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A FEMINIST STUDIO ART CRITIQUE: 
A CLASSROOM STUDY

DISSERTATION

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

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*****

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether feminist ideas can be used to structure studio art critiques in ways that significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical understandings of their own and their peers' artworks during studio art critiques. The two primary components of this feminist-based critique are a set of critical strategies and the sequence and structure of classroom activities.

During the studio art critiques in an introductory black and white photography class, students used a set of critical strategies derived mostly from feminist theories. The critical strategies were embodied primarily in a set of questions written on a sheet of paper that students were frequently asked to refer to during the critiques.

Classroom sequence and structure were arranged to gradually give students more responsibility for leading critical discussions about artworks during critiques as the quarter progressed.

This action research-based classroom study took place during one quarter in an introductory black and white photography class. Dialogue from the studio art critiques was audio taped and transcribed. A coding system for analyzing primarily the sociopolitical content was constructed and used to analyze the transcript.

An important set of findings is that feminist theories can significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings, and that students are
capable of discussing sociopolitical aspects of images, and of doing so with
sensitivity, depth and thoroughness.

Another important finding is that the continual reinforcement of and
emphasis on sociopolitical art understandings helps students retain that
emphasis to the extent that students can initiate questions of a sociopolitical
nature. Another finding is that an instrument such as the Guide Sheet of
Questions can aid in focusing students' attention to sociopolitical meanings of
artworks.

An important finding is that students are capable of leading sustained
discussions about the meanings of artworks, and that they tend to discount
descriptive activities. Another finding is that students value the variety of
interpretations and world views shared by classmates during critiques.

Recommendations include allowing more time for critiques, perhaps by
reserving less in-class time to work on art projects or reducing the number of
artworks a student produce; exploring ways to facilitate descriptive activities
during studio art critiques; and determining a number of ways to counter ideas
associated with studio art critiques that oppose the goals of a feminist studio art
critique.

Recommendations for future studies include the need to further explore
feminist ideas to determine a variety of ways to apply of feminist ideas to the
studio art classroom, and especially to studio art critiques. Further studies that
investigate different ways to reinforce an emphasis on sociopolitical aspects of
artworks are also recommended. Further studies are needed to explore ways in
which different kinds of classroom structure can affect sociopolitical art
understandings.

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Dedicated to my parents
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my adviser, Terry Barrett, for his longtime support and encouragement. I thank Sydney Walker for her insightful encouragement. I also thank Pat Stuhr for her support and faith.

I am grateful for my colleagues who have provided not only friendship but invaluable intellectual insight and encouragement. Those I refer to are many, but especially Janette Knowles, Kim Finley-Stansbury, Rina Kundu, and Jane Gooding-Brown.

I thank Ann Henderson for her support and assistance with this manuscript. Keith Brooks has provided invaluable encouragement and friendship.

I thank the Art Education Department for its support.
I thank Leslie Simon, Holly Longfellow, and Savenda Newell for their continued assistance and patience in helping me through this process.

Finally, I thank my parents for their unwaivering support.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many art educators (e.g. Congdon, 1991; Garber, 1992a, 1992b, 1990; Hagaman, 1990; Hamblen, 1991, 1986; Nadaner, 1984) strongly advocate that art should be understood in relation to its sociopolitical meanings and ideological bases. Hamblen (1986) cites the need for further development of sociopolitically focused theoretical bases for art criticism in art education, as well as frameworks for incorporating them into various aspects of pedagogy.

Feminist art educators are among the most vocal proponents of understanding art in relation to its sociopolitical meanings and ideological underpinnings. Garber (1990) suggests that feminist art criticism can function as an exemplar for art criticism because of the variety of views within feminism and because of its respect for diversity. Feminist researchers in art education (e.g. Garber 1992a, 1992b, 1990) have begun to explore and articulate feminist theories and make implications for classroom applications.

I have long been interested in criticism, feminism, studio art critiques, and feminist art criticism. Hennessey (1993) states that "the myriad forms of violence against women, the persistent worldwide devaluation of femininity and women's work, and the intensified controls over women's sexuality and reproductive capacities are daily reminders of the need for a strong and persistent feminist movement" (p. xi). I concur with feminists who locate "gender as a dynamic element in all human experiences" (Garber, 1990, p. 20),
and consider myself to be a feminist. I believe that feminist theories, among others, can help articulate frameworks for understanding how intersecting systems of oppression function and can offer suggestions for re-conceptualizing alternatives to these systems.

As Garber (1990) states, the need is as great in art classrooms as it is anywhere else for students to explore the mechanisms of patriarchy and its interaction with other systemic oppressive practices, such as those pertaining to race, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference. Representations, including those that commonly fall into the category "art" are an important, cultural products that contribute to social understandings.

Criticism is a process that is connected to understandings which can potentially affect social change (Garber 1992a; Pollock, 1987; Olander, 1984; Nadaner, 1984). The studio critique can contribute to sociopolitical art understandings which can affect social change, although studio inquiry does not typically do this. Constructions of feminist theories of art criticism and their implications for pedagogical structures fundamental to the art classroom, such as the studio critique, are needed to aid in making feminist art education a tangible practice.

Statement of the Problem

During the introductory photography course I taught as a graduate teaching assistant, students often demonstrated a lack of interest in and understanding of the underlying ideologies and sociopolitical implications of artworks, including knowledge of and sensitivity to feminist issues. This lack of understanding and interest was reflected in students' discussions and critical writings. When such occasions arose I usually responded by
incorporating questions or comments designed to raise issues as they seemed appropriate.

What I began to notice is that even after being introduced to some sociopolitically-focused ideas, including many feminist ones and after somewhat successful discussions in which students voluntarily incorporated feminist or other sociopolitically-focused ideas in classroom discussions, students rarely demonstrated an interest in or understanding of those concepts during studio art critiques. Some of the many possible reasons for this includes attitudes and beliefs about both feminism and other sociopolitical concerns, and about studio art critiques. For instance, some students may not be interested in sociopolitical art understandings including feminist ones; some may have biased or limited ideas about feminism; some may be anti-feminist; some may not feel comfortable voicing their ideas; some may not have adequate strategies for investigating sociopolitical art understandings which would enable them to meaningfully use them during studio critiques; some may have preconceptions about the studio art critique that impair their willingness to engage in critiques that do not conform to their expectations. The latter point refers to a study by Barrett (1988) which determined that art education students conduct studio critiques similar to the way their studio professors conducted them, contrary to what they may have learned in art education classes in criticism.

Garber (1990) and Barrett (1988) state that in art education, criticism usually results in an examination of the formal properties of works of art. Bright (1988) states that students' expectations in introductory photography courses center around technical proficiency, taking better pictures, and learning to succeed in the artworld, not around developing a critical consciousness of the images that they make.
A studio art critique is an organized session in which student artworks are viewed by the entire class and in which something beneficial to students is supposed to occur. Studio art critiques are typically conducted solely by the instructor and focus primarily on improving student artworks. I perceive the need for a structured approach to conducting studio art critiques that both provides some conceptual tool for and that encourages sociopolitical art understandings. I believe that feminist theories are among those that can provide a rich core of ideas with which to structure such a critique because feminism has evolved into a complex range of sociopolitically-focused ideas.

Many questions guide this study. What is feminism? How can I use feminist theories to address artmaking in the context of the studio art critique? What might a feminist studio art critique be like? How would students react? Primarily I wanted to know whether feminist theories can influence studio art critiques in ways that significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings. I constructed a set of guiding ideas derived from feminist theories and applied them to the studio art critique.

Overview

In this chapter I have presented the background to the study and the statement of the problem. In Chapter 2 I will present an overview of literature in general feminist theory, of feminism and art criticism in art education, and explain the model I developed for my feminist studio art critique. Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in the study. Chapter 4 is the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations.
'Feminism' is a loaded term for many people. Particularly for people unfamiliar with feminism, constructing a studio art critique based on feminist theories might need explication. It is necessary to first explain, at least in part, what feminism is in order to build a case for constructing this critique. In the following section I present an overview of feminism illustrating both the evolution and the breadth of feminist theory. It is important to note that any such overview is only a sketch of these theories. Describing feminism is the first step in demonstrating the reasons that I find this body of theories to be so amenable.

**Many Feminisms**

Many books that present an overview of feminism use a set of categories with which to help understand the long struggle to improve the condition of women's lives. The categorization of feminist thought has important implications because such groupings privilege some ideas over others. Feminists are now less likely to claim strict allegiance to a "category" of feminist thought. I will briefly explain some groupings used in recent feminist writings.

Sylvia Walby (1990) identifies "four distinct" perspectives: Marxist feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, and dual-systems theory (p. 1).
Maggie Humm's (1992) categories include: Socialist-Marxist feminism; lesbian feminism; liberal feminism; psychoanalytic feminism; Asian, Black, and Women of Colour, and other groupings centered around such concepts as Difference and Nature and Culture.

Two authors include cautionary notes about categories. Bryson (1992) includes liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, and radical feminism. She stresses caution in using labels because of the complexity of feminism and because of its continually evolving nature, stating that feminism is "constantly challenging its own assumptions" (p. 6). Rosemary Tong's (1989) Feminist Thought contains many feminist perspectives including liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist, psychoanalytic, existentialist, and postmodern feminisms. In writing the book, she explains how difficult and often "artificial" labeling sometimes is. She asks

Is Juliet Mitchell, for example, a Marxist feminist? She does, after all, sometimes write as if the cause of women's oppression is the fact that we live in class society. Or do the powerful psychoanalytic themes of her later work persuade us instead that she is more a psychoanalytic than a Marxist feminist? Or does her emphasis on the over determination of women's oppression make her a socialist feminist? (pp. 7, 8)

Tong decides to include Mitchell in both the chapter on psychoanalytic feminism and in the chapter on socialist feminism, adding that other authors might have reasonably made different choices. She adds that although categories are often limiting, they continue to be useful for analytic reasons. She subsequently wrangles with placing herself in this spectrum of perspectives. Unable to do so, she posits that this may again point to the increasing obsolescence of the categories. Difficulties also may center around the rapid growth and change within feminist theory that has occurred in the last two decades. Feminists' views may not be the same as they were a decade ago as feminists both offer new ideas and engage with other theoretical
constructs. I mention the problem of categorization to indicate the recurring difficulty of "placing" different feminists' ideas, to underscore the complexity and continuing evolution of feminism, and to note that many feminist writers combine various theoretical perspectives.

Feminism in the 1990's differs considerably from feminism in the 1970's. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (1992) state that the "founding principles of contemporary western feminism have been dramatically challenged, with previously shared assumptions and unquestioned orthodoxies relegated almost to history" (p. 2). Not all feminists would agree; however, whether overstated in this passage or not, feminism is clearly a different kind of place now than it was then. It is important to remember that many feminists still hold closely to convictions based on the varieties of feminism that were established early on. It is perhaps more important to remember that these strands still inform and influence current feminist thought. Additionally, Barrett and Phillips reject the simplistic idea of "assuming that later theory is therefore better theory, and that the best theory of all is the position from which we happen at the moment to be speaking" (p. 7). If any main theme can be associated with the variety of feminisms from the early 1970's and into the 1980's it is the search for a primary cause of oppression. With this as an introduction, a brief and therefore necessarily incomplete and partial discussion of feminism follows.

It is important to remember that feminism did not spring full-grown from the flurry of civil unrest in the 1960's and 1970's. Maggie Humm (1992) reminds us of feminism's long-standing history. Reflections Upon Marriage, written by Mary Astell in 1700, is an example of early feminist thought. Centered around suffrage, organized feminism entered the area of public politics in America and Britain in the 1840's.
The suffrage movement was successful in winning the vote in Britain in 1918 and in 1920 in America. This was followed by campaigns for legal equalities in subsequent decades. It was in the 1960's that Women's Liberation "created a new politics out of Marxist and socialist feminisms, radical feminism, and other multifarious responses to the question of why women continued to suffer social inequality, exploitation, and oppression" (Humm, ibid., p. 2). Critiques of the feminist movement by black feminists soon followed, pointing out the racism and ethnocentrism in many white feminist writings.

**Liberal feminism**

One of the earliest directions in feminist thought is commonly called *liberal feminism*. It is based on justifications borrowed from liberal and democratic theory which claim "that all men were to be equal before the law which would only be imposed with the consent of those who were to obey it" (Nye, 1988, p. 5). It emphasizes equality of opportunity (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1978). An important early example is Mary Wollstonecraft's classic feminist text written in 1792 called *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which argued that sex was not a relevant reason for denying women's equal rights since women's capacity to reason equaled men's. Liberal feminism claims that

> because women are rational beings like men, they are entitled to the same legal and political rights; liberal feminists have therefore argued and campaigned over the last three hundred years for women's right to education, employment, political participation and full legal equality. (Bryson, 1992, pp. 2, 3)

It is probably the most widely recognized form of feminism. The National Organization for Women and *Ms.* magazine are mostly connected to liberal feminist ideas (Philipson & Hansen, 1990). Some feminists continue to align themselves with liberal feminism. It is important to remember that the rights that liberal feminists secured have brought about some significant changes in
women's opportunities to function in the public sphere (Kourany, Sterba, & Tong, 1992). Liberal feminists have developed their own ideas as well as translating radical feminist insights into ways that have "meant real changes in the daily lives of millions of American women" (English, Epstein, Haber, & MacLean, 1990, p. 305). It has been mostly through the efforts of liberal feminists that the legal status of women has improved in most industrialized nations, through legislation concerning sexual harassment, employment opportunities, rape, abortion rights, and maternity leave. Jaggar (1988) points out that because, for instance, the average female wage earner earns little more than half the average male wage earner, it is clear that liberal feminism still has important work to do. For the liberal feminist, women's oppression is rooted in women's lack of equality in civil rights and educational opportunities. Achieving equality in those areas by attacking sexist discrimination will bring liberation to women (Jagger & Rothenberg, 1978). Increasingly, liberal feminists are realizing that male supremacy can create internal barriers that prevent women from achieving equality. As a result of this concern, children's early education has become an additional focus (Jaggar, 1988).

Liberal feminist theory is usually criticized by non-liberal feminists for overemphasizing the importance of individual freedom, and for its failure to address overarching structures of oppression such as patriarchy and the myriad ways it is imbedded in culture. Radical and Marxist feminists, for example, argue that liberal feminism assumes all groups have equal access to state power and that the state will use this power to impartially promote justice (Bryson, 1992). Zillah Eisenstein predicts problems for liberal feminist theory, because as women continue to work toward state-instituted reforms, they will find out that "the motive of the state... is to keep women in their place as
secondary wage earners and as mothers, " and that it is based on male
dominance (quoted in Jaggar, 1988, p. 201). Radical and socialist feminists
criticized "both the analysis of women’s oppression and the confidence it
seemed to place in equal opportunities as the easy way out" (M. Barrett &
Phillips, 1992). Some non-liberal feminists also believe that liberal feminism
contains an implicit or explicit message that women must "cultivate men’s
negative as well as positive character and personality traits . . . and eschew
women’s positive as well as negative character and personality traits”
(Kourany, et al., ibid., p. 18). Tong (1989) characterizes much of contemporary
feminism as defining itself as a reaction against the perceived shortcomings
of liberal feminism.

The flurry of activity that began in the 1960’s known as the modern
Women’s Movement united many women around the common goal of
improving the lot of women, which resulted in achieving a critical mass and
brought attention to their ideas. Differences among women became clearer as
time passed, although all feminists fought for abortion rights, women's health
care, organizing daycare, and women's centers. Three other feminist
theoretical perspectives emerged from the ferment and activity, creating four
primary perspectives. In addition to rekindling the long-standing liberal
feminist perspective, this time period was the rebirth of socialist feminism,
which also had a longer history, and the creation of radical and Marxist
feminisms. Black feminists began constructing approaches for examining the
intersecting effects of racism and sexism.

Radical feminism

Radical feminism, which began in the 1960's, is relatively new
compared to liberal feminism, and is still developing (Jaggar, 1988) . This
accounts for both the variety of views and foci among radical feminists and
for the fact that it is not identified with any one specific political theory. Alison Jaggar, a socialist feminist who is not prone to excess, calls radical feminism, "startlingly original" (p. 83) because it presents a totally new and different way to understand social reality. Bryson (1992) states that it is first and foremost a theory "of, by and for women" (p. 181).

Radical feminists believe that liberal feminists do not analyze women's oppression with the depth and scope that they should; overarching, deep-rooted and interconnected causes of oppression must be sought. Those causes are to be found within patriarchy. Radical feminism "is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequality in which men as a group dominate women as a group and are the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women" (Walby, 1990, p. 3). Radical feminists argue that it is patriarchy that oppresses women: a system characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition--a system that cannot be reformed but only extirpated root and branch. It is not just patriarchy's legal, political, and economic structures that must be overturned; it is also its social and cultural institutions (especially the family, the Church, and the academy). (Kourany, et al., ibid., p. 18)

Radical feminists agree that women's oppression is the deepest and the most widespread form of human oppression (Tong, 1989). Radical feminism analyzes how patriarchy functions as a system of women's oppression and seeks ways to end it.

Radical feminists differ among each other as to the particular site of women's oppression within the system of patriarchy. Tong (1989) writes that "although radical feminist writings are as distinct as they are myriad, one of their frequent themes is the effect of female biology on women's self-perception, status, and function in the private and public domains" (p. 3). Some radical feminists single out women's reproductive roles. Other focus on ways in which gender and sexuality have been used to subordinate women.
Some see violence against women as the main cause. Some construct combinations of these (Kourany, et al., ibid.).

Some early radical feminists focused on what they perceived as the repressive results of mainly the reproductive activities associated with female biology. These feminists sought to bring an end to biological reproduction, citing it as the source of women's oppression. Artificial reproduction could bring about the liberation of women.

Radical feminists now believe that what is oppressive "is not women's biology per se, but rather the fact that men have controlled women as bearers and rearers of children" (Kourany, et al. ibid., p.19). They now view women's biology and psychology as potentially liberating because of the nurturing qualities associated with it (Tong, 1989). Therefore, in order for women to be liberated, each woman must have control over technologies of reproduction, including contraception, abortion, sterilization, artificial insemination, and in-vitro fertilization. She must also determine for herself whether to raise her children herself, to collaborate with her husband, relatives, friends, or paid workers (Kourany, et al., ibid.).

Most radical feminists examine the ways sexuality and gender have been used to oppress and subordinate women, identifying them as the primary site of women's oppression (Tong, 1989). They focus on what they perceive to be the repressiveness of femininity and/or sexuality. Proposed routes out of the confines of femininity include constructing androgyny as an ideal and replacing male-centered culture with female-centered culture. Androgyny has fallen out of favor among radical feminists. The concept of a female-centered culture is sometimes extended to mean separatism and often lesbian separatism. This separatism strives to create women-only spaces and institutions, and freedom from heterosexuality. Additionally, radical feminists
celebrate many aspects of femaleness that women and men have been taught
to despise, including the physical characteristics of women's bodies and
traditionally female ways of being and knowing.

Many radical feminists, as well as liberal feminists, have specified
socialization as the determining factor in both masculine and feminine traits,
and are therefore not necessarily locked into biologism (Tong, 1989). Liberal
feminists, however, tend to see men as innocent victims of socialization unlike
radical feminists who usually perceive men as complicitous (Tong, ibid.) and
in which violence is part of the systematic way in which men control women
(Walby, 1990).

Radical feminists' concern with sexuality focuses on creating solutions
to end the sexual domination of women by men. Those solutions include
transforming heterosexuality by equalizing men's and women's roles within it
or rejecting it altogether, choosing lesbianism, celibacy, or auto-eroticism.
Tong explains that

As most radical feminists see it, women will never be men's full
political, economic, and social equals until heterosexual relations are
entirely egalitarian—a state of affairs not likely to be achieved so long
as women's sexuality is interpreted in terms of men's sexuality—as if Eve
had indeed been made only to service Adam's every want and need.
(1989, p. 110)

For many radical feminists, pornography has emerged as the central
site of patriarchal power, although other feminists not associated with radical
feminist ideas also espouse similar views. Feminists have typically taken
rather clear sides in the contentious debate over pornography, which became
very audible in the early 1980's. Antipornography feminists view
pornography as a blue print for action, linking it causally to violence against
women (Clover, 1993). Robin Morgan's (1983, p. 139) famous phrase,
"pornography is the theory and rape the practice" exemplifies this view, in
which heterosexual sex is sometimes perceived as a form of rape.

Anticensorship feminists do not believe that pornography has a one-to-one relationship with reality or actions. Anticensorship feminists also "criticize the mythologies mediated by mainstream pornography" (Segal. 1993, p. 7), but focus on particular instances rather than sweeping condemnations. These feminists state that the policing of explicit images has potentially negative repercussions, such as the further repression of women's sexual freedom and imagination.

Jaggar (1988) points out many positive aspects of radical feminism as well as its negative ones. She credits radical feminism for "shattering the illusions of male culture" by revealing "the interlocking system of male-dominant institutions" which trap women and their bodies, and result in women's subsequent devastating psychic damage (pp. 286, 287). Radical feminism has produced many insights that have substantially improved the lives of women, albeit through the interpretation of these ideas by liberal feminists (English, et al., ibid.).

Jaggar (1988) critiques radical feminism for its inability to explain why men oppress women. Radical feminism has also been criticized for "a tendency to essentialism, to an implicit biological reductionism" and "a false universalism which cannot understand historical change or take sufficient account of divisions between women based on ethnicity and class" (Walby, 1990, p. 3). Walby herself is not so harsh, claiming that radical feminism is more historically and socially sensitive to class than some feminist critics claim. Jaggar (1988) foresees the potential of an expanded future for radical feminism, as it changes and becomes more attuned to issues of difference among women.
Psychoanalytic feminism

Korsmeyer (1993) explains that feminists turned to Freudian theory in order to examine how the development of consciousness is linked to gender following the "realization that gender asymmetry is a far more intransient fact of culture than sociological description can explain, and that the sources of gender difference lie far deeper than the reaches of legislation or social reorganization" (p. 203). Feminists wanted to use Freudian theory, including that of Lacan, in order to analyze the earliest stages of gender development; thus, the study of gender construction is focused toward how it reveals patriarchal elements of culture.

For Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1987), that meant that childrearing practices have political consequences and are the heart of the matter. Both suggest that changes must start there. Those changes include freeing women from the monopoly of child care and the involvement of men in parenting (Bryson, 1992).

Other psychoanalytic feminist theory has included some French feminist theorists' concern for how gender identity is tied to the acquisition of language. These debates have centered around "complex arguments as to whether sex differences are acquired via the Oedipal recognition of sex difference or whether they in fact pre-date it and are essentially rooted in the body, while some query the whole notion of a stable adult identity" (ibid., p. 202).

Chodorow's and Dinnerstein's approaches have been criticized because neither resolves the economic issues surrounding such changes, or explains how men and women who have been mother-raised could break out of their existing mindsets. Additionally, feminist psychoanalytic theory in general has been criticized for its universalizing tendencies with regard to race and class.
Lesbian feminism is a diffuse category. The New York Radicalesbians helped establish it as a category in which lesbianism as determined by a combination of sexual practice, ideology, and political practices. In the early 1970's the New York Radicalesbians published an essay which helped show that "contemporary lesbian feminism was a definable cultural phenomenon" (Freedman, quoted in Humm, 1992, p. 163). Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, and Charlotte Bunch were some early theorists writing about a woman-identified existence.

Adrienne Rich (1980), the American lesbian feminist poet, published a very influential essay entitled, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in 1980. In this essay she questions why women, who are originally homosexual (after de Beauvoir) would want to turn to men. She describes "compulsory heterosexuality" as a construct imposed on women throughout history. She coined the phrases, "lesbian existence" and "lesbian continuum" to describe a range of female emotional bonding which may or may not be sexual. This essay received much criticism but it was also recognized for opening the space up for "all women to join in a rich history of women-identified culture" (Donovan, quoted in Humm, 1992, p. 175).

Charlotte Bunch, a feminist activist since the late 1960's, established connections with socialist feminist ideas. She argues that "lesbian feminism is a major part of feminism" because lesbians have a materially "different sense of reality and can reveal the extremes of heterosexual privilege" (Donovan, quoted in Humm, 1992, p. 170).

As with much of feminism itself, the first "fault line identified in lesbian theory was that of racism" (Zimmerman, 1992, p. 3). Lesbian theories, especially now, acknowledge that there is no single monolithic lesbian theory.
or lesbian existence. As with feminist theory, lesbians struggle over how to represent and identify lesbian lives. Zimmerman calls Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1989) the paradigmatic text of the 1980's because of Anzaldua's description of the "mestiza consciousness" as helping to reconceptualize complex issues concerning identity.

**Marxist feminism**

*Marxist feminist*, as with other strands of feminist thought, is very complex, and boundaries constituting Marxist feminist theory are often blurred. Several factors can be attributed to the complexity of the category, "Marxist feminism." All Marxist feminists use Marx's ideas provisionally; they acknowledge that Marx's ideas as they were written by him are insufficient in effectively examining the condition of women and therefore must be stretched, supplemented or altered. Although most Marxist feminists have looked at the work of Marx and Engels, some feminists have drawn from the legacy of Marxism that comes from critical theory. Some feminists (e.g. Bryson, 1992; Humm, 1992) conflate Marxist feminism with socialist feminism. From the perspective of 1992, Barrett and Phillips (1992) do not even include the term "Marxist," using instead "socialist." Bryson explains:

I use 'Marxist feminist' fairly loosely, to refer to all feminist theories which use Marxist analysis, even if this has been modified by radical feminist ideas. I use 'socialist feminist' as an inclusive category covering all feminists who believe that women's liberation requires the socialist transformation of the socio-economic system . . . . In practice, the line between Marxist and non-Marxist socialist feminists is frequently blurred, and there has been a tendency for writers to move away from a strictly Marxist position as the difficulties of achieving a 'happy marriage' between Marxism and feminism have become more apparent. (p. 234)

In this first section I will discuss the specifically Marxist ideas that contributed to Marxist feminism, and will then proceed to discuss what is commonly called socialist feminism. In subsequent sections I will explain
materialist feminism and feminist standpoint theories, which also come from the legacy of Marxist thought. No clear demarcation between these categories is intended. The boundaries between them are best understood as fuzzy for the reasons Bryson lists above. Although many feminists separate the fine points between Marxist and socialist feminisms for analytic reasons, they often refer to them jointly as one large direction within feminism when talking about large, important categories within feminism.

Marxist feminism grew partially out of women's involvement with the Marxist-identified new left movements in the 1960's and 1970's that were analyzing the capitalism and imperialism within the U.S. (Sargent, 1981). "New left" is the term commonly used to indicate the student and antiwar movements of this era (Hansen & Philipson, 1990). Other feminists were simultaneously engaging with Marxist theories alongside those feminists who emerged from the New Left.

Many women in the new left became disillusioned because of the constant sexism they were confronted with from males in the group. Additionally, women's limited roles within the new left reflected sexist attitudes that pervaded the structure of the movement. Barbara Haber, a former member of SDS, recalls: "I was always being asked to stuff envelopes, and my husband was always being asked to make speeches, so I figured he must be good at speeches and I must be good at envelopes" (English, Epstein, Haber & MacLean, 1990, p. 301). Efforts to include sexism on the agenda were not taken seriously or were ridiculed. The recurrence of these kinds of events provided the impetus for women to meet on their own to discuss the sexism they were experiencing and other issues pertinent to their lives. Most of the women chose to splinter from the mixed-sex groups to form their own.
Marxist feminists began by examining ideas usually considered to be fundamental to Marxism and attempted to use them to analyze the oppression of women. At the heart of Marxism is a belief that human activities are constantly changing and that these changes must be examined not in terms of ideas that people have, but in terms of human productive activity (Bryson, 1992). Marxists believe that "what makes us human is that we produce our means of subsistence" (Tong, 1989, p. 39). Marx said that

the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence; but their social existence determines their consciousness" (Marx, quoted in Tong, ibid., p. 40).

The increasing complexity of production led to the division of labor and social groupings based on this division. The production of surplus brought about private property and the division of society into classes and corresponding laws and systems of belief. These developments brought about alienation and exploitation. The historical forces were supposedly building which would lead to the proletarian revolution which would end in a classless communist society. Marx had little to say about women, so many feminists turn to the writings of Engels. Both Engels' and Marx's writings concerning women indicate that both assumed any inequality concerning women is subsumed under the issue of class, and would be corrected with the overthrow of capitalism and the implementation of the communist state. Engels, who wrote considerably more about women than Marx, has been criticized for his ahistoricism in a number of areas, such as assumptions about women's nature and about the supposedly benevolent nature of pre-capitalist societies (Bryson, 1992).

Seyla Benhabib & Drucilla Cornell (1987) describe the Marxism that many Marxist/socialist feminists most often looked to as "orthodox Marxism."
Three basic premises of Marxism form the theoretical basis that feminists drew from:

1. The theory of historical materialism is to be viewed as a "science" of societies which yields law-like generalizations across culture and history.
2. Such a "science" of society makes production relations determinant in the last instance. In explaining social transformation, it is the dynamics of production relations which are the final and determining causal mechanism.
3. The consciousness of a social group as well as its potential for revolutionary, social transformation is determined by its position in the production process; social classes are defined in terms of such positions and are the most important collective actors in history. (p. 2)

Marxist feminists believe that women's oppression is determined ultimately by class (Tong, 1989). Marxist feminists say that under capitalism bourgeois women will not experience the same kind of oppression that proletarian women will. What is distinctive about Marxist feminism, then, is that it invites every woman, whether proletarian or bourgeois, to understand women's oppression not so much as the result of intentional actions of individuals but as the product of the political, social, and economic systems associated with capitalism. (p. 39)

A "Marxist answer to the question of 'woman' would point to the sexual division of labour and the implications of this division for power differentials between women and men" (Walby, quoted in Humm, 1992, p. 87). Marxist feminists use Marxist ideas to construct theories about gender. Specifically, they use ideas about exploitative relations under capitalism and about class, and apply them to gender inequality. These relations are "seen to be importantly implicated in the oppression of women, sufficiently so that women's liberation from the family would not be achievable outside a socialist society" (Walby, 1990, p. 70).

All Marxist feminists agree that traditional (or "orthodox") Marxism does not adequately address the oppression of women. Erlich (1981) states that "patriarchy, the institutionalized domination of women by men, has historically been invisible to traditional marxists" (p. 110). Since Marx and Engels didn't say much about many factors that significantly affect the lives of
women, such as rape, spousal abuse, contraception, and childbearing, Marxist feminists concentrate on women's relationship to work and other Marxist concepts (Tong, 1989). The fact that Marxism "neither considered gender nor viewed women's oppression as anything other than a derivation of capitalists exploitation was seen as an oversight that could be corrected through attention to women's unique position under capitalism—the position of domestic worker" (Philipson & Hansen, 1990, p. 13). Thus, Marxist feminists sought to determine how the sexual division of labor fit within Marxist ideas about production. Lois McNay (1992) sums up feminism's primary criticism of orthodox Marxism:

Firstly, by privileging the labour/capital distinction, it renders women peripheral unless they are engaged in productive wage labour. Secondly, by emphasizing the primacy of economic determination, women's oppression is reduced to an ideological effect. (p. 24).

Additionally, the observation that there are some repeating patterns to patriarchal control across societies and history helped dismantle the idea that patriarchy and capitalism are interdependent. McNay's last point is part of many socialist feminists' analyses.

Some of the major concerns of Marxists feminists include determining the following: the relationship of the sexual division of labor to capitalism; the site of women's oppression within the social structure of society; whether women constitute a class; and how Marxist ideas such as the concept of alienation can be applied to the lives of women.

In an essay from 1969, Margaret Benston (1984) theorized that unpaid household labor was responsible for women's secondary status under capitalism. She posits that domestic labor constitutes a significant amount of "socially necessary production" (p. 241). Since women worked outside the market economy, their labor isn't counted; the answer is to industrialize
housework. She suggested cooperative child care and living arrangements such as communal living.

Mariarosa Dalla-Costa (1972) proposed that women reject both the Marxist approach that women enter the workforce and the Marxist feminist idea that women demand wages for housework. She declared that "slavery to an assembly line is not a liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink" (p. 81). While these ideas were appealing, she provided no indication as to where this would leave women. Her ideas helped spark an important debate within feminism called the "Wages for Housework" campaign. The premise of the campaign was that if women demanded compensation for their work, the capitalist economy would eventually fail (Hansen & Philipson, 1990). The domestic labor debate was a response to the tendency to view women's domestic labor as ideological rather than economic (Walby, 1990). The debate eventually lost favor among feminists because of important questions such as who would pay for the wages.

Bryson (1992) explains the important effect of the Wages for Housework debate was to show that the unpaid work performed by women in the home is connected to the wider economy and to explain that the family under capitalism continues to perform important economic as well as ideological and psychological functions which any overall strategy for change must take into account. (p. 239)

Barbara Ehrenreich (1990) also points out that the Wages for Housework debate provided an "unintended caricature" of American socialist feminism. Some feminists pushed the factory metaphor to its limits, stating that everything women did was "reproducing labor power" and "was in the service of capital and indispensable to capital," including activities such as goodnight kisses and tooth brushing (p. 272).
The comparable worth controversy is a companion of the Wages for Housework debate. Amott and Matthaei (1984) argue that "as long as women are denied access to men's jobs, and few women's jobs pay a living wage, women are under strong economic pressure to marry" (p. 359). Thus, they argue that not only must women demand equal wages for equal work but comparable wages for comparable work. The "ultimate aim" of the comparable worth debate is to undermine the structure of capitalism in which the "scandalous hierarchy of wages" can be changed and the workplace truly socialized (Kourany, et al., 1992, p. 25).

Christine Delphy (1984) argues that housewives comprise one class and husbands another. She writes that housewives are the class of producers and husbands are the class of non-producers, utilizing the efforts of their wives. Delphy has been criticized by some feminists on the basis that not all women are housewives (Tong, 1989).

Ann Foreman (1977) states that women are alienated in a profound way, in addition to the distancing and detachment that men under capitalism experience. She explains that

the effect of alienation on the lives of and consciousness of women takes on even more oppressive form. Men seek relief from their alienation through their relations with women; for women there is no relief. For these intimate relations are the very ones that are the essential structures of her oppression (quoted in Tong, ibid., p. 45).

Holstrom (1984) focuses on the Marxist concept that social existence determines consciousness. Women form a conception of themselves based on the nature of their work and role within the family, both of which typically reinforce and/or perpetuate their domination by men. She proposes examining women's self-images in relationship to the work they do as an important task for Marxist-feminists.
Joanna Brenner and Nancy Holstrom (1983) propose theoretical bases for strategies for women's self-organization—the importance of women organizing themselves toward revolutionary ends. They state that it is working women who should be organized toward emancipatory efforts because as workers they have more cohesion and social power. Brenner and Holstrom combine the two sites of oppression sometimes separated within various Marxist and socialist feminist theories: the family as the site of women's oppression, and women's marginalization from social production. They note the link that working women have between these two spheres: child care affects them as mothers and workers. Working women also have the concerns that all women do concerning violence against women, reproductive rights, and legal issues. Tong (1989) states that

Given the recent influx of women into the workplace, and given that, for a variety of reasons, women are increasingly unwilling to work "more for less," Marxist feminists are in a position first to develop working women's revolutionary consciousness and then to lead them to revolutionary action. Far from existing at the margins of the revolution, women—especially working women who live in both the workplace and the household—appear to be at the center of it. Marxist feminists hold out the hope that if woman's status and function(s) truly change in the workplace, her status and function(s) in the household will also change, if not today, then tomorrow. (p. 69)

Juliet Mitchell's "Women: The Longest Revolution" appeared in The New Left Review in Britain in 1966, predating the organized women's movement in Britain by two years (Walby, 1990). Her essay, later included in Woman's Estate, published in 1971, is touted as "the first intelligent critique of classical marxist literature on the question of women" (Vogel, 1981, p. 198). Mitchell identified four structures of oppression that must be examined: production, reproduction, sex and the socialization of children. It is the historical changes and recombinations of these structures which determine women's position. Emphasizing the historical nature of women's position, in order to achieve
liberation, all four structures must be transformed. Additionally, the end of capitalism would not necessarily bring about the end of patriarchy because patriarchy predates capitalism. Mitchell later turned to psychoanalytic theory to account for the role of psychic processes in women's oppression. In *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, published in 1975, she argues for a materialist analysis of capitalism and an ideological analysis (via Freud) of patriarchy. She states that "patriarchy describes the universal culture—however, each specific mode of production express this in different ideological forms" (Mitchell, quoted in Young, 1981, p. 46). Young and Mina Davis Caulfield (1977) criticize Mitchell's universalizing and ahistorical premise.

Michele Barrett offers a less economistic interpretation of Marxist ideas. Influenced by Althusser, she examines ideology as having some autonomy from economic influences. Her important work, *Women's Oppression Today*, was originally written in 1980. From the vantage point of 1988, she states that her two main points in the book, are flexible enough to retain their usefulness (M. Barrett, 1988). They are

(i) that although women's oppression is not (as some Marxists have argued) a prerequisite of capitalism, it is however historically embedded in its social relations and thus material in character and (ii) that the role of ideology in this historical process should not be underestimated. (p. x)

She also states that an important point is the "historically gendered" nature of capitalist relations of production. She quotes Dorothy Smith as referring to the "gender saturated" character of social classes and Smith's insistence that "gender relations are an integral constituent of the social organization of class" (Smith, quoted in M. Barrett, 1988, p. xii).

Barrett also describes the currently estranged relationship of Marxism and feminism. She explains that the "confident combination of 'Marxist Feminist,' a common phrase in the late 1970s when the book was written,
uncomfortably reminds us of an attempt to bring together two world-views that have continued to go their separate ways in spite of our efforts at marriage guidance" (p. v). She critiques the ethnocentrism and racism of her own work, and suggests that feminism's increasing involvement with postmodern ideas may prove more fruitful. Her recent article (1992) furthers the impact and importance of postmodern ideas for feminism.

There are several reasons why feminists engage with Marxist ideas. Jaggar (1988) claims that Marxist theory is "one of the few [philosophical/political theories] that has given much weight to questions of means as well as of ends and this is because of the Marxist belief that theory is born from practice, that only in the process of struggling against oppression can people formulate new visions for liberation" (p. 16). Tong (1989) states that Marxist feminist analysis has helped to explain the relationship of women's domestic labor to capitalism, to depict the tendency to not view domestic labor as real work, and to point out the low-paying jobs typically given to women. Hartmann (1981) points out that "Marxism is also a method" (p. 11) the method of historical materialism.

Criticisms of some Marxist feminisms include an inability to account for pre-capitalist and post-capitalist societies, a narrow and limiting focus on capitalism, and a mistaken reduction of gender inequality to capitalism. These criticisms apply mostly to earlier varieties of Marxist feminism. Additionally, Marxist and socialist feminism has been criticized for its blindness to racial and ethnic differences (Walby, 1990). While these early ideas were an improvement over traditional Marxist ideas about women, women's liberation was still considered secondary to class struggle; also, many aspects of women's lives were not addressed in these theories (Hansen & Philipson, 1990). Jaggar (1988) posits that the "most obvious" defect of Marxism is that "even if
unwaged labor is profitable to capital, there is no explanation of why it is women who perform this labor" (p. 71). Benhabib & Cornell (1987) write that Marxist feminists omitted a fundamental question: whether the idea of production which is "based on the model of an active subject transforming, making and shaping an object given to it [is] at all adequate for comprehending activities like childbearing and rearing, care of the sick and elderly" (p. 2)? Thus, many feminists shifted their focus from attempts to place domestic labor into Marxist categories about work to include the non-economic aspects of women's lives (Walby, 1990). Feminists increasingly move further away from strictly economistic interpretations of Marxism. Sandra Morgen (1990) explains that an important change occurred when socialist feminists began to examine issues such as sexuality, reproductive rights, and abortion—issues that did not "presume the primacy of class relations" or the centrality of production (p. 278).

Socialist feminism

The history of socialist feminism extends into the early 1800's (Bryson, 1992). Early socialist feminism, such as that espoused by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, emphasized slow, gradual change. Marxism added to the existing socialist feminist position the idea that changes will not occur by appeals to justice and reason, the historicization of women's oppression, and the idea of collective struggle and revolution. A "central tenet of all forms of Marxist and socialist feminism is the belief that women's situation cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context, and that any meaningful improvement in the lives of women requires that this context be changed" (Bryson, 1992, p. 232). Louise Johnson has succinctly stated that socialist feminists "inhabit, critique, and reconstruct" the Marxist tradition (1991, p. 355).
Socialist feminists, dissatisfied with the economic determinism of much Marxist feminism, sought to combine Marxist ideas with other theories. Jaggar (1988), an important socialist feminist theorist, explains that both socialist feminists and radical feminists believe that old and established political theories were insufficient or incapable of explaining women's oppression. Both the public and the private sphere needed to be analyzed. Therefore, the new categories conceptualized by socialist feminism

must give us a way of understanding sexuality, childbearing, childrearing and personal maintenance in political and economic terms. Unlike many American radical feminists, however, socialist feminists attempt to conceptualize these activities in a deliberately historical, rather than a universal and sometimes biologistic, way. A defining feature of socialist feminism is that it attempts to interpret the historical materialist method of traditional Marxism so that it applies to the issues made visible by radical feminists. (Jaggar, 1988, p. 124)

Thus, socialist feminists combine elements of both Marxist feminism and radical feminism (Bryson, 1992). Tong (1989) sees one primary difference separating Marxist feminism from socialist feminism, despite their commonalities. Socialist feminism sees women's oppression as a combination of patriarchy and capitalism; Marxist feminism sees the ultimate cause to be rooted in class and economics. Socialist feminists believe that class and gender play equal roles in women's oppression. Jaggar and Rothenberg (1978) explain that socialist feminists are committed to using Marx's historical materialist method, but add to the list of what counts for production. They, like Marxist feminists, add the components of domestic labor: nurturing, sexuality, and reproduction. Jaggar (1988) states that what is unique about socialist feminism is "the way in which it synthesizes insights drawn from a variety of sources" (p. 127). Those sources sometimes include radical feminism, psychoanalysis, and sometimes liberal feminism.
A fundamental focus of socialist feminists is the social construction of masculine and feminine character types. For socialist feminists, psychoanalysis is a tool with which to "explain the mechanism by which psychological masculinity and femininity are imposed on infants and young children" because psychoanalytic theory provides the "most plausible and systematic account of how the individual psyche is structured by gender" (Jaggar, 1988, p. 126).

