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THE SUBJECT(S) OF TECHNOLOGY:
DEFINING ELECTRONIC DISCOURSE IN COMPOSITION CLASSROOMS

DISSERTATION

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

By
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****
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1997

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H. Lewis Ulman
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People here communicate mind to mind.
Not black to white.
Not man to woman.
Not young to old.
Not short to tall.
Or handsome to homely.
Just thought to thought.
Idea to idea.
Uninfluenced by the rest of it.
What is this place?
Utopia?
No, the internet.
Where minds, doors and lives open up.
It's a nice place.
This place called the internet

--MCI commercial, aired winter 1997
This work explores the ways that student writers define and are defined by the
discourse of computer networks; how issues of identity and difference are articulated in
various discourse environments; how the formal and social structures of discursive forums
are related to the quantity and quality of participation in these forums; and how computer-
mediated communication and face-to-face discourse influence one another. My wish to
discover the balance of responsibility between students and teachers using computer
technology within institutional settings led me to pursue a qualitative study of these issues;
therefore, I designed an ethnographic study of two computer-supported composition
classes--identified in this study as Class A and Class B--as a way of collecting extensive
comparative data on the contexts of classroom networks. Rather than relying solely on
data generated from within network culture, my work compares two groups of students
participating in face-to-face and networked class discussions.

My work explores the patterns of participation in each of the classes I studied to
provide my readers with “snapshots” of the ways computers and pedagogy interact in each
classroom. I look closely at one small group of students in Class A, focusing on their
chosen silences in large-group face-to-face discussions. Next, I describe the experiences
of one student in Class B, focusing on the ways she approached issues of difference in face-to-face and networked discussions.

By engaging in a qualitative, ethnographic study, I am able to distinguish between the architecture of computer networks and the pedagogy and culture of the classes I studied. I make a distinction between machine-centered and student-centered pedagogy as a way of understanding what happened in these classes. Finally, this work raises new questions for research in computers and composition and makes pedagogical recommendations for networked composition classrooms at the close of the twentieth century.
Dedicated to Rose and Emma
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my advisor, H. Lewis Ulman, whose face-to-face and online grappling with the issues germane to this work challenged and inspired me. His patience, insight, and wisdom have ever been a model to me of academic integrity and teaching excellence.

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I also thank Andrea Lunsford, who encouraged me to explore computers and composition studies as teacher, researcher, and administrator.

I gratefully acknowledge the support of my colleagues at The Ohio State University, including the unnamed teachers who opened the doors to their classrooms for me and the students who attempted to define the discourse of computer networks in my presence.

I also acknowledge the support of the Computers in Composition and Literature Program, especially Lori Mathis, who has shared the work and joy of graduate school with me, and Eric Walborn (d. 1993), who first introduced me to computers in English studies and whose presence was missed every step of the way in this project. I thank Adam Beach for his transcription work.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"So Why Don't You Just Shut Your Mouth":
Defining Electronic Discourse

Like a force of nature, the digital age cannot be denied or stopped. It has four very powerful qualities that will result in its ultimate triumph: decentralizing, globalizing, harmonizing, and empowering.

Nicholas Negroponte
Being Digital

Men have dreamed of liberating machines. But there are no machines of freedom, by definition.

Michel Foucault
"Space, Power, and Knowledge"

1. A Classroom Network as a Site for Conflict

A couple of years ago, in a second-level, computer-supported writing class I taught at The Ohio State University, I asked the students to participate in an electronic mail reflector as a supplement to our face-to-face class discussions. At the time, many students were unfamiliar with e-mail, and I hoped that the reflector would create a hybrid discourse space for them, somewhere between the informal spoken discourse of face-to-face class discussions and the formal written essays. I believed that writing in the reflector would serve a pedagogical goal similar to journal-keeping, that it would both encourage my students to write and give them a responsive audience for their writing. At first, my students participated dutifully in the electronic class discussion, perhaps more interested in

---

1 An electronic mail reflector is a simple mail forwarding system in which all messages sent to a single class address are forwarded to each member of the list. All messages sent to the reflector were "tagged" with the sender's name and return address. See the glossary at the end of this work for full definitions of computer-related terms.
fulfilling the course e-mail requirements than in developing a rhetoric of electronic communication. However, when a disagreement erupted over Israel Horovitz's play, *The Indian Wants the Bronx*, some of my students began to struggle in earnest to define the possibilities and parameters of electronic discourse.

The course was English 367C, Intermediate Essay Writing: The U.S. Experience, a computer-supported sophomore-level writing course that fulfilled the university's requirement for cultural diversity in the undergraduate curriculum. My section was titled "The U.S. Experience in Literature," and I used an anthology, *New Worlds of Literature*, as the primary text for the course. The readings I chose, including Toni Morrison's "Recitatif," Louise Erdrich's "Fleur," and Perry Brass's "I Think the New Teacher's a Queer," provided a starting place for class discussions about race, gender, and gay culture. From a sociocultural perspective, the students were a typical group of undergraduate students at Ohio State; in other words, they were mostly white, middle-class, and midwestern. As a white, middle-class, midwestern teacher with a liberal ideological perspective, I worried about how best to present the issues of social and cultural difference that students would confront in the class. I hoped that electronic discussion spaces would help me to enact a critical pedagogy by providing a forum for the free exchange of ideas, unaccompanied by the identity politics of much face-to-face class discussion.

---

2 Two other English 367 classes were the subject of this dissertation study. I discuss the course in greater detail in Chapter Two.

3 Some sections of English 367 were designated as having special topics such as literature, folklore, rhetoric, business communication, or the African-American experience. The syllabus for my course and a handout on using the reflector are included in Appendix A.

4 Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe point out that many technophilic social constructionist composition teachers shared this view: "These two developments—the rise of social and critical pedagogies and the expansion of...[computer-mediated communication]—were mutually reinforcing."
About halfway through the term, a student named Rich posted a tagged message to the class e-mail reflector, asking for help with his interpretation of the Horovitz play. Rich wanted to read one scene in a homoerotic context, but was uncertain about his interpretation:

What’s up with the sweater? . . . It seemed to me to be more of a guilt offering than a symbol of the boys repressed homosexual feelings comming through. (although these can be seen othe places.) help me out.

In this posting, Rich did not mention the “other places” where he saw the boys’ “repressed homosexual feelings,” and the topic did not come up in our face-to-face class discussion of the play. A second student, Dave, posted a message accusing Rich of reading “a little too far into things”:

I’ll tell you what’s up with the sweater, it is a guilt offering. How could you get any type of homosexual reference from that. God I think someone is reading a little to far into things. . . . how in the hell can you get the message of ‘repressed homosexual feelings from this.’

Rich took offense at the tone of Dave’s posting, and, in his next e-mail message, asserted his right to “read as far into the play as [he] wish[ed]” and taunted Dave with “taking the possibility of repressed homosexual desires a teensy bit too personally.” Dave did not respond directly (in the reflector) to Rich’s posting. Instead, he sent the class a rather tasteless spoof on political correctness forwarded from a source on the Internet. The five-page “PC Manifesto” included statements such as the following: “We of the Politically Correct philosophy believe in increasing a tolerance for a DIVERSITY of cultures, race, gender, ideology and alternate lifestyles. Politically Correctnes is the only social and morally acceptable outlook. Anyone who disagrees with this philosophy is bigoted,

---

5 All names of participants (except my own) are pseudonyms.
6 For the sake of accuracy, I have preserved original spellings and syntax when quoting e-mail postings. Throughout this work, I have avoided the use of “sic” when it could be misconstrued as part of the message.
biased, sexist, and/or closed-minded." I rather suspected that this "PC Manifesto" was
directed at me rather than at Rich—intended as a critique of the course content rather than
a personal attack on another student. Nevertheless, the message implicated Rich, who
responded personally to Dave's posting. Rich wrote in the class reflector:

Maybe I shouldn't, but I took the e-mail personally, coming as it does on
the heels of my comment about latent, repressed homosexual desire and
about my e-mail in which I mentioned that it is my right to read as far into
any text as I wish. . . . So, if there was anything directed to me personally,
let me know. . . Just don't use the class reflector; it is more than a little
gauche.

When Rich asked Dave in this message to step metaphorically out of the public space of
the class reflector into the private space of personal e-mail, he effectively excluded me as a
witness to their disagreement.

At this point in the exchange, I tried to mitigate the tension between these two
students and establish clear guidelines for use of the reflector by sending the following
message to Dave and the entire class:

I'm not sure how to react to the "PC Manifesto" you've sent--because I'm
not sure in what spirit you sent it. I can only assume that you intended to
provide us with material for a debate on PC? A suggestion, though—if
you're going to use the class reflector space to send reading materials to
everyone, please at least take the time to contextualize them since this is
meant to be a discussion space. So—if you send something, please let us
know why you're sending it to us, and how you feel about it.

I hoped that asking my students to contextualize their postings would help them to
remember the audience for their e-mail messages. Dave did not respond to my message,
either in class or in the reflector. He continued to post, though, and his next e-mail
posting was increasingly hostile. After agreeing with a student named Hank about a
reading of Morrison's "Recitatif," Dave attempted to "silence" Rich publicly. He wrote in
the reflector: "'Rich' I don't believe that you, yes you not Hank, were ever accused of
'reading too far into the stories.' So why don't you just shut your mouth."
Rather than responding directly to Dave's aggression, Rich sent the following message to my personal e-mail account:

Theresa,
Once again, I really do NOT mean to be causing problems, but... Have you read Dave's latest little contribution to our class reflector? If you haven't yet, I think you really should. Look, it has to stop, NOW! I am more than just a little bit offended now. I am absolutely not going to be 'talked' to like that ('so why don't you just shut your mouth') in a classroom setting (yes, I consider our reflector to be a classroom setting, regardless of where the messages are actually sent or received). I think that something definitely needs to be said IN CLASS about all of this. What I am not sure of is whether you should say something or I should... If Dave wants to speak to me like that, then he can either do it in person, or he can e-mail something to ME—only me. I am quite angry right now (I'm shaking a bit as I type this) and I'm only telling you because you are involved and because I have to say something to someone, but, should he chose to continue, I very well may pursue this as a violation of the university's code of conduct.

In this message, Rich went on to explain that he had overheard whispered comments in class about his sexual preference. He wrote:

I have overheard certain students in our class make remarks in class that have upset me... The comments that include the words 'gay,' 'fag,' and 'queer' do not offend me; the comments that question my motives for saying something, that debate my right to say or do something, or that challenge my right to find something in a text, do... Please, please, please, respond!!!! I would like to get your views. And, I kind of want to know what I'm going to be walking into on Tuesday. I will take my cue from you.

The following Tuesday, the students and I spent time in class discussing this online incident. Without mentioning any names, I told the students that I was displeased with the tone of some recent e-mail postings. I asked them to define appropriate (and inappropriate) ways of using the class reflector; we agreed that the reflector should be a discussion space, and that what would be inappropriate in face-to-face class discussions
would also be inappropriate in the reflector. Though present in class, Dave did not participate in this discussion.

Ten days later, Rich told me in a private e-mail message, “Our little in-class problem has been adequately resolved. There have been no further harassing e-mail messages, and the oral comments have been reduced (or at least they have finally wised up and now say them quietly).” Despite this apparent resolution, Rich struggled with personal issues during the term that affected his performance in my class. He missed three of the last five class sessions, and neither turned in the last paper nor did the required oral presentation. In another e-mail message, he told me: “I am sorry for sort of flaking out at the end of the semester. My life just got extremely complicated all of a sudden. Just think: in a little while, you won’t have to deal with me or my problems anymore : ).” I was unable to give Rich a final grade for my course because his name was not on the final class roster. Two weeks after final grades were due, I received the following message from Rich: “The registrar and fees and deposits managed to lose a check from my father and are saying that I never paid my fees for the quarter. . .Well, I am leaving for New York tonight. I’ll contact you when I get back.” I never heard from Rich again; Dave received an A- for the term.

Though Rich’s presence was all but erased from my course, his harrowing experience of confronting identity politics in my English 367C class helped me to reconsider the ways that computer networks in such a course can influence students’ presentations of self and responses to one another in relation to issues of difference. For both Dave and Rich, electronic discourse changed the dynamics—for better or for worse—of the face-to-face classroom. As a witness to their online disagreement, but not to the whispered comments in my classroom (I never heard these), I became uncertain about the merits of bringing electronic discourse into English 367 and uncertain about my role in mediating this student conflict both online and face-to-face. In the end, the exchange on
my class reflector between Dave and Rich left me with more questions than answers. In what ways did electronic mail allow—or even encourage—the exchange between Dave and Rich? Was the increased “freedom” of the electronic classroom ultimately productive for or damaging to Dave? to Rich? to the other students? Why did the other students remain relatively silent during this exchange? To what extent does the electronic forum intersect with the face-to-face discussion? Was it appropriate for me to “discipline” my students in class for what occurred on the reflector? In Chapter Five, I return to these questions as a way of understanding how the pedagogy of computer-supported classrooms can influence student participation in networks.

2. Research Questions

Marilyn Cooper and Cynthia Selfe (1990) discuss (asynchronous, tagged) computer conferences as a way of incorporating “disruptive” behavior into the structure of their courses, using these conferences as a way of “get[ting] students to let us in on some of the things they talk about under their breath in class lectures and discussions” (848). Cooper and Selfe express here a pedagogical impulse uncomfortably close to surveillance—an impulse which becomes all too easy to enact in a computer-supported learning environment. In a 1991 CCC piece, Selfe and Gail Hawisher warn against this same impulse: “Electronic conferences, we must continue to remind ourselves as teachers, can serve a technology of power, can provide teachers with the ability ‘to keep tabs on’ and watch those who participate in online discussion, and can, despite our best intentions, encourage the sort of surveillance that we believe is damaging to writing classes” (“Reply,” 503). In my own class, Dave was quiet in face-to-face class discussions but—perhaps because he was already a proficient e-mail user—asserted himself in the reflector. Dave used an external “authority” (the “PC Manifesto”) to articulate his frustration about

7 See the glossary at the end of this work for definitions of relevant terms such as “asynchronous” and “tagged.”
the way the course was going but chose to remain silent (by not posting) when confronted about it. For him, the reflector was indeed a place to bring up the things he might have talked about under his breath—or not at all—in my class. I worried that Dave was using the reflector in a way that could hurt other students; I also worried that limiting his freedom there would leave him without a space in which to express himself. In contrast, Rich was usually vocal in class discussions, but was also easily flustered. In my class, he was caught between responding in a personal way to the gay literature we read and discussed, and concealing his gay identity from some homophobic classmates. Rich was better equipped to address personal issues in writing than in a face-to-face setting (and he had Internet access at home); however, when a conflict arose in the reflector, he wanted to say something “in class” about it. For Rich, the electronic spaces of the class were spaces where he could confront issues that might otherwise have been suppressed and bring them into the public arena of face-to-face class discussion. Rich argued that the reflector was a “classroom setting,” but obviously considered it inadequate for the resolution of this important conflict. At the end of the term, he wrote in a course evaluation: “I enjoyed the [face-to-face] discussion, even when I ventured into somewhat personal matters and when my views were sort of shot down.”

For me, this classroom network experience serves as the starting point for the research questions that have shaped this dissertation.

1. How do the dynamics of computer networks influence the dynamics of face-to-face class discussions (and vice versa)?

2. How are issues of identity and difference articulated in various discourse environments?

3. In classroom networks, whose participation is encouraged and who is silenced?

4. How do factors such as the architecture of communication (e.g. small group/large group, synchronous/asynchronous, anonymous/tagged), the institutional setting,
the computer literacies of the students, and the pedagogical approach of the 
teacher, influence the ways students participate in classroom networks?

I address these questions with an ethnographic study of two computer-supported 
composition classes, comparing how students in each class participated in both computer-
mediated and face-to-face discussion environments, and considering how these 
environments shift and overlap. Like Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe, I consider 
myself a “soft technological determinist,” for I believe that “changes in technology drive 
changes in the ways we live and work, and we, agents to a degree in control of our own 
lives, use technology to achieve our human purposes” (1). By engaging in a qualitative, 
ethnographic study, I distinguish between the architecture of computer networks and the 
pedagogy and culture of the classes I study in order to discover the balance of 
responsibility between students, teachers, computers, and their institutional settings. I 
argue that the architecture of communication, including the configuration of hardware and 
software, can affect the way that students and teachers interact with one another by giving 
students new choices about where—and how—to position themselves in relation to the 
subject matter. By studying different types of face-to-face and networked discussions, 
including large group and small group, asynchronous and synchronous, anonymous and 
tagged, I demonstrate that factors such as anonymous participation can influence the ways 
students construct issues of identity and difference in relation to English 367.

3. Overview of Scholarship on Computer Networks and Composition

During the last ten years, as instructional technology has become more 
commonplace in composition classrooms, different areas of study have evolved based on 
different methods of using technology. For example, word processing, software 
development, hypertext, networks, and multimedia have all become distinct, interrelated 
subfields of computers and composition studies. In their comprehensive history of the 
field, Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe delineate the various technological innovations
that have defined the field of computers and writing, from the stand-alone word processors of the early 1980s to the fully networked multimedia workstations of the mid-1990s. My work is concerned primarily with network technology, the combination of hardware and software that connects one computer to another and allows for the sharing of written text and conversation; and the political and pedagogical implications of such networks. Although much of the early work in the area of networks does not make distinctions between local-area and wide-area networks, or between anonymous and tagged participation in such networks, I make these distinctions both in my own work and in my review of the literature.

Computer Networks as Tools for Democratization

Many of the preliminary claims about student interaction in computer networks indicated that technology could serve a democratizing purpose in the classroom (e.g. Batson, Faigley). Computer networks, supposedly both inexpensive and accessible, were also supposed to be “socially decontextualized” because they did not necessarily reveal the identities of their participants, and they neutralized social cues such as “accent, handwriting/voice quality, sex, appearance...that might otherwise be transmitted by the form of the message” (Herring). Computer networks, it seemed, could give traditionally “silenced” students voices in the classroom by providing them with a “safe” space in which to speak. It was widely believed that in an environment where the written word took precedence over physical indicators of race, class, gender, and ethnicity, there would be a meritocracy of ideas rather than of social or cultural characteristics. Michael Spitzer (1986) makes such a claim in predicting how the politics of electronic conferences would emerge: “Those people with powerful ideas will have more influence than those with powerful personalities...The democratization fostered by computer conferencing has other consequences as well. Just as nonverbal cues are missing in conferencing, so too are clues about an individual’s status and position” (20). Predictions such as Spitzer’s are
based on the dynamics of online interaction among individuals who have never met face-to-face; nevertheless, similar claims about the democratizing power of networks have regularly been applied to networked composition classrooms. For example, Marilyn Cooper and Cynthia Selfe (1990) echo Spitzer's claim in terms of composition students, claiming that classroom networks give students spaces to "experiment with and confront discourses" in a "less threatening context" where "what matters is [sic] ideas, not personalities" (866). Cooper and Selfe express the hope that electronic discourse will even redefine face-to-face interaction in composition classrooms and make classrooms more democratic:

If we can't eliminate the effects of racism, sexism, and classism in our traditional classrooms because of social inertia, we may be able to set aside smaller electronic spaces in which such problems can find expression and be debated. And in these reduced-risk spaces, students can discover or evolve among themselves different patterns of power and linguistic exchange to facilitate these discussions, patterns which may run directly counter to those that have become habitual in our classrooms. In our experience, once students experience these new patterns, they bring them back into the classroom and, thus, also change that setting for the better, encouraging increased levels of intellectual divergence and dissent that balance our impulse toward the status quo. (867)

Such enthusiastic claims for electronic discourse were based on anecdotal evidence from classrooms or from electronic newsgroups or bulletin boards, rather than on qualitative or quantitative studies of composition students. A few years later, Selfe and Gail Hawisher became some of the first to criticize early work in computers and composition studies and to call for critical and feminist revisions of positivist claims about networks.

According to the first wave of theory about computer networks in writing classrooms, networks allowed a freedom of expression that face-to-face interaction did not. Jerome Bump (1990) concludes that the positive effects of computer-mediated communication outweigh the negative, based on the results of a questionnaire given to
graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Texas. Bump claims that student participation increased with the network (because surveyed students said it did) and that shy students and minorities were liberated by the computer network: "[Computer-assisted class discussion] restores voices to all such students more effectively, whatever their sex, race, class, or age" (55). Marshall Kremers (1993) examines anonymous participation in a classroom network, claiming that ENFI (Electronic Networks for Interaction) role playing "allows students to test their attitudes toward controversial issues in ways that oral discussions cannot accommodate. That is, network roles provide a mask behind which one can become invisible, an anonymity that many students need when they are afraid to say what they really believe" (119). Kremers believes that the anonymity of networks can be empowering—shifting and expanding traditional classroom boundaries: "ENFI helps students to become authors by granting them freedom of expression, while it frees their teachers to create a more stimulating climate for learning. ENFI students are self-motivated and able to work without dependence on the teacher. An ENFI classroom is student centered" (118). Kremers hoped that technology would transform classrooms into student-centered learning environments, where individual differences are respected and intellectual diversity is promoted. In Chapter Five, I argue that relying on computer technology to create student-centered learning environments can result instead in machine-centered pedagogies. Like many early researchers in computers and composition, Kremers affords too much agency to the technology, and further fails to acknowledge the potential dangers of "invisibility" in classrooms.

Understanding the Limits of Instructional Technology

Other researchers suggest that while the ENFI classroom is student-centered, it is not necessarily one in which all students are empowered. Christine Neuwirth and her co-authors (1993) conclude that concurrent network interaction "demonstrate[s] a limited but
positive value.” Using a combination of field and laboratory research methods, Neuwirth and her co-authors tracked four students—two higher-achieving and two lower-achieving students who also differed in gender—and their teacher with open-ended interviews and classroom observations. Classroom observers tried to remain unobtrusive and nonreactive; they recorded “impressions of the verbal and nonverbal interaction between the teacher and students” (192). The research team also collected ENFI transcripts and drafts of student essays. They conclude that the negative effects of network behavior outweigh the positive benefits of student writing on the network: “Experience at our site... suggested that uninhibited behavior (e.g., swearing) on the network indeed occurred in classrooms and was highly disturbing to some teachers and students” (201). Neuwirth and her co-authors do not consider the context for the “uninhibited behavior” they observed on the network but suggest that it was more likely to occur when the students did not have structured assignments to follow. They conclude that, “This phenomenon raises serious concerns for teachers and researchers interested in the potential of computer-mediated communication for teaching writing” (201).

Gail Hawisher and Charles Moran (1993) express similar concerns about student behavior on networks: “In writing to a screen, writers may at times lose the sense of an audience, become self-absorbed, and lose the constraints and inhibitions that the imagined audience provides. What would be censored in a face-to-face confrontation or in a paper-mail letter may not be censored on e-mail” (631). Although Hawisher and Moran do not explain why the “imagined audience” would be different in paper mail and e-mail exchanges, issues of freedom and censorship are crucial when teachers use classroom networks. In classrooms where identity and diversity are foregrounded, inhibitions (which may or may not be present in networks) can either hamper class discussions by restricting what students say, or protect other students from hurtful remarks in class discussions. Researchers in computers and composition are beginning to realize that different network
configurations and different ways of using networks can enact different results in computer-supported composition classrooms. Hawisher and Selfe point out that, "Like the traditional classroom, the architecture of electronic spaces can put some students at a disadvantage, thwarting rather than encouraging learning" ("Rhetoric" 60).

Feminist Critiques of Classroom Networks

Current trends in network theory posit that classroom networks can replicate "dominant" discourse patterns that silence marginalized students rather than provide them with new classroom dynamics in which to express themselves. Recently, feminist scholars have called our attention to the potential dangers of computer networks for women students, helping us to realize that technologies are not designed neutrally. According to Susan Herring, networks replicate a "masculine" discourse where electronic "flaming" often silences women students in the same way that masculine discourse in face-to-face discussions does. What Herring defines as "masculine" discourse is illustrated in my own class by Dave's "how in the hell" response to Rich's posting about the Horovitz play.*

Herring cites a study by McCormick and McCormick in which a pattern of male aggression is found in "electronic mail exchanges between undergraduates (75% male) on a local network," where a small minority of participants generates most of the participation. According to this study, "the minority also seems to have imposed its style on the discourse overall, turning the computer lab into 'an adolescent subculture' complete with crude jokes, threats, and put-downs." In her study of male and female participation in two academic electronic discussion lists during a one-year period, Herring finds a similar tendency for "a minority of male participants to effectively dominate discussions both in amount of talk, and through rhetorical intimidation." She argues that male students "censor" female students on the network and that an essential condition for

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* Dave's previous experiences on the Internet (e.g. participating in online newsgroups) might have taught him the discourse practices that seemed inappropriate in a classroom setting.
democratic discourse is therefore not met. Herring concludes that while computer-mediated communication has democratizing potential, it is not inherently democratic: “Rather than being democratic, academic [computer-mediated communication] is power-based and hierarchical. This state of affairs cannot however be attributed to the influence of computer communication technology; rather, it continues pre-existing patterns of hierarchy and male dominance in academia more generally, and in society as a whole.” Pamela Takayoshi (1994) shares this concern with the gender gap in academic discourse environments, which is not simply or easily overcome by the introduction of technology into work spaces and classrooms:

We must be aware that the problem of voice for women in academia is rooted at a deeper level than can be addressed simply through implementing a new medium. Just because women are offered a “safe” space in which to speak does not mean they will know how to do so. . . Patterns of interaction deeply entrenched within a patriarchal system cannot be undermined simply by offering access to a new medium. (32)

Takayoshi’s work is based on a feminist critique of existing research on computers in composition, along with firsthand accounts from women participants on computer networks who report being insulted and harassed by male participants on the basis of female usernames.

Citing sharply unequal participation in networks and newsgroups, as well as stories of harassment, cross-dressing, and posting of pornographic images, Leslie Regan Shade warns that the Internet is not yet an equal space for women. Shade and Gladys We point out that making the Internet accessible to women means neither excluding women nor including them in undesirable ways. They write:

It means making the Internet easily accessible to all people; making networking an attractive communications tool for women, by creating tangible and viable information and resources; and by encouraging young girls and women to become involved in the development and deployment of the technology. It also means creating a friendly online environment,
one that allows women to speak their thoughts without having to hide their
gender. The world of cyberspace is one which is being shaped daily by the
millions of interactions on it, and women can contribute much to these
exchanges. (quoted in Shade)

The realization that the Internet is often a hostile place for women has led to feminist
critiques of computer networks in composition classrooms. In composition classrooms,
giving women access to computer networks is not enough to overcome dangerous
discursive practices or define new ones. Feminist composition teachers must work against
current conventions of electronic interaction (on the Internet) to define safe and inclusive
discourse practices in online environments.

Billie J. Wahlstrom asks, “What are the long-range implications, for women and
others who lack a voice, of our using computers and other gendered technologies in our
writing classrooms?” (174). Wahlstrom identifies some of the ways that technologies are
gendered and suggests that “[m]aking students computer-literate on networks may not
enable them to find a voice once they leave the classroom” (182). Similarly, Emily Jessup
asks, “Does the use of the computer make class participation more equitable across sexes,
or is it privileging those who feel more confident about using the technology?” (349).
Jessup points out that the gender gap in computer use in school is not merely quantitative,
but that the “sociocultural context of computers leads to the dominance of white middle-
class males as computer users” (338). Although the gender gap in computer use has been
lessening in recent years, feminist critiques of network interaction help us to see that the
same technology can liberate some students even while it oppresses others. Alison Regan
reminds us that gay and lesbian students often are not marked by social context cues, and
warns that “the computer medium exaggerates some disturbing and often ignored features
of classroom dialogue” (117). She argues that the network provides a space for
homophobic students to express themselves in ways that can “further suppress gay and
lesbian voices” (119). In my own class, the online conflict between Dave and Rich created
a homophobic spectacle that might have contributed to Rich’s eventual disappearance. As a result of work such as Regan’s, researchers in computers and composition are beginning to see that networks are complex sites for student interaction and that research about networks must consider the social, political, and economic context for computer use, including the ways teachers assign participation in networks and the ways students respond to assignments; the computer literacies our students bring to our composition classrooms; and our students’ varied experiences with access to technology.

4. New Directions for Network Research

Gail Hawisher (1989) warns against research in computers and composition that is “technocentric,” that does not consider the context for the computer in composition classrooms. Research in computers and composition has become increasingly widespread and increasingly validated, as evidenced by articles related to computers and composition regularly appearing in such journals as *College English, CCC*, and *Written Communication*; by the Computers and Writing Cluster at the CCCC and the growth of the Computers and Writing Conference; by the many online professional listservs related to computers and writing, such as Purtopoi and Writing Program Administration; by the international professional journal, *Computers and Writing*, dedicated specifically to this discipline; and by the book-length history of the field published in 1996, *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History*. The 1990s gave rise to an increasing tolerance for qualitative, ethnographic research in composition studies, along with increasing access to computer networks in composition classrooms. Together, these trends demonstrate and allow for research in “the ways in which individuals [use] literacy within communities—the classroom-as-community, the family, the home, the neighborhood, the culture” (Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe, 174). Nevertheless, more research is needed that considers the context of computer networks, including the experiences of students and teachers, their institutional settings,
and the architecture of communication. Preliminary research on how students write on computer networks has been largely theoretical (Takayoshi), anecdotal (Cooper and Selfe, Regan), or quantitative (Herring). The field still lacks qualitative and comparative studies capable of defining and evaluating student participation in classroom networks.

Early work in this field consisted primarily of the enthusiastic response of technophilic teachers and students. Janet Carey Eldred and Gail Hawisher (1995) point out that much of the early work that formed our assumptions about computer networks in composition classrooms was imported from social psychology and was conducted online with participants who never met face-to-face. Eldred and Hawisher write, “For compositionists, who see their students on a regular basis, it is somewhat odd to foreground the network and its lack of social cues without acknowledging instructors’ and students’ many face-to-face interactions” (353). My study, by comparing instructors’ and students’ face-to-face and online interactions, provides a more complete picture of student writers in networks than has been previously available. In addition, I consider the quality of students’ interactions in online and face-to-face contexts by asking questions such as Emily Jessup’s: “Are female students as likely as male students to assert their authority in the classroom? . . . Are women assuming a wide spectrum of roles in their responses on computer conferences (i.e. initiating topics as well as supporting other students’ contributions)?” (349). My research considers the various roles students play (including gender roles) in different discourse spaces in order to define the various qualities of their interactions (e.g. tone, length, frequency).

Much of the recent work on computer networks in composition classrooms has focused on what networks cannot do to change the dynamics of the traditional classroom.

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9 One recent exception is Joan Tomow’s Link/Age: Composing in the Online Classroom, an ethnographic study of a 1990 class at the University of Texas at Austin, in which students used tagged, synchronous online conferencing instead of face-to-face class discussion.
Sybille Gruber (1995) examines the use of a computer network in a graduate seminar to find that, "E-mail did not prove to be the ideal setting the instructors envisioned and it did not provide all students with an additional voice. Instead, it excluded and silenced those who were uncomfortable with the technology itself, those who did not have easy access to computers, and those who were uneasy with expressing their ideas on e-mail" (65). Gruber’s categories of network participation have not been widely considered in the literature on computer-mediated communication; nevertheless, they are important ones if we are to avoid technocentric ideas about computers in composition classrooms. By taking into consideration that there are many factors other than the presence of computer networks that influence student participation in our classes, my research avoids easy generalizations about computer-mediated communication.

