pattern of tense shift takes is often very revealing. Generally, narratives are written in past tense with very conscious switches to present tense for such things as dialogue and description. Students often switch to present tense when they come to a section which might best be handled as dialogue. It is almost as if the writer doesn't at first remember that a detail or description came from dialogue. James Zebroski
discussed a point related to this which he developed much more extensively in a paper delivered at a Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1986. Zebroski traces the student's problem with syntax to a much larger problem between the different voices present in the paper. He uses Michail Bakhtin's discussion of dialogue to clarify how the dialogue between the voices happens within the paper. This type of sophisticated analysis of a student's paper explains how a problem with voice can end up looking more like a problem with syntax. Likewise, problems with pronoun shift can often be traced to a problem with sense rather than a syntactic one.

The confusion between a generalized statement fitting all members of group and a specific case has not always been worked out so that the writer may be better off giving a specific case rather than trying to discuss the whole problem in a generalized fashion. The previous sentence in this paragraph is very confusing for this very reason. The writer would be better off switching to a specific or a hypothetical example rather than trying to convey a lot of information in a more vague, generalized fashion. Addressing specific syntactic problems with one or two words does not touch the larger issue of sense which may be at the root of the problem.

My last category of error may be more difficult to substantiate than the earlier ones because of a lack of research in this area. This last category classifies some major sentence flaws as normal developmental problems. Students of a certain age or a certain linguistic sophistication seem to have the same errors in
common which rather than being a sign of ignorance, indicate a growth
toward a new linguistic development. We do not have a very clear
developmental model of writing growth for various age levels and
reading abilities. It would be helpful to know what type of
syntactic and rhetorical features tend to develop early and those
which take more linguistic maturity to develop. Of course, we can
only have a global model of development since these features are
greatly affected by dialect differences as was discussed in chapter
two. To clarify this point, there is the case of irregular verb
conjugation. We know that children learn irregular verbs much later
than they learn the regular past tense verb ending. The over
generalization of the 'ed' ending for irregular verbs is quite common
for children under the age of six. From this information, we know
that it is best not to punish or overtly correct a young child's over
generalization of the 'ed' verb ending. Without any formal teaching,
most children pick up many irregular verb endings from the ages of
five to eight. Incidentally, some children will not learn some
irregular verb forms at this age since these forms are not used in
their native dialect. Correcting irregular verbs in a child's oral
and written language will not hasten this development and may indeed
cause other problems such as a reticence to communicate or even
stuttering.

Likewise, composition teachers tend to get overly concerned
about fragments and run ons when these errors may be a natural sign
of linguistic growth. I have informally studied the frequency and
type of run-ons and fragments in both my middle school and my college
students. My interest began when I noticed that some of my most
advanced eighth grade students were writing some very interesting
fragments. One girl in particular only punctuated infinitives as
fragments while another boy only had participial phrases as
fragments. I began to view these constructions as signs of growth
rather than signs of ignorance. I pointed out to the students that
these constructions were quite advanced for their age and showed each
student individually how to punctuate them. The students never
seemed to have another problem with the particular type of fragment
in question. Finding this approach successful, I took a somewhat
radical approach with a few of my remedial writers. When one of
these students had a run on or fragment problem, I approached the
student with a compliment instead of a punishment. For the students
with run ons, I explained that they were on the verge of learning to
write complex sentences and that their natural desire to string
several sentences together indicated that they were ready to start
using subordinate conjunctions. For the students with fragments, I
went through a similar procedure, usually explaining how they were
constructing sophisticated clauses that they just didn't know how to
punctuate yet. We many indeed be punishing students for syntactic
constructions which are a natural precursor of development. Many
students cure their run on problem by reverting back to simple
sentences instead of learning how to handle more complex structures.
Composition teachers should be aware of these developmental signs and
should adopt strategies which foster development rather than retard
In our culture, pointing out an error in someone's writing is an important power play. All of us can remember the humiliation of having one of our errors pointed out to us. Part of the problem is that the writer is left totally defenseless. An error is an obvious sign of the writer's incompetence. The person who points out the error increases his or her power while the person who made the error is suddenly moved into the subordinate position. People who choose to point out errors in other people's writing may not be motivated by a sincere desire to help the other person make improvements. I have witnessed several incidents where in a large meeting errors were pointed out solely for the purpose of establishing one person's superiority over another. In the classroom, errors can become a part of this maneuvering for power where the teacher holds the position of ultimate authority, choosing who to subordinate with the flick of a red pen. When error reduction focuses on power plays, the student's self concept is damaged in the process, providing little over-all gain. If errors are analyzed for their psychological sources, perhaps they can be treated as intelligent mistakes rather than signs of feeble-mindedness. All of these different types of errors, slips of the eye, the limits of short term memory, overcompensation, semantic confusion and developmental growth, are quite natural for anyone to make. The conflict arises once again when the power relations in the classroom prevent the student from being able to learn anything from errors other than the student's role as the
Students are not generally too polite about their demands in regards to this myth. They come to college wanting all the right answers, and they want them immediately, without any delay. If they fail to get the answers that they want, then it can only be one person’s fault, the teacher. I can remember facing the rage of one of my favorite students after class. She wanted me to know that all the students were having a problem on this paper because I was not doing a good job of explaining what I wanted. She was there to get answers and she intended to badger me into giving them to her. She was specific: she wanted to know what topic to write about, what the point of the whole paper should be, and how long it should be. I always valued this student because she was so candid. She was at the uncomfortable beginning stage of her paper, and the only way that she knew to ask for help was to demand that I give her the answers which she had come to believe that all teachers had. For many students, writing like any other assignment is just a matter of following directions. After years of school, students know that assignments are created by teachers, who have all the answers to begin with and are just giving the assignment in order to check and see if the students have learned the answers yet.
Because students view writing as a right-or-wrong enterprise, many of them feel more secure with narrow requirements. For self protection, they ask the teacher how long the assigned paper should be. I learned early in my career that students always wanted to know how long the papers should be. I started out by answering in numbers of words, which was what they expected. Then I realized that if I told them how many words the paper should have, then I was obligated to check to see if they had done the prescribed number. I soon found myself laboriously counting every word or at least estimating the number by counting the words on one line and multiplying that number by the total number of lines used. A few years later, I got the great brainstorm to dictate the number of paragraphs a paper should be rather than the number of words since the number of paragraphs would be considerably less to count. It wasn't long after this great realization that I became disillusioned when I caught students trying to pass off one measly sentence as a paragraph, so I decided to rectify the situation by requiring the number of sentences per paragraph. I accomplished this task with the aid of the text that I had used in high school which handily spelled out the number of major and minor supports per paragraph. The grand total came to 14: one topic sentence, three major supports with three minor supports each, and a concluding sentence. I mandated that each paragraph should have at least 14 sentences, and my students knew that I wasn't kidding because I checked. The worst part was that I got what I had asked for. Sentences often read like this, "The second example for
my third point for the first reason is . . ." Sometimes I wish that I could have a recall of my former students, something like the auto industry does when it discovers years later that it had made a mistake. I'd like to recall all my students of that particular year and tell them that I've changed my mind— all paragraphs don't really have 14 sentences.

An interesting part of this incident is that my students loved me for telling them precisely how long each paragraph should be. There was no more ambiguity. The task of writing papers was so much simpler. Success was nothing more than following a formula. I felt good too because I was giving them what they wanted— answers. All was well until I decided to give them examples of these 14 sentence paragraphs to read. For some reason, I had trouble finding paragraphs like these in real life. There were not any five-paragraph comparison themes in the New Yorker or even in Newsweek. I finally gave up and just badgered a few students into writing some artificial examples for me—which they did. And the papers looked and read like school assignments and all was right in my fabricated universe. Both teachers and students reinforce one another cultural expectancy that language should follow reified patterns. When in actuality, real essays do not follow a standardized form.
Little by little, I started to realize that I was not doing my students any favors by answering their demands that I give them handy formulas for every aspect of writing. I began to try to make this point to my students by discussing how natural it was for them to want to gain control over the unknown. Psychologists tell us that a feeling of a lack of control is the most difficult stress to endure. Wanting handy formulas isn't the problem; the problem is created when students start to believe that these answers actually exist. In this myth and in other sections of the textbook, I explain that such absolute answers do not exist, and even if I did concoct these answers for the students, they might not enjoy being forced to follow such restrictive parameters. In the teacher's edition of Reprints, I try to set the students up for being caught by their own misguided desire to reduce writing to a simple matter of formulas. The text of a section called "The Writing Stages" begins by telling the students that they will be reading the correct steps to follow in order to produce a good piece of writing. This introduction is then followed by a blank page. Then, the blank page is followed by an explanation of why this little trick was pulled on them. (See the text included below.)

Introduction:
This next section is the most important part of the whole textbook because it is devoted to explaining what composing is and is not. Too often composition courses begin by examining what was written rather than beginning by discussing how writing actually takes place.
The first part of this section is devoted to what composition is not. Common myths about composing are carefully considered since these myths can actually get in the way of your
being able to write. Primary school children often enjoy composing their own stories and secret notes, but somewhere during the years that follow, children soon learn to dislike writing, and by the time that they reach adulthood, they may even despise writing so much that they avoid writing whenever possible. Perhaps the myths about writing that abound in our culture pervert an otherwise natural language experience.

The last part of this chapter is about what composition is. Three important factors about composing are discussed that have only recently been considered by researchers in the field. First, composition is emphasized as a process. Then its dynamic qualities are discussed. Third, the uniqueness of each person's composing process is explained. Examining the composing process thoroughly is an important component to learning to write. Thoughtful consideration may help you to reexamine what you actually do when you are composing. By becoming conscious of what is actually happening, you may be able to better control your own composing process. Too often students have absolutely no control over their writing so that every time that they begin to write, the students are totally helpless and can only go where their writing takes them.

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THE WRITING STAGES

Many students are poor writers only because they do not follow the proper procedure for writing a paper. In this book you will learn the correct steps to follow in order to produce a good piece of writing. Memorizing these steps will be helpful to you for your future college writing career. Each one of these steps will be explained in depth in this book, but for your convenience, the steps will be listed on the next page in the proper order. You should never attempt to write a paper unless you go through these four stages of good writing. Skipping one of these stages may indeed cause you great problems. Do not be surprised if your teacher gives you a quiz on them.

You may have noticed that the preceding page in your book was blank. This was no printing accident. This little trick was intentionally played on you in order to get you to examine your expectancies for this class.

Many college students come to college expecting learning to be a simple matter of memorizing all the right answers. Some students have been know to get very angry with teachers who do not give out handy answers for everything. Your college career would be very simple if you only had to learn a set of clearly stated facts.

Sometimes teachers have been pressured by their students into giving absolute answers to questions that should have been very complex answers. It's really hard to tell a student how long a paper should be. In my career as an English teacher I
have answered that question in the following ways: "4 pages," "500 words," "5 paragraphs," "5 paragraphs each of which are 14 or more sentences long." These answers are all ludicrous.

Would you stop automatically on the 500th word? Will the teacher actually count the number of words on each page? Would it be possible to write a good paragraph that was only two sentences long instead of 14?

Teachers are supposed to have all the answers. You may very well feel that your teacher is not qualified if he/she cannot spout out clear formulas for instant success. Searching for the answers to your questions about writing is your job too. This search is part of learning to write. Memorizing a rule for semicolons in 25 words or less guarantees nothing. To use, understand and be confident using semicolons is a totally different matter from knowing the rules. If you stop looking for handy lists and clever rules, you may begin to understand the dynamic quality of writing.

At first, easy answers appear to be so helpful. Books about writing often make wild promises in their titles, 7 Steps to Creative Thinking or Better Writing Instantly. These titles make very complex things seem deceptively simple. Perhaps you have learned some rules that reduce complex concepts to simple ultimatums. Some popular commandments are: never use "I" or "you" in writing; never begin a sentence with "because", "but" or "and." The people who propose such ultimatums mean well. Such rules are generally invented to quickly get a desired result. The "I - you" rule may have been suggested to you in order to get you to sound more like a scientific journal. But it is certainly not incorrect to use "I" or "you" when writing. The "because-but-and" rule may have been suggested to get you to write fewer fragments, but it is grammatically possible to write correct sentences that begin with these taboo words. Such rules often do not get the results that are intended, nor are these rules completely true.

Learning to write cannot be reduced to a list of procedures to be memorized or a list of forbidden mistakes. The writing process is far more complex and dynamic. It is so complex that some experts believe that it is impossible to describe its fluid qualities in flat linear sentences in a textbook. Such rigid rules and formulas may be totally misleading. By the very fact that you believe such things exist, you may totally overlook what you can learn from your own natural writing process. You may be so busy memorizing that you never stop to investigate what works best for you.

NOTE:
I'm sorry that I had to trick you at the beginning of this section in order to get you to read about how unrealistic such notions are. I don't want to make you feel gullible. Our company does offer several handy writing aids that you might wish to purchase this quarter. We have pencils that can only write unsplit infinitives and some lovely non-comma splice
paper. For those of you more interested in investment ventures, we have a bridge in New York City (actually it is in Brooklyn) and some waterlogged land in Florida that we are selling shares in—for a limited time of course. Just stop by the office any time, and we'll be glad to help you.

The whole point of this ruse is to make the students aware of their unrealistic desire for easy answers. Some students seem to have a greater difficulty accepting ambiguity than others. Psychologist, William Perry (1968) studied college students' learning patterns over four years and generated a model of development. Perry suggests that the beginning college student prefers teachers who are strong authority figures and who give out explicit rules and formulas. In the composition classroom, college freshmen are often aggravated by teachers who did not give out specific rules for topic choice, thesis statement placement, paper length, use of transitional devices and so on.

Dealing with the students who wanted answers and didn't have them was a little easier than dealing with the evangelists who were given the answers by some previous teacher and who were on a mission to convert the rest of us to their doctrines. These arrogant high school students know all of the answers. They can write narratives without using the word "I," and they can write comparison papers with alternating or block form at the drop of a hat—although I did suspect that these students were just trying to recycle old high school papers. College composition teachers are continually confronted by freshmen who try to cling to maxims given to them in high school by former teachers as if the maxims were a charm to ward
away evil grades. For instance, I noticed that I would often receive student papers with the thesis statement underlined. I finally asked a student why he felt obliged to do such a thing, and he informed me that, "All English teachers like for students to underline their thesis statements since it makes it easier to check them." It sounded so logical that I almost felt guilty that I hadn't been asking all of my students to underline theirs. These students had all the answers to passing freshman composition, yet their writing was often totally devoid of any meaningful content at all. It is difficult to get students like these to abandon formulas in favor of accepting the ambiguity of language as its most exciting possibility. Language can be more than a stagnant competency test. Students need to believe that language can be used for their own purposes.

One of the problems with emphasizing format is that form gets separated from content and things get out of balance. The last three paragraphs of this myth discuss the dialectical relationship that form and content have to one another. Specifically, format can dictate content, and content can dictate format as well. Regretfully, students have had far more experience with the former case where the teacher dictated the format and the students had to find a content that would fit within the format. The student quote below echoes this myth by warning against boxing writing into an unrealistic, orderly pattern:
Illusions

We walk around with illusions in our head. Most people are shocked when they find out that writers don’t do things perfectly the first time. Things don’t always happen in a nice, neat orderly manner. I think it’s important for every new writer to realize this, because when they do, they have a better understanding of what to expect during the writing process. If the new writer is hell bent on conforming to a strict format, he/she may be doing more harm than good.

This student was one of the few student writers whom I had in class who believed in this advice from the very beginning of the course. He was very assertive about his drafts. He would tell me how he felt about his draft, but he rarely wanted any suggestions. He did not want to be restricted by my suggestions about format. Instead, he would reassure me that he would work his problems out when he started his next draft. He had a lot of confidence in himself as a writer which lead him to select his own topics and formats. He was even brazen enough to write a highly controversial paper about growing Marijuana which not only won a student writing award but also merited publication in a professional psychological journal about illegal drugs. Students rarely have enough confidence to bend the format in order to aid what they have to say.

Students are so fearful that they won’t be able to write an organized paper that they often select a pattern of organization too early, thus constraining what they will be writing about. They underestimate the power of the human mind to create organization. To prove my point, I sometimes bring in a bag full of junk and dump it on my desk. I then show each object to the students so that they can
which is always a whole activity, to be judged as such. The opposition between theory and practice is then, it is said, broken down, by the interactive redefinition of each term.

In the field of education, there is a popularized connotation of the word "praxis" which uses the term to represent a practice which is in harmony with a particular accepted theory. For example, "praxis" would signify a classroom practice which was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs or Bloom's taxonomy. This popularized denotation reveals a questionable relationship between theory and practice which is much less interactive than the Hegelian and Marxist definition. This section will consider the modern definition of "praxis" rather than the popularized one.

These characteristic features of modern praxis will be considered: reflection, intention, interaction, liberation, and transformation. The works of two scholars, Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, will be used to analyze the individual process of reaching praxis. Both men call for a new relationship between theory and practice which does not result in a polarity between the two concepts. The attainment of praxis is so significant that both men portray it as the pinnacle of human development.

Reflection

The journey to praxis can be analyzed as passing through a series of successive consciousnesses. (See the next page.) The first level of consciousness is one of reflection. Even on this
<table>
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<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth Level</td>
<td><strong>Transformation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Transformation happens when action which is based in reflection is realized in major social change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Level</td>
<td><strong>Liberation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Liberation is when reflection and action merge to create change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level</td>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Interaction is a continual dialectical movement between action and reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td><strong>Intention</strong>&lt;br&gt;Intention is informed by reflection which will then be carried out in action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Level</td>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong>&lt;br&gt;Reflection is directed toward the activity of everyday life.</td>
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level, there is a connection between reflection and action because the object of the process of reflection is action. However, the reflection which takes place is different from ordinary reflection. As an overview, reflection which leads to praxis is directed at everyday life, encourages a wider perspective of everyday life, develops a sense of self, and is concerned with positive change.

Reflection which leads to praxis is not based upon an isolated vacuum of esoteric thoughts. Critical reflection is focused instead upon the reality of everyday life. If the reality of everyday life can be penetrated, then there is hope that the individual can be saved from being submerged under the hegemonic forces which regulate the tide of daily life. However, daily life is the most difficult of topics to reflect about since by necessity working class people must continually participate in daily life in order to survive. The working class does not have the luxury of sitting up on a mountain, totally separated from daily life, in order to reflect about it.

There are many ways to develop an individual's ability to reflect about daily activity. Paulo Freire and his colleagues developed a technique called "decodification" which they employed to develop both literacy and reflection. During cultural circles, peasants were shown drawings which represented various aspects of their life: a man in the field using tools, a man and a woman talking, a primitive hunter with a bow and arrows, a modern hunter
with a gun, etc. Then the group discussed critical issues related to
the drawings. Some of these drawings can be seen in Freire's
Education for Critical Consciousness (1981) and in Cynthia Brown's
Literacy in 30 Hours: Paulo Freire's Process in North East Brazil
(1978). In this citation Freire (1972) explains the type of
reflection involved in decodification:

In the event, however, that men [women] perceive reality as
dense, impenetrable, and enveloping, it is indispensable to
proceed with the investigation by means of abstraction. This
method does not involve reducing the concrete to the abstract
(which would signify the negation of its dialectical nature),
but rather maintaining both elements as opposites which
interrelate dialectically in the act of reflection. This
dialectical movement of thought is exemplified perfectly in the
analysis of a concrete, existential, "coded" situation. (The
coding of an existential situation is the representation of that
situation, showing some of its constituent elements in
interaction. Decoding is the critical analysis of the coded
situation.) Its "decoding" requires moving from the abstract to
the concrete; this requires moving from the part to the whole
and then returning to the parts; this in turn requires that the
Subject recognize himself [herself] in the object (the coded
concrete existential situation) and recognize the object as a
situation in which he [she] finds himself [herself], together
with other Subjects. If the decoding is well done, this
movement of flux and reflux from abstract to the concrete which
occurs in the analysis of a coded situation leads to the
supersedence of the abstraction by the critical perception of
the concrete, which has already ceased to be a dense,
impenetrable reality. (pp. 95-96)

Freire demonstrates how critical reflection can be used to supersede
or rise above impenetrable daily life through the use of
decodification.
However, Freire's ideas are not always well received by American educators. These educators feel that Freire's suggestions are not relevant to American classrooms because most of Freire's work took place in third world countries. This bias may come from the American assumption that third world people are the only people who are oppressed and who need to develop their critical consciousnesses. Americans forget that many adults are totally immersed in their daily lives and that they seldom critically examine what happens to them. American school children, just like Freire's third world students, need to develop reflective thought processes so that they can have a transformative effect upon their world. All human beings need to become aware of themselves and their activities in order to consciously choose whom they wish to be and what they wish to do. Both of these types of reflection, objectifying self and objectifying one's activity, are necessary for developing critical consciousness.

Although there have been no American teachers who have been publicized for using Freire's techniques of decodification through drawings or photographs, Ira Shor who taught at City College in New York has been influenced by Freire's work and has several sections in his book, *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* (1980), which demonstrate how decodification could be applied to a freshman composition course. His example of the fast food hamburger is particularly interesting:
I bought a hamburger and took it to class. What better way to extraordinarily re-experience the ordinary? The burger is the nexus of so many daily realities. It's not only the king of fast foods, the lunch/snack/dinner quickie meal, but it's also the source of wages for many students who work in the burger chains. In addition, the spread of fast food franchises is tied into the suburban dispersal of the American city. This dispersal is further connected to the automobilization of American life. The car, the suburbs, and the burger thus connect central themes of everyday life. So, I was able to hold in my hand a weighty interstice of mass experience. My students have eaten, cooked and sold countless numbers of hamburgers, but they have never reflected on all this activity. I brought a burger to class and interfered with a major uncritical flow of mass culture. It was a lucky break, played out on a hunch. (p. 162)

Through decodification both Freire and Shor are developing what educators might label as critical thinking skills.