Much socialist feminist writing has focused on whether patriarchy and capitalism should be analyzed as separate, autonomous systems ("dual-systems") or as one interlocking system. Socialist feminists have taken differing positions concerning this issue.

Heidi Hartmann (1981) wrote an essay that helped establish the terms of the socialist feminist debate about Marxism entitled, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." It was originally published in 1975. An important book, Women and Revolution, featured Hartmann's essay and response essays, some of which agreed and some of which disagreed with Hartmann. Hartmann argues that the categories of Marxism are sex-blind, and proposed a dual systems theory to "remedy the weaknesses both of traditional marxism and radical feminism" (Young, 1981). Hartmann argues that the material base of the two "systems," capitalism and patriarchy, must be examined independently, then analyzed for their interaction. She says that the material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labor power. Men maintain this control by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources (in capitalist societies, for example, jobs that pay a living wage) and by restricting women's sexuality. . . . [This] allows men to control women's labor power, both for the purposes of serving men in many personal and sexual ways and for the purpose of rearing women. (p. 15)
Iris Young (1981) disagrees with the dual-systems theory and argues that capitalist patriarchy is "one system in which the oppression of women is a core attribute" (p.44). She claims that to separate them negates the responsibility of confronting socialists, it encourages socialists to fail to recognize the central issue of women's oppression in fighting capitalism, thus "segregating" the socialist movement.

Tong (in Kourany, et al., 1992) asserts that socialist feminists have been very effective in integrating differing feminist theories. Morgen (1981) states that although socialist feminist literature had problems, it "has been invaluable in revealing the interconnections between domains of social relations" (p. 279).

Judith Van Allen (1990) provides a historical context with which to view some aspects of the modern feminist movement by noting how developments within feminism can in part be described as determined by the demands of the historical moment:

In those early years of women's liberation, we needed strong polemics and slogans. They were the dynamite we used to explode Marxist and other male left categories ... Our mistake was turning slogans into theory and producing Marxist-feminist theory that assumed a functionalist fit between the two reified entities "capitalism" and "patriarchy." (p. 294)

Van Allen urges a push toward Marxist feminism that includes the dynamics of race and gender and to involve the male members of the left in adopting and championing this stance.

Materialist feminism

Marxist-based feminist ideas continue not only within Marxist feminism and socialist feminism, but also under materialist feminisms and feminist standpoint theories. Neither of these theories are placed in separate categories in most feminist anthologies; in fact they may only be tangentially
referred to in connection with Marxist or socialist feminism. However, they constitute some important directions in feminist theory that have been heavily influenced by Marxist ideas.

Materialist feminism is the name that some feminists use to refer to "continuation of what used to be called socialist or Marxist feminism" (Moi & Mitchell, 1994, p. 937). Rosemary Hennessey (1993) explains that some feminists favored the term "materialist feminism" over "Marxist feminism" because of the argument that "marxism cannot adequately address women's exploitation and oppression unless the marxist problematic itself is transformed so as to be able to account for the sexual division of labor" (pp. xi-xii). Jennifer Wicke (1994) explains that materialist feminism could be defined, provisionally, as a feminism that insists on examining the material conditions under which social arrangements, including those of gender hierarchy, develop. While fully acknowledging that the gender hierarchy pervasively maintains "men on top," materialist feminism avoids seeing this as the effect of a singular, persistent patriarchy and instead gauges the web of social and psychic relations that make up a material, historical moment, when the women in question may be situated in a variety of positions that defy a horizontal reading. (p. 751).

Wicke explains further by using the example that the women of the Bloomsbury Group are "materially constellated differently" than "nineteenth-century Flemish female coal miners" (p. 751).

Hennessey (1993) distinguishes current materialist feminism as differing from socialist feminism by its embrace of postmodern concepts of language and subjectivity. She describes the materialist feminism of the nineties as expanding earlier materialist feminist work that began "making use of the insight that subjectivity is discursively constructed," and which focused mostly on the social construction of gender (p. xi). Recent materialist feminist work focuses on analyzing how the once unitary category "woman" is a discursive category that is constructed historically.

31
**Feminist standpoint theory**

Henessey (1993) describes *feminist standpoint theory* as occupying "a significant place among materialist critiques of western epistemology" (p. 67). It was developed by socialist feminists from Marxist ideas about how social experience shapes reality. She states that standpoint refers to a "position" in society which is shaped by and in turn helps shape ways of knowing, structures of power, and resource distribution. Feminist standpoint theorists have posited feminism as this sort of position, a way of conceptualizing reality from the vantage point of women's lives: their activities, interests, and values. (p. 67)

Patti Lather (1992) explains that according to standpoint theorists, the feminist standpoint, "achieved through struggle both against male oppression and toward seeing the world through women's eyes, provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings" and that "given the variety of women's experience in relations to culture, class, race, sexual orientation, etc., there are multiple feminist standpoints" (p. 93). Harding (1993) states that when opposite sides of power relations are examined, the perspectives of those who are less powerful are more objective than those of the powerful.

McNay (1992) states that standpoint theories position themselves between feminists who are opposed to formulating a postmodern feminism and those such as Linda Nicholson who advocate constructing a postmodern feminism. Harding (1990) posits that standpoint theorists are needed to counteract traditional discourses of "objectivism" and "intentionalism" (relativism). Objectivism refers to the "view from nowhere." Intentionalism refers to the view that feminist claims are just one among many and that conflicting claims made by nonfeminists are equally defensible. She explains that this position functions to justify the silencing of women/feminists no less than its objectivist twin by refusing to recognize existing power.
relations of male dominance and the dynamics that insure intimate relations between partial and perverse beliefs and social power. (p. 88).

Harding (1993) argues that it is possible for people who do not have marginal identities to produce beliefs that are less distorted. To do this, a person must take responsibility for their social location. Harding says that it is important, for instance, to distinguish between a man "reading as a woman" and "reading as a feminist man" (p. 151).

Patricia Hill Collins (1991, 1989) further articulates a black feminist epistemology based in standpoint theory. It is based on Afrocentric values and the oppression common to black people's lives. She explains that the presence of an independent standpoint does not mean that it is shared by all Black women or even that Black women fully recognize its contours. By using the concept of standpoint, I do not mean to minimize the rich diversity existing among African-American women. I use the phrase "Black women's standpoint" to emphasize the plurality of experiences within the overarching term "standpoint." (1989, p. 747)

Women of color, "third world women," women of non-dominant groups, and feminism

Morgen (1990) cites the real move beyond socialist feminism "entrapped by dualist theorizing" has been the change of focus caused by the "attention on the "intersection" of race and gender, race, and class in women's lives and in the constitution of social relations of power" (p. 279). She reminds us that in 1977 the Combahee River Collective stated that is was "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" and perceived its "particular task as the development of integrated analysis and practice based on the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (the Combahee River Collective, quoted in Morgen, ibid., p. 280).

Gloria Joseph (1981), extending the metaphor produced by Hartmann's article about the "unhappy marriage," laments "the absence of an analysis of
the Black woman and her role as a member of the wedding" (p. 92). The need 
for a strong black women's movement is made by her statement that just as 

women cannot trust men to 'liberate' them, black women cannot trust 
white women to 'liberate' them during or 'after the revolution;' in part 
because there is little reason to think they would know how, and in part 
because white women's immediate self-interest lies in continued racial 
oppression. (p. 104-5).

Many other writers criticizing the lack of the perspectives of women of color 
and ethnocentrism of much feminist work include bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, 
Cherry Moraga, Patricia Hill Collins, Barbara Smith, Patricia J. Williams, 
Michele Barrett along with Mary Macintosh, and many others.

The anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, published in 1981, was widely 
influential and contributed many important perspectives concerning 
differences of ethnicity and race that much of feminism was lacking. In the 

Foreword, the language is engaging and the message hopeful but urgent:

Blackfoot  amiga Nisei hermana  Down Home Up Souf Sistuh sister El 
Barrio suburbia  Korean  The Bronx Lakota Menominee Cubana Chinese 
Puertoriquena reservation Chicana campanera and letters testimonials 
poems interviews essays journal entries sharing Sister of the yam 
Sisters of the rice  Sisters of the corn  Sisters of the plain tain putting in 
telecalls to each other. And we're all on the line. (Bambara, 1983, pg. vi)

Hooks (1990) points out that sometimes white feminists have readily 
included ideas by women of color concerning racism but not when other kinds 
of ideas are involved. She also claims that "the theoretical groundwork for all 
reconsiderations of the category "woman" which consider race, as talked about 
in the work of theorists like Teresa de Lauretis and Elizabeth Spelman and 
many others, was laid by women of color" (p. 21).

Anzaldúa offers an engaging description of processes involved in 
activating aspects of her identity and that of others whose multi-sited 
identities are particularly complex. She speaks of creating a new, hybrid 
"*mestiza*" consciousness:
Her first step is to take inventory. Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja. Just what did she learn from her ancestors? This weight on her back— which is the baggage from the Indian mother, which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from the Anglo? . . . She puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been part of . . . This step is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions . . . She reinterprets history and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths. She adopts new perspectives toward the dark-skinned, women, and queers. She strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity. She is willing to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking. She surrenders all notions of safety, of the familiar. Deconstruct, construct. She becomes a nahual, able to transform herself into a tree, a coyote, into another person. (1993, p. 432)

She demonstrates not only the multi-faceted, many-cultured, and fluid nature of her identity and consciousness. The conscious self-construction that Anzaldúa describes is also indicative of much of feminism's direction toward ideas that explore contradictions, and away from the sole analysis of women as victims of various monolithic systems.

Feminism continues to reverberate with these criticisms. Many of the assumptions about the family, which are central to much Marxist and socialist feminism have been examined (see McIntosh & M. Barrett, 1985; M. Barrett, 1988) for their racism and ethnocentrism. Barrett (1988) critiques the racism and ethnocentrism in her earlier work. She notes, for instance, that the "male breadwinner-dependent wife" model does not apply to the black British population of West Indian descent to the same degree that it does for the white population.

Walby (1990) identifies three important issues resulting from these critiques. The first is that the experiences of women in the labor market are different because of racism that places women of color at a disadvantage. Second is that ethnic variation and racism mean that the sites of oppression for women of color can be different than those of white women. Bell hooks, for example, states that for women of color the family is often a site of
resistance and solidarity against racism. The last issue is that the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender requires the recognition of historically differing sites of oppression for women of different ethnicities. The result of these ongoing critiques considerably broadened and strengthened feminism.

Lydia Sargent (1981) concisely characterizes some of the conflicts between various feminisms examined thus far:

Marxist feminists criticized radical and socialist feminists for being insufficiently materialist and therefore oblivious to class oppression and the class nature of the women's movement. Radical feminists criticized marxists and socialists for ignoring the importance of patriarchy as part of the formation of people's consciousness and for ignoring the importance of behavior. Socialist feminists criticized marxist and radical feminists—the former for being overly economistic, the latter for being overly subjective and therefore ahistorical. Black feminists criticized all three for being racist and posed a theory which incorporated race as a part of feminist analysis. Lesbian feminists in all three areas argued for consciousness-raising around heterosexuality as an institution and for the importance of lesbianism as part of feminist analysis and strategy. (p. xxi)

As constructs with which to understand current feminism, these categories are less useful than in the 1970's, when feminists often establish their membership in one or the other. Joanna De Groot and Mary Maynard (1992) state that in order to remain "politically informed and not to disassociate theory from practice," women's studies has found itself caught up in "evaluative dichotomous language" that has resulted in the pigeon-holing of ideas "despite the fact that a wide spectrum of approaches can be found among those to whom one or the other label is attributed" (pp. 164-165).

From within feminism, the cohesiveness of the very category "women" on which many feminisms had based various theoretical perspectives, came to be questioned. This cohesiveness was challenged by women of color, "third world women," lesbians, and other women who do not belong to dominant groups, such as Native American women. Feminists of color critiqued much of the "racist and ethnocentric assumptions of white feminists, which helped seal
the fate of the original sex and class debate" as well as to call into question the
taxonomies such as liberal, radical, and socialist feminism (M. Barrett & Phillips, ibid., p. 4).

Postmodern feminism

Another strand of feminist thought that has challenged the cohesiveness of the category "woman" is postmodern feminism. Feminists have long been critical of universalizing claims, "high" theory, and claims of neutrality. This critique has been extended recently with the current postmodern analysis and critique of Western thought. Noting many similar concerns, feminists have thus engaged with poststructuralist and postmodern theories. Lois McNay (1992) states that the "poststructural critique of the rational subject has resonated strongly with the feminist critique of rationality as an essentially masculine construct" (p. 2).

Additionally, the development of ideas from French feminist theorists such as Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva were moving in sometimes similar directions to male French postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan (Tong, ibid.). These feminists later became associated with the more general movement called postmodern feminism.

Postmodernism refers to an interest in surface rather than depth; to pastiche and parody, to references to the past and to self-reference, and it focuses attention on a plurality of styles... a rejection of the grand projects of the rationalist Enlightenment, including Marxist as well as liberal systems of thought... post-modernity is a phenomenon of post-industrial capitalism, crucially determined by the micro-electronic revolution and the globalization of communication and information systems. (M. Barrett & Phillips, ibid., p. 206)

Although there are differences among them, Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous use de Beauvoir's concept of women as Other and "turn it on its head" by celebrating the feminine, which, because of its Otherness is "a way of being,
thinking, and speaking that allows for openness, plurality, diversity, and difference" (Tong, ibid., p. 219). They challenge dichotomies and binary oppositions such as reason/emotion, self/other, critique the idea of a coherent identity, of quests for truth, and claims that feminism should attempt to offer one explanation for women's oppression. Categories such as "women" and "feminism" are challenged because of their potential for reducing difference.

McNay (1992) discusses two "debates" within postmodern thought. The debates center around "the extent to which the Enlightenment narratives of rationality and justice are valid in respect to the justification of action in contemporary society" (p. 119). She states that Lyotard exemplifies one side of the debate, which argues that metanarratives are outmoded in modern society, and that the new postmodern era has emerged in which more freedom and diversity are tolerated. According to Lyotard, "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensibility to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurate" (quoted in McNay, ibid., p. 119). The other side of this debate is exemplified by Habermas, who, according to McNay, argues that the modernist project is not completed and that those who reject progressive social ideas are themselves replicating many problems that characterize society today.

Some feminists have adopted postmodern theories and ideas while others are ambivalent about feminism's wholehearted embrace of the postmodern. Bryson (1992) believes that there are both advantages and disadvantages of postmodern theories for feminism. She points that postmodernism can "demonstrate how language and subjectivity are socially constructed and so open them up for change, and by stressing the specificity and partiality of all experience it can guard feminists against generalizing about all women" (p. 229). Chris Weedon states that an "understanding of how discourses of
biological sex difference are mobilized, in a particular society, at a particular moment, is the first stage in intervening in order to initiate change" (quoted in Bryson, ibid., p. 229). It can also help challenge the claims of truth and objectivity of male perspectives.

Walby's argues against feminism's wholesale adoption of postmodern theories, stating that

while gender relations could potentially take an infinite number of forms, in actuality there are some widely repeated features. In addition the signifiers of 'woman' and 'man' have sufficient historical and cross-cultural continuity, despite some variations to warrant using such terms. (ibid., p. 16)

Bryson (1992) remarks that denying ideas such as "reason" and "justice" results in a "total relativism that is unable to differentiate between freedom and slavery and that therefore denies legitimacy to feminist attempts to change society" (p. 229).

McNay (ibid.) is skeptical about the possibility of a feminist postmodernism because of the ultimate incompatibility between the categories of difference and sexual difference, and "false polarization that the debate on modernity and postmodernity has established between theory and practice . . . the general and the particular" (p. 7). She also sees feminism as fundamentally dependent on a "general theoretical perspective" and appeals to "the metanarrative of justice" (p. 7). Harding (1990) argues that some aspects of postmodern feminism retain Enlightenment ideals, and that some aspects of feminist science reflect the postmodern. She states that the "extent of human rationality if neither restricted to--nor perhaps paradigmatically exhibited by--the modern West, "referring to high cultures in Asia and Africa (p. 100). She states that some feminist research can embody aspects of the postmodern due to a "fault line" that opens up because the experiences of women sociologists do not fit dominant conceptual schemes. For example,
dominant schemes do not sufficiently describe "housework" because the
traditional division of many men's lives into "leisure" and "work" does not
adequately illuminate the life of someone who maintains a home and a family
all day, seven days a week. Additionally, Michele Barrett (1992) asks why it is
acceptable to discuss capitalism in the global sense but not other kinds of
oppression in other larger instances.

Thus, many feminists and nonfeminists are scurrying to situate
feminism either inside or outside of postmodernism, either as a means of
legitimizing it or to denounce it. Not everyone, however, is taking sides or
assuming that such territorialism is necessary.

Harding (1990) suggests that feminists ought to maintain a "principled
ambivalence" towards postmodernism, at least for now. The most important
result of this ambivalence is that because of the "contradictions in the worlds
in which feminist move . . . the tensions are desirable because they reflect
different, sometimes conflicting, legitimate political and theoretical needs of
women today" (p. 86). Feminism has been described as having moved from an
"equality" to a "difference" model. Joan Scott has critiqued this opposition as
disabling for feminism, stating that "the antithesis itself hides in the
interdependence of the two terms, for equality is not the elimination of
difference, and difference does not preclude equality" (quoted in M. Barrett &

Summary:

To Hilde Hein's (1990) statement that "feminism is nothing if not
complex" I add Nancy Cott's statement that "feminism is nothing if not
paradoxical" (1986, p. 49). Exploring the paradoxes and the parallels within
feminism quickly dispels any notion of feminism as monolithic. Elizabeth
Weed states that
The critical advantage of the feminist project has been that when one area of feminism has settled on a truth, another has emerged to disrupt that truth, to keep at bay truths too easily produced by cultural and political formations. As long as feminism remains a process of coming to terms but never arriving, always interrogating the very terms it constitutes and never mastering them, it will continue to be a challenging mode of inquiry. (1989, p. xxxi)

The causes and importance of these various alliances and tensions are a recurring theme throughout this writing. This brief encapsulation of feminism is necessarily incomplete. What I have attempted to illustrate is the continually evolving nature of feminism, how some strands of feminism are contradictory and some are complementary, how these tensions enriches feminism.

A Feminist Studio Art Critique

There are several reasons why I based this studio art critique mostly on feminist ideas. I chose feminism because feminist theories are by nature sociopolitically-focused and because of the richness that this body of theories had to offer as a method. There are many feminisms, making it a rich theoretical field with a long history from which to draw. Many feminist theories welcome the tensions within feminism as healthy and positive partially because these tensions resist fixing feminist thought and make requisite ongoing self-critical activities.

Elizabeth Garber (1990) has referred to feminisms that in addition to gender, hold parallel concerns for race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation and other factors. Garber has also pointed out that feminist art criticism can function as an exemplar for art criticism because of the variety of views within feminism and because of its respect for diversity. I advocate Garber's description of feminism, and, given this description's range of
concerns, many feminist ideas have relevance to ways that I wanted to guide students to consider artworks.

As a white, middle-class, well-educated woman who is concerned about the social and political effects of gender, including the ways in which gender is culturally constructed and reinforced, and who is similarly concerned about race, sexual orientation, and other factors such as class and ethnicity, I consider myself to be a feminist because of feminism's focus on these issues. I find feminist theory to be useful because I feel committed to articulating art educational questions and practices that I am deeply interested in and personally committed to. I believe that the purpose of art education is to educate students about aesthetic issues, artworld practices, art histories, sociopolitical aspects of art and artmaking, and about how to critically examine all visual culture.

I do not feel the necessity, nor would it be possible, to carefully align this project with exact categories of feminist thought. However, certain strands of feminism influence my thinking more and therefore influenced the construction of my feminist studio art critique more than other strands. The remainder of this paragraph reflects my positioning within the framework of feminist theories. While in many instances they are still important, quests for equality are not necessarily enough or necessarily desirable. Thus, liberal feminist ideas are not enough, although many are still useful. One example is how the Guerilla Girls raise awareness about gender inequality in the artworld through the use of statistical comparisons. While it can be useful and important to investigate the regulatory and restrictive practices of patriarchy, as radical feminists do, other repressive systemic structures should not only be simultaneously investigated, but investigated for the specific ways that they intersect with each other. Understandings about
and the potential to change peoples' lives must consider the material conditions of those lives, particularly as they relate to factors such as gender, race, and class. The social and political dimensions of gender and how gender is constructed should be explored. Thus, feminist standpoint theory has influenced this project, as have some postmodern feminist ideas. The instability and of identity-based constructs such as "women" should be explored, yet the ways in which those constructs are useful should also be explored. Weed states that the terms of feminism are "given to it by the social formations in which it is produced, and feminist practice becomes an ongoing theoretical and political process of reinscribing or dismantling those terms" (p. xvi).

The ways that feminist theories influenced the structure of this project were largely driven by characteristics typical of studio art critiques. The characteristics I am referring to are that students and an instructor are gathered in a classroom, that student artwork is to be critiqued, and that something beneficial is supposed to result from this session. In this long section, I will first characterize the typical studio art critique I am trying to replace, and then a version of a feminist studio art critique. Then I will present ways in which feminist theories helped construct my version of a feminist studio art critique and further characterize it.

Out with the old and in with the new: Re-imagining the Studio Art Critique

The studio art critique is important because it is a fundamental component of the art classroom. In studio art classes, students and instructor gather after the completion of their artworks for a "critique" session in which something useful for students is supposed to occur. This research project is about maximizing the pedagogical potential of the studio art critique. I am primarily interested in the dialogue that occurs in the context of the critique,
the communal space created by a classroom discussion where information is shared.

I will further illustrate the need for changing the way studio art critiques tend to be currently conducted and present my feminist studio art critique as a replacement. I will present theoretical examples by describing a scenario depicting a typical studio art critique that I am trying to replace and follow that with a scenario portraying a feminist-based critique that I am proposing.

Out with the old: The typical studio art critique

The way in which many studio art critiques are typically conducted is in need of significant reconstruction. This first example presents the kind of critique that is often found in art classrooms. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Bright (1988) has pointed out that students in basic studio photography classes are mostly interested in learning how to take better pictures and how to improve their technical understandings of the medium, and that they do not expect to be historians or critics. Garber (1990) states that most attention to art criticism in art education typically results in examining an artwork's formal or expressive properties. Barrett (1994) states that the purpose of most studio art critiques is to improve artworks.

The critique that I am trying to displace focuses on formal properties, technical concerns, and expressive properties of artworks. The reason that one or more of these aspects of artworks are often emphasized during studio art critiques is because discussing them is perceived as the most efficient avenue for accomplishing the typical purpose of those critiques—improving students' artworks.

An example of such a critique would be one in which students gather during their usually allotted class meeting time and the instructor tells
students to put their artworks up on a ledge or chalkboard in the classroom. The time allotted to critical sessions may differ from one educational context to another, but it is usually one discrete class meeting time. A junior high or high school class would typically devote one class meeting time of about an hour; a university class might have two hours, and an elementary class might spend less than an hour to critique student artworks.

When placing their artworks up for this kind of typical critique, students may do so with some degree of trepidation. They know that, depending on their instructor, their artworks might be found wanting in many respects. They know that all the flaws that the instructor perceives within their artworks will be pointed out. They can only hope that the instructor is merciful when discussing flaws in their work. They also expect that the voice that will mostly be heard will be that of the instructor. They are used to coming to critiques and remaining mostly silent, since the instructor is viewed as the one with significant knowledge to be tapped into during critiques. The students feel that they do not really know enough to talk about their peers' artworks because they are just learning and obviously the instructor has studied art longer than they have, earned degrees in it, and have an exhibition record. If students talk it will be to explain what they intended to do in their artwork and perhaps address how well they think they succeeded in doing so. In addition to the instructor, the artist's interpretations of their own work is the only other valid authority about it.

The instructor will basically proceed down the line of artworks, commenting on various features and pointing out problems. Perhaps, in a photography class, the instructor might say that a particular photograph was underexposed because it lacks detail in the darker areas of the photograph. In a painting class, the instructor may state that the artist needs to rethink the
surface texture that was created by the paint, and then might add a comment that the work is good because it expresses considerable emotion. It is unlikely that artworks will be described or interpreted during the critique; since everyone can see the artworks, description may be perceived as superfluous (see Barrett, 1994). The critique is essentially judgmental and has little to do with understanding artworks. The students will leave at the end of one critical session with some ideas indicated by their instructor about how to improve their compositions, perhaps some feedback about the expressive properties of their artworks, and how to better handle the medium they are using.

In with the new: A feminist studio art critique

The kind of feminist studio art critique that I propose to replace the one I just described has as its primary goal to encourage students to explore the meanings of artworks during studio art critiques, focusing on the sociopolitical implications of those meanings. Bright (1988) advocates encouraging students to develop a critical consciousness about their artmaking practices, including an awareness of perceiving themselves as "active shapers of knowledge" (p. 15).

My version of a feminist studio art critique does not ignore formal, technical, or expressive concerns. A feminist critique, however, can address one or more of these aspects of artworks. Students enrolled in studio art classes are not expected to be proficient with the medium that they are using in an art class. Therefore, feedback about aspects of using that particular medium is important in developing students' ability to make and understand artworks made in that medium. Some of the ways that artworks convey information--formal aspects of composition, such as line, shape, color and texture--are important for students to understand in order to make and interpret artworks. The feminist studio art critique differs in the emphasis
placed on these aspects of artmaking, and by primarily focusing on matters of meaning, especially, sociopolitical implications of those meanings.

An example of a feminist studio art critique would be one in which students and instructor gather during their usually allotted class meeting time and begin the critique. If needed, the critique may be continued into the next class meeting time, because discussing artworks and arriving at the meanings of those artworks is the most important aspect of the critique and therefore may not fit neatly into one class session. The structure of this feminist critique has some flexibility and variation within it.

Focusing on interpreting artworks and on the sociopolitical meanings of those interpretations is fundamental to my version of a feminist studio art critique. Developing understandings about artworks is best imagined as an ongoing process in which students and instructor are both involved. Student involvement is essential and not peripheral because my feminist studio art critique encourages students to develop a critical consciousness about images and encourages students to inquire about the sociopolitical meanings of artworks.

In this critique, the work of a handful of students' artworks might be placed up for the class to see. The whole class may come up to view the artworks if they are not readily seen from their seats. The instructor may divide the class up into small groups of three or four students. All the students may have a sheet of questions to help guide them in their inquiry. The sheet may contain questions pertaining to what the artwork says about the world, and whether or not the artwork seems to bring up any particular sociopolitical issue.

The small groups may describe among themselves the artwork they are looking at. Students will probably bring up some technical issues, either
strengths or weaknesses. Perhaps one student will take notes for the group. They will then move on to another angle, that of discussing the meaning of the artwork, perhaps with one student perhaps describing how being a white male is influencing how he perceives the artwork. Students will discuss any sociopolitical implications of the artwork that they perceive. The students are used to discussing artworks in this manner in both small groups and in the large class setting because they have done so before in other critiques with this instructor. Earlier in the course the instructor led most of their inquiry about artworks during critiques, but as the course progressed, students had more and more responsibility to think critically for themselves and to articulate their ideas to each other. The students are aware that this critique is different from the critiques that they were used to in previous art courses.

In these two scenarios, I have portrayed an example of what might happen in each of the two critiques: the kind typically found in many art classes and a version of the feminist studio art critique that I propose as a replacement for it.

**General goals and characteristics of a feminist studio art critique**

My dissertation project is about the process of structuring, restructuring, and honing feminist questions and ideas so that students are more responsive to them. This feminist studio art critique is designed to keep a set of ideas and questions in play, and attempts to keep students thinking about them long after the course is finished.

My feminist studio art critique asks certain kinds of questions, and attempts a kind of displacement. Barbara Kruger, the postmodern feminist artist who says she can't think of any moment when she wasn't "totally involved in how one is defined and produced as a female in this culture" (1991, p. 228) provides clarity:
one does make one's suggestions, and I'm just trying to ask questions or make suggestions. Instead of saying how things are, I might suggest how things might be. I could say that I'm involved in a series of attempts to displace things, to change people's minds, to make them think a little bit. (p. 228)

This critique, then, is constructed to displace things, to change people's minds, to make them think differently than they might in a typical critique.

The goal of my feminist studio art critique is to "achieve feminist ends." To achieve feminist ends means to illuminate the lives of women and other often disenfranchised groups of people, and the lives of men in ways that may present reconstructive possibilities for social change.

In the context of the studio art critique, the goal of my feminist studio art critique also means other kinds of things regarding art. Artworks are cultural representations of one kind or another; the purpose of using feminist theories is to enhance ways in which students can recognize and be encouraged to explore artworks as cultural representations. In an essay on black feminism, filmmaker Pratibha Parmar states that "the deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think about us but how we think about ourselves" (quoted in hooks, 1992, p. 5).

This feminist art critique is best characterized as drawing on differing approaches that center around "understanding art in relationship to social values and ideologies, to power struggles, and economic, class, gender, ethnic, and racial considerations" (Garber, 1990, p. 19). Thus, this feminist studio art critique strives for interpretations that relate to social structures and what they can reveal about them. My feminist studio art critique is structured in ways that will be most likely to help accomplish all these goals.

I am pursuing several avenues to change how students think about art. I am mostly interested in students' ability to generate sociopolitical
understandings of artworks based on ideas from feminist theories during studio art critiques. Generating sociopolitical understandings means for students to give significant consideration to the social, cultural, and political meanings of artworks, and the implications of the sociopolitical meanings of artworks. I am also interested in determining whether students can take considerable responsibility in critiquing images during studio art critiques.

A feminist studio art critique: Two primary components

Based mostly on feminist ideas, I constructed two primary components designed to help participants generate and demonstrate sociopolitical art understandings during studio art critiques. One is the introduction and reinforcement of a series of critical strategies primarily through the frequent use of a list of questions. Another component is the structure and sequence of classroom discussions.

In the following section I will present the guiding feminist ideas I have used to compile and construct the first component of this feminist studio art critique. I have chosen to call these ideas "guiding feminist ideas" rather than by a more seemingly impermeable title in order to reflect the partial nature of any interpretation of feminist theories, to acknowledge and encourage the ongoing evolution of feminist theories, and to welcome readers to tailor these approaches to their own interests and needs. I will then present how these guiding ideas were translated into Guide Sheet of Questions that students used in this feminist studio art critique. Finally, I will present the second component of the feminist studio art critique.

Clearly, not all student artworks will reverberate with sociopolitical content. The likelihood of obvious sociopolitical content may depend somewhat on the assignments students are given. I encourage instructors to assign occasional art projects that specifically sociopolitical in nature. I do
do not believe that all assignments should be specifically sociopolitical because doing so would be too restrictive for both students and instructors. Not every image will have content that suggests the need for exploring issues about the representation of men, women, people of color, or any other frequently used sociopolitical structure. During the critique of some images in this feminist studio art critique, then, it is unlikely that any discussion will be initiated by either students or instructor that directly addresses obvious sociopolitical content. Discussions and activities in this feminist studio art critique are not limited to investigations of sociopolitical ideas. I also believe that it is important to often address aspects of images that are typically discussed in studio art critiques (e.g., technical and formal aspects of images). Having said this, however, it is important to note that sociopolitical concerns or issues surrounding representation can arise from either subtle sociopolitical aspects of images or from the situation surrounding the making of the image. A desired outcome of my feminist studio art critique is to persuade students to look for subtle as well as overt sociopolitical aspects of images, and to be cognizant of and willing to explore sociopolitical issues of student artworks.

Guiding feminist ideas for criticizing and interpreting artworks

The following section delineates feminist guiding ideas for criticizing artworks during studio art critiques. Not all of these ideas presented here are specifically feminist, although I consider them to be compatible with my selection and interpretation of feminist ideas, and I consider them to be requisite aspects of a thorough feminist studio art critique. It is the sum total of all these ideas employed while interpreting artworks that is feminist. These feminist ideas are not meant to be exhaustive of all possibilities for structuring a feminist studio art critique; also, readers are invited to add, subtract, or alter aspects of this guiding "list." Additionally, not every idea will be explored
during the discussion of each artwork. I will also include explanations of some commonly-accepted ideas about criticizing art and the particular importance that those ideas have for a feminist studio art critique. There are eleven ideas in all; and I have numbered them to facilitate reading and understanding them.

1. "Artworks have "aboutness" and demand interpretation" (Barrett, 1994, after Danto). This imperative to interpret artworks has special importance for a feminist studio art critique. This feminist studio art critique insists that artworks are cultural products that reflect cultural ideas. Interpreting artworks is necessary in order to understand the cultural ideas embodied within them, as well as how they are influenced by and influence society.

2. Description can reveal important interpretive clues. Barrett (1994a) states that description, the articulation of the components of a work of art is not a simple, pedestrian activity; it is an important critical process. Although description usually concerns facts about artworks, "all facts are dependent on theory and all descriptions are interwoven with interpretation" (ibid., p. 43). Additionally, Barrett points out that art is rarely carefully described in typical studio art critiques; the focus usually centers around ways to improve artworks, discussions about the artists' intents, and judgments of artworks. Verbal descriptions by many students in the critique can enrich the class's perceptions of the work because "everyone sees the phenomena differently," and provides a wider set of ideas from which to better understand the artwork (p. 163). People see things differently because of their varied experiences and world views. For the feminist studio art critique, descriptive activities can have interpretive dimensions by revealing important aspects of viewers'
perceptions, points of view, and sense of identities, and should be included in critiques.

3. Interpretations and the consequences of those interpretations are the most important aspects of studio art critiques. Barrett (1994b) states that artworks should be interpreted and that interpretation is the most important aspect of criticism. Feminism's sociopolitical emphasis, however, makes requisite a focus on meanings of artworks and the consequences of those meanings. These are the most important aspects of a feminist studio art critique; therefore, activities should be structured to emphasize interpretation. Evaluation is featured as part of interpretation in this critique. Barrett (1994a) points out that the procedures of evaluation and interpretation are similar "because the two sets of activities are very much alike although their results are different" (p. 79). Both are "acts of making decisions, providing reasons, and evidence for those decisions, and formulating arguments for one's conclusions" (p. 79).

4. Artworks should be examined for their sociopolitical meanings and implications. Students will be asked to consider that there is "no way out from seeing art as a reflection or meditation or a comment on life" (Kuspit, quoted in Barrett, 1994b, p. 12). This feminist studio art critique seconds these ideas, and extends them to make explorations of any perceived sociopolitical meanings and implications of artworks the ideal to strive for in studio art critiques. As stated earlier not all student images will reverberate with sociopolitical meaning. However, an attempt should be made, and students should be encouraged, to examine images for their sociopolitical implications. Garber (1990, p. 18) states that "art is understood as a carrier of ideas, values, and beliefs, and must be taught with the larger world in mind." The need for
understanding sociopolitical meanings and implications of artworks is of crucial importance for a feminist studio art critique.

5. Concepts about identity can be important in interpreting artworks. Identity-based constructs should be explored when opportunities arise to do so. Opportunities to explore identity arise when aspects of identity that are perceived by instructors and/or students as potentially important parts of the content of artworks and as potentially important elements of student's perceptions that might influence their interpretations of artworks.

Garber (1990, p. 19) states that feminist art criticism "poses not a single method, but draws on a variety of critical approaches whose foci are understanding art in relationship to social values and ideologies, to power struggles, and to economic, class, gender, ethnic, and racial considerations." She advocates feminist art criticism that "does not isolate or overrepresent gender in critical discourse: class, race, age, sexual preference, ethnicity, nationality, and additional influences hold parallel positions." Following Garber, these identity-based constructs are important to consider when interpreting artworks because these various identities have often profound social and political repercussions.

It is important to further explain identity-based constructs and why they are important to consider when interpreting artworks in this feminist studio art critique. The category "women" seems to be a crucial component of anything considered to be feminist. What this term means is a subject of much debate within feminist theories. Concepts of identity as they relate to feminist theories have been rapidly evolving, as I have previously discussed. Mostly, the thrust in many feminist theories has been to recognize components of identity in addition to that of gender as having equal importance, and to explore the complex intersections of those components. Many feminists,
especially feminists of color and some postmodern feminists have brought attention to the exclusionary nature of the term "women" as it has been and is employed within many feminist theories, particularly those of mainstream, liberal feminism that gained popularity particular in the 1970's and 1980's. Still, to advance feminist ideas, the category of "women" is a useful construct when used with caution and with the understanding of the limits of identity-based categories. To allay some of the exclusionary problems, many feminist advocate that the more particular, specific, and contextualized the use of the term, "women," the better.

Another way to understand the importance of identity-based constructs is to look ideas that emanate from feminist standpoint theory. As stated earlier, feminist standpoint theory was developed by socialist feminists from Marxist ideas about how social experience shapes reality. Henessey (1993) states that standpoint refers to a "position" in society which is shaped by and in turn helps shape ways of knowing, structures of power, and resource distribution. Feminist standpoint theorists have posited feminism as this sort of position, a way of conceptualizing reality from the vantage point of women's lives: their activities, interests, and values. (p. 67)

Patti Lather (1992) explains that according to standpoint theorists, the feminist standpoint, "achieved through struggle both against male oppression and toward seeing the world through women's eyes, provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings" and that "given the variety of women's experience in relations to culture, class, race, sexual orientation, etc., there are multiple feminist standpoints" (p. 93). Harding (1993) states that when opposite sides of power relations are examined, the perspectives of those who are less powerful are more objective than those of the powerful. Harding argues that it is possible for people who do not have marginal identities to produce beliefs that are less distorted. To do this, a person must
take responsibility for their social location. Harding says that it is important, for instance, to distinguish between a man "reading as a woman" and "reading as a feminist man" (ibid., p. 151).

I will use an anecdotal account to further illustrate the use of identity-based constructs as embodied within much feminist standpoint theory. The incident I am recalling occurred during the critique of an image in an introductory photography class. The image being critiqued depicted the large, hulking figure of the back of a man in the foreground who appears to be observing a woman seated at a table who is smoking. The photograph was taken in a public place such as a cafe. In discussing the image, one woman in the class stated that she thought the presence of the male figure seemed menacing. A male in the class responded by saying he had no idea that simply the presence of someone sitting in a public location could be menacing. The woman explained how women are sometimes observed in a way that can seem intrusive and possibly menacing, and which can make a person uncomfortable. In this case, the social location of the woman having probably experienced some intimidating moments allowed her to articulate this. Similarly, the social location of the man may have prevented him from knowing what it is like to experience this kind of intimidation based on gender.

Patricia Hill Collins (1991, 1989) further articulates a black feminist epistemology based in standpoint theory. It is based on Afrocentric values and the oppression common to the lives of many black people. She explains that the presence of an independent standpoint does not mean that it is shared by all Black women or even that Black women fully recognize its contours. By using the concept of standpoint, I do not mean to minimize the rich diversity existing among African-American women. I use the phrase "Black women's standpoint" to emphasize the plurality of experiences within the overarching term "standpoint." (1989, p. 747)
Thus the idea of the standpoint from which a person perceives and interprets the world is best understood as not fixed or monolithic. The standpoint is also best understood as being to some degree unstable and constantly in flux. The idea of a person's understandings of the world (and therefore artworks) as being constructed by, among other things, various intersections of identity-based components can be useful when understood as a contributing factor in interpreting artworks.

Using identity-based categories is not intended to fix, foreclose, or limit the complexity of students' explorations of identity. But no understandings about these categories can occur without somehow employing them. Weed (1989, p. xvi) writes that the terms of feminism "are given to it by the social locations in which is produced, and feminist practice becomes an ongoing theoretical and political process of reinscribing or dismantling those terms." Weed also makes cautionary notes about some of feminist theory's persistent focus on identity. An obsession with identity can be detrimental if "what is to be done has been replaced by who I am" (Rooney, quoted in Weed, ibid., p. xxxi). Weed points out that the "problem with Man is that it remained for so long an unmarked term"; and that (after Hazel Carby) the problem with whiteness is that is still refuses to become a racialized category." One way out of this according to Weed is to focus on the cultural operations that perpetuate masculinity and femininity. In this feminist studio art critique, students will be encouraged to examine what various intersecting identities can, might and often do mean and to examine the social mechanisms which produce them. As social constructions with far-reaching social and political ramifications, complex dimensions and intersections of identity should be explored when opportunities arise to do so.
6. A plurality of interpretations should be encouraged. Feminist criticism (Garber, 1990; Congdon, 1991) is often characterized as fostering a plurality of interpretations. Garber states that "the goal of art criticism becomes coherence in diversity and respect" (ibid., p. 22). The goal is to welcome the diversity that exists in any particular classroom in order to not only recognize and respect differences among people, but to encourage students' understanding that all knowledge is partial and inflected (ibid.).

7. Students should be encouraged to articulate their feelings about artworks in part because feelings can sometimes be clues to non-dominant ideas. Feelings are considered to be "integral to the critical experience . . . part of the total significance" of an artwork (Lankford, 1984, p. 153), and important guides to interpretation (Barrett, 1994, p.11). Feelings and emotions can have particularly important meanings in the feminist studio critique.