In addition, my work considers the architecture of computer networks and classrooms to examine how the arrangement of spaces might elicit certain behaviors from participants. Nancy Kaplan stresses the importance of looking critically at the architecture of communication:

> When teachers or researchers study the effects of word processing, desktop publishing, electronic communication, and so on—we must ask, what is the relationship between the conceptual fields a particular configuration of hardware and software opens and those it obscures or proscribes? Claims that networks redistribute authority and encourage wider and freer participation, for example, need to specify which network, according to which privileges, to which participants, and under what circumstances. What privileges and prohibitions are embedded in the design of the particular tools used in the studies? How are the writers’ behaviors, and even their desires, affected by the workings of those tools’ deepest structures? (35-36)

Any configuration of hardware and software can influence the ways it is used in a classroom. Even the physical arrangement of the computers can define the pedagogical choices teachers make. For example, when computer workstations line the perimeter of
the room, they can allow for a central discussion area for face-to-face interaction, but, depending on how they are used, they can also pull students away from the central discussion area. Likewise, network software allows for certain types of participation: anonymous or tagged, synchronous or asynchronous, small group or large group.

Although the tone of research in computers and composition studies has shifted from wildly optimistic to guarded, this field still needs research capable of explaining the implications of networked interaction in our composition classrooms. Pamela Takayoshi writes, “Research that critically examines students working on computerized networks is necessary for an understanding of whether we are moving toward a more democratic and inviting classroom or if we are merely replicating in different ways the same oppressions marginalized groups have faced in the past” (27). My study provides ways of understanding network participation among undergraduate students by discussing computer technology and its accompanying discourse—recognizing their separable effects and the ways they influence one another. In my work, I distinguish the essential qualities of computer networks (their architecture) from the way computer-supported interaction is implemented by teachers and adopted by students in institutional contexts. In the chapters that follow, I provide a way of understanding the discourse of computer networks in composition classrooms—the way our students define this discourse and the way this discourse defines our students. Chapter Two delineates my methodology for this project and describes the research site as well as my own positionality in relation to the research. Chapters Three and Four describe the pedagogical decisions of the teachers in my study and provide “snapshots” of patterns of participation in the two classes. In Chapter Three, I explore the experiences of one small group of students in Class A, discussing the ways members of the group chose to participate (or not participate) in various discourse environments in the class. Chapter Four describes some of the experiences of one student in Class B, including the way she worked with and against the discourse spaces in her
In my concluding chapter, Chapter Five, I reflect on the discourse of computer networks and provide a way of understanding the theoretical and pedagogical implications of my work by defining "machine-centered" and "student-centered" pedagogies for networked composition classrooms. As I look to the future of instructional technology in composition classrooms, I consider the implications of network culture among socially and culturally diverse students in order to make recommendations about composition pedagogy for the next century.
CHAPTER 2

Technologies of Surveillance:
Ethnographic Method in Electronic Classrooms

Computers don't just do things for us, they do things to us, including to our ways of thinking about ourselves and other people.  

Sherry Turkle  
*Life on the Screen*

Much that we take as observations about "reality" may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms.

Kenneth Burke  
"Language as Action: Terministic Screens"

This study explores the ways that student writers define and are defined by the discourse of computer networks; how issues of identity and difference are articulated in various discourse environments; how the formal and social structures of discursive forums are related to the quantity and the qualities of participation in these forums; and how computer-mediated communication and face-to-face discourse influence one another.

Beginning with the set of research questions laid out in the Introduction, I designed an ethnographic study of two computer-supported composition classes as a way of collecting extensive comparative data on the context of classroom networks. Rather than relying solely on data generated from within network culture, my work compares two groups of students participating in face-to-face and networked class discussions. In this chapter, I describe the design of my study and its institutional context, including the course, the
student population, and the computer classroom, as well as my own position in relation to
the data I collected.

As the story that begins my first chapter explains, my own teaching in computer-
supported classrooms led to many of the questions that shape this project. I had read
about the equalizing potential of computer networks from scholars such as Lester Faigley,
Gail Hawisher, and Cynthia Selfe; however, the idyllic claims made for computer networks
never seemed fully to materialize in my own classrooms or those of my colleagues. My
teaching and administrative work in the Computers in Composition and Literature (CCL)
Program at Ohio State focused on using computer networks to decenter authority and
facilitate collaboration in composition and literature classes, and I felt committed to the
social and critical pedagogies that support these practices. I believed in the potential of
computers as tools for communication and collaboration, but the “success” narratives I
heard and experienced always seemed to be countered by stories of destructive language
practices among undergraduate students on computer networks.

1. Issues in Computer-supported Research

In my own composition classrooms, I began to conduct research by saving the text
my students generated in our networked discussions. By interrogating my own teaching
practices and the discursive choices of my students, I took part in a growing body of
teacher research in computers and composition studies. Computer-supported classrooms
can facilitate teacher research by making data collection invisible and effortless; as a result,
teachers can conduct thoughtful research on their own classes with a minimum of planning
and effort. In fact, many of the studies that have shaped network theory in composition
studies (Faigley, Hawisher and Selfe, Regan) rely on the classroom experiences of the researchers to explore the central issues in the field, such as who speaks and who is silent in networked class discussion.

Ethnography became a way for me to expand the range of my study by examining the interactions and experiences of other teachers and students in computer-supported classrooms. Much like the self-reflective research that composition teachers conduct in their own classrooms, ethnography relies on naturalistic description, context, and shared understanding of the construction of meaning between participants and researcher.

Ethnographic research is particularly appropriate for an emerging field of study such as computers and composition since it allows for a collaborative approach to knowledge-making. As Amy Goodburn states: "Ethnography affords community members opportunities to participate in determining which issues are of importance and allows researchers to question initial assumptions in light of broader issues which emerge during such studies" (43). In my study, ethnographic method provided a way of contextualizing the discursive practices of one small group of students and one individual student who helped me define the essential qualities of electronic networks by describing their experiences in different discussion environments.

The technology that supports ethnographic research in computer classrooms presents new possibilities—and new ethical problems—for data collection. Susan Herring describes her ethnographic work in a computer newsgroup, where "observers can easily remain invisible, thus avoiding the 'observer's paradox' of altering by their presence the nature of the phenomenon they seek to observe." I believe that such "invisible" data
collection is a form of surveillance that should be deemed inappropriate in most university classrooms, where researchers and subjects can and should work together. By making my presence known in the classrooms I observed, I avoided the ethical dilemma posed by Herring’s position, but still faced the observational dilemma of altering the research situation with my presence. In the design of this project, I foregrounded my data collection by becoming a participant/observer in both of the classes I studied, rather than merely “lurking” in their networks. My physical presence in the classrooms, along with the apparatus of research—tape recorder, microphone, and notebook—served as reminders to the student subjects that their words were being recorded and studied when we were in face-to-face environments (i.e. small-group and large-group face-to-face discussions). When the students participated in synchronous, anonymous, online discussions during class, they saw me saving their words on disk, again foregrounding the data collection. However, the next two chapters will show that I was more observer than participant in e-mail environments. Although many of the students’ postings to the class e-mail reflectors seemed to be written with the teacher as audience, other postings seemed to reveal a startling lack of audience awareness, much like Dave’s “so why don’t you just shut your mouth” posting, quoted in Chapter One. Finally, I cannot tell how much my presence as observer in the networks might have affected student interactions but I suspect that students had varying levels of audience awareness in electronic environments.

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1 When students participated in Aspects discussions (described in more detail later in this chapter), the teachers asked them to leave the program running at the end of the session. I had to walk around the room with a floppy disk in order to save the transcripts of different conferences from different workstations, so collecting this online work was anything but discreet.
Computers can serve as tools of observation and analysis, so I sought a research method that would combine the intensive, thorough, contextualized examination of student discourse provided by ethnography with a quantitative analysis of the patterns of participation at my research sites. Elizabeth Klem and Charles Moran discuss the ways qualitative research and quantitative analysis can be used together productively in computers and composition studies:

The research agenda that we see for work in computers and composition during the next decade will blend naturalistic, ethnographic research with the ability of the computer, as a research tool, to count and to remember. The goals of such research will be to discover how writers write in the new medium, how teachers teach in the new medium, and how the computer has entered, and inevitably altered, the system that includes the writer, the text, and the teacher of writing. ("Evolving Perspectives," 143)

In my analysis of the data from this study, I have quantified certain aspects of the data in order to provide my readers with "snapshots" of the classes I studied. For example, I provide tables in Chapters Three and Four to show frequency of participation in Class A and Class B according to the sociocultural identities of the students. Within the context of this study, these tables yield data about patterns of participation in the classes I observed (which students participated and how often) and form the basis for comparing face-to-face and online interaction among the students.

The methodology for this project combines qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis; I used the computer to collect electronic transcripts of online student discussions and supplemented this data with observation of face-to-face class discussions and interviews with the teachers and students. I did not use any of the software programs (such as Ethnograph or NUD.IST, popular in sociology and
anthropology) that can perform discourse analysis functions; instead, I used the computer to count student turn-taking and to analyze the emerging patterns of participation of the students in my study (by calculating participation according to gender, for example). In my opinion, the most productive ways of understanding how these patterns work moves beyond quantification of the data to tell the stories of the teachers and students who used both face-to-face and electronic interaction to communicate with one another. This combination of methodological approaches, discussed in more detail later in this chapter, gives me a way of studying the problem of student participation in electronic networks from different angles, and provides a more complete picture of what happened in the classes I studied.

2. The Course: English 367C

Ohio State's required, second-year writing course was taught throughout the university as part of a three-quarter series of writing requirements, but the English Department bore the burden for the majority of sections because English 367 served also to fulfill a General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirement for social diversity in undergraduate coursework. According to GEC statements of purpose, English 367 was a course "designed to develop skills in expository writing as well as in oral discussion and/or presentation through the study of major topics and writings pertaining to the United States." In addition, English 367 was supposed to give "significant treatment to the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States with special attention to issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity." The adoption of a similar course at the University of Texas--a first-year writing course focused on race and gender--caused
a political furor involving academics, politicians, students, and local community members. The adoption of this "multicultural" writing course at Ohio State was perhaps more remarkable for the lack of wide-scale political struggle. Perhaps it was the lack of public debate about the course that left the graduate students who taught the majority of sections unprepared to deal with student resistance to English 367. English 367 was popularly known as the "PC" course among undergraduates, many of whom shared the perception that they needed to be politically correct in order to earn a good grade. Graduate Teaching Associates (GTAs) often worried about negotiating a balance between writing and multicultural pedagogy and were unsure about what was valued in the department and in the university. In response to an OSU Writing Center survey of Graduate Teaching Associates about English 367 immediately preceding my study, one teacher wrote:

367 is especially difficult because some students find the foregrounded political content threatening, and this discourages their engagement with the course on every level. . .Many are willing to employ a wide variety of political or rhetorical strategies, argue for things they admit they don't believe in, and generally jump through any number of argumentative, ideological, or rhetorical hoops in pursuit of a good GPA.

The surveys demonstrated that many self-identified "liberal" GTAs felt ideologically distanced from their undergraduate students (whom they perceived as largely "conservative") and worried about issues of identity politics and indoctrination in relation to this course. Others found the foregrounded political content of the course threatening to their traditional paradigms for teaching writing. There was no standard syllabus for English 367 so English Department GTAs used a wide variety of approaches, from rhetorical modes to cultural criticism.
Several sections of English 367 were taught each quarter in the English Department's computer classroom labs—these were designated as “English 367C.” The “C” designation in the master schedule of classes was intended to help interested students self-select into computer-supported English classes. However, enrollment decisions were most often based on times and availability of sections, so the computer element of the course was a bonus for some students and a burden for others. The computer classrooms were used mainly for undergraduate writing courses and staffed almost exclusively by GTAs. Although the English 367C teachers were in a sense doubly prepared (because they were required to attend pre-quarter professional development workshops on computing and on multicultural teaching issues), they were left to struggle with a difficult teaching assignment in a different teaching environment, unsupported by English Department faculty culture. In the next two chapters, I discuss the ways the two teachers whose classes I studied defined English 367C to contextualize my interpretations of their students’ discursive choices.

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2 At the time, the CCL Program did not have a faculty director and did not have widespread support among English Department faculty. Because the courses taught in the labs were primarily writing courses, it was sometimes difficult to recruit faculty to teach them. Because only a few faculty members taught in the labs, it was difficult to convince the department chair to schedule other courses there.
3. Student Demographics

The following tables, Table 2.1 and Table 2.2, show enrollment statistics at Ohio State for the autumn quarter of the year in which I conducted my study compared to enrollment statistics in the classes I studied the following summer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSU</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Enrollment Statistics by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-resident Alien</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSU</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Enrollment Statistics by Ethnic Origin

The total enrollment figures for OSU in Table 2.1 refer to undergraduate, graduate, and professional enrollment on the Columbus campus. Table 2.2 compares total undergraduate enrollment on the Columbus campus to enrollment in Class A and Class B. In Class A, there were seventeen students (eleven men and six women); in Class B, there were eighteen students (twelve men and six women). In comparison with overall enrollment statistics at Ohio State, the two classes I studied were

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3 My source for this information is the OSU Registrar. Comparable data for gender and ethnic origin (e.g. among undergraduates alone) is not available for the year in which my study took place.
proportionately male. Class A had a lower-than-average percentage of white students, along with a higher-than-average percentage of Asian students. Class B had a higher-than-average percentage of white students. The statistics for the classes I studied are based on my observations of the students as well as the ways they chose to identify their ethnic or cultural identities in class during the course of the study. I include this demographic portrait of the two classes not to draw conclusions about how students ought to behave according to ethnic or cultural identity, but rather to respond to the literature about computer networks for women and underrepresented groups in college composition classes. My study shows that students in the classes I observed behaved neither according to early predictions, such as Spitzer’s, about computer networks as liberatory spaces for women and minority students, nor according to Takayoshi’s premise that networks replicate traditional classroom patterns of power and oppression. In Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this study, I provide more complete demographic portraits of the classes, complicated by further discussion of the implications for these figures.

4. The Computer Classroom

Classroom Design

The two classes I studied were taught in the same classroom, a computer classroom lab maintained by the English Department. At the time of my study, the English

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4 Overall enrollment statistics are not available for the quarter in which I conducted my study, or for computer-supported English classes specifically, so I do not know how the classes I studied fit into these contexts.
Department maintained five such classrooms, which were used mostly for undergraduate writing classes. Appendix B shows the layout of the classroom where I conducted my study. The classroom was self-consciously designed as a collaborative, student-centered workspace. This classroom was equipped with twenty Macintosh Centris 610 computers, lining the perimeter of the room. The rationale for this layout was that computers would not occupy the center of the visual space of the classroom, but would support the work of students and teachers from the periphery. There were five round tables in the center of the room where small groups could meet; chairs with wheels allowed students to roll easily back and forth between tables and workstations. Professional development workshops for teachers in the CCL Program emphasized that the architecture of this classroom could support a student-centered pedagogy, for unlike classroom labs where computers are lined up in rows, there was no "front" of this room where a teacher could stand. Teachers were encouraged to work with the architecture of the classrooms to create student-centered classes emphasizing small groups and collaboration. Eric Walborn, the former Coordinator of the CCL Program who first designed the classrooms, wrote about them as follows:

The traditional teacher-based power structure is decentered in the computer-enhanced classroom, then re-centered in a manner that can lead, if aided by pedagogy inspired by the new situation, to a student-centered environment in which the process of learning is lively and active, and the act of teaching is radically redefined.

^ The computers had 4mb RAM and 80 mb hard drives. They were linked by a local-area network and had Internet access at each workstation.
CCL training workshops for teachers encouraged such a view of the computer-supported classrooms by promoting “student-centered” pedagogy. This study shows that the classroom architecture emphasized small group dynamics at the expense of the large group, and that the pedagogical practices sometimes privileged machines instead of students. The CCL classroom labs were dedicated to English Department use all day but offered some limited open lab hours during the evening and on weekends with priority access for students enrolled in computer-supported English classes.

Hardware and Software Specifications

Sherry Turkle writes about the ways that computers shape the way we think about the world: “Today’s software programs typically take the form of a simulation of some reality...and try to place the user within it” (60-61). Similarly, Christina Haas accounts for the “materiality of literacy,” the idea that technology mediates our experiences of reading and writing to a computer screen. For example, word-processing programs simulate the act of writing by presenting us with blank “sheets” of paper which we store in folders, while e-mail software programs simulate the act of correspondence by representing full or empty mailboxes on our computer screens. The ubiquitous nature of computer software can put us in danger of forgetting the ways that they inscribe our writing processes. In this study, I do not attempt a complete analysis of the hardware and software that mediated the way students encountered the technology of writing and communicating in their English 367 classes, but I do suggest that technology can affect the way we (and our students) interact with one another through writing. My dissertation brings some of these effects into view by showing, for example, that the pseudonym
feature in the synchronous online conferencing program used in English 367C encouraged anonymous conferencing that led to negative behavior in the classes I studied.

The Macintosh Centris computers in the classroom I studied were equipped with word-processing software (Macwrite Pro), a hypertextual writing program (Storyspace), synchronous conferencing software (Aspects), software for Internet e-mail (Eudora) and software for web-browsing (Netscape). The two teachers whose classes I studied used Macwrite Pro, Aspects, and Eudora in their classes. Macwrite Pro was chosen for the English Department computer labs because it is a simple word-processing program, not loaded with features but adequate for composing and revising essays for English classes. Unfortunately, it was not available in many labs at the time of this study, and some students complained of access problems. Aspects, a collaborative writing and conferencing software program, also was available on campus only in the English Department computer labs. Both teachers used Aspects for small-group anonymous discussions during class time. Two copies of the Aspects program were shared among four classrooms, so teachers had to reserve the software ahead of time to make sure it would be available. Because it typically took fifteen minutes or more to set up the Aspects program for in-class conferences (and there were only twelve minutes between classes), teachers usually arrived in class on Aspects days early enough to start up the software using preset pseudonyms. It was easier to use preset pseudonyms than to create

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6 The English department labs were some of the first to adopt this particular word-processor, which was supposed to become standard on campus. Unfortunately, it did not. Even students who purchased Macintosh computers through the university computer store received a different (and incompatible) word-processor (ClarisWorks).
names for conference participants each time a class used the Aspects program. CCL teachers occasionally changed the names of the conference participants in order to construct a role-playing scenario (using names of characters or authors from assigned readings, for example), but they most often used whatever names were stored in the local network's memory and considered the resulting student discussions "anonymous." Neither teacher used Aspects for the other purposes for which it is designed (such as collaborative writing and peer responding). Both teachers expected students to use Eudora, the e-mail software available in all campus labs with Internet access. Eudora allows for composing mail, attaching files, and creating mailboxes to organize and save mail. Eudora allows users to cut and paste from word-processing files, but does not provide editing features such as spell-checking. All messages sent with Eudora are tagged with the sender's name and e-mail address; therefore it is not possible to send anonymous e-mail messages within the Ohio State system. The teachers of both classes used Internet e-mail only for local correspondence. All Ohio State students were given university e-mail accounts at the time of their enrollment; however, many of the students in the classes I studied had never activated their accounts.7

The Macintosh computers with their large color monitors and "friendly" software were relatively easy for teachers to learn and teach, but somewhat inconvenient for many students. Since many of the students enrolled in English 367 did not have access to computers or the Internet at home, their writing, conferencing, and e-mail activities took

7 I did not survey the students directly about whether they owned computers, but more than half of the students in both classes told me that they had no previous e-mail experience.
place exclusively in class or in campus labs, which further mediated their experiences of
reading and writing to a screen. Students who did have compatible home computers with
Internet access had a distinct advantage in accessing the class e-mail reflectors. In my
next chapter, I describe the ways the two teachers assigned the use of computers and
defined various discourse spaces in their classes in order to contextualize my discussions
of the students interacting with the technology.

5. Data Gathering and Analysis

Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater reminds us that researchers are always positioned,
"whether they write about it explicitly, separately, or not at all" (115). I choose to write
about my position in relation to the teachers and students in my study in order to
contextualize my data gathering and analysis and show my readers what I was positioned
to see and understand as I conducted my study. At the time of my study, I was a graduate
student in rhetoric and composition with four years of experience and seniority in the
English Department at Ohio State (I had completed my M.A. in literature there and had
subsequently entered the Ph.D. program). I had held a number of teaching and
administrative positions in the department, including administrative associate positions in
the Computers in Composition and Literature (CCL) Program and the First-year Writing
Program. I worked in both of these programs during the autumn quarter preceding my
study, but resigned from my administrative positions after the birth of my first child. (I
still taught classes.) My position and experience gave me some authority in the graduate
program but I was relatively inactive in the department for two quarters before the study.
The two teachers whose classes I chose to study were both Graduate Teaching Associates
and Graduate Administrative Associates in the CCL Program. During the quarter of the study, I was the recipient of a graduate summer research fellowship, so I did not have any other teaching or administrative appointments. However, I had just agreed to serve as the interim Coordinator of CCL beginning the autumn quarter after my research period. I decided to employ the existing staff of CCL when I took over the position of Coordinator, which meant that I would be the immediate supervisor of the two teachers whose classes I studied. I felt uneasy about my position of authority in relation to these teachers, but since there were no faculty teaching English 367C during the quarter of my research, I chose to observe the most experienced graduate students. Because my administrative position in the CCL Program meant that I would be responsible for hiring and training GTAs, I was unwilling to ask less experienced teachers to participate in the project.

I chose the two teachers whose classes were the focus of this study based on their prior experience teaching in computer-supported classrooms, their willingness to use both anonymous and tagged networked discussions in their classes, their professional interest in the field of computers and composition studies, and their willingness to allow for my presence as a participant observer in their classrooms. I decided to observe two sections of the same course for the sake of continuity of subject matter and subjects, and I chose the university's second-level required writing course because I was interested in how the

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8 The CCL Program was in a period of transition, as the previous Coordinator had died a few months before my research began. I was the graduate administrative associate with the most seniority in the Program and had agreed to serve as an interim CCL Coordinator.
9 I had worked with one of the teachers in CCL. The other was hired to take my place when I took time off after the birth of my first child.
students would respond to issues of identity and diversity in that course. In addition, I thought that the students in a second-level course would be more likely than first-year students to share some degree of computer literacy. 10

When I approached the teachers whose classes were the focus of this study, I emphasized the fact that their students would be the focus of my dissertation. I told these teachers at the beginning of the research period that I was not interested in evaluating the ways they taught English 367C or the ways they used technology in their classrooms, but that I wanted to study the ways their students adopted the technology for their own discursive practices. As I come to the writing of this dissertation, I find that an exploration of the context for my ethnography seems like a betrayal of the trust I had established with these teachers because it exposes their pedagogical decisions to the scrutiny of my readers. As Thomas Newkirk writes:

In the opening encounters with those we study, we may give no indication that our rendering of them may be partially or wholly negative. . . . Even though the negative might be balanced by the positive, and even though we have carefully disguised the identity of the person we render, we (and often the subject) feel as if a trust has been betrayed. And it often has.

However, just as it seems necessary to disclose my own positionality with regard to the design and execution of my study, so it seems necessary to describe the choices these teachers made in assigning technology in their classrooms. Therefore, I begin Chapters Three and Four with descriptions of the pedagogical choices the teachers made. These descriptions have been read and approved by the teachers and are not intended to be

10 I assumed a certain level of computer literacy (familiarity with word-processing, at least), and surveyed students about their experience with e-mail.
evaluative. In Chapter Five, I make recommendations for pedagogy based on what I learned from these teachers and their students.

On the first day of the term I introduced myself to the students in each class and explained my research project. I asked the students to sign consent forms to participate in the research. All of the students in both classes signed these consent forms, giving me permission to use their spoken and written words in my work. I feel that an ethnographer has a responsibility to establish and maintain an honest relationship with the members of the community being studied, so I did not attempt to disguise myself as a student—though as a female graduate student in my twenties, I could probably have done so. In each class, I described myself to students as a graduate student in the English Department. I was identifiably white, as were both teachers and most of the students. (See Table 2.2.) I was relatively young, as were the teachers whose classes I studied. (We were all in our twenties.) The research took place in the summer, and I dressed casually (often in shorts) as did both teachers and all of the students.

I identified my position as researcher in both of the classes and invited teachers and students to interrogate that position. Many students asked about my project when I participated in small group discussions; the teacher of Class A called attention to my position in relation to a Studs Terkel piece; the teacher of Class B discussed my positionality with students when he assigned a micro-ethnography as the first essay assignment. Both teachers expressed a willingness to allow me to define my position in

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11 A copy of this consent form is included in Appendix C.
12 The teacher called it "minor ethnographic study." See Appendix E for the text of this assignment.
their classrooms in a way that would be productive for the study, and I saw myself playing multiple roles in each of the classes—sometimes aligned more closely with the students, sometimes with the teachers, and sometimes isolated in my role as researcher. For example, I helped the teachers with computer instruction and answered individual student questions about assignments, which connected me with the teachers. I also participated in small group discussions and completed in-class assignments, which connected me with the students. Since the teachers and I were all working for CCL, we shared an office, which meant that there was little privacy. Although I tried to contribute in equal ways to each of the communities in which I participated, I noticed that because of different classroom dynamics, I was a different observer in each of the classes I studied. One day in the office, when I discussed with the teacher of one class whether to complete in-class writing assignments, the teacher of the other class warned me that I ought to do exactly the same thing in his class for consistency of data. Rather than trying to be the same researcher in two different communities though, I tried to record my positionality in each classroom community as part of the data. As Brenda Jo Brueggemann helps us to see, the role of the researcher/participant/observer is always complex. Just as a student is never simply a student, we are never simply researchers, conveniently situated at the right objective distance from our data.

During the ten week quarter, I attended every class session in Class A, and all but four class sessions in Class B. (The teacher of Class B held in-class writing workshops four times during the quarter, which he discouraged me from attending.) Both classes met twice each week. I recorded sixteen large-group and twelve small-group face-to-face
discussions in Class A; I recorded nine large-group and eight small-group face-to-face
discussions in Class B. My research method involved observation and collection of face-
to-face class discussion, as well as observation and collection of networked class
discussions. In order to record face-to-face class discussions, I used a relatively
inconspicuous and highly sensitive audio microphone. I recorded all large-group
discussions, as well as all of the small-group discussions in which I took part. (I chose not
to record the small-group discussions in which I did not participate, as I felt that the
presence of my microphone without my body would have been intrusive and that the
recording of the discussion without my accompanying field notes would have been
decontextualized.) When I observed small groups, I joined and participated in them so
that my physical presence would be a reminder of the recorded nature of the
conversations. Though it would have been interesting to use physical/visible markers of
identity in contrast to the virtual and discursive markers in written, electronic discussions,
I decided that the benefits of video recording are outweighed by the intrusiveness of the
equipment and depended instead on audio recordings and field notes.

I decided to take my cue about network participation from the teachers. Neither
teacher participated in his class reflector after introductory messages, so these spaces
evolved almost entirely in terms of assigned postings. Since I chose not to do the assigned
reading response postings, I did not find a space for my own participation in the class
reflectors. Neither teacher participated in Aspects discussions, usually because there were
not enough computers running the program. Although I would have preferred participating in both online discussion forums since I wanted to collect the text generated in them, I felt that my presence would have been unnecessarily intrusive. The consequence of this choice was that I did not have a position from which to speak when students began sending messages to which I would have liked to respond. In retrospect, I feel convinced that my lack of participation in the network constituted a form of lurking that was ultimately unproductive for my study.

I did not have access to private e-mail between teachers and students, or among the students in the classes, and I do not know how often, if at all, this type of correspondence occurred. I also did not have access to face-to-face conferences between teachers and students. Although it would have been interesting to have access to all student/teacher correspondence in order to understand the full context of interaction in the classes I studied, I was most interested in the differences among discussions in different environments which were adequately observed in public discourse spaces.

At first, I tried to sit with different groups of students during each class period. I wanted to make sure that all of the students got to know me as a participant observer in their classrooms. As the study progressed, I became interested in the ways the women in the two classes interacted with technology. My own gender seemed to provide the most prominent or meaningful lens through which I could observe and interact with students.

13 Technical problems with the Aspects software usually prevented us from running Aspects on all twenty classroom computers. With class sizes of seventeen or eighteen students, we usually had just enough workstations in class for the students.
and teachers, perhaps because my gender was different from both teachers and from most of the students. (See Table 2.1.) As Roxanne Mountford explains, "gender is rhetorical in two ways," first, "in the way we perform our fieldwork (how we interact with our informants, how we present ourselves, and how we view the research)" and second, "in the way we write our ethnographies" (211). As a woman teacher/researcher in two classes taught by men, I became especially conscious of the ways that students and teachers often respond to one another in gendered ways. For example, I found that it was easier for me to sit in small groups with female students or with a mix of male and female students than with groups of all male students. I also found that female students were much more likely to approach me with questions about my study or conversations about the classes than were male students. Female students also seemed more willing to "help" me by letting me interview them. I came to the study with an interest in gender issues and computer networks, and I was able to use my own positionality as a researcher to focus on the experiences of women students with computer networks in disproportionately male classes.

Patterns of participation in face-to-face discussions in the two classes seemed quite different. Each class had only six women students, but the gender dynamics were markedly different in the large-group discussions. According to the impressions I recorded in my fieldnotes, the women spoke very infrequently in Class A, but spoke very frequently (and more often than the men) in Class B. I was curious about what factors might influence the different ways that women participated in these two computer-supported classrooms. In Class A, I decided to focus on one small group of five students,
two women and three men who sat together every day. I chose this group because the members were all consistently present and on time for class (another group in the class had all male students, and another group had frequent absenteeism, so my choices were somewhat limited). These students will be the subject of Chapter Three. In Class B, I became interested in two woman who were particularly outspoken. At the end of the term, only one of these women gave me permission to interview her about her experiences in the class. This woman will be the subject of Chapter Four.

During the research period, I collected eight distinct sets of classroom data: transcripts of small-group and large-group face-to-face class discussions; transcripts of "tagged," asynchronous, large-group, networked discussions; and transcripts of anonymous, asynchronous, small-group, networked discussions in two English 367C classes. The qualities of these different environments are identified in Table 2.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACE-TO-FACE</th>
<th>SMALL-GROUP</th>
<th>LARGE-GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACE-TO-FACE</td>
<td><strong>TAGGED</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAGGED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SYNCHRONOUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>SYNCHRONOUS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(in-class discussion)</td>
<td>(in-class discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td><strong>ANONYMOUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAGGED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SYNCHRONOUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>ASYNCHRONOUS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Aspects discussion)</td>
<td>(e-mail reflector)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Characteristics of Face-to-face and Online Discussion Spaces

As Table 2.3 shows, both small-group and large-group face-to-face discussions were tagged and synchronous. Small-group online discussions were anonymous and synchronous, and large-group online discussions were tagged and asynchronous. Since both of the classes I studied used small-group and large-group face-to-face class
discussions as well as e-mail reflectors and anonymous Aspects discussions, the sets of data I collected from the two classes shared the qualities identified in Table 2.3. In the following chapters, I portray differences in patterns of participation among the students according to the qualities of the various discussion spaces.

At the end of the term, I surveyed all of the students in my study about their participation in various discourse environments. I interviewed the students who will be the subjects of Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this dissertation. Interviews with these (and other) students and the teachers helped me to gain other perspectives on what took place in the classes. In print form, my data included thick binders of transcripts from face-to-face and online discussions in each of the classes I studied, in addition to my field notes, surveys of students, copies of the essays they had written for the classes, and transcripts of interviews with each teacher and several students from each class. As I went through my data, I began to compare the impressions I had recorded in my field notes with the patterns of participation that emerged in my data, including turn-taking in face-to-face and online environments. I began to quantify the data to identify overall patterns of participation, then used my field notes, transcripts of face-to-face and online discussions, and interviews of teachers and students, to produce qualitative interpretations of the data. Chapters Three and Four provide overviews of the patterns of participation in both classes and discuss the experiences of the focus students in more detail.

Appendix C provides a copy of the survey I used.