Certainly, any of many different everyday life issues are important issues for reflection, but the immediate environment of the school may be the most critical topic for student reflection. This is particularly important for the students who have had the least success with the educational system. A colleague, Robert Coughlin (1982), who did an ethnographic study in my classroom, documented that this theme was prevalent in my own teaching. As part of my remedial courses about writing, I was trying to make my students more critical of the way that the educational system worked so that they would stand a better chance of surviving it. Students need to examine the whole enterprise of schooling in general, and each student needs to consider how he or she goes about learning things. Self evaluation is a particularly useful tool in helping students to
analyze their own behavior and then begin to take responsibility for it. An interesting resource which offers a discussion of how to build a curriculum around self evaluation is that of A. K. Markova (1979), whose work sprang from a strong influence from the Vygotsky school. Markova suggest a type of learning which depends on self evaluation before, during and after the learning activity. (See pages 55-56.)

Although reflection which leads to praxis is directed at everyday life, it emphasizes everyday life's interrelation to larger issues. In his last citation, Freire characterized this wider perspective as representing the relationship between the whole and the parts. Reflection helps the individual to see activities in his or her life as having a connection to other social relations both present and past. The individual may begin to see the economic, political, and historical significance of his or her activities. A historical dimension is added when the individual begins to see his or her life as being a part of an on-going history of events. In order for critical reflection to help the individual rise above a submersion in daily life, reflection must offer the individual a wider perspective from which to view his or her activity.

Ira Shor (1980) expresses this type of reflection as a spacial and temporal five step process. (See figure 5.) Steps one through three focus on social relations from a more immediate understanding to a more global one. Steps four and five focus on a
1. X in the square is the theme or object under problematic study. In this first step it is described in great deal.

2. The larger square represents X in its immediate social setting. How does X relate to other aspects of social life? What are the human consequences of X? This second step begins the deep contextual analysis of the codified theme . . .

3. The next large square represents the global relations of X. Does it exist in France, China or Afghanistan? . . .

figure 5

Critical Reflection of Everyday Life
4. The previous two steps have elaborated X in its immediate and global space. They unveil the social relations of X in the present time. The new rectangle moves backwards and forwards in time. This new dimension seeks to know how each student's life has been involved recently with X. Further, it probes the immediate future vis-à-vis X...

5. The larger rectangle is the long-range time-span of X. When did it first enter human history? What did it replace? Why did it appear when it did? Has it changed since then? Who brought it into being and why? What will it look like ten or twenty years from now? How could X look if it was reconstructed along different ideas? What changes are needed in it?

The last step is the Utopian phase of the investigation. It calls upon students to re-invent the thing being studied, so that the future will not reproduce the present.


figure 5 (continued)
historical understanding moving from the earliest use to a utopian reinvention. Shor's model has some similarity to the heuristic devices sometimes used in composition classes as a prewriting activity. However, Shor's model is much more political than most heuristic gambits such as the "who, what, when, where, and why" device.

Reflecting about one's activity also develops a heightened awareness of one's self. By objectifying one's activity one can then separate one's self from the activity and thus develop a sense of an "I" as something separate from the world. Freire (1970) again uses a comparison to animals to makes his point about the humanity's ability to conceive of a self. (The use of pronouns in this citation are troublesome because of the differences between Portuguese and English as well as the sexist use of man for humanity.)

... man is the only one to treat not only his actions but his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals, which are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon it. In this apparently superficial distinction lie the boundaries which delimit the action of each in his life space. Because the animals' activity is an extension of themselves, the results of that activity are also inseparable from themselves; animals can neither set objectives nor infuse their transformation of nature with any significance beyond itself. Moreover, the "decision" to perform this activity belongs not to them but to their species. Animals are, accordingly, fundamentally "beings in themselves."

Unable to decide for themselves, unable to objectify either themselves or their activity, lacking objectives which they themselves have set, living "submerged" in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a "tomorrow" and a "today" because they exist in an overwhelming present, animals are ahistorical. Their ahistorical life does not occur in the "world," taken in its strict meaning; for the animal, the world does not constitute a "not-I" which could set him apart as an
"I." The human world, which is historical, serves as a mere prop for the "being in itself." (p.87)

The distinction that Freire makes between "being in themselves" (animals) and "being in itself" (humans) is one of "I-ness" or the ability to perceive of a self. As Freire points out this ability to objectify oneself enables a person to literally create a self within one's mind.

The creation of a sense of self is a highly significant moment in human development whether we examine it phylogenetically or ontogenetically. Research into brain functioning indicates that a sense of self and willpower itself are housed in what is believed to be the newest evolutionary part of the brain, the frontal lobes. People with extensive damage to their frontal lobes can respond to commands but do not seem to be able to generate any independent activities (Gardner 1974 and 1981) (Also see Luria 1972). Research into brain growth demonstrates that the last ontogenetic brain development is the growth of the corpus callosum which is completed during the preteen years. It is speculated that the corpus callosum gives the individual full, integrated use of both hemispheres of the brain, allowing for more sophisticated thinking. One type of sophisticated thought process that the split brain researchers have explored is a sense of humor. Split brain patients, who have had their corpus callosum severed surgically, had difficulty understanding puns and satire. If the growth of the corpus callosum indicates more sophisticated thought processes, then it is no coincidence that the teenage years hallmark a rapid development in
the sense of self. Teenagers characteristically begin to define a sense of self which is different from their parents. Teenagers distinguish themselves in their dress and music. Interestingly, teenagers utilize language quite differently than children. They become active generators of slang words and often signify their changing sense of self in their insistence upon a new nickname or a different version of their given name such as "Jenni" instead of "Jennifer." Although the psychological development of a self concept may be the leading activity of this age, other age groups focus activity around developing a sense of self. For example, college freshmen are concerned with developing a sense of self in relation to a wider social community. College students often have their first opportunity to meet people different from themselves while attending a college or a university. As they reflect about the differences between families and communities, they begin to develop new insights about their sense of self. Rather than fighting against these important developments related to a sense of self, educators should focus much of the curriculum around it. Becoming conscious of one's self is a very important part of the educational process.

Although reflection appears to be essentially a static activity, critical reflection is always directed toward positive change. The ability to conceive of the type of change which leads to praxis requires a dialectical relationship with the world. Praxis explodes the false subject/object dichotomy by emphasizing the relations between subject and object. Thus, it is humanity's
relationship with the world that can cause meaningful change to take place. Freire argues that this ability to cause the world to change makes humanity uniquely human. Freire repeatedly uses the negative comparison to animals to laud the potential of humanity: animals can only adapt to the world whereas humans can change the world to suit their purposes.

Intention

If an individual reflects about his or her everyday life activities, the individual may then decide to assume responsibility for those actions and for future actions. Making critical decisions about one's actions is the next level of consciousness which is labeled as intention. Intention has several important features: intention is based upon optimistic will, is carried out through concrete action, enables a person to create his or her own history, is a political act rather than a philosophical one, and can be used to transform the self.

However, reaching this level of consciousness is a bold move because in many ways it is much more comfortable to let someone else make all the decisions. Eric Fromm (1941) in his book, Escape from Freedom explains why humans have historically found it easier to give up ownership of their actions to others. Similarly, students find it much more pleasant to take no responsibility for their education at all. They allow teachers to bear the complete burden of
deciding what they will study and how they will study it. In an informal study of a seventh grade math class (Mack 1981), I found that students could see no connection at all between one day's lesson and the next nor from one part of the lesson to the next. Very few students could even name the unit that they were studying even though the teacher did an excellent job of providing each student with a calendar of the class's activities for that unit. The majority of students have been alienated from their own activity of learning and therefore they assume no responsibility for it.

Intention is optimistically oriented toward a utopian future. Through reflection, several different futures can be imagined. Then, a person can take the responsibility to choose a particular future as being more desirable than others. Intention is therefore a very optimistic act of will. Gramsci championed the significance of the human will. Since Gramsci's discussion of this point has not yet been translated into English, this quote is taken from Leonardo Salamini's (1981) interpretation of that passage:

Gramsci asserts the primacy of will over intelligence. Revolutionary change can be expected not by a politicized human intelligence, but politicized human will. Intelligence, Gramsci writes, is pessimistic while will is optimistic. Intelligence cannot imagine what has not happened in history, that is, future history, as already happening. This will is optimistic in so far as it acts on the present, as it is, to transform it. (p.218)

As Gramsci implies, reflection by itself can be very pessimistic. Since critical reflection must necessarily focus on the many ills which are perpetuated throughout society, staying at the first level
of consciousness can be dangerous. After developing the insight to see life critically, a person must move on to take action upon that insight even though it may be far easier to wallow in a quagmire of inaction.

Intention cannot just be wishful thinking, it must be connected to meaningful concrete action. Intention must be informed by reflection which considers how such an action could best be carried out. Utopian dreams are useless unless they can be grounded in a wisdom about how the world actually works. For praxis, all the while that intentions are being formed, the individual should be concerned with how such actions might be carried out. This means developing goals and objectives as well as considering realistic options and practical methods. Such mental rehearsal is more than just an example of good planning; it is abstract reflection which is grounded in the concrete world. Gramsci (1971) makes a distinction between a will that is abstract and one that is concrete:

That the objective possibilities exist for people not to die of hunger and that people do die of hunger, has its importance, or so one would have thought. But the existence of objective conditions, of possibilities or of freedom is not yet enough: it is necessary to "know" them, and know how to use them. And to want to use them. Man, in this sense is concrete will, that is, the effective application of the abstract will or vital impulse to the concrete means which realise such a will. (p. 360)

Once again, any discussion of praxis must keep a clear connection between theory and practice, reflection and action, for one is meaningless without the other.
The role of the individual becomes more significant when the level of intentional consciousness has been reached. Intention gives the individual an active role in producing change in order to influence the outcome of the future. In this way, the individual actively begins to create history rather than just viewing himself or herself as a historical being. Through action, each person becomes the author of his or her own history. Freire (1985) maintains that the ultimate goal of education should be to empower the student with the desire to make his or her own history:

Since they [students] are not marginal beings who need to be "restored to health" or "saved," learners are viewed as members of the large family of the oppressed. Answers for their situation do not reside in their learning to read alienating stories, but in their making history that will actualize their lives. (p. 102)

According to Freire, history then changes from something that one learns about or one suffers through to something that one does. Intention must be based on the belief that history is not predetermined and that all people have the right to create their own history—if they only can become empowered to do so.

With the belief that one can create history, intention moves from the realm of reflection into the real world. However, many grand intentions have been little more than idle philosophical ramblings because these intentions never moved out into the world to make changes. Gramsci (1971) envisions a different type of philosophy, one which acts upon intention:
But the "theoretical" significance of this debate [history and anti-history] seems to me to consist in this: that it marks the "logical" point at which every conception of the world makes the passage to the morality appropriate to it, when contemplation becomes action and every philosophy becomes the political action dependent on it. In other words, it is the point at which the conception of the world, contemplation, philosophy become "real," since they now aim to modify the world and to revolutionise praxis. One could say therefore that this is the central nexus of the philosophy of praxis, the point at which it becomes actual and lives historically (that is socially and no longer just in the brains of individuals), when it ceases to be arbitrary and becomes necessary—rational—real. (p. 369)

Praxis is political action which is significant because it realizes an intention. This action becomes symbolic of a whole belief about one's self and one's relation to the world. When action becomes a necessary part of one's philosophy, that person is no longer a person embedded in history but a person who has taken history into his or her own hands and who now creates it. Action which creates history is political, and because it is political this action has far reaching effects on society.

Praxis is transformative action which characteristically transforms the inner self as well as outer world. When a person decides to author a transformative action, many decisions have to be made. These choices, about how to take action, redefine the new, more active self. Gramsci (1971) refers to this type of action as creating a personality. In the citation below Gramsci outlines the ways that transformative action changes the self:
... one could say that each one of us changes himself [herself], modifies himself [herself] to the extent that he [she] changes and modifies the complex relations of which he [she] is the hub ... Men [Women] create their own personality, 1. by giving a specific and concrete ("rational") direction to their own vital impulse or will; 2. by identifying the means which will make this will concrete and specific and not arbitrary; 3. by contributing to modify the ensemble of the concrete conditions for realising this will to the extent of one's own limits and capacities and in the most fruitful form. . . To transform the external world, the general system of relations, is to potentiate oneself and to develop oneself. (pp. 352, 360)

Certainly, a sense of self would be different for a person who was actively engaged in changing the world than for one who is passively submerged beneath everyday life.

In an educational setting, teachers frequently complain that their students have no motives to write. Such students cannot think of anything to write about let alone anything about the world that they want to transform. This type of apathy reflects a sense of powerlessness which debilitates the student. These oppressed students end up losing their sense of voice so that if they are forced to express themselves through writing, the writing reads like hollow drivel. Part two will discuss several factors which destroy or thwart the sense of voice for the student writer. Freire (1985) calls this inability to express oneself "a culture of silence":

In the culture of silence the masses are mute, that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their society and therefore prohibited from being. Even if they can occasionally read and write because they were "taught" in humanitarian—but not humanist—literacy campaigns, they are nevertheless alienated from the power
responsible for their silence.

Illiterates know they are concrete men. They know that they do things. What they do not know in the culture of silence—in which they are ambiguous, dual beings—is that men's [women's] actions as such are transforming, creative, and re-creative. Overcome by the myths of this culture, including the myth of their own "natural inferiority," they do not know that their action upon the world is also transforming. Prevented from having a "structural perception" of the facts involving them, they do not know that they cannot "have a voice," that is, that they cannot exercise the right to participate consciously in the sociohistorical transformation of their society, because their work does not belong to them. (p. 50)

As Freire states, these students are alienated from their own literacy. A form of literacy which denies the students an opportunity to transform society offers a false use of words.

It is important to note that Freire's sense of the world "voice" is quite different from the composition teacher's use of the word, but there is an interesting common ground between the two uses of the word. For composition teachers, voice is generally used to describe an authentic piece of writing in which the reader can sense a clear and consistent "voice" on the author's part. However, it may be impossible to develop a strong sense of voice in writing if the student feels no sense of voice in the transformation of the society in which he or she lives. Once again, Freire (1965) explains why literacy and having a voice are so interconnected with one another:

As an event calling forth the critical reflection of both the learners and educators, the literacy process must relate speaking the word to transforming reality, and to man's role in this transformation. Perceiving the significance of that relationship is indispensable for those learning to read and write if we are really committed to liberation. Such a perception will lead the learners to recognize a much greater right than that of being literate. They will ultimately
recognize that, as men [women], they have the right to have a voice. (p. 51)

If having a voice, in both senses of the word, is a right of every student, then composition teachers need to address the culture of silence which keeps students from developing an authentic use of language.

Interaction

During the intention level of consciousness authentic action was contemplated. Now during the interaction level, actions are carried out. Praxis is not just any action nor is it any thoughtful action. The connection between reflection and action is so interrelated that praxis can be viewed as the process of dialectical interaction between theory and practice. The dialectical quality of this interaction needs further explanation.

In the previous sections, the discussion cautioned that there must be a close relationship between reflection and action. An accurate description of praxis can never leave much distance between these two concepts even for the sake of analysis. The isolation of these two concepts from one another provokes behavior which is often dangerous or useless. Freire (1972) soundly condemns any use of words which emphasizes theory without practice or practice without theory:
An unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements. When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating "blah." It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.

On the other hand, if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into *activism*. The latter—action for action's sake—negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible. Either dichotomy, by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought, which reinforce the original dichotomy. (p. 75-76)

As Freire implies at the end of this citation, verbalism and activism reinforce the common split between theory and practice.

Praxis works to minimize this split between theory and practice and to promote a dialectical influence between the two. Both theory and practice benefit when there is interaction between them. Theoretical constructs need a concrete context from which to arise. Theorists must continually be sent back to real life by their reflection in order to clarify their ideas. A theory which is continually corrected by the happenings in real life is far more effective at promoting change than a theory which is fabricated from very little real life experience. Careful observation of current practices can even cause new theories to be generated. Without the power of real life experience behind it, most theories are likely to die a boring death of disinterest. Conversely, actions need critical reflection in order to guide them. Without this reflection, a person
can easily become submerged in daily action. Theory increases a person's understanding of common practices so that that person's actions can become more authentic. Reflection can have a dramatic effect upon action. Penetrating common practices may provoke a person to create a whole new direction in life. Reflection also increases the effectiveness of a person's actions which increases the likelihood that that person will accomplish what was originally intended. Theory helps to clarify a person's actions and thus influences future actions.

The goal of this interaction between theory and practice is not to create better theory and better practice but to create a unity of praxis from which authentic action is possible. When this unity is reached, the individual becomes empowered to intervene in real life and to impose a new way of doing things. In this way, the culture can be influenced by new ideas. Praxis makes use of the dialectical relationship between consciousness and the world. Instead of the individual consciousness being totally shaped by his or her "ensemble of relations," the individual can in turn use consciousness to change these relations and ultimately to change the world itself.

Although the continual movement, back and forth, between theory and practice constitutes a whole, this movement can be analyzed. It is important to caution that this movement should not be reified into a single, regimented plan for reflection which can be
forced upon the student. The movement between theory and practice will vary depending upon the individual and the context involved. The road to praxis begin with reflection upon current practice, but praxis itself can only happen when a transformative action is made. Praxis begins when the individual takes the first action upon the world.

Freire (1981) explains this point in an interview. He states that he began his personal praxis with action (pp. 59-61). He argues that although reflection is an important part of this action, beginning with a bold tentative action is what starts the whole process of praxis. Freire goes on to give an example of what he did to work out his theory of training illiterates to read and write. He tells a long story about how he invited a cook into his library and showed her a series of slides of a boy with the word written both correctly and incorrectly at the bottom of the slide. She mastered the word, but within fifteen minutes she was tired and wanted to leave. From this tentative action Freire then reflected and realized that this method was not challenging and this was not the way. So from an action which reaches out to attempt a new idea, praxis begins. And from this one bold experiment Freire began a whole literacy movement which has become one of the most significant literacy methodologies ever attempted.
Freire's explanation of the movement between action and reflection is somewhat one dimensional. Bruce D. Boston (1972) suggests a more two dimensional model of Freire's discussion of this movement. (See figure 6.) Boston suggests that action and reflection go on simultaneously, but when these two dimensions converge, conscientization occurs. Here is his discussion of his diagram:

Here action and reflection are seen as two intertwining lines, situated in the force field of culture. Conscientization is Freire's name for what happens at the various points of convergence along a historical continuum. Both action and reflection, and thus our future, are changed and re-directed as a result of this convergence. Our lived cultural experience acts as a field of force which keeps the action and reflection lines from "flying off the chart," and also keeps the lines from flattening out to form a one-dimensional existence. (p. 84)

Boston's representation emphasizes that the convergence between action and reflection causes a redirection. However, this redirection should not be considered as merely an end of the action projection for the next action. Reflection can converge and change the direction of an action continually throughout the course of just one single action. This can be applied to the actions carried out in the classroom. A good teacher continually monitors his or her actions while teaching just one lesson and makes several adjustments based on this reflection along the way. This is not to imply that this reflection is a simplistic correction such as changing the number of math problems assigned. This reflection can be a significant analysis of the students' reaction to an activity which may take until the next class period or the next day in order to be realized.
Development of a Critical Consciousness through Historical Time

Figure 6

The Action/Reflection Dialectic

Convergence in Conscientization

in a change of direction. This type of classroom reflection is an important part of meaningful teaching but is seldom developed in student teachers. From my work with LTF students, I believe that undergraduate education students can be lead into this reflection process and thus begin to learn how to combine action and reflection.

Because the interaction between action and reflection is not static, a person seeking praxis is in a continual process of change. This person can be viewed as being unfinished because this person is actively creating history. Praxis thus becomes the permanent process of becoming what one decides to be. Freire (1972) explains that the individual's ability to know that he or she is unfinished is an awareness which is necessary for beginning the process of praxis:

Problem-posing education affirms men [women] as beings in the process of becoming as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, men [women] know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. (p. 72)

Knowing that they are incomplete gives humans the knowledge that they can complete themselves through praxis. Praxis is therefore a life's project which never reaches completion because each person is continually in the act of creating his or her own history until death.
This section demonstrates how both reflection and action play a critical part in the process or praxis. Neither reflection nor action alone can elevate the individual from his or her submersion in daily life. For true praxis, individuals need both reflection and action in dialectical interaction.

Liberation

Each level of consciousness adds a new and necessary feature to the struggle to reach praxis. Thus, the liberation level of consciousness adds the distinction that praxis must serve to liberate those who are dominated. This is an important distinction, for without liberatory action, heightened consciousness may never be fully realized. Even worse, the individual's new ability to reflect may result in action which serves his or her best interests, as in the case of false consciousness. On the liberation level of consciousness, the person becomes aware of his or her domination, develops a sense of collective, class consciousness, and uses political action to move beyond the given limit situation.

With the inclusion of the topic of liberation into the discussion, the rhetoric changes, and there is an implicit reference to the class system. However, it is important to note that the class system has a significant role in all the other levels of
consciousness as well. In fact, the class system can be viewed as one of the major reasons why praxis is necessary in the first place. The class system separates the natural connection between theory and practice which praxis strives to unite. Historically, there has been a class differentiation between the thinkers and the doers. Simplistically, the privileged upper class becomes the educated elite whose role it is to contemplate the theories while it is the subordinate, working class who become the menial laborers whose role it is to act out the wishes of the dominant group. This polarity between reflection and action has many other consequences, one of which is the consideration that the class system embeds the dominated group in a daily life which submerges their consciousness and makes it difficult for them to perceive their domination.