Feelings and emotions are often separated from ideas and given a lesser status in Western thought (Jaggar, 1989). Catherine Lutz has argued that the "dichotomous categories of 'cognition' and 'affect' are themselves Euroamerican constructions, master symbols that participate in the fundamental organization of our ways of looking at ourselves and others (quoted in Jaggar, 1989, p. 131-132). French postmodern feminists have long questioned this duality.

Jaggar (1989) also suggests that emotions are social constructs which vary cross-culturally and across other social borders. Although feelings are social constructs, they can also be clues to non-dominant ideas as I indicated above because of differences in social locations. For example, although both a man and a woman who have been raised seeing many images of women being objectified by the assumed viewer, a woman may experience embarrassment and anger when viewing such an image, and the man may not experience any
negative emotions. Jaggar explains that the most obvious way in which emotions are socially constructed is that "children are taught deliberately what their culture defines as appropriate responses to certain situations, such as fearing strangers or enjoying spicy food" (p. 134-135). She also points out that by "forming our emotional constitution in particular ways, our society helps to ensure its own perpetuation." Thus, she encourages an attention to "outlaw emotions," feelings which do not coincide with values of the dominant culture (p. 143).

Emotions can be important elements for determining sociopolitical meanings of artworks. One could explore, for instance, why an image is upsetting or why it is joyful. Encouraging the expression of emotions about artworks is important, and examining the reasons behind them can provide information for viewers about the social positions that comprise subjectivity and which help determine what we have certain preferences and beliefs.

Carolyn Korsmeyer (1993) notes that as early as 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft has pointed out the "intransigent alignment of feminine temperament with the 'less rational' regions of sensation, appetite—and emotion" (p. 200). Korsmeyer discusses theoretical parallels concerning emotions, aesthetics, and appraisals of art:

Feminist philosophy coincides with recent moves in aesthetics and philosophy generally to establish emotional responses as integral to the experiences of art and emotive judgments as legitimate critical assessments. (p. 200)

For the reasons explained above feelings can be particularly important in this feminist studio art critique.

8. Acknowledging and exploring the influence of context in interpreting artworks is important in this feminist studio art critique. In this instance, the context is the studio art critique. Students should be encouraged
to explore the studio art critique as a discourse that each has some prior construct for and which influences the criticism of artworks in critiques. Students should be encouraged to explore the particular set of associations and influences that the concept of discussing artworks in studio art critiques has on their interpretations of artworks.

9. Students should be encouraged to explore criteria that are used to interpret and evaluate artworks. Criteria reflect a world view and have social and political ramifications, therefore need to be explored in this feminist studio art critique. Students should be taught about a wide range of criteria, including criteria which directly oppose some modernist ideas that many students may have been brought up with. Some criteria are mutually exclusive (Barrett, 1994a). Formalist criteria, based on the exploration of the form of artworks, and internationalist criteria, based on the what artworks say about the world, are one example of mutually exclusive criteria. Feminism is inherently intentionalist. A feminist studio art critique encourages explorations of what artworks say about the world.

10. Intentionalist criticism should be discouraged. This feminist studio art critique is about opening up dialogue to involve as many students as possible and welcome a diversity of opinions, and to foster investigations of the sociopolitical meanings of images. Intentionalist critiques would foreclose this range of activities from happening by locating the most 'correct' interpretation with the artist. Additionally, there is no reason to believe that artists would necessarily explore sociopolitical dimensions of their artworks. Instead, the artist's interpretation should be understood to be one among other possible interpretations. Particularly in the initial discussion of their work, it is important for artists to see how that work of art is received and understood by the community of viewers at hand.
11. Artists can sometimes be informative resources about their artworks. Although intentionalist critiques should be avoided, there may be times when, due to factors which are situationally determined, such as the instructor's or other students' knowledge about a student or to some thoughts about the content of an artwork, when other kinds of activities might be included. I am suggesting that there may be instances when a students' work may be constructed from aesthetic and cultural ideas that differ from the dominant artistic paradigms or cultural spheres of most of the other students in the critique. In such cases the artist might be used as a resource so that other students might better understand their work. Discussions of these issues do not necessarily mean a thorough embrace of intentionalism. One way around this knotty issue is to ask the artist about and discuss cultural influences and inspirations and not for the artist to interpret the artwork.

If the artist remains a silent listener in all instances, including the one described above, then we conveniently leave some very difficult issues which have high stakes in the hands of those who may be perceived to be "the problem." Simply noting to themselves that their work did not "communicate" what they thought it would about their culture or group may not be enough. Every artist must deal with the gap between their intended meanings and those which the community perceives. Some artists may not care whether or not certain kinds of meanings are understood. Viewers do not necessarily need to know or seek correspondence to the artist's intent. The issue is that some artists whose work is constructed from cultural and aesthetic ideas which reside outside dominant systems may have their work excluded or devalued.

Charlene Touchette (1994) wrote that

As all multicultural artists know from painful experience, racism has everything to do with art. "Universality" and "quality" are in fact red-herring issues used to systematically exclude their art from the
mainstream by elevating the subjective Euro-American cultural viewpoint to the position of sole arbiter of what is quality for all people. The sad truth is that it is the mainstream arts professionals who "just haven't got it yet." They close themselves off to the richness of artistic diversity by refusing to see the plain truth that though criteria vary widely among cultures, classes, and genders, they can all be simultaneously valid and can produce art that profoundly explores and illuminates the human experience. (p. 186)

Particularly in an educational setting, the community of viewers, whatever their makeup, should also become involved in complex issues of representation. In the studio art critique, that community is comprised of students and instructor. If issues of representation (e.g., possible difficulties in representing ideas from a hybrid mixture of cultural influences) are always left for the artist working from a non-dominant aesthetic paradigm to contemplate privately, the temptation might be to adopt whatever dominant paradigm exists, and to abandon culturally specific beliefs. Graeme Sullivan (1993) argues that

Common-sense and the reality of the classroom suggest it is the framing of different perspectives, the discipline lens used, and the personal and public connections made that provide the informing platform for learning. As such, moving to the edge to see as much as possible from another point of view does not involve blindly taking on that position, but to see what is revealed in your own circumstance. (p. 18)

I am arguing for responsible interpretations and judgments made by a thoughtful consideration of criteria, including the political implications of that criteria. A student may be encouraged to discuss, for instance, why it was important for them to depict particular aspects of their cultural heritage in the way that they did. In general, appraisals of artworks should be made with consideration of one's own criteria for evaluation and the political stakes surrounding that criteria, and with consideration given to the particular standpoint of the artist, sometimes including considerations of how that artwork functions for the maker.
12. This feminist studio art critique encourages instructors to consider situations in which it might be beneficial to nudge discussions in particular sociopolitically-focused directions. I have already stated that augmenting the articulation of a plurality of interpretations is an important aspect of the critique. Welcoming a plurality of interpretations, however, does not mean that the discussion should stop there, or that varying interpretations should always be left floating in a sea of equivalence.

The feminist studio art critique encourages instructors to recognize opportunities to nudge discussions as they develop to further explore sociopolitical art understandings. This nudging is particularly important when an opportunity arises to maximize the reconstructive potential of a sociopolitically-focused comment or question. Reconstructive potential means that a sociopolitical issue has surfaced and that further discussion of that issue may contribute to understandings about it that the instructor perceives can contribute to "reconstructing" ideas that she feels are in need of reconstruction.

Terry Barrett (1994b) argues that some interpretations are "better argued, better grounded in evidence, and therefore more reasonable, more persuasive, and more readily acceptable" (p. 9). His criteria, then, center around being reasonable, persuasive, and well-articulated.

In her explanation of feminist art criticism, Elizabeth Garber (1990) welcomes plurality, which I interpret as encouraging a range of possibly differing interpretations that are vocalized by students. Yet she goes on to say that some "feminist criticisms work toward such reconstruction, although most practitioners go beyond pluralism in envisioning a reconstruction of such extreme dimensions that it might be understood as revolutionary" (p. 23, my emphasis). Later in the article she states that "the critical endpoints at which
students arrive need to be dissected in terms of their sociopolitical ramifications" (p. 24). I borrow Garber's term "reconstruction" to envision the activity of working with cultural ideas that the instructor believes are in need of attention. The phrase I am advocating in this study is "reconstructive potential."

Discussing aesthetic pluralism in reference to multicultural education, Lynn Hart (1991) explains that what rescues pluralism from nihilism or from implying that all interpretations are equally valid, is the fact that it requires the acknowledgment and delineation of "the specific standards upon which the art form in question is based" (p. 154). In the same article, Hart identifies Paul Duncum as an art educator who thinks that art education should be socially critical and address "not only the socially embedded nature of its subject, but its political nature" (quoted in Hart, ibid., p. 155). She agrees, saying that certainly a "pluralist approach should include the social and political nature of art education" (p. 155).

"Going beyond pluralism," to borrow Garber's phrase, has to mean, at least some of the time, to nudge the discussion toward certain kinds of concerns, those of the larger sociopolitical implications of artworks. Although Robert Scholes (1985) focuses on written texts, we can adopt his practice of opening "the way between the literary or verbal text and the social text in which we live" (p. 24). In analyzing a writing by Hemingway, he says that if stories open up "extratextual" concerns about prostitution and war, and the cultural sanctioning of those two institutions, we teachers should not cut off such discussion as non literary but welcome it as recognizing a major function of written texts: the rendering of "accounts" that are themselves abstractions from the cultural text, versions of social reality for our consideration. (p. 36)

Continuing his work on Hemingway's writing, he adds that we should confront the implications Hemingway's seemingly objective, naturalistic attitude"—this
is the way things are, people can't help themselves-" and ask why he might have assumed this position and "what the consequences of such positions are in the world of human action" (p. 37).

The implication of the preceding ideas is that this feminist studio art critique encourages instructors to consider situations in which it might be beneficial to nudge discussions in particular sociopolitical directions. The purpose of this interpretively focused critique is to reveal deeper meanings of artworks and how they connect to the world at large in ways that might have relevance for revealing oppressive structures, and for illustrating new ways in which women and other traditionally dominated groups and in which men can re-evaluate, re-imagine, reconstruct ideas about the world.

I do not want to limit what I mean by "revealing oppressive structures," in relation to identity-based constructs, but some examples might provide clarity. Examples include: exploring ways in which gender and other factors affect artistic production; exposing and examining the implications of gender stereotypes of both men and women; discussing ways in which images might be considered either demeaning or reconstructively enabling or both; investigating how images can reveal either repressive and/or reconstructively enabling components of society; and analyzing ways in which supposedly "liberated" depictions of women and others may not be so liberating.

Illustrating ways of re-evaluating, re-imaging, and reconstructing the lives of people in oppressed groups can mean many things. This critique can involve exploring how characteristically female ways of being, or how marginalized identities which are frequently devalued, can be seen as positive. Bell hooks writes about "loving blackness," as a radical, positive political
resistance, which is an important complement to examinations of oppressive
events (1992, p. 9).

Another way in which this critique can re-imagine and reconstruct the
lives of women and other marginalized people is for people in marginalized
groups to speak from their own lives. Another way in which this critique can
re-imagine the lives of women and other marginalized people can be to
investigate ways in which marginalized groups can see through the cracks of
patriarchy, which has often been portrayed as imperviously monolithic by
some feminists. Another way can be, to borrow a particularly apt phrase from
Louise Nicholson's description of socialist feminism's relationship to Marxism,
is to explore how some women and some feminists "inhabit, critique, and
reconstruct" certain aspects of culture (ibid., p. 355). Another way in which
this critique can re-imagine the lives of women and other marginalized people
is for students to explore oppositional readings or interpretations which
oppose dominant readings of all kinds of texts, including student artworks.

Feminist ideas for criticizing artworks: The guide sheet of questions

My feminist studio art critique centers around understanding the
sociopolitical meanings of art through the lens of feminist theories. The first
of the two primary components designed to help participants generate and
demonstrate sociopolitical art understandings during studio art critiques is the
introduction and reinforcement of critical strategies primarily through the
frequent use of a list of questions. The guiding feminist ideas are embodied
within this set of questions. Mostly interpretive, the questions are designed to
be a springboard for opening up discussions of a sociopolitical nature.

This sheet of questions should be understood to be only suggestions for
questions that students might be asked to consider during a feminist studio art
critique. The questions are intended to be a guide and are not meant to be
prescriptive. Many other kinds of questions could be included and some presently on the sheet might be deleted by someone else who is applying feminist ideas to structure a feminist studio art critique. The sheet of questions is best viewed as a set of ideas to consider, and to keep in a state of flux.

As is true of other aspects of this critique, not all of the questions specifically refer to gender or other concerns typically associated with feminism. The first questions are basic critical procedures. Describing, interpreting and evaluating are all components of this feminist studio art critique. These critical procedures are usually part of any thorough critique, and are inherently part of sociopolitically-focused critiques. These critical procedures are located at the beginning of the Guide Sheet of Questions. Following those are more sociopolitically-oriented questions and suggestions to consider when describing, interpreting and evaluating artworks. Feelings about artworks are also included. These questions were printed on a sheet referred to as the Guide Sheet of Questions and given to students to use frequently throughout the course during studio critiques. The sheet is not necessarily to be used during all discussions of artworks. When the sheet was used, usually only one or two of the questions were asked about an artwork put up to be critiqued. Those one or two questions were usually selected from the sheet by students.

The questions form a pool of sociopolitical approaches designed to enhance students' sociopolitical art understandings. The questions are as follows, and are also listed in Appendix B as the separate sheet students received. Describe the artwork. Explain what the artwork is about. What feelings do you have about it? Why do you think you have those feelings? What kinds of ideas about life does the artwork prompt you to think about? What does the artwork make you think about art and artmaking and the
artworld? What does the artwork say about class, race, gender, culture, sexuality, age, and ethnicity or other factors? How has your identity influenced your view of the artwork? How do you think the artist's identity or any cultural factors influenced the artwork? What is/are your criteria for judgment? What function does this artwork have in society? For the artist? Are there other kinds of information that may be particularly useful in understanding this artwork? What kinds of information might this be and how might you find it? Should you try to?

Components of this feminist studio art critique: sequence and group structure

The second component of this feminist studio art critique is the sequence and structure of critical activities within the studio art classroom. Some feminist theorists imply that the way that students are organized in educational settings, in this instance during critiques, has implications for enhancing feminist ideas. Bell hooks (1995) states that "making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (p. 39). She also explains that

One of my teaching strategies is to redirect their attention away from my voice to one another's voice. I often find that this happens most quickly when students share experiences in conjunction with academic subject matter" (p. 151).

Garber (1992) states that

We must be prepared to give up some of our power. As teachers, we must no longer desire to be the masters of the discourse. (p. 27)

Sustained dialogue by students with a frequent sociopolitical focus is the goal of this critique.

Three basic classroom structures were utilized in this model of a feminist studio art critique. These classroom structures are not feminist in and of themselves. The way they are utilized in this model complement and embody many feminist ideas and are therefore important to achieving
feminist goals. The first of those is large group instructor-led discussion, a common feature of many classrooms. The second is small group discussions led by students. The way those groups are configured are structured in a particular way and follows an intentional sequence in the feminist studio art critique. The third is large group discussions led by students. Small groups take two different forms in this study: the first of these is an instructor-led large class discussion after students meet in small groups; the second of is large class discussions led by the small groups.

In this feminist studio art critique, during the duration of the course, the classroom structure should move gradually from large class discussions led mostly by the instructor to mostly student-led discussions. The idea is to give students more and more responsibility for critical dialogue. It is important for the instructor in this feminist studio art critique to continually provide examples or models of approaches to criticism during studio art critiques. Demonstrating examples or models of ways to approach criticism in studio art critiques is accomplished through the portions of discussions that are instructor-led, in which the focus is constantly directed to non-intentionalist, thorough interpretations that focus on sociopolitical meanings of artworks whenever possible. I do not advocate long student-led discussions that have no relation to art or sociopolitical art understandings. When students lead discussions, the instructor should interject questions or redirect discussions only if needed, particularly to nudge discussions in sociopolitical directions. The point of these differing discussion structures is to involve as many students in as much of the dialogue about artworks as possible.

This feminist art critique is best characterized as drawing on differing approaches that center around "understanding art in relationship to social values and ideologies, to power struggles, and economic, class, gender, ethnic.
and racial considerations" (Garber, 1990, p. 19). Thus, this feminist studio art critique strives for interpretations that relate to social structures and what they can reveal about them.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical frameworks

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman (1995) state that "openly ideological" perspectives in research are necessary for determining the political underpinnings of social structures (p. ix). Feminism can be characterized as openly ideological. Patti Lather (1992) describes four main paradigms of inquiry, based on those of Habermas. Those are to "predict," "understand," "emancipate," and the fourth, which she adds, is to "deconstruct." Feminist research spans all these paradigms. It is "openly ideological," recognizing that "ways of knowing are inherently culture bound and that researcher values permeate inquiry" (p. 91). My research project falls within both the "understanding" and the "emancipatory" paradigms. The latter is characterized, in part, as "praxis-oriented" and "critical" (p. 89).

I designed this study mostly using ideas from action research. Action research has been described by Wanda May (1993) as "the study and enhancement of one's own practice" (p. 114). Reinhart (1992) states that for feminists, research that is characterized by action rather than only reflection is highly valued. She characterizes action research as that which intervenes and studies in a continuous series of feedback loops. Lather believes that research should only be considered feminist if it is clearly linked to action, an idea that I also advocate.
May (1993) points out that some researchers believe that reform is emphasized, particularly when "critical" action research is informed by theories such as neo-Marxism and feminism. Reform is typically directed toward "full, active democratic participation to change inequitable structures, policies, and practices that oppress groups in a particular context by gender, race, ethnicity, economic or social status, and/or age" (p. 120). The critical action research discussed by May focuses on change. Lather (1992) describes "critical inquiry" as inquiry that "takes into account how our lives are mediated by systems of inequity such as classicism, racism, and sexism" (p. 87). I also accept and advocate these positions.

Contextualizing the study

To begin the analysis of my study, I will first describe the particular situation in which the study was conducted. This contextualization will present many factors that are important to consider in analyzing the results.

I wanted to conduct my study in an introductory level black and white photography class because I was familiar with the course, having previously taught it. Additionally, I thought that I would have a good chance of being able to conduct my research there because I was familiar with some of the faculty who taught photography. As a graduate student I spoke with the professor coordinating and course and then with some photography teaching associates. I was acquainted with two graduate students who were teaching associates working toward their M.F.A.'s in photography. After obtaining permission from the professor coordinating the course, I first discussed my study with a female graduate student who was teaching the course. Although the topic interested her, she did not want to relinquish the opportunity to continue developing her own ideas. The male teaching assistant was more interested in my project. He had previously taken the photographic criticism
course offered through the Department of Art Education and told me that he had learned much from it and that it influenced his teaching. His M.F.A. show was scheduled for the quarter I would be conducting my study and he said that cooperating in the study might give him more time to complete the work necessary for his M.F.A. show.

He agreed to participate in the study. As he had previously been teaching it, the syllabus already reflected a strong emphasis on critical thinking and included studio projects that are typical of introductory photography courses: portraits, self-portraits, documentaries, photograms, and intentionally-constructed "fictional" images. The course structure and assignments remained mostly unchanged. I suggested to him to introduce me to the class as a co-instructor who was conducting a study about ways to improve studio art critiques and who would be leading the critiques.

I had the benefit of working with this instructor who was interested in my study, supportive, and who maintained positive attitudes throughout the study. Not all of the students involved with the study, however, were supportive. I have taught three separate courses at the Ohio State University, including an introduction to contemporary art, an ethnic arts class, and an introductory black and white photography class. I also worked as a Graduate Research Associate at the Wexner Center for the Arts. I have encountered many groups of students during my teaching. Many of the students participating in the study were sometimes unsupportive, apathetic and uncooperative, not only during their involvement with the critiques, but during the few times I observed their interactions with the instructor.

Perhaps an example of the students' behavior would provide clarity. Although thorough, lively description of an artwork is not necessarily easy, description is an activity that is a likely starting place to talk about artworks.
Many times when asked to describe an image, students would not readily do so. When asked to write brief in-class descriptions and interpretations of an image during a critique, twice within a two-minute period, students would not respond when I asked them what they wrote to describe the artwork being critiqued. On numerous occasions, students were reluctant to respond to any questions asked during the critique.

Several factors may have contributed to the students' failure to respond to questions. The class met late in the afternoon, when the heat of the day had accumulated, from 4:30 until 6:30 during Spring Quarter. The room was usually very warm. The air conditioner in the room functioned and could be turned on, but was loud and intrusive. I tried to turn it on before class in order to start with a cool room, but another class met before mine, often preventing me from being able to do so. When I could use the air conditioner, whatever coolness had been established did not last long. The class was held on the third floor of the building that housed the darkrooms, a modern, nondescript building, during Spring Quarter. Despite some fluorescent lighting, the room was somewhat dark, even with the shades open, since slides were frequently shown there. The scheduling of assignments and other aspects of the course necessitated that one critique be conducted on the late afternoon on a Friday, and some of the students were very eager to finish early, and were noticeably impatient.

Another factor that may have contributed to the students' negative attitudes is the number of Industrial Design students who were required to take the class. Although the fact that the course was required does not necessarily cause negative student attitudes, this does present the possibility that some design students did not want to be there. Five of the thirteen participants were Industrial Design majors.
Another factor that may have contributed to students' negative attitudes is that the primary instructor conducted the first critique. The first project critiqued was a photogram. When he initially agreed to take part in the study, I did not know that he felt that he wanted to conduct the first critique until two weeks into the quarter. I do not know what happened during this critique because the instructor requested that he conduct it without my presence. The first critique may have established patterns of behavior and student expectations that were not complementary to my study. Although the instructor was supportive of criticism as it was taught in a course in the art education department, I do not know how or if any of these ideas manifested themselves in his teaching of this course because I was not present.

Another factor that may have influenced students is that although I was presented as co-teacher, it was clear to students that beyond structuring and leading discussions that occurred during the critiques that I conducted, I had no authority. I did not teach other aspects of the class. I did not grade any student work. Grading all aspects of the course was the responsibility of the primary instructor. This may have helped students to perceive the instructor as the 'real' authority and predisposed them to a diminished level of participation in the critiques that I led, even though he was present during most of them.

Another set of factors that may have contributed to students non-responsive behavior, and perhaps the most important ones, are both the legacy of the discourse known as "the studio art critique" and the kinds of ideas that are popularly associated with art and artists. The legacy of the discourse known as "the studio art critique" typically embodies ideas that are not complementary with the goals of this feminist studio art critique. Those ideas consist of a disregard for interpretation in general and therefore for
explorations of sociopolitical aspects of artworks, the instructor issuing judgments on mostly formal or expressive aspects of student artworks, and the exclusion of students' contributions to discussions about the artworks of their peers. Ideas popularly associated with art and artists that are not complementary to the goals of this feminist studio art critique include the assumption that artworks speak for themselves, and that the process of criticizing artworks can rob artworks of inherent mysteries that should not be articulated.

The preceding factors may have contributed to the apathy that students sometimes demonstrated. I asked the cooperating instructor about his thoughts concerning this behavior and attitudes. He also found them to be somewhat reticent to participate, although he stated that he has encountered other groups of students who exhibited similarly apathetic attitudes.

The apathy and negative attitudes demonstrated by many of these students initially prompted me to consider waiting until another quarter to conduct my research. Some students, however, demonstrated a willingness to engage in the kind of inquiry I was interested in. I decided to continue working with this group of students. I reasoned that some measure of success with a less than ideal group of students would add authenticity to my project. Additionally, both more ideal and less ideal groups of students are actually encountered in teaching situations. It is with this preface that I will begin analyzing the results of my study.

**Structuring the analysis**

To analyze the results I utilized some of the ideas discussed by Strauss (1987) in his book on qualitative analysis for social scientists. I wanted to give my data a sound analysis, and Strauss's methods are presented clearly and logically, and have a structure that I found meaningful for my study.
Along with Bernard Glaser, Strauss is responsible for developing the concept of *grounded theory* in the late 1960's. "Grounded theory" emphasizes generating theory which is thoroughly based on ("grounded in") data (p. 6). He states that "without grounding in data, that theory will be speculative, hence ineffective" (p. 1). An important conviction underlying his approach to qualitative analysis is that "social phenomena are complex phenomena" which must be accounted for in the analysis (p. 6). Not a method, grounded theory is a way of doing research that has certain characteristics. He advocates "methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm to ensure conceptual development and density" (p. 5).

In order to account for the complexity of a situation under study, Strauss suggests that interpretations should successively evolve during the course of the study. He also states that interpretations must be "conceptually dense," meaning that "there are many concepts and many linkages among them." He also argues that data must be examined thoroughly and in detail to bring out its complexity.

Strauss quotes Glaser (in Strauss, p. 25) to explain that behavioral actions and events become data which are "indicators of a concept the analyst derives from them, at first provisionally but later with more certainty". He explains that "many indicators (behavioral actions/events) are examined comparatively by the analyst who "codes" them, naming them as indicators of a class of events/behavioral actions. He quotes Glaser again to further explain that in making "comparisons of indicator to indicator the analyst is forced into confronting similarities, differences, and degrees of consistency of meaning among indicators" which "generates an underlying uniformity, which in turn results in" making coded categories.
Strauss suggests a coding paradigm. The purpose of the paradigm is to serve as a reminder to "code data for relevance to whatever phenomena are referenced by a given category." He suggests coding for the "conditions," "interactions among the actors," "strategies and tactics," and "consequences." Conditions refers to the set of circumstances surrounding an event/behavior. Interactions refers to what happens between and among people in the situation being studied. Strategies and tactics refers to reasons behind the interactions. Consequences refers to the outcome of the behavior/event. I utilized some of these categories in my analysis, which I explain below.

Establishing codes for analysis

In this study I primarily wanted to know whether feminist theories can be used to structure studio art critiques in ways that significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings. To address this question, I established coding that would identify and categorize participants' sociopolitical art understandings. Due to the premise of my study, this major coding category, sociopolitical art understandings, pre-existed. Following ideas advocated by Strauss, I also established coding that could account for the circumstances surrounding the participants' demonstration of those understandings. Since the coding categories were created during the analysis of the dialogue, I will discuss them at length in Chapter 4.

Design of the Study

A series of sequential and sustained interventions during studio art critiques and that span the duration of a studio art course in photography comprise this study. After comprehensively reviewing feminism, I developed two components that comprise this critique. The first component is a set of guiding feminist ideas about criticism that I imbedded in a set of feminist-based questions designed to be used by students as springboards for discussion.
during critiques. The second component is the sequence and structure of classroom activities.

It follows that the longer an instructor uses the kinds of approaches advocated in a feminist studio art critique, the more potential there is to displace present ones. For this study I selected a class length that is typical within many institutions of higher education—one quarter at a university. The class is an introductory black and white photography class. Ten weeks is close enough in resemblance to the length of many classes to be useful for classes of similar or longer duration. Ten weeks is often all the time that an instructor has in some universities and other educational systems. Therefore, the ten week time frame is based upon actual constraints faced by many instructors. More time would, of course, be advantageous. An instructor in a public school who has an entire year to work with students may have greater success. A visiting artist who spends one class period with a studio art class will be limited by the fact that a two or three hour session is unlikely to undo a lifetime of critiques that have most likely operated on principles ignoring many of those of the feminist studio art critique.

I chose to analyze the transcript of student dialogue that occurred during the studio art critiques to study the conversation that takes place during critiques. As a construct common to studio art classrooms, the critique is a site where students communally make meanings about artworks by engaging in group dialogue of one kind or another. I chose not to analyze individual artworks myself because what I was interested in researching were the kinds of meanings students made through dialogue during the studio art critiques, and not those that I separately arrived at. Rather than viewing artworks as texts that have fixed meanings embodied within them, I am viewing interpretations of artworks as dependent upon context, as meanings
produced through a series of contextually-bound interactions among students and among students and instructor during critiques.

Participants/Location of Research

The participants in this study are students who enrolled in the Art Department's Introduction to Black and White Photography course at the Ohio State University. No prerequisites are required to take the course and students from many different fields usually enroll, including many who have not chosen a major. A class is typically comprised of undergraduate students, mostly white and male, along with an occasional graduate student from a non-art field. A significant proportion of design students, mostly male, consistently enroll because it is a requirement for their major. There were thirteen students enrolled in the class in which my study occurred. Nine are male and four are female. Of the four females, two are Industrial Design majors, one is an honors English major, and the other is undecided about a major. Of the males, three are Industrial Design majors, one is a business major, one is a continuing education student, another is majoring in molecular genetics, and three are undecided about a major.

On the first day of class I told the class that I was interested in conducting a research project about improving studio art critiques, explained the collaborative nature of the project and that I would be conducting the studio art critiques, and answered the few questions students asked. I informed students that studio art critiques were an integral part of studio art classes. I asked students to think about whether or not they wished to participate and told them that they were under no obligation to agree to participate. All students agreed to participate; if they had not, I would have chosen a different situation in which to conduct my research. Students signed a release form. The study took place during one quarter, Spring Quarter, at the Ohio State University.
University, a large midwestern research university, in Haskett Hall, the building where photography courses are usually taught.

Methods of Data Collection

Ethnographic data collection methods were utilized. Spradley (1988) identifies an ethnographic record as consisting of "field notes, tape recordings, pictures, artifacts, and anything else which documents the cultural scene under study" (p. 69). I collected data during each studio art critique in the form of an audio tape of the discussion that occurred during each critique. The transcript of this dialogue is the primary data I analyzed. I also analyzed one brief critical paper and participants' comments evaluating the critique.

Methods of Data Analysis

I analyzed the content of participant dialogue during the studio art critiques. I also noted student affective responses during critiques. I will present the specific criteria for analysis in Chapter Four. Students' dialogue was examined at length to determine their comprehension of, application of, and attitude toward discussing sociopolitical art understandings using feminist ideas. A complete 115-page transcript of the dialogue that occurred during the studio art critiques is included in the Appendix.

Significance of the Study

I draw many implications from this study. It provides information about an under-researched area in the art classroom: the studio art critique. The findings of this research will be valuable to art education because the study will document the development of sequential studio art critiques that attempt to put many feminist/sociopolitically-based ideas in practice. Such grounded information is lacking in the field (Hamblen, 1986). I expect that by the end of the quarter students will demonstrate some transfer of feminist art
ideas in the studio art critique. I draw implications for the field of art education.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study mostly center around the small population that participated. Another limitation is that I did not have significant control over course content. Additionally, a limitation is that I did not teach the course other than the critiques I was present for. Ideally, the instructor present during critiques should also be the instructor who teaches the rest of the course.
Establishing Codes for Analysis

First I bound two copies of the transcript from the studio critiques. One copy was mostly experimental, which I used to establish codes during the open coding process. "Open coding" (Strauss, 1987, p. 28) consisted of reading again and again through the data, trying to ascertain and hone important categories and subcategories. I wanted to code with as much clarity and meaningful complexity as I could. I also wanted to be able create codes that functioned as a visual shorthand, so that just by glancing I could have as much information as possible about that particular moment during the critique. As suggested by Strauss, the codes kept evolving throughout my analysis but were established mostly during a series of initial analyses.

The following questions, which were basic to my study, helped guide in establishing codes of analysis. What is meant by sociopolitical art understandings, the desired consequence of this study? What was the kind, quality and thoroughness of those understandings? When did students exhibit them? Should I differentiate between discussions of sociopolitical aspects of art that are compatible with feminist ideas (e.g., those that reveal oppressive societal structures and/or offered reconstructive possibilities for society) and those that I did not consider to be? What were the conditions surrounding instances of sociopolitical art understandings? Did they use concepts and questions from the Guiding Sheet of Questions? How and when? What was
their attitude about using the Guide Sheet and about considering specifically sociopolitically-focused questions during studio art critiques? How did large-group vs. small-group classroom structures affect their sociopolitical art understandings? How did other critical procedures factor into instances when students demonstrated sociopolitical art understandings? How did instructor nudges affect instances when students demonstrated sociopolitical art understandings?

Coding Consequences: Sociopolitical art understandings

This study centers around the concept, "sociopolitical art understandings," which, in this study, refers to ideas concerning social and political issues that arise from participants' discussions of artworks. While I acknowledge the broad nature of this category and the somewhat subjective nature of any interpretation of it, I also assert that boundaries can be demarcated for the purposes of this study. Determining how I would break sociopolitical art understandings, the consequence that I wanted to examine further, into components to be analyzed occurred mostly during the open coding of the data.

To qualify as a sociopolitical art understanding, participants had to minimally begin to address at least one aspect of the social and political dimensions of an image. A minimum qualifying example occurred during the discussion of a portrait of a woman who is smiling broadly. One male student stated that the photograph appeared to counter "lots of stereotyped things that you hear, like women are unapproachable." He attributed this to the camera angle, which was level with the viewer, the woman's smile, and the fact that the photographer is male, and did not elaborate any further. This statement qualifies as a very low level sociopolitical comment because the participant has gone beyond simply identifying a topic ('women') that is potentially rich.
in sociopolitical meaning and has begun to minimally explore at least one idea associated with that category, in this case, stereotypes associated with women.

I developed a numerical rating scale from one to five to indicate the range of passages that fall into this category. The scale spans comments that I consider to minimally qualify to those that I consider to be exemplary. What I am rating is the participants' engagement with, the depth with which sociopolitical issues are explored. The number "1" represents those that minimally qualify, as illustrated above in the example when a participant mentioned stereotypes about women. It received a rating of "S/P 1." The "S/P" represents the category "sociopolitical" and the "1" represents the minimally qualifying end of the scale. I consider comments which received a "5" to be exemplary.

An example of a comment that was not strong enough to qualify as sociopolitical occurred during the discussion of an image of a mother holding a child. One student, representing the small group that had discussed the photograph, said, "...we all came to the immediate conclusion that this has something to do with motherhood." He did not explain or develop his comment further. It was not included in the sociopolitical category because although the participant identified the category 'motherhood,' nothing about the social and political dimensions of 'motherhood' was explored. Motherhood, and all the ideas associated with it is, of course, potentially rich with such implications. In his comment, however, this participant did not explore any of them. To code passages that were borderline cases, I put a question mark beside the "S/P" code in the margin.

An exemplary comment occurred later in the discussion of the same image. One male student stated that motherhood is something women "can
relate to and for a man it's something that he needs to appreciate." He
continued after a nudge from the instructor, adding,

I mean, for a woman, especially if they're a mother, if they're a mother
it's something they can relate to, that they can agree with, that they have a
common bond with. For a younger woman, she can either be in fear of or in
preparation for. And then for any guy, we generally don't do, it's something
stereotypically we don't do. There are some that are in that position, but for
the most part we're the ones who take care of the other end of the deal while
they're there with the kids...

The reason for considering this passage exemplary is the extended
engagement the participant demonstrated in considering sociopolitical ideas
associated with this image. The specific content must simply address and
discuss sociopolitical meanings, with no particular ideology or direction to
those discussions.

The range of topics that have strong sociopolitical dimensions or
implications is infinite. I found it useful, however, to use some categories that
are commonly referred to in popular culture, in academia and in particular
within feminism, as well as in other aspects of social life and that are
generally understood to have strong sociopolitical dimensions. This list is
mostly comprised of identity-based constructs. These include gender, race,
ethnicity, nationality, ableness, sexual orientation, age, class and other
factors. I add "and other factors" to acknowledge that I may not be aware of all
facets of identity and that such a list cannot be exhaustive. The degree to
which such constructs intersect with each other in complex ways and
influence how we perceive the world is immensely variable, and differs
among individuals, over time, and from situation to situation. I have
previously discussed some problems with utilizing identity-based constructs
and stated that using them is not intended to fix or foreclose or limit the
complexity of students' exploration of them. This list is meant to persuade
participants to raise questions about the implications and importance of these
politically loaded, commonly-referenced constructs associated with identity as they relate to artworks and interpretations of them.

As explained earlier, participants' naming or mentioning categories from this list was not a guarantee of inclusion in the sociopolitical category. Inclusion was based on a minimum level of participants' engagement with these categories, as it was with any other category or topic. Because the list of other sociopolitical topics is potentially endless, I identified those topics as they arose from discussions during critiques.

To code the transcript of dialogue that occurred during the studio art critiques, I abbreviated these identity-centered categories. Gender became "G." Ethnicity became "E." The rest of the codes logically followed these examples, with a single capitalized letter that begins each word.

Other sociopolitical concerns that are relevant to this study fall under the general category of sociopolitical issues, topics, and categories. Since a category such as this is potentially infinite, it would be impossible to create an exhaustive list. Inclusion in this category is dependent upon what participants did with an idea or topic. As previously explained, a topic that is potentially rich with sociopolitical content is not included unless students not only identify but also explore that topic to some degree.

An example of a general or non-identity based sociopolitical construct or issue is the discussion of smoking that occurred during the critique of one image that depicted a young person smoking. Smoking in and of itself may not necessarily be considered to be a sociopolitical issue. After some discussion of an image, including description identifying a girl and boy smoking cigarettes, participants' talk started to center around the problems of adolescent smoking. One participant said "The age there's important, too." One student was pondering the subject matter, stating "there's something that these little
children are standing for." One participant noticed that the shirt on one youth said "Real Rebels." Another participant stated that "you also have the aspect of innocence of very young children here that go into this kind of thing....the social dilemma here of peer pressure." Thus, the students mentioned the rebellious symbolism that attracts some youths to smoke along with the issue of peer pressure. The combination of these concerns qualified this last statement to be labeled "S/P" which was the abbreviation for sociopolitical. In the left hand margin beside the passage, the S/P issue is summed up with the word, "smoking." I gave it a rating of S/P 3 because a number of reasons for adolescent smoking (image/peer pressure) were presented.

**Coding Further: Reconstructive Potential**

Two general categories eventually emerged during the analysis of sociopolitical art understandings transcripts of dialogue. The first of those I have just explained—rating participants' engagement with various sociopolitical topics connected which artworks they are critiquing. Although the goal of this study is to determine whether structuring studio art critiques using ideas drawn from feminist theories can enhance students' engagement with sociopolitical aspects of images, this study would be remiss if the content of those sociopolitical comments was not analyzed beyond categories and levels of engagement.

While students may become engaged in discussing sociopolitical aspects of images, the results may or may not be discussions that reveal oppressive structures or indicate reconstructive ideas for society. Interpreting what is oppressive or what is in need of reconstruction is fraught with difficulty. Indeed it is impossible to do so, because of different people's various social locations and interests, and because the goal of this feminist studio art critique
is not to prescribe exactly how feminist ideas should be interpreted. What this feminist studio art critique does is to again borrow the phrase from Barbara Kruger, make suggestions about how things might be. However, there are ideas that many feminists in particular, as well as others, would agree that are probably repressive or are probably directions toward societal reconstruction, at least to some degree. In the Foreword to *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, Maxine Greene refers to the array of feminist perspectives in the book, stating that:

"All, committed as they are to identifying an emancipatory feminist praxis, cannot but work to clarify what it signifies to "empower" and what, given the institutions in which feminist teaching must take place, empowerment may imply in specific contexts. (Greene, p. x, in Luke and Gore, 1992)."

The charge is to move in directions that one feels have positive reconstructive possibilities as best as is possible in any given situation, but to also contextualize and localize information as much as possible, and to acknowledge the partiality and particularity of any such investigations.

I coded sociopolitical art understandings, then, in two ways. The first, which I have presented, indicates the extent of student's engagement with social and political issues as they relate to artworks discussed in the critiques. The second aspect of coding concerns whether or not those explorations have what I will term "reconstructive potential." In other words, a participant could demonstrate sustained engagement with sociopolitical aspects of an image, yet those ideas could simply reinforce what is considered by many feminists and others to be stereotypical and negative. I abbreviated this category "R/P," to stand for reconstructive potential, when coding the transcript. The other important aspect of this coding is that most of the ideas I am calling "reconstructive" were initiated by students. It is my interpretation of their ideas as having reconstructive possibilities. A minimum qualifying
example occurred when one participant discussing the image of a well-toned female dancer said:

She looks like her looks are really powerful and striking....Plus her body is really muscled, well-defined. So this might say something about women, too.

In this example, what the image may be saying about women is mostly undeveloped. However, the implication of this student's comment is that depicting a physically strong woman might be done to counter or make a point about how women are often depicted.

An exemplary comment that was given the numerical rating of five occurred when a participant responded near the end of a discussion in which the class was discussing feminism and ideas associated with it. I nudged the conversation by asking whether all feminists were man-haters or not after a student had just made a statement implying that feminists were man-haters. One participant replied:

That's as big a stereotype as anything else. You know, saying all Jewish people have long beards and big noses. There's lots of other things. You can't stereotype any group.

I believe that the reconstructive potential of this comment is a powerful and important one about not stereotyping groups.

Part of the success of this process lies in the community of viewers present in the context of the studio art critique. Hopefully, this community is broad enough and will not allow repressive views to go unchallenged. Another part of the success of this project is to continually reinforce the legitimacy of asking for explorations of this kind. Listening to student voices, and providing situations, which may involve instructor-initiated nudges during discussions in which students can reveal what has positive reconstructive potential for them is crucial to this process.
Strategies

The second major component for analysis is to characterize and examine the strategies participants used to arrive at sociopolitical art understandings. After coding all instances of the consequences that I am primarily interested in, sociopolitical art understandings, I needed to develop coding, or categories, that corresponded to the probable ways students arrived at them. For this study, strategy refers to any one of a handful of specific prompts which I explain in the following paragraphs.

The first strategy I coded for were instances of participants' use of the Guide Sheet of Questions. Participants were often asked by the instructor to consider one or more of the questions on the sheet while critiquing many student artworks put up for critique. It is important to remember that students were usually asked to consider any of the questions they wished to. Given the range of questions, some of which were quite broad (e.g., What ideas about life does this image prompt you to think about), this request is less dogmatic than it may first appear. Additionally, the first few questions on the sheet were basic critical procedures. Sociopolitically-focused discussions necessitate an attention to meanings of artworks. Eventually, however, to steer participants toward sociopolitical questions, I often asked participants to choose one of the questions listed after the basic critical procedures, most of which are overtly sociopolitical.