I interviewed seven students in Class A and six students in Class B.
CHAPTER 3

"Sometimes I Just Keep My Mouth Shut":
Choosing Silence in Face-to-face Discussions

In the class discussion, you sometimes feel you have to be more guarded about things—you're not sure. —Billy

I don't like talking to a group of people when I know I can just be shot down. . .during class, and that's why I didn't talk that much during the in-class discussions. I noticed that it was being dominated by certain people in the class and. . .a lot of times they would mention my point anyway, so I thought, oh just let them do that. It's easier that way. —Cheryl

Debate is not bad but sometimes it goes too far and. . .I can get upset, and so I just kinda keep my mouth shut until I know where everyone kind of stands on it, and then I'll say how I feel. —Ellen

It's hard in a few minutes of class to say exactly what you feel, and sometimes one thing comes out wrong and you immediately have criticism. That's why sometimes I just keep my mouth shut and waited til the Aspects part. —Eric

You know I'm scared of those character judgments that people make in a class and for some reason it bothers me to the point where I may not speak or say something. —Jason

This chapter tells the story of Billy, Cheryl, Ellen, Eric, and Jason, five students whose experiences of speaking and of choosing silence in various discourse environments serve as a microcosm for some of the broader patterns of participation in Class A. These five “focus” students formed a small group in Class A; they attended class regularly, they consistently sat at the same table, they participated in small group discussions, and they allowed me to interview them. In this chapter, I first consider the pedagogical practices of
John, the teacher of Class A as a way of contextualizing the students’ use of computer technology. Next, I provide a profile of student identity in Class A to set the scene for my analysis. In each subsequent section of this chapter, I survey overall patterns of participation in Class A, in small-group and large-group face-to-face discussion, in the e-mail reflector, and in Aspects discussions, then examine in detail the way that the five focus students fit into these patterns. In order to illustrate my claims about the ways Billy, Cheryl, Ellen, Eric, and Jason defined the various discourse spaces in this class, I refer throughout this chapter to three representative transcripts from Class A, provided in Appendix F. In addition, I refer to my surveys and interviews with these students to interpret their talk, their participation in online discussions, and their silences.

1. Class A Teacher: John

The teacher of Class A was a Ph.D. student with a specialty in nineteenth-century British literature. He was charming and personable with students; a Southern drawl and highly embellished speech enhanced these qualities. He usually arrived at class early enough to chat with students about sports, jazz music, campus life, or current events. Although the style of interaction in the classroom was informal, John’s teaching style was formal and structured. John began each class session by writing a “quote of the day” on the white board, ranging from Axel Rose songs to Emerson. John’s classes followed a clear plan from bell to bell, with structured small-group and large-group activities punctuated by a ten-minute break in the middle of each two-hour class session.

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1 Both of the teachers whose classes I studied asked their students to call them by their first names, so I refer to them with (fictional) first names throughout this work.

2 John was likely to tell students to “belly up” to the computers, for example, and once entertained students with stories about his home state of West Virginia.
John used an essay anthology called *Rereading America* for this class, and assigned essays such as "Learning to Read" by Malcolm X and "La consciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness" by Gloria Anzaldúa. In addition, he asked students to copy and read two articles he had put on closed reserve in the library: Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Helen Keller's "The Key to Language." The students read twenty essays during the ten-week quarter. John recommended Dornan and Dawe's *Brief English Handbook* as an optional text, but did not assign reading from it.

The readings in John's course were grouped together loosely in thematic sections on education, language, in-groups, gender, family, and popular culture. He assigned three formal essays, with assignments ranging from writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about a societal problem to evaluating the message in some form of popular culture (such as advertising or television shows). The three essays were supposed to be 600-800 words, 800-1000 words, and at least 800 words, respectively. Each of the first two essays was worth fifteen percent of the final grade for the quarter and the third essay was worth twenty percent, for a combined total of fifty percent. E-mail response postings were worth thirty percent of the final grade, and participation (defined as attendance, homework, quizzes, in-class work, discussion, etc.) was worth twenty percent. According to John's grading scale, then, electronic and face-to-face class participation were as valuable as the written essays in the course.

John identified himself as a straight, white male in relation to the multicultural subject matter of the course. For example, in a discussion about affirmative action, he told

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3 A copy of John's syllabus is included in Appendix A. All names and dates have been omitted.
students, "All my life I have not been discriminated against because I am . . . gay. I have
not been discriminated against because I am a person of color. I have not been
discriminated against for all these various reasons." Given his socio-cultural perspective,
John was wary about approaching the multicultural subject matter of English 367. In the
same face-to-face class discussion, he told students:

This class. . . it’s kinda been dubbed the PC course on campus. So that’s an
interesting thing, and I don’t know if you all knew that. . . But I don’t think
you’ll find me trying to indoctrinate you. But it does put teachers in a
weird position. . . Sometimes I may or may not tell you exactly what I think
because I’m wary of this indoctrination issue.

John tried to adopt a teaching style “like Oprah,” questioning students about their views
and incorporating diverse viewpoints whenever possible.

John was methodical about covering computing topics and devoted significant
class time to writing issues (including in-class revision and peer-responding activities) as
well as to discussion of the assigned readings. John’s classes usually consisted of a variety
of small and large group activities, including in-class writing, revision, peer-responding
activities, and small-group and large-group discussion of assigned readings or writing
issues. In a typical class, small-group discussion was followed by large-group discussion,
and large-group discussion usually followed a teacher/student/teacher pattern, with a few
students contributing most of the comments. 4 Students were not assigned to groups but
usually sat at the same tables every day, so small groups were clearly defined for
discussion, peer response, and in-class writing assignments.

4 This type of pattern is also known as an IRE sequence, in which the teacher initiates, a student responds,
and the teacher evaluates the student’s response.
Since John had not previously used an e-mail reflector in a class, he openly discussed with his students different possibilities for defining and evaluating their writing in that space. For example, one day in class John asked students to help him define the reflector assignments and asked me to describe the way I had used a reflector in my own class. John emphasized the fact that he wanted the reflector to be used as a space for "prefacing and extending classroom discussion." Unfortunately, technical difficulties kept the e-mail reflector from running until the fourth week of the term. Once the reflector was up, however, John gave students a handout entitled "Writing to the Reflector" as a way of helping them understand the purpose and use of that space. Because they had a late start with the reflector, John scaled back his original plan for weekly postings and responses.

John told students:

I had to make a decision between quantity and quality, and I opted for quality. I'm just having you do four entries the rest of the quarter. That's less than one per week, so they should be good entries. They should be well-developed, they should be significant. ...Just four times before the end of class you have to write one of these. ...responses for everyone to read, and before class each day you just have to read what the other people have written.

John gave his students guidelines about the length of their postings: "We will not worry too much about word limits, but I cannot imagine a truly thorough entry being less than 250 words." John also made sure to introduce the idea of netiquette to his e-mail reflector, warning students: "We do not have to be formal in our writing, but we should be courteous to all of those who will be reading our postings." John did not post his own responses to the readings in the reflector, but tried to connect the virtual space to the real

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5 This handout is included in Appendix D.
world classroom by discussing student postings in class. He wrote private evaluative responses to students about their e-mail postings.

John used Aspects three times during the quarter. Each time, there were three or four simultaneous conferences with four or five participants in each. The students participated anonymously, and John did not participate or ask students to reveal their identity. He told me in an interview that he thought it was important for students to have an anonymous space to work out their responses to the difficult issues in his course. Two of the Aspects discussions were directed on specific topics, and the third was an open-ended discussion.

2. Student Identity in Class A

Demographic Profile

Three members of the Class A focus group were men and two were women; all five members of the group were Caucasian, native speakers of English; and all five were from small towns in Ohio. As far as I could tell, none of these students came from traditionally underrepresented groups in the university or in society. The following table, Table 3.1, shows the way these focus students fit into a demographic profile of Class A. In this table, I have included social and cultural characteristics that were observable, such as gender, race or ethnicity, and age; and characteristics that were not observable but that students self-identified in public spaces (e.g. class, religion, sexual preference). I

6 It should be noted, however, that the women in this class were a distinct minority compared with the men. There were only six women in a class of seventeen students.

7 I do not consider age an observable characteristic in most cases. While there might have been many students in the class who were slightly older or younger than the “traditional” 18-21 college student age group, I have included age as a characteristic of only two students in the class: Ann, who was significantly older than the other students, and Billy, who could have “passed” for a traditional-age student but labeled himself non-traditional in face-to-face discussions. (Billy was 25.)
decided not to survey students about their social and cultural identities; rather, as I observed the class I watched for what the students chose to reveal about themselves for their teacher and their peers in the public spaces of the class (i.e., in large-group face-to-face discussions or in the e-mail reflector). By letting the students' self-representations of their identity form the basis for the last two columns of this table, I am able to include the characteristics that were important to the students in Class A. In Table 3.1, I have noted the environment in which revelations about social or cultural identity occurred, whether in face-to-face discussions where students can see one another or in the tagged e-mail reflector where they cannot. Some students revealed social or cultural identity in their essays or in small groups, but I considered these private revelations rather than public, and chose not to include them in the table.\footnote{Because essays were workshopped, they were in some senses "public" documents; however, students could choose with whom to share their work and essays remained most often within small groups.} Since I did not have access to all small-group discussions, but rather only to the ones in which I participated, my own knowledge of students' personal revelations to small groups are limited by my participation in the class (where small groups might have been influenced by my participation in them).
Table 3.1: Student Identity in Class A

Table 3.1 shows that of seventeen students in Class A, eleven were men and six were women. Of the eleven men, nine were Caucasian American, one was African American, and one was Pakistani American. Of the six women, four were Caucasian American, one was Korean American, and one was Chinese Indonesian. Lila and Quinn, the two women of color, were also both non-native speakers of English (the only non-native speakers in the class). According to the enrollment statistics in Chapter Two (Table 2.1 and Table 2.2), Class A had more men than was typical of Ohio State (women were
only thirty-five percent of the population in Class A, compared to forty-eight percent at Ohio State. Class A had fewer Caucasian students than was typical at Ohio State (seventy-six percent of Class A, compared to eighty-three percent of OSU undergraduates). These statistics refer only to visible differences among students such as those collected for university demographic profiles; the rest of this chapter considers the ways that these statistics might have played out in English 367 by considering the ways that individual students approached issues of difference in discussion with their peers in the face-to-face and online discursive environments of Class A.

Self-representations of Identity

For many of the students in Class A, personal identity or cultural perspective never became a “public” issue. At no places in my transcripts of large-group face-to-face or e-mail discussions did Cheryl, Derek, Ellen, Eric, Greg, James (the only African American student in Class A), Jason, or Steven—almost half of the students in the class—identify themselves in relation to issues of race, class, gender, or ethnicity. However, some students did choose to identify themselves publicly in relation to the issues that defined the subject matter of the class. While age is not part of the defined subject matter of English 367, it constitutes a personal difference that students were willing to discuss in the large-group face-to-face environment. Ann and Billy, the two non-traditional age students, were among the most vocal students in the class; both spoke about their age and their experiences (of motherhood and of military service) in relation to issues raised in large-group face-to-face discussions. For the other students, issues related to personal identity or cultural perspective arose more often in the e-mail reflector. Two students wrote in the
e-mail reflector about belonging to mainstream culture, or white, straight, middle-
class America. Matt wrote, “I count myself one of the lucky ones to have been born into
the predominant culture which enjoys all the rights this country has to offer.” In response
to an essay entitled “What Price Independence? Social Reactions to Lesbians, Spinsters,
Widows, and Nuns,” in which Rose Weitz argues that independent women are stigmatized
because they threaten the male dominated social order, Charlie wrote: “I am completely
heterosexual. . .but I do not consider homosexuals inferior to myself nor consider them a
threat.” Perhaps it was the teacher’s self-identification as a straight, Caucasian male that
allowed these students to “speak” about their identity in the e-mail reflector. In contrast,
Drew did feel his identity threatened by the multicultural subject matter of the course. In
response to a large-group face-to-face discussion on gender differences, he wrote in the
reflector: “I feel like I am being attacked. I am a ‘white’, straight, male, and raised as a
Roman Catholic. All four of these categories are bashed all the time. What about our
rights?” Charlie, Matt, and Drew were the male students who participated least often in
large-group face-to-face discussions. Though they obviously had different perspectives on
belonging to mainstream culture, I found it significant that e-mail provided all three with
an opportunity to write about their identity in relation to the multicultural subject matter
of English 367, because their voices might not otherwise have been heard.

Three students of color—Alan, Lila, and Quinn—wrote in the e-mail reflector about
belonging to other cultures and viewing American culture from the outside. “I am still
unsure if I would not have rather been the normal white kid around the corner who could
eat pork and celebrate Christmas,” wrote Alan. Lila and Quinn both wrote about
differences between their native cultures and American culture in the class reflector. Though Alan was the student who participated most often in large-group face-to-face discussions, he "talked" about his cultural identity only in the e-mail reflector. Lila and Quinn, the two non-native speakers in the class, were virtually silent in face-to-face discussions, but when they participated in class (by writing in the e-mail reflector), personal identity was evidently an important issue for them. The only other student of color in Class A was James. Though James never explicitly spoke about his identity as the only African American student in the class, his identity must have given him some authority with the other students when, for example, he objected to Billy's use of the word "race" and suggested "culture" instead. In a discussion on political correctness, James told Billy, "Race is incorrect. . .It's the human race, not black versus white races." Billy deferred to James' suggestion, saying, "I can deal with that, different cultures."

One other student, Cathy, a traditional age, female, Caucasian student, found a way to talk about her identity in relation to the course. In response to Sam Keen's "Rite of Work: The Economic Man," which discusses rules for participating successfully in professional and corporate life, Cathy became concerned about class issues. She wrote in the class e-mail reflector about her father's farming career, concluding, "My whole point is society would say he is not a successful man or that we are lower class." Many students at Ohio State come from farms around Ohio, and the university boasts a large agricultural program of study; however, Cathy clearly felt alienated by the discussion of class in the Keen essay. Cathy was the only student in the class to mention her own class affiliation. Hers was the only "personal" posting that elicited a response. Greg tried to get Julie to
reconsider class in purely economic terms in his next posting: "With two farms, I'm guessing that Julie's dad makes a considerable income. . . . He also has a considerable net worth when the cost of land and equipment is considered." Greg's assessment of Julie's father's economic position was based on his own speculation; since Julie did not respond publicly, I cannot tell whether she was pleased to be admitted to higher class status than she had claimed for herself.

Cathy's posting, and the other students' postings about personal identity suggest to me that it was important for students to consider issues of personal identity (race, class, ethnicity) in relation to the subjects of English 367. In Class A, students seemed more comfortable writing about their identities in the e-mail reflector than speaking about individual differences in face-to-face environments. Interestingly, students did not respond to one another's individual statements of difference, except in the case of Julie and Greg, when Greg reasserted Julie's "sameness" in relation to middle class culture.

3. Class A Small-group Face-to-face Discussions

I had opportunities to observe all of the students in Class A as they participated in small groups. Small groups were not assigned by the teacher, but students were very strict about maintaining consistent groups throughout the quarter according to where they sat. In general, small groups functioned well; even students who did not participate in large-group face-to-face discussions seemed to participate actively in small-group face-to-face discussions. Most of the students I surveyed and all of the students I interviewed reported being very comfortable in small-group face-to-face discussions.
The transcript in Appendix F provides an example of the way four of the focus students interacted with one another in their small group. On this particular day of class, students were supposed to have read two essays: “Learning to Read,” an excerpt from Malcolm X’s autobiography, and Jerry Adler’s “Taking Offense: New McCarthyism on Campus?” a Newsweek piece about the battle over political correctness at American universities. John, the teacher, passed out the following list of discussion questions and asked students to discuss them in small groups as preparation for the large-group discussion:

Discussion Questions
1. Malcolm X makes a point about education in America that the philosophy Adler calls the “PC” movement is designed to amend. What is the problem, how does the “PC” movement attempt to amend it, and is it effective in so doing?
2. Is racism still a problem on this campus? In this society? How might the problem be addressed, both within and outside of the university?
3. Malcolm X’s piece was published in 1965, and the Adler piece was published in 1990—do you feel any significant changes have occurred since that time?
4. How “PC” has your education been? How have you responded to this facet of it?

John, the teacher, asked Jason to join a different small group that day since a couple of students were absent. Billy, Cheryl, Ellen, and Eric, all of whom came from small, predominantly white communities in Ohio, shared stories of small-town innocence and their “discovery” of racism when they came to college. Billy initiated discussion by identifying with the Malcolm X piece; he told the group that his high school courses presented only the white male side of history. When Eric asked Billy, “Did you have any black kids in your school?” Billy replied that his school had “maybe two or three.” Eric
told the group, “I grew up with them. One was in the class behind me and we were in a lot of sports together. . .So there was never a difference between black and white to me.”

Billy said that he learned about “reverse racism” in the Air Force, where he met black people who did not want to be his friend because he was white. Cheryl told the group that her father was “incredibly racist” but that when she was growing up she thought he was the only person who “acted like that.” She told the group about racial separation in her dormitory, where black and white students did not associate with one another. Eric told about the “white on white” class prejudice he had witnessed in his off-campus job, where his coworkers made frequent references to the “white trash” in the surrounding neighborhoods. Ellen did not share stories with the group, but interjected her opinions at several points during the conversation. The group was in agreement about racism (that it was bad) and found similarity among their backgrounds to support their views (that it was everyone else’s problem). Cheryl summarized their response by saying, “I think it’s interesting that all of us discovered racism when we came here. Not many of us saw it in high school or whatever.” Probably because they were all Caucasian, the members of this small group were willing to discuss their personal perspectives on racism and able to distance themselves from racism in their small-group face-to-face discussion. They did not tell personal stories (about racism in their families or black/white ratios in their high schools) when the class moved into large-group face-to-face discussion.

In the small group, Cheryl initiated a discussion of political correctness by asking her group their opinions on the issue. Billy said, “I hate the PC movement. I think it’s dangerous.” He asked Cheryl for her feelings about it, but rather than expressing an
opinion, she asked another question: “Who makes the rules about what’s politically correct and what isn’t? Whose decision is this and how did they get the authority to make that decision?” Later, Cheryl kept the group on task by introducing the last discussion question, about how “PC” the group members’ education had been. She argued heatedly with Billy and Eric in favor of nonexist language in textbooks, but when the large-group face-to-face discussion turned to the same topic, Cheryl did not contribute at all—perhaps because no one asked for her point of view as they had in the small group. Altogether, in this small-group face-to-face discussion, Billy took thirty-three turns, Cheryl took twenty-eight turns, Eric took nineteen turns, and Ellen took fourteen turns. Table 3.2 shows the group members’ participation in this discussion according to percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># of turns</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billy</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Class A Focus Group Participation in Small-group Face-to-face Discussion

As Table 3.2 indicates, the men in this focus group spoke more often than the women. However, Cheryl and Ellen together contributed forty-five percent of the time; they were much more active in the small-group face-to-face discussion than they were in large-group face-to-face discussions.

When I interviewed the members of this small group about their participation in small-group discussions, they all told me that they felt “comfortable” in the small group. Billy said, “We’re all similar people but at the same time we all have different views on a
lot of things, but we got comfortable knowing that...we could say that we didn't feel a
certain way or whatever and the people in the group would accept that.” Their
sociocultural similarities seemed to enable the members of this small group to speak about
issues of difference. For Cheryl and Ellen, the small group seemed to provide a forum
where their voices could be heard. Cheryl told me that she was more comfortable with a
small group, where she knew everyone’s name, than in large-group discussions. She
appreciated the fact that in small group discussions, “Billy and Eric would usually say,
“Well Cheryl, how do you feel about that?” or ‘Ellen, how do you feel about that?’ And
we’d go around and ask each other that way, when in a large class group we would never
do that.” Like Cheryl, Ellen valued the fact that in the small group each member’s opinion
was validated. She told me, “We just made sure everyone spoke so we didn’t say
something that someone didn’t agree with.” Though Cheryl initiated discussions, kept the
group on task, and argued from a feminist perspective on issues such as nonsexist
language, she seemed to need permission—or at least space—from the men in the group in
order to speak. I suspect that similar dynamics in the large-group face-to-face discussion
would have matched Cheryl’s discourse style. Since large-group discussions were usually
lively and active, the teacher probably did not think he needed to invite increased
participation from the women in the class.

4. Class A Large-group Face-to-face Discussions

The following table, Table 3.3, quantifies student participation in large-group face-
to-face discussions by showing the number of turns taken by each student and the teacher
during the sixteen large-group face-to-face discussions in Class A. Table 3.3 shows how
many of these large-group face-to-face discussions each student attended, the greatest number of turns each student took in a single class period, the fewest number of turns each student took in a single class period, and the average number of turns each student took per class. Since the students received grades at the end of the quarter for their participation in large-group face-to-face discussions, this type of class participation was not “voluntary” in the strictest sense; however, it was the only discussion space in which some students consistently chose not to participate.

Large-group face-to-face discussion is defined, for the purposes of this chart, as time when students were engaged in teacher-led discussion of assigned readings or related issues; large-group discussion does not include times when the teacher explained an assignment or activity to the class, even though there might have been student participation in the form of questions or comments. Occasionally there was more than one large-group face-to-face discussion on a given day of class, such as a time when teacher and students discussed an issue; participated in online, synchronous Aspects conferences; then reconvened as a large group to discuss the Aspects conferences. Participation in such “interrupted” discussions was simply totaled in the table as one class session. Table 3.3 does not attempt to qualify utterances, but merely to count the number of turns each participant took. The turns do not include words spoken aloud but not intended for the whole class to hear; they do include questions (e.g. “When was the article written?”), one word responses (e.g. “yeah” or “okay”), opinions, and personal stories; in other words, any times when one student took the floor and addressed the class. My quantification of student turn-taking assumes that while qualities and length of utterances varied to a certain
extent, they evened out for individual students over the duration of the quarter. In other words, this table simply provides a description of averages, or a “snapshot” of Class A, while my later discussion of the focus students provides a way of understanding the complexity imbedded in these statistics by analyzing their utterances.

Table 3.3: Class A Participation in Large-group Face-to-face Discussion

Table 3.3 shows that Alan, Ann, and Billy spoke most often in Class A during the sixteen large-group face-to-face discussions and took the greatest number of average turns per class. Alan was a Pakistani American student; Ann and Billy were both non-traditional age students. All three used personal experiences to respond to the issues raised in class.
but only Ann and Billy spoke about their own sociocultural perspectives in large-group face-to-face discussions. (Alan wrote about his in the e-mail reflector.) As discussed in the previous section, the students who participated the least often were Drew, Lila, and Quinn. Drew was a traditional-age Caucasian male student. Lila and Quinn were Korean-American and Chinese-Indonesian, respectively; both were non-native speakers of English. In response to my survey, Lila wrote, “I seldom participated large group discussion. I was somewhat afraid of participation because of language barrier.” Quinn wrote, “I think language barrier limit me and I prefer to discuss in smaller group than in big group like this class.” Drew was the only student in Class A who did not respond to my survey, nor did he consent to an interview. He was absent five times, and participated in large-group face-to-face discussions only twice all quarter. Several angry e-mail postings to the class reflector (like the one quoted in the previous section) indicate that Drew felt alienated by the multicultural focus of English 367, and serve to explain (at least in part) his frequent absences and silence in class discussions.

The following table, Table 3.4, shows patterns of participation in large-group face-to-face discussions in Class A according to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total # of turns</th>
<th>percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female students</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male students</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Class A Participation in Large-group Face-to-face Discussion by Gender

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* Drew participated once during the fifth class, to answer the teacher’s question about the reading assignment, and once in the seventh class, to describe an incident that occurred in his dorm when students on his floor wanted to put up a picture of Disney’s Little Mermaid. According to Drew, some students objected because they equated her name “Ariel” with “Arian.” Drew used this example to voice his objections to the PC movement, which he seemed to consider threatening from his perspective as a Polish American Catholic male.
Table 3.4 shows that female students took only fourteen percent of the total turns in Class A. Male students took three times more turns than female students, or forty-two percent of the total turns. The teacher of Class A, John, took almost half of the total turns, or forty-four percent, maintaining a teacher/student/teacher pattern of participation throughout the course. The teacher’s participation fluctuated only according to the length of the discussion. In other words, when students participated more often, the teacher did too.

Guiding discussion with evaluative comments, questions, and directions (e.g. “Let’s hear from Alan, then Billy, then Ann”).

Billy was one of the most vocal students in the class. He was often the one to initiate class discussion, and he often argued his points based on personal experience. For example, on one memorable class day, Billy used the example of his girlfriend’s abortion to support his views on paternal involvement in the choice to terminate a pregnancy. Billy asked a lot of questions of the teacher and of other students. In the attached transcript (Appendix F), Billy was the first student to speak when John, the teacher, initiated a large-group face-to-face discussion. John asked a question: “What is the point that Malcolm X makes about education that the PC movement may or may not be addressing?” Billy responded by asking another question: “What exactly is the PC movement in education?”

As the large-group face-to-face discussion in Class Seven continued, the teacher and students discussed an incident described in the Adler piece, in which a girl was punished at her university for putting an “offensive” sign on her dormitory room door. Billy and Ann
both participated actively in the discussion—expressing opposing views, as was often the
case in large-group face-to-face discussions:

Ann: If there are people that it bothers, then it's not right.
Billy: So if it bothers one person?
Ann: Yeah. If there are ten people and one person gets hurt, is that person
not just as important as the other nine...

Billy: So we have to sacrifice context.
Ann: Yes, we have to struggle hard to communicate...
Billy: So we walk around saying half-truths and not being able to express
what you feel.

Billy told me that he enjoyed large-group face-to-face discussions. In an interview, he
explained: “If I have something to say, I'd rather say it to somebody’s face.” He valued
truthfulness in class discussions, which he felt most able to judge in a face-to-face
environment. However, he felt frustrated by his continued opposition to Ann. In our
interview, he told me:

I could pretty much guarantee that every argument that came up she was
going to be sitting on the opposite side of the fence...and after a
while...it creates a little bit of animosity because when you know
somebody’s not going to agree with you, you’re wondering what is it, why
can’t you feel the way I feel...Because we were only limited to a certain
amount of discussion time in class, she doesn’t see why my views are the
way they are, and I never got to see why her views are the way they are.

Clearly, Billy placed a high value on personal experience as a way of participating in large-
group face-to-face discussions, and expected other students to do the same. His age
seemed to give him some authority in the class and his experiences gave him stories to
share. When he shared personal stories, he expected others to understand (and then
affirm) his point of view. Ann also placed a high value on personal experience. She told
me that the topics in English 367 “cause [students] to share more personal observations
and feelings than other classes might." Ann and Billy were both very emotional in their involvement in face-to-face discussions. In the attached transcript, they argue much longer than the other students without ever resolving their disagreement. I think it was the lack of resolution to their differences that nagged at Billy all quarter.

Eric participated less frequently in large-group discussion than Billy, but more frequently than the other members of the focus group. When I asked him about his participation in large-group discussions, he told me that though he sometimes felt anxious about participating, he was more vocal in this class than he had ever been before in a class. He told me that it was difficult to discuss political issues, such as political correctness. He said, "It's hard in a few minutes of class to say exactly what you feel and sometimes one thing comes out wrong and you immediately have criticism. That's why sometimes I just keep my mouth shut and wait 'til the Aspects part. . . even then it's hard to say exactly how you feel, but at least they don't know who you are." Unlike Billy, who valued the honesty of face-to-face discussions, Eric valued the opportunity to experiment with different points of view in an anonymous environment.

Table 3.3 shows that Cheryl took thirty-eight turns in class during the quarter; however twenty-seven of these turns were in a single class period. During Class Six, the teacher divided the students into groups of women and men and asked them to discuss some of the gender issues in the reading and to come up with lists of benefits for men and women. Cheryl was the spokesperson for her group, and most of the turns she took in class on that day were spent reading from the list of women's grievances she generated with her group. Cheryl's participation in large-group face-to-face discussion suggests a
shortcoming in quantification then, for had she not been spokesperson for her group that
day, she might have been among the quietest students in the class. When Cheryl
participated in large-group face-to-face discussions, it was almost always to answer the
teacher’s question; for example, in the attached transcript when the teacher asks, “Does
anybody remember the title of our textbook?” Cheryl answers “Rereading America,” the
only utterance she offers in the large-group face-to-face discussion that day. When I
interviewed Cheryl, she described her feelings of insecurity in large-group face-to-face
discussions:

I know a couple of communications classes that I’ve had in the past, I’ve
taken with a lot of graduate students, and I think this is part of the reason
I’m like this now. . . We’d be in a large group and most of our grade was
based on participation because it was a communications class and people
would start talking and I was just lost in what they were saying. It was
different theories from different classes they’ve taken and I was real
insecure about saying something and sounding stupid, so ever since
then. . . I’ve kinda just shied away and had that feeling.

I have no way to know whether the communications classes Cheryl described in our
interview literally silenced her; however, it does seem clear from what she told me that her
previous classroom experiences affected her self-perception and the ways she contributed
to discussions in English 367. Cheryl argued her points intelligently and convincingly in
small-group face-to-face discussions, and wrote eloquently in the e-mail reflector, but
“lurked” in large-group face-to-face discussions, choosing silence as a way of managing a
construction of herself as “quiet” rather than “not smart.”

Ellen also participated infrequently in large-group face-to-face discussions, most
often to ask questions clarifying assignments. In the attached transcript, she did not
participate at all in the large-group discussion. When the discussion was over, Ellen and Cheryl discussed their silence with Billy:

Ellen: I just kept my mouth shut!
Cheryl: I was afraid to say anything because of Billy, geez.
Billy: Was I that bad?
Ellen: No, I was just afraid to say anything.
Billy: I wasn't jumping on people, was I?
Ellen: No, no. You were just saying what you feel. Nothing wrong with that.
Billy: I agree with that.

When Cheryl accused Billy of frightening other participants away from the discussion, it was Ellen who told him that he did nothing wrong—Cheryl, on the other hand, never excused him. Ellen told me that in class discussions she was usually “afraid to offend someone” by expressing a politically incorrect opinion. Cheryl, however, seemed more afraid of getting into a public argument. Though her views on the issue were different from Billy’s, she was unwilling to make herself a public spectacle by arguing with Billy in the large group. Interestingly, she was willing to speak out in the large-group face-to-face discussion on the day when she was supported by a group of women (who were relative strangers because she did not sit with them every day). I wondered whether it was the support of these other women that allowed Cheryl’s participation in that discussion.

Jason participated even less frequently in large-group face-to-face discussions than Ellen or Cheryl. According to the attached transcript, Jason participated only once in the large-group face-to-face discussion during Class Seven, to echo one of Eric’s comments. When I interviewed Jason, he told me that he was afraid of speaking in large groups because he thought his perspective might be misunderstood. He said:
Whether this is true or not, I go into a class discussion in the university—and this applies to English 367—with the preconceived notion that everybody, that the teacher and the majority of the other students are gonna hold pretty much politically correct stances. . . That's the 'right' way to be right now, and a lot of times I can't say. . . that my feelings are always PC, and so I always kind of view myself as being on the outside.

Like Cheryl, Jason identified previous classroom experience at Ohio State as influencing his participation in English 367. Jason never identified his "outsider's" perspective in large-group face-to-face discussions or on e-mail, and he never discussed his sociocultural identity in the small-group face-to-face discussions in which I participated or in my interview with him. In his second essay, though, Jason identified himself as a "traditional" Roman Catholic, a member of a congregation which practices pre-Vatican II Catholicism by worshipping at a Latin mass and practicing their faith in a traditional way. I suspect that it was his religious views, which he kept very private in class, that prevented him from expressing his views in relation to the readings and class discussions. Religious difference was not part of the diversity agenda in English 367, though I suspect that many students might have responded to the issues raised in class according to religious values.¹⁰

5. Class A E-mail Reflector

The following table, Table 3.5, quantifies class participation in the e-mail reflector by showing how often students posted, the total number of lines they posted, and the average number of lines per posting.