Critical reflection can help the individual to become aware of his or her domination through objectifying daily life. During reflection contradictions arise which reveal the differences between those who rule and those who are dominated. The dominated can then begin to see the situation in which they live their lives. Freire (1972) refers to these situations which reveal domination as "limit situations":

As they [men and women] separate themselves from the world, which they objectify, as they separate themselves from their own activity, as they locate the seat of their decision in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, men [women] overcome the situations which limit them: the "limit-situations." Once perceived by men [women] as fetters, as obstacles to their liberation, these situations stand out in relief from the background, revealing their true nature as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality. Men [Women]
respond to the challenge with actions which Viera Pinto calls "limit-acts:" those directed at negating and overcoming, rather than passively accepting, the "given." Thus, it is not the limit-situations in and of themselves which create a climate of hopelessness, but rather how they are perceived by men [women] at a given historical moment. . . (p. 89)

In this way, these limit situations become opportunities to move beyond domination. They become problems to be solved.

Whether controversial topics such as domination and liberation should become part of the educational process may seem questionable to some. To deny that such issues are present may be even more difficult since issues related to domination are prevalent in music, art, and literature. Social commentary about gender, class, and racial discrimination can be found in poetry, plays, novels, and biographies; however, such issues are not confronted in textbooks. Textbooks which are devoid of such controversies are conspicuously bland such as the often parodied "Dick and Jane" readers. Textbooks which avoid controversial issues demonstrate the lack of regard those in power have for those who are dominated. In his most recent work, Freire (1985) repeatedly criticizes textbooks whose content is vacuous. Freire includes an excerpt from an alternative textbook created by one of his literacy teams in Uruguay (p. 61-62). The selection is a transcript of a classroom discussion about the natives' water source entitled, "The Color of Water." Freire relates that three thousand copies of this book were sold out in fifteen days in Montevideo. This is just one example of how the students' evolving sense of critical consciousness should and can be a part of the literacy process.
Not all oppressed people are the same nor should they be treated the same. For example, becoming aware of one's domination is different for those who are the rural poor than those who are the urban poor. Freire (1972) explains that the peasants in the non-urban settings have a single, compact center of oppression while the urban poor have a plural, complex center of oppression. He labels the center of oppression for the urban poor as "oppressive impersonality" which he explains is often invisible. (p. 176) I found that helping students analyze their own reactions to such oppressive situations as university red tape was quite difficult because the oppression was so diffuse. Helping students to analyze their domination may indeed be more difficult for the American urban dwellers than it is for the third world rural or urban poor.

The question of liberation also brings up the problem of who should be the liberator. Liberatory education cannot be successful if the teacher is seen as the only liberator. In this case, little has changed for the oppressed since they still take orders but this time from a different leader. The oppressed must take part in their own liberation, or there can be no praxis. This is the point that Gramsci (1971) discusses at length with his description of the organic intellectual. When reforms are lead by a small group of elites, the oppressed have not been liberated. Liberation can only take place when the oppressed take political action which is informed by their own critical consciousness. To seat critical consciousness
in a small ruling group is to deny the oppressed any real liberation.

As the oppressed develop a sense of their own domination, they begin to empathise with other dominated groups. This sense of empathy can develop into a collective group who all have similar needs. On this level, consciousness moves beyond an individual awareness into a collective consciousness which represents the awareness of a whole class of oppressed people. Gramsci (1971) clearly states that developing a collective consciousness is a critical step toward reaching political praxis. (See chapter 2.) In this citation he describes how oppressed people develop a collective conception of the world through their use of language:

An historical act can only be performed by "collective man," and this presupposes the attainment of a "cultural-social" unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world, both general and particular, operating in transitory bursts (in emotional ways) or permanently (where the intellectual base is so well rooted, assimilated and experienced that it becomes passion). Since this is the way things happen, great importance is assumed by the general question of language, that is, the question of collectively attaining a single cultural "climate." (p. 349)

The relationship between diverse members of an oppressed class must be negotiated through language. As the oppressed relate to the world in a different way, they can then relate to one another in a different way. Through cultural action, these groups unify around their mutual needs to alter the existing oppressive situation. Thus, class consciousness is not merely a psychological state but a willful action on the group's part, a historical mission.
The liberation of the oppressed is more than a question of a change in consciousness. Liberation can only be realized through political action. Without political action to alter the oppressive situation, little has been accomplished. Subsequently, without political action, there is a limit to how much the consciousness can be developed. Reflection upon political action develops the critical consciousness in ways which cannot happen through other types of reflection. Action which is not political does little to lead to liberation, for it cannot alter the larger class system which relegates the oppressed group to the bottom.

Freire has been criticized for being idealistic in his discussion of conscientization. His critics contend that an oppressive situation cannot be transcended through consciousness alone. However, Freire maintains that he has always advocated political action as a necessary part of conscientization. Regretfully, Freire does not discuss political action other than in very general terms. Freire (1972) does explain that political action should be determined by the collective, oppressed group rather than being imposed from a small leadership. Any decision, even if it is from the most benevolent group, is not liberatory unless the majority has some role in the decision-making process.
The real question that Freire does not address is what the nature of the political action should be. Of course, the convenient answer would be to side step the question by pointing out that the political action must remain undefined because it is the oppressed masses who should determine what the action should be. Although the specifics of the political action should indeed be determined by the oppressed, some description of that action can be attempted. Political action which leads to praxis must address the limit situation directly. Participating in the existing oppressive social structure in some new capacity does not alter the limit situation. Serving on an existing committee or voting at a staff meeting may be useful activities, but these activities do not lead to praxis because they rarely have any effect on the limit situation. These pseudo-political activities work instead to reinforce the existing oppressive social structure. Intensive charity work, although important, likewise, does little to change the oppressive circumstances. An action can only lead to political praxis if it is directed as altering the superstructure of society itself. In order to emerge from the everyday life in which they are submerged, the oppressed must be able to intervene in the structure of that everyday life. Whether the action is successful or not is of less importance than if the action is political. An unsuccessful political action can be the object of critical reflection which may in turn generate a more significant action in the future. Certainly, Gramsci’s political actions were not considered an immediate success, but the
written reflections on his actions has resulted in a significant influence on other people's political actions such as Freire himself.

Transformation

The highest level of consciousness is that which generates the most significant changes in the social structure. The word "transformation" itself denotes a change which is so total that it results in a complete restructuring of what has gone before. In other words, things are not just improved; they are totally recreated. The transformation level of consciousness has these features: it is a creative force, it denounces the old social structure, and it announces a new social structure.

When the oppressed no longer passively accept reality for what it has been, they realize that they have the power to make reality whatever they want it to be. History is not a predetermined dead-end. History is their obligation to create a new reality.

Social structures are created through social relations which become institutionalized. Therefore, social structures can be transformed through a change in social relations. For example, in order to transform the social structure of the institution of education, changes would have to be made in the oppressive social relations. Specifically, the social relations which are related to
the pursuit of knowledge are oppressive to both the teachers and the students. Knowledge has been reified into a sacred collection of maxims from the past which must be perpetually reproduced through the brains of each new generation.

From the curriculum to the homework assignment, knowledge is treated like the given reality to which both teachers and students alike must sublimate themselves. Neither party really participates in the creation of knowledge; they can only serve its function by becoming the object of its subject. In other words, knowledge starts running the teachers and students instead of vice versa. Students are expected to accept dutifully the knowledge that is doled out to them. Students are not to question the usefulness or accuracy of the given knowledge; their only role is to passively memorize it. However, teachers are not really in charge of determining what knowledge should be given to the students. Teachers may serve as the role of agents for the educational institution, but they are just as powerless to affect what knowledge is chosen and how it is distributed as the students are. Teachers must be careful to do a good job of delivering the sanctioned knowledge to the students. Praxis calls for a more activist stance toward knowledge. Unless both the teachers and the students transform their social relations related to the creation of knowledge, knowledge will continue to be the ultimate possession of the library rather than the masses. The issue of ownership is critical to transforming social structures. The masses cannot own knowledge unless they change the existing
social structure which makes knowledge the exclusive creation of the elite.

There can be no mistake that transformation is a reactionary response to society. Transformation becomes necessary when the existing social structure is oppressive. Thus, the current social structure is denounced as oppressive. Freire (1985) labels oppressive situations as dehumanizing. Freire explains that there is no middle ground; there is only the choice to continue or to terminate a dehumanizing situation:

The process of transforming the world, which reveals this presence of man [woman], can lead to his [her] humanization as well as his [her] dehumanization, to his [her] growth or diminution. These alternatives reveal to man [woman] his [her] problematic nature and pose a problem for him [her], requiring that he [she] choose one path or the other. Often this very process of transformation ensnares man [woman] and his [her] freedom to choose. Nevertheless, because they impregnate the world with their reflective presence, only men [women] can humanize or dehumanize. Humanization is their utopia, which they announce in denouncing dehumanizing processes. (p. 70)

The existing oppressive social structure is a problem which has two solutions: one stops the oppression and one continues it. Transformation is the decision to make a choice.

With the denouncement of the existing oppressive situation comes the announcement of a new, liberatory situation. Accordingly, praxis does not stop with a negative denouncement; it moves forward to a positive announcement. The liberatory society which is envisioned is utopian. Freire (1985) describes what this utopian society would be like:
Revolutionary utopia tends to be dynamic rather than static; tends to life rather than death; to the future as a challenge to man's creativity rather than as a repetition of the present; to love as liberation of subjects rather than as pathological possessiveness; to the emotion of life rather than cold abstractions; to living together in harmony rather than gregariousness; to dialogue rather than mutism; to praxis rather than "law and order"; to men who organize themselves reflectively for action rather than men who are organized for passivity; to creative and communicative language rather than prescriptive signals; to reflective challenges rather than domesticating slogans; and to values that are lived rather than myths that are imposed. (p. 82)

Freire's discussion of language emphasized the creative use of language.

Language has a significant role in praxis, for it is through language that a new social structure is described. This description most probably will hinge on a creative use of words. An old word, like "praxis" itself, may be redefined, or a totally new word may be coined. New social structures demand new words to signify its difference from the old structures. Perhaps, the creation of new meanings precedes the creation of new actions, for it is through these new meanings that the liberatory action is launched. To enforce a rigid, prescriptive use of language may thwart praxis. Praxis uses a different rhetoric than the status quo. Praxis uses the rhetoric of change.

Praxis is not just reactionary; it is revolutionary. Action which leads to praxis can be classified as revolutionary because it is directed at creating a new social structure. Praxis can never come about from the simple refinement of some small feature of the
existing social system. Praxis discontinues oppressive structures by replacing them with completely new social structures. Such changes are radical and consequently turn society upside down. Praxis requires a whole new way of being for a large group of people who are quite used to the old way of being. Totally changing the nature of one social relation will in turn upset many other social relations. Thus, it is not possible to change the status of oppressed people without severely changing the character of the whole social system.

Part Two
Praxis and the Composition Student

Student Oppression Outside of the Classroom

A common lament that many composition teachers share is that their students do not know what to write about. If this problem were as simplistic as it at first appears, it could be solved by books such as: A Thousand Writing Topics, Theme Topics Which Please English Teachers, etc. However, the problem is far more complex than this. Students do not have anything to say because they have been socialized into believing that what they have to say is unimportant. Students engage in several oppressive social relations which doom them to what Freire described in an earlier citation as the "culture of silence."
Before examining the oppressive social relations of the classroom, the students' oppressive social relations outside of the classroom will be examined. Students in college and high school composition courses are generally under twenty-one years old. This age group is forced to assume a powerless position to older adults. Teenagers suffer politically because they have no voting rights, and they suffer economically because they can rarely find jobs above the minimum wage level. Moreover, the present administration hopes to pass legislation which will permit students to be compensated beneath the current minimum wage requirements. The one job which typifies the students' plight is that of the fast food employee. McDonalds has become the sweat shop employer of the twentieth century who needs a new Charles Dickens to dramatize the oppressive circumstances. To be employed by a fast food corporation, the employee must submit to the company's dictates which cover everything from a uniform, to when the hamburgers can be turned, to the exact phrases to be used over the drive-thru intercom. The excerpt from the student paper below describes the mindless task of cleaning up the salad bar:

The Pitts

No one seems to realize how much work people in fast food restaurants do. There are many tedious hours that are worked without pay. The real crime is, franchises around the world are bringing in millions of dollars and paying their employees pennies. I found this to be true when I worked in a Burger Chef. This being my first job, I never realized that being a waitress meant more than just waiting on customers. I was in for quite a shock . . . .

Closing time is the final pain in the rear. The Burger Chef closes at eleven o'clock sharp. The employees are supposed to be able to finish all the work at half past eleven. Well personally speaking, there is no way in heaven one could do this. The boss clocks us out regardless at half past eleven.
One of the many jobs of closing is shutting down the salad bar. After shoveling all the ice and water from the bar, one has to dig all the crud off the bottom of the salad bar. Kidney beans are all smashed beans. Rotten cherry tomatoes are squished to the back side of the salad bar which makes the job longer...

Our culture introduces our children into the world of work through oppressive social relations which tell them not to think, not to speak, just to clean up after those who are more important.

In many families, teenagers have to struggle for their rights to freedom of movement, freedom to determine their friends, freedom to choose their clothes, etc. Although such issues seem trivial to adults, the lack of power that a teenager has in many home situations reinforces the societal pressure for teenagers to remain submissive to adults. In many home situations, teenagers are conditioned into silence. Teenagers are seldom allowed to voice opinions about matters of importance, nor are the teenagers consulted when the adults make the decisions. If teenagers are allowed to express themselves in the home, it may only be through their choice of music and dress. It is acceptable for teenagers to look funny as long as they sit passively at the dinner table in silence. Long before they reach the classroom, teenagers know that most adults do not want to hear from them; adults seem to like the sound of their own voices better.

A large group of young college students slip further into the culture of silence because they are remedial composition students. The lives of these remedial students outside of the classroom reveal
that they seldom come from the elite social class. Many college
students are employed, but these students work in order to pay their
college tuition and not just in order to pay for an expensive car,
Greek organization membership or spending money. They struggle
financially to stay in college and often must dropout for a quarter
or more before they have enough money to return. They come from
homes where they will be the first member to attend college. This
freewriting done during the first week of classes reveals how the
word "college" represents more than just the hopes of the student; it
represents his fathers dreams for his son to have a better life:

College

Today is another day of college. That sounds so good to
me. College is a big word. College--say that to someone and
they'll think, "Whoa! a college man! I wish I could go to
college with all those parties, contests, and the big football
games on weekends." College. College. My folks tell their
friends, "My boy's in COLLEGE." It makes them feel so good.
They tell me, "Son I never got to go to college. I never had
the chance. I was raised in those days when you went to work to
help support a family. My folks told me, 'Oh I'd love to be
able to send you to COLLEGE but I just don't have the money.'
So I got a JOB. I haven't done too bad in life without a
COLLEGE DEGREE. But I know I could have been more if I had
gone. COLLEGE was just for the rich. If you didn't have the
money you didn't go. There was no such thing as BANK LOANS. Oh
no, you had it in the pocket or you just didn't go. So son, I
want you to go to COLLEGE and work your butt off to get the
grades to make it in COLLEGE." Yep, COLLEGE.

Since they did not live in the elite suburbs, they did not attend the
best schools; consequently, they may not have had the same quality of
education as the more elite students have had. Many were so doubtful
that they would be able to attend college that they did not take the
college preparatory courses in high school. Many commute or attend
branch campuses and do not live in the dorm and do not participate in
traditional college social organizations. Remedial students are often from a non-white racial group. Many students are in the remedial courses partially due to the fact that they speak a dialect other than that of the dominant social group. These remedial students believe that their voices are not as refined or as eloquent as those of the higher class students. Silence is preferable to those who feel out of place and who are trying to pass for those who are readily welcomed at college.

However, not all students in composition courses are teenagers. On the college level, particularly in remedial courses, there is a small group of what has been labeled as the "non-traditional" college students. The determining feature of these students' non-traditional status is their age. These students are older than the traditional right-out-of-high-school age group. This group carries this stigma because they did not attend college at the culturally acceptable age. These students suffer severe anxiety and self doubt. In our culture, we punish those who were not wealthy or academically successful enough to enter college at the sanctioned time. If they enter a few years later, the shame is so strong that these students continually feel out of place. College has traditionally been the domain of the elite. Those who come from lower social class groups find it much more difficult to be accepted into the college life.
There are two subgroups within this adult returning student group who characteristically come to college to escape their current oppressive situation. The first group hopes to make a career change which will enable them to acquire a better job. These adults already have a career in a field which does not require a college degree or which only requires some sort of technical certification. These adults are often very unhappy about their earlier career choices. Trying to change careers and possibly even social classes is a mammoth undertaking. Even if a person was happy with his or her present position, working a full time job while pursuing a college degree is very difficult. Moreover, these non-traditional students come to college seeking a new job primarily because their current job is undesirable. Their jobs are not just unfulfilling; they are often severely oppressive in many ways. This excerpt from a student paper comes from a theme which compares being a lab technician to being a Timex watch—"They take a licking but keep on ticking." The student mounted his paper on a huge watch face with a lab technician as the hands of the watch:

Takes a Licking and Keeps on Ticking

Upon graduating from medical laboratory technician school, I had the notion that everything would indeed be just as all the school literature had stated. All of the ads on television along with the brochures that said, "You too can enjoy an exciting and rewarding career as a Medical Laboratory Technician in only two years," had me foaming at the mouth. Being young, impressionable and naive, I had swallowed it all "hook, line and sinker." I was convinced that a four year degree was not necessary to be successful in today's ultra technological world. As a technician with a two year degree working with many other people who have four year degrees, it is
difficult to receive the same amount of respect that they do and nearly impossible to receive the same responsibility or pay. I have often thought of myself as being a "Timex" among a group of "Seikos." I can do everything the "Seikos" can do only I do not reap the same benefits . . . .

Non-traditional students characteristically have difficult home situations as well. These students must attend class at night, and may have to drive great distances for classes. They often have child care problems because they must now find child care for both the day and the night time. Since these non-traditional students have so many conflicts both on the job and at home, the determination that it takes for these students to complete their degree programs is amazing.

The second subgroup is made up of the women who come to college looking for change in social status. This group includes the women who are housewives and the women who are recently divorced. The women who are housewives often seek a degree either because their children are old enough to survive without them or because they have begun to feel unfulfilled as a housewife. The women who are divorced are generally seeking financial security now that their former husband's income is not available to them. Many of the married women are expected to provide all their previous household and child-care services in addition to going to school. One woman told me that her husband told her that when she was unable to provide a home-cooked meal, she would have to drop out of school. I received a humorous essay from one woman who related how much trouble she had just getting the men in her family to put the laundry down the laundry
shoot in order for her to wash it. For the married and the divorced women, their husband's negative opinion of their ability to succeed academically is often an issue. Many husbands view their wives' attempt to get an education as pure folly. Many female students have confided that their husbands told them that they were stupid and that they were not very good writers. For years, these women have been socialized into believing that their place was in the home. Their opinions and abilities are often considered to be subordinate to their husbands'. Of course, some women do have supportive husbands and do not have a subordinate position in their families, but these women are not in traditional families, and they are certainly not the majority. It is the traditional family which oppresses many women into feeling inferior and incapable.

The issue of student oppression is not a significant one for many college composition teachers. Whether the teachers acknowledge the issue or not, liberation is the underlying motive for the presence of most students' in such a course to begin with. For the younger age group, a composition course is one of the first hurdles to jump in order to acquire the credentials and ultimately the job which will allow them to be treated like an adult. For the non-traditional age group and the remedial students, college is the way out of the economic and social position that they have been locked into. These students come to college because of the unstated lure of upward mobility. The instructors may not actively lobby for students to learn to write in order to get a better job, but the
students rest all their future hopes and dreams upon their ability to
survive this important early course in college.

Composition courses become the focus of these students' self
doubts about whether they are college material or not. Language is
the central issue for many students because many of them speak a
dialect which is not accepted by the dominant social group as
"standard English." To these students, passing freshman composition
is a real test of whether they will be accepted by the upper class.
Students who are not from the elite social class refer to themselves
as trying to "pass" for a college student much as mullatos referred
to trying to "pass" for white during the reconstruction era.
Students are ashamed of their writing because they see it as a dead
give away to the fact that they do not belong in college:

I can easily say there's no one that hates writing more
than me. It's not just story writing either. It's writing in
general. I even avoid writing family and friends. Til I can't
put it off any longer.
The worst part is it's not, because I can't think of
anything to say in my letters or stories. It's the idea of
looking dumb. Or writing something that sound dumb. And
looking stupid "just doesn't overly excite me." My solution to
this problem has been, not to write. Or write as less as
possible.
And like everything in life. "All good things must come
to an end." There goes my days of not writing anything. "Hello
ink pen." . . .

These students have been oppressed into assuming their place in
society's structure. They know that they weren't really "meant" to
go to college; therefore, they can never feel fully accepted. They
live in constant fear of being found out. Their nightmare is that
they will be called on in class or that they will turn in a paper
which will reveal their incompetence. In this scenario, the professor banishes them dramatically from the room, with the instructions that they are never to come back to a college campus ever again. These oppressed students are very fatalistic. While they secretly know that they were not "meant" to go to college, they view their first attempt as their only chance to make it big. These students blame themselves for their own failure. They rarely fault the system.

These students are so desperate to fit in that they become over-zealous. They have unrealistic expectancies for what a college student has to do in order to succeed. I have had students who adopt some bizarre behaviors in the hopes of succeeding. Such students may look up almost every word that they write in the dictionary or they may write overly long papers for a very brief assignment in the hopes that extra words will mean extra credit. Some diligent students will start outlining the textbook when it was not assigned, or they will meticulously make a list of every word that they do not know the meaning of. These paranoid overachievers often drop out of class during the first few weeks because they cannot compromise their high standards for themselves. Caring too much can actually cause some students more harm than good.