Although I requested that students use the Guide Sheet of Questions, they did not always do so, or at times seem to forget about them. I wanted to code who prompted the use of the Guide Sheet of questions. The categories I established were instructor initiated, and participant initiated. Instructor initiated refers to student usage of the sheet after being directly requested to
do so by the instructor. Participant initiated refers to usage of the sheet that was not directly requested by instructor.

The next strategy category I coded was sociopolitical nudges from instructor. These kinds of comments did not refer specifically to the Guide Sheet of Questions. They served to mostly push students to consider or to further consider sociopolitical aspects of artworks. These 'pushes' were questions or comments were usually made in response to a participant's comments. This occurred when a participant's comment or question presented an opportunity to enhance the possibility of revealing oppressive structures or indicating societally reconstructive ideas.

I coded instructor activities of this kind "sociopolitical nudges" which I shortened to "S/P nudge." An example of an S/P nudge is demonstrated when students were discussing a photograph depicting the sign and storefront of a feminist bookstore, and trying to determine what point of view concerning the bookstore or feminism in general the image reflected. One male student stated,

I think it's not so ambiguous considering that we know the sex of the artist. That it's going to be more against than for it. I know Martin and he doesn't look like the militant feminist type.

In response to this the instructor did not only ask for a response, but asked that a specific sociopolitical aspect of the student's comment be addressed. The issue of who and what a feminist is and whether men can be feminists is an important one. The instructor asked,

Somebody respond to that. Because he's a man does that mean that this is an anti-feminist statement?

Views about topics such as this are subjective. Another instructor, for instance, even a feminist one, who does not believe that men can be feminists may not have nudged students in the same direction or if they did it may not
have been with the same purpose in mind. Considerations of purpose are important because another instructor may have simply wanted to see if the discussion might be continued a little further, no matter what the outcome. In the feminist studio art critique, an instructor may have then pressed students further, by reframing the question or further directing it, thus providing more opportunity for a student to be willing to voice an idea that may be considered by some to be impossible, incorrect, uncommon or unpopular—that men can be feminists.

Next, I categorized peer responses. These responses are comprised of either a question or a comment from one participant to another that do not directly refer to the Guide Sheet of Questions or did not directly result from a S/P nudge from the instructor. These participant's responses ask for a response in relation to a peer's comment or question. Participants might directly counter or ask for clarification of another participant's comment or question.

As a measure of affective responses and attitudes toward critical activities in general and sociopolitical discussions of artworks in particular, I coded participants' non-responsiveness to instructor questions. I coded the kinds of questions were mostly likely to produce non-responsiveness.

Classroom Structure

After strategies, the next major coding category examines the conditions surrounding the demonstration of participant's sociopolitical art understandings. The major conditions that I coded for are large group discussion, and small group discussion. I wanted to know if any of these first two classroom structures mentioned above were more conducive to students' demonstration of sociopolitical art understandings.
The large group discussion is a commonly found classroom structure. In the context of the studio art critique, it is when an artwork is put up for critique in which the class stays in one large group for the critique of the image.

Small group discussions are smaller groups of participants who meet and discuss an image before any discussion involving the class as a whole. I broke the small group discussion category into two subcategories. The first of those is when the instructor leads the large group discussion after students have met in smaller groups. The second of those is when students lead, for the most part, the discussion of artworks after meeting in smaller groups. Analyzing these classroom structures is important because part of my study is about participants' ability and willingness to generate sociopolitical art understandings. I coded who spoke with lines of color that extend out from the name of each speaker. The instructor and the participants each had their own color. This way I could glance at a page and immediately understand who was speaking, and thus begin to discern patterns of behavior.

Although I did not code the text specifically for the next category, I also wanted to consider what I call assignment bias. The latter condition refers to the inherently sociopolitical nature of the portrait project, which I needed to account for. That project, a self-portrait or portrait that says something about women, predisposed students to sociopolitical issues when both making and discussing artworks. Since all other assignments were considerably more neutral in overt sociopolitical content, I felt that I needed to account for the bias built into this project. I did not code for it because the entire portrait project falls under this category, and should be considered when interpreting results of that critical session.

Overview of the course
As part of the presentation of the findings, I will first present a general overview of the sequence of events during the course. As part of the overview, I will also describe some examples of the sociopolitical discussions that ensued during the course. This will help provide a more complete picture of the studio art critiques that I was responsible for.

I was presented to students as a researcher who was conducting a study about how to improve studio art critiques. I did not feel that it was important to indicate to participants that the study is based on feminist theories. Additionally, I was using feminism primarily as a method. For many, "feminism" is a loaded term and may have predisposed students to be unsympathetic to my study. I have spent many pages in Chapter 2 explain the very broad range of ideas that are considered to be feminist. I did not feel, particularly since I had limited class time, that it was important to present my study as feminist. I discussed these aspects beforehand with the cooperating instructor, and he concurred.

I told participants I would be conducting my study throughout the quarter and that I would be conducting the studio art critiques. I told students that they had the option of non-participation and that they were under no obligation to participate. I asked students to consider all this and decide whether or not they wanted to participate. All students consented to participate and shortly thereafter signed an informed consent form.

As stated earlier, the instructor changed very little about the course, including objectives, other than to rearrange some studio art projects and restructure two of them. All five of the cooperating instructor's course objectives on the syllabus were already in place from previous quarters. Two of the five objectives focus exclusively on critical thinking. Two of the remaining three objectives center on understanding photographic images and
knowledge about photography. One objective was exclusively focused on technical issues—understanding photographic processes and materials. The instructor explained and demonstrated virtually all technical components of the course, taking students into the darkroom at various points during the quarter to explain and/or demonstrate aspects of black and white photography.

The studio art assignments were sequenced as follows: Photogram; Sense of Place; Self-Portrait or Portrait that says something about women; Documentary Photograph; Staged/Fabricated Image; and Final Project. In prefacing this chapter on analysis, I stated that the primary instructor indicated after the class had begun and students had agreed to participate in my research project that he wanted to conduct the first two critiques, and that he would prefer that he conduct them without my presence. I honored his request. As a result, however, I do not know what happened during those critiques, or what expectations and patterns of behavior were established.

My first contact with the participants consisted of a brief introduction to my project. Next, I introduced the Guide Sheet of questions that I would use throughout the quarter. Then I conducted the Portrait critique. Following that I conducted the Documentary photograph critique. Next I conducted the Staged/Fabricated image project. Lastly, I conducted the critique for the final project. I will present each studio art project and some information about the corresponding critique.

**Introduction to the guide sheet of questions**

To present my analysis, I will begin by discussing participants’ introduction to the Guide Sheet of Questions. This introductory session with participants was meant to introduce them to critical procedures and strategies as they were embodied in the Guide Sheet of Questions. My rationale for
introducing them to the sheet by using it in relation to a relatively well-known kind of photograph before the first studio art critique was to begin to instill good critical habits. I hoped that if these questions worked well in that situation, students might transfer knowledge and strategies about how to approach critical inquiry of artworks, including sociopolitical aspects of images. I also hoped that a productive critical discussion using these questions might engender in students a willingness to engage in such inquiry. The introduction to the sheet of questions occurred during the first week of the quarter.

The Guide Sheet of Questions consists of a list of questions on a single sheet of paper (see Appendix B). The first few questions on the sheet are critical procedures. The next questions on the sheet ask about identity-based constructs in relation to artworks. Some of these questions include, "What does the image say about women?" and "What does the image say about race, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, ethnicity, and other factors that relate to identity?" I advised them to consider the list a "smorgasbord" of questions from which they could draw. The sheet also includes questions concerning the possibility that participants' own self-identities may influence the way they see images. The sheet includes a very broad question, "What ideas about life does the artwork prompt you to think about?" The next questions on the sheet ask about art, including what the artwork may prompt participants to think about artmaking and the artworld, and what the function of the artwork might be. Another question asks about whether the artwork prompts you to seek information external to the artwork in order to understand it better. The last questions ask about evaluating the work and considering the criteria for evaluation.
The slide reproduction of an artwork I put up was Lewis Hine's *Leo, 48 inches high, 8 years old, picks up bobbins at 15 cents a day, Fayetteville, Tennessee, November, 1910.* I chose this work because of its strong sociopolitical message. I wanted to push students into immediately thinking about sociopolitical issues and articulating them. Participants were then instructed to break into small groups of three or four and to describe, interpret and evaluate it, and to then choose a couple of other questions from the sheet and discuss them in relation to the image.

The discussion that ensued was the most exemplary of the entire study. Participants described, interpreted and evaluated the image with minimal prompts from the instructor. After having discussed the image in smaller groups, and during the large group discussion that followed, participants repeatedly engaged in high level sociopolitical (hereafter referred to and abbreviated as "S/P") discussions. A handful of instances had high levels of incidence of revealing oppressive structures or of suggesting societally reconstructive ideas (hereafter referred to and abbreviated as "R/P"). Participants used the Guide Sheet with sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness. Examples of the quality of this session will provide clarity.

One student explained that his historical location made the image "hard to relate to" because he couldn't imagine what it would feel like to have to work as a small child. This prompted another student to refer to specific aspects of her historical location as having influenced how she understood the image. She explained that her husband's grandparents were the age of the boy in the photograph and that she has heard storied from her family about how hard they had to work. She added that the image reminded her "that the 'good old days' weren't necessarily that good." Another student stated

That comment about us not really being able to relate to that kind of
stuff brings up another question, which is, what function does this artwork have in society? It shows the evolution of society. How we've progressed since then. And how we can't really relate because we don't experience that any more but we can see how it evolved

Thus, this series of comments were each rated S/P 5 because of the exemplary engagement with historical contexts and historical situatedness and how they affected interpretation. I rated them R/P 5 because the comments provided insightful perspectives on historically situated knowledge as it pertains to artworks.

Another instance of dialogue that demonstrates the exemplary nature of this session is when I asked another group what question they had concentrated on. One student answered that their group had considered the time and history behind the image, especially the Industrial Revolution. She also stated that

We thought it maybe said something about women and about maybe the culture at the time in that you see the women working in the factories, and the child. And we were talking about how women and children have small hands and can do some menial things. Maybe the men were out working the farms. This is Tennessee so everybody grew their own food back then. And very few people went to the grocery. So we just talked about that social difference there.

Another group stated that the question that they concentrated on was "What kinds of ideas about life does the artwork prompt you to think about?" A student from this group replied "Maybe like labor laws, child labor laws, conditions, working conditions.... The fact that there are no men in the pictures, just women." Another student added

One thing that it reminded me of was in an article that I saw recently was that in some developing countries, some boys of eight years old have to work in similar conditions. So this is still happening. It was also saying that some products that we are using today that are imported from those countries, we don't even realize that they are made by little children like that.

All of these passages demonstrated a high levels of engagement with sociopolitical aspects of images. Participants thoroughly considered the
content of the image, the historical context surrounding the image, and reasons that the image may have been made, the impact such an image may have had, and how aspects of their situatedness as human beings influenced how they interpreted and valued the image. This situatedness was articulated, for instance, in a historical sense when a student explained that "we can't really relate because we don't experience that any more but we can see how it evolved throughout the years."

Numerous passages demonstrated high levels of R/P. Since the information was shared, as it is in group discussions, it therefore potentially heightened participants' awareness of a number of issues. Examples will provide clarity. One is to be aware of ethical issues involving how, where, and by whom the products we consume are made. Another is to realize that many dimensions of our situatedness directly affect how we see the world. Another is to become aware that cultural products, like artworks, can influence and can help institute social change.

Several factors may account for the quality of this session. The first of those is that this approach to discussing artworks was probably new, and therefore fresh and interesting. Another is that I was new, and students might have been more attentive at this point in the study, and more willing, at least as a matter of initial politeness, to accept my authority. Another factor might be that the condition of working in small groups affected their involvement in positive ways. Those may include that such a structure allows each student to become actively involved and have a voice, thereby improving attentiveness and providing a sense of self-worth in the context of this course and subject area. Another is that many of the questions on the Guide Sheet may have seemed particularly relevant to this artwork. Perhaps since the Guide Sheet was new for them at this point they were willing to work with this
imposed set of strategies for understanding artworks. Another factor may have been the clearly historical nature of the photograph, which may have predisposed students to investigate the era from which it came, in the same ways that encountering and examining a fossil might.

As I asked each group to discuss the artwork in relation to the questions on the sheet that they concentrated on, they kept returning with rich, varied answers that demonstrated a thoughtful use of these guiding questions. Their interactions demonstrated a responsible and responsive attitude toward learning in this situation during this session. Another important factor to consider when comparing this situation to that of a studio art critique is students' predisposition to regard studio art critiques mostly as a means for them to improve their technical knowledge about photography. I had several goals in mine when introducing them to the Guide Sheet of Questions. In addition to introducing them to critical procedures in general, I also wanted to introduce them to ways in which sociopolitical ideas can be explored.

**Self-Portrait or Portrait Critique**

This assignment was described as a "portrait of self-portrait which says something about women." This was the third assignment of the quarter. I constructed the stipulation" which says something about women" to immerse students in thinking about sociopolitical issues in general and specifically about gender and images of women.

Since the purpose of this study is to determine whether continual exposure to a sociopolitical focus about artworks during studio art critiques displaces the typical formal and/or technically-oriented, or expressive focus, the sequence of what happens is important. Since the premise of the first project students completed in which I led the critique was of a highly sociopolitical nature, this may skew the actualization or appearance of
sequential progress during the course. My choice of this project was, however, precisely because it is highly sociopolitical in nature and because it was the first critique of student artworks that I experienced with the students. Along with their earlier introduction to the Guide Sheet of Questions, at the beginning of my interactions with them I wanted to immerse participants in situations predisposed to sociopolitical art discussions.

At the beginning of this critique I reminded students that three of the five course objectives centered on criticism and understanding images, and that the course was not just about gaining technical knowledge about photography. In part since small group discussion had been so successful during the previous session, I used it frequently throughout the course. Groups were instructed to describe and interpret the image, and to try to figure out what the image was saying about women. They were also instructed to pick one of the questions from the Guide Sheet of Questions to use as a tool for discussion in the small groups.

The class started out with one male student asking me whether men can be feminists. Clearly, the premise of the assignment prompted him to ask this question. I told him that I thought so but that he should be "sure to bring this up later."

During much of this critique students frequently engaged in sociopolitical discussions of a two or higher rating, many of which had some level of R/P. Examples include the discussion of the image of a mother who looked "frazzled" by one student's description. When prompted to consider questions from the Guide Sheet of Questions, one student stated that the depiction of motherhood may be a stereotypical way to view women. I rated this passage an S/P 5. Toward the end of his series of statements, he eventually articulated how "uncomfortable" aspects of motherhood appear to be. Shortly
thereafter a student who was also a mother offered a lighthearted comment that motherhood is "not for sissies!" I rated this passage R/P 5 because this conceptual reversal of how motherhood is usually presented. It suggests that motherhood takes toughness, which is something usually associated with football players or soldiers, and not with mothers. Since motherhood is often devalued, particularly as an occupation, the passage has important R/P.

At the end of the discussion of this artwork however, the strong sociopolitical inquiry tapered off. Despite my S/P nudge, asking for further comments or whether or not anyone else thought that the viewer's gender made a difference in viewing the image, no one wanted to discuss the views of one male who stated that motherhood is something a women can "relate to" and that a man "needs to appreciate." One reasons for this is that I believe participants felt that the image had been discussed thoroughly enough. The student's pre-existing expectations of the studio art critique is likely to be that enough had been said, and perhaps that to continue along these lines was to venture too far from making better pictures. Taking issue with another student's comments may have also been perceived by some as more contentious than students wanted to be on this hot afternoon.

I frequently asked the artist to discuss any relevant points or to answer specific questions about the artworks they made. As discussed in earlier chapters, this critique is structured to advantageously utilize the artist as a source of information, although not the final, determining, or most important source. The artist instead is viewed as a source of information to contribute to the understanding of the image in most cases but only after the image has been discussed by the viewing community at hand—in this case the other students in the classroom. The idea is not to turn the critique into an intentionalist one, but to use the artist as an important source among many in
this context for providing relevant information with which to interpret
images. As also previously discussed, the artist can be an important source of
information, especially by providing a context or other information about
their images when gaps in understanding emerge due to factors of difference
as it is embodied in artworks.

Another example of a well-developed sociopolitical discussion occurred
in discussing the image of the sign and part of the front of a feminist
bookstore. The sign clearly read "Fan the Flames Feminist Bookstore." In a
small group discussion, one student stated that she felt it was a documentary.
Another said that he felt if he would do such a photo it would be to "poke fun"
at the tone and message he perceived in the image. He said that the sign
seemed "fanatical" and dealt with power "from a woman's point of view....The
power a woman wishes to have." He added that "we thought that one possible
thing we think of feminists is that they're male-haters, stereotypically
speaking." When the group was nudged further for an explanation of what
they thought the image was about, they reiterated the words "fanatic" and
"power." Since the image seemed to be fairly neutral in my point of view with
regard to how the concept of feminism was depicted in the image, I requested
that students describe the image.

After describing it, one student stated that he thought it was "impartial"
and that viewers are "just given the fact that it's a feminist bookstore." Another participant agreed that it was ambiguous. Another participant said
that he didn't think it was ambiguous considering "we know the sex of the
artist." After my S/P nudge requesting a response to whether or not being
male meant that this was necessarily anti-feminist, one student responded in a
that "men can be feminists too." In the dialogue that followed, two students
articulated the negative impact that gender stereotypes can have on men as
well as women. One of those students who was male cited additional biographical information about himself as a viewer that influenced his interpretation. He said,

...my mom worked for the A.C.L.U. and I spent a lot of time in their offices downtown....Any one of the guys working at the A.C.L.U. would fight over women's rights as well as other things. They would take up a fight as much as any woman by the middle '70's....I think a lot of guys feel that way, you know. That woman, the first woman fighter pilot, you know, and many people were out there on the bandwagon saying she wrecked because she was a woman. I think a woman could fly as well as anybody. I mean, accidents happen all the time. Just 'cause you're a guy it inclines you to be better at things?!

Another student said she didn't "think it's fair" that men are assumed to be better at things. The male student who had just been speaking agreed that this can result in a "reverse stereotype" that can "come back and haunt you sometimes." Following this, several students discussed the idea that feminists are all man-haters was a stereotype that was false, unfair, and was "as big a stereotype as anything else." The above passages were rated S/P 5 because of the engagement with feminism and ideas associated with it, and R/P 5 because of the dismantling of many stereotypes, such as the idea that all feminists are man-haters and that gender stereotypes about men can be detrimental to men and women.

Another high-level sociopolitical discussion with reconstructive potential came near the end of the discussion of the image taken by a male in the class that depicted his sister dancing, and which emphasized both her grace as a dancer and her strong and subtly-muscled physique. Several male students commented that the image was about how aesthetically pleasing women are to look at: "I mean, what do you see when you look at her...you see very nice curves." Because I considered the image to be an atypical image of a woman because it seemed to emphasize her masculinity as acceptable female beauty, this comment prompted me to try an S/P nudge. I asked
How does her body, that's what we have here to look at, how does it compare to other images of women's bodies? You know, what you might see in magazines, in Mademoiselle?

One male student responded that her body looked "more like a man, even though you can tell she's very graceful." The photographer, a male, humorously added "It's my sister, you know!" This comment led to light-hearted laughter from a number of male students. One female student responded "I think she looks athletic or physically fit, and that can be just as attractive as being thin." In this age of anorexia and other eating disorders, in which a widespread sense of malaise exists concerning the appearance of the female body, I consider this brief comment to have strong reconstructive potential. Obviously proud of his sister, the artist commented that the photo he chose to print was "really cool because it got a lot of her back muscle tone."

Later in the critique, one artwork was discussed that consisted of two photographs of two women in front of bathroom doors. The doors included the word "persons" along with the typical identifiers, "men" and "women." While describing this image, one male student commented interpretively that like they did on Star Trek....Instead of 'only going where no man has gone before' they changed it to 'no one.' Kind of like referring to everybody as people instead of mankind.

This passage, which I rated S/P 3 and R/P 4, indicates an awareness of issues regarding gender and refers to political implications of how gender is designated in public spaces. It did not rate higher in the first category because the topic was not discussed further.

Another image discussed late during the critique consisted of a woman dressed as a man is traditionally dressed, in a sport coat, who is smoking a cigarette and sporting facial hair. Early in the describing the image, one student identified the subject as one of his female classmates, and the portrait as a self-portrait. He commented that he thought it looked like a "girl" but that
he hoped it was not. He postulated that perhaps she is trying to hide the fact that she is female. He then continues and says that

...a girl that I used to associate myself with wore a lot of oversized guy's clothes...it could just be a style. One of not really caring whether she's perceived as feminine or it could be something where she's not too proud of her womanhood.

The sustained exploration of possibilities about why a woman may want to depict herself in this way prompted me to rate this passage S/P 5. The R/P rating was 3 because few comments had reconstructive potential; however, the passage does indicate a willingness to engage with ideas about gender.

After being asked whether she might want to say something about it, the artist said that it is

something to do with culture....In my country guys smoke water pipes a lot and female tend to like that and want to do it, too. So we were thinking, it's like if she were a man she would be able to do so more freely. She wants to do it, but she can't because she is female and so she has to be a man in order to do it.

I rated this passage S/P 5 and R/P 5 because I considered the passage to be a thorough exploration of gender and ethnicity, and because the reconstructive potential of articulating the impact of gender and ethnicity in this situation make it a powerful reminder of the importance of recognizing cultural differences when discussing gender. This dialogue represents a clear instance of cultural differences as they are embodied in an artwork and of utilizing the artist as a resource on the artwork provided important contextual information in order for viewers to be able to understand it. This is not to determine the way students and artists should negotiate cultural or other differences as they relate to art understandings. What is important is encouraging or creating situations in which students can explore these issues.

Another discussion that had high levels of S/P and R/P ensued surrounding a male student's two images of himself. The first image depicted
him wrapped in a towel with the words "a woman is a female human being" written on his chest, and the second portrayed him in a bra seated in a traditionally 'girlie' pose. One male student thought that the image was about "not looking at women as just a piece of meat because they are also people, they're humans.... It's kind of degrading to do that." Later, the artist said,

I was just asking a question—what makes a woman a woman? If I can just stand there being a male and write 'woman' and then tell you what a woman is, can't I be a woman?....You see that all the time on those talk shows. You get men who dress like women and say 'I'm a woman. I want to be considered a woman.'

These passages were rated highly because of the exploration of identity as it relates to gender and what gender identity consists of.

The political nature of the studio art project was a likely reason for some of the constistency and the high degree with which students engaged in sociopolitical discussions of artworks during this critique. Another factor that may have contributed is that this was the first critique and using these ideas to critique artworks may have still been a new and therefore fresh and engaging way to critique artworks. Another reason was that the project directly correlated to the question concerning what an image might say about women on the Guide Sheet of Questions.

At this point I asked students to write a brief written evaluation of the critique and to turn it in the next time we met. Five students did not evaluate the critique. Of the seven who did their answers varied. One student did not like how long the critique was (it had continued for part of a second class period). Another student said that he was not sure what the class was doing during critiques and that less of an interpretive focus would be better. Another wrote that he thought the critiques were "alright" and said he would prefer an individual rather than a group analysis of his images. Another wrote that she felt the critiques were "awkward" because it seemed like no one
knew what to say, and that she didn't feel as though she was experienced enough to know what to say about artworks. Another student felt that the critique seemed too long and that a lot of the questions seemed irrelevant for work shown during the critique. Another student wrote that she thought the critique was "OK" but seemed to take a long time. Another student said that it was "very organized."

As a result of these evaluations, I strove to make some changes. I wanted to make sure that critiques except for perhaps the final critique, did not continue for as long into more than one class period. I also felt that if students had more responsibility during critiques, that perhaps they would feel more a part of the critical process. I also felt that it would take time for students to become more comfortable talking about art. Additionally, I decided that I would make sure to spend more time discussing formal and technical aspects of images.

**Documentary Critique**

The documentary project was described in the syllabus. Students were instructed to "make an image about something we may know little about or make an image about something we are likely to know something about but show it in a different or more informative way." I added this stipulation in an effort to prevent the proliferation of squirrel-on-campus or pile-of garbage-on-the-street image that is so common to documentary assignments in introductory level photography classes.

To begin this critique, I asked students to take home a peer's artwork and write a short, one-page critical paper in which they describe and interpret the artwork and then to consider one other question from the Guide Sheet of Questions. I wanted to see whether participants found this critical writing beneficial to the group critique. Specifically, I wondered whether
critical dialogue during the studio art critique might be enhanced if students wrote about each other's work beforehand.

To begin the critique I asked participants whether they found this writing beneficial. Most students who replied said that they did not seem to find the writing advantageous. Two students stated that they valued the fact that the process required them to sit down and think about the image longer, although both thought that the activity of writing itself did not add anything beneficial.

Several students took this opportunity to say how much they liked the verbal sharing of ideas that occurred during studio art critiques. One participant stated that

You get other people's input and it makes you see it differently than just sitting there on your own and doing everything alone and getting just one view of it. I mean, you can get other views but usually you get that one first idea and you just kind of stick with it.

Another student stated "I think I learn more, too, seeing things from different viewpoints of the world, and a group like this together you see different things than you do just alone."

The first image that was critiqued was a set of images of a restaurant. After some description of the image, one student who had also written his brief critical writing on this image, commented that the restaurant is "really casual and looks more middle class, someplace that a college student could afford." He added that this was similar to his written interpretation, saying that "when I thought about being middle class, I thought that the artist, that she is most likely a middle class person who gets into doing more middle-class things."

This passage was rated S/P 3 because it conveyed a small exploration into ideas about class, and R/P 2 because it offered little more than an awareness of the impact that economics can have on what people choose to do.
In the middle of this critique evidence that some of the constant exposure to sociopolitical ideas in studio art critique started to show up as evidenced by unsolicited comments. Not all such exchanges demonstrated a particularly strong or meaningful investigation into the sociopolitical meanings of artworks, so they were rated low in both the S/P and R/P categories. What they demonstrate is that these kinds of questions were beginning to displace or supplement other strategies for understanding artworks.

One such instance is evidenced in an albeit lighthearted exchange. In critiquing an image of aquatic life in an aquarium, students brought up gender by explaining that the small sharks and the lack of little lighthouses and frilly aquarium accouterments might indicate that the tank belongs to a male. This comment brought a good round of laughter from the class. This comment, coupled with a lack of further examination of gender in succeeding comments, is not particularly informative in investigating gender in this situation. However, what it demonstrates is that some aspects of gender were considered in critiquing an image in a studio art critique without the specific prompt of a sociopolitically-focused assignment such as the portrait, a sociopolitical nudge, or direct a request to use the Guide Sheet of Questions. This comment could be perceived as making fun of this kind of sociopolitical focus, and/or it could be considered positive because participants demonstrated that sometimes considering such ideas can be fun.

Another similar occurrence took place during the discussion of a photograph of a car-sick dog. One student, a male, stated that he didn't think many "girls would take a picture of a dog vomiting on the back seat of a car." Another male classmate then asked, in a reference to the Guide Sheet of Questions, "So this is possibly saying something about men?" Yet another
male classmate said that he thought that it said that a man would be more likely then a woman to take a picture of something of that nature. These were rated low in the S/P category and did not qualify for the R/P category.

Later in the critique a male student asked his classmates whether a certain image said anything about gender, but the conversation rated only minimal levels of S/P and R/P. Still, it demonstrates an awareness of the possibility that images may say something about gender.

Fabricated Image Critique

I handed out a new sheet of questions that was quite similar to the other set, but with enlarged type and with the basic critical procedures grouped and separated at the top. I grouped them this way to prevent students from choosing only from among those critical procedures because they are the first on the list when asked to choose any of the questions to answer. Additionally I printed the sheet on brown Kraft paper to make it easy to find and to hopefully hint at the practical nature of these kinds of questions.

I started this critique by having students write brief descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations, and discussing the first image as a whole class. My rationale was to improve participant involvement especially in description, since in previous sessions participants resisted requests to describe images. Indeed, when requested, students more readily described images during the discussion that followed.

I then moved students into small groups for the rest of the critique. The critiques of the rest of the images were led completely by the separate small groups. Although this critical session did not necessarily result in discussions that were rife with sociopolitical content, the manner in which students took responsibility for leading discussions and participating in discussions was encouraging. The discussion during these two discussions that followed was
the most remarkable in the entire study for participant-perpetuated and sustained dialogue. For the first discussion instructor involvement was limited to one nudge, and for the second, one incidental question. These all were student-discussions following small-group discussions.

The discussions with sociopolitical content include portions of the dialogue about an image of a burned toy. In leading the discussion, one student was determined to use the sheet of questions. At first she asked students to interpret the image and then asked how they thought the artist's identity influenced the artwork. No significant responses resulted. She then asked what they thought the artist was trying to communicate. Again, the discussion was not particularly informative. I asked which question on the sheet that the group concentrated on. The student who had been leading the discussion thus far said that she focused on society. She then asked her classmates what the image said about society. One student replied,

This is taking an innocent symbol of childhood and setting fire to it. When you look at society you see kids bring guns and pop guns and using their fingers for guns, and like, hauling .38's and stuff. I think this is a manifestation of the very same thing.

One student humorously responded, "it's evil!" The student originally leading the discussion added that she thought that it was a funny image at first, but her opinion changed upon further reflection.

The next artwork critiqued was a pair of images depicting pre-packaged food with names like "Chicken a la King." These comments received low to middle S/P and R/P ratings because they did not thoroughly investigate aspects of class or nationality, and only suggested some reconstructive ideas, such as stereotypes associated with food and nationality. The discussion of this set of images was lively and sprinkled with humor. The group leading the discussion decided to ask questions from the sheet and see whether or not the
rest of the class thought in similar ways. The group asked what the artwork said about class, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, or other factors. The group then commented that it came down to class and/or nationality for them, and someone from the group asked their peers what the photographs said about class. No one responded, and this prompted someone from the group to nudge classmates to consider "when you get a national...a plate of food in front of your face, you say, well, this is Chinese food or this is Italian food." One student said, "French!" This elicited laughter and she was asked what made her think it was French. She replied, "a la!" One student brought up "American cooking." Students discussed that using the phrase "North American" would be better than "American." After more discussion about ethnicity, nationality, and food, one participant succinctly summed up the series of images as "a representation of the American middle class," an idea that was seconded by two other participants, one of which added, "American middle class culture."

Later on in the critique, a student brought up an issue of teenage smoking, which I interpret in this context to be a social issue because of the manner in which it was discussed. Students referred to peer pressure as a causative factor in determining why young people may start smoking, and also to the image of the rebel as it is associated with smoking as a cultural symbol that may encourage it. This passage received middle S/P and R/P ratings.

Final Critique

I began the final critique with students in a large, instructor-led group. I asked students to write descriptions of an image placed up for critique, but several students jumped mostly into interpretation, and some students had trouble describing or seemed to feel impatient at having been asked to write a brief description.
After interpreting a few images, I broke the class into small groups to discuss the images. Early in the critique one student asked his peers what they thought about "how he framed the picture, the composition of it." One male student responded by saying, "Oh, so it is a he?" This unsolicited comment addressing the gender assumption of "he" was made lightheartedly, and was evidence that an awareness of one sociopolitical aspect, gender, was becoming habit for at least one person.

A discussion with some sociopolitical content ensued concerning a participant's images of his father. One student said, "...under the aging process bodies begin to decline, and his went like this." Another participant said that the images shows that the artist idolizes his father and she then discussed aspects of aging, adding,

There's this person here he idolizes. If you have aging parents, you suddenly realize they're mortal, they're not immortal. You grew up with them really looking up to them and all of a sudden you realize one day they're older and they rely more on you.

Later another image that was discussed depicted different kind of people at a picnic. One student stated that you "see different races of people, like Middle Eastern, and you have Asian people, black people, white people, all kinds of races doing different things together at a picnic." Students were asked by the instructor what they thought the picture was about and eventually, after some discussion, one student said,

going back to that question, I think it shows how people of different ages and races can get along and have a good time together. No racism. No confrontations.

This passage was rated S/P 4 and R/P 5.

The critique was continued into the next class meeting time. The most sustained sociopolitical discussion occurred during the discussion of a series of images bound into a book depicting aspects of a Middle Eastern student's life in
the USA, many of which focused on her ethnic identity. Some images depicted food and other activities such as a female smoking a pipe and a male watching. One photo clearly showed someone wearing a T-shirt identifying an Arabic club. A student stated that the book "opens opposite of what you normally have a book open to." The artist responded by saying, "It's Arabic." I nudged the students by asking, "so the way the book is oriented has something to do with...?" And to that a student responded, "Culture." Another student followed that comment by saying that the book is about "the interaction between two cultures when one is brought to another."

Another student responded to the question from the sheet of questions and that I asked: "How does your identity influence how you understand and value the image?" He stated:

I grew up in white suburbia...since I came to Ohio State I got a little bit of culture. I can respect other cultures, but, as far as being comfortable with being around them, you know, being at all interested in them and finding out about them, I'm not used to it because of growing up in white suburbia. I don't even think there's one black family in my neighborhood. Bunch of white people...after I saw the back of the T-shirt, I'm like, OK, it has something to do with this club...they obviously...they feel that their heritage is important. Where they come from is important to them. They like to remember."

Another student who was eager to talk followed this by saying she interpreted it differently, and said:

I know if I visit a different culture, I'm only there a short time...But if I were there permanently or if I moved there or if I was there a year, or ten years, I would really begin missing my own culture. And I interpret it as a book kind of documenting your culture, what you miss.

I was pleased by the depth with which these students were willing to engage with issues of nationality and ethnicity, ethnic identity, and cultural displacement. I rated these passages S/P 5 and R/P 5, the latter rating because of the general awareness the interactions raised concerning cultural displacement.

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After this critique, as I had during the middle of the quarter after the Portrait Critique, I asked students to write a brief evaluation of the critique. Student attitudes had improved since the Portrait Critique. One participant wrote that "the photographs were very interesting." Another student wrote that the critique was "more interesting and there was more interaction—maybe because the work/projects were more interesting and better quality." She also wrote that "talking about ethnicity was interesting." Another student wrote that the critique seemed to go slowly and attributes this in part to the fact that it was the last day of class. Another student wrote that this critique "went well," that "a lot was said," and attributed this in part to the quality of the artwork. Another student wrote that "this critique was pretty much like the rest," and that people were reluctant to talk. Another student wrote that it was "nice to look at other people's work and evaluate them and get some feedback of our own from others."

General Findings

Critical Strategies

Participants demonstrated that they understand how to verbally describe and interpret images during studio art critiques by doing so on numerous occasions throughout the course. Participants' understandings of describing and interpreting images are in the context of dialogue that occurs during the studio art critique. Their understandings about describing and interpreting images also include incorporating discussion about formal and technical aspects of artworks as they demonstrated throughout the course during discussions of student artworks. Participants' understandings about critical dialogue during studio art critiques developed throughout the course to
the extent that small groups of participants were able to lead critical discussions about the artworks of their peers by the end of the course.

Participants were mostly uninterested in describing artworks during critiques. Participants demonstrated that they could describe images, but tended to do so only when clearly asked and often only after being asked to do so several times. Participants indicated several times that description felt extraneous and unnecessary. Additionally, the instructor was not as attentive to focusing on descriptive activities, mostly in an effort to foster positive attitudes toward critical dialogue during studio art critiques.

Participants modeled participant-led critical sessions on those led by the instructor. Typically, descriptive questions were followed by generally interpretive questions. These were often followed by a question from the Guide Sheet of Questions. The artist was often asked for additional information about their artwork. Technical and/or formal issues were also often addressed.

Students sometimes demonstrated an embrace of intentionalist beliefs during critiques of their work and the work of their peers during studio art critiques. Five times during the series of critiques participants made overt comments indicating that they perceive the artist to be the ultimate authority about the meanings of that artist's images. This occurred even though the instructor conveyed reasons opposing intentionalist criticism on several occasions.

Some students indicated that they valued the plurality of opinions that were often expressed during studio art critiques in group dialogue. In one discussion at the beginning of the Documentary Critique, two participants indicated through unsolicited comments that they learn more from and like hearing different points of view, indicating that they value a plurality of ideas that can be articulated in group dialogue during studio art critiques.
Participants demonstrated understandings about sociopolitical aspects of images during studio art critiques. This includes responding to questions asked by both instructors and peers, and leading discussions that sometimes address sociopolitical aspects of artworks during studio art critiques. There were six unsolicited responses not specifically in reference to the Guide Sheet of Questions that were sociopolitical. Of those comments, five were about gender and one was about age. Pertaining to the Guide Sheet of Questions, the most frequently asked question was "What ideas about life does this image prompt you to think about?" The next most frequently asked was "What does this artwork say about women?"

As indicated by the examples described earlier in this chapter, participants demonstrated high levels of engagement with sociopolitical art understandings on a number of occasions throughout the course. Additionally, participants demonstrated a number of instances of sociopolitical art understandings which either revealed oppressive societal structures and/or indicated reconstructive ideas about society.

The majority of sociopolitical comments and discussions occurred during the critique of the Portrait or Self-portrait Critique. Forty two S/P comments occurred during this critique. During the introduction to the Guide Sheet at the beginning of the quarter, 13 S/P comments were made. During the Documentary Critique 17 S/P comments were made. During the Fabricated Image Critique 16 S/P comments were made and during the Final Critique 23 S/P comments were made.

Of the 111 total S/P comments, 32 directly followed a specific question made by the instructor. Of the remaining S/P comments, 105 were participants' responses to the instructor's specific requests to consider questions from the Guide Sheet of Questions that were not asked directly before
the S/P comment. Of the 32 responses that directly followed a specific question made by the instructor, 18 directly followed a sociopolitical nudge from the instructor. Sociopolitical nudges are the instructor's comments that refer to a question from the Guide Sheet of Questions or that ask a sociopolitically-based question in response to a participant's comment or question. Eleven of those 18 were direct questions from the Guide Sheet of Questions. Fourteen S/P comments directly followed the instructor's request to interpret the image being critiqued.

Although most students stated that they did not, a few participants said that the process of writing a short critical paper about a classmate's artwork was beneficial because writing necessitates thinking longer about images than might otherwise occur. Two students stated during the Documentary Critique that they valued the one piece of critical writing that they did for this reason.

Of the twelve students who participated in the study, all demonstrated that they could at least adequately write descriptions of artworks of their peers. All also wrote plausible interpretations of artworks. Five did not address sociopolitical aspects of artworks. Of those seven that did, three considered factors about gender, two discussed issues about class, and three wrote about the identity of the artist.

Participants demonstrated non-responsive behavior throughout the series of critiques. Non-responsive behavior means that participants did not answer questions that were asked. This happened to questions asked by both instructor and other students when they led discussions. Students exhibited non-responsive behavior 20 times thought the series of critiques. Students exhibited non-responsive behavior most frequently (14 times) when asked to
interpret or describe images, and 3 times when specifically asked a question from the Guide Sheet of Questions.

There were six instances of participant usage of the Guide Sheet of Questions that were unproductive and four instances of instructor usage of the sheet that were unproductive. By unproductive I mean that no one responded to the question that was asked.

Participants demonstrated that they understood ways in which identity-based constructs influenced their art understandings during studio critiques. Fourteen times during the series of critiques participants vocalized ways in which identity-based constructs influenced their understandings about art. The constructs that participants identified include age, ethnicity, nationality, gender and race. Twice participants articulated ways in which personal experience influenced their art understandings, and 7 times discussed intersections of different identity-based constructs.

Identity-based constructs that were discussed during the series of critiques include gender, age, class, ethnicity, race and nationality. Non-identity-based topics that arose during the series of critiques include the following: violence, fatherhood, motherhood, feminism, gender and artistic production, women in the media, criteria for evaluation, instrumental purposes for artmaking; cultural displacement, historically-situated knowledge, technology, and cigarettes and smoking.

Participants demonstrated that they can engage in sustained critical dialogue that focuses on a particular sociopolitical issue when asked to focus on that particular sociopolitical issue, and when the premise of the artworks being discussed centers around that issue. The premise of the project, portrait of self-portrait that says something about women, was inherently
sociopolitical. The discussion surrounding the portrait or self-portrait that centered around women demonstrated this.

Group structure and sequence

Few standard large-group discussions occurred in this study. Since the first discussion that introduced the Guide Sheet of Questions was so successful, I decided to model most of the discussions in the first half of the course after it. In this first discussion, small groups of students talked among themselves discussing various aspects of the image being shown. Then the class met as a whole and a large-group discussion took place. Often one or two people from the group organically emerged as a spokesperson. This structure occurred in 85 percent of the classroom discussions that occurred before the Documentary Critique in which student led discussions became the standard. There were times when the instructor specifically asked some participants to contribute to class discussion. Additionally, participants were almost always asked to contribute ideas to the discussion of their own artwork after the rest of the class had discussed it.

Large-group discussions that occurred after small groups had an opportunity to discuss images appear to be conducive to critical dialogue in general. I believe that this is because students have had an opportunity to formulate often involved or complex ideas about artworks. Because their ideas have been developed to some degree, I believe that students felt less pressure when discussing images in the large group discussion that followed, the majority of which were small group that moved into large group. Additionally, I usually casually observed small-group discussions to make sure various members of the small group participated to some degree.