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¹⁰ An exception was discussion of gay issues, when God or Christian values were often invoked.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total # of postings</th>
<th>total # of lines</th>
<th>average # of lines per posting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lila</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Table 3.5: Class A E-mail Reflector Participation

There was not a great variation in the number of times the students posted in Class A. More than half of them posted only the four required times. Students did not begin participating in the reflector until the fourth week of the quarter, and some began posting much later. For example, Ann first posted during Week Nine, and Derek posted for the first time on the last day of class in Week Ten. (These students both commuted to campus, so access issues might have affected the timing of their participation.) John, the teacher, posted three times at the beginning of the term, twice to give students instructions about their reflector postings and once to point out examples of “good” reflector postings. Five times, he forwarded a class members’ response to the reflector when a few messages
failed to “bounce” to the entire list. Altogether, John posted thirty-three lines of text to the reflector, all of which was related to reflector business.

Since women were so outnumbered in the class, I was surprised to find that the students who posted the most lines to the reflector were all women: Ann, Ellen, and Lila. As mentioned earlier, Ann was one of the most outspoken students in the class, and was also significantly older than the other students. She was also proficient in e-mail, since she used it in her job. She told me that she thought the reflector “made discussion easier,” but she did not begin participating in it until near the end of the quarter. Ellen, on the other hand, was one of the more quiet students in face-to-face discussions. I was surprised when she told me in an interview that she did not like participating in the reflector:

I felt like we were just spitting out information and that was it. I mean, I know we were responding to each other, but I felt like we were doing it because we had to. It was an assignment, and it was just do it, get it over with, that kind of thing, and I felt like that’s what everyone was doing. It just appeared that way.

Lila participated only twice in large-group face-to-face class discussions, so it seemed significant that she wrote lengthy postings in the e-mail reflector. Lila wrote in response to my survey: “E-mail reflector was very special to me. I have never had e-mail account and this experience before. It was little difficult to send message without revision, however.” Further, Lila told me, “I am satisfied with my participation in e-mail. It was easier discussion than face-to-face discussion because there is no need to be afraid of. I spent pretty much time to think before I actually write.” Although she felt self-conscious

11 Of course, Lila could have revised her postings, but perhaps she did not know how to do so. Interestingly, the other non-native speaker in the class, Quinn, did revise her e-mail messages. She wrote her postings in Macwrite Pro, printed them, and brought them to the teacher’s office hours for help with grammatical issues before posting them to the reflector.
about her written English skills, Lila enjoyed the opportunity to take part in the class
discussion. She told stories of her native Korea in e-mail as a way to contribute to the
online discussion in that space.

The students who posted the fewest lines in the class reflector were Cheryl and
James. When I asked Cheryl in an interview about her participation in the different types
of class discussions, she reported feeling most comfortable in e-mail. Cheryl said, "I
don’t like talking to a group of people when I know I can just be shot down just like that
during class, and that’s why I didn’t talk that much during the in-class discussions."
Though Cheryl completed the required number of postings, they averaged less than
seventeen lines each, compared to Ann’s average posting length of forty-seven lines. This
quantification of Cheryl’s participation fails to tell the whole story, though. The next
section of this chapter shows that Cheryl used e-mail very powerfully to criticize her
classmates’ homophobic contributions to an Aspects discussion. Though James
participated in large-group face-to-face discussions with above-average frequency, he told
me in the survey that he “felt pressure to agree with what everyone was saying in face-to-
face discussion.” James’s position as the only African American student in the class might
have made him reluctant to disagree with other students. James told me that “E-mail was
fun and allowed discussion without pressure.” The substance of one posting, in which he
wrote, “I personally would avoid conversations about race and religion until I really knew
the person” gives a clue about why he might have remained relatively silent on these issues
in e-mail.

12 It seems important to mention here that Cheryl was already comfortable using computers, and that she
regularly used e-mail in her job, to correspond with friends at work.
The following table, Table 3.6, examines participation in the Class A e-mail reflector according to the categories of postings. For their reflector postings, John (the teacher) asked students to respond either to issues from assigned readings or class discussions. I found that student postings fell into six broad categories: social postings, reading responses, face-to-face (ftf) discussion responses, e-mail responses, Aspects responses, and personal stories (in which students discussed their own social and cultural identities in relation to the issues raised in class). Most reflector postings fit into one category, but I divided some into more than one category when the students gave explicit signals within the text of their postings (such as "In class the other day..."). I created the category "social posts" to account for postings that seemed to be entirely social in nature. These occurred only at the beginning of the reflector period, and consisted of messages like, "Howdy folks. I'm just trying this thing so I hope you don't mind. Feel free to respond on this cool reflector thingy." I did not count greetings (e.g. "Hello classmates"), titles, or signatures in the total number of lines for other types of postings, since not all of the students used them.

Appendix D provides a copy of the reflector assignment, in which students were instructed to "write responses to readings and/or class discussion." They were also supposed to "read [their] classmates' postings before each class."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>reading response</th>
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<th>e-mail response</th>
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Table 3.6: Class A E-mail Postings by Category (% of total lines)

By far the majority of postings (almost seventy-five percent) were written in response either to assigned readings or to issues raised in face-to-face discussions. Most of the students who posted five or more times (e.g. Alan, Billy, Cathy, Matt) posted one brief experimental and social message at the beginning of the reflector period but social postings made up only one percent of the total. According to this table, Alan and Billy, two of the most vocal students in class, were not very “engaged” with the reflector, as neither posted any responses to other students’ postings. On the other hand, Jason and Cheryl, both of whom were very quiet in face-to-face discussions, were the most
"engaged" in the online discussion based on the percentage of responses they wrote to other students’ e-mail postings (even though neither posted very much).

Some of the members of my focus group—Billy, Ellen, Eric, and Jason—became involved in an online discussion in the class e-mail reflector in response to some readings and a large-group face-to-face discussion on gay issues. After Eric said in a large-group face-to-face discussion that he thought that homosexuality was "wrong," Billy wrote a "response on homosexuality" in the e-mail reflector in which he agreed with Eric: "I would have to agree with Eric and say I just feel that [homosexuality] is wrong. My reasons are not founded in theological beliefs and matter of factly I could not honestly say what the underlying reasons for my beliefs might be. So am I wrong to feel the way I do?" Billy wrote in the reflector about a friend in the Air Force who was discharged when he "came out." Billy said that their opposing viewpoints and the fact that [his friend] "got kicked out" ended the friendship. Ellen responded to Billy:

Billy, I have a question for you, just out of curiosity, don't take offense from it, but in all reality, do you actually think your friendship with the guy in the Air Force ended because he admitted he was homosexual, or that because he was discharged before you received the chance to see that he is still the same person, just more honest about his sexuality? Basically if you think about it, he probably realized that he was gay before he came out with it, but until you found out about it, he was still your friend. I'm not picking on you, I just wanted to make that point.

Billy did not respond to Ellen's posting, and I never heard them discuss this issue in the small group.
In the same thread, Cathy wrote in the reflector, “I used to think homosexuality was wrong but as I got older I began to think, ‘To each his own.’” In response to Cathy’s posting, Jason wrote:

By no means do I advocate violence or hatred of homosexuals, nor do I believe that legislation should be passed outlawing same-sex relations. I do believe, however, that like alcoholism, certain individuals are possibly born with a genetic predisposition towards homosexual behavior. And, like alcoholism, homosexuality should be approached with an attitude of love and understanding in an effort to overcome it.

The students in Class A had some difficulty discussing gay and lesbian issues in large-group face-to-face discussion, but the topic generated more exchange of ideas than any other topics in the e-mail reflector. Jason told me:

I know there were a lot of times in class where I might have felt a certain way about an issue, and...my stance may have been a little more radical than the way the discussion was going, and I was afraid to say it or I didn’t want to say it, and either I would just not say anything at all or I would kind of maybe manifest those thoughts in the reflector, like maybe write something on the reflector where I was able to be a little more open about the way I felt about a certain issue.

Jason found some affirmation of his “politically incorrect” views in the e-mail reflector. He said, “In e-mail I noticed that the people that may not have been politically correct and a lot more conservative, they seemed to get a lot more open in e-mail about how they felt, and they were more willing to express their views.” Clearly, Jason felt “safer” in the e-mail reflector expressing a minority point of view. In the Aspects discussions, the next section will show, some students became even more willing to express unpopular or politically incorrect views. The anonymity of the Aspects sessions seemed to give
students a license to diverge from the points of view expressed in the large-group face-to-face discussions.

6. Class A Aspects Discussions

In Class A, the instructor used Aspects three times, for anonymous, synchronous conferences during class time. Aspects was the only environment where anonymity was possible, and many students seemed to enjoy the opportunity for role-playing. Appendix F represents one small group’s conversation during the third Aspects session of the term, during which the teacher asked students to discuss some of the important issues that came up during the quarter. In this particular conversation, about gay and lesbian issues, one student expressed his hatred of homosexuals, and another student in this conference claimed to be gay.

The students were free to propose their own topic for this particular Aspects session. (In earlier Aspects sessions, the teacher had given the students a topic and a list of discussion questions.) This session affirms Christine Neuwirth’s finding with her co-authors that “uninhibited behavior” was more likely to occur on computer networks when students did not have a structured assignment to follow (201). In this example, the student with the pseudonym “Jim Bob” suggested the topic “homosexuality” for the group discussion. “Petula” wrote, “I think the issue about gays and lesbians was a good one. Everyone seemed to have a strong opinion.” Jim Bob shocked the group by “shouting” (using the Caps Lock key), “IF THE U.S.A WAS AN ANARCHY I WOULD KILL ALL HOMOS.” Longfellow asked, “WHY?” Spock posted, “I agree, kill em all.” Though he had initiated the topic, Jim Bob expressed some doubt about its appropriateness:
“SHOULD WE BE TALKING ABOUT THIS,” then suggested, “LETS TALK ABOUT
SOMETHING ELSE.” Petula responded: “I don’t think because I am gay and I don’t
like the idea of being told two of you would stand up right now and kill me.” An excerpt
from the remaining portion of the transcript follows:

Jim Bob: I DON’T FEEL SORRY FOR YOU PETULA! YOU DO
NEED SOME SEVERE HELP THOUGH
Longfellow: PETULA ARE YOU REALLY GAY?
Jim Bob: THIS COULD GET UGLY
Longfellow: NO IT WON’T
Longfellow: WE CAN CONTROL IT
Longfellow: SPEAK!
Jim Bob: WELL WHAT SHOULD I SAY, I HATE ALL QUEERS
Longfellow: COME ON WHY DO YOU REALLY HATE GAYS. ARE
YOU HOMOPHOBIC ARE YOU AFRAID?
Petula: No I am not gay! I just wanted to see how everyone felt knowing
they may be talking to a gay
Jim Bob: ARE WE BEING SERIOUS HERE OR ARE WE JUST
JOKING AROUND, CAUSE IF IF WE ARE SERIOUS I’M NOT
KIDDING
Petula: We know that!
Jim Bob: GOOD ONE PETULA, I FEEL BETTER NOW! I DON’T
HATE YOU ANYMORE

Jim Bob was the most antagonistic participant in this conference. At the end of the
discussion, Spock asked, “jim bob, are you really this racist, this ignorant, or are you just
doing this to make us mad?” The students ended the discussion amicably, and after class,
Cathy went around the room to make sure that everyone in the class knew that she had
played a trick on her Aspects discussion group.

Since I had no way of knowing the pseudonyms of the students in Aspects
discussions, I cannot positively identify any of the above participants, except Cathy, who
identified herself as Petula. However, when I interviewed Cheryl at the end of the quarter, she told me about witnessing the above conversation:

I think it was just the last time we did Aspects, someone brought up homosexuality, and it was on Eric's computer, who was right next to mine. And he was just laughing the whole time. I'm like what are you writing about? And you probably remember... the one about how Cathy... said that she was gay, and Eric is totally prejudiced against homosexuals, and he would never say that during class, and he was just going on and on in Aspects about it, and I couldn't believe some of the things he was writing.

From what Cheryl told me in our interview, I inferred that Eric had been Jim Bob in this Aspects conversation. (I also had heard Eric express homophobic views—but not violent ones—in our small group discussions.) It seemed apparent to me that Eric was exaggerating his responses in this Aspects session, both for the benefit of his unseen (but captive) online audience and for Cheryl, who was looking over his shoulder.

When I interviewed him, Eric told me that Aspects was his favorite way to communicate in class. Although he thought it was a bit too informal, with too much joking around, he liked the opportunity to express his views anonymously: "I like the Aspects part of [the class], only because you could say exactly what you felt without being afraid of criticism right away. Like they still don't know it was me saying something."

Though Eric had been willing to say in large-group face-to-face discussion that he thought "homosexuality [was] wrong," he was clearly much less inhibited in Aspects and enjoyed hiding behind his pseudonym to elicit horrified responses from his audience.

Four members of the focus group told me how much they enjoyed the Aspects discussions. Eric liked the fact that Aspects gave everyone a chance to participate. He said, "A lot of people are afraid to speak up in class. I know I always was. I never speak
in class and this is really the first time that I've really gotten involved in in-class
discussion. But I think Aspects is good for the people that don't like to be heard out
loud.” Ellen and Jason were both students who did not like to be heard out loud, and both
told me that Aspects gave them a sense of security. Ellen told me in an interview that
Aspects was her preferred method of communication in the class:

   I like the Aspects because you could say whatever you want without
   anybody knowing who you were and no one is going to stereotype you by
   what you say, and that respect, and then you have an immediate response
   from your group, and it's close to the in-class, but I liked it better because
   you didn't have to be worried about what you were saying to offend
   anybody or anything like that, because no one knows who you are.

Though Ellen made an absurd claim—that anonymous slander does not hurt—I believe it
was a sensitivity to but uncertainty about political correctness that made her feel safe in
Aspects. In other words, I think she wanted to be politically correct in class, but was
afraid of making a public mistake. When I interviewed Jason, he also expressed a
preference for Aspects discussions: “Although I don’t feel anybody’s going to shoot me
down for anything I say, just the fact that [Aspects] is anonymous just provides a certain
security.” I believe that Jason was insecure about his traditional Catholic perspective in
class, but enjoyed the freedom to express his opinions anonymously in Aspects. Billy told
me that he “loved” Aspects because it was “much more interactive.” He said that his
participation in Aspects discussions was “much more response-oriented” because the
feedback of the other participants caused him constantly to re-evaluate his position. Billy
wished for more such response in large-group face-to-face discussions.
Cheryl, on the other hand, told me in our interview that she did not like Aspects discussions, because she felt that the same people who “dominated” large-group face-to-face discussions also dominated Aspects. Although she would have no way of knowing the identity of those who “dominated” Aspects, she told me that she felt that men were loudest in both environments. She attributed this to the fact that there were more men than women in the class. Perhaps it was also witnessing Eric’s participation in Aspects that caused her to perceive the space as male-dominated.

Cheryl was upset about what she had read in Eric’s Aspects conference. She used the e-mail reflector to chastise her classmates for their behavior in Aspects.

Hello class! I would like to respond to the Aspects discussions we recently had in class last week. I thought that it was very interesting to see how much more we will say when our name isn’t known. For example, when we were talking about homosexuality during our in-class discussions, not many people mentioned that they opposed it. Yet, what a response to that issue on the Aspects!! People talked about how they thought homosexuality was completely wrong and hated all gays on the anonymous postings, yet wouldn’t dare to say that during a class discussion. Don’t you think that criticizing gays hurts them regardless of whether we speak it or print it? I think that some of us need to be more sensitive to others’ choices. What if someone in our class is gay? Would you automatically hate him or her if you found out their sexual preference? (even though you were probably friends with this student all quarter)? I think that is completely unfair and close-minded. Why should someone’s sexual preference make a difference in a friendship?

Cheryl used the first person plural to correct her classmates’ behavior: “Some of us need to be more sensitive to others’ choices.” It seemed clear to me that Cheryl’s comments were directed mostly at Eric, who was the worst offender in the Aspects session, but she addressed her posting to the whole class. I found it interesting that Cheryl chose to use
the public space of the e-mail reflector to address this wrong, rather than the private space of small-group face-to-face discussion where she could have confronted Eric more directly. Perhaps she felt more capable of expressing herself in writing, or perhaps she wanted the whole class to "hear" what she had to say. In either case, no one responded to Cheryl's posting. Though it was sometimes easier for students like Cheryl to "speak out" on e-mail, it was also easier for others not to listen or respond to her there. Because the reflector assignments did not require any interaction among students, and because the time frame for the e-mail reflector in Class A was limited to a few weeks, the students' postings often seemed to take place in a vacuum.

7. Choosing Silence in Class A

My discussion of the data in this chapter calls into question some of the claims that have been made for computer networks and raises important new pedagogical questions about computer networks in composition classrooms. In my analysis of patterns of participation in Class A, I found that the students who spoke most often in large-group face-to-face class discussions were not always the ones who posted most often in e-mail and that the kinds of contributions students made in these environments differed in some very important ways. Categories as reductive as gender and ethnicity do not suffice to explain overall patterns of participation in Class A; nevertheless I did see patterns emerge from my data according to student identity.

I was surprised to find that student access to computers and skill level with e-mail did not seem greatly to affect their enthusiasm for it. Alan complained of access difficulties since he lived off campus, but none of the other students told me that access to
e-mail presented a problem to them, though many others relied on campus labs. Both Ann and Lila contributed a great deal in terms of number of lines posted to the class e-mail reflector, but their skill levels were very different since Ann used e-mail regularly at work and Lila had never used it before. Additionally, e-mail seemed to provide a safe and productive space for Lila, though she had never used it before this class, but caused great anxiety for Quinn, who was already very proficient in e-mail and regularly participated in bulletin board services. Both were non-native speakers who were self-conscious about their written English skills, but Lila saw the e-mail reflector as a space where she could have a chance to participate in the class discussion and Quinn saw it as a space where her written English would be exposed to the scrutiny of her classmates. (Quinn even asked the teacher to proofread her responses before she posted them to the class reflector.) The experiences of Lila and Quinn show that e-mail as nonverbal communication in composition classes can be—but is not necessarily—beneficial for non-native speakers of English.

One of the most important patterns I found in my analysis of Class A was that many of the students who participated most in either face-to-face or online discussion environments had a unique social or cultural perspective to contribute to the class discussions. In other words, students like Alan, Ann, Billy, and Lila, who participated most in the face-to-face and online public spaces of Class A, all found ways to include their sociocultural differences in class discussions. In contrast, Jason, who rarely participated in class, seemed unwilling to reveal his religious difference in public. Drew was virtually silent in large-group face-to-face discussions, and his e-mail postings
indicated that he felt culturally alienated as a straight, white, Catholic male in relation to the multicultural issues in the course. Some kinds of cultural difference were apparently easier for students to discuss in public than others. Students were more likely to discuss age and ethnicity, for example, than social class, religion, or sexual preference. As Margaret J. Marshall explains, “the outward manifestations of race and gender are easier to identify than the more difficult markings of class or literacy experience” (231), and I suspect too that many of the students who appear to be “in the middle” might not recognize their unique social and cultural perspectives in relation to the issues emphasized in English 367, which identifies race, class, gender, and ethnicity as its topics.

Contrary to my expectations, I found in my surveys and interviews of students that they were not necessarily most comfortable in the environments where they participated most actively. For example, four of the members of my focus group—Billy, Ellen, Eric, and Jason—all told me that Aspects was their preferred method of communication. Billy was one of the most vocal members of class in the large-group face-to-face discussions, and Jason was one of the most quiet. On the other hand, Cheryl posted fewer lines to the e-mail reflector than any other student in Class A, yet she seemed engaged with it (judging by the types of postings she did) and expressed a preference for this method of communication.

In a class of thirty-five percent female and sixty-five percent male students, women generated thirty-five percent of the total lines of e-mail postings to the reflector, but took only fourteen percent of the turns in the large-group face-to-face discussion. It was apparent that access to e-mail and Aspects discussions did not “empower” them to speak
in the classroom as some early scholarship suggested it might. As Pamela Takayoshi says, “The problem of voice for women in academia is rooted at a deeper level than can be addressed simply through implementing a new medium. Just because women are offered a ‘safe’ space in which to speak does not mean they will know how to do so” (32). The number of face-to-face turns and the lines of e-mail postings do not tell all that is important about male/female patterns of participation though. Although face-to-face discussions in Class A were effectively dominated by male students, I noted that some of the women students in the class used electronic discourse in interesting and very powerful ways. While some of the male students in Class A (e.g. Billy and Eric) used electronic forums as spaces where they could express homophobia, some female students (e.g. Cheryl and Ellen) used electronic forums to challenge this type of discourse. In addition, Cathy tried to subvert male homophobia by posing as a gay student in her small-group Aspects discussion.

The teacher of Class A did not respond publicly either to Ellen’s or Cheryl’s e-mail postings, or to what happened in Aspects. In our interview, he told me that he was disappointed by the “ugliness” that emerged online. He thought Aspects provided students with an “impersonal” space, that was “conducive to folks flaming each other on e-mail like people in psychology experiments shocking other people to death because they can’t see them.” Because Aspects conversations were anonymous in Class A, students had the freedom to express themselves in potentially destructive ways. Most Aspects conversations did not degenerate into homophobic hatespeak; the transcript I quoted in this chapter represents only one of twelve total Aspects discussions in Class A (there were
four separate Aspects conferences in three different class sessions), but the anonymity of the Aspects environment created the possibility for (and the reality of) this sort of interaction among students.

My study provided John with an imperative to incorporate computer-supported discussion into his class and CCL precedent provided a model for doing so (e.g. using Aspects for anonymous conferencing and e-mail for a class reflector). John hoped that these computer-supported discussion environments would provide additional spaces for his students to address the difficult issues of English 367, and for some students, this goal was accomplished. However, computer technology was often used (in Class A and in other CCL classes) in "machine-centered" ways that were ultimately damaging to interaction among students. For example, it was easier to use Aspects for conferencing than for collaborating or peer responding, so most CCL teachers who used Aspects used it for synchronous conferencing. In addition, it was easier for teachers to set up anonymous (or pseudonymous) conferences in Aspects than to set up tagged online discussions, so most CCL teachers used Aspects for anonymous conferencing. The properties of the software along with the pedagogical practices of CCL teachers created "machine-centered" rather than "student-centered" pedagogies. Chapter Five provides a more complete discussion of the criteria for "machine-centered" versus "student-centered" uses of computer technology.

The students in the focus group, who with the exception of Billy did not share their social and cultural identities in public, often chose silence in face-to-face discussions. Student silences can elude interpretation in ethnographic study, and when I attempt to
interpret a student's silence I risk putting words in her mouth. In her research at
Gallaudet, Brenda Jo Brueggemann found her work thwarted at times by the silence of her
subjects. She turned her dilemma into a methodological question by asking what a
researcher should do when her subjects choose silence: "I think the question for us, as
researchers, becomes how—or even whether—we should try to represent out of, or in spite
of, this silence" (33). For the students in my focus group, silence could have been a
statement of identity in relation to the subject of English 367—perhaps a statement that
they could not represent their identity within the discursive environments of the class, but I
can only speculate about the meanings of their chosen silences. My observations and
interviews of the students in John’s class convince me that the most productive discussions
occurred when there was interaction among discourse spaces or when different discourse
spaces enabled students to overcome their silences; for example, when Lila wrote about
her home in Korea in the e-mail reflector, or when Cheryl was able to address an injustice
she witnessed in Aspects by posting to the e-mail reflector.

Student silences do help to raise important pedagogical issues for computers and
composition studies. Work like Pamela Takayoshi's suggests that electronic networks
could help women students by giving them increased power in face-to-face environments.
This kind of thinking limits the work we can do in networks by privileging face-to-face
interaction. When we begin teaching in computer-supported environments, we ought to
reconsider the ways we define face-to-face and online interaction, so as not to create a
hierarchy of classroom discourse since different students flourish in different discursive
environments. For example, the writing that Lila and Cheryl did in the e-mail reflector
could, in a student-centered and computer-supported classroom, be given the same attention that participation in large-group face-to-face discussions is usually granted. Further, we need to consider what kind of computer networks and what kind of multicultural subjects can provide spaces for all students to write their identities into our courses. As Alison Regan argues: “We need to acknowledge the risks of self-disclosure at the same time we encourage all students to contribute to conversations” (126).

We also need to reconsider the ways we define computer networks in our classrooms so that students take responsibility for what they “say” online. When the Aspects discussion in Class A turned to a homophobic free-for-all, the consequence for any gay and lesbian students who might have been in the class was “isolation, alienation, and marginalization” (Regan 118). If anonymity is a defensible pedagogical approach to network interaction, we need to consider why and how we use it. Finally, we need to reconsider silence as a position of discursive power. Just as those who “lurk” in Internet chat rooms or bulletin boards seem to exercise a certain power over those who speak, sometimes the students who remain silent in our classrooms hold positions of power which ought to be explored. The next chapter examines the issue of silence further by describing the experiences of one student in Class B who gave me insight about the power of electronic forums versus face-to-face interaction when she told me that in her English 367 class, “the best part is when everyone is silent.”
CHAPTER 4

‘The Best Part Is When Everyone Is Silent’:
Issues of Difference in Face-to-face and Networked Discussions

The last chapter described the experiences of one small group of students in Class A and showed that students have different reasons for participating (or choosing not to participate) in different discourse environments in computer-supported classes. This chapter tells the story of one student, Monique, whose style of interaction and cultural perspective became problematic for some of the other students in Class B. In this chapter, I focus on the ways that issues of difference emerged in the face-to-face and online discourse spaces in Class B, where several students criticized what they perceived as Monique’s domination of face-to-face discussions. I argue that although the teacher of Class B tried to enact a student-centered pedagogy, the class was instead machine-centered and student-run—a dynamic that ultimately was damaging to Monique and others. Together, Chapters Three and Four provide a context for understanding my discussion of machine-centered versus student-centered pedagogy in Chapter Five and preface my recommendations for teaching and research in networked composition classrooms.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the pedagogical choices of the teacher of Class B as a way of contextualizing student participation in Class B. Next, I discuss patterns of participation in each of the discourse environments in Class B, describing overall patterns and then focusing on Monique’s participation in the class. To illustrate

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my claims about machine-centered discussions in Class B, I refer to four representative transcripts in Appendix G: first, a small-group face-to-face discussion in which Monique participated; second an excerpt from a small-group face-to-face discussion in which Monique became the subject of the conversation; third, an excerpt from a transcript of a large-group face-to-face discussion led by Monique’s small group; and fourth, a transcript of an Aspects discussion in which Monique again became the subject of other students’ conversation. I refer to these transcripts throughout this chapter to illustrate my claims about the ways students in Class B defined the various discourse spaces in this class and the ways Monique worked within and in resistance to these spaces. In addition, I refer to my surveys and interviews of the teacher and students in Class B to interpret Monique’s participation in the class from multiple perspectives.

1. Class B Teacher: Mike

Like the teacher of Class A, the teacher of Class B was a Ph.D. student with a specialty in nineteenth-century British literature. Mike was abrupt and funny, overtly political and unafraid of shocking his students with coarse vernacular speech.1 The style of interaction in the class was informal, as was Mike’s teaching style. Both Mike and John covered everything on their respective syllabi, but Mike was much more likely than John to change or abandon a day’s lesson plan based on student response or participation. Mike also gave students a good deal of control of his class by asking small groups to lead class discussions on five separate days. Mike devoted class time to either small-group or

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1 For example, when Mike was frustrated with class participation one day, he asked students “Who read the damn article?” Another time, angry about students “playing” in Aspects, Mike told me loudly that they were “just fucking around.”
large-group discussions, films, student-led discussions, and writing workshops. Mike eschewed the ten-minute break in the two-hour class period, but usually ended class at least twenty minutes early.

Mike designed a syllabus around themes in popular culture, using a textbook called *Signs of Life in the USA.* The readings in this anthology, including bell hooks’ “Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?” and Susan Sontag’s “AIDS and Its Metaphors” focused on semiotics and critical thinking, and tended to be difficult for undergraduate students. Mike also required his students to buy Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference* and Richard Lanham’s *Revising Prose* and assigned reading from each of these texts. He assigned his students to read a total of thirty-four essays (and view two films during class time) during the ten-week quarter.

Mike juxtaposed various readings from *Signs of Life* to create three thematic units in his class on “education or consumption”; “advertising, t.v., and film”; and “dis-ease, AIDS, and homophobia.” Three essay assignments corresponded with these thematic units and asked students to theorize the “multiplicity of American popular culture, its beliefs and ideologies, and its affect(s) on individuals.” For example, one possible paper topic in the first unit (which included readings ranging from a debate about speech codes on campuses to a semiotic analysis of American shopping malls) asked students to:

Examine the ways in which the American educational system is informed or complicated by gender issues. Are American school systems patriarchal; that is, are they dominated by and geared toward masculinist ways of knowing? What are masculine ways of knowing and compare them to feminine ways of knowing? To what extent is this masculinist/feminist

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2 A copy of Mike’s syllabus is included in Appendix E. All names and dates have been omitted.
polemic too reductive? Why is it important to (re)think education in terms of gender?

The first two essays were supposed to be five or six pages in length and the third essay was supposed to be six or seven pages. In Mike’s class, each of the three essays was worth twenty percent of the final grade, for a combined total of sixty percent. E-mail discussions were worth another twenty percent, a group oral presentation was worth fifteen percent, and class participation was worth five percent. According to Mike’s grading scale, then, electronic and face-to-face class participation combined were worth twenty-five percent of the final grade, compared to fifty percent in John’s class.

Mike tried to teach his students strategies for critical thinking and semiotic analysis rather than indoctrinating them with a particular ideological perspective, but the readings in his class suggested a “liberal” bias. Mike was identifiably a white male, but did not identify himself to students as either gay or straight. Mike was clearly sensitive to gay issues and sympathetic to a liberal feminist perspective.

Most of the class time in Mike’s class was devoted to discussion of the readings and related issues, usually with lecture followed by small group discussions, followed by large group discussions. Mike spent more time lecturing to students than John did. For example, on the third day of class, Mike lectured for approximately thirty minutes about semiotics and popular culture before dividing students into discussion groups. Mike also used lecture to deal with writing issues relevant to his course. Mike assigned small groups at the beginning of the quarter and asked students to sign a contract, or agreement, to participate in the small groups in his class. Each small group had to take responsibility for
leading one class discussion. Students did not necessarily sit with the members of their small groups in class and did not necessarily sit with the same groups every day.

Mike's syllabus defined the ways students would use the class e-mail reflector to perform two integrated writing tasks: writing five formal responses (500-1000 lines each) to the class readings and participating in an ongoing discussion with classmates. Mike asked students to check their e-mail three times per week but had no way to make sure that they did. Mike did not participate in the reflector except to give instructions at the beginning of the term. Like the reflector in John's class, this space evolved almost exclusively in terms of assigned postings.

Mike used Aspects four times in his class. Each time, he set up three or four conferences around the classroom, with four or five participants in each. After giving students time to discuss a set of issues anonymously in Aspects, Mike divided them into small groups according to conferences, asked them to reveal their identities, and gave them time to discuss the same issues face-to-face. For Mike, it was important to give students a "free" space, but also to ask them to take responsibility for their words. In Class B, the teacher's goals in using e-mail and Aspects discussions were to provide "safe" spaces for his students. He wrote in his syllabus: "We will use the computer to create an (electronic) intellectual community from which to enhance our understanding of the topics and issues and to invite more dynamic and inclusive participation in class discussions."

By creating an e-mail reflector in which he did not participate, this teacher hoped to draw out student voices. He hoped that students who might otherwise be silent in class would feel more comfortable expressing their ideas in writing, on the computers, and then would
transfer their skills and ideas to face-to-face contexts. Similarly, by using pseudonyms in Aspects discussions, this teacher hoped to invite students to express their ideas more freely. He hoped that both of these electronic spaces would become spaces for thoughtful discussion and reflection which would define the face-to-face discussions in his class.