Besides all these driving fears that what they write or say will be inadequate, these oppressed students doubt that they have anything of value to say. Their daily social relations socialize
them into believing that they are not as important or as intelligent as the others, so their voices are not worthy of being heard. These oppressed students have been conditioned into silence for so long that they have forgotten what it is like to have something to say. They are awkward at putting together their thoughts because they have had so little experience holding a position of power from which to spout one's opinion. More damning than their inexperience with the language is their conditioning to silence. Just giving these students more experience with writing does not automatically convince them that they have something to say. When a person feels unworthy to say anything of any importance, that person will still view language as an alien classroom requirement rather than a mode of expression. One of my inmate students went to great lengths to plagiarize a journal entry about prison life from Eldridge Cleaver's, *Soul on Ice*. He copied a passage about Eldridge Cleaver's daily routine at prison, word for word, because he felt that his own experiences did not count since he was not anyone who was important. He was alienated from his own experiences inside of prison. Oppressed students do not feel that their lives are important enough to write about or that their opinions are worth being heard. They prefer the safety of silence. And soon they have no voice in which to say anything even when they are forced to speak.

If for no other purpose, the writing samples in this section demonstrate that oppressed students have a lot to write about. Since their oppression is a central issue to their pursuit of a college
degree in the first place, they should be encouraged to write reflective essays about the site of their oppression, about their limit situations. An essay about how McDonalds trains its employees to be mindless and expects them of being incapable of knowing when to turn over a hamburger pattie without an electronic timing device is far preferable to an essay which is a gloss of encyclopedia knowledge about air pollution. Essays which center around oppressive themes are charged with emotion and real life examples. The motive to write such essays often lies in the student's frustration. Tapping into this source of both motive and knowledge is not easy. A teacher cannot glibly walk into class and assign students to write about their oppression for the next class session. It takes time to raise the student's consciousness level first. The teacher also has to create a classroom atmosphere where students' voices are heard and where the activity of everyday life is examined critically.

Student Oppression Inside of the Classroom

The power relations within the school are clearly established. There is no doubt that students occupy the bottom position in the hierarchy of school. Teachers hold the power to punish and reward. Movement is controlled within the institution, and the students must even ask for permission to go to the bathroom. Students are threatened with quizzes, tests, detentions, telephone calls to parents, and corporal punishment. Teachers make the
decisions about what to learn, when to learn it and how to learn it while the students are passively conditioned into just following directions. There can be no doubt that the teachers have the power within the school while the students do not. This oppression affects all forms of expression from when students may speak to what type of writing instrument can be used for written assignments. Since silence is the preferred state for learning, self expression is not encouraged in school.

The hierarchy of power affects all the social relations within the school and thus determines how learning is defined for our culture. Students are not actively involved in creating knowledge for themselves. Instead, students view knowledge as an untouchable, predetermined body of facts which can only be passively memorized. The students' subordinate relationship to knowledge negatively affects their ability to write.

Students believe that knowledge is contained in books. Books are considered to be the ultimate authority on everything. Teachers are seen as getting their knowledge from books. However, students find it conceivable that a teacher could be wrong about somethings, but that books hold the indisputable truth about everything. This puts the student in an inferior position to the book when the student begins to write about a topic. If the student consults a book about a topic, the student is often intimidated by the authority of the voice of the book and finds it very difficult to express the same
information without using the book's exact words. These students plagiarize the text because the text's voice sounds so much more authoritative than their own. In such a case, plagiarism is more a matter of intimidation than a case of intentional cheating. The student simply cannot conceive of any other way of expressing the information in question other than in the exact words that the book used.

For many students, just using the same words which are used by the knowledgeable books causes them all types of syntactic problems. These oppressed students feel uncomfortable using the words which belong to the domain of those who are more knowledgeable. The words taken from the books are alien to the students since they echo the voice of the book and thus the voices of upper class authorities rather than their own voices. Michael Bakhtin (1981) is one of the few language scholars to discusses how words are never neutral but are always charged with the meanings of others:

... between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate ... .

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or, on the contrary, by the "light" of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression...
and influence its entire stylistic profile.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it--it does not approach the object from the sidelines. (p. 276-277.)

Students cannot write well when they feel inferior to the voices which have previously spoken the words that they are now trying to use upon the page. These words are awkward for the students to use and the words fall from their mouths in ill-formed sentences which do not belong to them. The students do a poor job of masquerading as someone else. Much like a little girl who dresses up in her mother's high heels and make-up, the students stumble and appear like a painted clown to those who recognize their immaturity. The following student sample was in response to the first written assignment of the quarter. This remedial student is trying to adopt an educated, book-like voice to explain his past experiences with writing. Notice the unintentional malapropisms:

HOW WRITING AFFECT MY ATTITUDE

When I was a youth in kindergarten; I was always trying to learn the fundamentals of writing. Since almost everywhere I went I observe individuals with objects in their hands, which had a point. But I still couldn't understand what peoples use these objects for, which had a sharp point. Since I was still immature of this learning process.

In the first grade, the teacher introduce me to this object, which had a sharp point and another object that I had already use during kindergarten; which was a piece of paper. I remember the times in the first grade, that I couldn't wait, until the teacher pass out the writing materials to me.

The year I spent in the six grade, was an achievement for me in writing, because I thought I had learn all the fundamentals of writing, but I realize that I was lacking in
some areas of writing, since the formal way of writing is using punctuation marks.

So in my freshman, sophomore, and junior year in high school. I started being absence frequently from all of my classes. To avoid the embarrassment I brought among myself, for not going to my classes, which could of have taught me the writing technique, so I idle myself from the Educational world in writing, since I didn't like the subject of writing at all.

Then came my first experience in the penal system. When I had to write to my folks for some assistant, but I was still embarrass, knowing I would have gave or given anything to express my feelings toward them in writing, instead of calling them up expressing my feelings on the phone. Seriously, I was really ashamed of myself, because I was uncapable of writing a one page letter.

My second turn in the penal system, was not as harder than my first time, since the job I was assign to was going to school and the school help me learn, the correct way to write.

To my knowledge of understanding writing fundamentals, writing is a easy method to learn, but when it come down to the basis of writing. Like placing your punctuation mark in the correct place, writing is a challenge for one to conquer. For instance, if a teacher give you a good grade on your writing skills. It doesn't mean the next teacher is going to like your writing, as the first teacher did to give you a good grade in writing.

Students often have trouble writing with the authoritative voice used by books because they have been socialized into believing that they are not authorities about anything. To the student, only the book has the authority to speak.

Sounding like a book is much easier for upper class students because they have heard these voices speak many times, and these students feel privileged enough to assume such a role of authority. Developing the ability to sound authoritative is almost impossible for a student who is oppressed. During a recent presentation at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, David Bartholomae (1986) passed out several turn of the century student essays. Bartholomew pointed out that the writing sample which was
ranked the highest demonstrates that acceptable college writing has a tone which belies an upper class attitude toward the topic:

When I sat down to think over the experiences of my life that have been profitable to me my memory wandered back to one of the big lessons I learned when I was yet a little child.

I was in the sixth grade in a little country school. Here I mingled with children from all stations in life and made friends with them all. There was, however, something insincere about my friendship for the poorer children. It was due, I now believe, to a feeling of superiority over them. I resented the ravenous manner in which they ate their lunches I divided with them; I detested their furtive glances when we talked; and I could not tolerate their tendency to lie. In all, they had an uncouth bearing that I could neither understand nor forgive.

That spring our teacher invited me to go with her while she took the enumeration. After visiting a number of homes we came to a place called Grub Hollow where several of our school patrons lived. In one little shack we found the family huddled around a little stove, the walls and floors bare, and everything most squalid and depressing. In another, a dirty, miserable hovel, we found a blind father, an indolent, flabby mother, and three mangy children. Finally we found a family of fourteen living in one room amid unspeakable conditions.

On our way home Miss Marxson was strangely silent, and, child that I was, tears stood in my eyes. I had heard "the still sad music of humanity," and it had given me a new understanding. Never again did I feel haughtily toward those children; and all through life that experience has modified my judgment of human conduct.

Thus, remedial writers fail not because they are inherently less intelligent about their subject matter, but because they do not know the upper class etiquette about writing. They make many embarrassing mistakes because they do not know the little nuances of expression which are common practice for the elite group. For instance, the elite know when to use colloquial expressions to be witty; however, the students from the lower social classes may use such expressions as a general practice, not being aware of their restrictive use.

Remedial students have great difficulty using the voice of authority because they have been oppressed into silence because their voice has
Not only do students consider themselves subordinate to the book's knowledge about a subject, but they feel inferior to their teacher's knowledge as well. Students believe that teachers possess unilateral knowledge about everything. Students begin conversations with the teacher, automatically assuming that he or she has read all the books in the world or that he or she has vast knowledge about any topic simply because that person is a teacher. Writing can only be a defeating process when the students believe that the teacher knows more about what they are writing about than they do. Writing becomes less an exercise of self expression and more a test to see if the students know what the teacher already knows. Consequently, students believe that writing is a simple matter of just expressing the right answers. Students believe that their grade is determined by their ability to search for the right topic and the right opinion of that topic. Since students do not believe that they can create knowledge through writing, they write only to express the right knowledge which they have learned belongs to the books and the teachers.

Perhaps the worst problem with the students' attitude toward knowledge is that these students believe that by comparison to the books and the teachers, they know nothing of importance at all. Students become alienated from the knowledge that they possess from the activity of their own daily lives. Because of their false consciousness about knowledge, students discount whatever knowledge
they do have as either unimportant or inaccurate by the very virtue that someone of their low social status possesses it. In other words, it couldn't be valuable knowledge if they know about it. Another verification of their low opinion of themselves is the fact that student writing is rarely used in composition anthologies. Only the works of great writers are included which further corroborates to the student that they do not know about anything of consequence. The students' social relations at school soon convince them that they do not have anything to say.

In addition to being alienated from their own life experiences, students are disenfranchised from their own natural composing processes. Students believe that the composition textbook and the composition teacher know how writing should take place. For example, if the teacher says that a writer must outline, or fill out a jot sheet or answer the five journalistic questions before writing a paper, the students will believe that this must be the truth even if the reality of students' own writing experiences indicates otherwise. Whether the student is a successful letter writer or poet, etc. makes no difference because the student always holds the teacher's model as the correct one. However, the students do not see the contradiction that their teacher only grades papers and never writes anything of much significance. The students' false consciousness denies the reality of experience and champions the teacher's rules. Students believe that they are supposed to write the way the authority figures tell them to. These students cannot
learn how to write by writing because they will not believe their own experiences; they will only believe what their teachers and textbooks tell them.

When students must exist in oppressed situations, they lose the confidence necessary to become writers. Eventually, they even lose the desire to make meaning. In both their lives outside of school and their lives within the classroom, students are continually socialized into a silence which debilitates their belief that they know anything worth writing about. Moreover, these oppressed, voiceless writers vainly try acting out the charade of their teacher's false consciousness about the composing process. These students are continually trying to write about the alien topics which please the teacher by adopting the artificial composing process which the textbook mandates. Soon these students have lost everything. They no longer speak with an authentic voice nor do they possess a composing process of their own. What was once a unique form of self expression has turned into a lock-step, school routine.

Praxis in the Composition Classroom

Before describing techniques for helping the composition student reach praxis, it is important to establish a description of the overall goals for such a process. Hopefully, these goals will compliment the student's larger task of reaching political praxis. This section will provide an overview of the sections which will
An early goal in the process of reaching composition praxis is for the students to realize that they possess opinions and prejudices about composing. And, because they are already writers, each of them already has a unique composing process. While the students are engaged in meaningful writing experiences, the students can begin to critically examine their current composing processes. Students can then make personal judgements about what works and what does not work for them individually.

The next goal should be for students to begin to take ownership of their own composing processes as they begin to make reflective modifications in their strategies. These changes should be in the form of experiments which they then critically reflect about and evaluate in order to guide future experimentation.

The students should then have the goal of assuming a role in recreating the existing knowledge about composing. Through the sharing of tentative insights in the classroom, the students can see themselves as authorities on writing.

As the student begins to transform his or her own personal composing process and ultimately, the culture's existing knowledge about composing, the student learns to use writing for his or her own purposes. This writing is meaningful and is not an artificially
created exercise invented by the teacher in order to have a writing sample to correct. The students use writing to critically analyze everyday life, to express intentions to create change, to act and react upon the world, to liberate themselves from oppressive situations, and to transform the society into a personally conceived utopia.

The following five sections will examine the four expanding levels of consciousness which were previously defined: reflection, intention, intervention, liberation and two on transformation. These levels will be applied directly to the students' activities in the composition classroom. Several specific classroom procedures will be discussed; however, it is important to caution that these procedures are only one teacher's approach to this process. The students' composition praxis can and should be fostered by a number of other approaches. In addition, these activities are listed during particular levels of consciousness only for the convenience of description. In actuality, these activities interconnect and overlap from level to level. They are not listed in chronological order since most of them should be practiced for an entire quarter rather than in a strict linear sequence.

Although each of the activities described below are significant, the activities are not as important as the larger goals which they strive for. Too often teachers adopt popular classroom activities without carefully considering their personal motives for
practicing such an activity. These activities stress a change in attitude or consciousness rather than a change in skill. For this reason, following a particular procedure is not as important as monitoring the activity's effect upon the students. Often, the best lessons which foster an attitude change are conducted spontaneously from a candid student response or are carried out in discussions before or after class or in the hallway. If students become angry or confused by a new practice, these concerns must be addressed immediately. One student's distress may represent the conscience for the rest of the class. For instance, one student recently commented that doing another rough draft of his paper was not going to be helpful because he had no idea what he should change. His candor represented several students' feelings that drafting is a matter of fixing up the parts that were wrong. Each of these activities has to be continually readjusted and changed since they come to life in the unpredictable social relations of the classroom.

Reflection

The object of the composition students' reflection should be their past experiences with writing. During the first week of class, the students should construct a writing history or a writing profile. This is not an easy assignment for the students to do because at first they want to play the game of school where they pretend that up until this particular class they have never really learned about
composition. Students also have problems with being candid because in the past at school they have learned that success is determined by how closely the student can paraphrase the teacher's point of view. To encourage candor, the teacher can share previous writing histories which voice both positive and negative opinions of writing.

One motive in assigning this discursive discussion of the students' past writing experiences is to get the students to acknowledge that they are bringing past beliefs with them into this learning context which must be examined and decoded. In order to facilitate their recall of past experience, a planning sheet can be used which has them list their past writing experiences both inside and out of school. College students can be asked to consider what they wrote as a child, as a high school student, and what strategies their teachers used to teach them composition. Some interesting additional information can be gained by suggesting that they recall the attitudes of friends and relatives toward writing. Students can also be asked to explain what makes good writing or how good writing is produced. From the planning sheet, the students can construct their individual representation of their past experiences. Some write glosses which methodically cover all of their school experiences while others may elaborate on one particularly positive or negative experience.
Besides encouraging the students to examine their own experiences and biases, the teacher can gain invaluable insight into the reality which the students have constructed for themselves about writing. Whether the information which the students write about is accurate or not is not the issue because the students' memory of what happened to them is all that remains and this image will dominate the discussion of the composing process which follows. There would be a much larger problem if students allowed their internalized beliefs about writing to remain unexamined somewhere just beneath their consciousness, for these beliefs will to a large extent influence what their future experiences with writing will be. The students need to bring these experiences to consciousness in order to critique them and to construct new authentic action. However, the teacher should be cautioned not to expect much critical analysis at this point from the students. Even if the students just construct a log of typical school writing experiences, the data is reconstructed so that the students may call it to mind later to be the subject of critical reflection.

The writing histories serve several other purposes for the teacher. The teacher at the least gains an early, out-of-class writing sample, but more importantly, the teacher becomes aware of each student's ensemble of experiences which form this particular classroom composite of students. This information can be useful for planning activities and guiding discussions. If a student has had
one or more particularly negative experiences, the teacher may need
to address the student’s scars early in the course. These writing
histories can provide a wealth of information for both the students
and the teacher.

Composition students need to be lead into critical reflection
about the composing process. The "Myths" were written to speak
directly to the students about their false consciousness about the
composing process. Regretfully, the students' consciousnesses cannot
be raised by simply assigning them to read the myths. Students need
to discuss the myths early in the course, but the dialogue which
expands from this discussion should continue throughout the course of
the entire quarter.

I have experimented with cartoon representations of the
issues discussed in the myths. Laughter is a powerful form of
recognition. Students, of course, will laugh at the cartoons just
because they are cartoons, but sometimes they laugh because they can
see the contradiction of their own false consciousness about
composing.

Students generally express a more positive attitude toward
writing after discussing the myths. Some students express great
relief that they no longer will be restricted by their former beliefs
about composing. This student expresses pleasure at being able to
resolve areas of internal conflict about composing:
Reaction to "Myths"

I found that all these myths pertained to me in one way or another. Especially the neatness myth. I am constantly throwing away sheets of paper with only one or two words on them. After I realized how ridiculous this habit of mine had become, I laughed at myself.

I also realized that writing isn't just an ordained gift from God . . .

I also believe the handout has some really practical advice on which one may reflect . . . "Myths," on a whole, will help me to go about writing in a personal way. It erased a lot of the fear and helped me to go about composing in a more experimental manner.

The End

(Just Joking)

Students can feel burdened by cultural expectations about writing. They may feel so frightened of making any type of error that their whole composing process dysfunctions within the first few minutes of facing a piece of paper.

Although the "Myths" are useful for stimulating reflective classroom discussion, the students have only begun to penetrate the fog of their false consciousness about composing. Students may begin to view composing as a process, but they will probably imagine it as a reified formula which they must be careful to learn from this new composition teacher. If one reified model is just exchanged for an old one, the students have done little more than change from one oppressive master to another—perhaps the new master is more benevolent than the last one, but the students are still oppressed into submitting to being ruled by someone else's knowledge about composing rather than their own. Donald Murray (1982) explains how teachers who teach with the process rather than the product approach should not peddle rules and formulas to their students:
Those of us who teach the writing process are comfortable with the constant change. This sets us apart from many people in the academic world who teach in a traditional or classical mode, believing there are truths which can be learned and passed on from teacher to student, from generation to generation. Their conception has its attractions; it is the one I was taught. But my life as a writer and as a teacher of writing leads me—as similar experience has led others—to a different tradition which some call developmental or truly humanistic. We do not teach our students rules demonstrated by static models; we teach our students to write by allowing them to experience the process of what we have to say. (p. 31)

Discovering what one has to say is an unfolding process which follows its own path to meaning. Students and teachers both need to respect the unpredictable nature of their composing processes.

Classroom discussions are an excellent forum for developing critical reflection. Besides centering discussion on the issue of cultural beliefs about writing, several other topics should be considered as well. Critical reflection about the everyday life activity of school is unavoidably connected to a discussion about learning to write, if only because schools are the sanctioned site for the transfer of the culture’s knowledge about composing. Issues such as the power relations between teachers and students are central to the students’ ability to face their false consciousness. One of the students’ favorite selections in Reprints (1984) is a long piece about how a student under-handedly resists the classroom game of doing written assignments. The selection is entitled, "How to Get Out of Doing an English Paper and Still Get a Good Grade" (p. 153). Examining teacher and student relations becomes even more important if the teacher hopes to transform the current oppressive relations.
In order for many of the activities which are described in this section to succeed, new teacher and student relations will have to be constructed.

School relations are just one type of everyday activity which can be critically reflected upon in the composition classroom. Since students would have to reflect about many of their other daily activities to reach the larger goal of political praxis, there is no reason why these activities should not be part of the composition classroom's discussions. Critiquing everyday life activities such as fast food restaurants, cars, the bar scene, amusement parks, designer fashions, home towns, federal budgets, etc. can at the very least develop the students' ability to decode false consciousness. Of more significance to the composition teacher is the fact that these discussions can be used as prewriting strategies which will help the students to find topics about which to write.

The teacher's role in these classroom discussions should be carefully considered. In a genuine effort to encourage critical consciousness, teachers often destroy the students' ability to develop this thought process by doing all the critical thinking for the students. Thus, the well-meaning teacher deftly deconstructs some aspect of daily life single-handedly before the whole class, leaving the students marveling at the teacher's wit. This practice can actually serve to further oppress the students by once again holding up the teacher's views as superior.
Good classroom discussions are always so spontaneous and unpredictable that many teachers find them quite unnerving to try to use as a major teaching strategy. For best results, the teacher must give the students the primary role of offering critical insights about the topic under discussion. By asking probing questions and being very patient, the teacher can watch a superficial analysis evolve into a more critical discussion. For instance, I once started a classroom discussion about how during the holiday I had noticed that everywhere I went my relatives were trying to love me with food. Some relatives in fact were particularly fond of feeding me non-nutritious, sugar-filled treats. I joked with the students that grandmothers could save a lot of energy by just greeting all guests at the front door with five-pound packages of sugar and a spoon. This gambit started a roller coaster of comments about relatives, food, and nutrition. Some interesting comments were made about associating affection or rewards with food. But the most critical dialogue began when one student suggested that poor people should just wise-up and stop eating junk food. Several students then tried to explain why poor people have poor eating habits. Economic and political issues entered into the discussion, and some students even extended the discussion to themselves and why they eat junk food.

The teacher must risk giving up control over the dialogue so that the students can feel that they have created the knowledge which was generated by the discussion. Freire (1972) explores the
qualities of true dialogue in the second half of his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this citation, Freire elaborates upon why teachers should not control the discussion:

> Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education. . . . For the anti-dialogical banking educator, the question of content simply concerns the program about which he [she] will discourse to his [her] students; and he [she] answers his [her] own question, by organizing his [her] own program. For the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the program content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition—bits of information to be deposited in the students—but rather the organized, systematized, and developed "representation" to individuals of the things about which they want to know more. (pp. 81-82)

Teachers let the curriculum of the course of study become the content of the classroom discussions rather than letting critical reflection be the content and the selection of the topic be the students' decision. However, the teacher may have to suggest topics for critical reflection at first in order to get the students to believe that they have the right to express their insights about everyday life.