The sequence of classroom structure moved gradually from large class discussions led mostly by the instructor to mostly student-led discussions.
After the Documentary Critique, the format usually consisted of small groups that discussed an image and then got up in front of the class and discussed the image with the rest of the class. Participants' understandings about critical dialogue during studio art critiques developed throughout the course to the extent that small groups of participants were able to lead critical discussions about the artworks of their peers by the end of the course. There were virtually no student-led discussions that had little relation to the art being critiqued. These differing discussion structures involved as many students in as much of the dialogue about artworks as possible. Participants repeatedly demonstrated knowledge of how to use critical procedures including addressing sociopolitical aspects of artworks during studio art critiques.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study is an attempt to determine if feminist theories can help structure studio art critiques in ways that significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings. In this study I am mostly interested in students' ability to generate sociopolitical understandings of artworks based on ideas from feminist theories during studio art critiques. Generating sociopolitical understandings means for students to give significant consideration to the social, cultural, and political meanings of artworks, and the implications of the sociopolitical meanings of artworks. I am also interested in determining whether students can take considerable responsibility in critiquing images during studio art critiques, especially in focusing on sociopolitical art understandings.

As stated in the opening sentence of Chapter 1, many art educators strongly advocate that art be understood in relation to its sociopolitical underpinnings.

The conclusions that can be drawn from qualitative research projects such as this are different than that which can be drawn from other kinds of research. Elliot Eisner suggests that in qualitative research.

The researcher might say something like this: "This is what I did and this is what I think it means. Does it have any bearing on your situation? (quoted in Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996, p. 465).

Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) state that qualitative researchers draw conclusions that are "less definitive, less certain about the conclusions they draw" and tend
to consider them "as ideas to be shared, discussed, and investigated further."
They add that modification "in different circumstances and under different
circumstances will almost always be necessary" (p. 465).

This study represents a beginning rather than an end. It is a tentative
study since the sample size is small. The information presented here should be
understood to be a series of suggestions and ideas that will almost certainly be
modified under different circumstances, as suggested above. The major
strength of this project is that it represents a series of interventions that
happened over the duration of a course. Therefore, the study is realistic about
how change might be instituted: in increments, through sustained activities
over long periods of time.

An important finding is that feminist ideas can be used successfully by
everyone to enhance sociopolitical art understandings. All members of the
class, men and women alike, used feminist ideas to discuss sociopolitical aspects
of student artworks during studio art critiques. Participants used critical
strategies based on feminist ideas successfully in discussing sociopolitical
aspects of artworks. Feminist ideas were embodied in the Guide Sheet of
Questions and in the structure and sequence of classroom discussions. Since
feminism is increasingly broadening and deepening and now encompasses
many concerns in addition to gender, and since many feminist theorists insist
upon an ongoing critique of these theories, feminist ideas are more useful
than ever in educational settings such as the studio art critique.

Another important finding is that a variety of feminist theories can be
used to create classroom activities and structures that enhance feminist goals.
For example, discussions can center on specific sociopolitical topics, and
students can be encouraged or assigned to make sociopolitically-based
artworks.
Another important finding is that feminist theories can significantly contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings. Ideas from feminist theories were reflected in various critical strategies and approaches that I used throughout the quarter. Participants demonstrated these understandings throughout the series of critiques. A good example is the discussion that took place during the Self Portrait/Portrait critique in which students discussed stereotypes of feminists (see Appendix A, pp. 147, 148 and Chapter 4, pp. 104, 105). Continually reinforcing an emphasis on sociopolitical art understandings helps participants retain that emphasis to the extent that students can initiate questions of a sociopolitical nature.

Another finding is that students are capable of discussing sociopolitical aspects of images with sensitivity, depth and thoroughness. Participants sometimes demonstrated extended engagement with sociopolitical art understandings throughout the course. The discussion that focused on cultural and ethnic identity that occurred during the Portrait Critique is a good example (see Appendix A, pp. 154, 155 and Chapter 4, pp. 106, 107).

Another finding is that students can thoughtfully explore how identity-based constructs can influence art understandings during studio art critiques. An instance that demonstrates this occurred during the Final Critique when students discussed cultural displacement and identity (see Appendix A, pp. 246, 247 and Chapter 4, pg. 116). A related finding is that students exploring issues about identity demonstrated some understanding of the complexity of identity-based constructs.

Another finding is that a feminist studio art critique such as this one can raise a number of non-identity-based sociopolitical issues. Topics that were discussed during critiques included motherhood, smoking, violence, fatherhood, and women in the media.
Another finding is that students often need an extra push or nudge from the instructor to keep directing thinking toward, and to keep deepening talk about, sociopolitical issues as they relate to artworks. A good example occurred when students were discussing the image of a dancer and I nudged the discussion further and asked them to consider depictions of women in popular culture to prompt them to explore their reactions to the image (see Appendix A pg. 150 and Chapter 4, pp. 105, 106). Instructors should be encouraged to nudge discussions in order to further encourage the exploration of sociopolitical ideas.

Another finding is that students value the variety of interpretations and world views shared by classmates during critiques. At the beginning of the Documentary Critique, students mentioned that they valued the views of other students and felt that they benefited the most from critiques when varying ideas were heard. This bodes well for criticism as it is advocated by many art educators and many feminist art educators in particular.

An important finding is that students tend to neglect and to doubt the importance of descriptive activities during studio art critiques. Instructors need to make sure that artworks are thoroughly described in studio art critiques. Students' tendency is to assume that description is superfluous since usually everyone is simultaneously looking at the same image during critique. Critiques that take longer than students expect, as a feminist critiques might, makes paying attention to descriptive activities even more difficult.

Another finding is that an overtly sociopolitical art assignment is likely to lead to artworks and discussions during critiques that are clearly and purposefully sociopolitical. The focus of critical dialogue is likely to center around the same sociopolitical topic as was specified in the art assignment.
Another finding is that students are capable of sustained student-led critical discussions about artworks (see Appendix A, pp. 201-205). A gradual shift of responsibility from instructor-led discussions to mostly student-led discussions throughout a course is advocated.

Another finding is that an instrument such as the Guide Sheet of Questions can contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings during studio art critiques. Having a piece of paper with sociopolitically-oriented questions about artworks helped on numerous occasions. Although students can be verbally prompted, they can forget, especially during small group discussions. The sheet provided a tool that participants continually referred to. Additionally, the specificity of the questions at times prompted specific sociopolitical directions of thought.

Another important finding is that although an instrument such as the Guide Sheet of Questions can contribute to students' sociopolitical art understandings during studio art critiques, it can also become tedious or seem too prescriptive to students. On several occasions, some students used the Guide Sheet of Questions with reluctance and apathy. If students are asked to use such an instrument excessively, they may eventually dislike it and become disinterested in the emphasis the sheet was designed to instill. I advocate using such instruments sensibly and sparingly. I designed the sheet as a series of suggested questions, and welcome changes and additions to it.

Another important finding is that many of the ideas associated with the construct known as "the studio art critique" that students are likely to have been exposed to, are a formidable stumbling block to the goals of a feminist studio art critique. Among the undesirable ideas often associated with studio art critiques are that the instructor and/or the artist are the true authorities on artworks, that critiques should not focus on meanings of artworks but
instead on expressive, formal and/or technical issues, that critiques are not important and therefore should be succinct, and that considerations of sociopolitical ideas in relation to the artworks are irrelevant and extraneous.

Another finding is that student-led sociopolitical discussions about artworks can be enhanced by classroom structures such as small-group discussion. This provides an opportunity for many students to articulate their views, and allows more time for thinking and for discussion in intimate situations before discussing images as a large group.

Another finding is that sociopolitical discussions can take a considerable amount of time to develop. Therefore, studio art critiques in which sociopolitical aspect of artworks are discussed are likely to take more time than typical studio art critiques.

Since most sociopolitical discussions in the study took a considerable time to develop in the course of discussing one image, one recommendation is to allow more time for critiques. This is necessary because the feminist studio art critique does not dispense with formal, technical, and expressive concerns. It may be that less time may be spent discussing these dimensions of images. Depending on the nature of the course, finding more time for sociopolitical discussions might be accomplished by reserving less in-class time to artistic production. Another way to allow for more time is by perhaps reducing the number of artworks a student produces over the span of an art course.

Another finding is that all assignments can and do have sociopolitical implications. Instructors should give significant consideration to the sociopolitical implications of studio art projects and consider the possibility of including some overtly sociopolitical art projects.

Some recommendations for future studies include the need to explore different interpretations of feminist ideas as they apply to the studio art
classroom, and especially to studio art critiques. Further studies that investigate different ways to reinforce an emphasis on sociopolitical aspects of artworks are also recommended.

Further studies should be conducted concerning ways in which written critical activities might be interspersed with dialogue in ways that enhance sociopolitical art understandings.

Further study is needed to explore ways in which different kinds of classroom structures can affect sociopolitical art understandings.

Further study is needed to determine ways in which to counter undesirable ideas often associated with studio art critiques that oppose the goals of a feminist studio art critique, including methods for dissuading students from valuing intentionalist-based studio art critiques.

Additionally, I recommend future studies that explore ways to facilitate descriptive activities during studio art critiques.
APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF DIALOGUE FROM STUDIO ART CRITIQUES

Introduction to the List of Questions

Instructor: How many of you...do you remember that sheet I handed out earlier in the quarter? How many of you still have it? If you do, get it out and if you don't, raise your hand and I'm going to give you another one. [Several students raise their hand and instructor gives them another one.] I want to go down through this list briefly. View this list as...a smorgasbord. Instead of only having one question to think about you have a whole list. What we're going to do today is do some things where you can choose from among these questions as we're looking at some works of art. The first question had to do with some critical procedures that we talked about before where describing something sort of gives you this entry into a work of art that you may not have just looking at it, because the process of looking and maybe writing makes you really focus on the work that maybe you wouldn't have if you didn't have to really go through the process of describing it. So the list of questions after describing is, considering the feelings you have about it and figuring out why you might have whatever response or whatever feelings that you might have. Another one is to interpret the artwork or explain what you think it's about based on the two things that we've already talked about, describing what you see, and the feelings that you have about it. There is a list of questions that follow that are real specific. And I just, they're questions for you to think about, and see if and when you might want to answer questions like, what does
the artwork say about women, what does the artwork say about men, about
race, about class, about sexuality, religion, age, ethnicity and other factors that
relate to identity? And how have those factors in yourself, your own issues of
identity, or aspects of your identity, influenced how you are viewing the
artwork? So you are looking at what you perceive about the artwork might be
affected by your own identity...how you understand it, whether you like it, and
any sort of emotional reaction you have to it. A general question: what ideas
about life does the artwork prompt you to think about? Then, a question about
artmaking in general. Some art is really dealing with artmaking, questions
about art itself. What does the image make you think about photography
itself? About art or the artworld? A lot of work addresses those kinds of
things. What is the function of art? Are there other kinds of information that
may be particularly useful in understanding this artwork? It's sometimes
difficult to put a single image up there and have a real thorough
understanding of it unless you know a lot about the work about that artist.
Maybe you know some other information about that artist. Maybe you feel that
you need to. What kinds of information might this be and how might you find
it? Should you try to find it? Or do you think the artwork alone should be
enough? What function does the artwork have in society? What function
might it have for the artist? We all have different reasons for making things.
And finally, evaluate the artwork. Why is it good? Or, why don't you think it's
good? What kind of criteria are you basing this evaluation on? That's the
smorgasbord of questions. So, keep those in mind. What I want to do is put you
in real small groups of three. So, why don't you three get in a group, and you
three. Turn around and face each other so that you can see the slide but that
you will be able to talk to each other. There should be one person that takes
notes. So what you get to do, is, I'm going to put a slide on. Every group
answer the first three questions. The first three questions are kind of a given. We're only going to look at two or three images. Then, from the rest of those questions, pick three. You might want to let the image determine which three you pick. Discuss three of these other questions. OK, the slide. And I'll read the title of this one because it's a longer title. Just talk in your group for ten minutes or so and answer those questions. The title is Leo, 48 inches high, 8 years old, picks up bobbins at 15 cents a day, Fayetteville, Tennessee, November, 1910.

James: What are bobbins?
Instructor: Bobbins have to do with sewing. Like a bobbin on a machine.
James: Who is the photographer?
Instructor: It's Lewis Hine. [Students talk in groups for about ten minutes.]
OK, has everyone answered the first three questions plus a few more?
Christopher: Yeah.
Instructor: OK, how did some of you describe it?
Audrey: It's black and white. [Laughter, short pause.]
Instructor: Good start. You can continue.
Audrey: It's taken inside a factory. It's a little boy. He appears to be the center of attention. It appears to be a photograph of the time.
Instructor: Who can add something to that?
Christopher: He's standing on the floor of what appears to be a textile mill.
He's centered. Vertically speaking he doesn't take up the whole frame of the picture. There's a lot of space left to see what's behind him.
Instructor: OK, what else is there?
Teddy: The women around him.
Instructor: What else about the women?
Teddy: They're watching the photographer.
Instructor: And it's a really dark photograph. What about your feelings that you have while looking at this?

Tammy: It's sad. This little boy doesn't look very happy standing there in this factory. He's probably wishing he could be out playing somewhere instead of in this dark factory picking up bobbins.

Instructor: Somebody else?

Teddy: I thought it was boring.

Instructor: Boring?

Teddy: It's kind of hard to relate to, I mean, come on, it's 1910. We're a little bit beyond that idea of little kids busting their butts for fifteen cents. I mean I can't relate to it because I have no idea what it would feel like. I didn't have to work until I was fifteen.

Instructor: OK, some other responses.

Margaret: I can relate to it more because my husband's grandfather is his identical age. And my grandparents are his age, too. I've heard stories of how hard they had to work when they were little. It makes really makes me sad. Those people worked hard and had a hard life. It reminds me of the past and that the 'good old days' weren't necessarily that good.

James: That comment about us not really not being be able to relate to that kind of stuff brings up another question, which is, what function does this artwork have in society? It shows the evolution of society. How we've progressed since then. And how we can't really relate because we don't experience that any more but we can see how it evolved throughout the years.

Instructor: OK. So what did the group back there say?

Ivan: We got a sense of oppression.

Instructor: I didn't mean to bum you all out. [Laughter.] OK, what about this group back here? What is the artwork about?
Christopher: Well, we concentrated on that, in our eyes we thought the picture was more concerned with the socioeconomic conditions of the time instead of this individual child. The picture's not about him, it's about the time in which it was taken.

Instructor: What about the group up here?

Margaret: We took it as a social shot, too. We just kind of went right into talking about the Industrial Revolution. About the time in history behind it and what he was trying to say in making this picture.

Tammy: Having this picture of a child working it's hard to ignore that children are working places like this.

Instructor: So, any group, what are some of the other questions that you answered on the list?

James: We concentrated on, what ideas about life does the artwork prompt you think about? None of us had to experience working when we were eight years old. We were outside playing. This kid had a lot of responsibility for eight years old.

Instructor: OK. This group, what was the question?

Margaret: We thought it maybe said something about women and about maybe the culture at the time in that you see the women working in the factories, and child. And we were talking about how women and children have smaller hands and can do some menial things. Maybe the men were out working the farms. This is Tennessee so everybody grew their own food back then. And very few people went to the grocery. So we just talked about that social difference there.

Instructor: OK. This group up here, what other question that you...

Brad: What kind of ideas about life does the artwork prompt you to think about? Maybe like labor laws, child labor laws, conditions, working
conditions. The fact that there are no men in the picture, just women. It may be recording the first times when women first started actually working.

James: New factories went up around 1900, and women started working in factories.

Rodd: Is that definitely a women there on the right?

Instructor: I'm pretty sure it is. Back there, what was another question.

Christopher: One thing that it reminded me of was in an article that I saw recently was that in some developing countries, some boys of eight years old have to work in similar situations. So this is still happening. It was also saying that some products that we are using today that are imported from those countries, we don't even realize that they are made by little children like that.

Instructor: OK. So that we need to look beyond the boundaries of this country. So, this group, any other questions.

Christopher: He looks like he's saying with his face, 'Get me the hell outa here.' I just thought it was grim.

Instructor: Yeah, how would you describe that little face?

Rodd: You would think he would be a little excited to be in front of the camera, but he has no feeling whatsoever about getting his picture taken.

Instructor: So what does that indicate?

Rodd: Just that, 'Let me get this over with, let me get my fifteen cents for the day, then go home and get some sleep so I can get back here.'

Margaret: I think just fatigue, tired.

Rodd: I was thinking jobs weren't really secure back then. He didn't want to look like he was slacking.

Teddy: I think they used kids because they were really cheap labor.

Instructor: What did anybody else say about it?

Teddy: The question, 'what does the artwork make you think about
photography, about art making, about the artworld? To me that's more of a political thing. I think it was to make something seen that could not normally be seen. Not everybody's in the factory seeing these little kids work, and they're more apt to ignore it if they can't actually see it. So when you put a face with an idea, it has a stronger impact. It almost looks like it could be done for a newspaper. But it's very political. And I'm just not into political art. I'm just not into stuff that deals with problems with the country. Art to me...I'm more into the beauty of the art than I am in the, how it makes me feel otherwise. When I hang a piece of art in my house I, you know, I like it to make me feel good about it, not, you know, hmmm. Which the artwork is supposed to make you do. That's just not the kind of artwork that I personally enjoy.

Instructor: Is there anybody's work that you really like?
Teddy: Well, I don't like the guy, I don't like Mapplethorpe, but a few of his pictures of flowers and stuff that I've seen are really pretty amazing, what he can do. But some of his other, what they call more controversial work, I...a few of them in specific I'd tell him to go to hell over. Because didn't he do one where basically it was a bottle of urine with a crucifix in it?
Instructor: No, that was another photographer. Serrano.
Teddy: Who was the guy who did, somebody did a picture of somebody, two guys, one of them at least, I never saw them I just heard about it, it was a guy peeing into another guy's head...
Instructor: That was Mapplethorpe.
Teddy: That's freaky. I could never get into it. Little bit too immoral for me.
Instructor: But you like some of them.
Teddy: Yeah, he's a good photographer. You can tell he has a major amount of talent. But his choice of subject matter is to me very questionable.
Instructor: OK, who had something else to say about it?

Brad: I got a question. I think the artist's identity influenced the artwork. I wonder if you could explain.

Instructor: Well, I know a little bit of context surrounding the work. Which would be more about what information you could find out about the work. One would certainly be more of the historical situation surrounding child labor. He was very concerned with child labor. He took a series of photographs of children working in all kinds of situations in different areas of the country. He circulated them very much like what you were saying, Teddy, you know, people didn't, weren't there and they couldn't see it, so his work really functioned to really let people see what was happening. And his work was instrumental in bringing about child labor laws. So it had a very specific intent and achieved a very specific goal. Today we might call him a 'concerned photographer.' OK, I'm going to put up one more image. This time I want you to write about it. You can finish your writing at home if you don't quite get finished. In your notebooks. OK. Speaking of Mapplethorpe.

[Instructor puts up slide, Doris Saatchi, 1984.] Do the same thing, answer the same questions.

Portrait Critique

Instructor: I would like to add that there are five course objectives listed on your syllabus. The first of those is to develop practical knowledge of photographic materials. The next is to develop critical skills, both written and oral. The next one is to consider the criteria that you're using to think about photographs. Another is to develop increased understandings of visual communication through photography. Another one is to serve as a basis for further study of photography and issues related to visual communication. At least three or four of those objectives are clearly about understanding
photographs and not about making them. The temptation in a studio art class is to think that the photograph, the product is it. Like that's the main focus. I think it's better to visualize it as at least equally weighted to the other kinds of things. So, just to help you visualize what the class is about. If you look at the breakdown of grades, that's reflected also in the breakdown of grades. So the writing that you do for class will count. It does matter. We will be doing some writing out of class, too. Not a lot, but some. What I want to do is get in groups of three. So just clump up and get situated so that you can talk to each other and see each other. Go ahead and move yourself around. OK, groups of three or four. So there will be one group of three and two groups of four. [Several students look puzzled.] How's that? I mean physically get so that you can talk to each other. Here's one group of four. OK, now what I want you to do is get your prints out. Now I'll just pick one. [Tim's print chosen] So, this other group will look at Tim's. This other group will look at this one. Nobody should be looking at prints from someone in their own group. Now, as a group, look carefully at what it is that you have in the photograph. Just within the group, describe the photograph and interpret it like we've been doing with other images. These are definitely about something. The assignment was to make an image that says something about women. You all tried to say something. We'll find out what shortly. So describe and interpret the image within the group. See if you can come up to some kind of consensus. You may not. See what happens when you all try to interpret the photograph. And from that list I gave you, that list of questions, you'll want to get that list out. The smorgasbord of questions. If you don't have it with you I have some extra ones. Does anybody need an extra copy? [About five do.] So you're going to describe and interpret. And you're going to pick one of the questions on the list to answer. In other words, does it matter whether it was a male or female
who took the picture? This was supposed to be about women. So, does that matter? You, looking at that image, if you're male or female—does that have some bearing on how you interpret it? Then we'll talk as a large class and your group will represent the image and talk about it. So talk for about ten minutes. I think it would be helpful if somebody took notes. Don't forget to go through describing and interpreting and then answering those other kinds of questions. [Students discuss images.]

Teddy: [Half the class can hear this, others are still discussing images.] I don't know too many guys that are...Is a guy actually able to be a feminist?

Instructor: I think so.

Teddy: Isn't that kind of like being a spy for the other side? Kind of like switching over?

Instructor: Naw, we'll talk about this, make sure you bring that up later. OK, I'll bring these images around so you can have a chance to look closely at these. You all should talk about them, too and respond to what this group is saying. OK [group] go ahead and tell us what you had to say about these.

Christopher: First off, speaking in terms of the subject matter, we all came to the immediate conclusion that this has something to do with motherhood. You see a shopping bag...We all kind of tried to look for a focal point, something that your eye is drawn to. The one on the left, we all agreed on the black spherical ??? That's the most in focus. We think maybe it's the grain, but the women's face doesn't seem to be as clear.

Instructor: Does it feel like it should be?

Rodd: Yeah, I think that this should be more in focus.

Christopher: We all were looking at that woman in the foreground on the left, and in the one on the right we all were looking at that woman in the foreground on the left. She's biggest, she's in the foreground, there is
surprise on her face, she's holding a kid. That kind of drew your eye to the upper left. And I'm not sure we got a consensus on where the focus was supposed to be, again, maybe if it was the grain that was coming out, or if the focus was somewhere between the woman in the back holding the baby carriage and the woman with the baby.

Rodd: There were two different focal points, one in the upper right hand corner and one in the lower left hand corner.

Instructor: OK, why is this an issue?

Rodd: It tells you what the main subject was. The focus points don't seem to... because of the motion and the way that they're looking, it's kind of hard to figure out what the actual subject was. It's just hard to, I mean, I like the composition of it, everyone thought it was a decent picture. There is a subject there, but it's in the background of the picture. The people, the husband and wife and the kid, as he was saying, are made smaller by the foreground.

Instructor: So these are compositional things you're talking about, issues of focus and choosing what you want to emphasize by carefully focusing on it.

Christopher: Yeah.

Instructor: OK, what about some of the other questions? Did you discuss any of the other questions on the sheet?

Christopher: I don't know what it says about women, I mean, motherhood. the possibility of shopping with someone. It's kind of a stereotypical way that women are viewed, lots of times. It's the mother, who does the shopping a lot. Taking care of the kids all day and going out and taking care of the shopping which needs to be done. It's clearly not always pleasurable to go shopping. Sometimes it's a pain in the ass. You have to take your kid, with you, too, your arms are full. That looks uncomfortable.

Instructor: OK, so the point it's making about motherhood is...?
Christopher: It's difficult.

Instructor: It's tough. OK.

Margaret: It's not for sissies! [Laughter.]

Instructor: Motherhood is not for sissies! What about, anybody but the artist, what else can you add that you perceived that this is about? Anything different than what has already been said? [No comments] Anybody? Teddy, how about you?

Teddy: I kind of agree with the whole motherhood, child, shopping, pain-in-the-butt theory.

Instructor: Do you think it's important whether you're male or female? Do you think that makes your perceptions of it...as a viewer sitting there, do you think you perceive it differently because you're male as opposed to being female?

Teddy: For a woman, it's something that they can relate to and for a man it's something that he needs to appreciate.

Instructor: OK...

Teddy: I mean, for a woman, especially if they're a mother, if they're a mother it's something they can relate to, that they can agree with, that they have a common bond with. For a younger woman, she can either be in fear of or in preparation for. And then for any guy, period, we generally don't do, it's something stereotypically we don't do. There are some that are in that position, but for the most part we're the ones who take care of the other end of the deal while they're there with the kids we're at work, so to speak.

Instructor: Any women have any comments? Agree, disagree? Tammy, it's yours, how about you?

Tammy: Well, you see women like this all the time in shopping malls with their children and they're kind of frazzled. In the second picture, the Daffy
Duck, she's not really interested, but the baby wanted to see it so she took her over there. The one with the baby carriage, there's so much stuff there: shopping bags, baby, baby carriage.

Instructor: Do you think that it made any difference that you are a female as a person taking this picture as opposed to being a male?
Tammy: Yeah. Cause I've been around babies who do similar things, they want to go here and look at this or something.

Instructor: OK. I think there are some issues with the focus. And this one, you were pretty far away when you were taking the picture, right?
Tammy: Yeah.

Instructor: We already talked about some issues about focus. Any final comments? OK. [New image.] This group. Just so everyone can see the image that we're talking about. OK, go! What did you have to say about it?
Brad: It's a picture of a female. Age, probably late teens, early twenties. She has a lightness, vibrant, a happiness, a cheerfulness. She's definitely the focus of the picture since the background's kind of blurry. There isn't anything in the background that is of any importance. The significance of the picture is, sentimental, sentimental value. I don't know if it really says anything about women, other than just maybe the beauty of women. If you didn't know who took the picture...I guess you focus on the beauty of women. Maybe youth.

Instructor: So when you say 'sentimental,' what makes you say that?
Margaret: We talked a little bit about that. The way she's looking at the camera. She may be looking at...who took this?
Rodd: Brad.

Margaret: That she's maybe smiling at him. Almost looking past the camera. I mean she knows she's getting her picture taken, but maybe smiling at him.
the person that took the picture.

Instructor: So this is not somebody that someone just walked up to.

Rodd: It's like, 'he's the man.'

Instructor: One thing that's working pretty well is if we're supposed to be focusing on her, she's clear, the background is out of focus and it's gray, so you really don't pay much attention to the background. When you said it was printed kind of light, talk about that a little more.

Brad: I meant the face is really light. It looks like there's light just shining down. It seems like an open picture it has happiness and openness.

Instructor: OK, Other comments about the printing. How did anyone feel about the printing?

Teddy: Well-processed. For being a light picture, there is a definite black. It looks like you got the strong black and the white.

Margaret: The subject is framed really well and there are really dark blacks.

Instructor: Does this seem like a portrait you might find in anybody's collection of images? Is there anything about it that seems to be saying anything about women to you or not? I mean we have this history of images in our heads going into an assignment. There's a way you take a picture of a friend on the street. There's a way you take portraits of your family. So where does this fit in this body of knowledge that many of us have some knowledge of?

Rodd: I think it says they're on an even level. It's not a camera down shot, it's not camera up shot. It's pretty up close, not from a distance. I don't know, lots of stereotyped things that you hear, like women are unapproachable. This seems like they're very friendly. They're just another person. You just walk right up. They're not smaller than you, they're not bigger than you, they're pretty even.
Instructor: So that camera angle which we know can really influence things is what is helping to do that.

Teddy: I think in some way or another the artist is attracted to this person. It's one of those pictures you would want to keep of, like, a either a real close friend or a girlfriend. With the smile, and all.

Instructor: What is about it that makes it do that?

Teddy: Just the way she's looking at him when he's taking the picture. I know it's a guy now. Her smile, it's not a forced smile, it's not like, for, you know, like, 'I have to do this.' She seems to be happy with him who is taking the picture.

Instructor: OK any other comments? [Image is taken down and a new image is put up.] I want to be sure everyone sees this clearly. [Image is held up to everyone so they can see it.]

Teddy: OK, we already knew who did it, we knew it was a male artist. It's a picture of a bookstore sign. I said if I were to take it I'd do it to poke fun at the idea of it. It's different, it's not like your Doubleday Bookstore. She [Margaret] thought it was a documentary. As far as like, it's real big right there, 'Fan the Flames Feminist Bookstore,' and we thought that one possible thing we think of feminists is that they're male haters, stereotypically speaking. Kind of obvious it's big on feminism and in my opinion, personally, kind of fanatic. The whole fan the flames kind of gives more feel to the possibility to being fanatical and dealing with power and definitely from a woman's point of view. The power a woman wishes to have.

Instructor: Was there a consensus in the group as far as what you felt the image was about?

Tammy: We thought it was more about power. We thought it was fanatical.

Instructor: OK, let's back up a little bit. Anybody in any group—describe
what is in this photograph. A picture of a bookstore. You already said that much, right? What else can you say about it?

Brad: It shows the entrance, and the full sign.

Instructor: What else can you add about what's actually pictured? What about the angle?

Teddy: Well, it looks like it could possible be a little bit up.

Rodd: I think it's slightly angled upward. Unless he was on a ladder there was no way he could have shot it downward or straight ahead.

Instructor: So it's pretty clear what the focal point is, right? The sign. Thinking in formal terms, that's where all the light tones are. That's where all the action is. It's kind of hitting you in the face, this sign. My question is, can you tell a point of view based on what you're looking at it? Can you tell, looking at the Fan the Flames Feminist Bookstore sign, can you perceive a point of view based on what you see in the image?

Brad: I'd say looking at the picture that the photographer was not at all interested in entering the store.

Instructor: What makes you say that?

Brad: 'Cause it's only of the sign. It looks like he's not on top of the store, he's kind of standing back

Instructor: Other ideas. Do you agree or disagree?

James: I'd say it's impartial.

Instructor: What makes you say that?

James: It's straight on. You don't get a view if it's a male or a female, if it's in support of the feminist movement or it's not in support of the movement. You're just given the fact that it's a feminist bookstore.

Christopher: I'd say it's ambiguous as well. I mean, in order to take this photo you either have to be anti-feminist or almost militant feminist. The fact
that it's so straight on, it's so hard. There was the option of maybe taking it inside, or from down the street with a wide-angle lens to show you were standing out in front of it.

Margaret: There are no people in it.
Christopher: Yeah, there are no people in it.
Margaret: It's dark
Brad: It's hardcore.
Christopher: They could've stood on the sidewalk and had it maybe like at an angle. It's hardcore, in-your-face, either really against it or really for it.
Instructor: But can you tell which way it is?
Christopher: I say it's ambiguous.
Rodd: If the store inside was a little bit more illuminated it might give more of a feeling. If you saw somebody at the counter and they looked like, you know, I mean, I guess it goes back to the people in the picture thing. If you see somebody just walking by just not even glancing at it. The store looks closed. Maybe if they took it at night where the sign was illuminated and the building, too, it might give it a different feeling. It looks closed up.
Instructor: So all we really have is the sign. So, what is it about then if it's ambiguous.
Christopher: To let us know it exists..
Instructor: Yeah, anybody else seen this before?
Teddy: I don't know. I think it's not so ambiguous considering that we know the sex of the artist. That it's going to be more against than for it. I know Martin and he doesn't look like the militant feminist type.
Instructor: Somebody respond to that. Because he's a man does that mean that this is an anti-feminist statement?
Christopher: No. I used to, growing up, my mom worked for the ACLU and I
spent a lot of time in their offices downtown, and was just way left growing up. I don't know. Any one of the guys working at the ACLU would fight over women's rights as well as other things. They would take up a fight as much as any women by the middle '70's. That's the nature of the ACLU. I think a lot of guys feel that way, you know. That woman, the first woman fighter pilot, you know, and many people were out there on the bandwagon saying she wrecked because she was a woman? I think a woman could fly as well as anybody. I mean, accidents happen all the time. Just 'cause you're a guy it inclines you to be better at things?!

Margaret: I don't think it's fair. Everyone just assumes that.

Christopher: Yeah, I hate that, because once you're a guy...it's like once you're a guy...[Laughter.]

Instructor: You're doomed! [Laughter.]

Margaret: It's a reverse stereotype.

Christopher: Exactly, exactly. It can really come back and haunt you sometimes, you know.

Instructor: So part of the question might be what is a feminist? Some of the things you said, Teddy, man-hating. That was an idea you associated with it.

Teddy: Yeah, generally.

Christopher: Of course the sign says a lot—Fan the Flames. It seems like, 'let's go out and get something started here.'

Brad: Yeah, let's go out and bash some people.

Instructor: Well, do you think all feminists are man-haters?

Rodd: That's as big a stereotype as anything else, you know, saying all Jewish people have long beard and big noses. There's lots of other things. You can't stereotype any group. I think this picture is mostly about the wording of this sign. I don't know how much it actually has to do with the store at all. But like
he was saying, the word is pretty harsh. It doesn't invite a lot of people in. At least the way that it's all dark and looks like it's closed up might actually work for it.

Christopher: I don't think anyone was surprised by the name 'Fan the Flames.' I think it we would be very surprised if it was, like, 'Swing the Pillows.'

Instructor: It has the feeling of something kind of radical. The bookstore's been around a long time. That name was around in the '70's. There was a certain language to a lot of the social movements in the '70's. Any other comments on the picture? Everyone else get your picture out that we haven't looked at. Do the same thing this time. [Students discuss images in groups]
Does anybody need a quick break before we go on?

Margaret: Let's keep going.

Instructor: OK, let's start with this group. [Students pass around image so they can all see it.] The floor is yours.

Martin: Alright. It's a good picture. Good content. Well use of the full frame or whatever. Her face is hidden. That might be kind of important.

James: Because I think it's over-exposed it gives a gloomy, darker feeling. The female kind of blends into the background. I guess this assignment was about the feminine part, and with the overexposure...

Instructor: Overexposure?

James: What is it?

Instructor: Under.

James: Under.

Brad: [to Margaret] That's what you said, right?

Margaret: Dark. yeah, it's too dark.

James: I think it should be lighter to create a more feminine feeling since it
makes her look darker.

Instructor: OK. So you were interpreting the assignment as saying something feminine?

James: Right. It could be in a sense. But I think it could be enlightened more if it was just lighter.

Margaret: We're saying she's more athletic. And we liked the way that the light illuminates her. We also liked how everything is horizontal. Her whole body is horizontal. The format compliments her body.

James: The form is really pretty feminine.

Instructor: Maybe it would be good to separate a couple terms to clarify things. It was an image that says something about women, which is equivalent to something that is feminine...I'm not sure they're equivalent. To me, feminine is about qualities that are usually or stereotypically associated with women. Just to clarify the use of terms. So when you were trying to figure out what this said about women, what did you say?

James: Beautiful, graceful.

Instructor: What was it saying about those things?

James: About the aesthetic qualities women have.

Instructor: OK, so it was saying that those are positive things. Other people, what did you think it was about, or what was it saying about women? [no response] Did you have any response to it?

Christopher: Aesthetically it's pleasing, what these guys said. The statement that it makes about women is that they're nice to look at. [laughter] I mean, what do you see when you look at her? You see very nice curves.

Instructor: How does her body, that's what we have here to look at, how does it compare to other images of women's bodies? You know, what you might see in Mademoiselle?
Christopher: Her body looks more like a man, even though you can tell she's very graceful. Her position and her outfit. But her muscle tone kind of brings out her masculine.

Teddy: It's my sister, you know. [Many men in class laugh.]

Margaret: I think she looks athletic or physically fit, and that can be just as attractive as being thin.

Teddy: Actually this ended up the last few pictures I took just to use up the roll. Actually I have a whole roll going around her from that position. That one was really cool because it got a lot of her back muscle tone. And, also, my sister is a real dedicated dancer. Somebody might have heard, she was teen Miss Dance Ohio of 1995.

Margaret: You said she's only fifteen!

Teddy: Yea, she's a really, really good tap dancer. You can't see her face there, but personally, I've heard my friends say, well, guys have a lot of attraction for her. She's a really pretty girl although you can't tell that from this picture. She's not a very feminine girl, I mean, she dresses like a girl does and doesn't wear guy jeans or anything. She's more worried about her dancing. She's real dedicated. She's a strong person. You can tell that with her back.

Instructor: Print quality. What do you have to say about it? And there's another thing you can start thinking about. Sometimes if you have a real hot white spot...if I cut that out, that line, out, it's easier to look at subject. So some white areas can make your eyes zoom right toward that area. So when you have that happen in a print that you want to save, you can think about burning in the area. We will talk about burning in later. Burning in takes a lot of practice, though, if you do it. OK, [taking another set of prints around] so you can see the prints in question.
Teddy: Is it our go? Alrighty. Two different pictures of a singular woman, different women, though, each holding a cartoon, the same cartoon. The cartoon has on it, it's a guy and there are two doors. I'm thinking they're bathroom doors, I'm not sure. It just says 'persons,' then 'males' specified, then 'persons' 'females.' I get the impression they're trying to take away....Kind of like they did with Star Trek. Instead of 'only going where no man has gone before' they changed it to 'no one.' Kind of like referring to everybody as people instead of as mankind. That kind of thing. The one on the left she doesn't look too content with the way that she's kind of looking away. But you can tell she's holding up the cartoon. In the other one, the way her arms are positioned and everything, and how her hands are a lot more in focus than the rest of the picture. It looks as though almost it could be somebody else's hands holding the cartoon up. You generally assume that they are her hands. She's got kind of a smirk on her face. She looks like she kind of enjoys this, like she gets a kick out of the photo. The one on the left could care less. Like she's just doing it for a friend. Um, painful nose. That girl's got her nose pierced. Doesn't look very comfortable. Oh, as far as the focusing goes. The one on the left is all in focus. There's the contrast of the white sweater, and her hair blends into the background. Her hands are really in focus and so is the cartoon, but the rest of her is slightly more out of focus than the, what I consider the actual focal point, which is the cartoon.

Instructor: Do you think she should be in focus?
Teddy: It draws more attention to the hands because that's easiest to focus on.
Instructor: My question is, do you think that this one should be in focus?
Margaret: I don't know that it has to be. Maybe if they weren't side by side it wouldn't matter.
Instructor: Since they're side by side, what does that do? Makes it seem like
that's a mistake?

Christopher: Yeah, I was gonna say the one on the right I wanted to make a statement. The one on the left was actually a mistake.

Instructor: Oh, well you're not talking yet. You'll have your chance. This has some very specific things in it. Two women, the cartoons. So, what's the point? Is it clear? Is it unclear?

Tammy: Well it's about a political preference, talking about 'person' instead of 'man' or 'woman.'

Instructor: So what stance do you feel like it's taking?

Tammy: I think it's pro, because the girl on the right seems to like it.

Instructor: OK. Other opinions. Does this group agree? So what did you want to say about it? [to Christopher.]

Christopher: Personally I don't know why I gave you the one on the left. I like the one on the right more and I would like to have the hands...I mean if there was anything I could change about it I would have the hands closer, bigger, and have her lesser. You're right. The one on the right doesn't look the same.

Instructor: Let's just get rid of this one. [I take away one on left. Laughter.]

Christopher: See I like that one much better with two signs.

Instructor: So how many people feel that this one is in support of this change of terminology. It's obviously taking a point of view. Or trying to. Maybe it isn't clear. maybe it is. If you think it's taking a positive point of view toward this, raise your hand. If you think it's taking a negative pint of view, raise your hand. OK, if you can't tell. [Most raise hands indicating first choice.]

Margaret: I think what it is, the humor behind it makes you wonder whether it's negative or positive. I think she's poking some humor at something.
Sometimes we joke about things that are controversial.

Instructor: [Holding print and covering part of image.] I just wanted to see what that would look like without that distracting background. What do you think?

Teddy: Your hands are much better.

Instructor: Yeah, you can tell a lot with a big pair of hands there. But, keep thinking about what's in the background. The bricks were much less distraction in the other image than what's going on in this one. This has a lot of weird stuff going on right around here.

Christopher: Her head has kind of a tattoo on it.

Instructor: Yeah, but we can't read the words.

Christopher: One thing that I did want to get across is that I thought it was just kind of a statement about extremes. The fact that she's kind of extreme. I mean when you say this is kind of a social comment.

Instructor: Because she has the nose ring?

Christopher: Because she has the nose ring and actually because she has a lot of body parts pierced.

Instructor: But we can only see the nose ring.

Christopher: Yeah; the nose ring is kind of extreme and the hair is completely orange and kind of back and really short and that's kind of unusual.

Instructor: Of course, if you walk around High Street very much...

Christopher: Yeah, that's not surprising.

Margaret: Who is she? I've seen her before.

Christopher: She works in a tattoo shop on High Street.

Instructor: OK, was there another photograph we haven't talked about yet or was that all? OK, here's one more. [Shows photo to class]
Audrey: We didn't say much because we couldn't figure out if it was a boy.
Without Christopher telling us that it was a girl. We thought it was a boy. And so, we looked at it. It is Mara.
Christopher: I was privy to inside information.
Instructor: OK, we'll talk about that after we talk about what's here. So you didn't make a definite stance on what it was getting at? Anybody else?
Teddy: I thought it, because I saw it when it was being washed out in the open area in there and I forget who I was talking to, it was somebody in our class, I think, but, it was like, 'that looks like a girl with facial hair to me.' I think that might be a girl. I hope it's not, but I think it is. I guess I was right. It's kind of weird. Like almost as if she's trying to hide the fact that she's a female. She could pass for a guy. I had a hard time deciding what it was. If it truly was a male, the, what was that saying about women? If it was a male it wouldn't say much. But the fact that is says that maybe something's trying to be hidden, or she's poking fun, or...some girls, a girl that I used to associate myself with wore a lot of oversized guy's clothes. So, it could just be a style. One of not really caring whether she's perceived as feminine or it could be something where she's not too proud of her womanhood.
Instructor: Other arguments?
Martin: He's a girl.
Instructor: We've established that. Can you tell what's in her hand?
Brad: Cigarette?
Instructor: What other comment are you most inclined to make about it?
Martin: It's out of focus.
Instructor: Alright. It's out of focus. Does anybody else feel that it's out of focus? [Several heads nod.] So that's kind of hampering seeing what's going on and what she'd holding. I don't know--can anyone tell what that is? [Print
Brad: It's a pipe.