2. Student Identity in Class B

Demographic Profile

The following table, Table 4.1, complements the demographic profiles in Chapters Two and Three by illustrating some social and cultural characteristics of students in Class B. This table includes observable characteristics such as gender, race or ethnicity, and age; as well as characteristics that were not observable but that students identified in the public spaces of Class B, such as class, religion, or sexual preference. As discussed in the previous chapter, I decided not to survey students about their social and cultural identities. Instead, I watched for what students chose to reveal about themselves in the public spaces of e-mail and large-group face-to-face discussions. The column “Self-representations of Identity” includes only personal characteristics that students identified explicitly in the public spaces of the class rather than those merely implied by dress or language.³

³ Social class was often an issue in Class B, but indicators of social class are not always consistent or reliable. For example, though a student might talk about travel experiences that imply an upper middle-class perspective, I use only those constructions of social class explicitly stated by students in public.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Self-representation of Identity</th>
<th>Forums for Self-representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Indian American</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>Indian American</td>
<td>face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>Russian married</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>Filipino American</td>
<td>face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>face-to-face &amp; e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>Roman Catholic &amp; straight</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>older student</td>
<td>face-to-face &amp; e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vince</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Student Identity in Class B

The teacher of Class B was a young, white, male graduate student. Table 4.1 shows that of eighteen students, six were women and twelve were men. Nine of the men and five of the women were traditional age, Caucasian students. One male student, Boris, was Russian, the only non-native speaker of English in the class. Two male students, Jake and Andrew, were Filipino American and Indian American, respectively. One female
student, Monique, was the only African American student in the class. Like Class A, Class B was comprised mostly of Caucasian (eighty-three percent), male (sixty-seven percent), traditional age (eighty-nine percent) students.

Self-Representations of Identity

Most students in Class B seemed reluctant to discuss identity and difference in public discourse spaces. Nine students (Barb, Dillon, Hannah, Joe, Laura, Nicole, Ryan, Vince and Zachary), all Caucasian and traditional age, never publicly discussed their own identities in relation to the subject matter of English 367. The public space of the e-mail reflector in Class B was used more often to reassert sameness in relation to white, straight, male, middle-class culture than to discuss issues of difference. When a homophobic thread emerged in the Class B reflector (just as homophobic threads emerged in the Class A reflector and in my own class, described in Chapter One), four of the male students—Andrew, Dan, Dave and Nathan—publicly identified themselves as straight. Three of these students—Andrew, Dave and Nathan—were among the ones who participated least often in large-group face-to-face discussions. In Class B, it seemed that many of the students who represent what Margaret J. Marshall calls "the unmarked norm" could not find ways to respond to the subject matter of English 367. When they participated as they did, it was to take part in a kind of cultural anti-rebellion.

Other than Monique, whose self-representation I will discuss at the end of this section, only two students—Bob and Peggy—willingly described aspects of their identity in large-group face-to-face discussions. Peggy identified herself in face-to-face and e-mail discussions as older than the other students. She already had a degree in education and
was certified in social studies. She explained that the class fulfilled a requirement for her to become certified for elementary education. During a class discussion on consumption and spending, Peggy said that unlike most of her classmates, she regularly saved money. “I am older than anybody else here, though,” she admitted. Peggy participated with average frequency in the large-group face-to-face discussions and wrote long postings in the e-mail reflector in response to the readings. Like Ann, the older female student in Class A, Peggy used her age and experience to respond to the issues raised in class.

One student, Bob, identified his social position according to his occupation--farming. At the beginning of the term, when Bob’s small group led a discussion on the semiotics of dress, Bob said, “It’s like jeans and boots, and I go from around the farm to here and back to work and then on the farm, so I don’t care what people think.” At the end of class discussion that day, Mike, the teacher, responded to the issues the students had raised. He used Bob’s statement about dress to illustrate the idea that function and form go together. He pointed out that farmers no longer wear overalls, but that they wear certain kinds of boots, jeans, and hats. He pointed to Bob’s green “Purina” baseball cap, and the way Bob was wearing it, saying, “A lot of farmers are wearing hats like this, even though it’s the worst thing to put on your head as far as sun protection, ‘cause your ears and neck are still exposed. . .So, there’s still a group identification that goes on with what you wear and why you wear it.” Bob was clearly embarrassed by the teacher’s semiotic analysis of his clothing. I wondered whether this incident prevented other students from identifying themselves publicly in relation to the issues of the course.
Two students in Class B identified their ethnicity when directly asked about it by a classmate. Later sections of this chapter show that Andrew and Jake, the only two identifiably non-white and non-black students in Class B, were very infrequent participants in large-group face-to-face discussions. Both revealed their ethnic identities during Class Twelve, when Zachary, one of the student leaders that day, asked them directly about their ethnicity in the context of a discussion on minorities in advertising:

Zachary: Jake -- is that your name? I was wondering if you don't mind-- what nationality are you?
Jake: Filipino.
Zachary: You don't see Filipinos...
Jake: I consider myself American because I was born in the United States.
Zachary: Right, I know you're American, but are you concerned that in commercials that you don't see people like you, that are born here and everything, but you know, Filipino. How do you feel about that?
Jake: . . . I support whatever...
Mike (teacher): You don't have to answer.
Zachary: Right, I was just curious how you feel about that.
Jake: I guess I don't have strong feelings about that.
Zachary: Andrew, do you have anything to say?
Andrew: I never thought about it. I've seen a couple of Indians on a 7-11 commercial. I'd like to see more though.

Only the students who were identifiably non-white and non-black were singled out by Zachary to contribute their point of view to this discussion. Though the teacher tried to indicate his disapproval of Zachary's question by telling Jake that he didn't have to answer, it was clear that Zachary did not understand that his question was intrusive. This section of the course, on "Advertising, TV, and Film," emphasized visible differences among students, but neither Zachary nor any of the other students asked for Monique's perspective—even though she was the only other student of color. Perhaps they realized
that Monique would offer her views on the issue without being asked, or perhaps they felt that ethnic difference was a less threatening topic than racial difference.

**Monique**

Monique was the only African-American student in Class B. This chapter will show that Monique’s conversational style was incompatible with her classmates’ and caused problems for her in Class B like the ones experienced by the student in Hull and Rose, et. al.’s “Remediation as a Social Construct.”

Hannah (a Caucasian student) and Monique both participated in large-group face-to-face discussions much more frequently than any of their classmates; however, Monique was subjected to the animosity of her peers while Hannah seemed to be liked and respected. Monique has a loud voice and an assertive conversational style, including a tendency to interrupt and to talk over others. Like Hannah, Monique participated enthusiastically in the class, but her “rules for classroom discourse did not map well on the norm for this class.”

Monique valued personal experience as a way of responding to the issues raised in class. Early in the quarter, during a discussion of Robin Lakoff’s “Women’s Language,” Monique tried to help the class understand the essay by using her own experience as an African American to respond to Lakoff’s claims about “women’s language”:

Monique: In a sense, like she was saying...we can talk the dominant group's language but the dominant group can't speak our language.

Teacher: ...There are a lot of groups that consider themselves quite bilingual, that they can be aware of when they need to use standard English or when they can use their own dialect...that they can use in their own communities but cannot use outside those...

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4 Unlike Hull and Rose et. al.’s “Maria,” whose teacher had trouble understanding her style of interaction. Monique’s difficulty was not with the teacher but with the other students in her class.
Communities, probably because they would be viewed as inferior or not smart.

Monique: I see in this list [of features of women's language] things that I've also seen in my own heritage, being African-American. . . I think that that's what she is trying to say, in a sense that women are intelligent, women are, women have something extra, cause they have whatever the dominant group has but they also have something extra. . . they can use this extra communication skills that they have. . .

Teacher: That's really good. . . women have communicatively more options than men, more channels legitimately open to them.

Monique compared being an African American to what Lakoff says about women's experience of dominant language. If women have something "extra" in terms of communication skills, Monique saw that African Americans have something extra as well.

In fact, Monique felt that the ability to speak about issues for women and people of color gave her something "extra" to contribute to class discussions. In the above exchange, the teacher affirmed what Monique said with his comment, "That's really good." As the term progressed, however, Monique's "extra" contributions seemed to become problematic for many of her classmates. Later sections of this chapter will show that Mike, the teacher of Class B, gave his students a great deal of control over the various discourse environments in the course, a dynamic that eventually worked to reduce Monique's complex individuality into a single axis of difference for her classmates. When Monique spoke, her classmates could respond to her discourse only in terms of race.

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5 During our end-of-quarter interview, Monique explained that she occupied a unique position in the class and that she wanted to share the insights of that position with her classmates. She told me, "The only way you're going to learn is by talking about what you know."
3. Class B Small-group Face-to-face Discussions

Mike, the teacher of Class B, assigned student groups at the beginning of the quarter, but students did not usually sit with their assigned groups in class. Unlike the students in Class A, these students moved around frequently for face-to-face discussions. Some students formed small groups for writing collaborative essays, but even these groups shifted throughout the quarter. During a typical class session, Mike, the teacher, spent between thirty and forty-five minutes lecturing students about issues or concepts related to the reading, or about the writing assignments and the writing process. When he asked the students to participate in small-group face-to-face discussions, it was either in response to Aspects sessions (he would ask the students to identify for one another the parts they had played online) or in response to a list of discussion questions he provided about the reading. He told me in an interview at the end of the quarter that he considered small-group face-to-face discussion the most successful part of his class. Mike placed a high value on active student exchange of ideas, and he saw the small group face-to-face discussions as the most “dynamically charged” discourse space in his class because of the high level of interaction.

There were eight total small-group face-to-face discussions in Class B; seven were initiated by the teacher and one was initiated by a student group who was in charge of leading class discussion. I had the opportunity to observe all of the students in Class B as they interacted in small groups. During Class Nine, I participated in a small-group face-to-face discussion with Boris, Hannah, Monique, Nathan, and Nicole. The reading assignment for the day was “Male-Address Video,” an essay about MTV as a vehicle for
adolescent male desires. This group quickly moved into a discussion of different television shows and their target audiences, then into a discussion of the audiences for different advertising campaigns. During our discussion, Boris took twenty-three turns, I took twenty-eight turns, and Nathan took twenty-nine turns. Nicole and Hannah took forty-three and forty-four turns, respectively. Monique took ninety-seven turns, or more than twice the number of anyone else in the group. In the excerpt from our discussion in Appendix G, Monique told a personal story comparing her life to the characters on Beverly Hills 90210 and argued with the other students about whether or not television should represent “reality”:

Monique: Yeah, but let’s face it, let’s face it, this, these shows are pretty, they are pretty unreasonable. And...

Hannah: Maybe that’s why they’re successful.

Monique: Let’s figure it out here. The problem is is that they alienate so many people, you know what I mean. I wouldn’t be invited to be a guest on the show, I mean there’s a lot of people who just don’t fall into this category. And I like--

Nicole: These types of shows are targeted towards a certain audience and--

Monique: They target it towards whoever wants to watch it.

Nicole: Yeah but if they think--

Monique: The more popular they are, if there was only a certain group of people watching it then they’re not going to be very popular in the rankings. Cause there are a lot of people out there who just don’t fit that description.

Nathan: There aren’t too many forty and fifty year old people watching 90210.

Nicole: All shows have a type of audience.

Monique persisted in arguing that Beverly Hills 90210 alienates people who do not fit the young and beautiful (and Caucasian) image of the cast, but the other students in the small
group refused to understand her point, invoking the capitalist notion that all shows are geared to target audiences for simple (and innocent) advertising purposes.

Monique’s style of interacting in small-group face-to-face discussions was very active and debate-oriented. She told me in an interview, “I’m a big debater. I enjoy doing it.” Monique felt that she had a responsibility to bring up issues that she felt were important and to challenge views that she thought were wrong. Many of the other students perceived Monique as domineering and argumentative. In other small-group face-to-face discussions, I often saw students resisting Monique’s style of participation in the class.

In one recorded small-group face-to-face discussion in which Monique did not participate, some students openly voiced their disapproval of Monique. During Class Eleven, I sat with Barb, Dan, Nicole, and Peggy. Students were supposed to be discussing gender roles in current films. Monique sat at an adjoining table, loudly debating the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie *True Lies* with members of her small group. Rather than having their own discussion, Barb, Dan, Nicole, and Peggy listened to Monique argue that the film is degrading to women and discussed Monique’s participation in the class. They had reached a point in the quarter when my microphone and tape recorder seemed to make little difference in terms of their motivation to follow in-class assignments or in terms of censorship of what they said, as the following conversation makes clear:

Dan: It’s kind of quiet now.  
Nicole: Oh. I wonder why.

---

6 The second transcript in Appendix G is an excerpt from their discussion.
Dan: I found the remote control.
Nicole: It was really quiet last Thursday.
Peggy: Yeah. It was. /laughs/
Dan: That's cause she wasn't here
Barb: I didn't notice.
Nicole: Really? How could you not notice?
Barb: I have a lot of patience.
Nicole: Obviously. I have zero.
Dan: I just find it amusing.
Nicole: I find it annoying.
Dan: Yeah, it gets annoying after a while, especially in the class discussions. Like in small groups like this I can avoid it.

In this conversation, Dan pretended that he found a “remote control” with which he could “turn down” Monique. He and Nicole discussed Monique’s absence from the previous class, and even when Barb did not participate, Dan and Nicole persisted in criticizing Monique. Dan told the group that he found Monique amusing, but Nicole expressed her annoyance with Monique. Nicole told the others that she used e-mail to address her complaint about Monique to the teacher.

Nicole: I wrote him an e-mail.
Dan: You wrote him an e-mail?
Nicole: I said there's this certain individual in this class who is really annoying, and she's getting on more than just my nerves.
Dan: Oh, everybody. Everybody.
Peggy: You can't have class discussion if you have one person leading the whole discussion.
Nicole: I just said, I hope that her interjections don't hinder our grades since we don't have the opportunity to say much.

These students neither asked for my opinion nor tried to conceal their feelings about Monique from me. I indicated my disapproval by changing the topic, but felt unsure about whether I should have confronted them directly to address this injustice. I did not share what I heard with the teacher, and I do not know to what extent he might have been aware
of what went on in small-group discussions. Nicole did not tell the group whether the teacher responded to her e-mail complaint. The teacher did not discuss with me any private e-mail correspondence with students.

Nicole was a graduating senior communications major who participated in large-group face-to-face discussions with average frequency. Since I found it hard to believe that one student could literally deprive seventeen other students of the opportunity to speak, I suspected that Nicole's personal dislike of Monique or disagreement with Monique's political positions was her reason for objecting so strongly to Monique’s participation in class. Nicole seemed to expect that her views were shared by other members of her group, and apparently they were shared by Dan and Peggy, at least. None of the students in this small-group discussion, or in other discourse environments in Class B, defended Monique's right to speak.

4. Class B Large-group Face-to-face Discussions

There were nine large-group face-to-face discussions in Class B; four of these were led by student groups and five were led by the teacher. Table 4.2 analyzes patterns of participation in these discussions by showing the number of times each student was present for large-group face-to-face discussions; the greatest and fewest number of turns she or he took in a single class session; the total number of turns she or he took in class during the quarter; and the average number of turns she or he took per class. Table 4.2 includes data about the teacher's participation in large-group face-to-face discussions as well.
Monique 7 64 4 185 26.4
Hannah 9 53 2 183 20.3
Ryan 8 66 0 104 13
Dan 9 22 0 75 8.3
Zachary 7 22 1 55 7.9
Laura 8 16 2 54 6.8
Dillon 9 25 0 60 6.7
Peggy 8 18 0 50 6.3
Barb 9 18 0 44 4.9
Nicole 7 20 0 34 4.9
Boris 9 20 0 34 3.8
Joe 7 16 0 24 3.4
Bob 9 11 0 29 3.2
Jake 8 14 0 18 2.3
Dave 9 17 0 20 2.2
Nathan 7 7 0 12 1.7
Vince 9 10 0 12 1.3
Andrew 8 2 0 3 0.4
Mike (teacher) 9 51 19 286 31.8

Table 4.2: Class B Participation in Large-group Face-to-face Discussion

Table 4.2 lists the students in Class B in descending order according to the average number of turns they took per class. The students were required to participate in large-group face-to-face discussions to a certain extent, because the teacher required small groups to lead class discussions. Still, there was tremendous variation among the students; while Monique took an average of more than twenty-six turns per class, Andrew averaged less than one. The teacher took an average of almost thirty-two turns per class. The three most active student participants, Monique, Hannah, and Ryan, all had higher
numbers than the teacher for greatest number of turns in a class, which illustrates the teacher’s willingness to let students lead class discussions.

On average, the women were more frequent contributors to class discussion than the men. The following table, Table 4.3, shows participation in large-group face-to-face discussions in Class B according to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of turns</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female students</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male students</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Class B Participation in Large-group Face-to-face Discussion by Gender

The teacher of Class B took twenty-two percent of the total number of turns, fewer than the male students as a group or the female students as a group. According to Table 4.3, the female students in Class B participated most frequently. Although they represented only one third of the population of Class B, they took forty-three percent of the total turns. Monique and Hannah took more turns than any other students, and though Hannah participated nearly as often as Monique, the other students never complained about Hannah’s participation in the class. Hannah participated with decreasing frequency as the quarter went on. She did not seem satisfied with the large-group face-to-face discussions. In response to my survey, she wrote, “Sometimes I feel comfortable participating in discussion, but I get tired of being interrupted or having to interrupt someone else.”

Hannah refused to allow me to interview her about her participation in the class.

Monique’s style of interaction in large-group face-to-face discussions was highly personal; she often told stories in response to issues raised in class. In the middle of the
term, when student groups began to take responsibility for leading class discussions, I noticed that students often failed to respond to Monique's stories by changing the subject when she finished speaking. For example, during a student-led discussion about consumerism, Dillon told a story about age discrimination at a Dodge dealer, where employees would not let him test-drive a car. Hannah responded by telling a story about being discriminated against at a repair shop for being a woman. Monique followed with a story about going to buy a Lexus with her aunt, and the racial discrimination they experienced at the automobile dealership:

And also when you're an African American and going into buy something that's expensive. I went with my aunt who was buying a Lexus. She had the money, I mean she had the money. . .She wanted to get something nice so she walks into this Lexus dealer with me and my mom and we're just looking around and she's, 'oh this is the one I want'. . .The guy acted like he didn't want to wait on her. He did not want to talk to us. Cause he did not believe that. . .she would buy it. And what happened was she was so offended she went out, went out, oh gosh we went for two hours away to another Lexus dealer, OK, who treated her better, and it happened to be another African American who was selling her the car this time. And I was, that was kinda demeaning that she had to go all the way. . .just to get a car, to get some respect. You know what I mean.

Dillon's personal story was about age, and Hannah's personal story was about gender. These categories of difference seemed to be ones that students in the class could understand and discuss. In contrast, Monique's story was about racial difference, and when she said, "you know what I mean," the other students were either unable or unwilling to respond to her story. One student leader, Jake, simply changed the subject altogether when Monique finished speaking. He said, "OK, um cause we're running short on time, we're going to have a final activity." This type of interruption of Monique's
stories happened more than once during this particular class period, and several times during the course of the term. Many of the other students indicated with facial expressions and body language that they were unwilling to listen to Monique's stories, so that there was almost a collective resistance to her participation in the class.

On the day when Monique's small group led class discussion, they showed excerpts from MTV videos and television commercials to generate a class discussion on issues of violence and sex in popular culture. The MTV video "Regulate" sparked a discussion of race and violence in popular culture, in which Monique defended a black perspective on rap music to the rest of the class.

Monique: I'm not saying that only a black person could understand this. I'm saying that [Dave—the next speaker] doesn't have enough information to understand it. He doesn't have a black history background. He wouldn't understand half of the icons that were put into the video... he doesn't have the proper information to back up what he's saying.

Dave: You don't have to be black to see that this video glorifies violence, glorifies drugs—that that's what they're saying.

Nicole: Why does he have to know the history of black culture, or black whatever, to make it so it's right that it's realistic or that violence is okay?

Monique: I didn't say that it's okay. I just said that it's one experience that he has never had and I'm saying that's an experience that many more sheltered, non-minorities would not be able to understand.

Nicole: What's the difference if you're black or white? It's still killing people.

When other students challenged her view, Monique responded: "There are times to stand up for your rights nonviolently, but sometimes there is a point. In white America there is not the same point because they are not faced with the same challenges." In this excerpt,

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7 The third transcript in Appendix G provides an excerpt from this discussion.
Monique claimed that the students who criticized rap music lacked the cultural basis for understanding it. Monique set herself up as an authority on black culture, and the other students, excluded from this cultural perspective, challenged her position according to the standards of white, middle-class morality. The teacher did not intervene at this point, and the student-led discussion turned to representations of racial and ethnic groups in American advertising.

During the same class period, a discussion of a Levi's commercial escalated into an argument about racism in advertising. Dave said, “It’s hard to find a minority in any of these ads. Advertisers just don’t have minorities. They are good on Taco Bell commercials, but they don’t put them on to sell a product.” Another student, Bob, attempted to excuse companies and ad agencies from including people of color in their advertisements. He made the excuse that people of color do not appear in Levi’s ads, for example, because black people don’t wear Levi’s.

Bob: Well, how many blacks do you see wearing Levi’s?
Boris: No, but you see the whole image of the jeans is that its some sort of American product. Jeans are a very American product. It’s hard to sell “American” products while emphasizing minorities.
Monique: Are you saying that only white people are American?
Boris: No, but . . .
Monique: Is that the message they’re sending? If it’s hard to put minorities in, that’s saying that America is white. It’s not the cultural diversity that we’re supposed to have. And that is wrong.

Bob: But you’re talking about Levi’s. Whites wear Levi’s. Look at shoes.
Monique: I own a pair of Levi’s! Does that make me white?!

Monique became understandably upset about Bob’s stereotype that blacks do not wear Levi’s, especially when Bob tried to emphasize the fact that African Americans can sell
athletic shoes, if not jeans. During this discussion, Monique was once again forced into a position of arguing for a black perspective on the issues raised in class. While she had the help and support of the teacher, she was working alone and in opposition to the other students, one of whom told her, “But you see, that’s your opinion.” When several students attempted to justify advertising trends by implying that minorities make up a small percentage of the population, the teacher intervened, saying, “Unfortunately, this class is not very diverse. This class is not representational. White America is not 90% of America. It is not.” The teacher told them, “The ideas floating around this classroom are absurd.” Though he lectured students about their “absurd” ideas in an attempt to help them understand the weaknesses in their arguments, the fact that he waited until the end of the class period to intervene by lecturing might have enabled students to tune him out instead of re-examining their views. In our interview at the end of the quarter, Monique told me: “The disturbing part came when I heard comments like, ‘Black people don’t wear Levi’s.’ That’s just an example of one of many things I’ve heard in the class.” Monique was understandably frustrated by the cultural insensitivity of her classmates, so much that she needed to bring a friend to class to witness what went on.

Monique brought a friend to class the day that her group led the class discussion, introducing him as a senior black studies major and an expert in rap music. She told the class that they could direct questions toward him, but no one asked him any questions and he did not volunteer his perspective. In our interview, Monique told me that she brought her friend to class for solidarity, just so that he could “see what was going on.” She said, “Every time he sees me, he goes, ‘Are you out of that class yet? It’s gotta be driving you
crazy.' And I'm going, well, some of the times I have to control myself and say...they may not understand what they're talking about, but the problem is that they don't realize they don't.” Monique saw the class as an opportunity for her to enlighten others by sharing her identity and her experiences—a lonely position for her.

Many of the other students in the class could not understand why Monique was talking as much as she was; they could only understand that she was “dominating” class discussion. Ten students complained in my end-of-quarter surveys about Monique’s participation in large-group face-to-face discussions. For example, Joe wrote, “Monique seemed to participate a little too much. I wouldn’t say participate, probably more like, told to many personal stories.” Dan wrote, “I am displeased with the conversations turning to racism all the time. Monique seemed to dominate the conversations, which seemed to piss everyone off. I agree with them.” Dave, Dillon, Nathan, Peggy, Hannah, Nicole, and Laura also complained about Monique, with comments such as, “One person controlled most of the class discussions. This prevented others from participating.” Zachary also complained that Monique “seemed to talk more than her fair share” although he admitted that “she had some valid points.” Because Hannah (and Ryan, to a lesser extent) also participated a good deal more than other students without repercussion, I suspect that the students’ resistance to Monique’s participation in the class had more to do with her identity as a black woman and her political views than with the frequency of her participation. The fact that this was a computer classroom may have made it more difficult for the teacher to understand Monique’s vulnerability since he seemed to believe
that the e-mail reflector would provide his students with opportunities to engage one
another in “more inclusive” discussions.

Monique wrote in her survey: “I found the face-to-face discussion a bit disturbing,
because I saw how ignorance has consumed many students in the class.” At the same time,
Monique expressed a clear preference for the face-to-face large group discussions. In our
interview, she told me, “It was a little disturbing, but at least I could see the expressions
[on the other students’ faces].” While some of the other students in the class had
complained that racial issues were over-emphasized, Monique felt that they were not
discussed as much as they should have been. Because she felt politically isolated in the
class, Monique felt the constant need to defend her own positions. She said, “I felt like a
broken record, ‘race, race, race…’ A lot of times it seemed like it was left out, so I
brought it up.” Racial issues were relevant to the main topics of the course, but perhaps
because there was no thematic unit devoted specifically to “Race in the United States,”
students were at odds about how and when race should be discussed in class.

Monique felt that the teacher was her best ally in the class. While other students
complained that Monique spoke too much, she actually preferred to hear the teacher’s
voice rather than her own. She didn’t want to be the only one to speak, but she said what
she felt needed to be said. She told me, “The best part is when [the teacher] takes over the
conversation. . . And then nobody says anything. Everyone is silent. Nobody has any back
talk.” By supporting Monique’s political perspective, the teacher gave her the space she
needed to speak in his class. On the other hand, by giving the students a good deal of
control over large-group face-to-face discussions (by limiting his own participation), the
teacher set up a situation in which one student was “blamed” for the class dynamics. Interestingly, none of the other students seemed to blame the teacher for what they perceived as Monique’s domination of the class.

5. Class B E-mail Reflector

The teacher of Class B set up an e-mail reflector in which students could address mail to the entire class. He required students to post five formal responses to the reading assignments (between forty and eighty lines each), to check their mail three times per week, and to engage in informal discussion. He chose not to participate in this forum himself because he wanted it to be a student-centered space. Table 4.4 shows patterns of participation in the Class B e-mail reflector by listing the students in descending order according to the total number of lines they posted in the reflector.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Total # of postings</th>
<th>Total # of lines</th>
<th>Average # of lines per posting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vince</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>31.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Class B E-mail Reflector Participation

Students were required to post more than five times, for a total of between two hundred and four hundred lines, but many students did not meet one or the other of these requirements. Four students (Boris, Joe, Monique, and Ryan) posted five or fewer times, and five students (Boris, Joe, Laura, Monique, and Nicole) posted fewer than two hundred lines. Mike, the teacher, participated twice to manage reflector business. He also forwarded several messages that somehow made it to his address but not to the reflector.

The students who participated most in the e-mail reflector were not the same students who participated most in large-group face-to-face discussions. There was great
variation among the students in terms of the average number of lines per posting. For example, Peggy and Andrew posted more total lines than any of the other students, but Peggy’s postings averaged slightly more than sixty-nine lines each, while Andrew’s averaged less than seventeen. Andrew was the student who spoke least often in face-to-face discussions (only three times during the entire quarter), but posted most frequently. Clearly, the reflector offered him a space where he could participate in discussion in a way that he could not in face-to-face environments. Andrew told me that he tended to participate more frequently in Math and CIS classes, where he felt more knowledgeable than he did in English 367. In the survey, Andrew told me that he regularly read newsgroups, so he was apparently Internet-literate. His expertise in e-mail might have given him the confidence he needed to participate in English 367. Like Andrew, Peggy reported having used e-mail before this class; however, her use of e-mail was very different from Andrew’s. Like Ann, the older female student in Class A, Peggy wrote very long reading responses in the reflector, and rarely engaged with other students in that space. In contrast, Monique spoke most often in large-group face-to-face discussions, but was one of the students who participated least often in the reflector.

The following table, Table 4.5, further examines patterns of participation in Class B by categorizing the students’ e-mail postings according to the percentage of lines they posted that were social exchanges, reading responses, responses to face-to-face discussions, responses to other e-mail postings, or personal stories. Students are listed in the same order in Tables 4.4 and 4.5, in descending order according to total number of lines posted to the reflector, for the sake of comparison.
Table 4.5: Class B E-mail Postings by Category (% of total lines)

Table 4.5 shows that reading responses comprised the majority of e-mail postings in Class B. All of the students posted a significant percentage of reading responses because the reading responses were assigned and graded. The teacher also told the students to interact with one another online, but such interaction did not happen very frequently. The students who posted most frequently and/or posted the longest responses were not necessarily the ones who were most "engaged" in the virtual discussion. Six students (Boris, Hannah, Joe, Peggy, Ryan, Vince) did not post any responses to other students' e-mail. Peggy, the student who posted the greatest number of lines, never responded to anyone else's postings. Ninety-two percent of the lines she posted were...
simply reading responses. On the other hand, Andrew, the student who participated least in large-group face-to-face discussions, posted more frequently than any other student, and posted the greatest percentage of responses to e-mail postings.

For the most part, students seemed to have a sense of their teacher as audience for their postings and wrote formal reading responses with the expectation of being graded for them. Monique posted the following after a showing of the film, “Still Killing Us Softly” followed by a class discussion of the portrayal of women in advertising:

It was amazing, in the small groups, to see that many people are fooled completely. I spent half the class trying to get through to one young man with no luck. He, of course, is an educated young man, yet he believed that the speaker was over simplifying, stating that there was many ways to look at these ads. . .I suggested that he question these ads more.

In her posting, Monique explained her role in a small group discussion. She wrote, “I spent half the class trying to get through to one young man with no luck.” Clearly, Monique saw herself taking on a teacherly role in her small group. When she saw that another student did not understand the arguments of the film the way that she did, Monique tried to make suggestions. Her posting about this incident, like most other postings, seems to have been written with the teacher as intended audience.

On a few occasions, students posted writing to which they clearly expected a response from one of their peers. Frequently, responses were not forthcoming. When Dan posted an inflammatory response to an essay by bell hooks entitled, “Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?” no other students responded to it. hooks’ essay argues that Madonna maintains the image of the quintessential “white girl” by positioning herself in her videos as an outsider in relation to black culture. hooks writes, “Mainstream
culture always reads the black female body as a sign of sexual experience.” Dan responded:

when hooks says that many blacks females are angry that Madonna expresses the black female’s body as an instrument of sexual experience, I am also a bit unhappy. If black females don’t want to be depicted in a sexually expressive light, stop depicting yourselves in the same light you are disagreeing with. I am not saying that all black women depict themselves in this light, but a good deal of them do, and many times these are the same women that society sees, therefore making it seem as if all black women were like that.

Dan wrote, “All of these things that I have just said, are indeed controversial. I could have chosen to take the middle of the road approach, and be safe from ridicule. But I didn’t. Neither does Madonna.” He clearly expected his posting to inspire response from his classmates: “All of the things [Madonna] does, are controversial, but nevertheless effective in stirring up controversy. . .And I’m sure that this response will do the same thing as she does.” However, none of the other students responded to Dan’s “controversial” posting. Perhaps none of them wanted to get involved in a discussion of bell hooks and Madonna; perhaps none of them bothered to read Dan’s posting in the first place.

The students missed some important opportunities for interaction in the e-mail reflector. Since they were required to post lengthy reading responses, I suspect that many students did not take the time to respond to one another’s postings. In addition, two students’ postings seemed to give some indication about the difficulty of discussing difficult topics face-to-face. In her first posting, posted the second day of class and the first day anyone posted, Laura wrote that people “in the middle” on political issues go
through what she did “in a Black studies class here at OSU”: “Many times during a class debate I found myself not speaking up for fear of saying something ‘politically incorrect.’ My views are in no way racist or pro-white, but many times I was in question as to how I should state something.” Dillon posted a response in which he agreed with Laura: “I don’t want to offend them but when I have difficulties talking to them for fear of saying to wrong thing I tend to avoid conversation.” Perhaps these comments give us some insight about students’ difficulty with speaking in face-to-face discussions in English 367 courses. For the most part, Caucasian students in Class A and in Class B seemed to be afraid of discussing controversial topics in face-to-face discussions, where they were afraid of offending someone or expressing politically incorrect views.