Another important problem which the teacher must consider when conducting this type of critical reflection is that students often do not see a connection between the discussion and their task of writing an essay. The teacher has to continually convince the students that these classroom discussion contain real knowledge which deserves to be written about. Students can be encouraged to take notes or a tape recording might even be utilized for later recall. Some of Freire's groups even published transcriptions of their
cultural circle’s dialogues which could then be used to provoke
dialogue in other groups.

This section has primarily emphasized the use of classroom
discussions to foster critical reflection. Reading student-produced
texts can also further the students’ critical reflection by bringing
up new issues. Using student selections rather than only those of
professional writers serves to legitimate the student’s role in the
classroom. Using student selections both about composing and about
everyday life can encourage students to believe that they can have
great insights about writing and that they do have something worth
writing about. Certainly, professional articles which are critical
about the composing process or everyday life could also be a good
springboard for classroom discussions.

Perhaps even more beneficial than activities which use
talking and reading as a means to develop a critical consciousness is
the practice of engaging students in reflective writing. Critical
reflection which is generated through writing is often more thorough
and more insightful than an individual can ever hope to gain from a
whole group discussion or by reading another person’s insights, no
matter how similar that person may be to the individual. Writing, if
it is worth doing at all, must provide an opportunity for an analysis
which is more in-depth than other mode of expression. Composition
teachers must believe that writing has special benefits to offer the
students’ thought processes, or the teacher will not be able to
convince the students that they should increase their composing ability.

The teacher can finish classroom activities which were designed to increase critical consciousness by asking the students to freewrite about the issue under investigation. Since these responses are hard to solicit from the students at first, the students can be asked to write about the specific features of their response to an activity. For example, students can be asked to describe how they felt about the activity before doing it, after doing it, and what they gained personally from doing the activity. In order to foster candid responses, these writings should be free from restrictions about correct spelling, paragraphing, etc. Many teachers call this type of immediate writing which focuses on ideas freewriting. This written reflection completes the activity by focusing on the purpose of the activity itself. Asking the students to write about their responses may encourage them to elaborate upon their reflection. Discussion which occurs after the written reflection may be more responsive than usual since the students have each already generated ideas about the issue. These written responses can also give the teacher valuable feedback about the success of classroom activities.

All the activities in this section, the writing histories, the use of the "Myths," the classroom discussions about everyday life, the student selections, and the written reactions, have the same motive, to increase the students' critical consciousness.
Penetrating false consciousness should be an early goal in a composition class. When I first started teaching composition, I did not believe that this goal was of primary importance. Instead, I was concerned with other very important issue related to teaching composition. I practiced some of the most successful approaches in the field: journal writing, freewriting, sentence combining, peer editing, prewriting, teacher conferences, etc. All my labors only produced minimal changes in the students' writing. As I became more interested in gathering information from the students about how they viewed my innovative classroom activities, I began to realize that their false consciousness took precedence over everything else that I had done. Unless the students' are helped to recognize their false consciousness about composing, they will probably respond to the new classroom activities in the same way that they responded to the traditional, product-oriented activities. Regretfully, teachers cannot just lecture students about false consciousness, hoping that students will gain instant insight. Developing critical consciousness is an individual process which demands the active, sustained participation of the each student's mind.

Intention

This level of critical consciousness is hard to delineate because it has so many similarities to the other levels. Much like the previous level, the primary activity of the intention level is the composition students' reflection. However, the intention level
changes the object of reflection from the students' past experiences to their future opportunities. The intention level is also similar to the next level, the interaction level, because it is directed toward action, but the intention level only hypothesizes action because the students are just developing the wisdom necessary to formulate and carry out the proposed action. During this level, the students make a personal commitment to seek changes in their own composing processes although they are not certain as of yet just what those changes will be.

The composition students come to this level with a very naive awareness of the composing process. These students may have only recently expanded their model of composing to include such strategies as prewriting, drafting, and revision. In fact, the students' may only have a vague understanding of the concepts and may not actually practice these procedures at all. The students are a long way from believing that composition is an exploratory, unfolding, recursive, emotion-centered activity. At this point, the students may have great hopes of becoming better writers, but their decision to change is without a specific focus.

During the reflection level of consciousness, the students began to view composing problematically. However, critical reflection can be debilitating because an old strategy is condemned long before a satisfying alternative has been created. The students may be painfully aware that they do not have the right answer for how
the composing process should work, so they may logically turn to the teacher who has long been the source of all the right answers. The teacher must be careful not to be put in the uncomfortable position of coming up with this right answer for the student. Students can be rather unpleasant when they find out that the teacher has no handy multipurpose panacea. Instead of searching for the one right answer, the students need to understand that there can be many right answers. This is because each writer has his or her own unique, best method of composing. Even more disturbing to the students than the possibility that there are many right answers for many people is the idea that there may be many right answers for each person. Thus, each person may have a different composing process for different writing activities. To make matters even more complicated, each person's many right answers may vary over time so that there are many right answers for each person for many different times. (See the next page.) Moreover, these right answers do not exist in advance just waiting to be utilized. They must be created by the writer to suit a particular purpose at a particular time in that writer's history. The creation of these right answers will be a continual challenge for the writer as both the context and the writer change from time to time.

Students need to be prepared for this continual reconstruction of their composing processes. A problem solving approach to composing can help students to generate answers for themselves. Such an approach uses a self-monitoring technique so
THE STUDENTS' QUEST FOR THE RIGHT ANSWER TO THEIR COMPOSING PROCESS

one right answer

↓

many right answers

↓

many right answers for each person

↓

many right answers for each person for many different times
that the students can continually make decisions about what to change and how to change it. This is a particularly difficult task since most everyone’s composing process lies somewhere just beneath consciousness. To modify their composing processes, the students will have to first bring their existing process to consciousness in order to consciously set about changing it. The challenge is to get students to participate in the long-term activity of researching their own composing process.

Since students are hardly aware that composing is itself a process, it is additionally difficult to guide them in examining their own composing process. Students can be assigned to keep a Process Journal in which they record specific details about their own composing process while they are writing an essay. However, this activity has to be carefully guided in order for it to work. Students have great difficulty in just recalling the series of activities that they did in order to produce an essay. Many students just write their paper without any conscious awareness of how they went about the task.

In order to aid students in their recall of what they did to compose an essay, they should be asked to reflect about the process throughout the entire composing process rather than just at the end. I make it a routine classroom procedure to stop frequently, several times a week, and have the students freewrite about their progress and their emotional reaction to their current draft. The best
student responses can be elicited by asking them to respond to specific questions such as: "When and where did you get your idea for your first draft?" "What strategies did you try which did not help you to get an idea?" "If you got frustrated during this time period, why do you think that you felt so unhappy?" "Why do you think that the writing strategy which helped you to come up with an idea was successful?" "What could you do next time to help yourself have an easier time creating an idea for an assignment?" Collecting a series of responses can help students to see a pattern to their composing processes, and they may begin to formulate ideas about what aspects of their composing process they would like to change.

I find these student Process Journals extremely interesting to read. They contain all sorts of raw data about how people go about composing a paper that has not been adequately acknowledged by the composition profession. For instance, Process Journals can supply information about the type of student who can write three drafts of a paper and the first draft is much more interesting than the third one or the type of student who functions best by writing only one draft of a paper.

Although Process Journals can provide both the teacher and the students with invaluable information about composing, they can also be a miserable failure if the students' false consciousness gets in the way. For instance, I have had students who would only tell me what they thought that I wanted to hear rather than what they really
did. Such students generally never complain of having any problems and swear that they wrote an outline first which they accidentally threw away. Students like these need to be encouraged that a genuine response will aid the teacher in knowing how to best assist the student and that grades are not determined by the degree of difficulty one had in writing the paper.

Another impediment to critical consciousness from false consciousness which continually rears its ugly head is the issue of rough drafts. Students do not believe that it is legitimate to make an imperfect rough draft; consequently, they cannot conceive of how recursive the composing process must be in order to work the ideas out in writing. In fact, some students are so paranoid about the issue that they will destroy their early drafts and refuse to bring them into class for the teacher to see even if they are bribed with extra credit points. Threatening to fail these students will not motivate them to turn in their messy drafts; instead, they will laboriously copy them over in neater handwriting or even type them.

False consciousness about the drafting process is quite common among students because most students have never seen a real rough draft before. There are several reasons for this phenomenon. First of all, the general public never gets to see the rough drafts of famous writers, so everyone erroneously believes that professional writers never write messy drafts. The problem is that these rough drafts, if they have not been destroyed by the author or lost over
time, are rarely published and are almost always housed in a restricted archives at a university. Secondly, textbooks rarely publish student essays let alone rough drafts of student essays. When I put together *Reprints*, I decided to put in one or more rough drafts of about ten different essays. These rough drafts were almost impossible to photocopy, so I had all but two of them typed up. One of the two was included in its original state, and the other, I had recopied in neater handwriting. I now believe that typing up rough drafts or tidying them up contributes to the students' false consciousness about composing. If they never see what real writing looks like, they may continue to believe that writing springs fully formed out of the author's head. A third reason why rough drafts are not accepted by students is that teachers rarely look at them or use them to diagnose composing problems. Students quite logically will not put much effort into something that the teacher does not emphasize. Another reason that students do not use drafts to develop their ideas is that the students largely believe that doing a paper over is punishment—which has been assigned to them because they made too many mistakes the first time. These students always secretly hope that their rough drafts will be their final draft if only the teacher would not be able to find any errors in it. Students should be encouraged to view drafting as a way of creating their ideas rather than a way of correcting their errors.
An effective strategy to begin an exploration of the possibilities of drafting is to engage the whole class in a discussion of how they use common drafting strategies such as crossing out, using arrows, and cutting and pasting. The assumption is that someone within the whole group will be brave enough to admit that they cross out or move things around. Once the discussion has been started, the students can then compare how they use these strategies to foster their composing process. For far too long, students have viewed strategies like crossing out as a sign of incompetence rather than a sign of competence. When students are willing to admit that they do indeed have idiosyncrasies about writing, they can then begin to examine the idiosyncrasies of others in order to consider possible new approaches.

Contact with other students is more than a source of different ideas; it is a source of a totally different perspective which is necessary to create a more critical approach to composing. Peer conferencing can be a terrible disappointment if the student does not have a clear understanding of the teacher’s motive for assigning group work. Some students will angrily complain that they should not be expected to do the teacher’s job because they are not knowledgeable enough to hunt for the errors. The problem with most peer editing is that just like its title, it emphasizes error. In order to get students to respond to each other like human beings rather than monsters, the teacher should forbid them to even point
out a spelling or sentence level error. Pointing out errors in the text is of little value at this point since the passage which contains the error may be dropped as the student revises the essay. No matter how hard the teacher pleads, some students will become possessed by the opportunity to have a little power for a change, and they will turn into the worst teacher that they can imagine.

After watching peer editing fail on numerous occasions in my classroom, I decided to change the name to author conferencing in order to switch the emphasis from error to content, from playing the game of school to making sense on paper. I had in mind the type of support group that famous authors often had in coffee houses or taverns. However, students must be carefully introduced to this idea because they are somewhat shocked by the opportunity to comment upon another person’s paper. For many students, just reading someone else’s assignment is a form of cheating. These students subscribe to rugged individualism and believe that every student should do his or her own work without any help from anyone else. Because sharing papers is such a shock to most students, they must be eased into the process gently. To do this, students should pass their writing histories around the room so that every student can read every other student’s paper in a round-robin fashion. For this first sharing activity, the students should not make any comments upon the other students’ papers. It is painful enough for the students to have their writing shared with the class without any negative feedback. Students generally express great relief when they find that their
paper is much like the other papers in the room. Since the content of these papers is about the students' writing experiences, the content of the paper also serves to set the students at ease. In order to underscore this benefit, the students can write freewriting responses which focus on how they feel about sharing before they actually pass their papers around the room; then after the activity is over, they can be asked again to freewrite about how they feel now in comparison to how they felt before. This one student sample is a representative example:

I didn't want to read everyone else's paper. The reason being, if I read theirs, they would have to read mine. I really wanted to read others, but I was afraid of what they would think of mine. I became very frightened when people read my writing. I don't believe mine is very good.

My feelings changed a lot after reading the other papers. I thought I was the only non-expert writer in the class. Everyone else seemed so at ease about writing. Writing does come easily to me from the sense that I always have something to say. I don't like other people reading my writing. I'm super insecure about that. Many of the personal letters I write, I usually feel are bad. I usually end up apologizing at the end of the letter to my friends in fact, I can say I always do. I really enjoy writing. My mind just went blank. I say that is unusual for me. I feel I did okay on my writing history. Seeing everyone else's, showed me I wasn't the only non-writer in the group. It also showed me I had many peers that were very good writers and had some experience with writing. I would like to write a novel some day or a short story--but I don't feel I would ever have the confidence to show it to anyone.

Making the first sharing experience a positive one is important. Students have a lot to risk by exposing such a vulnerable part of themselves to others. Once the students have confidence that sharing their papers will not totally humiliate them, they participate with a more positive attitude.
Even with this gentle beginning, the teacher should not assume that the students know how to have a dialogue about one another’s writing. Students need to be trained in how to respond like a reader rather than a psychotic teacher. A dramatization of stereotypical bad group members helps the students to use humor as a form of denial. Students who laugh about ridiculous behaviors are acknowledging that the behavior in question is silly; thus, they make a point of never falling into the trap of making themselves appear this foolish when they get into their groups. Giving students specific tasks to do when reading another student’s paper is a helpful way for them to get started. Students can be asked to point out the places that they enjoyed reading, and they can even suggest opportunities to do more of the same. Teachers can model this behavior for the students by critiquing an essay with the whole class. Students can also be instructed to point out places where they were confused as a reader. Readers should not be obligated to solve such problems for the author; they only need to share their responses to the various twists and turns in the essay. It is up to the author to decide whether to change the essay and how such changes should be made.

Expecting students to correct one another’s papers may serve only to alienate the students from one another. One of the greatest benefits to author conferencing is that the writers begin to know what it feels like to be a reader. Good writers are good at predicting how a reader will react to a particular passage. This
ability is kind of a mental gymnastics in which the writer can be a writer but can also turn inside out to become the reader as well. Beginning writers have trouble visualizing how their writing will be received. This unpredictability makes them very uncomfortable. The more that a writer can predict the response of the reader, the better the writer will be at controlling those responses. In author conferences, the student must switch places with the reader and read writing very similar to his or her own. Remembering this feeling will be very helpful to the writer while composing. In addition to this mental experience, the writer has the physical experience of having to confront a real-life, warm-blooded reader. This confrontation can be painful or pleasurable, but nevertheless, the writer begins to anticipate the reader's response in advance—while the writer is in the act of composing.

When author conference groups are functioning well, students share more than their current drafts of their essays. Students will often discuss writing strategies and composing problems. Students can learn a great deal about writing from one another. This may be because students may be more willing to confide in another student than they are in the teacher. Likewise, students may be more willing to adopt the successful writing strategies of their friends rather than from the teacher. Occasionally, I have had a group of students who worked so well together that they have stayed after class to be sure that everyone in the group had an equal opportunity to share their paper. In contrast, inmates seem to have more problems with
working in groups than regular college students. This may be due in part to the aggressive social relations that they must maintain inside of the institution.

Although these author conferences can benefit the students in many different ways, the teacher will still need to suggest composing strategies to the students. In the best circumstances, the students would be able to supply this information to one another, but students are so alienated from their own composing processes that even the successful students cannot explain how they were able to compose a useful draft.

It is important that when the teacher presents writing strategies to the students that the teacher should not represent these strategies as mandatory procedures. Students should be required to try new strategies a few times, but they should not be forced to use a particular strategy for an assigned essay. Students should be encouraged to carefully evaluate the relative merits of each strategy on a personal basis with the goal being for each student to discover those strategies which work the best for him or her.

Professional composition publications are full of exciting new strategies. Teachers should strive to present a wide variety of choices to the students. I have found the four following strategies to be particularly successful with students. Freewriting is useful
because it emphasizes ideas rather than errors by encouraging the student to keep writing ideas down free-form without going back to correct them. Students like the freedom of not having to worry about correct spelling and punctuation while developing their ideas. Freewriting is often less threatening than writing a draft of the paper because students see it as being more experimental and tentative. They tend to take more risks when freewriting which can help them to generate more creative ideas. Clustering is another composition technique which most students find helpful. Clustering is more visual and more cryptic than freewriting. Clustering begins by having the writer select a key word to place in a circle in the center of the page. Orbiting around the circle, the writer generates various secondary ideas which are connected to one another with lines which make the whole network look like a web or like tree branches. This technique encourages unusual ideas and helps the students to increase their linguistic pool of words for this particular topic. Key words are another useful strategy for getting students to organize their paper and be more selective in their word choice. Writers and their author groups can work together to select the key words for an essay. Finding the key words can focus the student on how the main idea is represented to the reader. Having the students write a large number of alternative titles can also cause the student to carefully reconsider the main idea of the essay. I have also experimented with having students use visuals to help them develop their ideas. I have explored using doodling, visual projects, photography, and reader maps. Some students find that working with
images helps them to better visualize their ideas. All of these various strategies provide the students with a smorgasbord of possibilities for improving their writing. Because of individual differences, the student is the best judge of what works the best for him or her.

To summarize, classroom activities such as Process Journals, drafting, author conferences, and new composing strategies help students to realize that each writer has a personal composing process. Once students believe that they have a unique composing process, they can then move on to take ownership of that process in order to make changes in it.

Interaction

As students share their own private knowledge about composing with one another, they become more and more confident about their ability to generate knowledge about composing. Soon they develop the confidence to take a the bold action of changing a part of their individual composing process. As Freire stressed in an earlier citation, the first step to praxis is to take a bold tentative action.
The students rather than the teacher should make the decision as to what action will be taken. Sometimes students decide to change the part of their composing process that is the most frustrating. Other students may choose to try a flashy new technique which was demonstrated in class, a strategy used successfully by another group member, or a strategy which requires the least risk on the student’s part. Whatever the student's motive is for changing, the teacher should realize the importance of the authenticity of the action. The interaction between action and reflection is more likely to take place if the students determine what feature of their composing process should be changed.

The students' first authentic action is easiest to conceptualize as an experiment. Assuming the role of the researcher will help the students to take more risks when deciding upon what action to take. The student should be made to feel that there are no penalties for discovering a strategy which does not work. Freire explained how useful his first failure at teaching literacy was, for his reflection upon his failure is what generated his ideas for his future successes. Thinking of their authentic actions as experiments also increases the necessity for the students to gather feedback and to reflect along the way.

Students can declare their intent to adopt a new action as they turn in one paper and before they begin the next paper. Students can describe in a freewrite the type of change that they
will make in their composing process. The teacher can then use these freewrites to consider the students' motives for such an experiment and the assumptions that the students are making about the composing process. Even on this level of consciousness, students can still be thwarted by their false consciousness. Students quite frequently have unrealistic expectancies for themselves because they still cling to the belief that composing should be perfect the first time. For instance, students might declare that for the next draft they intend to get the ideas straight before they start writing so that they will not have to do so many rough drafts. This type of pressure might not be the best strategy for a beginning writer. Although the student should select the new composition strategy to institute, the teacher may need to offer some guidance.

An important part of the students' experimentation should be their active reflection about their results. This reflection should take place before, during, and after the experiment. The Process Journal is a good place to note immediate reactions. In addition, the author conference groups can be an important forum for the students to gain data about their success as a writer. I have noticed that when students decide to take part in evaluating their success, they no longer passively wait for their fellow writers' responses. They actively solicit their group members for their reactions to specific sections of their drafts. Then the writer can check the reader's response against his or her intent. The whole character of the author conference changes as the authors have a
vested interest in their readers' responses.

Not only do the peer relations change as the students take more of an active role in the development of their individual composing process, their social relations with the teacher should also change. Many composition teachers use individual conferences with their students to look over rough drafts and to conduct mini-lessons on individual writing problems—usually just problems in punctuation and usage. These types of conferences are not always productive because they place all the responsibility for improvement in the teachers' hands. Accordingly, the teacher decides what the student should improve and the manner in which the student should improve it. In these traditional conferences, the teacher has all the power. In fact, the teacher could determine the whole agenda for the conference in advance without the student having any voice in the matter at all.

After trying this technique myself, I began to notice that I had more planned for the student conferences than the students had the endurance to learn. In fact, I had so much to teach them that there was very little time for the students to speak at all. During this same time period, I began conducting ethnographic interviews with my students. From these interviews, I learned that each student seemed to have a private curriculum of his or her own. For example, one particular student was making a great effort to be more descriptive in her writing by creating clever metaphors. Quite
understandably, this student's natural learning process might be disrupted if I were to structure the whole conference to discuss a totally different topic such as thesis statements.

As a bold experiment on my part, I decided to give the students a more powerful role in the conferences. I tried allowing the students to guide the conference by having them indicate what they were working on or what they would like to improve. Besides coming up with very reasonable topics for discussion, the students were very accurate in their estimation of what was a problem in their writing. Of course, some students allowed their false consciousness to take over because they wanted me to determine what they should work on instead of their assuming ownership of their own composing process.

In order to help students develop their own abilities to evaluate their writing, the students should pay more attention to their emotional reactions to their paper. (Chapter five discusses this point in more detail.) Professional writers learn to guide their writing by their felt-sense of whether what they have written expresses what they intended to say or not. Regretfully, students are so alienated from their own writing that they will gladly hand over all of the decisions related to their essays to the teacher. Soon, the students lose the ability to even sense whether what they have written pleases them or not. The teacher must encourage the students to take ownership of their writing in order to have, at the
very least, an opinion about what they do and do not like.