Instructor: Are you sure? You know?

Christopher: We'll go along with that. And it looks like she's wearing a longshoreman's hat.

Instructor: So there's something about gender, about expectations...do you agree? [Several heads nod.] But the lack of focus is interfering. We can't be sure what that is.

Brad: Well, we don't know whether it's male or female so maybe that's the point.

Instructor: Well, we don't have a lot here. Just the women from just below the neck up. And she'd holding something that's very clearly included in the picture frame. If you can't tell what it is and you want to and feel like you should, it might be an issue.

Instructor: What do you think about the composition? The way the picture frame is filled?

Brad: It's good.

Instructor: [Nodding.] Nice. Mara, do you want to saying anything about it?

Mara: It's something that has to do with culture, too. The thing that's there is a water pipe. In my country guys smoke water pipes lot so and females tend to like that and want to do it, too. So we were thinking, it's like if she were a man she would be able to do it more freely. She wants do it, but she can't because she is female so she has to be a man in order to do it.

Instructor: So this centers around being able to smoke this pipe. In what country?

Mara: Jordan.

Christopher: Yea, what was that movie—Mental or Yentl.
Instructor: Yeat. So I want to have you quickly think about the question [Referring to sheet of questions] "Other kinds of information that may be particularly useful in understanding this artwork?" In this case there's something really specific, specific in a cultural way. So that was information that you didn't have in order to interpret this. So I think what that points to is knowing the context that we're looking at these in and trying to figure out what kind of knowledge you can assume or what kind of knowledge you have to include or might include in order for somebody to understand that. OK, how many people have pictures left that we haven't talked about? [Four people raise their hands.] OK, so let's get those pictures out. [Remaining pictures are divided among groups] So each group has two sets of pictures, right? OK, at first put one set down. We'll talk about the other one first. It would be too confusing to talk about two sets at once. Now I want you to do something a little different with this one. Get out your journals. If you don't happen to have your journal you can just write on a piece of paper. I know you're sitting in a group. Draw a line after whatever you've been writing in there. Just put the 26th down. Write a description of it, interpret it, and write what you think it says about women. [Students look and write for about ten minutes] OK we'll talk about these. Let's start here. [Shows set of prints to class.] So, what were some of the things you wrote about? How did you describe these?

Rodd: Well I just put what was actually in the picture. I described it as the artist standing against the white background wearing nothing more than a towel and the words on his chest in the right picture. And on the left he was sitting in his chair with his back facing us, looking over his shoulder wearing what appeared to be a bra, giving us his best sexy pose and also against the white background.

Instructor: So what did you say that they were about?
Rodd: I think that it was about not...it's kind of hard to put it into words. It's about not looking at women as just a piece of meat because they also are people, they're humans. It's kind of degrading to do that. I don't know if he's...how would you like it if you were just like this picture. The one on the left, it looks just like picture out of a magazine. Millions of people would be looking at you in this kind of way. How would you like that?
Instructor: And that was based on a certain kind of pose?
Rodd: Something about, I'm not sure.
Instructor: OK. Anybody else in the group, what else did you say about it?
[no response] Anybody else?
Christopher: The fact that it was about women makes it inherently sexist. A man trying... What he was saying, what I was thinking was when a woman takes on this assignment, she always has the possibility of taking a picture of herself. And of expressing her gender or her sexuality, anything. And a guy can't I don't think a guy can take a photo of himself and say anything about women. Just the fact that it's difficult for a guy to say anything about women by taking a photograph of himself. Brad had to use props in order to get anything about women across. A woman can just take a photo of herself.
Instructor: Other responses. Back there.
Martin: Very sexy.
Instructor: So do you think these were poking fun at the assignment or maybe trying to say something in a humorous way?
Christopher: When he says "a woman is a female human being..."
Brad: That's the definition of 'woman' in the dictionary.
Christopher: I mean I thought it might say you should just view them equally
Instructor: [Picking up image of 'sexy' Brad on his knees facing the camera]
Is that what this says to you when you look at it? I mean, does this seem completely tongue-in-cheek?

Rodd: It all depends on the intent behind it. It can go either way. I mean it can go Christopher's way where he says, 'Ah, she's nuts, man, just write the definition on my chest. What the heck!' Then, there are performance artists who, that's exactly what they would do. I've seen things where people are serious about art and what they do and they do things that aren't that wacky.

Instructor: [To Brad] Why did you choose this to do?

Brad: Well, you were partially right and Christopher was partially right, and I was also kind of asking a question—what makes a woman a woman? If I can just stand there being a male and write 'woman' and then tell you what a woman is, then can't I be a woman?

Instructor: You mean, just by self-definition?

Brad: Right. Which is why the towels are there.

Instructor: Well, that's a pretty deep issue, just by self-definition can you call yourself that.

Brad: Well you see that all the time on those talk shows. You get men who dress like women and say, 'I'm a woman. I want to be considered a woman.'

Instructor: OK. To me it seems like a mistake that it's out of focus.

Brad: I didn't do it on purpose when I took the picture.

Instructor: Do they seem like separate pictures to you or do they need to be read together?

Margaret: Separate.

Instructor: So we'll just separate them. What does this one seem to be about?

Teddy: Well, he's wearing a bra so I kind of get the same idea.

Margaret: He's definitely mimicking a 'girlie' pose.

Instructor: To what end?
Margaret: Poking fun at women, or portrayals of women.

Instructor: OK, you have some pictures. [New picture is placed up in front of the room.] What were some of the things that you wrote.

Teddy: Nobody else talks in this group.

Instructor: Mara, how about you?

Mara: [Comments are drowned out by airplane]

Teddy: It is a collage-style print. He took a total of five different things exposed on the paper at different times. It's tricky, so that's probably why it's a little dark. Takes time to get that down right I would assume. The top left is more what I would consider a sexy photo. Plus I talked to him and he said he got it out of a pornographic store. Naturally I assumed that. Then the one beneath it is a larger, overweight woman not in the prime of her days, so to speak. And the one straight across from that is a fantasy kind of picture and the one at the top is from a clothing store. The only word I use for it is artsy.

Instructor: OK. But there are these four images being played off of one another and this in the middle. There's a lot of similarity between this and this and this. This is the one that seems different [the older woman]. How is it different?

Tammy: Well it's not an idealized picture of a woman. She's not really very attractive at all and the other three are in some shape or form attractive. I mean they are like Cindy Crawford they're associated with beauty as opposed to the woman in the corner.

Instructor: So the point of the whole thing is what? Calling what into question?

Teddy: Reminds me of the Sesame Street thing where three different people are doing the same thing.

Instructor: So here is the fantasy image and here is the kind of person you
might really see on the street. Is there one more picture? To be continued. We'll just finish up on Monday. I have one brief out-of-class writing to do. What I want you to do is comment on this critique. You can do this in your journals. What you liked about it, what you didn't like about. And about that page of questions, write about which questions you thought were most effective and which weren't.

**Instructor:** [Next class meeting time, Monday: finishing Portrait Critique.] I gave a little handout because I thought it would be useful to have something, an in-depth description of what we're doing part of the time during critiques. So, these are basic critical procedures. During some of the critiques and during some of the discussions we've just described what's in the image. Which is actually is a really important step because it makes you look at an image a lot longer, and a lot more carefully than you normally would. So, when you're describing it, you really just listing everything that seems important in order to give somebody a sense of what's there. Imagine that you're writing a letter to somebody overseas. What would you say about the artwork so that they could picture it? That's what the whole descriptive activity is about. And then it will lead you sometimes right into some ideas about interpreting what the photograph is about. Mara, can you join this group, because then there will be four. Thanks. So, interpretation is what the artwork is about. It's in my mind, the most important part of criticism. Figuring out what these things are about. So what you're doing when you're interpreting is making persuasive arguments for what you think something is about based on what's in the picture, what you know about the world, and what you feel about the artwork. So try to connect the artwork to ideas about life and issues that artwork is connected to. In other words, that page of questions that we've been using all quarter. Use those to sort of spur your thinking on
about the images. And evaluation is figuring out why you like something or why you don't like it. So, in your group, be as thorough as you can, and somebody take out a sheet of paper and be the recorder, and describe the artwork as accurately and as completely as you can. I know that you could really write twenty pages of description, but try to write a page, just a real thorough description of the artwork. Just within your group. Have somebody do the writing. And then do the same thing with interpretation, figuring out what it is about. And use a couple questions from the sheet I handed out.

[Students meet in groups and discuss artworks.] OK, how about this group. We'll start with you. OK, so,

Rodd: We do our presentation thing.

Instructor: Describe it...

Rodd: Well, it was a portrait of a blond-haired woman holding a luminescent shell. There's a slight tonality between the background and her shirt. Very slight. Hard to see. She was looking down. Her head was facing slightly down but her eyes were closed. She has long-sleeved black shirt. Looks like a turtleneck. Her hands were cupped around the shell at about mid-waist, mid-torso. And it was very flat, not too much depth of field. Our interpretations of it, were, we had it looked very peaceful, almost death, kind of. Because it seemed too perfect to be alive. It was just morbid. The pose looked like it could have been in a coffin, hands crossed over the torso. Something left behind, the shell is like something left behind from another animal. We had remembering collecting the shell. Maybe she was thinking about it getting some kind of vibes off it or something. We had the similarities between the round curves of the face and the roundness of the shell. And our evaluation of the technique was 'very well done.' Mapplethorpe reminiscent, only less controversial. Very, very white whites, and very, very black blacks. Lots
Instructor: OK. What two questions did you address on the sheet?
Rodd: We didn't do that.
Brad: Yeah we did.
Rodd: We did?
Brad: What does it say about women? We said it could just be a self-portrait not saying anything about women. Or, maybe saying something about the exoskeleton, the shell being an exoskeleton, a mollusk, the face being what everybody sees of a person. Maybe about how women are looked at from the outside.
Instructor: OK, well, why don't you just pick another question now, and talk about.
Rodd: I think if we do 'what does it say about class, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, I think that it's inherently different for whoever's taking the picture. Since a woman took the picture it was much easier for her to say something about women. We don't know exactly what the statement was, but it's definitely a self-portrait of the artist. I mean, it wasn't of a daughter or a grandmother. She wants to say something about herself I think, in the artwork.
Instructor: What was that in the interpretation...you said 'death' and then 'too perfect to be alive,' or something like that. Those seem like different kinds of interpretations. Did you feel like it was something about death?
Brad: I did.
Instructor: What was it about it that made you think that?
Brad: The black. The black background. She looks like she's almost in total peace. Kind of like you see someone that's dead and everything's fixed perfect. The hair's perfect. The makeup's put on. There's no evidence of life.
Instructor: OK, people in this group. What kind of interpretation do you have? Is it the same, or different?

Teddy: Why don't we ask the source?

Instructor: Because you said earlier, I guess I want to make a point about that. You said you don't know what she meant. You never know what an artist means. Sometimes it's really useful to know specifically had in mine for a picture. But really what you have is the image. That's what's there. How you view that image is what's important. Sometimes artists doesn't know consciously what they're doing. We were just talking about the process Chris is going through in his work and how sometimes you're so close to it it's really hard to get enough distance on it. Some artists don't want to talk about their work. So I think that the artist isn't the ultimate source, but it's an interesting source to often consider. The artist can be a resource. So, we're as a community in here, we're the people that can decide what it's about and talk about what's about and that's what I want us to do. So, what do you think it's about?

Christopher: The shell, the fact that it's a shell it's the home of an animal, now it's a deceased animal. Like the shell of a life, it's almost like a skeleton of something that used to be there. That could be interpreted as being morbid.

Instructor: When you look at the shell portion, do you get a sense of morbidity or do you something else.

Rodd: It's beautiful. It's not an ugly shell. It's all pearled. It was a very beautiful shell even after it was dead or gone or whatever.

Instructor: Do you think it's photographed to maximize that sense of beauty?

Rodd: I think the shell was chosen carefully.

Instructor: OK, technical elements. What do you think is working well with this picture? Printing? Composition? Choice of contrast? Do you like it or
not? Why?

Ivan: I like the contrast a lot. I like just the separation of things. Looking at it up close it looks a lot different than from back here. Because you can see shoulders and you can see arms. But from back here you just see the hands and the shell. I think that the printing was very well done. It's not overexposed or underexposed. I don't know what the negative looked like but there's good contrast or a filter used, or whatever.

Instructor: Why are you bringing up Mapplethorpe?

Rodd: Reminiscent of Mapplethorpe. I think that Mapplethorpe either something that's completely inanimate, you know, like a rock or a flower or something like that, or something that's really controversial that has like, naked humans or doing whatever, something. I didn't see the exhibit so I don't know exactly what's in the photos. I know it's got a lot of very controversial...

Instructor: But this seems to be also in reference to that particular image that you wrote about, right?

Rodd: Right.

Instructor: OK, Margaret what did you want to add?

Margaret: I don't know whether I wanna say anything or not. But, you guys were really close. I think a lot of subconscious things went on as they were talking about it. I've got a real connection with the ocean. My house is full of sea shells and things. It drives my husband crazy. I just recently lost my dad and he lived on the ocean, was crazy about the ocean. That was my grandmother's sea shell and I lost them real fast, too. My grandparents went and then my father went, and there was a real sense of loss there. When I picked the shell, it was just a pretty shell, it was one of the prettiest ones I had. Starting shooting pictures with it. I have this loss. The only thing I have left is a picture. A lot of my work over in design right now is oceans. People are
getting sick of it.

Instructor: A lot of artists work through something.

Margaret: So, yeah, that had a lot of meaning and a sense of loss. But death, I never thought about the end itself. And then, of course, I like a lot of Mapplethorpe's techniques and work and wanted to see if I could mimic some of that.

Instructor: Did you want to make your sweater disappear?

Margaret: I was trying. I probably could have done more to do that.

Instructor: You could have burned the area in. It's so close to being black already. OK.

1 May: Explanation of Criticism Assignment

Instructor: OK, everybody looks so glum! What can we do?

Charles: I think it's probably just the time of the day.

Instructor: OK, let me just hand this out first and then I'll explain what we're gonna do. Take one and pass it down. What I want you to do is swap photographs with somebody. And, take the photograph home with you. This will give you a lot of time to think about this picture, or couple pictures if it's a diptych. What I'd like you to do is write a two to three page paper on the image. I know you're probably not used to writing critiques of other artwork that other people are doing in class, but I think it's just as important as, you know, looking at more well-known artists' work. Just a two to three page double-spaced typewritten critique of the photograph. You should bring that to class on Friday. On Friday, we'll have the official critique. What you should do, two to three pages is really quite short. So describe, interpret and evaluate the photograph. Use the guidelines in the handout that I gave you last week. Is there anyone who didn't get this handout? What this does is break down criticism into three basic procedures, which are describing, interpreting, and
evaluating. But you don't need to separate them distinctly in your writing. You want to write in a lively, interesting way. So if you want to start off reacting to the work, that's fine. But just, in there, somewhere, describe it and interpret it and tell why you like it or don't like it. Then, the handout that I gave you at the beginning of the quarter with the questions on it—choose two of those questions other than the first three since the first three are to describe, interpret and evaluate, and incorporate those into your writing. That's what you need to for Friday. Address technical issues in the work as well as the content in the work. Do spend some time trying to evaluate the work. Any questions?

Christopher: Can we incorporate an interview with the photographer? I mean not to get the absolute right idea what the photograph's about, but like, as an example, Margaret's shell. The way that a lot of us read death or something else into it. That also kind of fit into her ideas about that shell.

Instructor: Not for this. I think it's useful for now to deal with the work as far as just what you see and what you know and what you feel. Biographical information can be very useful and important, but we'll do that in some of the critiques themselves.

**Documentary Critique**

Instructor: Get out the written critique of the other person's artwork. Do you feel like you learned more about the artwork or have a better understanding of the artwork through doing that writing?

Brad: Not really. It was just because you have to think about it longer. If I sat and thought about it just as long without writing anything down I'd have gotten the same thing.

Instructor: So it was the process of sitting and thinking that was crucial?
Brad: Yeah.

Instructor: OK, somebody else. Martin, how about you?

Martin: I feel the same way he does. For us it just means sitting down to look at it, it might take longer to write it out and that in itself might give you new ideas. But I think if you sit down to look at a photo you might get the same ideas.

Instructor: OK. But again, sitting and looking is the prerequisite for doing deeper thinking about it.

Martin: I don't see you get anything deeper by writing it down.

Instructor: It helps me work out ideas. I'm just curious whether or not it helps anyone else get ideas that maybe you wouldn't have worked out if you hadn't gone through the process of writing.

Rodd: I think it's better when we just talk about it. You get other people's input and it makes you see it differently than just sitting there in your own and doing everything alone and getting just one view of it. I mean you can get other views but usually you get that one first idea and you just kind of stick with it.

Margaret: I think I learn more, too, seeing things from different viewpoints of the world, and a group like this together you see different things than you do just alone.

Instructor: OK. You all have someone else's artwork, so we'll just start with one. OK. These are small so everyone should just come look at them. It looks like all three are a unit. I know you all have spend some time describing whatever it is that you wrote about. I want to try building this description where everyone contributes one important descriptive word.

Martin: Restaurant.

Brad: French.
Tammy: Hungry.

Mara: Bread.

Rodd: Patio.

Ivan: Delicate.

Instructor: OK, you've all had a chance to look at them and form some ideas about them. What do you think this is about?

Martin: Meals, dining.

Instructor: Let's back up and describe it further.

Brad: The outdoor patio of a restaurant.

Instructor: What about this other image, its companion image. What's in it?

Margaret: A kitchen, a big cafeteria-like kitchen.

Instructor: Characterize it more. Is it more like the MCL Cafeteria or a different kind of cafeteria.

Margaret: European. The cafeteria style seems European. But it looks like a more upscale kind of place.

Instructor: OK so you've got the restaurant patio and then you've got this...

Tammy: Bread

Instructor: What kind of bread?

Rodd: Deli bread, you know, like, rye, wheat.

Instructor: Do you read these as a sequence or as having some kind of sense going from one direction or another?

Margaret: I see a sequence. From the outside, then they're going inside to the line, and then to the food.

Instructor: So why photograph this restaurant place, and then the bread?

James: Maybe its their specialty.

Instructor: So, Teddy, you wrote about this one. Read us what you wrote or just tell us.
Teddy: I remember her talking about going to a French restaurant but it didn't click until I saw the French flag in the top corner. The middle of the three pictures just looks like a cafeteria and you're not sure what it is. I mean you know they have bread and either she thought the bread was just really cool-looking, or it's probably really good. She didn't take many pictures of people. Even they are slightly impartial pictures they do suggest a certain comfort. It looks like a place that she'd like to go kind of like some people get into going over to Insomnia and having coffee and relaxing over there. It's a French place but you can tell from looking at the interior that it's not one of those 'must wear a tie' kind of places. It's really casual and looks more middle class, someplace that a college student could afford, or people in general. It's quiet not overcrowded.

Instructor: Is that what you write when you interpreted the pictures?
Teddy: Yeah. When I thought about being middle class, I thought that the artist, that she is most likely a middle class person who gets into doing more middle-class things.

Instructor: Mara, do you have any comments to add about your pictures?
Mara: Just basically the same thing. I mean, this is a place that I feel comfortable with and I go there whenever expenses allow French bread. So I was just thinking about documenting a place that I always feel comfortable in.

Instructor: Technical issues. What do you think of the composition, printing, etc.
Teddy: Little dark except for the bread one. The bread one I thought was good.

Instructor: Good use of depth of field. The bread's very clear, and the background, even if it is a little cluttered, it's still out of focus enough so that you don't really pay too much attention to it. How does the darkness of the
others affect you as a viewer?

Rodd: They're not nearly as comforting as they should be. Dark has heavier tones, lighter things tend to make people happier.

Instructor: They're kind of dark and small and I find sometimes that when a print is dark and small you just don't want to look at it as much. OK. [moving to the next set of prints] How about these prints. Why don't you come up and look at these if you haven't already seen them. Form at least one sentence where you describe what we're looking at.

Mara: Playing music.

Instructor: What about location. Where are these?

Rodd: In a dorm room. It looks like DJ equipment.

Instructor: What other clues are there that this is more than just your ordinary stereo?

Margaret: Two turntables.

Instructor: Something else about him.

Brad: He has a name tag with a company name tag on it so it makes you think it might be a little more professional than just somebody's house.

Instructor: What else does he have on?

Brad: A headset with a microphone.

Instructor: OK. How do you feel about the three different photographs? Does there seem to be a reason for the three? Do the three add up to something that just one wouldn't?

Rodd: No. It might have if it wasn't in that order. Because the end ones, if you look at the records that he's dealing with, its the same record and the one in the middle is a different one. He might taking one off and putting another one on.

Ivan: Actually, the one in the middle, he's switching records.
Instructor: Is that important?
Rodd: I think they're too close time-wise. I'm not sure why he's got two in a horizontal format and one in the vertical.
James: It could be a club.
Instructor: It isn't necessarily a rule, but if you're unifying a body of work, and this is something to consider for your final project, is, think of all the variables that you have. One would be how you orient the picture. If you keep mixing them up, there should be a good reason why. They seem less unified.
So what do you think this is about? Why would somebody choose to photograph this?
Brad: It's kind of like what James said. Because there is such a lack of setting there, it looks like its just in a club. You get the feeling that this is something that the photographer and this guy respect.
Instructor: OK but do you get involved with the pictures, maybe because of great printing or great composition or intriguing subject matter or maybe they lead you to think about something. [no response] Maybe its hard to say things about negative aspects of work or where it needs improvement, but that's the only way you're going to learn is if you say what's working with the work as well as what's not working with the work.
James: How he displayed the person is rather simple. There's not much movement or excitement in the pictures. I guess if he wanted to show his friend or show this person doing this...I would have chosen the background situation a lot better, or the different positions that he is in.
Brad: Or he could have taken just one minute detail. Like the hand putting the needle on the record. Like the task of deejaying.
Instructor: So you really start to look at the process of what happens.
Brad: Because here you don't know what you're supposed to be more involved
in him or the turntable. But I totally disagree with everything. I think the focus is not on the deejay but on the equipment. I think that he's document the activities, attitudes and feelings of disc jockeys. Because they have to have complete control over everything right in front of them. The focus is on the deejay but more consistently on the actual mixer and the turntables and all wires and equipment. In a normal setting you wouldn't be able to see it. They do have some light but not a lot of light. You have to know where everything is. I think that is emphasized by the blurred images of the hands on the records...how quickly and precise everything has to be done in order to accomplish the beat that they are looking for.

Instructor: There's a nice amount of blur.

Brad: It's a split second, actually. At first you can't even really tell it's a record. I think that that's the more important thing that's supposed to be looked at.

Instructor: But you also talked about feelings.

Brad: It looks like he's almost a statue. So, there's definitely a concentration that's going on. I think that it illustrates how concentrated you really have to be to do it.

Teddy: The pictures are too similar, they're too much the same. They basically look like the same picture. He might want to have zoomed up on the actual soundboard with his hands on one of the levers moving them. If the concentration was supposed to be on the equipment instead of him then it would have been best to cut out his face because you're naturally drawn towards looking at people's faces, and its taking the attention away from the equipment.

Christopher: He could have varied the angle some.

Instructor: So if you're going to have three shots there should be some
reason to have three shots. There should be some sort of narrative or
something that is showing you that one shot just doesn't cover.
OK, let's move a little into printing. What do you think of the printing?
Tammy: It's very gray. I find it hard to look at them. There's nothing that
catches my eye and makes it interesting.
Instructor: Other ideas about technical qualities?
Christopher: Just the background with that dark window and the light wall,
and he's wearing something kind of darkish. Especially in the two left ones he
kind of blends into that dark side of the window.
Instructor: I want to do something a little different with these [next images].
I want this group [of three students] to look these over. Consider which
questions from the sheet of questions that you want to think about. What I
want to try doing is for the three of you to lead the discussion on it using what
we usually do, describing and interpreting, and also pick out one question
from the group of questions [on the sheet]. Then we'll have another group of
three come look at these images. Each group will have one image. So what you
will be doing as a group is leading a discussion. Follow a similar format to what
we've been doing or improvise, but also include one of the questions from the
sheet. Get out your sheet of questions. Take some time and talk over your
ideas.
Instructor: OK let's hear what everybody has to say. Do you guys want to go?
Margaret: Where's my list of questions? OK. Describe the work.
Instructor: Maybe it would work better if you stood up by the work.
Margaret: Would anyone like to describe the work?
Instructor: Everyone else is going to have to answer questions, too.
Teddy: They're fish. I'm assuming that either he got in the water with his
camera or that's a fish tank. The one on the left has two fish in it, slightly out
of focus. The one of the right has only one fish that I can tell, and that's on
the bottom of the rocks. The background of the other one is kind of fuzzy and
dark. The exposure is a little bit better in the one on the right. I'm not sure
what that light thing is towards the top.
Tammy: That's air bubbles.
Margaret: Well, do they tell a story or do they go together in a series? Or
would they work better by themselves, itself?
James: From back here its really difficult to tell what the right on is because
its really dark. Looks like an outdoor woodsy picture to me.
??????
Christopher: It's kind of hard to identify the fish involved.?????
Margaret: We thought as a group that this one worked well alone. I don't
know if you want my input or not.
Instructor: Make sure you get to the question from the sheet. However you
want to do it.
Margaret: Well, we talked about this, it's a dark exposure. These fish if you
look at it closely, their eyes are like (eyes open wide), and they're hiding
under this rock so we were debating on whether there's some body in the tank
that would like to eat them. Or if they looked at you and said, 'Oh my God what's
he doing?...You have a flash on there that scared me to death.'
Rodd: I didn't use a flash.
Brad: Does anybody get any feelings about the blurred images of the fish?
What kind of attitudes or feelings it puts out? We kind of thought that was
fear. Do you agree or disagree?
??????: Fear.
Brad: Or startled or something like that.
Margaret: That [blurriness] may have been done on purpose to get a kind of
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motion effect. Well, what does it say about the artist? Why do you think he chose that?

[pause, no response]

Instructor: Maybe we should drink some coffee and come back. So, did anybody answer the question?

Mara: It's mysterious and dark.

Margaret: Well, one thing, if he's got an aquarium, they're a pain, so you would have to like aquariums. You have to like them enough to photograph them.

Christopher: But does that say anything about whether guys or girls have aquariums? That's the question. [laughter]

Rodd: Is this the question, 'what does it say about women, what does it say about men' type of thing?

Christopher: Well it's like women doing...photograms. You know, some of them you looked at them and you got more of a feminine feeling

Brad: Uh-hum. I think it depends on what kind of fish you have in your fish tank.

Margaret: ??? yea. fighting fish.

Rodd: Well, actually the one on the right is a shark.

Brad: We thought so. We got that kind of Jaws feeling. This looks like a guy's fish tank to me though. With the rocks in it. You don't see any...

Margaret: Little lighthouses in there...

Brad: Yea, and shells.

Instructor: OK, well, do you have anything else to bring up?

Brad: Does anybody else have any last words about it?

Margaret: We brought up something I think we ought to mention. To do that you ought to get closer in, like get a macro. And not shoot the bottom. Then it

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would look like you were actually in there, like you were scuba diving.
Rodd: Well, I tried to use a macro. The problem was there was not enough light. I had three lights set around the thing and I just could not get it lit well at all. I had to go to a 70 millimeter lens to even get anything. I was on like two second exposures with the aperture all the way open.
Instructor: OK, thanks, group. One thing we haven't done as much in here is evaluating the pictures. Maybe it isn't always that important. Sometimes I think its helpful. Think about evaluating these pictures. What do you think about them and why? So, somebody, some evaluation you have of the pictures.
Rodd: I had problems with the focus on the left. I remember seeing a lot of slides and a lot of pictures where there's nothing, not one thing in the picture in focus.
Instructor: What slides?
Rodd: One of the ones we watched the other day. It had some unknown square in the right corner and a very blurred female body that was kind of twisted.
Instructor: One of Francesca Woodman's?
Rodd: Yeah. I've seen a lot of pictures where there's just hardly anything in focus.
Instructor: OK. That's true.
Rodd: And they're professionally done, so...
Instructor: So does that mean a picture can have blur
Charles: Did we ever say that blur was bad or that everything had to be in focus? I think when I talked about depth of field I said sometimes you want things to be out of focus. Sometimes if it helps convey something, then you might choose it. When I was talking about camera shake and explaining shutter speeds, I said sometimes you might want to have camera shake. If you feel that might convey your intentions better.
Instructor: OK, everybody get out your little notebooks and turn to an empty page. This will take a couple minutes. Write a couple things that you see as positive aspects of these pictures. Then write a couple negative aspects; areas that could use some work. [A few minutes go by.] OK, Rodd tell me a positive aspect of the pictures.

Rodd: The fish are in the middle of the picture.

Instructor: And that feels right?

Rodd: If they were out to the side you might lose the point.

Instructor: Somebody else. Teddy, a positive comment.

Teddy: The position of the one on the right is interesting. Although like we said, we would probably want to cut off the bottom.

Margaret: Actually in that composition the gravel works. I think it adds to it. It adds balance and tone.

Instructor: OK, Mara, a negative aspect.

Mara: The black stripe at the top of the one of the left distracts me.

Instructor: OK, Martin, a negative comment.

Martin: The one on the left's a little too dark.

Instructor: OK, we need to move on to another picture. How about this group? How many more people have pictures that we have not talked about?

One, two, three, four. We have 35 minutes left so we'll keep things moving at a brisk clip.

Teddy: Alright, would everybody like to come up and view the ???

[class looks at images] OK pretty simple description, anybody want to give it?

Rodd: Dog finds food, dog eats food, dog heaves, and dog is feeling pretty sick.

Teddy: Can anybody tell where this is, I mean because you can't really tell from these but we figured out that this is in a car because of the molding. So, possibly a car-sick dog. And I was told that that's a hot dog. Used to be.

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Margaret: No wonder he threw up.

Teddy: Alright, what might this tell you about the artist, as far as his identity and personality?

Margaret: You really shouldn't let your dog eat hot dogs.

Martin: Interesting angles. Interesting subject. It's different.

Christopher: You assume a kind of relationship between the artist and this dog. Just because of the proximity. I mean you have to good friends with the owner of the car. It may not be his car. It may not be his dog.

Rodd: I'm just kind of wondering if it's a kind of set up thing. Where we're just going to make him puke and document it, or he just happened to have his camera and thinking, 'Alright! Something I can document.' Click. click. click.

Christopher: I think it was a spur of the moment because they're out of focus.

Margaret: They definitely seem spontaneous.

Instructor: Do you think that really matters?

Rodd: No. I think if it's a documentary and you set something up and say that you're going to document the way you're going to do this.

Teddy: If we didn't know him, what would you say about this person just by looking at what he photographed, his choice of subject matter. What goes through his mind?

Rodd: I don't think many girls would take a picture of a dog vomiting on the back seat of a car.

Teddy: So this is possibly saying something about men?

Rodd: I do think that it says that a man would more times than a woman take a picture of something like this.

Mara: So what feelings and emotions do you have toward these pictures?

Margaret: I can relate because I have a dog that vomits a lot.
Rodd: But would you take a picture of it? It all goes back to that thing of if it's a guy thing or is it a girl thing. If your dog vomits I don't think you'd say, 'Great let's get the camera.'

Christopher: I thought this was kind of a...now that I know it's vomiting, but I thought it was a kind of comforting. Like, this is the dog's place, and it's cool, the dog can sit here.

Instructor: So that was your interpretation when you wrote about it?

Christopher: Yeah.

Rodd: The resale value on that car can't be too high, then.

Brad: Fred, got anything intelligent?

Tim: The dog was sick, so he cannot control himself.

Instructor: Thanks group. I'd like to do the same thing. So think of some things that you think are going well, and then some things that aren't going so well. I think we can compliment each other for doing well, but talk about what really needs work. Write briefly. Just take one positive thing and one negative thing. You can address broad things like the subject matter. OK.

Tammy: How about you—a thing that works well.

Tammy: They're very well framed, especially the one on the right. I like the way it's right up on the dog and you can see how it's sleeping. Also the one on the other end, you can tell he's looking for something. If you were a little bit farther away it wouldn't be perhaps as interesting, but with you right up to the dog it looks like you're looking for it with him.

Instructor: OK, Christopher.

Christopher: Well, the fact that they're out of focus takes away from...well, for instance in the second one I couldn't tell at all what that was.

Instructor: Somebody else. Either a positive or a negative comment.

Rodd: There's a definite plot line. If there was writing underneath it they
would be very Duane Michals style. His things are a little colored. Like in the
day today he took a pill to get really, really small, and this is like that same
type of humor, I think. I don't know if it was meant to be humorous, but I
think it is.
Margaret: I like the first one for how sometimes you don't have to take a
picture of exactly what's going on. It suggests. In the next frame it shows
what happens.
Instructor: OK, any final comment? Alright, there's one last group.
Christopher: We decided to draw up a bunch of different things for
everybody to think about. For one thing, the lighting, the depth of field,
subject matter, the focus, technical things to think about, is there a
progression going on?
Rodd: It's a pick and choose kind of thing. You don't need to discuss all of
them.
Christopher: Who would like to begin?
Brad: I don't think there's any kind of progression other than the same
person and the same setting. But the one on the right is more appealing. The
one on the left is more definitely caught in the moment. You know they are
either dancing or stretching. And then in the one on the right it's either a
sigh of relief or exhaustion. It's two totally different moods.
Rodd: Would say something else if maybe it was lighter?
Brad: I don't really know. I didn't really look at that. It was more so the
position of the body and the head down. It almost looks like a feeling of
disappointment, maybe.
Christopher: Also you may not be able to tell this from far away, but this one
is maybe a bit more out of focus than this one. I mean, does that add to it or
take away from it, or is it a neutral aspect of the picture?
Brad: It didn't really change the way I feel about it.

Mara: I was going to say something about lighting.

Christopher: It makes you think about where the light is coming from because this light, it gets a lot of attention.

Mara: It puts the attention on the subject. Plus the lighting and the shadow on her body is really dramatic. It's really nice. It puts the focus on that person. But it's a little bit light, it's so white.

Christopher: But is that a necessary light? If you look at this, we were thinking that there was a light coming out from here, because if you look at it here if you're up close as we are, you can kind of note that this light is behind her, and that isn't...

Rodd: That's not necessary to light her. There's one actually right here that's doing the lighting, and this one is pretty far back in the distance.

Christopher: And does this say anything about the artist, or about women, or race, or gender? Does this make a statement or is it like, an image? Or is it telling a story? Martin?

Martin: I'm in the group.

Mara: I wanted to say something about the facial expressions on her face. They're really so pretty. She looks like her eyes are looking at somebody. She looks like her looks are really powerful and striking. Plus her body is really muscled, well-defined. So this might say something about women, too.

Christopher: Do you assume that she knows the photographer? We have some inside information.

Instructor: Ask one more question.

Christopher: James, ask a question. [no response] Do you like the pictures, or not? Do they say anything to you?

Rodd: You're shaking your head Brad. Why don't you like them?
Brad: I guess it's just I don't get anything out of them. That one on the right though, I think that maybe by itself it might tell a story. The one on the left, it's totally different. The one on the right, it's, I can see how someone would be totally crushed because they fell down during their routine, or something. It looks to me like someone that was in total exhaustion or total disappointment. So right now I could write a four five page story on just that one image.

Christopher: Is there anything else we wanted to draw out here?

Instructor: It seems like some people were saying something about the image on the left that nobody's bringing up. There was a lot of discussion about something else...I guess no one wants to bring that up?

Christopher: The fact that it's kind of sexual.

Jon: Well, it's Teddy's sister.

Christopher: I mean, she has amazingly long legs. [laughter] He was the one that pointed that out.

Brad: I don't think it's sexual at all.

Christopher: Well, if you were to pick a point that you were looking at, then, as your eye goes up the body there.

Teddy: My only question is because he said they don't go together, but people said that it's like she'd doing something, like, powerful, that she's working. And that one looks like she's extremely tired. But I guess since I know there is more than one aspect to a dancer, and that to do that...well I had plans to add another picture. I wanted to get another picture of her preparation and then her competition because she ended up winning this weekend. I was also going to take a picture of her trophy to show that this is what she does. You get tired. You get upset. You perform, and you can win.

Instructor: Who else has pictures that we have not talked about yet. Well I think we'll have to talk about these a little on Monday.
[Critique continued on Monday]

Instructor: Don't choose one that you wrote about. Try to figure out what the work is documenting and what one question from the list of questions to enhance the conversation about the work. Brad needs another person in his group. Also figure out whether or not you like them and why. OK, has everybody had enough time? Teddy, how about you and Martin? Stand up and lead.

Teddy: Does everybody want to get up or can you see these? OK, does anybody have any drastic feelings about this artwork...or feelings, period?

Rodd: It reminds me of the dog in the back seat series

Teddy: James, you have a close ????

Instructor: No one has any feelings at all?

Rodd: Oh, what a cute puppy.

Teddy: I don't know. I don't think that's very cute. I have a problem with dog excrement.

Instructor: Did you [as a group] address whether or not you liked it and why?

Teddy: We decided it was a cute dog doing an ugly thing. That's about it. There's not much substance. A fact of life.

Martin: Everybody's seen it done. It wasn't like it was from a drastically new perspective.

Teddy: There's nothing to think about.

Instructor: Did you agree, Martin?

Martin: I didn't have much to say really. This is a cute dog doing an ugly thing.

Instructor: So what else did you talk about?

Martin: Good print. It's not really out of focus or anything.

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Instructor: Other comments or questions?
Rodd: This definitely needed to be documented I think. One of those groundbreaking things for *Life* magazine
Ivan: I kind of addressed that question when did it. About what kind of ideas about life. I just said that this is kind of like how dogs, animals go to the bathroom out in the open and not really caring very much about it. Humans are so private and don't really talk much about it.
Teddy: The dog is trying to assume the position here, he's still doing his spin.
Instructor: I want to know how many people like this series or not?
Martin: I think it just speaks for itself. He took a cute picture of a dog, maybe he's sentimental about.
Charles: I think that's a good point. Just because you could have taken a picture of an animal that you felt strongly about, and tried to create some kind of sentimental image or some kind of image that's important to you. I think then the image might have some value, at least to the photographer if not to anyone else. But these images just seem to be a reaction to the assignment.
Rodd: I think it could be, depending on how you put it up, it could be a very Duane Michals kind of thing. Or you know, put some elaborate, weird plot line to it and it could be another Mount Fujiyama type deal.
Instructor: But is it like that, is the question.
Rodd: No.
Christopher: It could've been that way. I mean, the close-up one, I mean, I don't know how close you might want to get but if you got real close you could maybe...
Instructor: Yeah, but we have to talk about what's there. That's what's there so that's kind of what we have to talk about. Documentary assignments are one of the basic staples of photo courses. Going out, finding something that you
feel that is important and photographing it. It's fairly standard assignment.

Margaret: My dog would have been feeling really angry. You can't watch my one dog. You have to look away and pretend like you're not noticing. She's really self-conscious about these things. She's really sensitive.

Instructor: How do you feel about some technical issues? Like in the first shot the camera is real close to the dog, it fills the picture frame and then it's much further away in the other two? Is the camera too far away?

Teddy: I think it could've been closer on these two. There's just grass.

Instructor: Other comments? Do you want to say anything about it?

Audrey: No.

Instructor: Good. Who wants to go next?

Rodd: OK, come on up and get a good look at it. OK, does anybody have any thoughts about what's going on in this? If it's documenting something, what is it documenting?

Brad: Man working on a power line.

Rodd: I went a little deeper. I thought...I just figured, it's art, you can make up a story about it, right? So I figured this can be a guy tapping phone lines. Some kind of FBI work or something.

Instructor: I would ask if you're getting that from the work or just making up wild stories?

Rodd: Just making up wild stories.

Charles: They don't need to do anything physically to the wires to tap into them.

Rodd: Satellite link-up or something? I thought it might be a little more interesting to try to read something more into it.

Charles: You can bring a lot of information to an image to make it really interesting but you don't want to go overboard. If there's nothing there.
Rodd: OK, fine, fine. OK, well, does anybody have any comments.

Martin: It's kind of an interesting angle. You're right up there with the guy.

Rodd: For one of them it's an interesting angle.

Martin: I don't know. It's kind of nice being right up there.

How did you get that picture:

Tim: From my room, out the window.

Rodd: We were talking about the fact that it looks like there's not a whole lot going on in this. There's nothing wrong that but the figures are really similar. You would have to get one as he was going up he ladder and one as he was finishing up, maybe one as he was working on something. But they just seem like in these two he's working on the same thing. They're really similar. This one's really good, though.

Instructor: Christopher has a comment.

Christopher: Yeah. I can inject something into it. Maybe it's a photograph of the human factor in something that's so technologically advanced that most of us can't even comprehend how a phone line's connected or works. This guy's fixing something or adjusting something.

Rodd: So he's documenting the human factor in any kind of high tech thing?

Christopher: Yeah.

Instructor: That's what looking at those makes you think about?

Christopher: Yeah, I mean, personally speaking, I mean I was an English major so any kind of technology blows me away. So I could be in admiration of this guy.

Instructor: But what about the pictures?

Christopher: They're nicely centered.

Rodd: Your identity made you admire this guy. What do we think it says about the artist's identity? Somebody that hasn't said anything for a while, pipe up.

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Tammy: Does anyone have any particular feelings about this particular series? We thought it was the documentation of somebody going through the process of fixing their roof. They start out here then go up the ladder so they can get there.

Rodd: I did my paper...this is the one I got for the weekend and I wondered if it was actually, did she take the picture at the exact second he really hit his thumb?