Towards the end of the quarter, some students began to discuss in the e-mail reflector what was happening in the large-group face-to-face discussion. Dan posted a message to the reflector complaining that “too many people have pent up feeling in our class, and I can understand why.” He went on to explain his feelings: “Why do most of our class’ discussions center around race? Isn’t there anything else to talk about than race? I’m interested to know how the rest of you feel about our discussions in class. Am I the only one with these feelings, or just the only one who will admit that I do? Write me and let me know.” Nicole responded to Dan’s posting:

I also would like to know why close to every class discussion lately has revolved around race. And why when we discuss race, violence is always a large part of the discussion. I think that is fairly ironic. I think that it is those who constantly push the issues that actually intensify the problem.
Given Nicole's comments about Monique in her small group, it seemed obvious to me that she was referring to Monique when she mentioned "those who constantly push the issue."

Laura agreed with Dan and Nicole:

I too am having a hard time with the way our English class discussions are going... The fact that our discussions, for some odd reason, usually turn to race only complicates the matter even more. Why does this always seem to happen? And more importantly, why do we allow it to happen? Why can't we stay with the subject at hand? Anyone agree? Speak up!!

Bob concurred: "I agree with what you said. Everything comes up being a racial issue. If people wouldn't be so prejudice and claim that there race is right and we don't understand the other races, then this class would go much smoother." Clearly Bob also blamed Monique for the difficulty he perceived with people "claiming that there race is right and we don't understand the other races." I wondered to what extent the teacher was the intended audience for these postings, since the students seemed to be addressing one another, but with the awareness that the teacher would read their e-mail messages.

For the most part, the teacher did not respond in the class discussion to what went on in the reflector because he felt that it was important for the students to have a "free" space in which to express their ideas. He seemed aware of the significance of their postings when he told me in our interview that he was frustrated with the students' resistance to issues of race. "When they said, 'we're tired of talking about race,' I think they were talking about Monique, who was quick to bring things around to race, whether explicitly or not. I think they picked up on that and because they had a member of a minority group speaking so much, they always identified her discourse with race." The teacher was unsympathetic to student complaints about Monique, and so refused to
address them in either online or face-to-face discussions. In our interview, the teacher told me that he wanted to address the other students’ treatment of Monique but felt unwilling to use her as an “exploited learning resource.”

However, in a face-to-face discussion during Class Twelve, when the teacher introduced the readings for the last unit, on “AIDS, dis-ease and homophobia,” he mentioned immediately before dismissing class that he had been reading the reflector postings and did not approve what was written in them:

It seems also on the reflector a bizzarro thread has been developing for quite some time talking about gay and lesbian issues, and for the most part it has been incredibly homophobic--but I hope that towards the end of the quarter you can use that to explore these particular issues with greater sophistication and cultural awareness.

Perhaps because none of the students in the class were openly gay, Mike was willing to address homophobia face-to-face. On the other hand, addressing the difficult and personally charged racial issues in the class would have distinguished Monique’s visible difference, something the teacher felt unwilling to do.

6. Class B Aspects Discussions

The teacher used the Aspects online synchronous “chat” software every two weeks in Class B for a total of four times during the term. Students used preset pseudonyms to participate in small group discussions. The teacher usually “floated” around the room, looking over students’ shoulders to make sure that they were on task. At the end of each Aspects session, he put students into small groups according to their Aspects conferences and asked them to reveal their “real life” identities to one another. One day the following thread developed in one of the Aspects discussions:
Walter: So, where is the conversation monopolizer today?
Scotty: She is noticeably absent, maybe the rest of the class will get to talk today.
Pricilla: Walter, that what I was wondering. We probably wouldn’t have had to do this Aspects thing because she wasn’t here.
Walter: Good point, Pricillia
Captain Hook: Hopefully she won’t be here today. I would like to get a word in. I guess this is my chance.
Troubleman: Good point
Peter: You never know, she might show up at the last min and take over

In this forum, the ability or “license” to speak comes up again, as it did in the small-group face-to-face discussion. In this case, the ability to speak is directly related to Monique’s absence, or inability to speak. The students knew that the writing they did in Aspects would be collected and possibly discussed, but they also knew that their anonymity would be protected from the teacher. Six students persisted in voicing complaints about Monique. It is clear from this exchange that students found some solidarity against Monique among their peers. As in the small group face-to-face discussions, there was no “teacher” present in Aspects, and since Monique was absent that day racial difference was absent from the class as well. The students found a space where it was safe for them to express their animosity toward another student in the comfort of cultural homogeneity.

The teacher was angry and disappointed about the above Aspects conversation, which later turned into an online “outing” and gay-bashing session. In our interview, he called it, “a breaking point for the class and for me.” Mike felt that he had gone too far in creating safe spaces for his students when he saw that they were free to behave in entirely inappropriate ways. The students expressed disappointment about what happened, too. Although a couple of students expressed a preference for the Aspects discussions in the
surveys, most complained that the Aspects discussions were "not really anonymous" or that they always seemed to get "off track." The Aspects sessions in Class B seemed to be "machine-centered" and "student run" since the students and teacher conformed to the constraints of the software and the students had to decide the direction for discussions. Ultimately, the students seemed unhappy with a discourse environment in which no one seemed to be in control.

7. Issues of Difference in Class B

When I interviewed the teacher of Class B, he told me that he felt that the small group discussions were the most successful part of his class because in small groups the students had a greater sense of individuality. He told me, "[Small-group face-to-face discussions, Aspects discussions, and the e-mail reflector] make it hard to jump to large groups, where suddenly individuality is erased, suddenly you are saying things to everyone." While I do not agree that individuality was "erased" in the large group, I do think that many students were reluctant to confront the individual differences that were manifested in the large group. It was easy for students to reach quick consensus in their small groups, but the face-to-face large group discussions were often a forum for uncomfortable disagreement.

Perhaps the teacher also sensed that his own presence made a difference in large group discussions. In Aspects, in the e-mail reflector, and in small group discussions, the teacher was an "absent" presence. He designed these spaces, but did not participate in them. In large group discussions, the teacher necessarily became the leader and the voice of authority, a role which contradicted his pedagogical goals. By letting students "run"
the majority of large-group face-to-face discussions, he failed to interact with them there as well. As a result, the students were forced to confront difficult issues without guidance.

Although the teacher supported Monique’s views and respected her discursive strategies in his class, he saw that her participation in large group was problematic for the other students. As a result, the teacher felt reluctant about large group discussions, where he felt like he had to seize control of the class from his students. Ironically, these large group discussions were the place where Monique felt safest, because there the teacher could be her ally. The teacher did not hear what happened in small-group face-to-face discussions, did not see the Aspects conferences, and did not see my surveys. He responded to this crisis in what seemed to him appropriate ways, but because he wasn’t involved in three of the four discourse spaces in the class, he did not do enough. This negative example of Monique’s experiences in English 367 provides a positive heuristic for pedagogy as we reconsider the importance of teacher involvement in the various discourse spaces of a computer-supported classroom. A teacher needs to help students by modeling discourses and interacting with students to refine and interrogate arguments and ideas. When I argue against the machine-centered, student-run pedagogy in Class B, I do not argue for student-centered and teacher-run classes. Rather, I believe that a student-centered class could be teacher-mediated. One significant problem in Class B was that the various discourse spaces in the class were not connected. The large-group forums, both online and off-line, should have been spaces for brining in loose threads from other forums and tying them together.
By positioning Monique as the subject of this chapter, I subject her to my ethnographic gaze and to the gaze of my readers. Monique is not meant to be an example of how women of color construct identity in computer networks. Rather, I hope that an understanding of how this teacher’s pedagogical choices worked in this particular class with these particular students will help us to make better informed design choices in our own unique situations, where we try to reach beyond boundaries of race and gender and class, using electronic discourse. I end this chapter with Monique’s own perception of herself as a learner in English 367: “It’s neat to be who I am. I just want to share it with everybody but they don’t understand. So I try. I try my best.” It was obvious to me that Monique’s previous classroom experiences gave her the confidence to go on trying to express herself even when she encountered resistance to her ideas. In Chapter Five, I reread Monique’s experience in terms of machine-centered and student-centered pedagogy.
CHAPTER 5

The Subject(s) of Technology: Towards a Student-centered Pedagogy for Networked Composition Classrooms

Technology can be an effective vehicle for ideology, a vital part of a larger social mechanism for reproducing particular ideologies, and even a perspective on our understanding of the world that blinds us to other ways of living and understanding.

Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selke

In a talk given at Ohio State in April 1997, Cynthia Selke cautioned her listeners that although we may want to link technological "advancements" to productive social or pedagogical change, existing social forces usually work to reinforce the status quo.

Selke's cautionary remarks remind us that computers alone cannot transform our classrooms and communities. Just as the Internet has sometimes been portrayed in popular culture as giving birth to a kind of techno-utopian multicultural future, as in the MCI commercial quoted in the frontispiece to this work, compositionists have hailed computer networks as making possible a student-centered, multicultural, pedagogical revolution.¹ At Ohio State and elsewhere, composition teachers endorse such a vision by

¹ Of course the Internet is not always portrayed so positively in popular culture. Religious conservatives, for example, often attempt to link computers to the decline of American family values by pointing to the prevalence of pornographic web sites and cybersex chat rooms. The techno-utopian multicultural vision is more often promoted by corporations who have an economic interest in promoting such a vision. For example, the text for the MCI commercial in the frontispiece to this work tells us that the Internet is a place where people communicate "mind to mind," uninfluenced by categories such as black/white, man/woman, etc. Along with the celebratory text, the commercial shows "an extraordinary array of people, from different walks of life, different age groups and ethnic groups, the young, the old, the vibrant, the infirmed (sic)." (E-mail communication. Rick Phillips, MCI news bureau.)
using computer systems (including classroom layout, hardware/network connections, and accompanying software) to support student-centered pedagogies in multicultural courses.\(^2\) The question of whether their vision has been realized by actual classroom practice, however, remains largely unresolved. In this chapter, I examine this question by making a distinction between machine-centered and student-centered pedagogy and re-examining the ways students and teachers interacted with one another and used computer technology in Class A and Class B. I also make recommendations in this chapter for student-centered pedagogies in networked composition classrooms and raise new questions for computers and composition studies.

In this chapter, my descriptions of some of the problems I observed with the use of technology in Class A and Class B implicate my own teaching as well as that of the teachers whose classes I studied, for I have used the same technology in similar ways in my own classes (with comparable results). The teachers of Class A and Class B therefore are not meant to serve as "unsuccessful" examples; rather, they should be seen as thoughtful teachers who worked hard to use computers productively in their classrooms. They understood the dangers of technology uninformed by careful pedagogical choices, and used technology in ways that were established or recommended by the CCL Program in an attempt to enact student-centered multicultural pedagogies. However, this chapter proposes a new (and challenging) starting point for technology, one that considers the needs of the students before considering the available technology.

\(^2\) See the glossary for definitions of "student-centered," "multicultural," and other relevant terms.
1. Student-centered versus Machine-centered Pedagogy

In *Things that Make Us Smart*, cognitive scientist Donald Norman describes the way that human beings are often expected to conform to technology. Norman argues that the same technology that makes people "smart" in one context causes us to be judged as inadequate in comparison with machines in another context. Norman suggests that our perspective should be reversed: "Technology should be our friend in the creation of a better life; it should complement human abilities, aid those activities for which we are poorly suited, and enhance and help develop those for which we are ideally suited. That, to me, is a humanizing, appropriate use of technology" (12). Norman uses the example of the telephone to illustrate his point, claiming that "the telephone is designed around the needs of the telephone system: The goal is to make proper connections as efficiently as possible in order to minimize the demands on and cost of the equipment at the central telephone switching offices" (234), often at the expense of privacy, convenience, and good manners. Norman points out that a softer, more humane technology would actually be a more powerful, more sophisticated technology that would enable telephones to consider the needs of the users by providing more information about the calling party and more settings and controls, for example. According to Norman, even the relatively new caller i.d. feature, which does provide users with more options and information, is still a machine-centered technology. Norman says, "Identifying the telephone number of the caller is the machine-centered approach. This is the information that the system finds easy to provide. But is this what the call recipient wants to know? Not really" (235). Norman
proposes that a human-centered approach would provide options for callers and recipients; allowing both parties to use the technology in ways that best fit their needs.

Norman's definitions of human-centered and machine-centered views of humans and machines provide a model for defining "student-centered" and "machine-centered" pedagogy for networked composition classrooms. According to my model, machine-centered pedagogy incorporates computers into composition classrooms in ways that might consider the technical capabilities of the hardware and software (and the imperative to use them) before considering the needs of the students. Student-centered pedagogy, on the other hand, provides students with "a richer set of information and options than would otherwise be available," and "acknowledge[s] the initiative and flexibility of the person" (Norman 232). In concrete terms, machine-centered pedagogy might consider the capabilities of multimedia educational technologies in the classroom and then seek applications that exploit these capabilities. In contrast, student-centered pedagogy in composition classes might give students opportunities to use the computer for communication, peer response, or research, according to their needs and their access to computers. A student-centered approach to computer-supported instruction in English 367 would begin by considering the needs of the students in relation to a second-level multicultural writing course and then would consider how computer technology might complement student abilities and needs in such a course--by providing students with increased opportunities to encounter diversity for example. The following sections show

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3 However, student-centered pedagogy also entails more equitable access to computers among students. 131
that the teachers I observed attempted to create student-centered classroom environments, but instead established machine-centered classrooms that worked in opposition to the multicultural goals underlying English 367.

2. Face-to-face Discussion in Class A and Class B

The teachers of Class A and Class B included small-group and large-group face-to-face discussions in their classes and asked students to talk about the difficult issues in English 367 in these forums. Small groups seemed to provide safe spaces for students to express their ideas about the multicultural subject matter of the course; however, my observations of small-group face-to-face discussion suggested that these spaces are more likely to create easy consensus among students than productive debate. According to the impressions I recorded of small-group face-to-face discussions in my field notes, these forums were generally satisfactory for students. Virtually all students participated in small-group discussions—even those who remained silent in large-group face-to-face discussion. In my interviews I found that many students, like Cheryl in Class A, found small-group face-to-face discussions places where their voices could be heard and their opinions valued. Others, like Ellen in Class A, told me that they could speak freely in small-group face-to-face discussions without fear of offending someone. As discussed in Chapter Three, the focus group in Class A usually came to consensus during small-group discussions. Students debated more often in large-group face-to-face discussions. The same dynamic seemed true of small-group face-to-face discussions in Class B, though Monique was an important exception since she actively sought debate in both small-group and large-group face-to-face discussions. As discussed in Chapter Four, many of students
in Class B were frustrated with Monique's style of interaction, so small groups in Class B became spaces where they sought consensus in their opposition to Monique.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the computer classrooms in the CCL Program at Ohio State were consciously designed to facilitate student interaction and collaboration, with computer workstations around the perimeter of the room, small round tables for student groups, and rolling chairs rather than bolted-down desks. The teachers whose classes I studied were well aware of the importance of such design issues. Both teachers attempted to work with the architecture of the classroom by engaging students in frequent small-group discussions and activities. The classroom design seemed to encourage small group community and appeared to work best for small-group discussions. The small group clusters seemed to work less effectively in large-group discussions by isolating small groups from one another and from the class as a whole. I think that the design of the classroom made large-group discussion difficult because students sitting at small round tables could easily turn their backs on one another or on the teacher simply by swiveling their chairs. In both Class A and Class B, students remained sitting at their small tables for large-group discussions; in Class B, some students consistently swiveled their chairs away from the group. A more productive computer classroom arrangement for large-group discussion might be a "donut" shape, in which the computers line the perimeter of the
room, with one large seminar table in the middle where students would be compelled to face one another.⁴

Large-group face-to-face discussions were problematic for students in both Class A and Class B. As discussed in Chapter Three, four of the five members of the “focus” group in Class A told me about choosing silence in large-group face-to-face discussions. Ellen and Jason, for example, both told me that they were afraid of expressing politically incorrect opinions in front of the class which I found a troubling indicator of student inability to address multicultural issues in their classrooms. In my observations of Class A, I found that the members of my focus group used the available discourse environments in different ways and for different reasons. The example of this class showed me that we need to value different discursive environments as we value our students’ diverse ways of participating in them. As a whole, the members of this class were able to use the e-mail reflector to engage with one another, for example, by writing e-mail postings about Aspects sessions and about large-group face-to-face discussions. I think it would have been interesting to see what could have happened if the reflector had lasted longer than five weeks. It seemed important that the discourse spaces in Class A were interconnected, but since a good deal of activity took place on the e-mail reflector at the end of the quarter, the students and teacher did not have a chance to bring some threads into large-group face-to-face discussions. I think that this dynamic of connecting

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⁴ There were two CCL classrooms arranged in such a shape. The classroom I studied was originally designed to accommodate business writing courses which incorporated many small-group collaborative writing projects.
across media is a productive one that should be pursued as we incorporate different discourse spaces into our classrooms and include diverse voices in our discussions.

I observed that Class B failed Monique in some very important ways by allowing an atmosphere where other students became hostile to her participation in the class. With the very best of intentions for creating a student-centered classroom, the teacher of Class B instead created a machine-centered and student-run classroom. While a student-centered pedagogy should have given teacher and students an opportunity to work together to define the discourse spaces of the class, instead the students were expected to take responsibility for leading both face-to-face and online discussions without being adequately equipped to do so. Students directed small-group face-to-face discussions, led almost half of the large-group face-to-face discussions, and controlled the direction of Aspects discussions and the e-mail reflector. Though the teacher gave them directive assignments, the students failed when they tried to approach issues of diversity in the class. Their interaction online did not have the transformative power that the teacher hoped it would. In Class B, I was disturbed by the number of students who expressed anger and resentment toward what they perceived as Monique's domination of face-to-face discussions. Students resisted Monique's participation in the class in small-group face-to-face discussions, the e-mail reflector, and Aspects discussions--the discursive environments in which the teacher was least involved. Monique wanted merely to be able to express her views, but she encountered resistance when other students failed to listen to her or changed the subject when she was finished speaking. The fact that Monique was a member of an underrepresented group in the class and in the university, and that she
encountered resistance in relation to a multicultural course made the situation even more troubling to me. Monique felt “safest” in large-group face-to-face discussions, where the teacher was her ally. I think that more opportunities for the students in Class B to make connections across different media, including face-to-face discussion of e-mail postings and Aspects transcripts, might have helped them to understand one another’s perspectives on difficult issues and different ways of interacting in relation to these issues.

Both teachers intended for network interaction to inform face-to-face interaction, and it is difficult to measure all of the ways it might have done so. In his handout concerning the reflector, the teacher of Class A explained that the reflector would be used “as a means of prefacing and extending classroom discussion.” Similarly, the teacher of Class B wrote in his syllabus: “Hopefully we will be able to draw on these discussions to make our class time more productive and interesting.” The teachers occasionally referred to e-mail postings in class, but the reflectors remained largely extraneous to class discussion. I believe that the assignments go a long way toward explaining this dynamic. The teacher of Class A structured assignments so that students could write their required postings in response to face-to-face discussions, reading assignments, other e-mail postings, or Aspects discussions. The teacher of Class B defined required postings strictly in response to reading assignments. Neither teacher gave students choices about how to use e-mail and neither teacher participated in his reflector. After introductory e-mail training in both classes, the reflectors were never again used in class. Perhaps if the students could have spent some time in class discussing not only the content of reflector postings, but also the dynamics of e-mail interaction, they could have been equipped to
make choices about using different technologies of communication for different discursive purposes. A student-centered class could not only give students the opportunity to use different media, but also could give them the opportunity to examine the effects of different media on their interactions with one another. Using the e-mail reflector in class, or devoting class time to discussing issues that arose in the e-mail reflector and in Aspects would have given the students in Class A and Class B another opportunity to connect across media.

3. Online Discussion in Class A and Class B

The teachers of Class A and Class B sought to use networks to create “student-centered” classrooms by creating virtual discussion spaces in the e-mail reflectors and in Aspects that were entirely student-led. As discussed in Chapter Three, the teacher of Class A tried to create an electronic space in accordance with students’ needs by giving students the opportunity to help him design reflector assignments, but the students were not equipped to do so. When the teacher asked students about various possibilities for participation in the reflector (how often students should post, how often they should check their mail, etc.), one student, Billy, argued, “I don’t think we’re able to make a decision when no one really knows what you’re talking about.” Unfortunately, neither students nor teacher were experienced enough in e-mail discussions to define an assignment that would accomplish the teacher’s goal of “prefacing and extending classroom discussions.” The Class A reflector evolved in terms of assigned student postings; rather than participating in the reflector, the teacher sent students private e-mail responses to their postings, emphasizing the fact that the reflector was an “assignment” space. The Class B e-mail
reflector also evolved in terms of assigned postings. The teacher of Class B expressed a student-centered ideal for e-mail when he wrote in his syllabus: "We will...use the computer to create an (electronic) intellectual community...to invite more dynamic and inclusive participation in class discussion." Apparently, his "we" did not include himself, as he did not participate in the reflector discussion, but relied on the computer network itself to do the inviting. In retrospect, I believe that shorter, more frequent postings in both classes would have encouraged students to interact more with one another online. Also, increased involvement by the teacher could have made the space seem more like a discussion space. Connections across media in the two classes would have highlighted the significance of different discourse environments.

Both of the teachers knew about the potential advantages of computer networks for undergraduate students. They structured their assignments with the intention of creating student-centered discussion spaces in cyberspace. However, when we consider the ways that e-mail is most commonly used "itrw" (in the real world), the assignments seem to reflect a machine-centered pedagogical view in which the computers become high-tech machines for turning in homework. The students in Class A and Class B met face-to-face twice each week for small-group and large-group discussion opportunities. Most of them had limited time and access to computers. Though the computer component of the course provided them with an important way to learn some of the uses and conventions of electronic discourse, a student-centered approach would have designed assignments to reflect some real-world applications for e-mail. For example, in academic settings e-mail is regularly used by faculty for operations such as corresponding with
colleagues who are geographically distant; transferring documents without paper and postage; posting messages to groups; archiving correspondence; time-shifting correspondence (for people who are often away from their desks or working in different time zones); and, increasingly, for contact with students. E-mail reflectors are often used as discussion forums for groups who share a particular set of interests, e.g. a list dedicated to a subfield of composition studies or to an upcoming academic conference. Students could use e-mail in parallel scenarios; for example, they could learn to transfer documents by participating in online peer responding groups, they could participate in online discussion groups with students at other universities, or they could make contact with their teachers.

Individual students had very different ways of participating in the e-mail reflectors. In Class A, Lila was one of the least active in large-group face-to-face discussions and one of the top three participants in the e-mail reflector. In Class B, Andrew and Nathan were both among the students who participated least in large-group face-to-face discussions and were both among the students who participated most in the e-mail reflector. Counting the total number of lines posted does not tell the whole story, though. In Class B, Andrew and Peggy were the students who posted the most lines to the reflector, but Andrew posted nineteen times, while Peggy posted only seven. Ninety-two percent of the lines Peggy posted were reading responses, while only fifty percent of the lines Andrew posted.

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5 The pilot study for this project was a first-year writing course taught simultaneously at Ohio State, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Students participated in online conferencing activities with one another and wrote collaborative essays. Though the computer technology for the course was hopelessly slow and unwieldy, the course offered many benefits, such as contact with students at other universities.
were reading-response. Teachers need to have different ways of evaluating such different participatory styles, for Peggy’s postings were more substantial than Andrew’s, but Andrew was more engaged in the ongoing discussion. In Class A, Cheryl used the reflector less often than any of her classmates and posted the fewest total lines, but posted powerful responses to the homophobic content of her classmates’ participation in an Aspects conference. Cheryl’s participation was minimal in some senses, but she was able to make connections across media in a way that should be valued in her class.

Finally, no simple or easy patterns emerge from student participation in e-mail reflectors in these classes; instead, there is complexity, and our response to these issues must also be complex. My research suggests that the students in these classes were not equally equipped to use the reflector; for some it provided an important new way of participating in class discussions, for others it was a time-consuming way to hand in reading response assignments. The fact that the two teachers of these classes placed such different values on participation in different environments in their classes suggests that many of us do not know how to evaluate student participation in different discursive environments.

Both of the teachers in my study used anonymous Aspects conferences in another attempt to “decenter” authority in their classrooms. For example, Mike asked his students in Class B to participate in an Aspects discussion on the second day of class without giving them any prior training or explanation of the technology. He started the program at each work station before class began, and when the students arrived he told them to find a computer and begin typing. None of the students had any technical difficulty with this
assignment. When students are busy typing on computers, engaged with one another and having fun, it appears as though a class is no longer teacher-centered because the teacher is not commanding constant student attention. However, my research suggests that such a scenario might be better defined as machine-centered than student-centered, because the available technology limits the ways students can use it. The teachers of Class A and Class B unconsciously enacted a "machine-centered" pedagogy rather than a student-centered one by allowing the available technology to dictate their pedagogical choices in the classroom. As previously noted, Aspects allows students to engage in synchronous online conferences anonymously through the use of pseudonyms. For the teachers, the idea of using pseudonyms for class discussions was that students would have a chance to experiment with new ideas in relation to difficult topics. However, their use of this technology was constrained by some of the limitations of the software and by programmatic precedent. Neither the teacher of Class A nor the teacher of Class B participated in Aspects discussions. Because the program usually would not run on all of the workstations in the classroom (due to technical glitches), there was often no "extra" workstation available for the teacher. In addition, it was impossible for teachers to participate discreetly in more than one conference from a single workstation. The Aspects software "beeps" from each computer in a given conference (perhaps four or five simultaneous "beeps" from around the room) when a participant enters or exits the conference. When someone joins a new conference, she does not have access to any of the discussion that went on before she joined. These constraints of the software limit the ways that teachers can use it.
Some CCL teachers used Aspects for role-playing activities (e.g. asking students to use names of characters/authors from their reading assignments), but it was easier to use preset pseudonyms than to reset the names in Aspects each time it was used. Teachers could have moved toward student-centered pedagogy by using Aspects to meet student needs, for example by creating large-group simultaneous conferences using pseudonyms. The presence of a large group might have significantly changed the dynamics of Aspects discussions. Allowing students to choose their own pseudonyms for such a conference would allow them to construct personae. Role-playing in such an atmosphere would allow students to experiment with ideas and discourse practices that would support the English 367 goal of encountering diversity in the classroom.®

Asking a machine to mediate human communication by concealing human identity can be problematic. Just as most prank phone calls and anonymous notes are considered taboo, so should most anonymous online communication be considered so. As early theorists like Cooper and Selfe and Spitzer observed, networked communication creates the possibility for communication without the constraints of race, gender, ethnicity, etc. For students such as Lila in Class A, who found a voice in the class in e-mail, electronic communication provided benefits that should not be overlooked. Unfortunately, when we remove the visible markers of identity from human interaction, the result can be more like the Milgram experiments than like a multicultural techno-utopia. In both of the classes I

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® There is a practice called “trolling” on the Internet, in which someone goads other participants in a discussion by making statements he/she does not believe (like Cathy in the Class A Aspects session, pretending to be a lesbian). Teachers could explain this and other practices to students so that they could use and respond to them in educated ways.
studied, the students enjoyed the anonymous Aspects discussions as a supplement to their face-to-face discussions, and though most of the discussions seemed productive, both classes had disturbing incidents in which the technology was used in harmful or oppressive ways. My own experience of teaching in computer-supported classrooms, and that of other researchers (e.g. Alison Regan) has produced similar results. These problems were not merely the result of instructor ignorance of the potential dangers of technology, for both teachers understood the potential danger of anonymity and warned their students to use appropriate classroom discourse. When John introduced his students in Class A to Aspects on the third day of class, he told them, “Anonymity is both good and bad. It’s good because you might feel more free to say what you really think. . .But please resist the urge to use that to call other people ugly names and things like that.” This teacher was concerned about the possibility of students “flaming” one another, which did happen later in the term. The students did not have strategies for defining the discourse of Aspects, or reasons to take responsibility for what they wrote in these conferences. The experiences of these teachers remind us that it is easier to introduce new technology into our classrooms than to enact revolutionary pedagogies, for sometimes our revolutionary ideas merely reinforce the status quo.
4. Towards a Student-centered Pedagogy for Networked Classrooms

Each year, our students come to composition classrooms with more prior experience on computers and increasing levels of technological sophistication. At the same time, computer-supported classrooms and readily-available public computing facilities on university campuses allow technologically inclined teachers to increase their expectations for student computer use. However, the social and economic implications of such expectations can dramatically affect our students’ participation in composition classrooms. In the last ten years, realizations about the “home” literacies that students bring to composition classrooms have led to increased understanding of individual writers as part of complex systems. In the same way, we need to consider the electronic literacies our students bring to writing classrooms as an important aspect of their social and cultural identities. Just as we consider the diversity of cultural identities among our students, we need to consider a diversity of computer literacies.

Virtually all of our students know how to point and click with a mouse, but beyond this ability the range is tremendous. Some regularly use e-mail and online research tools, are familiar with role-playing activities in MOOS and MUDS, understand programming languages, or have their own World Wide Web home pages. Some have never used any of these technologies. Some students can do research and send e-mail from the comfort of their dorm rooms; others have to commute to campus and wait for a seat in a computer lab. Not only are there different levels of familiarity and access; even the students who are most familiar and proficient with technology might be underprepared for all of the discursive possibilities of computer-mediated communication. For example, I
think of the student "Dave" from my own class described in Chapter One. Dave was very proficient in e-mail, but demonstrated that he was unprepared to use it in academically responsible ways when he "flamed" Rich. Our responsibility as late-twentieth century composition teachers is to understand our students' computer literacies and categories of computer experience (such as the ones described by Gruber, e.g. comfort level, access, etc.) and work with them to define new possibilities for networked communication in our classrooms.

Recent scholarship problematizes computer networks by bringing to light concerns about underrepresented groups in classroom computer networks. We need to consider the broader implications of these studies by realizing that all of the discourse spaces in our computer-supported classrooms can be potentially safe or potentially dangerous for our students. Just as we must not privilege one kind of difference among students in multicultural courses, we must not privilege one type of discourse in computer-supported classes. Returning to the story of Rich and Dave from Chapter One, I believe that these two students used online interaction to mediate a conflict that otherwise would have been suppressed in my class. Although I regret the way Rich became "an exploited learning resource" in my class, I believe that what happened to all of us in the class taught Dave and others a lesson about "difference." It was, in my opinion, the interaction among the different media that helped all of us to understand and resolve the problem. When a conflict arose online, students were unable to resolve it in an unfamiliar discourse space with unfamiliar conventions. Bringing the conflict into the face-to-face discussion space
and working to understand it there enabled us to use the terms and conventions of a familiar discourse space to resolve the conflict.

The most important conclusion my research can offer computers and composition studies is that students have a variety of different and complex reasons for participating (or not) in various discourse environments. It is reductive to try to generalize about patterns of participation. Instead, we ought to work to create "student-centered" classrooms by working with a variety of discursive forums. Computer-supported classrooms give us an opportunity to work with our students in defining a variety of new discourses. In order to create student-centered rather than machine-centered pedagogies for computer-supported classrooms, we need to understand and value students' varied experiences with technology and work with students to create guidelines for face-to-face and networked interaction. I suggest that teachers who want to use computer technology in their classrooms consider the following questions:

1. What are the needs of students that can be met by computer technology?
2. What kinds of computer technology can meet those needs?
3. What kinds of assignments will help students to use the computer technology?
4. What are the constraints of the existing computer system that might limit the ways students can use it?