A fringe benefit to these student-directed conferences is that they are far easier to prepare for, and they take far less time. Actually, they take no preparation except for the classwork necessary to get the students to write a rough draft. The student brings a draft to the conference, which can even be held during class. First, the teacher asks the student to tell about how he or she feels about the draft. The teacher may need to prompt the student by asking specific questions such as: which part felt good while he or she was writing, which part felt uncomfortable, was beginning good, did the middle drag, was there a boring section, or was there a particularly descriptive section. Then, the teacher can read the paper from beginning to end very quickly without comment. Finally, the teacher can formulate tentative comments about his or her reactions to the student’s draft, always suggesting several general alternatives rather than any specific solutions. The writer usually responds by reacting to the alternatives or by volunteering several other possible ideas. This way, the conference covers the information that the student is willing and able to deal with rather than overloading the student with a lot of information that the student is not really interested in. These conferences are highly individualized and are based on the student’s current level of development. At the end of the dialogue, the teacher should summarize the conference by explaining that several problems have been identified, but that the student must decide what the exact solutions should be. Instead of
feeling uncomfortable because the teacher has proposed a particular solution for the problem, the student usually leaves the conference assuming the responsibility to improve the paper. This way the teacher is not in charge of the revision process, the student is.

As the students develop their ownership of their composing processes, they should also be developing their ownership of the content of their writing. One general way of suggesting such an action is to share powerful student essays which are about topics which are significant and meaningful to the writer. Far too often, teachers say that they want students to write about meaningful topics, and then they pass out models which are very artificial. This small strategy demonstrates that the teacher really does prefer real writing to artificial writing.

However, just encouraging students to write about real topics does not always develop ownership since the reason for doing the essay is still for the purpose of pleasing the teacher. Ownership can develop best when the students feel that they are doing the writing for another audience who is not the teacher. For example, I had my middle school students create a satirical magazine, similar to Mad Magazine, for the students in the grade level below them who would be in the school the following year. I also had them create a story which was bound and put on a shelf in the school library. The most successful activity was for them to write a children’s books for the elementary students. We took a field trip to the grade school
where they read their stories to the grade school students. There were many tearful eyes when my students each received an individual thank you note from their grade school students.

Middle and elementary school students also benefit from writing contexts which are created through fantasy. For these students, a properly developed fantasy situation is as realistic as a real-life situation. For example, one day I started class in the usual way by taking attendance. I then insisted that a student was absent from the room. I started to describe the student, and before long a few students agreed with me. From this ruse, I had the students each imagine what type of person the student was, and how we might go about investigating his or her disappearance. The students enjoyed the fantasy. Each day I added a new twist to the mystery that they would write about. They conducted fictitious interviews and searches. For these students, a vivid fantasy or dramatization provided many of the same things that a real-life communication situation might provide.

Two other natural contexts for writing were researched by the middle school teachers in the action research group of the Columbus Public teachers. Several teachers found that extended letter writing provided a real communication situation. The teachers documented that their students developed many different types of writing skills. (See Action Research, Mack 1985.) Another group of teachers found that publication projects such as a student ethnography of middle
school students stimulates a high degree of student involvement and commitment. (See Action Research, Mack 1985; Sharon Dorsey's dissertation, 1985; and Fresh Talk, Baker et al. 1985.)

Naturalistic composition situations not only give a student a reason to write; they provide various types of feedback and various types of problems. After all, it is in these natural communication situations that human beings learn language to begin with. It only seems logical that these rich naturalistic situations can provide the best environment for further developing those language skills.

During the interaction level of consciousness, the students begin to view their own composing processes problematically. The students direct their reflection toward future changes. Students can experiment with new composing strategies and take a more active role in both peer and teacher conferences. However, all these changes can only take place if the students are engaged in a meaningful, natural composing situation where they assume ownership of the content that they are writing about.

Liberation

The liberation level of consciousness requires that the students move beyond thinking of language and composition as apolitical activities. During this level, students can examine race, class, and gender oppression which are carried out through social
relations which focus on language differences.

Students need to see language as one of the battle grounds for social conflict. In most traditional English classrooms, language has been treated as if it were static, neutral, and untouchable. The first step could be to make students aware of the many ways in which language changes. Students can examine changes in words, spelling, usage, and other written conventions.

Political issues related to language use can come up quite naturally if the teacher takes advantage of the students' questions about usage. One of the topics which students can become quite dogmatic about is slang. Historically, some slang words and usages have been accepted into formal usage. The question becomes how and why are these practices discriminated against. The controversy over the word "ain't," for example, is related to industrialization and a direct oppression of those who came from the farm or could be derogatorily labeled as "hillbillies." Another hot issue is the use of the male pronoun for generalized cases. Many students, particularly older women, do not like the "he/she" construction. It is not important for the teacher to persuade everyone to switch to this new less chauvinistic usage, but to get the students to see that issues related to gender are being battled out in our language. The issue of standard and non-standard dialect can be used to point up conflicts related to race. Our hierarchy of errors is related to discrimination against black and other non-white dialects. Our
culture even promotes false consciousness about standard English being the great equalizer. Sprinkling black inmates with the fairy-dust of white standard English will not make them reappear at the top of the social class ladder. If the teacher is sensitive to the political issues which are currently in conflict in our language, common examples can be debated and thoughtfully decoded. Students can even be asked to write a paper about a contested area of language of their choice which states their political stance on the issue. This political activity could even fit nicely into the traditional freshman composition syllabus as the topic for the perennial persuasive theme.

During the liberation stage of praxis, the power relations in the classroom dramatically change. The teacher becomes more of a co-participant than the ultimate authority. Having the teacher bring in a rough draft to be critiqued by the class would be one activity which would totally reverse the teacher and student roles. This sharing is not as effective if the teacher brings in a polished draft and may only serve to intimidate the students.

Ira Shor (1980) refers to this change of power relations as the "withering away of the teacher." (p. 98) Shor is primarily referring to changing the teacher as the dictator of essay content and as the classroom manager by having his students become engaged in the decoding of certain cultural practices. Certainly, students should be allowed to choose the topics that they wish to write about,
but other arenas in which the students can be liberated from the power of the teacher’s authority should be considered.

Perhaps the ultimate area of power is the grading process. There are many benefits to be gained from allowing students to have more power in the grading process. For a large part of my teaching career, I experimented with various grading systems which gave the appearance of objectivity. I often out-foxed myself by inventing systems which took hours to use and which gave me grades for students that I often found so unacceptable that I would surreptitiously try to cheat against my own self-imposed system. One quarter when students seemed particularly over-concerned about their grade on their first essays, I gave the students a long lecture about how subjective theme grading is and how they should develop their own sense of self-satisfaction and evaluation which did not require validation by the teacher. I even candidly disclosed to them that whenever I have met with a group of English teachers in order to standardize grading, the teachers have never given an essay the same letter grade. In fact, an example essay will often get a very wide range of grades and may even provoke a huge brouhaha. Revealing my ambiguity about the objectivity and usefulness of grades did not cause a great mutiny in the class as some might have expected. Instead, students began to solicit the type of response that they wanted from me.
I instituted an evaluation system where the students directed my evaluation. I began by explaining that I could only spend a few minutes grading their papers and that I may not respond to some aspect of their writing that they are most concerned about. Many students could painfully remember a time when a teacher had only marked spelling errors on their papers when they really wanted to know about the content. I then required that they each compose three specific questions about their papers that they wish for me to answer. Students were discouraged from writing questions like: Was this right? How is my grammar and spelling? etc. Students often asked about the sections of their paper that they were the proudest of or that they had the most doubts about. Even the questions about mechanics were useful. I explained that I would not meticulously correct every error in their papers. Instead, I told them that they could write down one sentence which they wanted me to correct and I would correct the sentence and explain the reasons for the correction.

With the change in power relations, students may begin to take a more active role in challenging the limit situations in the classroom. For instance, students may become more assertive about changes that the teacher requests in their drafts. Just recently, I had a student patiently explain to me how I had ruined her second draft by suggesting that she limit her topic after hearing about her topic for the first draft. And indeed, she was right. As much as I
try not to overpower my students with advice, I still manage to occasionally goof up and require that students make the changes that I would have made to their draft. Another important area of conflict is the lock-step manner in which teachers often require that students go through the drafting process. As the quarter goes on, some students become bold enough to tell me what types of drafting strategies that they will do and when. Thus, they refuse to do a freewrite and insist instead upon drawing a schematic diagram or five different introductions. It is a good sign when students know their own composing process well enough to tell me what they do or do not need to do to make their essay take shape.

Another limit situation in the classroom which can be changed is the teacher’s determination of the curriculum. As students take more ownership of their writing and as they compose their pieces of writing for real people, students will become more insistent about what they want to be taught. For example, in one of the action research group member’s classrooms the students spontaneously demanded a lesson about capitalization because they were having trouble writing about the subjects that they were taking in school. Punctuation and usage lessons can be spontaneous if the teacher can utilize a natural communication situation from which the questions will arise. Students may also begin to value the response of their peers in their author conferences more than the comments from the teacher. One student confided in me that she was more worried about what her group would say about her rough draft than she was about my
opinion. This student obviously cared more about her peer's
evaluation than she did the teacher's evaluation. As the quarter
goes on, I find that students become more assertive about what they
will and will not write on. Thus, I find that my wonderful final
exam topic about their own composing processes, which is described in
the next section, has to be modified occasionally for students who
can present a good case for doing something else. I have had
students suggest that they would gain more from the class if I
allowed them to rewrite an important early paper for inclusion in the
next edition of the textbook. I even had one adult returning student
who insisted upon writing an enlightening series of journal entries
about her negative response to my final exam topic.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of students liberating
themselves from limit situations in the composition classroom is the
students' development of a sense of voice. Student papers which have
a strong voice clearly assert a sense of self from the beginning to
the end of the paper. These students speak from a position of great
personal authority in their papers. For example, one student wrote a
clever essay about all the techniques to get rid of talkative family
friends and relatives when they call on the phone and he is home
alone. Another inmate wrote an insightful essay about why black
families move a lot and have other unusual living arrangements that
white people might not understand. With papers like these, I find
that I enjoy reading student writing. The teacher's joy must be
genuine or the students will see through the shallowness of the phony
positive comments. I find that I so look forward to the day that the students turn in their papers that several must be read out loud to the class so that we can all bask in the glow of a sense of accomplishment.

Giving up some of their power over students can be quite frightening to some teachers. These teachers may fear that the students will become too powerful and that anarchy will reign. I find that the reverse of this is the case when students begin to take ownership of their role in the composition classroom. The students write better papers, they are more cooperative, and they do more than I expect of them. Students must gain their power through liberating themselves rather than through a benevolent gift from the teacher. All of these practices can backfire in the teacher’s face if the teacher still maintains an oppressive classroom and just gives out a little power in order to create a false sense of freedom.

Transformation of Knowledge

At the highest level of praxis, the student becomes the author of knowledge about composing rather than the consumer of the teacher’s knowledge. After reflecting about composing and penetrating false consciousness, the students move on to see themselves as have individual composing processes which could be changed for the better. This reflection about new possibilities leads the composition students into taking bold, experimental actions
to create a change in their past composing processes. Through an interchange of reflection and action, the students begin to take ownership of their learning processes, and eventually they liberate themselves from their passive, powerless role as a student. Once liberated, the students can rise above their limit situations and begin to create new knowledge about composing and about the world.

An important assumption which guides this whole level of transformative consciousness is that the students can produce real knowledge about composing. In the traditional composition classroom the knowledge about composing exists long before the student enters the room and the student must only struggle to memorize the information. The effect of the assumption that students can create knowledge about composing is far reaching. On the most immediate level, the character of the composition classroom must change. Learning to write becomes more than a basic skill which can be learned in a short period of time and which can be certified so that the student can assume his or her proper place in society and function according to the employer's needs. Learning to write changes into a life-long process which is only fostered by a brief interlude in a composing classroom. The students spend far more of their years guiding their own personal language development than they will under the tutelage of a composition instructor. Making the students learn a discrete body of knowledge about composition does not prepare students for a future of creating their own language development. Composition students must be prepared to continually
recreate their own individual composing process throughout the rest of their lives.

Assuming that students can create knowledge about composing can indeed change the individual classroom structure. Moreover, this assumption could change the composition profession’s knowledge about composing. If an objective body of knowledge about composing already exists just waiting to be discovered, then the student has no role in creating information about the composing process. If on the other hand the knowledge about composition is considered to be open-ended, then the students or any other writers for that matter could assume a role in creating knowledge about composing. Once again it becomes a question of ownership. The role of the teacher changes dramatically when the teacher believes that there is some knowledge to be learned from the way that the students write. The teacher and the students can actively be involved in creating new knowledge about composing.

In my composition course, I have the students write their last papers on their own composing process. Instead of asking them to try to describe their whole composing process, which would be a phenomenal task, the students are asked to focus on one particular aspect that they have found to be the most interesting to them during this quarter. Several examples of these papers in can be found in Reprints. Some students explain their personal use of a new strategy which was introduced in class while others are so bold as to
describe a personal strategy which has not been widely accepted by
the composition profession. I encourage the students to express
their insights in a creative manner. The student paper which follows
is a clever dialogue between the brain and the hand about getting an
idea for a paper:

Handy Inspiration

Perhaps the greatest task for any writer, new or
seasoned, is to get that initial idea to make its debut. Often,
just the mention of having to have a new concept can throw your
subconscious into a fit of stage fright, which in turn can
inhibit creativity. Please imagine with me, as we watch my hand
and my brain struggle in a conversation, trying to decide which
direction to take next in finding inspiration for writing.
Envision a corporate structure where Brain is management, Hand
is the "blue collar" worker, and all are working within Person,
the corporation.

Hand, sitting at Person's side, is ready, but with a
look of frustration on his countenance. He is impatient, and
speaks to Brain with very little respect. "Hey! Brain. We're
ready down here, what's holding things up?" Hand picks up one
of his pencils, and gives it a little toss toward the paper
clips. He takes great delight in catching Brain off guard.

"Yeah, yeah", says Brain with a weary sigh, "but I'm not
ready yet, you know the pressure this English class has put on
Person lately, it's hard to keep up."

"Well, I've been sitting down here for at least
twenty-four hours, and I'm getting a little sick of this." Hand
makes an obscene gesture behind Brain's back. "I had to work
third shift, laying in bed all night, bored out of my mind, just
in case, you said, you got a great idea in his sleep!" Hand
finishes, sarcastically mimicking these last few words.

Brain, being irate with Hand, but even more upset with
himself for not coming up with an idea, yells down to him,
"Just don't give me any more of your backtalk, Hand, Or I'll see
you shoveling shit in some farmer's barn, now shut up!" Brain
reverberated so hard that Person started to get a headache.

"Oh. Come on now Brain, don't take it so personal, I
just thought there had to be an easier way to get this idea,
that's all. Couldn't Person write a research paper again? Then
all you'd have to do is get a few books, and write the best
darned paper your little cerebellum could think up. Write about
"open pit mining", or the "unrest in South Africa", but for
God's sake Brain, give me something to do." Hand nervously
starts tapping his fingers on the desk in succession, flipping
more paper clips, and fingering the pencils, all the while
driving Brain daft, and numbing his perceptive senses even more.

"Stop, Hand, stop. You’re making me crazy, get a hold of yourself, fella’. Person is doing everything he can to help me. He thinks I’ll be more stimulated if he does something inspiring."

"What’s he going to do Brain, get you a lobotomy? Ha, ha, ha." Hand is very pleased with himself: He enjoys gouging Brain every chance he gets because he really thinks Brain is an intellectual snob.

"You uncoordinated forelimb!" Don’t you realize that if I don’t get an idea soon, we’re both out of a job? Shit always runs down hill, and don’t you ever forget it.

"Okay, okay", retorts Hand. "But if you want my firsthand advice, you better get moving, or heads will roll, and you might be in one of ‘em!"

"Oh, Hand", Brain shifts from right to left hemispheres, "inspiration can come only when I am excited about something, you know, when I am motivated to tell you to record something I’ve seen or felt. You don’t just go buy it, or pull it off a shelf, somewhere."

"Then Brain, where do you find it? I’m really getting tired of sharpening these damn pencils."

Brain starts into a long harangue about his creative sources, "Well, I do certain activities which help me to get excited about writing." He is temporarily interrupted by a flash from Person. "Darn him, Person is back to thinking about that stupid carburetor on his car, I do wish he’d get back to an idea for a story, he can fix that carburetor any time. Doesn’t he realize we’ve got to get production speeded up? Oh, that’s better, now where was I? Oh, yes, sometimes we talk to people, that seems to help a lot, like the other day, when Person was complaining about all the fault’s his mother-in-law had, and I got that great idea for a story about her silly parakeet, or when he was talking to all his friends from the office in the elevator, and that cute blond with the poodle came up, and they all got stuck between the eighth and ninth floor, and I called you to start writing about it, that’s inspiration, too. You know what I mean. Hand, it’s when a real life conversation or experience arouses a thought." Hand cracks his knuckles in a gesture of indifference, so Brain intensifies his wave frequency. "I guess you would understand it better if I explained it this way, Hand, it’s a little like sex, you grope around in the dark, looking for something good that you know is there, then all of a sudden you get this wonderful buzz, and you know you’ve found it!"

"I’m not always sure that works, Brain. I’ve seen Person sweat real bullets trying to get you in the mood to produce. Just what do you do when you don’t have a conversation or a life experience to rely on?" Hand twists the ring on his
finger, rubs Person's brow, and puts a pencil in this mouth.

"You guys down there are all the same, you are so lacking when it come's to anything creative." Brain is tense, and starts to transmit more quickly as he continues, "That's where you come in Hand, we freewrite. I get real relaxed, sit back, and take a load off my cranium, then you just start writing everything that comes to me. You can write about anything, what I see, think or just plain have on me at the moment. Eventually it turns me down some avenue of thought which I can use later. It's like "a path to growth through management". In other words, I can expand my thinking process through the exercise of thought on paper, which then can be turned into a more structured tool. In this way, by writing everything I think, I get rid of all the garbage that goes through me, and somehow, I usually narrow it down to a point which I can expand into a story. I start at the opposite end of the spectrum, and say everything I don't want to say, and work around to the things I do wish to include. It's raw creativity without control. I can get away from inhibition by the facts." Brain is feeling quite arrogant after his little speech, enjoying the superior feeling that Hand might not have understood his definition of freewriting, so he lays back, and smugly waits for Hand to respond.

"Yeah, Brain, but just remember, "the tower of business babbles", and it sounds to me that's what you're doing. You just go on and on, and what have you to show for all that trouble, but a pile of paper with ink on it. You big guys are all alike, your minds are like weeds, scattered here and there, always taking over, but no one really wants you!" Hand indignantly straightens Person's tie, lays his index finger against the side of his cheek, and says, "No one ever writes that he didn't need it yesterday, and you're telling me to spend more time writing useless papers!"

Brain is now getting very perturbed with Hand's obvious lack of intellect, and is upset that Hand won't take his advice as fact, "You little imbecillic digits, don't you understand anything? You're just like "cement, all mixed up, but already unsettled". Freewriting is an extension of brainstorming. It's a way to record on paper what's going on in me with the hope that these thought processes will lead to that long awaited story: it's a way to exercise me the same as Person exercises you through daily use, all with the hopes of strengthening our capabilities. Sometimes, I write several pages before I get an idea I can expand on."

Hand, now beginning to understand the logic Brain is trying to convey to him, starts to shake with excitement, "Now I know what you mean, Brain, that if you can't get an idea any other way, I just start writing anything and that will keep my thoughts flowing, just in case a good idea comes up." Hand waves his fingers in an up and down fashion, impersonating
"Groucho Marx" holding a cigar, personifying his own enthusiasm over discovering Brain's definition, and continues with his own awkward interpretation, "You know, like running water through your pipes in cold weather to keep the ice from freezing and making them burst. Remember Brain, like that advertising guy we used to work for who called his office a cave because he didn't have any windows, and he'd sit there day in and day out just writing? Well, you always said he was real smart 'cause he could get ideas that way. Was that freewriting, Brain?"

Brain starts to calm down a bit, and even reflects a certain pride in being able to get Hand to understand. "That's it exactly, Hand, because Person is such a structured individual, we have to create "artificial inspiration": we can't rely on it just happening. There'd be a lot fewer books written, and not nearly the regenerative proficiency most good writers experience without its use." Brain sighs contentedly, "Hand, no matter how good you are, you are limited by your own thinking, and getting ideas can be a deadend for some, that freewriting can cure. If you have a sensitivity towards your work, and utilize all your resources, many writers feel you won't even notice the obstacles." Brain is abruptly interrupted, and suddenly a mighty flash, big as a corporate executive paycheck shakes Brain until his grey matter turns blue, giving him a sensation he'd never forget. Brain shakes and quakes, shimmering and tingling enough to vibrate every convolution of his deep folds. Tinged with excitement and relief, and exceeding the limits of all office protocol. Brain yells out to Hand, "Get Ready, Hand, here it comes, that idea we've been waiting for it coming at me faster that I can relay it to you, and it's going to be a big one!"

On this urgent request, Hand collects all his pencils into another neat row, tenses around a select one, holding it over his paper, and screams up to Brain, "Let 'er rip!"

Some of the students' ideas are quite unorthodox, but I have found that their effectiveness can be documented by the other students as well as myself. My favorite example of this is a student who wrote about how he uses his unconscious mind during sleeping to incubate his ideas:

Finding Topics

In the past quarter in English class, I have learned quite a bit. When I really think about what I learned though, I would have to probably say that it's my ability to pick out topics to write on. I guess I learned this on my own but my teacher had helped me in the way I think about topics. I have
three ways of going about finding topics to write on. Not one of them has failed me yet.