Instructor: Did that matter?

Rodd: No, it defines the way the documentary is laid out. If it was staged it would be a humorous documentary. If it wasn't it could have just been a serious one that had a tragic ending to it.

Instructor: But since you don't know...

Rodd: I ended up on the staged end.

Mara: What do you think about the composition here?

[no response]

Instructor: All these design majors and no one has anything to say about composition?

Brad: I like the shadows on the roof.

Mara: What do you think about the print.

Teddy: It's good, especially the last one.

Instructor: What's good about it?

Teddy: It seems to be well in focus. There's no light source drawing your eye away from what's going on. It's easy to focus on the guy in the center.

Rodd: I disagree. I think they're kind of too dark. Because there are kind of harsh shadows.
Margaret: It was hard to get the black in this one, I don't know why.

Instructor: Did you use a filter when you printed?

Margaret: I think I used a two and a half.

Charles: You could have used a four.

Margaret: You mean higher?

Instructor: Slightly higher.

Charles: And then, if you develop them yourself, do you know how to recognize underdeveloped negatives?

Margaret: Do you mean on a test sheet?

Charles: I can show you after class how to recognize them. I think it's curious nobody mentioned the proximity of the photographer to the subject. I mean she had to get up on the roof to take these. And, that seems like big deal.

Rodd: Maybe there's a window there that she's taking it out of.

Tammy: I think she's right up on there. I think it needs some more shots.

Christopher: It would be kind of scary if you knew how many stories high this was. You can figure out a lot about who took the photos by the fact that they were able to get up that close to the subject.

Instructor: What can you figure out about who took it?

Christopher: The photographer knows the subject.

Instructor: Any comments?

Rodd: I was wondering why the perspective of the third one changed. They're not the same distance from the camera.

Instructor: Which was do you think is more effective.

Rodd: For someone working on a roof I think the third one is more effective.

Instructor: OK, so evaluate the series. OK, everybody stand up. I know it's hot in here.

Charles: Next time I'll bring some pliers because I think it would be a lot
easier to pull your teeth than to get comments from you.

Brad: I think it accomplishes the purpose of the assignment—to document something. It might be better off with another picture but it serves its purpose. So in that aspect I guess it was good.

Instructor: If the series was outside this classroom do you think you would, like in a gallery, do you think you would be engaged with the pictures and be interested in looking at them?

Tammy: I don't think as a series. But I think this one here stands by itself as a lone picture.

Instructor: Why? What do you like about it?

Tammy: The way it's composed with the ladder, and there's all this space over here so it leads your eye on the other side, and gives the impression of motion even through it's not moving.

Instructor: You know what else I was noticing about this one. You have all these horizontals: the ladder, the tree line, the roof; then the trees are verticals, all these are verticals, they're all echoing each other. To put it in formal terms. Any negative comments. OK, thank you.

Christopher: Alright, you guys might want to have a good look at these to get some of the details here.

Instructor: Don't forget to talk about the questions on that sheet that you addressed.

Martin: Basically we couldn't figure out what they're trying to document. One thing I could think of was that he's saying that this world's a dead end place and I'm disillusioned. That's what I got out of it. But I couldn't see any correlation between the two [images] at all.

Instructor: But what is it you like about it? You just like the thing being photographed? The Mona Lisa head?
Brad: Is that what it is? Where is it?

Charles: It's in the Short North.

Ivan: I didn't know what was going on documentary-wise but I just found it kind of interesting that he chose to put two different body parts in the left hand corner. He put his foot in that one, his hand in the other. I don't know what relevance that has.

Christopher: Were you thinking rebellion or because...sticking your middle finger out because not everybody might like your feet on the table. A lot of beer cans sitting around.

Ivan: There's a book. I personally never read it so I don't know if it has to do with the picture.

Instructor: What book is it?

Ivan: *On the Road.*

Brad: Also they have a J&B hat on, and a foot, which could be--traveling.

Christopher: Any comments? Does anybody else read anything into this or connect it in any other way.

Brad: Maybe the *Mona Lisa* is representative of what fine art is and his idea is just a bunch of empty beer cans and getting drunk, smoking cigarettes. His idea of art is like saying, 'Fuck the *Mona Lisa* this is my idea of art.' Because when I look at Picasso, and say what's that, who cares. Because when I look at the *Mona Lisa* I don't think it's very pretty. I wouldn't want to hang it in my living room.

Instructor: Do you think that we're grasping at little things here or do you think they should be looked at separately?

Brad: Since they're together you have to assume they're supposed to be compared together.

Instructor: But it's also fair to like one image by itself, and think that they...
don't work well together.

Rodd: I don't think they work well together. I can't see any connection.
There's nothing I can connect them with without just reaching as far as I can to read something into it.

Instructor: So what question from that sheet did you ask?

Christopher: Well, one thing that could come to mind very quickly is what does this say about the photographer?

James: Or society?

Christopher: Oh yeah, or society. I mean, does this say that this is a saint? A practicing monk, here? Somebody that really adheres to societal norms? [no response]

Instructor: OK, everybody get out your notebooks. Write one brief positive comment that has not been said. Then write one brief negative comment that has not been said. And then we will move on. Audrey, how about a positive comment. Anything. How about a negative one? [no response]

James: Both pictures are kind of interesting because they draw the eye around very slowly, checking out different details.

Instructor: Somebody else. A positive comment that hasn't been said.

Brad: That it's not obvious. When you look at it you don't just say, well, 'a dog taking a crap.' You look at it. Everybody's gonna say, well, something different. I think that that's real creative. But then on the negative side, it might be too ambiguous to where someone might not even want to figure it out.

Instructor: OK. One more, either positive or negative comment. Margaret.

Margaret: I don't think it seems to be a documentary. I can't get a documentary out of it. Individually they work well, their compositions, they are nice exposures, nicely framed.
Instructor: Do they work well beyond the level of composition, for you?
Margaret: Technically or to communicate a message?
Instructor: To communicate content.
Margaret: It doesn't quite communicate well to me. There's something I'm missing.
Instructor: Alright, any final comments?
Brad: Does it say anything about gender?
Instructor: Does it?
Brad: I think it says a lot about men.
Instructor: What do you think it says about men?
Brad: The fact that we're like....I mean I don't know that many women that
drink [brand of cheap beer]. Well, I don't know. Most of the girls that I've
ever met, 'course I don't really know many of age yet, but I would say, most
girls, if they drink beer, it's gonna be decent beer. It's not gonna be beer just
to get drunk. I wish I knew girls that drank???
Instructor: No response to that comment?
Brad: And in the other one, I mean, look at what he's saying to the woman.
Teddy: How do you know she's a woman. She looks strikingly like a guy to me.
Brad: To me that looks like a woman.
Instructor: Well we know that it's the Mona Lisa, right?
Teddy: I'm saying that if you did not know it's the Mona Lisa. I'm saying just
disregard the idea.
Instructor: But can you disregard that? I mean, the Mona Lisa is such an
icon.
Charles: You can't disregard it if you know that its...??
Instructor: OK, any responses to Brad, or any other comments? OK, who
wrote about this.

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Tammy: I liked the picture on the left. I liked the visual frame. I didn't notice the hand until the second time I looked at it.

Fabricated Image Critique

Instructor: Here's your new sheet of questions. Notice that it's printed on brown paper. That way you can always find your sheet of questions. And this is partially recycled.

Brad: I already have a lot of these questions. These are the same questions.

Instructor: Well, yes, basically they are. I just enlarged them a little bit, and numbered them, and combined the first three into the area above the italicized section. Let's see. Margaret, are you ready?

Margaret: I think so.

Instructor: OK, why don't you put your work up. What I want you to do is, the italicized line there at the top of your sheet of questions, where you're describing and interpreting it. Pick out one other question that you want to use to talk about it, and write for about five minutes doing those three things. Some description, some interpretation, some evaluation. When you're interpreting it, work in one of those questions on the sheet. First what we'll do is come up and take a really close look at Margaret's work. [Everyone walks up and looks at the images.] OK Ivan, why don't you describe aspects of this series.

We'll start with just describing what's there.

Ivan: Five images of a middle-aged woman sitting on a couch looking at a photo album. She's got picture of a middle-aged gentlemen. She's obviously got some emotions toward him. You can see it in her face. She seems distraught. Distraught because of the clothing that she chooses to wear. She's got some other photos of him, of the same man, on the couch. Different photos. And then she's got one particular one there on the end that she's got in her hand.
Instructor: OK Martin, add to that. What else can you describe?
Martin: Just describe it?
Instructor: Yeah, just describe it.
Martin: Well, the artist is seen in the first three photos in the middle of the photo in black which contrasts greatly with the white couch and the background of the photo. The photo that she's holding is the key part of the subject of them. The mood is sort of depressing.
Instructor: Can you tell who's in the photographs?
Rodd: I don't know who it is?
Instructor: Do you assume something about who it is?
Brad: You can assume (a) that it's a man and (b) that it's an older man.
Rodd: Looks like war pictures.
Instructor: That looks like what...a Marine outfit? [A few nods.] OK. What's the series about?
Teddy: Well she's looking at pictures from a photo album and what you usually use a photo album for is to remember things. But on top of that she's wearing black. As far as funerals go it's a symbol of death. Plus, like he said, the look on her face, she has emotion toward whoever is in the photographs. It looks like it is a sad remembrance of some person that she knew.
Instructor: OK. Tammy, what did you have?
Tammy: She's remembering happier times and places. Whenever we look at old photographs in my family it's to see these people as they were when they, I don't know quite how to say it. It seems to me she's remembering happier times and she's sad now.
Instructor: Did anyone take note of the name that's on the photo album?
"Happy Ways."
Mara, what question did you use from the sheet?
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Mara: Number thirteen, which is What have for the artist? Like we said she's remember a person who's obviously an important person to the artist and she's wearing black and the photos are dark to imply sorrow or sadness.

Instructor: OK, who picked a different question? [No response.] You all picked the identical question? Amazing!

Christopher: What does that say about the artist?

Instructor: Is that a question on there? Which number are you reading from?

Christopher: Six.

Instructor: That is different. How does the artist's identity influence the artwork. That's a little different from what does it say about the artist.

Christopher: Well there were several of them. Like we said you can't disregard the information that we have.

Instructor: So what information do you have?

Christopher: The information we have is that Margaret's father is recently deceased and that he was very close to the ocean to the water. So just having that information and seeing that she's dressed in black and seeing the pictures of the man on the boat, I assumed that that's her father.

Instructor: Since you knew that, you we pointing to the question on outside information?

Christopher: Yeah.

Instructor: So that's useful information to have. OK can you tell what relationship that person is to the photographer without knowing that?

Christopher: No.

Brad: I could make a good guess.

Instructor: Honestly, how many people think they could tell without that. Raise your hand. OK a couple people.
Tammy: Well, you can tell that it's somebody older than her. Looking at the pictures themselves, the format they're in. You don't get pictures anymore from the drugstore that have that white border around the edges. The picture of her father, even if you didn't know the uniforms have changed slightly over the years I think the last picture looks like he's holding her up.

Instructor: You mean this picture? [Holding it closer to class.] Did anybody get a close look at this one? Can you tell what's going on in this one? I mean, did you find yourself looking at this one a lot? If you didn't know anything else about the rest of the series, could you tell what's happening?

Rodd: A little girl getting out of a boat?

Instructor: Just looking at this single frame, is there any sort of mood that you detect?

Teddy: Dark.

Instructor: OK, dark. Why?

Christopher: Because it's a lot darker.

Instructor: What about what's going on in this little picture? Do you see any sort of story or narrative going on in this single frame?

Rodd: I don't know anything about it or what's going on, but if there was one little bit of information. If there was maybe some text around it or something. I know you don't like me to keep saying, 'If there was...'

Instructor: Well, an issue with something like this is that it seems that there's something specific that's being portrayed. Do you like the level of understanding you have looking at the pictures as they are? Do you find it a successful series of photographs, and if so, why?

Christopher: For me personally it's almost impossible to tell because it means something to the artist on a very personal level and somebody from the outside couldn't comprehend or understand.
Instructor: They couldn't understand what?

Christopher: Well to me it's just intimately personal. It's almost as though this wasn't made for viewing in class. It's made for a personal momento.

Instructor: So that makes me think of Mara's comment about what function the artwork might have for the artist.

Margaret: Interesting. I had text picked out for it but I found it too...I'm just a private of a person to put that on there. I'm not sure I'd want to read it again. So when I took those pictures I had specific things that I was going to write.

Instructor: It just seemed too specific?

Margaret: Too depressing. Maybe it's just working through some things. I don't know.

Instructor: Rodd, what did you think about the idea of text versus no text?

Rodd: In this series I think there should be some. Not necessarily for each picture, but some.

Instructor: OK, technical issues. Who wants to bring anything up, either positive or negative? Fred?

Tim: No.

Mara: I have a question. Did you use a flash for any of the pictures.

Margaret: No. I had one of those drawing lamps.

Mara: Because some of the corners are black.

Margaret: Yeah, you can see the light falloff there. That's probably due to the spotlight on the couch.

Rodd: I'm wondering why in the third picture she looks at the camera but not in any of the other pictures.

Tammy: I think it's sort of an imitation of the man in the photograph.

Instructor: Does anybody like the fact that she's looking at you? [Teddy nods.] What do you like about it?
Teddy: It shows emotion.

Instructor: There's something more confrontational about it. She acknowledges you as a viewer. Any final comments? OK, Christopher, why don't you put your prints up. [Everyone gets up to view the prints.] Who likes this series and can say some aspect of it that they like? Mara: I like the series, how it's put together, and the writing. It tells a story. In the first two you can see only legs and in the last two you can see only figures.

Instructor: Someone else who liked it, what did you like about it? Margaret: I liked the similarities—is that your dad's foot in the first frame?

Christopher: Yeah.

Margaret: And then your foot. Showing similarity, the similarity of the composition in both of them. It's kind of a play on the similarities he's decided to show between his father and him.

Instructor: Somebody else that like it. Brad, you raised your hand.

Brad: In the last shot I like the angle. It's a little different than the straight-on shot.

Instructor: So it just adds some visual interest? [Brad nods.]

Rodd: I think there was a plot line before the pictures were taken which made it really easy to follow right along with what he wanted to put in the picture. He knew that, my dad used to do this, now I do this. My dad used to work here, but I work in a similar place but it's more new, more new technology. It's got the diagram of a story, too, you know, the exposition and all that.

Instructor: Since this is one of the first images we've had with text, do you think this is the good phrasing, the right amount of text?

Martin: To me it's the right amount of text.

Instructor: We've got two things. The way the ideas are expressed: "I used to
be embarrassed because my dad would pick up cans in the street." And the amount of text. Is it presented clearly?

Margaret: I think he's got the right amount of text. I think I would have gone a little bit smaller on the point size.

Instructor: So you've been looking at some of Tony Mendoza's photographs with text, right? And some of Duane Michals photos with text. Do you like this story? Do you find yourself getting caught up in the story?

Brad: Yeah because the story is so simple. It's about everyday things.

Instructor: I think its kind of nice seeing his dad's face, seeing what he looks like. Any final comments? Any technical aspects of them you want to mention? OK, how many more prints do we have yet to talk about? Six? OK, you three get your pictures out. That would make four people in two groups and three people in another group. So first form in groups. Give your picture to someone in another group. What I want you to do is describe the pictures among yourselves, interpret them, and pick one question from the list that will enhance your thinking about it, and talk about that one question. Put yourself in a nice little bunch so you can talk. If you want to set them up here go ahead. Each group will lead the discussion on the artwork. [Students discuss artworks for about five minutes.] Is there anyone who hasn't gotten to look at these up close? This group is going to get up there and lead this discussion. [Group consisting of Rodd, Margaret, Martin, and Tammy stands up by pictures.]

Rodd: We don't need to go through the describe thing since we all se them.

Instructor: Yes we do.

Rodd: OK we need to go through the describe thing. So somebody describe it.

Instructor: You need to really help each other out because you're all going to be in their shoes.
Brad: Gets Barney. Pours gasoline on it, and it's dead.

Rodd: So it's a very happy piece, we've determined. Come on group pipe up here.

Margaret: Well, we could go to the questions but we oughta ask you guys to see how you interpret it. How do you think the artist's identity influenced the artwork? [No response.] What do you supposed he's trying to communicate here? Maybe we'll do that first.

Mara: Obviously he hates Barney. [Laughter.]

Margaret: Could this be a deep seated childhood...

Mara: It might!

Brad: But Barney's a new thing.

Margaret: Yeah but you can draw similarities from your childhood. You can pull things out of your childhood.

Rodd: From what I've heard (no offense Margaret) people older than myself talk about is the older generation always hated Mr. Rogers the way we hate Barney. He's stupid...and, 'hello. I'm going to put my shoes on now.'

Charles: I'm not that much older than Rob and I kind of like Mr. Rogers!

Rodd: Right but you're in the same kind of generation. I'm talking about like my parents generation. So do you think this says anything about class, or orientation, or ???

Instructor: Which of those questions did you focus on?

Rodd: We kind of rapid-fired through the whole sheet.

Margaret: I focused personally on society. What does this say about society?

Brad: You're sick. [Laughter.]

Margaret: Well, not in relation to Barney, we take something nice and just lambaste it. Barney-bash. What does that say about our society as a whole?

When you want to do this to something nice like Mr. Rogers...
Christopher: When you see that it's transcended from this. This is taking an innocent symbol of childhood and setting fire to it. When you look at society you see kids bringing guns and pop guns and using their fingers for guns, and like, hauling out .38's and stuff, I think this is a manifestation of the very same thing.

Rodd: It's evil!

Margaret: I thought it was funny at first, but when you really analyze it...

Rodd: I think another thing it says about our society is that we're a pretty rich society. That you can go out and get a fourteen dollar doll, douse it with gasoline, and five minutes later you've got nothing to show for it...

Teddy: Well, you've got five photographs.

Margaret: I don't know. OK, let's switch gears. Let's look at the technical aspects. Does anybody have any comments about it?

Mara: Something that distracts my eyes looking at the last four. There's many things going on. I don't know, if the ground was solid instead of like, stones, it would be so distracting.

Margaret: I was just kind of bothered by the format of each. They're all different sizes, shapes. I'd like to see more consistency among them. One's square, one's longer. Maybe I'm seeing the aspect you talked about. Maybe if Barney was more centered in each picture maybe it would make more of a visual connection.

Rodd: Anything final?

[Next group, consisting of Christopher, Fred, Teddy, Brad goes up]

Christopher: Come on up there's some text here. There are some details you have to see. [Class goes up to look at prints.] OK. Well the first thing we observed here was the presence of text which is kind of new. We saw the name in the first of the two images "Chicken a la King" is crossed out.
second one it's "Apple Mountain Pancakes." We wanted to know what that meant.

Brad: What relevance it has.

Christopher: What relevance it has for the pictures. So looking at the first picture we assumed from the text that this was chicken on this plate. And you see the salt on the side although it is light salt. And we have a crown on the top representing the royalty of Chicken a la King. And in the second one, "Apple Mountain Pancakes," if you look closely you can see two apples sandwiched between two pancakes. As the other group did, we were looking at the questions presented to us and we thought we would give you guys some of the questions and see what your answers had anything to do with what we thought.

Brad: Want me to read the question?

Christopher: Yeah.

Brad: What does the artwork say about class, sexual orientation, age, and ethnicity or other factors?

Christopher: Well, what we did is we came down to class. We thought we would just center on what do these photographs say about class? Can anyone say? Or nationality? [No immediate response] Everybody think for a minute. When you get like a national, a plate of food in front of your face, you say well, this is Chinese food, or this is Italian food,

Mara: French!

Brad: You think this is French? [Laughter.]

Christopher: What leads you to think it's French?

Mara: "a la." [Laughter.]

Margaret: I've got a...has anybody ever seen The History of White People by Martin Mull? Has anyone seen that? Rent it, it's like, only twenty minutes

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long. It's very, it just pokes fun at white-bread, mayonnaise, backyard barbecues. And it goes into the historical context. But it's very interesting.

Christopher: What does it say about the photos? [Laughter.]

Margaret: American cooking. [Laughter.]

Christopher: American cooking.

Margaret: Well we shouldn't say American, we should say specific to our country.

Christopher: Yes, specific to our country.

Margaret: North American, maybe

Christopher: Also, we were thinking about, not just nationalistic things...At least I've never had apple mountain pancakes in a Chinese restaurant, but also we were looking at what class of people eats Chicken a la Salt? Or Apple Mountain Pancakes?

Brad: Like, the bums on high street don't sit down and eat Apple Mountain Pancakes or Chicken a la Salt. And the Richard Gere's, they're eating lobsters.

Christopher: Look at the plates, the tablecloth, here you have things in the background. I see the word, 'coffee.'

Rodd: So what is this, middle-class?

Brad: It's a representation of the American middle class.

Christopher: This looks like something I would love to eat. Seriously. Because I eat pancakes all the time. We thought this person, we learned from the photographer last time in class that this person cooks in ways that some people poke fun at. Well, she is, if you didn't know this, this person is making a play on the obvious, she or he is making fun of something that is obviously different about his or her cooking. Or somebody else's cooking. Or am I just crazy? It's still a representation.

Instructor: Of what?
Brad: American middle class culture.

Margaret: What's called middle America.

Christopher: Me. I would eat this.

Brad: Someone who wakes up in the morning and if they want pancakes they cook them for themselves.

Mara: But do you guys like to eat pancakes with apples?

Brad: Yeah.

Rodd: Just not quite that big. [Laughter.]

Brad: Have you ever heard of pigs in a blanket?

Tammy: Have you ever had blueberry pancakes? It's the same idea. You just cut them up and cook them in the pancakes.

Mara: And you put cinnamon on them?

Tammy: Yeah.

Christopher: Trust me. I lived in Europe and you can't get pancakes like this in Spain. You can't get chicken like that in Spain. The chickens in Spain are just running around. Anything else? Anything else that you guys liked technically about these? What were you guys thinking about the technical composition? How are they laid out? Do you guys like the fact that...

Mara: Why are they on the side?

Christopher: Why is the chicken on the side? The chicken is not in the middle of the frame here. Any guesses why?

Margaret: Because it's only half the composition. The salt's the other half.

Brad: [Picking up print and pointing to sizable dark space in upper right corner of one of the prints.] Why is this space here? Get rid of it.

Christopher: Should they be seen together or separate?

Charles: Similar composition maintains the continuity.

Brad: There we go!
Christopher: You guys like the way the text is presented?

Teddy: Or would you rather it be written on the mat board rather than on paper?

Christopher: Martin.

Margaret: I think you could have a lot of fun with the text on that. Pick a good all-American text and lay it on it.

Christopher: OK, but we're dealing with the images as they're presented.

Margaret: I only said that because it looks like the text is removable.

Mara: Maybe if it was written with a darker pen, a black pen.

Teddy: Martin how about you.

Martin: I like it.

Teddy: You mean the text as it is—removable.

Martin: That was an accident.

Tammy: That wasn't purposely. [Laughter.] If you lift them up...

Martin: She mixed them up.

Instructor: Yeah, it looks like an afterthought. Here's a tip that works on fiber-based paper, it might work on RC paper, you'll have to try it. If you write with a permanent black marker, and make a mistake, get one of those white Staedler erasers. You can actually erase it. You have to rub a lot but it doesn't mess up the surface, at least on fiber based paper.

Christopher: Like any black marker?

Instructor: Well, I was using permanent black marker.

Rodd: You just tried to erase it?!

Instructor: I made a boo-boo.

Rodd: But what made you think you could erase it?

Instructor: I tried—I was desperate!

Margaret: Does it sit on top of the emulsion?
Instructor: Yeah it doesn't soak in.

Charles: It sits on the top of the coating on top of the emulsion.

Instructor: OK, let's move on.

Charles: Actually I don't mine them stuck to the board. I don't care for text at all. I think if you had enough time to think about it might have been fun to create some real text for a menu or an advertisement. If you like setting this stuff up, that might be something you think about for your final project—setting up a whole menu. You could explore...just look at some menus, go to some diners.

Instructor: OK, next group. Sorry. Are you finished?

Brad: Yeah.

[Ivan puts up images and class gets up to look at them. Mara accompanies him and they both stand by prints.]

Mara: Who wants to describe the pictures? [No response.]

Instructor: Just call on someone!

Mara: Martin! [Laughter, since he was just previously called on.]

Martin: The frame is of the artist taking up the whole vertical frame, I guess. He has hiking shoes wrapped around his neck and a timid smile, or I don't know what the proper word to describe his expression is. I guess he's proud of his shoes in the first photo. In the second photo it seems like he's accomplished something. He's back from his hiking. Very proud.

Ivan: [Reading from list of questions.] What function does this artwork have for the artist?

Teddy: Obviously he's proud. The ability to remember his first hiking trip. I guess. 'His first hiking shoes' -- means he didn't have hiking shoes before. And he'd never been hiking before so this is his first time hiking--'His first hiking trip.'
Ivan: What about the second one
Teddy: Well in the first there's the shoes and in the second he's back from his trip.
Ivan: Do you think the words help?
Teddy: I think it does because without it you'd just have his shoes around his neck.
Mara: We were wondering why he had his head chopped here. [No immediate response.]
Brad: What does his shirt say? [Referring to words on T-shirt.]
Mara: "Love in Life."
Tim:
Ivan: Could you talk about the technical aspects? Brad?
Brad: The white of the shirt and the white background is almost shockingly white.
Margaret: It reminds me of some of the advertising techniques that we're using now. It reminds me of a backpacking ad in a magazine. Because they're now zooming in on the shoes, the backpack. You see a lot of things cut off now.
Christopher: What if they were taken outside? They look like they were photographed in the same spot inside. Think they might be faked? [Laughter.] Maybe he should have come back scratched and sweaty and dirty!
Tim: Yes, in another picture I could be tired. One time I go hiking on very high mountain in tennis shoes and I lose two nails.
Brad: So you're really into hiking.
Tim: This time for this I borrow other person's hiking shoes. Not really shoes to my feet.
Mara: So these aren't yours?

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Tim: No, is mine.

Charles: Why did you take these inside when you were talking about something that takes place outside?

Tim: I took the picture at night. [Laughter.]

Mara: Any last comments? OK.

Instructor: OK. The last three photographs. Whoever has those get them out. Mara? Who else? So there's two. We'll do the same thing, only we'll divide the class in half. Only, on the list of questions, the only one you can't pick...

Rodd: So! You're narrowing the list down!

Instructor: ...is number seven or number thirteen. So, any questions but those. Why don't we split the class right here. Just as long as you're not in the group that's talking about your own pictures. Bunch up and concentrate this time on what the picture's about and think about as many of the questions on the list as you can. [Students discuss pictures in groups for five or so minutes. Teddy is standing in front of his group trying to make sense of the five images that comprise one student's work..] Why don't you just stay up there and start talking about the pictures?

Teddy: We're lost.

Instructor: Talk about being lost. [The rest of the group joins Teddy by the pictures.] So what were some of the things you were saying?

Charles: A good place to start is to find some aspect you're not lost about.

Teddy: I know what objects are there.

Instructor: Start describing them.

Teddy: OK. The first one's got text written on it. It says, "Destiny." And all you're seeing is the lap of somebody. It's a female, you can tell by the hands, holding a child with sneakers on. And it goes from that to a picture of some
shoes. And one shoe has a map of Jordan in it and a picture of little kids.
Then you notice in the third picture that there are three, four different kinds of shoes close to the map. And you can tell that the type of flower is different, and plus the place of the picture is moved. And then in the fourth picture, again the kinds of flowers have changed and then it's moved further away. Oh, and the flowers have died. And then in the fifth, the picture and the flowers have traded places and then we're back to a kid like in the first one, holding the kid. It's either really deep or...
Instructor: So, what did you talk about? Did you make any kind of connections?
Teddy: You heard everything we said.
Instructor: No, I wasn't really listening in to what you said. You just got to the point where you were describing what's in the pictures?
Teddy: Yeah, we were all just sitting there, we spent five minutes trying to make a connection. We were just kind of dazed by it. It was difficult trying to find the true meaning of what the person's trying to say. The outer two pictures deal with actual humans. The inner pictures deal with photographs and shoes and flowers, some of which are dying.
Rodd: [From the other group.] I think the middle four pictures that the objects you're talking about are metaphoric for the people.
Teddy: There's only two people.
Rodd: It represents a family though, I mean, two strangers... I don't know any lady that would just walk down the street and pick up a baby like that just like the picture on the end and be that friendly with just any old baby.
Teddy: Some people are. Also, you don't know if it's family. It could be friends, it could be a family. Some people are very friendly.
Rodd: I'm not talking immediate family. You can have friends and relate
them as family, you know.

Teddy: We still don't know that for sure.

Rodd: There's some kind of relationship between them.

Teddy: How do you know they haven't just met?

Rodd: You're a little bit into this, aren't you? For somebody that's really lost!

[Laughter.]

Charles: I think because of the proximity of the images we can assume there's supposed to be some kind of relationship between them. Whether or not it's immediate family I think there's some kind of relationship. Does that help, Teddy?

Teddy: No.

Instructor: Ask anybody but the artist ideas about what this about. That seems to be the issue right now.

Teddy: OK, Martin.

Martin: I think this has to do with the passage of time or the relationship of the family. The flower is significant of, I guess, strong I guess the flower is a symbol of time wears on. The destiny in the title is at work. I guess time. I don't have no idea. I really don't.

Tammy: I remember a little bit from the work in progress. Like relating it to my own...it's the separation, not necessarily the separation, but the lessening of dependency of the child upon the family. Moving away. I know Mara moved far away from her home, but it's sort of a similar situation. You don't really wanna go but you do. That's what I see there.

Instructor: OK, and you saw them as metaphoric for people. So, for who?

Rodd: Obviously the map is for her hometown, her country, or whatever. Flowers are a metaphor for sentiment, and the picture is for, I don't know who's in the picture--family, friends, whatever.
Mara: It's me.

Rodd: OK, then it's representing you moving. Your feelings are back with the country. You're moving away, you're moving farther away. I see boots, loafers, whatever. It's looks like your family's shoes or something like that.

Instructor: OK we get some kind of agreement that it's about family and distance, because there's a map. About the confusion, what is it about this, about the way it's set up that makes it difficult to read? Teddy, since you were looking at it trying to figure it out, what were some of the things that were problematic?

Teddy: Connecting the first picture too...it's easy to connect the first picture to the last picture but it's not easy to connect to the other pictures. The whole purpose of changing of the flowers. In some they look to be alive. In the last two they seem to be dead flowers.

Instructor: So why is that a problem?

Teddy: Because they're inanimate objects and I don't know what symbolic meaning the flowers have. I think those are roses at the end but I'm not positive. And the different angles that are in those.

Instructor: OK, Ivan. Some things that you found that make these images difficult.

Ivan: There's no progression of events. The word, the two people and then all these shoes and stuff in the middle. It's like, too complex to try to figure out.

Instructor: Teddy mentioned one thing that I think is one of the big issues here. The pictures in the middle have many similar objects but they're all shot in such different ways that it almost makes you look at the different ways these things have been shot rather than connecting the actual objects themselves, it just sets up more variables to try to wade through and put this all together.

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Ivan: So is that bad or is that good or does that not mean anything?
Instructor: Well, you answer the question. The issue when we put these all up here and you were trying to figure what they were about.
Ivan: To the viewer it's obvious. I don't really think it matters because it matters to the person who took the picture.
Instructor: But we can look at the photographs in different ways. One of those is that they have a function for the person making them, some kind of meaning that's particularly personal. But they're out there for us as a community of viewers, too. So we have to be able to look at them and say, 'here's what we see.' I think that there are no rules. Nothing has to be particularly straightforward and hit you at first glance. There's nothing wrong with complexity, but you may have to walk a fine line between spelling everything out too quickly but having some kind of logic and so that's it's pieced together in such a way that it's intriguing to look at and figure out.
Charles: I agree.
Mara: But the preface for the assignment was to do something fictional.
Instructor: Yeah. So you've got the fictional part going! [Laughter.]
Tammy: She's also depicting a very complex sentiment. That you want to go but you don't want to go.
Instructor: That's how you would interpret it for you?
Tammy: That's how I would. I mean I don't really want to live at home with my parents. And I'm up here and they're down in Florida and I miss them a lot.
I'm glad I'm here and in other ways I wish I could be with them.
Instructor: So you sense that kind of ambivalence?
Tammy: Yes. Especially with the way she ends with the baby back with the mother. In the fifth picture, the picture of her is back with the symbols of her family.

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Instructor: So how about for you, Mara?

Mara: Well, it's just the same like she said. It's presenting me leaving my family. And I want to do that but at the same time I don't want to. I want to do that for experience, so it's like, presenting everyone together and all of that. In the second image you can see the light coming out. It's like door opening and me leaving.

Instructor: I don't think it reads that way, but...

Charles: I think these images are just a little too complicated. Too much information. Because when we look at them, we see not only the rays that you want us to see, but we also see the carpeting. And the stuff you take out of context by putting it on the floor, so all that is stuff you have to think about when you compose an image. Maybe if you'd placed them on a tabletop, we'd be able to focus on what you want us to focus on.

Instructor: Any final comments? OK, let's put up the last photographs.

[Martin, Fred, and Rodd stand up next to the prints.]

Martin: Does anybody want to describe what you see?

Instructor: You can call on someone.

Teddy: Cigarettes, Marlboro Lights, money, this one here's got money, and ashtrays with cigarettes in them. The last one is of a picturebook and cigarettes and money.

Martin: This detail's important too. Come up and look.

Teddy: [Goes up and looks closely at the last image.] The girl and the little boy smoking cigarettes and there's a boy kissing, I think, a girl and there's cigarettes and money.

Martin: The age there's important, too.

Teddy: Adolescence. I'd say about ten, twelve years old. They might be younger. And these are like four- and five-year-olds. The similarity between
money and cigarettes. You use a cigarette and it's gonna be gone and if you use money it's eventually going to be gone.

Martin: So the relationship between the money and the cigarettes is what I think is important.

Teddy: The money to buy cigarettes?

Martin: Yeah.

Rodd: Well through the work in progress we got the idea that he was going to portray something that if he hadn't gotten into smoking at such an early age he would probably have more money. Which is what I think. He's got the picture of the little children smoking there.

Instructor: But can you tell that by looking at these pictures. I mean, you know what idea he had but here's what we have.

Rodd: If I walked by a gallery I would wonder what this picture has to do with it. Like we said earlier, this picture [the last one] could stand alone and the other three could stand alone.

Martin: They just kind of have the same theme.

Rodd: I would wonder, there's something that these little children are standing for.

Instructor: So what questions did you...

Martin: We discussed the first one. How does it make you feel. But I like this one the best [pointing to the last image.] Because of the pictures in the background and it has a kind of separate theme besides the money down the tube thing. The money down the tube if you buy cigarettes is here too but you also have aspect of innocence of very young children here that go into this kind of thing. Social kind of dilemma here, with peer pressure.

Rodd: Yeah, we noticed on the older child's shirt that it said, what did it say, "Real Rebels."
Martin: Yeah, "Real Rebels."
Instructor: So looking at those what other questions do you want to ask?
Martin: This last picture is also saying that smoking is bad.
Rodd: Yeah, it corrupts.
Instructor: Technical issues? Quickly?
Martin: Good lighting. Good use of frame.
Instructor: The one in the middle looks a tad gray.
Charles: Actually they all look a little gray. Just as a rule of thumb, when shooting inside under incandescent lights you probably want to open up two stops from what the meter tells you. OK. So homework for this weekend—I want everyone to come up with some ideas for your final project. I'd like everyone to write down some ideas for your final projects for Monday.

Final Critique
Instrucon: Go ahead and get out the lovely brown sheet of paper. And your notebook. Does everyone have those two things out? The notebook and the sheet of questions? [Several students indicate they have forgotten them.] Perhaps they are ingrained in your memory. I'll give you a couple copies just in case you want to look at them. Here's our very first artwork.
Margaret: I have a question. Mine is a little booklet. Should I just pass it around now so people can look at it?
Instructor: No. Because that will keep people from focusing. We'll look at it later. It's a challenge to figure out how to present something that's in a book form. What we'll do is just gather around and look at it in little groups so everybody gets a chance to see it. Did everyone get a chance to see it [the first artwork put up for critique]? If not make sure you come up because the pictures are kind of small. OK, briefly, in your notebook, describe these images as completely as you can in two sentences. Include what is most

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important in those two sentences. [Students write.] After those two sentences, write another sentence about your feelings and your emotional response to this piece. A brief sentence about how you feel about it. [Students write.] OK, are you pretty well finished? OK. somebody, what did you write for your description? Mara?

Mara: It's a black and white picture of a man with makeup on his face and dark, serious...

Instructor: OK, that's getting very interpretive. Somebody else. What did you write?

James: A black and white series of portraits of a person and a skeleton and ???

Instructor: Somebody else. What did you write?

Ivan: I said it was a black and white artwork about death.

Instructor: You've plunged deeply into interpretation.

Ivan: Is that bad?

Instructor: Well, you were supposed to do more description, but save that thought. Margaret, what did you have?

Margaret: Mine's interpretive. I jumped ahead.

Instructor: OK. Feelings. OK, Tammy. What did you put?

Tammy: Well, I first thought of Phantom of the Opera. I don't know. Just because the bottom one, only one half the face is shown light.

Instructor: OK, Fred? [No response.] Did you have any kind of emotional reaction to the piece? [Fred shakes his head.] OK. Martin?

Martin: My emotional reaction?

Instructor: Uh-huh.

Martin: I liked it a lot, I thought it was really creative.

Instructor: OK, that's more of an evaluation.
Martin: That was my reaction.

Instructor: Does it elicit certain kinds of feelings or emotions?

Martin: Scared.

Instructor: There you go. OK. We've already had one interpretation.

Margaret, you said you had an interpretation. What was yours?

Margaret: Well it seems to be ghostlike and spooky. It's scary and puts me in an unpleasant mood. It's nightmarish.

Instructor: OK. And Ivan already said...could you repeat that? It was very succinct.

Ivan: I said the artist represents a human moving into skeleton form.

Instructor: OK. Somebody else. How did you interpret it? What do you think it's about? [No response.] Those two interpretations completely summed up what everyone in the class thinks? Is there anything you could elaborate on a little bit?

Tammy: It's a little bit playful, almost.

Instructor: Playful? Alright...?

Tammy: Yes.

Instructor: So do you think it's a little tongue-in-cheek?

Tammy: Yes.

Instructor: OK, so, there are some differences here. It seems very much about this progression into death. Another interpretation is that it's a little playful, maybe a little tongue-in-cheek. How did anybody else feel about it?

Brad, how about you?

Brad: I thought it was scary.

Instructor: Pretty straightforward?

Brad: Reminds me of Teddy Krueger.

Audrey: The hand reminds me of Jason.
Instructor: If you look at it and try to break down how this sense of ghoulishness was accomplished, what are the elements that run through most of the pictures that made that happen.

James: The lamp.

Instructor: What about the lamp?

James: I think the one on the bottom right, that kind of lighting, I don't know...I don't know. I can see it but I don't know what I'm trying to say.

Instructor: Well describe the light source...where it is relative to the figure.

James: It comes sideways and the other half is really dark, so it creates an unknown, scary element. The one on the top, I think that lighting creates a different feeling than the one on the bottom.

Instructor: OK, why? What can you attribute the different feeling to? If you look at it there are a couple of important differences.

James: Actually, I don't know how toward it, but the brightness really lightens it up.

Instructor: The amount of white?

James: Yeah.

Instructor: Something else. What do you see in this one that you don't see in the other one?

Tammy: It may be a hand, but it's head on and well-lighted enough that you see the eyes.

Instructor: So you see more of the whole face. What else do you see?

Brad: The hat.

Instructor: The hat. Here the hat blends into the blackness. On your left is the side of the face that's made up. So there's less mystery to these. You see how the artifice was created. OK, Teddy, evaluate them. How do you like them or dislike them and why?
Teddy: Am I evaluating...are we talking technical or are we talking concept?
Instructor: We're talking whatever you feel is important. We all have
different criteria sometimes, so however you want to address it.
Teddy: I think the idea itself is really cool. I mean even if the images have
no point to them, just looking at them would still be kind of interesting. Each
individually. The only complaint I have is, from one to the next, the sequence,
is that it seems as though, if it is a progression from human to skeleton, they
spent a lot of time concentrating on more of the skeleton form and only one
real picture where he looks like a human.
Instructor: That being which one?
Teddy: The first one. From [image #] one to two, it's pretty drastic, as
compared to from two to three, then four.
Instructor: OK. Rodd, what do you say about evaluating it? You can play off
of what Teddy said, or...
Rodd: The first one I'm still painted in the skeleton. So it's still different
props. I guess, but I'm still a skeleton. I didn't like the ones I did before with
just mounting them. That's why they're matted. I think it gives it a much
more finished look. They were meant to be all together so I put them all on the
same piece [of matboard].
Instructor: So what do you like about your own work?
Rodd: I've always kind of liked dark things. I've always kind of, in
elementary school and in high school I'd paint my hand and make it look like a
skeleton. I like the X-ray kind of thing. And, Phantom of the Opera, I didn't
notice it, but that bottom right one is just very, very evil. I like Phantom of
the Opera a lot and I like...I was very happy with it.
Instructor: Any technical issues that anyone wants to mention?
James: The borders around the photographs. The space is not the same
around them.

Instructor: OK, so they could have been presented more precisely. Other observations? OK.

Charles: I like it.

Rodd: Wow! A good word from the teacher.

Charles: I think the way it goes from light to dark. I guess the only thing I'd like to see is just a little more variation.

Margaret: For this project, how many rolls did you take?

Rodd: About two.

Instructor: And a little bit more about the process. You put makeup on and starting taking pictures. How much of a concept did you have, did you start out with?