This last question is the most difficult and most crucial one. Assuming that we do not have access to "perfect" hardware or software (as most of us do not), we must weigh the benefits and potential dangers of the existing system. We need to decide in such a case whether to use computer technology at all. We must balance our desire to experiment
with new technology with a thoughtful approach to what the technology can do. I propose that a student-centered approach would use computer technology in courses like English 367C to provide the following: a place for students to encounter diversity of identity and opinion (e.g. a listserv for all English 367 classes, or a long-distance listserv that could connect Ohio State students to students at other universities); accessibility (by bringing it into the classroom—though I believe that this will become less essential as more students gain access to computers and the Internet from their homes or dormitories.); and relevance (by connecting face-to-face and online discussions). Such uses are entirely possible with existing computer technology.

5. The Subject(s) of Technology

Composition teachers have had to make enormous claims for the transformative power of technology in order to compete for scarce resources to fund our computer-supported classrooms. Billie J. Wahlstrom and Cynthia Selfe made the following observations about the economics of computer-supported teaching in English departments at a meeting of the Association for Departments of English in 1992:

Certainly we now recognize departmental administrators supportive of computer-assisted writing facilities and computer-using humanists must confront a set of increasingly conflicting forces. For one, the university bureaucracy requires that scheduling and financial plans be made years in advance, but technological change and the faculty members who embrace it require more immediate solutions. Their work, often characterized by unexpected innovations, frequently generates non-budgeted equipment requests, new personnel expenses, as well as unanticipated problems with space and scheduling. Moreover, even though costs of computing have come down in terms of the amount of computing power one gets for the dollar, faculty who use computers are finding uses for more and more complex and expensive hardware and software... (qtd. in Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe 258-59)
Computer-using humanists are confronted with a dilemma every time we try to fund computer-supported teaching environments. Computer technology is prohibitively expensive (now), but we have an intellectual, perhaps even a moral, imperative to work with computer technology (now) and to define its discursive possibilities for our classrooms.

Billie J. Wahlstrom and Cynthia Selfe argue that composition teachers have a responsibility to explore the field of computer-mediated communication:

The commitment of English departments to supporting computer networks, electronic common spaces, is essential because we are among the few who understand to what extent we are constituted by, and can constitute others by, discursive practices. (qtd. in Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe 258)

If we are the ones who can understand discursive practices, we must also work to understand the ways that computer technology shapes these practices. Too often, our use of technology is dictated by the technology itself. Christina Haas points out that we are at an ideal historical moment for critical inquiry about computer technology because “computer-based literacy technologies are still new enough that writers notice them. That is, many writers can articulate the advantages and disadvantages of computer technologies and can make conscious decisions to work around these technologies” (25). We have a responsibility to make conscious decisions about using computer technologies in our classrooms as well as a responsibility to imagine the shape of technology for the next millennium.

Part of the challenge in avoiding the trap of machine-centered pedagogy is the seductive ease with which we can introduce computer systems into our classrooms.
Indeed, the lighting systems, heating and air conditioning, or physical structures in our classrooms create a reliance on machines that seems utterly invisible and not worth mentioning unless something goes wrong. The same might be true someday of network technology. Those of us in the privileged position of having computer technology are in a better position to look critically at computer networks than those who must still work to convince their departments that they need computers. When something goes wrong, we need to think critically about how the system might better serve our needs and those of our students. At the same time, those of us who have technology have often worked very hard to get it and feel an economic imperative to use it in our classrooms, even though we have to work within the available parameters of hardware and software or classroom architecture that we did not design.

When we “subject” our students to technology, we need to consider the “subject” of technology—the how and why of computers in our composition classrooms. Nicholas Negroponte makes a prediction that computers and humans will become even more closely intertwined in the not-so-distant future: “The post-information age is about acquaintance over time: machines’ understanding individuals with the same degree of subtlety (or more than) we can expect from other human beings” (164). We ought to consider the implications of a future in which computers understand us better than our colleagues do. We need to work with our students in defining a humanist stance toward computer-mediated communication, emphasizing the human over the machine, for as Foucault says in the epigraph to Chapter One, “There are no machines of freedom, by definition.”
GLOSSARY

anonymous: not named or identified, as in anonymous participation in an electronic network

asynchronous: used in digital communication (as between computers) in which there is no timing requirement for transmission and in which the start of each character is individually signaled by the transmitting device [from Merriam Webster’s online dictionary]

Aspects: a Macintosh software program that allows for synchronous and anonymous conferences

electronic mail: first appeared 1977: messages sent and received electronically (as between terminals linked by telephone lines or microwave relays) [from Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary]

e-mail: electronic mail. See above.

multicultural: first appeared 1941: of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures [from Merriam Webster’s online dictionary]; refers most often in this work to pedagogy which is intended to reflect a multicultural point of view

online: (on-line) first appeared 1950: connected to, served by, or available through a system, especially a computer or telecommunications system [from Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary]

reflector: e-mail technology that allows all messages sent to a single address to “reflect” to each address on a list

student-centered: describes a pedagogical approach in which the teacher’s authority is de-emphasized and students are given power (based on Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed)

tagged: labelled, as with a participant’s name; used in this work to refer to electronic messages labelled with the name of the sender
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Whose Machines Are These?" Politics, Power, and the New Technology.


Wahlstrom, Billie J. "Communication and Technology: Defining a Feminist Presence in Research and Practice." *Literacy and Computers: The Complications of Teaching*

APPENDIX A

English 367 Syllabus and E-mail Reflector Guidelines

1. Syllabus for English 367C.02: The American Experience

Course Description:
English 367C.02 is an intermediate composition course that extends and refines skills in expository writing, critical reading, and critical thinking, by having students analyze, discuss, and write about major topics pertaining to the American experience in literature. The course is designed to extend and deepen students’ awareness of the complexity and significance of the American experience. The course requires that students plan, draft, and revise (either individually or collaboratively) extended essays that demand a sophisticated application of expository skills. The selected readings on the American experience stimulate the students’ own writing and facilitate an awareness of the interplay among purpose, audience, content, structure, and style.

Materials:
* New Worlds of Literature: Writings from America’s Many Cultures, 2nd edition
* Reference Guide to the IBM
* a good grammar handbook (e.g. The St. Martin’s Handbook)

Course Policies:
Attendance: Because this class meets only twice a week, we will be covering a lot of material during each class period. Therefore, attendance is extremely important in this course. You must come to class every day. You must be here to participate actively in discussions and in-class writing activities, as well as in-class group work times. Three or more absences may cause you to fail this course.

Computers: You must do all of your papers and response papers on the computer, using the Microsoft Word for Windows program. You will also be required to participate in the class newsgroup, for which you will use your POPMail account.

Collaboration: You will be required to do some collaborative in-class writing assignments as well as to participate in peer responding sessions. I encourage students who wish to do so to write any of the essays for this class collaboratively, with one or more of their classmates. Anyone who chooses to pursue this option must discuss it with me before the first draft of that essay is due.
Assignments: In order to pass this class, you must complete all major assignments. All essays must be handed in by 7:30 a.m. on the day they are due. You will write three essays for this class, five response papers, and one final exam. You will also prepare an oral report as a member of a small group.

Paper Format: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins. You must proofread all your work. If you don't, your grade will automatically be lowered by one full letter grade, and your assignment will be handed back to you to redo in correct form. If you have questions about thesis support, mechanics, sentence structure, style, organization, etc., I will be happy to discuss them with you. I will also be happy to refer you to an appropriate section of The St. Martin's Handbook and/or the Writing Center.

Plagiarism: I encourage you to work with others to generate topic ideas, strategies for development, or even entire essays. When you work with others, though, you must give credit where credit is due. Using someone else's words or ideas as your own is a serious offense in the university. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Committee on Academic Misconduct for review. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail English 367C.02.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined according to the following breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral report</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation*</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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*includes discussion, attendance, quizzes, and in-class writing assignments

Please note: If you choose to do any papers or projects collaboratively, you will be graded as part of a group. When you hand in a collaborative paper, each group member will hand in a group evaluation, giving each member (including yourself) a grade, and defending that grade.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center, located in University Hall, serves all members of the university community, including undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. If you desire assistance with a specific aspect of your writing, you are welcome to visit the Center. It is not a remedial writing lab; it is a place where you can receive individualized advice about topic development, organization, thesis support, sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and so on. It is not an editing or proofreading service. Although they sometimes can accommodate walk-ins, the Center staff is meeting with increasing numbers of students each quarter; therefore it would be best to call (292-5607) or stop in to make an appointment. If you wish to keep your visit confidential, your instructor will not be notified.
Reading List:
Michael Anthony, “Sandra Street” p. 3
Toni Cade Bambara, “The Lesson” p. 723
Lucille Clifton, “in the inner city” p. 51
Margaret Atwood, “The Man from Mars” p. 364
Carter Revard, “Discovery of the New World” p. 417
Gish Jen, “In the American Society” p. 730
Perry Brass, “I Think the New Teacher’s a Queer” p. 402
Alice Bloch, “Six Years” p. 644
Michael Lassell, “How to Watch Your Brother Die” p. 647
Fenton Johnson, “The Limitless Heart” p. 170
Israel Horovitz, The Indian Wants the Bronx p. 303
Stephen Krueger, “Language, Identity, and Violence in Israel Horovitz’s The Indian Wants the Bronx” p. 357
Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” p. 467
Michelle Cliff, “If I Could Write This in Fire I Would Write This in Fire” p. 581
Merle Woo, “Letter to Ma” p. 159
Paula Gunn Allen, “Pocohantas to her English Husband, John Rolfe” p. 628
Maria Albertsen, “Letter to Ma’: The Chasms Between Mothers and Daughters” p. 179
Louise Erdrich, “Fleur” p. 814
2. E-mail Reflector Guidelines

Some guidelines for using the class reflector:

• There are many valuable ways of contributing to class discussions online. You may initiate discussions with questions or observations about a given set of readings, you may comment on another person’s response to a particular reading and add your own interpretation, you may compare or contrast a couple of different readings, you may get into the role of a particular character or author from something we’ve read, or you may bring in your own expertise on a topic to enlighten the class about a particular reading. I’m sure you’ll find other ways of contributing to the online discussion as the quarter goes on. This is an experimental assignment, and I hope you’ll find the reflector useful as a place to experiment with your writing.

• Try to stay on topic. I expect (and invite) digression, but please don’t make our class reflector a forum for lengthy personal exchanges. You have one another’s e-mail addresses, so non-class business can take place electronically in a more appropriate location.

• You should respond to four of the six remaining sets of readings. That’s a minimum guideline.

• I encourage you to use e-mail to work with your small groups on your papers. Try out topics, exchange drafts, etc. You are always welcome to bring the concerns of a small group to the whole class in the reflector.

• Remember, there are no physical cues in electronic mail environments. You can’t tell by someone’s smile, for example, that she meant a comment to be taken lightly, and it’s easy to misinterpret what others “say” online. Try to be open to new ideas, understanding of different perspectives, and thoughtful in considering how your readers might understand what you write. You can use e-mail conventions to help you:

CAPS LOCK can help you emphasize what you say

:) a smile can indicate that you mean to be funny

:( a frown can indicate the reverse

;) or there’s always a wink

and I’m sure there are other symbols that you already know or that you’ll invent as the quarter goes on.

I look forward to talking with all of you in cyberspace!
APPENDIX B

Computer-supported Classroom Layout

File Server

Rolling Chair

Group Table

Mac Centris 610s
APPENDIX C

Student Consent Form and Survey

1. Form for Student Consent to Participate in Research

The Ohio State University

Consent for Participation in Social and Behavioral Research

I consent to participating in research entitled: “Constructing the On-line Self in the Multicultural Composition Classroom.”

Theresa Doerfler has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ____________________

Signed: ____________________
(Participant)

Signed: ____________________
(Principal Investigator)

Signed: ____________________
(Witness)

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2. **Survey for English 367C Students**

The following questions are intended to help me learn about your experiences with three different kinds of class discussion: face-to-face discussion (either in small groups or with the whole class), e-mail discussion (on the class reflector), and Aspects discussion (using the anonymous on-line conferencing program in the classroom). Your honest responses to these questions will help me to evaluate the data I’ve collected in your class this quarter. Your participation in this survey is, of course, voluntary. Although I am requesting your name on this survey for potential follow-up interviews during the last week of the quarter, please be assured that your privacy will be protected. I will not share your responses to this survey with your 367 instructor.

Name: ____________________

1. How would you describe the face-to-face discussions in your 367 class this quarter? What kinds of patterns of participation did you observe (i.e. who participated? when? who “controlled” class discussions? how and why?)?

2. How would you characterize your own participation in face-to-face discussions? How was your participation in these class discussions different or not different from the way you have participated in class discussions in other classes you have taken at Ohio State? Why did you choose to participate the way you did in this class?

3. How would you describe the class discussion in the e-mail reflector? In what way(s) do you think it was or was not different from the face-to-face class discussion?

4. How would you characterize your own participation in the class reflector? In what way(s) was your participation in the reflector different from your participation in face-to-face class discussions? Why did you choose to participate in the reflector the way you did?
5. Have you ever used electronic mail before? If so, could you please describe your participation in electronic-mail discussions?

6. How would you describe the class discussion in Aspects (the anonymous conferencing program used in class)?

7. How would you characterize your own participation in Aspects discussions? In what way(s) was your participation in Aspects discussions different or not different from your participation in the e-mail reflector? In what way(s) was your participation in Aspects discussions different or not different from your participation in face-to-face class discussions? Why did you choose to participate in Aspects discussions the way you did?

8. Would you be willing to talk to me further about any of these issues in a follow-up interview held sometime before the end of the quarter?

9. Would you be willing to talk to me about any of these issues after the quarter is over? (If so, may I please have a phone # where you can be reached this fall?)
Class A Syllabus, Essay Assignments, and E-mail Handout

1. Class A Syllabus

English 367C.01: The American Experience

Course Description: English 367C.01 is an intermediate composition course that extends and refines skills in expository writing, critical reading, and critical thinking, by having students analyze, discuss, and write about major topics pertaining to the United States. The course is designed to extend and deepen students' awareness of the complexity and significance of the U.S. experience, and it requires that students plan, draft, and revise extended essays that demand a sophisticated application of expository skills. The selected readings on the U.S. experience should stimulate the students' writing and facilitate an awareness of the interplay among purpose, audience, content, structure, and style. Moreover, the course will emphasize computer technology, and students will be use computers throughout the course for both word processing and communication.

Required Texts: Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle. Rereading America. 2nd edition
2 articles on 2 hour closed reserve in main library
a good dictionary


Disks: You need to buy three 3.5 inch double sided, double density diskettes

Assignments and Grade Distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay One</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Two</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Three</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Postings</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (attendance, homework, quizzes, etc.)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Policies

Attendance: Because discussion and peer commentary are vital facets of English 367, your regular attendance and participation are necessary for the class to be successful. Therefore, you will be held accountable for your attendance. Two or three unexcused absences may negatively affect your participation grade; four unexcused absences will
lower your grade by a full letter; five unexcused absences will result in a grade of “E” for the course. Also, any in-class work (quizzes, exercises, etc.) that you miss for an unexcused absence cannot be made up.

**Late Assignments:** In fairness to all class members, no late papers will be accepted at any time. Assignments due in class are due at the beginning of the class period and you may not print out final drafts of papers in class on the day that they are due.

**Plagiarism:** Using someone else’s words or ideas as your own is a serious offense in the university. If you are caught committing plagiarism, you may fail the essay, fail the class, or be referred to the Committee on Academic Misconduct for review. Be certain that you correctly document any sources that you use, and if you have any questions about the correct use of sources, please ask me for clarification or advice.

**Software:** Since we will be devoting class time to the drafting process, all of your essays must be written on MacWrite Pro, the word processing program that we have in the classroom. Also, we will be doing our journal writing on an electronic bulletin board. Please realize that these requirements mean that most of you will be doing work at campus computing labs, and that this will likely require your coming to and/or moving around on campus after dark. If you do not feel that you can come to the labs to complete your work, then you should transfer to a section of the course that is not computer driven.

**Paper Format:** Double-space all drafts of your essays and use for a font either Helvetica 12 or Palentino 12. Also, with everything you turn in, please include in the upper left-hand corner of the first page your name, “Eng 367C.01,” my name, assignment title (i.e. “Essay 1—draft,” “quiz”), and the date. Please do not use a title page (we’ll save the paper) or “right-justify” your papers. Do, however, find a neat way to bind things together; since you will be turning in “packages” including several drafts of a paper and peer commentaries, you may want to buy a cheap folder with which to turn in your essays.

**Revision:** Any one essay (except the last one) that you feel could benefit from further revision may be rewritten, and I will average the rewritten version’s grade with the original grade to determine the final grade for the essay. the rewrite must be completed within two weeks of your receiving the original grade.

**Writing Center:** Located in University Hall, the writing center exists to help you with any aspects of the writing process. You can call them at 292-5607 to set up an appointment.

**NOTE:** **You will not pass the course unless you have completed and handed in all of the major writing assignments for the course, including all drafts of each paper.**
Daily Assignments

While these dates are rather firm, they are subject to change. At the start of each class I will remind you of upcoming assignments; that is a great time to ask questions concerning the schedule. Unless otherwise noted, page numbers refer to *Rereading America*.

**Week One:**
- **Monday:** Introduction to Course
  - Diagnostic essay
- **Wednesday:** MacWrite Pro Intro
  - Carnegie “The Gospel of Wealth” 20
  - Introduction to Essay One

**Week Two:**
- **Monday:** Electronic Communications Intro
  - Emerson “Self-Reliance” (closed reserve)
  - Topics/Invention for Essay One
- **Wednesday:** Bambara “The Lesson” 64
  - Terkel “Mike LeFevre” 87
  - Exploratory Draft of Essay One

**Week Three:**
- **Wednesday:** Sizer “What High School Is” 496
  - Bring in an article discussing current job market for college graduates

**Week Four:**
- **Monday:** Working Draft of Essay One
  - Keller “The Key to Language” (closed reserve)
- **Wednesday:** Final Draft of Essay One
  - In-class “Aspects” exercise
  - Introduction to Essay Two

**Week Five:**
- **Monday:** Malcolm X “Learning to Read” 558
  - Adler “Taking Offense: New McCarthyism on Campus?” 588
- **Wednesday:** Topics/Invention for Essay Two
  - Omi and Winant “Racial Formation” 283
  - Allport “Formation of In-Groups” 292

**Week Six:**
- **Monday:** M.L. King, Jr. “Racism and the White Backlash” 319
  - Anzaldua “La consciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness” 386
- **Wednesday:** Exploratory Draft of Essay Two
  - Chafetz “Some Individual Costs of Gender Role Conformity” 194
Allen "Where I Come from Is Like This" 241

**Week Seven:**
Keen "The Rite of Work: The Economic Man" 207
Wednesday: Working Draft of Essay Two  
Goldstein "The Gay Family" 477

**Week Eight:**
Monday:  Final Draft of Essay Two  
Introduction to Essay Three
Wednesday: Solomon "Masters of Desire: The Culture of American Advertising" 602  
Bring in advertisements to discuss

**Week Nine:**
Monday:  Exploratory Draft of Essay Three  
Doerken "What's Left After Violence and Advertising?" 634
Wednesday: Rapping "Local News: Reality as Soap Opera" 616  
Workshop Time

**Week Ten:**
Monday:  Catch-up Day
Tuesday and Wednesday: Mandatory Conferences
Friday:  Essay Three due
2. Class A Essay Assignments

Essay One

Choose one of the three assignments below. Aim for a topic that you care about, that your audience should be interested in, and that can be handled in 600-800 words. Realize that topic selection is an integral part of a good piece of writing, and that you should therefore spend a significant amount of time determining what your topic will be. Remember those invention techniques from 110 and use them for your benefit. Also, recognize that the different options posit different audiences. Many of the choices you must make as you write, especially those involving tone and level of diction, should be determined by your audience.

Option #1: Write a letter to President Gee detailing a significant problem on campus and how you feel it could be eliminated or bettered. You will have to convince him that the problem does exist, that it is important, and that your solution is feasible.

Option #2: Write a letter to your advisor proposing a course that you feel should be added to your curriculum. You will have to convince the advisor that a need for the class exists and that the class you propose will fill that need. [If you want to address an area outside of your major, that is O.K.]

Option #3: Write a letter to the editor of The Columbus Dispatch addressing what you feel is a societal problem. You will have to briefly describe the problem, show its significance, and propose a reasonable, feasible solution. [You will probably want to avoid large scale problems—the deficit, health care—and tired topics about which there is little new that is left to be said—abortion, capital punishment, gun control.]

Regardless of your choice, aim for a logical development and strong evidence for your assertions. Also, if your topic is controversial, and it likely will be, then be sure to recognize and deal with the opposition’s points. Good luck, and remember that I would be happy to look at drafts at any time during the writing process.

Essay Two

All of us are members of at least one sub-culture about which we know a great deal and a significant portion of the general population knows very little. In this essay of 800-1000 words, which is to be informative and evaluative in nature, you are to explore that sub-culture, describing its distinguishing characteristics and evaluating the positives and negatives associated with the group itself and/or being a member of the group. Your audience is a group of college students and professors at an academic conference.
As you describe the sub-culture, consider what it is that makes someone a member and how those members can distinguish themselves from outsiders (if they can). Are these distinctions functions of appearance and/or dress, of behavior, of language, of all these (or even more)? What are the advantages of being a member? What are the disadvantages? Does this sub-culture contribute positively to society? Negatively? Challenge yourself to engage these issues and to give as honest and effective a portrayal as you can. This assignment gives you no only an opportunity to sharpen your writing skills, but also a chance to think about yourself.

**Essay Three**

In an essay of at least 800 words you are to analyze and evaluate a message being sent by the media. You can discuss advertising, television shows (perhaps even entire networks), news reporting and editorializing of all sorts, music, and maybe even other things I have not thourgh of (see me if you find something else). Your task is two-fold: You should thoroughly explain how the message is being sent and then evaluate the appropriateness of the message for our society. When analyzing you should likely consider such elements as the message’s intended audience, the images you see, the sounds you hear, the things you are asked to read, and the things you are asked to assume. When evaluating you should consider whom the message affects, how it is likely to affect them, and what larger effect on society the message could have.

Your audience is composed of juniors and seniors in an academic setting, so aim for a high, but no pretentious, level of diction. Work hard to find a medium and a message that will help you write an effective essay. Usually a more subtly conveyed and socially relevant message will lead to a better paper.
3. **Class A E-mail Handout**

**Writing to the Reflector***

We will be using the reflector this quarter as a means of prefacing and extending classroom discussion. You are expected to write responses to readings and/or class discussion four times this quarter, and you are expected to read your classmates’ postings before each class. We are aiming for a dynamic on-line discussion, so try to respond to issues you care about and to avoid doing all of your entries the last week of class.

Here is what you should do with regard to your postings. Find an issue from our reading or discussions that interests you. Then formulate a response to that issue, defining it based on what you read or heard and stating what you feel about it and why. For example, if the reflector were up earlier you could have summarized Carnegie’s thoughts with regard to philanthropy, including some actual citations, and then stated whether or not you agree with him, why or why not, and what current issues the idea of Carnegie’s brand of philanthropy relates to. The goal is to engage the issue in a thorough and meaningful way. We will not worry too much about word limits, but I cannot imagine a truly thorough entry being less than 250 words. Enjoy this exercise, and remember that the entire class is your audience. We do not have to be formal in our writing, but we should be courteous to all of those who will be reading our postings.

*This was a handout from Wednesday of Week Four.
Required Texts and Materials:

1. Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon. Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers, 1994
4. Two (Three, preferably) double sided, double density 3.5 inch disks

Course Description:

English 367.01C is a computer-enhanced intermediate composition course designed to extend and refine skills in expository writing, critical reading, and critical thinking. This course provides students opportunities to read about, respond to (both orally and in writing), and write coherent essays about various topics pertaining to the United States. In our reading assignments, class discussions, and writing activities, we will analyze multiple issues and themes pervading American popular culture; in particular, we will explore the icons (symbols or signs) and their contexts (assumptions, beliefs, ideologies) of American education, advertising, T.V., film, and AIDS. The main goal of the course is to help you read critically, think profoundly, and write clearly and interestingly, while exploring and analyzing the multiplicity of American popular culture, its beliefs and ideologies, and its affect(s) on individuals. Furthermore, since this is a computer-enhanced class, you will be required to compose (i.e., plan, draft, and revise) your essays on the computer. However, beyond taking advantage of word processing, we will also use the computer to create an (electronic) intellectual community from which to enhance our understanding of the topics and issues and to invite more dynamic and inclusive participation in class discussions.

Class Policies:

1. Attendance: The workshop structure of this course demands that you attend class daily and that you hand your papers in on time. Those of you who choose to miss three classes will find your final grade reduced by one letter. Should you accumulate, at any point in the course, four or more unexcused absences, you will fail the course. If you have
a legitimate reason for missing class, please talk to me. What is excused and unexcused will be determined on an individual basis, taking several factors into consideration. As a general rule of thumb, present a written excuse, such as a doctor's note or a letter from a counselor. Your best bet is to talk to me before an anticipated absence or immediately following an unexpected absence. Furthermore, repeated tardiness will be counted as absences. Quite simply, this course is structured on a tight time schedule, so please be on time.

2. Late Assignments: In fairness to all class members, no late papers will be accepted at any time. Assignments due in class are due at the beginning of the class period. So, do not run in seconds before the end of class and hand me a paper. I will not accept it. Also, please do not print the paper in the classroom lab before class begins. Assignments due at other times will be announced. Note: Disk crashes and closed or full computer labs are not acceptable excuses for late papers. You must back up your work and plan your time accordingly.

3. Plagiarism: Using someone else's ideas or words as your own is a serious offense at the University. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be sent on to the Committee on Academic Misconduct for review. Those convicted of plagiarism are expelled from the University. If you are ever in doubt or are confused by this truly delicate and serious issue, please contact me.

4. Grading: Your final grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:
   - Paper 1  20%
   - Paper 2  20%
   - Paper 3  20%
   - E-mail Discussions 20%
   - Group Oral Presentation 15%
   - Class Participation  5%
   100%

Note: You will not pass this course unless you have completed and handed in all the major writing assignments for the course including all drafts of each paper. Also, in order for you to receive any credit for the collaborative projects, you must contribute in a significant manner to the group effort. Simply having your name on the group roster does not entitle you to credit.

5. Collaboration: As the Course Description suggests, we will be engaging in the communal creation of knowledge and examining the interpretive and critical thinking process. Therefore, collaboration--working in groups or reading/thinking/writing communities--will be an important component and requirement of this course. After the first week of class, you will be assigned to a group and will work with that group on a variety of tasks throughout the quarter. You will be responsible for working with your group and for attending out-of-class meetings, and to pledge your participation, you will
be asked to sing a collaboration contract at the beginning of the term. Collaboration is an important learning tool that helps you take advantage of each other’s special skills and to pool these skills in an attempt to produce a final project that is more sophisticated, developed, and polished than if you were to write the assignments yourself. If for any reason your group is not functioning effectively or if one or more members are not keeping to the signed agreement, please see me before the assignment is due and before all of the group members’ grades are unfairly affected. But do no worry, for problems rarely occur if all members agree to work together. collaboration allows for more than one head to work together on a project so as to produce a higher quality product.

Course Projects:

1. Paper Projects:

- **Project 1 Education or Consumption:** This first assignment asks you to conduct minor ethnographic study; that is, you will have to interview three or more people on the subject of education or consumption, summarize their views, and analyze these views in relation to at least two essays we read in class. Articulating your subjects’ ideas, views, and perspectives is indeed key to this assignment, but you don’t want to end at the point of reporting your findings. You will need to analyze their ideas. why do they believe what they believe? What are the principles and assumptions informing their views? Do you agree or disagree with the views and why? discuss the ways in which their ideas mesh or conflict with the topics discussed in the course readings. finally, discuss what you have learned by conducting these interviews and analyses. what new or different understanding of the topic have you reached? This paper should be 5 to 6 pages in length.

Topic Ideas:

Education

- Examine free speech and its role in higher education. What are its allowances? Does it have limitations? In what ways does the nature of free speech (as you view it) help or hinder the positive exchange and/or creation of knowledge?
- Should there be a required college curriculum? who is to structure this curriculum? What are the gains and losses resulting from this core curricular construction? what should it include and exclude? Who benefits and who is hurt by a standardized curriculum?
- Examine the ways in which the American educational system is informed or complicated by gender issues. Are American school systems and colleges patriarchal; that is, are they dominated by and geared toward masculinist ways of knowing? What are masculine ways of knowing and compare them to feminine ways of knowing? To what extent is this masculinist/feminist polemic too reductive? Why is it important to (re)think education in terms of gender?
Consumption
• It has been said that teenagers today have more consuming power than ever before. On what are teenagers and college students spending their money? Why do they buy these products? How important is brand name in the purchasing and consumption of products? In what ways do these teenagers and college students construct their identities and sense of self worth according to the products they buy?
• What is style and fashion? Why does American culture change its style so frequently that we can identify such eras as the fifties, sixties, seventies, and eighties? What were some of the popular styles and fashions during these eras and what made them popular? What can we say about these eras by analyzing their popular consumption patterns?

Project 2 Advertising, T.V., Film: American society is continually surrounded by images in various forms and media. Advertisers bombard us with images on billboards, in magazines and newspapers, and on television. We also receive glimpses of product promotion in films (Bladerunner with its huge Coke displays or Wayne’s World and its spoof of product promotion immediately come to mind). In addition to advertising, T.V. and film surround us with images of “American Life,” grand displays of what someone (or groups of writers and producers) thinks American life should be. In this paper you will examine some topic related to advertising, T.V., or film. In some cases, you may think about combining them (magazines and T.V. ads or images in film and T.V.). Your major task here is to describe and analyze the images you find in relation to some focused topic of your choice, and you must develop your ideas by incorporating at least two course readings and two outside sources (books, journals, articles, sociological studies, movie or T.V. reviews). This paper should be 5 to 6 pages in length, and it can be collaborative if you choose (2-3 people per group).

Topic Ideas:
Advertising
• Scan through your favorite magazine and compile a portfolio of advertisements. Examine the images in the ads: how are men and women or minority groups represented? What types of products are presented? What types of people are most commonly represented? In what ways are the ads directed toward the expected readership? What desires are commodified by the ads? What strategies do the advertisers use to create a sense of need or desire for the products? Are there any contradictions between the messages mediated by the ads and the focus or purpose of the magazine?
• Record the T.V. commercials during your favorite shows. Analyze the ways in which people are represented and the activities in which they engage. Who is the intended audience of the ads? What assumptions do the advertisers make about the viewers, their fears, desires, and needs? Analyze any contradictions between the aims or themes of the T.V. program and the representations presented in the commercials.
T.V.

- Watch and video tape several episodes of your favorite T.V. show. Examine the ways in which certain people or groups are represented. What themes or representations are foregrounded and which are ignored? Why are the subjects or themes portrayed as they are and what are the social effects on the viewers? What do these representations say about the culture that encourages and allows them to exist?

- Watch and record various segments of MTV or VH1. What images are commonly used in these segments? Compare/contrast the ways in which certain groups (women, African Americans, urban youth) are represented in rock, pop, rap, and/or heavy metal videos. What do these representations suggest about the viewers and those constructing the videos?

Film

- Choose one or more films and analyze its icons and images. What is its plot and what function does it serve in our culture? Is there a “hero” (or antihero) in the film? How is he/she represented? Why does the audience value or devalue this heroic figure? Analyze the genre (horror, gothic, adventure, cop movie, suspense, romance, comedy, drama) as a cultural metaphor. Why do American audiences value certain types of movies?