The first way and probably the easiest is thinking of topics while I sleep. I know it sounds a little funny, but whenever I have a paper to write, it seems to work. I'm not sure how, but I think I start dreaming of writing a paper for English, and I have this great topic. I would then wake up for some reason and tell myself that would be a great topic, "I'll have to remember that next morning." Well by the next morning I usually have forgotten what the topic was, so I started leaving a pencil and paper next to my bed. Sure enough I would write an idea down in the middle of the night.

The next way I pick a topic, which is probably a little more understandable, is to totally relax my mind. For some people, they might think differently, but I always turn on my stereo and play my favorite Todd Runtgren album. Then I just lay back on my bed and let my mind wander. I keep in mind that I'm looking for a topic, but I don't strain myself. The idea is to totally relax and it will come. The music being played could be an important factor. For myself I have Todd because the music he plays and his singing is very relaxing to me. I think this is the most important part. People should find the type of music that relaxes them.

Next and usually as a last resort, is to take a walk. If I use this method, I usually take a walk through the woods down the street. If I look at all the trees and wildlife there, it helps me clear my head up a little and I can think of a topic. Sometimes walking is not enough. I have to do something more physical. If this is the case, I lift weights. This helps relieve tension so I can think more clearly and therefore come up with a topic.

Now that I have mastered the ability to pick out topics this quarter, I'm eternally in debt to my teacher. She has helped me sort out my thoughts and be able to put it in writing. However, some of the crazy ways I go about getting topics and ideas is to totally my doing. It might not work for everyone, but at least it works for me.

Since this student introduced me to this technique, I have tried it several times and have found it to be very effective. Other students have reported the same success with this approach. Some other unusual techniques are: a student who only sketches out the framework of his paper in his rough draft, leaving blanks for the descriptive passages that he later fills in, leaving time to savor his words as he produces them; a student who generates a word pool of favorite
descriptive words to be used in a paper before she starts to compose
the first draft; and a student who conquers writer's block by
throwing away his pen and going out to purchase a new one. I find
that I am so amazed by what the students have discovered about
writing that I save their insights for publication in a future
dition of Reprints.

There is as much to be learned from the students' unsuccessful
experiences as well. The reasons why one student dysfunction as a
writer can be used to guide other students away from such pitfalls in
the future. Great insights can be gained from gathering data from
the students' perspective of what happened rather than from a purely
external observation such as a writing sample evaluation or a video
tape of their pen movements across the page. For example, I learned
from one student, whom I mentioned in chapter five, that by imposing
my personal suggestions for revision upon the student, I destroyed
her ownership of her paper so much so that she hated the final copy.
Without reading about and discussing her perception of the problems,
I would not have been able to have fully examined my role in
lessening the student's ability to write a successful essay. Student
insights about their composing process can function as important
components in gathering data for a case study. Therefore, students
can be a great source of information about composition, not just as
subjects for study but as the researcher who creates the knowledge
about the composing process.
Transformation of Social Relations

Creating knowledge is only part of the transformative level of consciousness; on this level the student actively transforms the limit situations in order to create new, emancipatory social relations. Thus, a students who had become empowered as a creator of their own composing processes might refuse to enter into oppressive social relations related to writing. The students might decide instead to actively reconstruct those social relations so that they were no longer oppressive. For example, the student might use an instructor's office hours to ask a teacher who assigns one paper for an entire course's grade to look at a rough draft. Another student might ask for special permission to break from the restrictive format that a teacher has imposed on the writing situation. Will Dewees from Ohio University has compiled a list of active responses that students can take to make their position less oppressive when teachers assign writing in college courses:

EDUCATING YOUR INSTRUCTORS ON WRITING
When instructors ask you to do papers, reports, essay exams or any other writing assignments, here is what to request from them.

1. Early Evaluation of your writing to see if it matches the instructor's style. The Writers' Program of the Academic Advancement Center, First Floor Alden, offers instructors a model to use for a writing evaluation. This alerts you and them to rough edges on your writing that you need to take care of as you prepare for the assignment.

2. Examples of past C and B papers to see what the instructor objects to. Finding out what the instructor does not want helps you decide what to avoid. Many instructors pay special attention to spelling, sentence structure, organization, content, or some combination of these. Knowing your audience
helps you tailor what you write.
3. A clear assignment. Request that your instructors tell you, in writing, just what they want in the papers. Among the pieces of information that you need to know are the following: the range of appropriate topics; length in words, pages, or number of topics; information to be covered; sources (books and articles) needed; due dates; and any special instructions.
4. Editing Guidelines. Ask for a check sheet covering important features to look for in your final draft. If the instructor requires footnotes and a bibliography, find out what form she or he expects.
5. Anonymity. Require that anything that is graded subjectively is graded anonymously. Essay answers, fill-ins, lab reports, anything that cannot be machine graded must not have the identity of the test taker available to the grader. This precaution avoids bias against you or in someone else's favor.
6. Revision policy. Some instructors ask for the project at the final examination, the last meeting of the course. You can encourage them to allow you to submit your best draft earlier in the quarter for coaching. This way you can benefit from the instructor's critique to improve the final draft.
7. Practice requesting this information. For most of us, it is not easy to deal with persons who have a great deal of immediate power over us. Instructors can control us by the grades they give our work. We all want to do our best, but we still want to keep or dignity, our cool. In situations like these, it helps to practice our requests and conversations before meeting with the instructor. Try playing your role with a friend acting as the instructor. Then reverse the roles. After a little practice, you will find it easier to get the teaching you are paying the university for.

Students become totally different writers when they decide to take an active role in defining their composing situation. By recreating the social relations connected to writing, the students define a new reality for themselves which is of their own creation rather than the present, hegemonic version from the ruling class.

The students' desire to transform social relations should not stop with the composing process. One of the ultimate uses for the composing process itself is to aid the student in transforming the oppressive social relations of the larger society and the world.
Composing can become an integral part of the students process of becoming because writing can be an act of knowing the world. If writing is to be useful to the student on a long-term basis, then writing must be more than the means through which they are evaluated by a teacher. Writing must become part of their vocation of creating a better world.

Besides knowing the world in its present state, students can use the composing process to create the world according to their new image for society. What this image is is not for the composition teacher to decide. Nor can the composition teacher predict how the students will need to use writing to make these transformations. The teacher should empower the student to use writing to change the world not to change the world into the teacher's image for it. Writing can become a vehicle for conscientization where the students carry out their authentic actions. However, composition classes are rarely the site of political praxis. Students by in large write for the teacher and not in order to create political change. Making political change the focus of the classroom might put the composition teacher in an awkward position with the university administration. Nevertheless, many teachers have their students write letters to various power sources suggesting political action. Writing to one's senator might be an example of this approach. The effectiveness of such letters may be questionable. Perhaps the students should be guided to approach lower levels of change before taking on the national government. For example, one of my adult-returning students proudly
showed me a lengthy letter that she had written to a local school board in order to plead her case that a particular teacher should not be rehired. This letter represented a great step for this woman because she had begun the quarter as an oppressed woman who had great doubts about her ability to seek a higher education degree and in just a few weeks she was actively working to restructure her local education system. Not all students should be expected to actively work for their political praxis within a freshman composition course. But they should be exposed to the possibilities available to them if they decide to seek political praxis. The long-term goal should be to teach students to write well enough so that the students can decide to use writing to reach their own political praxis. The long term goal should be to teach students to write well enough so that the students can decide to use writing to reach their own political praxis.

Composition may have the potential to help the students to reach political praxis, but the composition teacher should be careful not to falsely represent composition as a direct ticket to the upper class. Teaching students to write for emancipatory purposes can cause the composition teacher a great ethical conflict. The conflict that the teacher feels is essentially a conflict between oppressive composition practices and emancipatory ones. Oppressive practices are those traditional teaching practices which socialize the students into writing about artificial topics by following an artificial lock-step composing process. Emancipatory practices are those
described in the previous sections which encourage the students to develop their own individual voices by transforming their own composing processes. The composition teacher may feel pressure from the educational institution to teach oppressive composition practices. The pressure comes from administrators, colleagues, and even students who believe that the traditional practices are the only successful ones. But the worst pressure comes from the composition teacher's false consciousness of what the college students' future college writing experiences will be. Thus, the teacher uses the logic that traditional practices must be used since the other teachers will use similar oppressive practices. For example, the teacher may personally dislike teaching students to outline a paper first before composing it, but the teacher may feel an obligation to do so because of the other teachers in the students' academic career who will supposedly expect the student to perform this practice.

The teacher's false consciousness makes it seem logical to teach oppressive practices in the composition classroom in order to help the student to graduate from college. In other words, the composition teacher oppresses the students in the present so that the students may get a college degree in the future which will finally help them to gain their emancipation. The composition teacher chooses to oppress the student in the short run in order to emancipate the student in the long run. According to this logic, the students are only oppressed for their own good. However, it is hard to imagine that students can learn an emancipatory practice in an
oppressive environment when the two purposes are so directly contradictory. It is also hard to believe that learning how to write through emancipatory practices could actually handicap students. If students learn to develop authentic voices and to transform their own composing processes into useful expressive tools, there would be no reason why they could not use these skills to complete traditional writing assignments. Emancipatory practices are always ultimately used to provoke change within traditional contexts.

Surviving within the educational institution has been acknowledged as an important goal for composition praxis, but the larger goal of reaching political praxis must take precedence. Generating a type of composing process which will aid the process of political praxis is more important than developing an artificial composing process which is only useful in the oppressive educational institution. If the students believe that succeeding in college will help them to reach political praxis, then it is up to them to learn how to modify their composing strategies to suit their immediate needs. The composition teacher does not help the students to cope with an oppressive educational institution by practicing oppressive techniques. The teacher only perpetuates the oppression of the students. Although composition skills do not directly merit acceptance into the existing upper class, composition skills can help the student to restructure the class system itself. Thus, political praxis is not learning to write, but learning to write can bring about political praxis.
Regretfully, learning to write in our current educational institution does not serve this purpose. Instead, it serves the exact opposite purpose. The traditional composition classroom reinforced the class system by legitimating the existing distribution of cultural capital. Even worse than this discrimination, the oppressive context of the composition classroom which serves to ultimately silence the students' voices and thus prevent them from ever conceiving changes which would lead to their own liberation.

Perhaps the biggest ethical issue that the composition teacher has to face is if he or she is attempting to make the students into linguistic clones of the teacher or if the teacher is attempting to teach students to write so that the student can create a better world which that student alone must author.

Part Three

Praxis and the Composition Teacher

The Oppression of the Composition Teacher

Chapter four, "Impediments to Critical Consciousness for the Teacher," established how composition teachers are socialized to fit into a whole cultural mythology about composition which dictates how composition should be taught. Composition teachers are subtly
pressured into adopting the dominant conceptual framework through their daily social relations with students, other teachers, parents, administrators, and school boards. In addition, teachers find that their power to determine what, when and how things are taught is constantly deskillled by mass-produced textbooks, district curriculum mandates, snoopy supervisors, outside experts, and university research studies.

The cumulative effect of all these socializing forces is that the composition teachers compliantly adopt all of the traditional teaching methodologies. Moreover, composition teachers develop a strong false consciousness which not only supports the dominant ideology but also helps to rationalize away any real-life contradictions. This false consciousness encourages composition teachers to dogmatically follow traditional practices even though these practices do not get the results that the teachers were hoping for.

Composition teachers are backed into a corner of inaction by the logic of the dominant ideology which they have internalized: if the traditional methodology cannot be at fault, then the fault must be that of the teacher. With all the current political focus on education, many groups are eager to blame teachers for the supposed decline in writing abilities. Teachers become the weakest link in the educational chain and therefore receive a lot of criticism from the public. This blame is then accepted by the teachers' own false
consciousness. Dan Lortie (1975) explains how teachers fall prey to doubting themselves whereas other professionals are more collectively organized and therefore do not suffer such grave, personal doubts:

People in other lines of work also have occasion to doubt their personal efficacy and the value of the services they offer. But in fields where people perceive their knowledge (and their ignorance) as jointly shared, the individual burden is reduced. A person can take comfort from his [her] compliance with normal expectations within the occupation; he [she] can feel that he [she] did everything possible within "the state of the art." (Physicians so argue when they are charged with malpractice.) Thus the individual can cope with unpleasant outcomes by sharing the weight of his [her] failure and guilt; his [her] inadequacy is part of the larger inadequacy of the field. Teachers derive little consolation from this source; an individualistic conception of practice exacerbates the burden of failure. (p. 81)

Teachers do not face the public as confident professional who can discount their failures to "the state of the art." But more alarming than this problem is the teachers' powerlessness to contribute to "the state of the art." Professional knowledge about teaching does not come from the teacher-practitioner; it comes from the university researcher who probably had minimal teaching experience. For instance, at national composition conferences, I have heard colleagues question how many of experts in the field still teach a full load or even one, solitary composition course. The real tragedy is not the experts who have no real-life teaching experience but the teachers who have no way of utilizing their vast teaching experience. Not only does the profession discount this experience, but the teachers themselves discount their own expertise by constantly looking to the experts rather than to themselves for knowledge about composing. Part three examines how teachers can penetrate their
false consciousness and then become empowered to create knowledge about composing.

The sections which follow apply the five levels of critical consciousness, reflection, intention, interaction, liberation and transformation, to the composition teacher. In each of these sections, activities will be discussed which could be used to foster critical consciousness. These activities could be carried out with preservice teachers in an undergraduate methods class or with practicing teachers in a graduate seminar or in professional workshops. Action research will be considered as a collective vehicle for teachers to gain professional power. This section by no means exhausts the possibilities for activities which could help teachers to reach praxis.

Reflection

Critical reflection is more than merely being critical of the circumstances in which one exists, or surely everyone who has ever complained about anything has developed a critical consciousness. Critical reflection does more than criticize ineffective practices; it criticizes the ideology beneath the practices. Therefore, the teacher who criticizes the textbook has not reached critical consciousness, but the teacher who criticizes the dominant ideology which is presented in the textbooks has. This ideology is always just beneath the surface and could even be described as silent.
Henry Giroux (1983) cites some specific examples of dominant ideology which pervade educational materials:

The production of self-awareness also requires an ability to decode and critique the ideologies inscribed in the form or structuring principles behind the presentation of images in curriculum materials; the significant "silences" of a classroom text also have to be uncovered. For instance, teachers must learn to identify the ideological messages implicit in "texts" that focus on individuals to the exclusion of collective action, that juxtapose high-quality art next to descriptions of poverty and exploitation, or use forms of discourse that do not promote critical engagement by students. (p. 67)

The work of Jean Anyon (1979, 1980) provides a closer look at the hidden ideology which pervades social studies textbooks. The whole pattern of social relations within school is a manifestation of the dominant ideology.

Besides being critical of the pattern of their everyday life at school and the curriculum materials, teachers need to develop a critical consciousness about educational research. The results of educational research have a more profound influence upon the profession than may at first be realized. Time on task studies from several decades ago still have a major prominence in many national reports about education. Textbook companies are starting to use research as one of their major advertising appeals. The research procedures that these companies use to produce their textbooks is highly suspect. Many do not even offer any form of documentation which describes the type of research methodology or the results. For even the most credible university research, teachers need to examine the underlying assumptions upon which the research is based. For
example, many quantitative studies base their statistics upon differences between one class period's and another's response to a particular teaching methodology. Any practicing teacher knows that one group of students is not comparable to another group of students from year to year, from day to day, from period to period, or from hour to hour. Another assumption of the traditional research model which must be critiqued is the belief that student growth can be measured by standardized tests. There are but a few of the complex issues which should be critiqued before an educator allows such research findings to influence classroom policies.

There is yet another object of reflection which should be analyzed by the teacher's critical consciousness for manifestations of the dominant ideology, the teacher's own false consciousness about teaching composition. Until the teacher can face the ideology which motivated that teacher to uncritically adopt traditional teaching methodologies, his or her powers of reflection will not be able to produce authentic action.

Various discussion and written reflection activities can be devised to help teachers to penetrate their false consciousness. Two activities which I tried with my methods classes were designed to help the students penetrate their own false consciousness about being an English teacher. On the first day of class, the students were seated in one large circle and each student was asked to describe a memorable English teacher who was memorable for either positive or
negative reasons. The students took brief notes about everyone's individual responses. The dialogue which ensued always took a full class period. The students were then asked to write an analysis of the significant themes which kept coming up in the examples which were given in class. During the next class period, these personal analyses were shared and discussed by the group. The students often made remarks about how they were going to make a conscious decision about how much their past image of what an English teacher should or should not be like would influence their own teaching.

Another activity involved constructing a history of recent innovations in the profession. Many students felt that they could classify their English teachers by their age. For example, a teacher who started teaching during the sixties might use a lot of small grouping, or a teacher from the fifties might take the literary heritage approach. The students were divided into groups and asked to create stereotypes of as many English-teacher types as they could imagine. Then, the groups reported their stereotypes to the class. This activity ended by having the students reflect in writing about which stereotype category they wanted to fit into or why they did not wish to be a part of any of these categories. Both of these activities were aimed at getting these preservice teachers to thoughtfully create their own teaching persona rather than letting the ghosts of "English Teachers Past" possess them.
Likewise, practicing teachers can be lead in activities which will encourage them to be more thoughtful about their everyday classroom experiences. Graduate seminars or inservice groups should begin by focusing the discussion on the teachers' previous and current classroom experiences. Through discussion and reflection, writing teachers can be asked to consider the contradictions of their classroom experiences. Teachers enjoy sharing their teaching experiences for many reasons. Teachers report that they get ideas from listening to other teachers share what they do in their classrooms. Teachers find that teacher-created methodologies transfer into their own classrooms more effectively than most educational research studies do. Also, teachers report that they feel great comfort and solidarity from listening to the experiences of their colleagues. I just recently conducted an inservice for a school district which provoked a lot of dialogue between teachers who were from several different school buildings. The teachers were so uplifted by their own interaction that they decided to have biweekly meeting to continue their support of one another. One of the most important benefits from teachers working together like this is that teachers begin to see themselves as a vast source of knowledge about teaching.

Teachers, like students, do engage in a limited amount of critical reflection about the institution of education. However, just like the students, this critical reflection can lead teachers to
various forms of resistance which do not serve their own best interests. Teachers shirk their responsibilities, talk negatively about students in the lounge, become angry with one another, hassle the administration, and lose patience with the students, all as a form of resistance against the things that they feel that they cannot change. One teacher that I knew proudly reported that he stole every type of office supply imaginable, including the filters for the coffee machine as a direct form of protest against the school’s oppressive administration. Regrettably, this type of resistance seldom changes the limit situation. Of course, an all too common form of resistance is to drop out of teaching altogether and look for another job. Unless criticism of the profession is directed toward positive change, the criticism serves no useful purpose. Peter Dreier (1980) points out how difficult it is to keep from becoming a victim of one’s own cynicism:

In the past two decades, many radicals have shifted from false hopes... to no hopes at all. We must now learn, as teachers, scholars, and activists, to walk the tightrope between romanticism and cynicism. The lessons of our own radical scholarship are clear: building a popular mass movement requires a critique of the present, a vision of the future, and a strategy. Yet neither vision nor strategy is possible, on a mass basis, unless the cynicism about social change that now pervades American politics and culture can be overcome. (as cited in Apple 1982 p. 174)

I have repeatedly heard teachers lament as they leave the profession that teaching could be so much better if this or that were changed. These teachers choose to leave the profession because they feel powerless to make changes in the basic social relations of the educational system. However, by making a commitment to take part in
making these changes, the teacher can eventually be liberated to reach praxis. Reflection is just the first step toward positive change.

Intention

The intention level of consciousness develops the teachers' motives to make changes in their current teaching practices. Henry Giroux (1983) explains that critical reflection can be used to identify the elements of the practice which should be kept and those which should be reformulated:

Critical analysis . . . becomes the distinct and important precondition for radical praxis, with a dual purpose. On the one hand it . . . is the explosion of reification—a breaking through of mystifications and a recognition of how certain forms of ideology serve the logic of domination. This means analyzing the hidden ideological elements in any object of analysis . . . and revealing their social function. It also means releasing their unintentional truths, the suppressed utopian elements contained in what they include as well as in what they leave out. More specifically, this means breaking apart the ideas and structuring principles in a cultural artifact and then reassembling them in a different framework that allows the limits of specific ideas and formalistic properties to come into view, while simultaneously discovering the new and vital elements in them that could be appropriated for radical purposes. (p. 155)

For instance, with peer editing, I discovered that the activity itself could be quite useful to empower students to see themselves as having knowledge about what makes good writing, but the specific directions which were given to the students could lead them instead on an error witch hunt which would have the opposite effect. In other words, the basic methodology may only need certain elements modified
in order to make it liberatory rather than oppressive. Critical reflection can be used to determine whether the teaching methodology needs to be totally abandoned or only redesigned.

Teachers seem to have a varying degree of responses to the idea of change. On one end of the continuum, teachers are constantly seeking new ideas. These teachers can be found at every type of educational conference that they can get permission from their school district to attend. These dedicated teachers will not only pay their own way to these conferences, but they will also use personal days or be docked pay if necessary in order to attend these meetings. These same teachers usually subscribe to a whole assortment of educational journals and magazines. They also keep themselves apprised of educational workshops at all the local universities and often spend their evenings and summers attending seminars.

The only problem with these types of teachers is that their motives for seeking new ideas may come from their false consciousness rather than from their desire for authentic action. For example, they may be looking to others as experts rather than developing their own expertise. These teachers need to critically examine why they are searching for new methodologies and what ideologies are reinforced by these methodologies. Slipping critical reflection into an inservice presentation is difficult because teachers expect a large quantity of gimmicks and specific lesson plans from even a one-hour presentation. When I do an inservice, I try to respect
these needs but also offer some gambits for critical consciousness. My best points can often be made through humorous cartoons which express classroom situations which provoke logical contradictions. For instance, one series of cartoons represents the scenario where a student raises his or her hand and demands, "Why do we have to learn all this garbage anyway?" Then the remaining cartoons depict the standard cultural responses such as, "It's good for you," "I had to do this when I was your age," and the ever-popular "You'll need to know this in order to get a good job." These standard responses can be critically examined for the ideology which supports them. In sum, rather than encouraging teachers to seek change indiscriminately, workshop leaders should encourage teachers to first examine their circumstances critically and then design their own personal changes.