Rodd: Somewhat. I knew I was going to do nine pictures in this format, but I didn't know how they were going to fit together or how I was going to display it.

Instructor: OK, any final comments? [No one has any.] Who would like to go next?

How many people have their work in some kind of book format? Five? I think the best way to look at this is to get up as group and flip through the pages and look at it. So everyone get where you can see it. We'll flip through it once and then see how it goes. [Holding book and flipping through it so students can see] There's some important text down here. I'll try to read these. "A Bug is to a Scirocco as McDonald's is to Friday's." "Dress clothes are to white collar business as casual attire is to blue collar business." "An operating parking meter is to a busy gas station as a faulty parking meter is to a closed gas station." "A glass wall is to a brick wall as a tanker truck is to a train car." OK. Teddy. Tell us what it's all about.

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Teddy: Thoughts.
Charles: About what?
Instructor: Think of one word that somehow addresses your reaction to this work. One word. Write it down. OK, we'll just quickly go across the room.
Margaret.
Margaret: I had analogies.
Audrey: Interesting.
Instructor: Ivan
Ivan: Amusing.
Tim: Compare.
Teddy: Deep.
Martin: Compare and contrast
Christopher: Reaching.
Rodd: Mine was more broad. Standard achievement tests.
Tammy: Unusual.
Instructor: Audrey, what did you like about it?
Audrey: I guess by putting it together like this, rather than just placing them together.
Instructor: So you like the actual book format? OK. Martin. Some comments on how it could be improved?
Martin: No, not really. I like it. Maybe the analogy about the car and the McDonald's. It could be more emphasized. Maybe a BMW.
Margaret: I think what he's trying to say...I agree. I really like this, but you could make more of a contrast. You could get a really ritzy five-star restaurant. Or even visually make it more contrasting. Two contrasting images.
Teddy: A Porsche. If you want to make a bigger contrast to the Volkswagen.
Instructor: Ivan. Any other suggestions?
Ivan: I just thought it was fun. Something different to look at rather than the regular old thing we always put up there.
Instructor: Christopher, something you could suggest as far as improving?
Christopher: Like everyone was saying, you could make some more dramatic. The contrast. I like it.
Instructor: Anything we haven't covered that we should covered? Any comments from the artist?
Brad: Well, I guess I tried to keep all the photographs with like the same kind of views, like the same viewpoint. Like the two cityscapes are kind of the same.
Instructor: I wondered why the businessman is in a graffiti-filled corner of an alley?
Brad: I didn't really have any meaning behind that. The only reason I put the text on these is that I didn't know if people would really get what I was talking about. Just basically a comparison and contrast. What analogies are all about.
Instructor: How many people would have gotten it without the words? No one.
Rodd: I think in some of the images, like if you would have maybe picked a rusted out Bug to the nice Scirocco, we would have picked it up if we would have thought about it long enough.
Instructor: It would have taken a lot more mulling it over. Did you have it bound at Kinko's?
Brad: Um-hum.
Instructor: OK, who wants to go next? Actually let's pick three people who want to go next. Tammy, James, Christopher. So break into four groups of
three. Each person that is going to have your photograph discussed, make sure you're not in the group discussing your own work. Bunch up so that you can talk to each other pretty easily. OK, are you all situated? You three, hand your work to another group. In these groups, look at the work. What you should discuss is what the work is about. Concentrate on interpreting the work and evaluating the series of photographs. You can use the sheet of questions if you want throughout the rest of the critique. So interpret the work and evaluate it. [Students break into small groups to discuss photographs.] Your group will discuss the photographs so think about what questions you want to ask. [Students discuss photographs for about five minutes.] Is everyone pretty much finished discussing their photographs? [Most nod 'yes.'] Who wants to go first?

Rodd: We will.

Instructor: Make sure you remember that we haven't seen these, so arrange us, or do whatever you want.

[Rodd, Tammy, and James put prints up.]

James: At first when we saw this we didn't know what the title was. They just look like they're random pictures of American life. There's some captions down here. I don't know if you all can see these. You all ought to get up and look at them. [Class files up to look at images.]

Rodd: What do we think it's about? We think it was about...

Instructor: Are you asking?

Rodd: Yeah. What do we think it's about?

James: American life, American culture.

Teddy: Ditto.

Rodd: Sort of an easy cop-out, there, Ed. Does anybody like or dislike the way they are presented? Any problems? Any concerns? [No response.]
Instructor: you can call
James: Alright, Teddy?
Teddy: What!? [Laughter.] I don't know. What do you want to know? What was the question?
Rodd: We want to know what you think about this, Ed. How he framed the pictures, the composition of it?
Teddy: Oh, so it is a 'he.'
Rodd: OK, pick out which he it is.
Teddy: It's wonderful, it really is. I especially like, I believe it's "Don't disturb" number three.
Rodd: Why?
Teddy: I like how it's matted, how it's off to the side. How he's on that bench. It's aesthetically pleasing.
James: I personally like this paper.
Rodd: James was a big fan of this paper.
James: I really do.
Margaret: I like the format. I really like how the offset mounting
James: What do you think that creates, though?
Margaret: It gives some movement to the series as a whole. It adds some personality and some movement to it. I wouldn't like them individually mounted that way but they work as a series.
Rodd: What about the big zero in the middle being in a different format, being vertical instead of horizontal? Does that work?
Margaret: Yeah, I'm not sure about that one. But that might have been his intent.
Brad: Why would that have been his intent? What might you gain from that?
Margaret: Well because it follows that some of the prints are larger and some
are smaller. The sizing.

Rodd: Just some offbeat kind of thing.

Teddy: Is there a specific order?

Rodd: This is the order we were handed them.

Margaret: What's the name of the piece, again?

Rodd: I Don't Care.

Margaret: I'm struggling with the theme of it.

Rodd: Yeah. Do we have any concept of what the theme might be, other than a slice of life?

James: The title of this work, it accomplishes ...is he saying I don't care in general or I'm just taking pictures of whatever because I don't care?

Rodd: What do you think?

Teddy: I say both.

Rodd: You say he just doesn't care and he's taking pictures just for the heck of it?

Teddy: It's just kind of easygoing, not too concerned with everything that's going on around him.

Rodd: What do you think about the little mini-series of the "Do not disturb" inside of this bigger series? Do you think that could be set off on its own? Or do you think it actually works in the thing as a whole?

Anybody...somebody...Christopher?

Christopher: They don't bother me.

Instructor: Did anybody deal with the question about the theme?

Rodd: I don't think so. I think we kind of side-stepped the theme. Is there a common theme? So can you see a theme?

James: Random people.

Rodd: Just random shots on the street? Documenting everyday...
Brad: It's hard to say what it is. The words are so vague.
Rodd: How would you suggest to make it better.
Brad: Maybe more behind the words.
Instructor: So did you evaluate it?
Rodd: Well we're kind of evaluating it now. Like the way it was matted this way. James liked the paper. He personally liked the prints a lot.
Instructor: Even the content as a whole, too?
Tammy: The content as a whole I think relates to the theme.
Rodd: I mean do you think it's too broad? Personally I think it's too broad. I mean, you could have done a whole series of people napping on benches and that would've gotten the 'I don't care' point across.
Margaret: There's a continuity problem, that nothing ties together well.
James: Do those pictures say "I don't care" to anybody? This one and this one don't. They seem either like a criminal act or as though they do care. If you know the title, I don't think this fits.
Teddy: But is it the person in the picture that doesn't care or the photographer that doesn't care?
Rodd: If he didn't care, why would he take a picture of it?
Teddy: Just to prove a point that he doesn't care what he's taking a picture of. He's just taking pictures. He's got to have at least ten pictures for an assignment.
Rodd: But he could take ten different pictures in the same area but these are all in completely different areas.
Teddy: Well, a lot of them are on campus.
Rodd: He could have stood in one place and just click, click, click, click.
Charles: Well he could have just presented ten blank images. Obviously the photographer went to a lot of trouble to print these images and they're 227
carefully composed. He spent a lot of time printing them because they are pretty nice prints. And spend a lot of time thinking about matting, because it would have been a lot easier to center all those.

Rodd: So you're saying that he does care. Any comments?

Instructor: One thing about titles. Sometimes they can be very oblique and not a literal thing. So there are a wide range of ways that a title can be connected to a work or a series.

James: Who is the photographer?

Tim: Me.

James: What kind of paper did you use?

Tim: Kodak Luster.

Instructor: OK, which group wants to go next? [Teddy and Fred go up to chalkboard.] Alright, are we ready? OK, here's the text. It's small so we'll go ahead and read this for you. It says "My dad. "His flag which he puts out every day." [Teddy walks around so class can see images, which are in a book form.] This says, "Air War College, Colonel George??" And these are all his medals. This says "My dad lost a lot of his hearing shooting a machine gun out of a B-17 during World War II. Just this last year he got his first hearing aid." It says "Now my dad is seventy years old and has ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease. Bright light bothers his eyes and he can no longer straighten his hands." That is it. OK, technically speaking, what do we feel is good or bad about this?

James?

James: What feels good is great prints. I like the way he set it up, and how he portrayed his dad.

Instructor: What do you like about the prints or about how he portrayed his dad?

James: The prints are very clear and crisp and have good contrast. And I like
how his father becomes...I don't know.

Teddy: Does anybody dislike anything about the prints? Or does everybody think they're pretty cool? [Several people nod.] OK, what do you think he's trying to say about his dad?

Rodd: He definitely respected him to the utmost with respect to his dad. He's been in the war and he's a lawyer. But he has problems that don't stop him from respecting his father at all.

Teddy: Is he trying to idealize his father or is he simply trying to show his father?

Tammy: I think he's trying to show him. Because if he was trying to idealize him he wouldn't have put the last part in.

Brad: I think he's trying to illustrate and express his father's attitude and way of life. I think that there's more shots needed. He kind of tries to get the point across that he's kind of set in his ways. He finally got a hearing aid and he's been hard of hearing for all those years.

Teddy: My only complaint is that a lot of these have text, which makes it easy, gives you a sense of direction of what you're supposed to get out of each picture. But when it comes to this one, this one is of a kind of a lawyer. These two pages of pictures really...they could be just examples of, you know, just pictures of his dad or I'm curious if there's any direction we're supposed to be following.

Tim: Some more pictures in this book would make this book more complete.

Rodd: I think it needs bit more trail off. Just ending on the Lou Gehrig disease is kind of a down note. But, you're saying he's great, he's done this, he's fought like this, he's a lawyer, and then he got Lou Gehrig's disease. It's kind of a bummer at the end.

James: I think it brings it all kind of full circle. How he's talking about his
dad and how he has such high regard for him, and how he found out in World War II how he fired machine guns from a plane, he made great money as a lawyer, and awards that he won in the war, he but that also brings a human face, under the aging process bodies begin to decline, and his went like this.

Teddy: That brings us back to whether or not it's idealized or realistic and I agree with him that it's realistic. That's why the Lou Gehrig's is in there. It's showing he accomplished things, he did things with his life, but he's real, a real person. We're not trying to completely...I wouldn't say god, make him god-like, but completely idealized, you know, show only what's best him.

Margaret: Well I think it's more. There's this person here he idolizes. And, if you have aging parents, you suddenly realize they're mortal, they're not immortal. You grew up with them really looking up to them and all of a sudden you realize one day they're older and they rely more on you. I think it's organized quite well, having older parents and understanding the same feelings.

Teddy: Do you think that this series of pictures is something that you would call, I guess, more personal, or is it a more public idea? Is this something to hold dear to himself or something for people to look at? I'm saying, if you had to say one way or the other, is this more of a personal thing for him or is this something to be shared? Do you think he wants to share this with everybody or do you think he wants to remember this for himself?

Ivan: I think it's both.

Martin: It's probably something he's going to keep for a very long time.

James: He's not ashamed of his father. It just shows how, the Lou Gehrig's disease is a personal thing, but it's nothing to be ashamed of. I don't know how you're saying is this a personal thing or a shared thing.

Teddy: I think there's some things you want to remember for yourself that
you don't feel you have to share. Christopher, your comments, your thoughts?

Christopher: I agree with what most everyone is saying. I mean two things that I did regret not doing is, one, I didn't continue with the text which I should have done. But I couldn't think...

Margaret: But I'm not sure you should have, though. Would you have ruined with text? The images speaks more..

Christopher: I was thinking one of two ways. I could have forced some text on this, or just kind of write out. In the one where he has his Air Force hat on, I should have put 'The Colonel' on there. I was going to put 'The Colonel' on there.

Teddy: It says right here: "Colonel."

Christopher: But it also says on the other one, that's his locker right there, where I put, "The Lawyer." So it would have just been more consistent. And I was just thinking for my personal use that I would have liked to start it earlier, maybe put old driver's licenses in there. Or pictures of him of when he was, like, nineteen or twenty. It could have just brought it more full circle.

Teddy: Well...

Instructor: Are you finished?

Teddy: As long as you don't feel like there's any questions that we need to bring up.

Instructor: Well, does anybody feel that there are any questions or any comments that you needed to say? OK. It has a nice family-album-scrapbook size. It has that reference. OK, who wants to go next? [Martin, Brad, and Christopher take a set of prints to the front of the room.]

Martin: OK, I'll do this, I'll do it this way. I'll pull them off and I'll put them up.

Brad: [Dramatically reading text on each image.] "Friends." "Hey what's up?"
"Man, more responsibility." "Grrrrrrrrrr." "You're the man." "No, don't."

"James, I was just thinking." "James, you're just so..." "I just can't control myself." "Hey, honey!"

Martin: Everybody see these? Anybody want to get up? [Four students get up to take a closer look.] I guess I'll start. As far as the technical aspects go, I think all these pictures go, I think all of them are really well developed. Lot of time spent on all of them. There's a creative nature in a lot of these, like the lighting. This guy, I know it's one-second shutter speed. His face moves slowly. As far as emotional, I get a really warm feeling out of looking at all these pictures just because "Friends" is the title and they're really all kind of friendly pictures. Do you guys have anything to say?

Brad: The matting. The black on being in the middle of the series is kind of unique. I think that each one of these pictures is trying to get an attitude across probably the person, probably about his friends. I'd say. Just because he does it in first person so there's obviously some kind of relationship, since he's in the series also.

Martin: Seems like a really fun series to do. Just because it's not serious, it's light-hearted. He just takes pictures of some friends. He can keep them around for sentimental reasons. It's nice, I guess.

Brad: Anybody know if she might be saying that? Let's go around.

Martin: Everybody write a word down. [Laughter.]

Margaret: I can't think of a word! How about "You're so sexy."

Brad: Alright! [Laughter.] You're so...think of a word that would complete that sentence.


Rodd: James you're so silly!

Martin: If I said what the theme was. I'd say it's a feeling of warmthness, I
guess, if that's a theme. It's kind of like, see all of James's friends.

Christopher: It's kind of a big warm collection.

Brad: The text throughout that one helps a lot.

Martin: The text on all of them is pretty cool. I like it.

Instructor: Ask class questions—see if they agree or disagree.

Christopher: Do you think there's any comment other than friends, do you think there's one big message or theme that he's trying to get across here?

Audrey.

Audrey: What?

Christopher: What do you think.

Audrey: I think it's a big variety that comes together because of what he wrote.

Christopher: Do you think the dialogue, actually the monologue, do you think the words have anything to do with each other from one picture to another?

Is there a story there?

Audrey: No.

Christopher: Not even...

Audrey: No.

Margaret: It fits together visually, though, because of the, what's in each frame is the person in the center of the picture. You see a head, a face, in the same position in each picture.

Christopher: What would anybody have changed compositionally? Like you said, everybody's in the center of the frame.

Margaret: It may have worked as a collage, possibly.

Rodd: Since we were talking about how it's such a close-knit thing, the fact that they're all in different boards...it's good and bad. It makes them separated and
the space around each person is kind of big.

**Instructor:** Did you evaluate them?

**Christopher:** Did you like them?

**Teddy:** Yes.

**Christopher:** Is there anything about them that's very specific that you like?

**Teddy:** They're just non-threatening, friendly images.

**Christopher:** Ivan, do you like them?

**Ivan:** Some of them I do and some of them I don't. [Laughter.] Do you wanna know which ones I do and don't like? Well I like them all but technically some of them I don't like. Like James. It's just real black. And I like the reflection on that guy's head. I like James's room. It's a pretty cool place. That's about all.

**Charles:** I kind of like how that print is dark. And I am bothered by the glare on that guy's head.

**Instructor:** OK, another group. [Margaret, Ivan, and Audrey go to the chalkboard.]

**Margaret:** [Holding small photographic book project.] OK, what if I just opened each page and walked around. Will that work?

**Brad:** Yeah.

**Margaret:** [Reads each page starting with the title page.] "Tammy's Culinary Delights." "Banana Gems." "Bread and butter pickles." "Cherry blinks." "Chilly Chili." "Ham and Eggs." "Duck a la Orange." "French Vanilla Ice Cream." Couple more. "Magic blue buns." "Orange juice." "Wedding Cake." OK. You guys want me to ask questions or do you want me to throw some questions out first?

**Ivan:** What does it make you think about photography, think about art?
What does the artwork make you think about photography, about artmaking, about the artworld? Fred?

Tim: About the husband.

Ivan: OK... James, what do you think?

James: I kind of picture photography as combining the artistic mind and what's in the frame. The picture and how she did it was, very, I guess it kind of describes her. I can get the female aspect of food and decorating and how she decorated the food and how she watercolored it and I was just excited about the creativity.

Ivan: Hey Brad, what are you feeling?

Brad: It's creative for the reason that... I mean you don't normally stop and think about why they call it 'deviled eggs.' It makes you make fun of the ideas and take time to think about these things and it makes you think about other things, too. Also she did them in black and white and colored them in, which is more artsy.

Ivan: Teddy, evaluate the artwork.

Teddy: Say that again?

Ivan: Evaluate the artwork.

Teddy: The prints were good... evaluate the...?

Ivan: Technically, yeah, technically.

Teddy: The arrangement was good. Kind of a cookbook.

Rodd: A cookbook or a menu, maybe. They're all centered. They've got nice, clean text. It's not scribbled on. I mean it adds to what she's trying to do. I mean in some cases, handwritten text would be preferred, but for this it would be like on a menu. There would be a picture so they would know what it looks like, and this is a humorous way to do that. The contrast is good and with adding color, it brightens areas and adds a different spark to what you're
looking at.

Ivan: This group, we personally thought she did a really good job but she kind of rushed toward the end. You could tell when she was applying the marker.

Audrey: What is that just markers?

Tammy: Watercolors.

Margaret: Did you initially think of the cookbook size?

Tammy: Yeah.

Margaret: I enjoyed the humor. It's really fun to look at.

Instructor: OK. Any other questions, comments? OK. Who has photographs that are not in a book format? Martin, why don't you put yours up? [Martin puts prints up.] OK go take a look at the pictures. Take a good thorough look.

[Class comes up to look except for those sitting next to the images.] The only things you need to do between now and Friday when we finish talking about them is in your notebooks write a paragraph about this collection of work. Interpret it, describe it, use the questions [from the sheet] use any of the questions that you want. So you can get some ideas in your head and go write an informal paragraph about the work.

LAST PART OF FINAL CRITIQUE, CONTINUED ON FRIDAY.

Instructor: So, Ivan, what did you write?

Ivan: I didn't really write anything.

Instructor: Did anybody write anything about it? [Margaret raises her hand.] What did you say, Margaret?

Margaret: I evaluated it.

Instructor: You evaluated it?

Margaret: Yeah, I said I really liked the way he presented it. It's kind of in a
Creative manner. It really has a neat theme to it. And I even liked the choice of text. The style of the lettering.

**Instructor:** Do you know why you liked the text?

**Margaret:** It's just so casual. You can kind of imagine him going to the store. Kind of a casual thing. It has a lot, his project has a lot of character.

**Instructor:** Who else wrote a brief paragraph? [No one responds.] Somebody else, evaluate the work, using whatever criteria that you want to. Mara, how about you? How do you like this series?

**Mara:** I like it because it says something about a friend or somebody that the photographer knew, so it's very simple, readable, and good.

**Instructor:** Do you like the amount of text that is with the pictures?

**Mara:** Yeah I do.

**Instructor:** It's pretty minimal, really.

**Margaret:** I like his minimal approach and I like his conclusion. I like how he, sometimes a series, you can't find a good ending. It's kind of nice.

**Instructor:** And it has some relationship to the beginning. They're both talking about number of years. From the number of years in his apartment to how old he is. So, sum up what you think the series is about. Tammy?

**Tammy:** About Charlie Taylor and how he lives his life.

**Teddy:** It's slightly humorous.

**Instructor:** What's humorous about it?

**Teddy:** This friend called Charlie and at the end of the story gets tired, and "I been sitting like this for 27 years."

**Instructor:** What were you going to say, Ivan?

**Ivan:** It's more like a day in the life.

**Instructor:** So how is Charlie being presented? How is Charlie, how does Charlie resemble people in magazines, or other people on the street? What's
different about him, or what do you think about his particular situation? Does it bring up any issues at all?

Teddy: Just that he's a senior citizen who somebody's taken an interest in and is letting us know how he lives.

Instructor: You think he's a typical senior citizen?

Teddy: He lives by himself, yeah. He's like an average person that you'd see but you'd never think about. Because you look at people and you, you wouldn't now that he lives by himself, and it's been a long time since he had any friends. I mean, when you just look at people you can't always get an accurate description of what they are and how they live. So Martin has taken some time to pay some interest to show some interest in this guy and how he lives.

Instructor: Well, he's not in a ritzy condo in Florida. I mean there are some specific things about his particular situation. How would you describe those?

Ivan: He's poor. Probably living off of Social Security benefits. Or if he was in a war, some kind of pension.

Instructor: Who else has a comment?

Rodd: I think I could see this on, like, David Letterman. Just holding up these cards. 'Charlie Taylor—here's his apartment' and there would be a disgruntled Charlie in the crowd.

Instructor: Just a slice of a particular life like he does.

Rodd: Yeah.

Instructor: Technical issues. What do you think of the way it's presented, the way they're printed?

Ivan: I like how he decided to cut the pictures out.

Instructor: OK. Other comments about the printing? Do you like it? Does it feel right? Are there any areas for improvement? No? I'm just wondering how anybody thinks about the contrast. Look at this picture, and what do you
have to say about contrast.

Tammy: He looks very washed out.

Instructor: And how would you describe that contrast?

Margaret: High contrast. Little too white in the light parts and too dark.

Instructor: This is glaring white, maybe a little too white there. But you kind of get caught up in the story and the attitude. The pleasant story.

Charles: I think when you're planning to do prints in a series, unless there's a really specific reason for it, you probably don't want to vary the contrast from picture to picture. You probably want to shoot for all your prints to have the same level. And there's too much white around the edges of the prints. Your eyes kind of zoom off.

Instructor: Margaret and I were talking before class started, and I know that Margaret has experimented with printing full-frame, where you are printing beyond the actual image area, so what that would do would be put a little black border around your print. That can help contain it. Keep your eyes within that rectangle. OK, any other comments? Martin, how about you?

Martin: No. Well, he wants one of them. So he can have a portrait and hand it up.

Instructor: OK, how many people have final projects yet? Four. I know we have two book projects. OK, there'll be very small groups. Some will have two people, some will have three. So raise your hand if you have prints we have to look at. So four groups, here are the four artworks. So each group come and take one and take it back to your group. Figure out what the artwork is about. And evaluate it. And then there's one question I want you to consider. It's one that people didn't pay any attention to on the sheet. So this is the one that I want you to think about in addition. The question is, how does any aspect of your identity influence how you interpret the work, and how you evaluate the
work. And those factors include gender, class, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity. So see if you think any of those factors or any other important factors influence how you see the work and how you like it or dislike it.

[Groups discuss artworks.] OK, why doesn't this group get up and talk to us about what you discussed.

Ivan: We kind of felt this photograph fit all those classifications up there because obviously it's pictures of people taken at a picnic. You can see different ages of people, so you have an age thing going on. You can see different races of people, like middle eastern, and you have Asian people, black people, white people, all kinds of races doing different things together at a picnic. Different classes of people. You can tell by their dress that they're middle class. The technical stuff—they're presented nicely.

Instructor: So what did you think this piece is about?

Ivan: I didn't.

Martin: What it's about?

Instructor: Yeah.

Martin: A picnic.

Instructor: That's it, just about a picnic?

Martin: No, it's...

Margaret: How about a documentary of a picnic of people interacting.

Instructor: Is there a certain attitude toward the picnic? Is a good time, is it a bad time, can you tell either way?

Martin: Seems like they're all having a pretty good time. They're all consumed by their own thing. Nobody's really looking at the camera. They're all pretty much smiling. Very jubilant.

Instructor: So you liked the way the prints are taken. What about this series as a whole? Does it hold your interest?

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Ivan: Yeah because there's a lot to look at, a lot of stuff going on.

Margaret: I would have liked all the prints to be in two sets of two all the way across. If they were printed individually it may be too long, but I kind of like the two on one board. At least it could be linked together.

Instructor: Anybody else?

Rodd: I think those last two, it could be real interesting. Those kids might not be watching anything related to the guys in the picture right before him. But having them sit next to each other, it gives that impression.

Martin: It seems like they're just looking around.

Margaret: Something interesting's going on.

Ivan: But going back to that question, I think it shows how people of different ages and races can get along and have a good time together. No racism, no confrontations. I think it shows that different view of how people get along.

Margaret: Different cultures enjoying the same thing.

Instructor: OK. Yes. That's more looking at the content of the photograph than, say, viewing how you as, say, a young white male might have a certain perspective on things.

Instructor: How many of you are familiar with stock photography? [A few people raise their hands.] The kind of photos in a lot of textbooks and other places. Now any group of people has to have a very diverse mixture of different kinds of ethnic groups and different skin colors, and different ages, and different men and women.

Charles: I think a good example of that would be to look at advertising. Pictures and billboards and magazines. If you drive around different parts, it's not quite as diverse as Los Angeles or Chicago. Like in Los Angeles, depending on what part of the city you drive around in the billboards will either be

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Caucasian, or Hispanic, or African-American, or Asian, but it depends a lot of time on what they're selling. A lot of times it's cigarettes. The poses will be exactly the same, the wording will be exactly the same, but in the exact same place but the models will be different. When photographers are going to shoot an ad, they first find out where it is going to appear. Is going to appear in Ladies Home Journal or Vibe magazine.

Instructor: A friend of mine works for a company who does photos for textbooks. So all these stock companies make photographs that photo editors can choose from. They're all very carefully orchestrated now as far as the diversity of people.

Charles: The question as I understood it was more in relation to themselves in relation to the images.

Instructor: Yes. Let me explain the difference. I felt that group didn't have a strong response to the question. My question is, how does an aspect of your identity, these or other ones, affect how you interpret or how you value the photograph. That's different than looking at the photograph and saying it's about people in a lawn. If you were from a different a country where perhaps you had never seen a hot dog picnic, your ethnicity would come into play a lot because maybe you wouldn't really have a reference for understanding, you would have a reference for people getting around together and eating, but not a hot dog roast. So that's an obvious example of how a certain factor of your identity might come into play. So, think about how the factors that comprise you, even though they may be evolving or changing, how they influence how you view and feel about things. But you may not have a strong reaction or answer. Just like all these questions we've been working with. They may or may not be important or be, really help you look at a photograph. OK, which group would like to go next. Are you going to turn around and hold [the
Christopher: Yeah. [Holding up the series of bound images and reading the title page.] "Life is a series of changes." Then, make sure you have a good view of these. We're looking for changes in these photos. Now, 1975, a kid sitting in front of a swing in front of a house. And 1995, same place. If you look very carefully, you see that it is indeed the same house. If you see the little windows here and the trees are bigger. Before, and after. And here we get some lyrics by Joni Mitchell. "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot." And here you see a parking structure. A family album. Two people standing on the corner of a porch, and emptiness. Same porch. A picture of people playing in water, one who is drowning in the memories of the past. Together. And then, at the end, which I really like, we get a question posed to us: "How does change make you feel?" I guess I'll start out. I think everyone can relate to the topic of change in their lives. And looking at this there are some things we should consider. I identify pretty strongly with the photographer in this book because I see a white male, and just coming back to the United States now after a couple of years, I'm now seeing, this is kind of strange, Wednesday I saw somebody that I haven't seen since high school. And Saturday I had actually gone to the wedding of a next-door-neighbor where a lot of our old neighbors came back to this. It was a 400 person Italian Catholic wedding. I saw people that I hadn't seen in ten or fifteen years. And it just made me kind of reminiscent. You just kind of look at your past and wonder where all these great friendships went and where connections got lost, people who you always thought would be your friends. Then one day they move and you never talk to them again.

Margaret: Wait until you seem them bald and fat and old.

Christopher: I did seem them bald and fat.
Margaret: But you still think they're seventeen, don't you, then you see them again comparatively.

Christopher: Well, one shock was when I was getting this final project done and I ran into this girl that I had been seeing in high school and had a big crush on, and now she's a professional photographer and she's handing out business cards. I'm taking Photo 203 at Ohio State. [Laughter.]

Instructor: Comparison is never a good idea!

Rodd: Yeah.

Christopher: But it just made me kind of reminisce. I can relate with the photographer in this instance.

Mara: Well, the other thing I can relate to about this change, I came from another country and now I'm here in this big different place. Leaving my friends and my family and my country. My friends try to I can relate to change. I mean I guess some good changes and bad changes. But I really can't tell from here if it was a good change or a bad change yet.

Christopher: Because some of the questions we had were who were some of the people in some of these photos. And looking at the last image, is that like, sadness or reminiscence or a reflection. We didn't know which way to take this. It was neat to see these places. Clearly here you see these bushes neatly trimmed and here, whoosh! Jungle. So you can really see the passage of time in these photos. It is cool how the photographer in this case brought other photos into play. I mean, he clearly didn't take this photo, but it's nice to see.

Any comments?

Martin: I was gonna say that the four photos are in color and that adds another kind of a cheeriness to them and the black and white. He made a lot of the black and white prints a little darker. It has kind of a drearier feel to it. Maybe the contrast is sharp between the color and the black and white and
that adds to the feeling of what he's trying to present as far as past, present.

Instructor: Particularly when they are side by side. So, Christopher, you
think that as you're getting older you're sort of relating to the whole process
of age and change.

Christopher: Yeah. Especially coming back to Columbus. Any questions?
Any comments?

Instructor: What does anybody think of the different orientation of some of
these? One's this way, the other's turned the other way...

Tammy: I find it very distracting. You practically have to physically turn
the thing to look at it.

Christopher: One of the things that I do like about this is that the black and
white pictures are bigger. Like, this one looks much more ominous.

Ivan: Well I wanted to make the photographs big so you get the feeling.

Instructor: I like that they are old photo pages, not a brand new photo book.

Charles: I think it's very important that these actually appear in an actual
photo album.

Christopher: That's true, the photo book does work really well. Plus this is
something that he can really hold onto.

Instructor: OK, another group.

Teddy: I guess we're gonna have everybody come up and listen because this
work's kind of small.

Margaret: Is this a book?

Teddy: Yeah.

Instructor: Could somebody describe what we're looking at?

Teddy: I think in this picture we're looking at a ceremonial gown. A robe, or
something. And an encyclopedia or a history-related book. This, as you will be
able to tell in the images to come, that it's a pipe. And this, all I can tell you is
that it's box and a basically small vase. And this one just gets closer. She brings the base down off of the box. And then the image itself that you see is the picture that's on the book. And then she backs off again. Now you see the book open. Then a smaller vase and then pipe. In this one is really is what I think gives you an idea why these things are even there. It's because they're involved...that these items have to do with the Arabic Club. At Ohio State University. Here you see a girl looking, it looks like she's sucking on the pipe, she has the mouthpiece in her mouth. I think that guy's just watching. And then they're listening to music. Possibly it's Arabic music. It looks like this is the Arabic club and they like to get together and smoke a pipe and dance. This is the gang, or part of it, at least. believe that this was an image taken by shooting in a mirror. This is, I know that's rice, this is exactly. I'm sure it's Arabic food.

Martin: Is rice an Arabic food?
Margaret: Middle Eastern.
Teddy: Middle Eastern, yeah. So that's a typical meal. So maybe something that when the all hang out, that they probably eat some of this. She's just sitting there. She's got her hand up by her mouth. And she's got a pot on her lap and is having a grand old time banging on it. I believe those are all the images. And, some are vertical and some are horizontally-oriented. But it's a book that opens opposite of what you normally have a book open to.
Mara: It's Arabic.
Teddy: It's Arabic!
Instructor: So they way the book is oriented also has something to do with...
Mara: Culture.
Tammy: So it's about the interaction between two cultures when one is brought to another culture.
Teddy: The question you wanted us to ask ourselves is how the piece of art...

Instructor: How do you, sitting there as a person who grew up in Westerville, how do you interpret, how does that influence how you know what these pictures are about and how you like them?

Teddy: Technically I thought they were really well shot.

Instructor: Not the technical stuff. Not yet.

Teddy: I'd say, for the ability to get ten images in, I felt that in certain parts they kind of got drug on. I was able to recognize what was going on, but because I grew up in white suburbia...since I came to Ohio State I got a little bit of culture. I can respect other cultures, but, as far as being comfortable with being around them, you know, being at all interested in them and finding out about them, I'm not used to it because of growing up in white suburbia. I don't even think there's a black family in my neighborhood. Bunch of white people. As far as that goes, it's how I relate. I don't think it has to do much to do with gender, so to speak.

Instructor: It may not. I was just asking if any of those factors or any other ones influence how you interpret that work.

Teddy: I guess I could tell where I thought it was going. Like after I saw these images and after I saw the back of the T-shirt, I'm like, OK, it has something to do with this club. What they do in their club. They obviously, because of this book, you can tell that they feel that their heritage is important. Where they came from is important to them. They like to remember.

Margaret: I don't know if you're finished or not.

Teddy: Yeah.

Margaret: I interpreted this totally different from the way they did. I see it as, you [looking at Mara] tell me if I'm wrong.
Instructor: You will have your interpretation and we will hear about Mara's.

Margaret: But how I see it as, of course I was born and raised basically here in Columbus, but I know if I visit a different culture, I'm only there a short time. And I just really have a ball when I'm there. But if I were there permanently or if I moved there or if I was there a year, or ten years, I would really begin missing my own culture. And I interpret it as a book kind of documenting your culture, what you miss. Some of the things that are familiar to you that you must miss about being here. I have a lot of friends that really miss their own culture. Just the little simple things of everyday life at home. That may be something you would have.

Teddy: Does anybody else have any comments that you would like to share

Instructor: A couple of have said that this is specifically about another culture. Are there things in there that you don't understand? That you feel that the amount of information that you have is OK? Do you want more information. Everything like this is contextually dependent. Back in the Middle East, a lot if these things would be clearly understood. But in this context here we're essentially the audience, so, my question is do you have questions about what's in the pictures?

Rodd: The box in the right of that front page, and that vase that I know Teddy was asking about at the beginning. That plate of food, we weren't quite sure of, what that was, so maybe if there was small caption there, or some ingredients around it so that we would know what it's made out of.

Margaret: But is that important to have to know the content?

Rodd: No, but that's a question that comes up when you're viewing it.

Margaret: What I'm saying is maybe we don't have to know what the content is to get the feeling...

Teddy: I think I know where he's coming from, like, cause you look at a
bunch of images of a certain bunch of paraphernalia, and then you have people involved in this club doing things together and then all of a sudden there's just a plate of food. And that's it. You can draw your own assumptions about it and make the connections if you think about it, but as far as providing a direction of going through these photos in the order that they're put in, it might have helped if you had added text or added a picture of what you're supposed to be going towards.

**Instructor:** I mean that was my question. It may or may not benefit from more. I was just asking how anybody felt. I'm curious what's being smoked.

**Teddy:** So we can go to the source?

**Instructor:** Yes. The point is that we have questions that we want to ask.

**Mara:** I don't know what the word is in English, but we kind of have different kinds of tobacco. There are different flavors that we have. We have African or we have strawberry flavors. So when you smoke it you can experiment with different flavors.

**Charles:** Where do you get it?

**Mara:** I brought it back from my country. I don't think they sell it here because it gets dry.

**Charles:** Well they have tobacco shops here.

**Mara:** Well, see it has to be a little bit wet.

**Instructor:** Is this the pipe that you said women weren't allowed to smoke, traditionally?

**Mara:** It's not that they're not allowed. But it more accomplished by men. Men usually do that. I thought it would be fun.

**Margaret:** Like women who smoke cigars.

**Mara:** The image in the book, there are some men sitting there and one of them has a pipe, the water pipe, they're smoking a water pipe.
Margaret: Did Customs give you a hassle?

Mara: No. Actually sometimes they did open my bag. We have this food that you can't get here. It's like leaves. You cook it. When we bring it back here they think that it is some kind of drugs. And they don't know how else to bring it here.

Charles: Is that the food that's on the rice?

Mara: No, that's different, it's eggplant.

Margaret: Have you ever been to Sinbad's.

Mara: Yes. And that other thing in the picture, that is sand. It is colored sand and they spend hours trying to get the image.

Teddy: If you moved it would it, like, spread?

Mara: No because it's like for kids.

Instructor: So is that a traditional art form?

Mara: Yeah.

Teddy: Anybody got anything else? [A new group of students come up]

Rodd: OK, this is a real tiny book, so everybody's got to come up.

Instructor: Is there anybody that hasn't seen this book yet? [Several people speak up and several students go up to look at it.]

Rodd: [Holding book up so class can see, going through one page at a time.]

It's really nicely bound, what do you think. Well, it's just pictures. We start out with a lot of carpet. Little closer shot there and you can see a sort of figure.

[Turns page.] Little closer yet. A dog [Turns page.] Even closer. [Turns page.]

Audrey: Closer or farther?

Rodd: Closer. [Turns page.] Different pose. Dog is definitely a ham. [Turns page.] Closer. until the camera just goes into the dog and the last image comes full circle, like the dog fur becoming the carpet. Anybody pick up a distinct style going here? One like some slides that we've seen earlier? Perhaps? And 250
I believe that would be it.

Tim: Would you name the story? Make the title?

Instructor: What are you asking?

Rodd: The story line kind of lends itself to a title.

Rodd: Yeah.

Tim: What do you think?

Martin: I don't know, you know it seems like that guy, Dean.

Instructor: Duane?

Rodd: That guy! Him, that guy!

Instructor: Duane Michals.

Rodd: That's what we were thinking, too. That picture that he did of that bathroom scene, and the picture kept getting closer and closer and closer. As for the identity, I don't think that we had, you know, any big, you know, 'I can identify with the dog.'

Instructor: Well it may or may not, those may or may not play in an obvious or important way at all.

Rodd: Well, I mean, I guess if I really wanted to dig deep I could say, well, my identity being an American, an American white middle class male, I recognize that as carpet. Some places in the third world wouldn't know.

Mara: They what?!

Rodd: You know, like Ethiopia probably wouldn't have carpeting. And they might not even recognize what this texture is. AAhhh!

Instructor: Yeah, I'm not saying make these big stretches. For some it may be important to address these kinds of things.

Rodd: Personally I don't think all artwork has actual meaning. That you have to sit there and grapple with. I mean it could be, she thought it would be a good idea to zoom in on this dog, and then snap, it's gone.
Instructor: I do think that artworks are about something and that we should try to understand. Anybody else? [No comments.] OK, so what do you like about it?

Rodd: I like that she tried to do that style of Duane Michals. That she had that little figurine, had the carpet texture, got closer, got closer, and then you could finally see a dog. A real dog, then, the dog was gone.

Tammy: The format its presented in reminds me of one of those flip books that you flip through and it looks like those figures are moving.

Rodd: Yeah. It’s very nicely put together I think. I definitely think this plastic cover is a bonus. When some people pick it up they won’t get their grubby fingerprints all over it.

Instructor: Yet you see that first photograph, so you’ve got a kind of visual ‘hum?’

Rodd: Well we didn’t even know that it was a photograph at first. We just thought that was a textured paper she was using as a cover. There’s another different texture on the next page. But then it went all the way through.

Anybody else have comments? This is the last time we have to make comments. Class is over after this.

Instructor: So did anybody else like it? Dislike it? Why? Give Margaret some feedback.

Teddy: Very straightforward. Just kinda cool. You go just right up into the dog. And it’s fun.

Charles: Remember our discussion about art? What happened to those stars by being understandable, straightforward. I think those got a couple of stars. And then I think also just kind of like the technique the craft there. So, I think using that criteria...

Rodd: I think it’s pretty cool that the dog actually stayed.
Margaret: That was luck! [Laughter.] She's not what do you call...a
Weimeraner.

Rodd: It's all sorts of mixtures, Duane Michals and William Wegman.

Margaret: Except my dog is not a working dog. Smart dog.

Instructor: All the prints are really consistent. They're all kind of even,
gray, soft gray.

Rodd: I was wondering, did you do all these prints yourself? [Laughter.]
They're all cut very much the same.

Margaret: If you look close, you'll know that I did them myself. Trust me.

Instructor: OK, just evaluate this critique for me. This critique. So as we're
wrapping up today, just write a little bit.
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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Describe and interpret the artwork. Consider the following questions.

1. What feelings do you have about it? Why do you have those feelings?
2. What does the artwork say about women?
3. What does the artwork say about men?
4. What does the artwork say about race?
5. What does the artwork say about class, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity or other factors?
6. How has your identity influenced your view of the artwork?
7. How do you think the artist's identity influenced the artwork?
8. What kinds of ideas about life does the artwork prompt you to think about?
9. What does the artwork make you think about photography, about art, about art making and the art world?
10. Are there other kinds of information that may be particularly useful in understanding this artwork?
11. What kinds of information might this be and how might you find it? Should you try to?
12. What function does the artwork have in society?
13. What function does this artwork have for the artist?
14. Evaluate the artwork.
15. What is/are your criteria for judgment?
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