The next lower level of teachers who are seeking changes in their teaching methodology are those who want new ideas but do not know what to do with them. These teachers may listen intently to discussions about peer editing and freewriting, but they have a million questions about how to institute these practices. These teachers only enjoy workshops where the presenter hands out explicit lesson plans which indicate exactly how to institute the new methodology at their particular grade level. During one workshop, a group of teachers asked me to tell them exactly how to use journals in the classroom. I was curious why these teachers expected me to give them an ultimate ruling on how this practice should be carried
out. When they started discussing their concerns, I noticed that they were all practicing journal writing in different ways for different purposes. I tried to assure them that there was no one right way to do journal writing. We then explored the frustrating contradictions that they experienced with journal writing. They raised several critical issues such as what to do about swearing, secrecy, privacy, suicide threats, the paper load of grading all of these journals, etc. As we discussed all of the issues, the teachers uncovered several ethical concerns. Although we did not arrive at even one ultimate right answer for journal writing, the teachers felt that they had more carefully considered their actions and were now ready to create some changes of their own for next year. The teachers who are disoriented by new ideas need to discuss the hidden ethical issues so that they can develop their own individual adaptations of these strategies.

The last group of teachers react to new innovations negatively. These teachers are either afraid of the new ideas or they are positive that the new ideas will not work in their classrooms. The first subgroup can come up with a million reasons why they would not be permitted to institute a new practice in their particular school districts. For instance, during an early meeting with the action research group, the teachers rejected one teacher's idea to try a publication project on the grounds that such an activity was not in the curriculum. We countered that such an activity would involve reading, writing, speaking, punctuation,
capitalization, and all the other curriculum requirements. The teachers could not be dissuaded until the next meeting when we could relate that we had asked the curriculum supervisor and he had directly said that such an activity would indeed be accepted as part of the curriculum. This incident was a pivotal point for the group because up until this point they had been very timid about trying anything new, evidently because they were afraid of being caught varying from the curriculum.

The second subgroup of teachers who have negative reactions to new ideas must be forced to attend inservice sessions almost against their will. These teachers are very critical of any of the presentations given, but the object of their criticism is not the underlying ideology but the odds for success. These teachers feel that innovative ideas are "pie in the sky" which would never work in a real classroom setting. These teachers are very angry people who want to tell everyone just how impossible their teaching circumstances are. These teachers should not be brushed off lightly because they are often desperate for help. Both of these subgroups of teachers react negatively because they feel powerless to make needed changes. They need to realize that they can change their limit situations.

Regretfully, many teachers are not permitted to develop their own personal motives for change. School district supervisors take this responsibility solely upon themselves. In such cases, the
supervisors dictate exactly what changes will be made and for what reasons. The teachers do not have the opportunity to critically reflect about their experiences so that they can conceive of their own solutions to their own problems. This whole process is taken over by the curriculum supervisor, and instead, the teachers are inundated with a wrath of new district policies for this and that which they must scramble to carry out. If change is to be successful, the teachers must have a major role in conceiving of that change.

Interaction

The interaction level of consciousness can once again be best conceptualized as an experiment. Such experiments can be carried out privately on an informal basis or formally for purposes of a graduate course, an advanced degree, or as an action research study.

Many of the profession's best teachers have quietly conducted hundreds of informal experiments in their own classrooms and can relate long anecdotes about why they decided to vary from traditional teaching practices in one way or another. These informal experiments often involve a particular contradictory incident which became the impetus for extended critical reflection and the formulation of a new strategy. These veteran teachers are an untapped source of expertise about teaching which has developed over a long period of years and
which is seldom formally recorded or shared with even one other teacher needless to say the whole profession.

The teachers who conduct formal studies either do so because they are required to for a course or a degree or because they desire to report the results to their profession in the form of an action research study. Since action research studies are only a recent development in the profession, most teachers are motivated to study some aspect of their classroom to fulfill some university requirement. These teachers may design authentic topics to investigate or they may decide upon a topic which would be most acceptable to the dominant ideology. Few teachers engage in classroom research because they see themselves as researchers, as knowledgeable observers of classroom behavior. The following paragraphs will discuss what might happen if teachers did start viewing themselves as researchers as well as teachers.

Formal classroom research is more rigorous than informal research. It requires that teachers gather several different types of data, that they keep extensive field notes or written records, and that they generate a written evaluation of their findings. Writing becomes one of the best means for fostering critical reflection because it encourages a more thoughtful analysis than can be gained without it. Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson (1986) make a point about how important reflection is for the growth of composition teachers:
The six teachers we studied taught writing most effectively, we thought, when they brought an attitude of openness to their work, an attitude that enabled them to see, by stepping back regularly to reflect, both the impact and the limitation of what they were doing. Reflection, as they practiced it, then, entailed a willingness to look openly and repeatedly at what they were doing with the knowledge that they had always more to learn. Reflection, as they practiced it, seemed to lie at the heart of their teaching . . . .

As we observed the teachers at work, we asked ourselves what the habit of reflection contributed to teaching. In the journals we thought we could see the connection: teachers who inquired into the nature of their teaching taught writing in the same spirit of inquiry. Realizing that there was always more to see than they had originally suspected, these teachers demonstrated with their teaching what they also believed to be true about writing: that there was always more to learn, that teaching, like writing, was subject to revision. In fact, we realized that insight in teaching and writing often sprang from the same source: the questioning that required one to pause, to look closely, to think for oneself, to engage what was yet unknown. (p.252-253)

Journal writing can be an excellent vehicle for reflection. Teachers can be asked to use journals to reflect about their experiments before, during, and after the experiment. Teachers should begin by analyzing the students' current cultural beliefs related to the methodology and subject matter being considered. The manifestations of the hidden, dominant ideology should be considered. The introduction of the activity should be carefully planned out so that the students gain the fullest understanding possible of the teacher's motives for the practice. The teacher's and the students' responses should be considered throughout the duration of the experiment. Several types of data gathering should be attempted. Modifications should be attempted mid-course as tentative conclusions are drawn.
One of the best features of praxis is that action and reflection dialectically interact. After the experiment has been terminated, several different types of critical reflection should be attempted from simply how successful the activity was in terms of student learning and attitude change to how successful the activity was in terms of promoting liberation rather than domination.

Teachers do indeed know a lot about education, however, most of that knowledge is intuitive. If teachers are to provide their profession with a body of knowledge which will grow from real-life classroom experiences, teachers will need to develop their skills of observation and analysis. The research methodology which has the most descriptive potential for classroom studies is ethnography, which educators have only recently borrowed from anthropologists. Ethnography relies upon participant observer information by gathering data from observations, interviews and other sources. There is a growing collection of ethnographic studies which are causing more than a mild tremor in the traditional, educational research paradigm. Wolcott’s study (1973) of a principal was an early educational ethnography. Shirley Brice Heath’s Ways with Words (1983) is an extensive ethnography of language habits and their relationship to school language which was conducted in two eastern Appalachian towns. Another study done by Heath collaboratively with Amanda Branscombe (1984) about letter writing offers many insights which teachers in the action research group found helpful. Action research is perhaps even more popular in England and Australia. Paul Willis’s (1977)
study of working class students is a good example of a British ethnography. American ethnographic studies are increasing. For example, a new study which is very representative of a teacher’s perspective is Through Teachers’ Eyes by Sondra Pearl and Nancy Wilson (1986).

Besides offering rich naturalistic data, ethnography offers teachers something far more valuable, a thoughtful perspective of classroom life. Therefore, even if a teacher did not desire to conduct research for publication, ethnography offers the teacher skills for gathering and analyzing feedback from the students which can be used on a daily basis in the classroom. In an article entitled, "Teachers as Researchers," Dixie Goswami (1984) lists five reasons why teachers of writing should conduct research on a regular basis:

1. When teachers of writing begin to study their own writing and the writing of their students, their teaching is transformed in important ways: they become theorists, articulating their intentions, testing their assumptions, and finding connections with practice.
2. When teachers of writing do classroom research, their perceptions of themselves as writers and teachers are transformed. They step up their use of resources; they form networks; and they become more active professionally.
3. Learning researchers are rich resources who can provide the profession with information we simply do not have. They can observe closely, over long periods of time, with special insights and knowledge. Teachers know their classrooms and students in ways that outsiders cannot.
4. Learning researchers become critical, responsive readers and users of current research, less apt to believe the theories of others, less vulnerable to fads, and more authoritative in their assessment of curricula, methods, and materials.
5. Classroom teachers can study writing and learning and report their findings without spending large sums of money (although they must have support and recognition). Their studies, while
probably not definitive, taken together should help us develop and assess writing curricula in ways that are outside the scope of specialists and external evaluators. (p. 356)

The immediate goal of teacher experimentation might be to create classroom innovations, but a larger, more significant goal can be obtained. This goal is the development of the teacher's critical consciousness. By conducting even one authentic classroom experiment, a teacher may reach praxis. One teacher from the action research group reported that the one study that she had conducted had so permanently affected her teaching that she would never again be able to teach as she had taught before she did the study. The implication was that she had gained new insights which had totally changed her perspective about teaching. Such a tremendous change in attitude could never be hoped for in traditional inservice programs or in university seminars. If action research can provide such results for even a few teachers by empowering them with the freedom to design changes for their own classrooms, it must be considered more seriously by the teaching profession.

Liberation

The liberation level of consciousness develops from the teachers' growing self confidence about their ability to generate professional knowledge. In order to liberate themselves from the position of being mere consumers of knowledge, teachers must develop the belief that they should have a voice in educational research. Research studies would only be feeble attempts to imitate the
behavior of the outside experts if teachers did not begin their research study with the belief that they have significant information to contribute to their profession.

The belief that teachers have significant information about teaching should not be an egotistical decision on one teacher's part. Instead, this decision should represent a growing awareness of the needs of the teaching profession as a collective group. Educational research could be far more effective if it were guided by the needs of teachers. Ann Berthoff (1981) in an address titled, "The Teacher as REsearcher," points out that teachers need to formulate the research questions for their profession:

Educational research is nothing to our purpose unless we formulate the questions; if the procedures by which answers are sought are not dialectic and dialogic, that is to say, if the questions and answers are not continually REformulated by those who are working in the classroom, educational research is pointless. (p. 31)

Berthoff not only feels that teachers should formulate the research questions, but they should reformulate the questions as the research study is being conducted. Teacher praxis requires this important dialectic between action and reflection.

On his level of consciousness, teachers realize that they are part of an oppressed group. There are virtually no forums where teacher knowledge is accepted as legitimate. In school districts, administrators and supervisors discount teacher knowledge and are primarily concerned with keeping teachers in line and checking that
they are following the district’s prescribed curriculum. In his ethnography of a school district’s inservice, John Aber (1986) reports that one school district required that their teachers turn in their lesson plans with each activity coded to document which course of study objective it was covering. On the university level, teacher knowledge is ignored. In graduate courses, the professor’s objective is to transfer a certain body of pre-existing knowledge, which was not created by teachers, to the graduate students. Teacher knowledge is not sought or revered.

Professional journals are almost exclusively the domain of the most elite university professors. The competition among these professors to publish in these journals is intense. Classroom teachers do not stand a chance of being published in most of these journals. One noticeable exception is the English Journal. NCTE has recently changed its format in order to publish articles by teachers; however, Language Arts has become even more theoretical.

Professional researchers are usually university personnel who are only shipped into the classroom temporarily to conduct their studies. They may interview the teacher for the purpose of gathering data, but they do not use the teacher’s opinions to guide their research design. Donald Graves (1981) strongly asserts that teachers are left out of the research process entirely:

In the past, teachers have been excluded from the process of writing research . . . . The base of research involvement must be broadened to include an active role by the public school
teacher. When the teacher becomes involved in research, researchers not only gather better data, but the context of research—the public school classroom—is enriched by the study itself. Teachers and researchers ought to know each other better for the sake of research and the children. (p. 93)

Researchers view teachers as the objects of their study rather than as equals or even as their employers who are soliciting the researchers’ observations in order to make insightful decisions about their classrooms.

The only forum where teacher knowledge can be shared is at some lower-level professional meetings. The national conferences of most professional organizations have programs filled with speeches by university professors rather than classroom teachers from the trenches. Other professional organizations such as the National Middle School association may allow classroom teachers to speak on a state or local level, but they prefer supervisors, university professors, and national experts for their national conferences. Certainly, it could be argued that teachers come to conferences to hear about "the state of the art" in their field of education, but to assume that the classroom teacher cannot contribute to this body of knowledge is damning to the teachers’ professionalism.

When teachers develop their sense of authority and voice, they can permit themselves to become source of legitimate knowledge which the profession badly needs. For instance, one of the teachers in the Action Research group became interested in what she could do to help suicidal middle school students. Ann McCrystal (Mack 1985)
developed a whole approach for classroom teachers to use when counseling suicidal youths. This problem is a growing national concern with suicide topping the cause of death list for middle-school-age youth. This past spring, there was a rash of teenage suicides. Among the seven student teachers that I had in the field, they faced three successful suicides, four attempted suicides, and one homicide. And these students were all placed in suburban school districts. Thus, Ann McCrystal's expertise about suicide is sorely needed by the profession. The work of teachers like Ann McCrystal needs to be recognized, publicized, and legitimized by those in power because these teachers have insights which are immediately useful.

If teachers are to develop their potential as sources of knowledge about teaching, they will need to liberate themselves from the limit situations which prevent them from studying their classrooms and sharing their results. Harvey Daniels (1983) ends his book about the recent literacy crisis by describing what English teachers will need to study in order to develop their own intuitive knowledge about language:

There are parts of the English curriculum, its professional traditions, and the customary teaching methods which are wrong based, counterproductive, which DO NOT WORK. And teachers need the chance to find out which these are. They need the chance to meet with each other, to read research, to consult with outside sources, to discuss, sift, and compare ideas. Ideally, they need time to study not only their experience with children, but also language itself: to learn about language acquisition, language history sociolinguistics, the nature of writing and even (so that they understand, but not necessarily teach it) grammar. They also need a chance to learn about the history and
But the problem is much more than one of just educating teachers; the problem is one of altering the existing social relations of the profession which relegate teachers to the bottom of the hierarchy.

If there is no institutional opportunity for such dialogue to develop or for professional integrity, then any programs which offer improvements for teachers are only temporary. Daniels goes on to specify what the administrators would have to give teachers in order to foster the process:

Giving teacher such opportunities for study will obviously require that employers provide the time and money these activities require. But even more important, teachers need the professional autonomy to adopt classroom practices and materials which will meet the legitimate objectives of schooling and not just of the back-to-something-or-other movement. (p. 261)

In other words, heightened consciousness is important but it will offer little significance to the profession unless the structure of the oppressive social relations is transformed.

Transformation

During the transformation level of consciousness, teachers should strive to change the existing, oppressive social relations of the institution of education into new, liberatory social relations. Altering the social relations which are connected to educational research should have far-reaching effects. The field of educational
research seems to be making some progress in this direction. First, qualitative research was accepted, then ethnographic methodology, collaborative research, and finally action research. Many of the ethnographies which were mentioned earlier were either studies conducted by outside researchers or collaborative research studies. Few examples of action research exist where the teacher serves as the primary researcher. Action research studies have the potential to generate information which will be the most responsive to teacher needs. Other types of educational research still express the perspective of and meet the needs of the university researcher rather than the teacher.

Classroom teachers need two types of support in order to become action researchers, administrative and professional. Administrators can offer time off, financial backing, support services and professional advancement. Professional organizations can offer journals, conferences, and public relations campaigns to change erroneous common sense views. Action research will need to have the backing of professional organizations on the national level in order for the teachers' research findings to have a transformative effect upon education. Nancy Atwell (1982) spells out some specific actions which can be taken to support teacher research:

1. Universities and state departments of education can begin to foster teacher-conducted research by including teacher-researcher courses in certification programs.
2. Teachers can request their directors of inservice programs to provide workshops and seminars in theories and procedures of writing research.
3. Teachers can establish—perhaps through Bread Loaf’s Program in Writing or NCTE—nationwide networks of teachers and researchers who can exchange information and assistance.
4. Funding sources which support educational research, such as the National Institute of Education, can begin to look to and finance classroom teachers as researchers.
5. NCTE can demonstrate its commitment to teacher-conducted, class-based research by seeking funding sources to support teachers’ research and by publishing research findings of regular classroom teachers—those working without institutional connections, using naturalistic inquiry procedures which do not result in statistical data toward which journals of education are so heavily biased. (p. 87)

Another series of oppressive social relations which must be transformed in order for teachers to be able to generate knowledge are those connected to the textbook industry. In states with state-wide adoptions such as Texas and California, textbooks are a political issue, and the values which the textbooks portray are carefully chosen to reinforce the dominant ideology. An examination of the professional teaching experience of the authors of most textbooks will reveal that textbooks are not written by classroom teachers for classroom teachers. In contrast, textbooks are not prestigious enough to merit authorship by the major experts of the field. Instead, textbooks are written by college professors, graduate students, and lay people who could be motivated to create such products for limited monetary rewards. (Textbook authors on the average reap less than 5% of the selling price of a textbook.)

Even if textbooks were written by the highest members of the profession, they still would not liberate teachers to develop their own knowledge base. Only if teachers are permitted to author their own textbooks will this limiting situation be transformed.
Teacher-produced textbooks offer several benefits to the profession and to the school district. First, teachers will find that creating a textbook will cause them to do extensive critical reflection and even intentional classroom experimentation. The use of the resulting textbook will facilitate further interaction between reflection and action which will result in additional information which can then be included in a new edition of the textbook. Second, teachers teach differently who are using their own textbook. These teachers become empowered to make far reaching changes in their former methodologies and limit situations. Third, textbooks which are designed by teachers for their particular teaching situation are more readily understandable by students. Fourth, school districts will find that the price of manufacturing a textbook even if they subcontract it to an outside company is far less than the selling price of pre-manufactured textbooks. Some companies are now providing publication services to universities and colleges where they will manufacture a textbook written by a staff member of that institution for the same or a lower price than the existing textbooks on the market. The savings can be so great that a school district could even afford to pay teachers a salary to write the textbook during the summer months. These textbooks could be frequently revised so that new teachers could participate in the process and new ideas could be generated from the information gained from the use of the first edition. Fifth, school districts can utilize textbooks which meet the needs of their particular population of students and community values. Sixth and most importantly, teachers may be able to reach
praxis through the experience of authoring a textbook. From my work
with creating two editions of an in-house publication with the
combined printing of nine thousand copies, I have found that the
benefits to my own personal development made the enterprise well
worth doing even though I did not receive financial gain from the
textbook sales themselves. Progress in the area of teacher-produced
textbooks on a public school level is extremely limited. Action
research and teacher-produced textbooks are just two suggestions for
transformation of oppressive social relations.

The improvements that the individual teacher decides to
implement should never be controlled by an outsider. Transformative
action must always be conceived and carried out by the individual
teacher. Daniels (1983) explains that his work with teachers on the
Illinois Writing Project has convinced him that teachers can produce
such knowledge about composing without the need for outside
manipulation:

In other words, my "progressive program to get us out of this
menagerie" of language crises and grammar drills is to give
schoolteachers the support and autonomy they need to teach about
language truthfully and effectively. I feel no need to predict
or prescribe exactly what, as a result of their own study, they
will decide to teach. It will vary from teacher to teacher and
from place to place, and that will be fine. But my own
experience assures me that teachers provided with the time and
space and encouragement to reflect upon what they do will make
far more sense than any curriculum that will ever come off
Richard Mitchell's [a language crisis alarmist] basement
printing press. (p. 262)

If teachers were seen as an unlimited source of knowledge, their
talents would be encouraged rather than monitored for error.
With the power to transform social relations comes several responsibilities. Teachers need to critically consider what type of knowledge they wish to create. False consciousness can easily direct teachers into producing a new version of the old commodity which only reinforces the dominant ideology. Thus, a new evaluation rubric does not have transformative value since it only modifies the existing values about competency and basic skills. Fitzclarence and Giroux (1984) list the features which useful knowledge should have:

Three main concerns are especially relevant here. First, really useful knowledge provided the basis for a critique of dominant forms of knowledge. Second, it strongly valued the development of curricula and pedagogies that begin with problems and need of those groups that such education was designed to serve. Third, it strongly argued for knowledge that would help make politics more educational. That is, knowledge that contributed to strategies for changing all forms of domination while simultaneously pointing to more democratic forms of active community. (p. 474)

Teachers who hope to radically transform our culture's knowledge base should carefully consider what hidden values that knowledge contains.

Ultimately, teachers could have the most far-reaching effect upon the world by transforming their social relations with the students. Through the students, the teachers influence the nature of future transformations. For this reason, teachers should refuse to be a part of the cultural oppression of students in general and of individual race, gender and class groups in particular. By helping these students to gain praxis in the composition classroom, students
would not only learn how to write but would also learn a process for reaching political praxis. Composition teachers must realize that they can either play a role in the students' oppression or their liberation. Richard Johnson (1983) discusses those points which make learning emancipatory:

Really useful knowledge involved . . . a range of resources for overcoming daily difficulties. It involved self-respect and self-confidence which came from seeing that your oppressions were systematic and were shared. It included practical skills, but not just those wanted by employers . . . Really useful knowledge was also a means to overcoming difficulties in the long term and more comprehensively. It taught people what social changes were necessary for real social ameliorations to occur. It also created solidarities and raised levels of literacy and general understanding within the movements. (as cited in Fitzclarence and Giroux 1984 p. 474)

It is therefore up to the composition teacher to see that the oppressive purposes served by language study are no longer perpetuated.


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