- Project 3 Disease, AIDS, Homophobia: Disease and how American view it is a problematic issue in popular American culture. Disease and illness seem to have no place in a society based on “equality,” “opportunity,” and “prosperity”; for when focus shifts to issues of disease or death, these cultural myths break down. This cultural and political dynamic is most clearly and painfully revealed in the case of AIDS and the violent homophobic reactions to this syndrome. In this paper you will combine the study of semiotics with self-exploration and the various research strategies you’ve practiced during the quarter (library research, interviews, film and/or T.V. study). Think about the ways in which AIDS has affected your life and your attitudes toward sexuality, dating, and lesbigay (lesbian, bisexual, and gay men) issues. This assignment is more difficult to define, because it will take shape according to your personal interests, concerns, and experiences. You can work in groups of 3 to 4 people if you wish, and the paper must be 6 to 7 pages in length. You should incorporate at least 2 course readings, 3 outside sources (library research), and 2 e-mail discussion references.

Topic Ideas:

- Interview students on campus concerning their views, beliefs, and knowledge of AIDS. Analyze the extent to which their views are founded in medical and sociological data and/or societal fears and misunderstanding. What images do they hold of people who are HIV positive? In what ways do these images affect/influence/infect their views toward lesbigay issues. Compare some of these beliefs and reactions to your own views. What new or different understanding of these
issue have you come to by researching this topic?

- Attend an AIDS rally, benefit, or art exhibition. Interview some people organizing and attending this function. What are their goals for holding the function? How do they see the function working in the society at large? Why do people attend and/or participate in these functions? How do other people in the community view this function? What images of AIDS, people who are HIV positives, and the various issues pervading AIDS are presented at the function? In what ways do these images reflect views or perspectives that are similar or different from what is commonly represented by the dominant culture?

- Watch and analyze at least 3 films in which AIDS is a dominant theme. Compare the ways in which the films represent AIDS and the various issues surrounding it. What is particularly effective in these representations? What are the limitations of these films' representations? How well do the films handle the issues? Who seems to be the intended audience of the film and discuss the ways in which the film is produced to fit the interests and sensibilities of this intended audience. For this topic, you will want to read several movie reviews, particularly reviews written for lesbigay audiences.

2. **E-mail Discussion Group**: You will be required to write five e-mail response postings, one for each reading unit, and to engage in an on-going electronic class discussion conducted entirely via e-mail. The idea here is to create an electronically organic collection of reactions and interpretations that is in the process of becoming. That is, you will be writing not only for yourself or for me, but for the whole class. Together, you will engage, interact, and discuss with each other through e-mail and, thus, collaboratively produce some of the knowledge and interpretive meaning that will comprise this course. Furthermore, by writing for each other, engaging each other's responses, and incorporating some of them into your final project, you will begin to experience some of the authority that should accompany authorship. The E-mail Discussion Group is an attempt to transform a (r)action of poststructuralist epistemology-knowledge/interpretation is not a determined (and determinate) set of information but, instead, a growing, ever-changing process of becoming--into a practical classroom pedagogy.

In the E-mail Discussion Group environment, you will be required to perform two integrated writing tasks:

1. You will first contribute to the discussion thread by writing five responses to the readings you do for class (the equivalent of 1-2 single spaced pages, 500-1000 words, or 40-80 lines per response). In these responses, you should ask questions about the texts and attempt to answer these questions, evaluate the positions the authors take in relation to your own experience and/or knowledge of the subject, and make connections (comparisons/contrasts) between and among the readings. You may want to begin your responses with a short (one paragraph) summary of the author's main points, but most of the response should explore and analyze issues, topics, and themes that are represented and developed in the essays we will be reading. You can focus on a single essay for each response, but better responses usually try to make connections...
among the essays within (and between) each unit. YOU can also try to discuss the essays in terms of your own personal experiences and various contemporary issues that you encounter in the news and in your own social groups, or you can attempt to continue or react to an oral class discussion.

2. The second component of the e-mail discussion group requires that you also spend time reading what your classmates have to say about the class readings and discussing their ideas. After the first posting is due (see date in syllabus), you will need to check your e-mail at least three times a week and read what your peers have written. You can check your e-mail either by using a modem from your own personal computer (if you have one, I recommend getting Homenet from ACS) or by using the ACS campus computing sites (including the Denney Hall classroom labs). There are many labs on campus, and you will have no trouble checking your mail and accessing the discussion. Try to think of this discussion group as an on-going class discussion: when you don’t understand what someone has written, ask for clarification; if you disagree with someone’s reading of the text, challenge that person’s perspective and provide your own; if you really like someone’s ideas, explain why you value what this person has said. In other words, you will be talking to each other about the class readings via this electronic environment.

This weekly writing can be informal, and you are not expected to write long, formal position papers (save this for the five required postings). Just be yourself and respond to the entries and ideas you find interesting. But please keep one thing in mind: you all know each other and you will have to work with each other for ten weeks, so please be sensitive to each other’s feelings. It is very easy to “flame” (to speak harshly and rudely or to attack mercilessly someone on via e-mail, because that person is not in your presence and you can loose all sense of social responsibility for your language and your treatment of your audience. Always remember that your audience is your classmates, and you want to engage in open dialogue and exchange of ideas, not egotistical displays of knowledge or brutal destruction of other peoples’ ideas—actions that ultimately shut down any good discussion. Be positive and supportive as you challenge each other and/or corroborate someone’s position. Furthermore, be mindful of offensive language that is sexist, racist or homophobic: you can talk about these issues without participating in their destructiveness. While we want all perspectives to be shared openly, we do not want to perpetuate oppressive bigotry that can silence others. If you have any questions, please talk to me (or send me e-mail) before you send a message or remark on a classmate’s response.

When you write the five required responses, write a subject heading that clearly labels each entry; for example give the posting number and a descriptive title: Posting 1: Freedom of Speech on College Campuses or Posting 2: Consumer Capitalism. When you respond to your peers’ postings (during your weekly reading/responding via e-mail), use the Reply command (under the Message menu in Eudora) and make it clear to whom you are responding (e.g.” “Jane Doe suggests that capitalism is mainly
concerned with...”). This way, we all can follow and engage in the various “threads” that the electronic discussion is inevitably going to assume. If you have never participated in e-mail discussion groups before, please do not worry. It is very easy to participate, and I will be providing training early in the quarter. After you’ve engaged in a few exchanges, you will find it to be quite fun and, for some people, addictive. The goal here is to help each other come to better understandings of the course readings in a non-threatening environment outside of class. Hopefully, we will be able to draw on these discussions to make our class time more productive and interesting.

3. **Oral Presentations**: Your group will be required to lead class for 30-40 minutes. You will be responsible for helping the class discuss the readings due for that day and explore the issues pertaining to the readings. The nature and structure of this project is limited only by your imagination, so challenge yourself to be creative and interesting. Early in the quarter, your group will sign up for a time slot, and hopefully we can schedule these presentations such that there is at least one group per thematic unit. These projects are designed not only to help you develop your skills in oral discourse, but also to contribute to our explorations of the communal production of meaning and knowledge. That is, your classmates should learn something from your group’s collective insight, and they should be able to draw from your ideas to help them develop their own understanding of the issues and readings.

Your group will have to turn in a 2-3 page lesson plan no later than the class period preceding your presentation. In this plan, you should articulate the goals for your class session, describe and explain the activities you will have the class perform (group work, discussion, lecture/presentation of background information), and how much time you plan to devote to each activity. If you have handouts, please be sure to include one of each with your submitted lesson plan (you will be responsible for making duplications for the class). If you need any audiovisual equipment, please be sure to notify me at least five days in advance. The following are just a few ideas of possible projects:

- Prepare a brief presentation of issues relating to the thematic unit and lead class discussion of the essays due that day.

- Stage a mock Oprah or Phil Donahue show in which you select a panel of “experts” to discuss issues and field questions from the audience (the class). Follow this role-playing with a discussion of the issues and readings due that day.

- Conduct a mock radio show interview where a radio personality interviews various authors, discussing the issues and themes represented in their essays. Conduct a class discussion in which we explore the essays and topics in detail from the perspective of the various writers.
• Use a video camera to conduct interviews of students on campus and then develop a presentation/analysis based upon the responses given by your interviewees.

• Videotape some public site that is filled with cultural icons (City Center Mall, a shopping strip, King's Island, or Cedar Point) and discuss/analyze your findings in terms of the readings on consumerism.

• Present some (short) T.V. program or a series of T.V. advertisements and discuss them in relation to the readings.

• Give a detailed semiotic reading of a movie, providing clips from the film to support your points. Lead a class discussion based on your ideas and some of the readings.

Assignment Formats:

1. Please keep all written course work— invention notes (clusters, brainstorming, etc.), exploratory drafts, working drafts, final drafts— organized in a folder. This way, you will be able to keep track of your work, and your peers will be able to collaborate with your work more easily.

2. Invention notes can either be written by hand or word processed. Please write on one side of the page only, leave about one inch margins for peer comments, and staple all pages together.

3. All drafts— exploratory, first and second working, and final— must be word processed. We will use the format adopted by the MLA (The Modern Language Association of America). Please refer to the sections describing the MLA paper format in A Writer’s Reference. If you have any questions, please ask me.

4. All word-processed work must be completed with the Macintosh software (or some other program which is compatible with the software we use in class). While this requirement may seem Draconian and unfair, the reason for it is quite practical: we will be working on our papers in class, and if you have worked with an incompatible system outside of class, you will not be able to work in class.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located in 147 University Hall, serves all members of the university community, including undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. If you desire individual assistance with a specific aspect of your writing, you are welcome to visit the Center. It is not a remedial writing lab; it is a place where you can receive individualized advice about topic development, organization, thesis support, sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and so on. Furthermore, the Writing Center can address collaborative writing issues in addition to individual writing assignments. The Center is no an editing or
proofreading service, so be prepared to discuss major writing issues. Although they sometimes can accommodate walk-ins, the Center staff is meeting with increasing numbers of students each quarter; therefore, it would be best to call or stop in to make an appointment. If you wish to keep your visit confidential, your instructor will not be notified.

Weekly Schedule

Week One: Introduction
T In Class: Introduction to the course; info on Pop mail accounts
R Due: “Popular Signs: Or, Everything You’ve Always Known About American Culture (But Nobody Asked)” (SL 1); “Working on a Word Processor” (WR 26-29); Bring Disks (always bring disks to class)
In Class: Aspects discussion (Your Life and Semiotics); Macintosh instruction (word processing)

Week Two: Education and Ways of Learning: So, What’s the Big Deal?
T Due: Planning Your Paper Projects (WR 3-11); Hentoff, “‘Speech Codes’ on the Campus and Problems of Free Speech” (SL 385); Grey, “Responding to Abusive Speech on Campus: A Model Statute” (SL 392)
In Class: Invention strategies; focus and purpose; formulating and proving thesis statements; Aspects discussion of essays (Free Speech and its Place on Campus); small group discussion
R Due: West, “Diverse New World” (SL 400); Gitlin, “On the Virtues of a Loose Canon” (SL 405)
In Class: Intro to project 1; e-mail instruction (BRING DISKS); e-mail writing session (What Do Canons Reflect/Represent?); class discussion

Week Three: Education and Ways of Learning: So, What’s the Big Deal? (Cont.)
T Due: Lakoff, “Women’s Language” (SL 624); Chiseri-Strater, “Anna” (SL 635); E-mail Discussion Posting 1
In Class: Critical thinking and writing (summary/evaluation); oral presentation; class discussion

American Consumption: What Capitalism Produces
R Due: “Consuming Passions: The Culture of American Consumption” (SL 17); Gibian, “The Art of Being Off-Center: Shopping Center Spaces and Spectacles” (SL 32); Drafting Your Papers (WR 11-23); Exploratory Draft of Project 1
In Class: Class discussion; drafting and revising; intros and conclusions; workshop

Week Four: American Consumption: What Capitalism Produces (Cont.)
T Due: Wilson, “Oppositional Dress” (SL 45); Poulson-Bryant, “B-Boys” (SL 56); Ewen, “Hard Bodies” (SL 60); Working Draft of Project 1
In Class: Oral Presentation; class discussion
Due: E-mail Discussion Posting 2; Revising Your Papers (WR 23-26); MLA Style Documentation (WR 235-48); "Where's the Action?" (RP 1-14)

In Class: Overview of MLA documentation; hand back drafts of project 1; Workshop

Week Five: American Advertising: Capitalist Construction of Desires and Identities

Due: Final Draft Project 1; “Brought To You B(u)y: The Signs of Advertising” (SL 101)

In Class: Film: Still Killing Us Softly; Aspects discussion (The Effects of Images in Advertising); small group discussion

Due: Marchand, “The Parable of the Democracy of Goods” (SL 109); Barthel, “A Gentleman and a Consumer” (SL 128); Steinem, “Sex, Lies, and Advertising” (SL 139); E-mail Discussion Posting 3

In Class: Introduction to Project 2; oral presentation; class discussion

Week Six: T.V. and Film: “America” (Re)Produces Itself

Due: “M(ore) TV: The Television and Video Revolution” (SL 167); Lewis, “Male-Address Video” (SL 182); Research Writing (WR 207-220)

In Class: Research strategies; small group discussion; class discussion

Due: hooks, “Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?” (SL 190); Ibelema, “Identity Crisis: The African Connection in African American Sitcom Characters” (SL 198); E-mail Discussion Posting 4

In Class: Film, Ethnic Notions; Aspects discussion (Is T.V. Just Entertainment?); small group discussion

Week Seven: T.V. and Film: “America” (Re)Produces Itself (Cont.)

Due: 1st Working Draft of Project 2; “The Hollywood Sign: The Semiotics of American Film” (SL 233); Seger, “Creating the Myth” (SL 250)

In Class: Small group discussion; class discussion

Due: Modleski, “Dead White Male Heterosexual Poets Society” (SL 278); Medhurst, “Batman, Deviance, and Camp”

In Class: Oral Presentation; class discussion

Week Eight: (Mis)Imaging AIDS: America’s Homophobic Dis-Ease

Due: 2nd Working Draft of Project 2; “Sentence Shapes and Shopping Bags” and “Sentence Length, Rhythm, and Sound” (RP 15-58)

In Class: Discuss revising at sentence level; workshop

Due: Final Draft of Project 2; “Journal of the Plague Years: The Social Mythology of AIDS” (SL 653)

In Class: Introduce Project 3; Film: Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

Week Nine: (Mis)Imaging AIDS: America’s Homophobic Dis-Ease (Cont.)

Due: Monette, “Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir” (SL 661); Sontag, “AIDS and Its Metaphors” (SL 668); Scannell, “Sills and Pills” (SL 688); E-mail
Discussion Posting 5

In Class: Oral Presentation; class discussion

R  Due: 1st Working Draft of Project 3; Hammonds, “Race, Sex, AIDS: The Construction of ‘Other’” (SL 692); Crimp and Rolston, “The Semiotics of AIDS Activism” (SL 708)

In Class: Small group discussion; class discussion

Week Ten: Working on Project 3

T  In Class: Workshop on Project 3

R  In Class: Workshop on Project 3
APPENDIX F

Class A Transcripts

1. Class A Small-group Face-to-face Discussion

Billy: ...the white male side. There were some points I agree with what Malcolm X says. I mean, in high school we hardly ever, I mean slavery was half a day topic.
Cheryl: Yeah, and he says it was like a paragraph in his history book.
Billy: I never would have learned anything about George Washington Carver, I mean he was a pretty good guy, but I wouldn't have learned anything about him if it wasn't for a certain class I was in. You know, I just drew his name out of a hat so I had to do a report on him. So it wasn't like we were taught specific things. So I can see where they're coming from there. It's unfortunate.
Eric: Did you have any black kids in your school?
Billy: My school had maybe two or three.
Eric: I grew up with them. One was in the class behind me and we were in a lot of sports together and it was like, [aside to Ellen] you might know him. So there was never a difference between black and white to me. 'Cause they were my friends when I was growing up and I never really realized how, what like racism was until I got here. It was like, whoa.
Billy: I didn't know what racism was until I went and joined the Air Force. Then I found out really quick.
Cheryl: In the Air Force? really?
Billy: Yeah, they said there's no such thing as reverse racism and reverse prejudice because they're not in power. It can't work that way, because the only people that can have racism and prejudice are the people that have power. I've heard that quote in The Lantern. But there is. I met black people who refused to talk to me because I was white. That's no shit. I mean, what's wrong with him. I had a buddy who lived across the hall from me who grew up in the city of Cleveland, who was you know black, your stereotypical black guy, who was great. He told me he just doesn't want to talk to you because you're white. I'm you know, that's bullshit. I know it, but what can you do about it man. At the same time I knew people who would say things about Kelly behind his back. Like a lot of older guys. I think that's where a lot of it comes from.
Cheryl: I think it's interesting that all of us discovered racism when we came here. Not many of us saw it in high school or whatever.
Ellen: We didn't have any in high school.
Billy: That's because in high school--
Cheryl: Neither did we. Did you have any black students in your high school?
Billy: The black students in our high school assimilated to our way of thinking and everything too, so that’s why you didn’t perceive it.
Cheryl: I noticed when I came here I lived in a dorm my first year and I don’t think that I was as prejudiced as it seemed like they automatically thought we were.
Billy: Yeah.
Cheryl: And they all just grouped together and were friends with each other and they didn’t want to talk to us, so they didn’t give us a chance.
Billy: The stereotyping goes both ways, so obviously the stereotype is not even to try. It’s easier to keep placing the blame, you know, you’re white, you don’t like me, well, how do you know? You never asked, you never gave me a chance to--
Ellen: I don’t understand all that.
Cheryl: You don’t understand what?
Ellen: I don’t understand racism. I don’t understand why--
Billy: Did you watch *Mississippi Burning* last night anybody?
Eric: I’ve seen it.
Billy: I mean that’s set in what, 1960s, and the conditions that those people lived in. I mean that’s unreal. A lot of that’s still carried over today, you know? The thing that I don’t like hearing is continuously it’s the white man’s fault, it’s this person’s fault. Don’t group all of us, you know. We’re trying. I’m trying to get through school right now, I can’t help you with your problems. I’ve got to get my own problems taken care of. I’m in no position to do anything about it, but don’t blame me, ‘cause I’m not going out there and slandering you. I keep trying to help but I get turned off every time I hear ACTION demanding a billion dollars, you know. For their cause you know. We want this we want that. There’s nothing that ever says--we want this for black people. There’s nothing that ever says, we want the white people to come over and join us and help us. You know what I’m saying? When have they gone so far as to--why don’t the people at ACTION have a multicultural dance or something and invite the whole campus to it? Where everybody can get to know each other. But that doesn’t happen.
Ellen: I think as the generations get younger the racism is decreasing. Because the younger generations are upset about the older generation’s racism.
Eric: I get tired of hearing blacks cry about slavery today. I mean, that happened a long time ago and I had nothing to do with it.
Billy: Well, the thing is, what I thought was funny is Malcolm X was sitting here talking about the Egyptian race and they’re from Africa and technically Africans. I mean what better example of slavery is there than ancient Egypt? Those people had more slaves going through there than we could ever hope to have in the United States. It’s just, slavery is something that, it’s not right, but it’s just something that’s been around, and you keep looking back at the past instead of trying to move on. I mean, it happened, it’s over with, now let’s try to move on and not keep dwelling on it because there’s nothing we can do about it. It’s just something that was standardly accepted across the board in any kind of civilization since the
beginning of time. You conquered somebody else, what did you do? Most...you made those people slaves. You conquered them, so they were inferior.

Cheryl: What do you guys think of the PC movement? Do you think it’s--
Billy: I think it’s a joke.
Ellen: I do too.
Billy: It’s a joke.
Eric: What can you say without being fried these days?
Billy: To me the PC movement is a way of grouping everybody into one, I mean I see it as I started to say into one thing, but at the same time you lose your individuality. I don’t like. I read the thing about nontraditional students. I mean, I’m a nontraditional student, but if you’re 18, I’m 25, if you want to call me old, that’s your prerogative. Because I am old, you know. You lose that when you say he’s a nontraditional student, you know. You lose that. If you say, he’s 25, the guy’s a dinosaur.
Eric: I never heard that before, nontraditional student. Does that just mean going through at a later stage than everybody else?
Billy: A nontraditional student is somebody that doesn’t come in right out of high school. Look how big of a group that is, it’s a huge group, call me a dino-, I don’t care. I’m not that sensitive. I’ve got grey hair. See, but it’s lost in the translation. She’s talking to somebody I’ve got this gray-haired old dinosaur in my class. You know, that might mean somebody a little older than me, but at the same time if you say nontraditional student the full effect is lost, you know my individuality is lost. I hate the PC movement. I think it’s dangerous...I don’t know, what do you think of it, Cheryl? Do you like it?
Cheryl: That’s the question I had about it. Who makes the rules about what’s politically correct and what isn’t? Whose decision is this and how did they get the authority to make that decision?
Theresa: But I guess you could say who has the authority to create education the way we were all educated? You were talking before about gaps in your education, so then if the PC movement is supposed to sort of fill in some of those gaps or correct some of the--
Billy: If that’s the purpose of it then go with it that way. Fill in the gaps but don’t try to de-individualize society while you’re doing it. I love to learn about the Indian cultures, the African-American cultures, I loved to learn all about that as I was growing up. Different perspectives, that opens up your mind. But at the same time I don’t want to have to worry about walking around whether I might say something that’s gonna offend somebody who is overly sensitive. Or trying to do the politically correct thing. Because you’re just walking on eggshells. You can’t just say what you feel. The context of what you’re saying is lost in the wording. You try to say what you want to say in a way that won’t offend anybody. It’s impossible. You can’t please everybody all the time. You shouldn’t even try to. You’re just going to lose yourself. It’s impossible.
Cheryl: I just kept thinking when I was reading the second article by Adler what Malcolm X would think if he read that. . .you know, I think he’d be really disappointed. I
don't think this is what he had in mind at all. At least that's not the impression
that I got when I read it.

Theresa: I guess I'm wondering if you guys think there could be a better movement to
replace the PC. It sounds like you are saying that we need something.

Eric: There's too many movements. I'm serious.

Billy: All the movements are toward separatization, you know, the movements like in
Detroit for ethnocentric schools. You know, schools just for black children. Just
the whole idea of having a school like that teaches separation. How can you get to
know another race when you don't get to know them as a kid when you don't
already have prejudices? I was fortunate I grew up with my mom and dad I was
lucky enough where that wasn't the thing in my family. You just didn't hear that.
And I hear my grandparents, which is a generation back. I hear that quite a bit.
I'm old enough to realize that they're old and that's how it was and that isn't--
even when I was younger their statements weren't out in the open that much.
Maybe I just wasn't in a situation to hear them, as I am now. But I've also known
people who have grown up in very racist families. They're racist.

Cheryl: My dad is incredibly prejudiced against black people. I don't know if it was
something, you know--how he was brought up when he was young--his whole
family isn't, just he is and a couple of his brothers are. We weren't allowed to
watch the Cosby Show... or anything like that.

Billy: Wow. Are you serious?

Cheryl: Yeah, and I never understood it because I had friends--I had to hide it from my
dad if I had black friends at school. And then I went to college, and I never saw
racism in high school besides from my dad--you know in high school no one acted
like that, just my dad. And then when I went to college I noticed that they were
very defensive and I thought well gosh, I would be too if there were actually
people who felt that way.

Billy: What kind of racism did you become aware of in college?

Cheryl: What?

Billy: What kind of racism did you become aware of, I mean.

Cheryl: Like examples of it?

Billy: Like have you been more aware of white to black racism, black to white, white to
orientals?

Cheryl: Both.

Eric: I've never noticed any kind of tension besides the black and white.

Billy: Do you see it working both ways, or just one way?

Eric: I think both.

Billy: See that's the thing that I can't understand.

Eric: I know I've changed. I've got some-- I know I have a certain amount of hatred
towards a certain number of people.

Billy: I do too. I do too. I've noticed that since I've come here too. I mean I went from
a place where I some of my best friends, when I was at [?] I constantly hung out
with a group of us, and we were the only family we had and you know there was a
couple of black guys that hung out, and you know to this day I consider them
some of my very best friends. A guy who was um Puerto Rican hung out with us. He was like a brother. And then you get here. I came here with a really open mind cause I hung out with all these people and automatically it's not like how you...that's how I feel all the time, like I'm on the defensive, it's my fault. That's all I hear, it's your fault, we want this, we want that. Jesus. You know. I don't know what to do.

Cheryl: What do you think, Ellen?
Ellen: I don't know. I just think it's stupid.
Cheryl: What, racism?
Ellen: Yes.
Cheryl: Our conversation.
Ellen: No, I just do. It's a waste of energy. If people wouldn't make such a big deal of it, and they make up all these...and this kind of stuff and if they wouldn't then it wouldn't be such an issue. I know, but, I mean, in a university setting we're here to learn, we're not here to be racist. I don't know. It's just such a waste of everything.

Billy: Is racism just the acting out of how to be prejudiced? Is that what racism is? I mean, as a definition.

Eric: No, I wouldn't say it's acting out. It's your feelings. You know what I've seen also is white on white prejudice. Like how higher class whites look down on like they call it white trash. And I can't believe it because. I guess my family's kind of both ways. I guess you could say my dad's family is like upper middle class. My mom's side of the family, you know, they grew up very poor. So it's like, you know I grew up with all sorts of different kinds, and then when I come here, you know I work up at the Doctor's Hospital in the parking lot, and when somebody comes in with a beat-up car, you know, you can tell they're lower class but some of the comments some of the guys I work with make is kind of shocking at first. I've never heard white on white prejudice and that shocked me more than anything.

[John interrupts the group to see how far along they are in the discussion questions.]

Cheryl: Alright, let's talk about the last one. How politically correct is your education? Are we just talking about racism when we're talking about politically correct there, or not?

Ellen: I don't think so because like the second one talks about everything like racism, homosexuality-- but your education has nothing to do with that. You're learning yourself and that's what I don't--

Theresa: Your education has nothing to do with what?
Ellen: Well it depends what they mean by education. If that means your entire social surroundings or if they just mean your actual education, the books, the classes, what you're learning.

Billy: I mean politically correct from the standpoint of learning about everybody else's culture? Is that what they're meaning?
Ellen: See I don’t understand.
Billy: I think in biology it’s pretty hard to be non politically correct about. I mean if that’s what they’re saying I mean there’s only one way to learn. This is what happens with x and y.
Cheryl: Haven’t you ever had like a prejudiced teacher, or a sexist teacher or anything like that?
Eric: Yeah, I had a sociology teacher who was--
Cheryl: See that’s--
Billy: I haven’t, I have been fortunate. At least nobody who was openly--
Ellen: I’ve had teachers who--
Cheryl: --not necessarily racist, but very sexist. I’ve had teachers like that, and I think that’s not very--
Eric: I Don’t understand this whole conflict between men and women. Why can’t it be businessman or businesswoman? Why does it have to be businessperson?
Billy: Once again, you’re losing your individuality.
Theresa: But if you had an English teacher who would use all masculine pronouns or something like that or tell you--
Eric: But I’ve had textbooks that were written by men that were definitely in the woman [?]. And they used she and businesswoman, and that’s fine but you know the only reason he’s doing it is so he doesn’t get criticized. I mean, who cares? I mean do you really have a problem with everything being, I don’t know, businessman, would you rather--
Cheryl: I think you should say businessperson. I don’t think it should--
Eric: I think it should be businessman or businesswoman.
Cheryl: But if you’re talking about a businessperson, you don’t know their sex and you automatically assume it’s a he, you know, I think that’s wrong.
Ellen: Well, if you don’t know who they are, that’s a different story.
Eric: How can you talk about somebody if you don’t know who they are?
Cheryl: Well, like saying businesspeople in the United States, instead of saying businessmen.
Eric: Okay, okay, yeah.
Billy: I think it sounds utterly ridiculous to say businessperson.
Eric: But if you know if it’s a woman would you still want to be businessperson or would you want people to know that you’re a businesswoman?
Ellen: I would want people to know I’m a woman.
Cheryl: It would depend.
Eric: It. It. Why not just say it. We’re not even human beings anymore. That’s what I’m being told. It.
Billy: Yeah. Just go to a society of it. Everything is it. Figure out what it means.
Cheryl: What do you guys think Malcolm X had in mind? ‘Cause I don’t think this is it, but I don’t exactly know what it is.
Billy: Well, Malcolm X said he wanted total separation of the races.
Cheryl: Don’t you think that’s what this is doing?
2. Class A Large-group Face-to-face Discussion

John: Let’s see what folks in different groups are thinking so we can get a good grip on the issues, what we read and what we feel and that kind of stuff. So without any further ado, what is the point that Malcolm X makes about education that the PC movement may or may not be addressing? What do you think? What’s your take on question #1 there?

Billy: What exactly is the PC movement in education? We’ve been messing with that and—

John: Okay, what exactly is the PC movement standing for in education? A great place to start. Anybody care to answer that? You know Adler talks about that some. He talks about Duke and some different things going on in that article. How does PC—how does it relate to one’s education?

Steven: It’s supposed to promote multiculturalism because certain groups have been oppressed by dominant white culture.

John: Very good. That’s exactly right, okay. It is allied with or related to multiculturalism, which is a philosophy, or a way of looking at history that embraces different cultures—different cultural perspectives on truth, on history, on these different things, okay, it’s—if you want to get into the vocabulary—it questions the hegemony of the western philosophical tradition, right. It says, were Plato and those guys necessarily right, basically, okay, things that we assume and have taken for granted in our culture as a given, you know is there a capital T truth, you can find one truth and things like that. Multiculturalism questions that and says, look this culture perceives truth in a different way, this culture over here perceives truth in a different way, and that is how it relates to education. One of the ways it relates to education. So, I’m glad you asked that question, because that’s a great place to start. Now how does that relate to what Malcolm X was saying, specifically? What was his complaint about his education?

Steven: He said he got one paragraph of black history in history books.

John: That was exactly his complaint, okay. He didn’t feel that his race was represented in American history, okay. That was his complaint. So—and I don’t think anybody can say that it’s not a valid one. It certainly seems to be a valid complaint. There was just nothing there as he was going through his education. And the PC movement says okay, let’s talk about these things. Let’s look at history different ways, let’s talk about different people that contribute to American history. So that’s how it was designed to attack this problem. So the next question is, is it effective in so doing? What do you think? What’s the take on that? Steven?

Steven: I think it’s effective as a teaching method, but when you try and indoctrinate—

John: Ah, yes. There’s the crux, right. Okay, so you’re saying it’s effective as a teaching method but you’re anti-indoctrination. [John writes on board.] How do you spell indoctrination?

Male: ind.
John: That’s a great way to spell indoctrination! Okay, so what’s the difference? How does one indoctrinate from a teacher’s perspective? Y’all are teachers here for a day. What’s the difference here? Where does teaching stop and indoctrination begin? That’s an important question. This might relate to question #4 about your own educational experiences. Does anybody have a sense—cause I think what Steven says is probably something that a large percentage of people agree with. Right. Don’t try to indoctrinate me in a certain way. But again, when does teaching stop and indoctrination start? Yes, Ann.

Ann: When you begin to share beliefs—what you believe—

John: Okay, so when a teacher does that is that indoctrination?

Ann: Well, when you’re saying that this is the only truth, when you say, I believe this and it’s true.

John: Okay, right.

Ann: And I think you should believe this.

John: Okay, I think that would certainly be an example of indoctrination, for me to say for example I believe this and if you say you believe something else you will get a D. Particularly if you bring that kind of punitive thing along, as opposed to saying this is what you are saying, where is your argument, how are you supporting that, none of that is there you get a D, would be a very different thing. Can a teacher unconsciously indoctrinate, do you think?

Male: Yeah.

John: You think so, okay. That can happen on any level, do you think, or particularly like in elementary school, junior high.

Ann: All levels

John: It can happen at all levels. Okay. That’s an interesting thing, and I do think it’s a danger. But you feel like it’s good in theory? Going back to what Steven was saying, you feel like it’s an okay thing to expose people to different—does anybody have a beef with that? Or does that seem a reasonable and okay thing? Okay. Have you guys found, have you run into what Adler calls political correctness in your education? At The Ohio State University? If you haven’t, I’m surprised.

Ann: Just in this class

John: Just in this class. Boy, you’re bright. What’s the title of our textbook, incidentally?

Cheryl: Rereading America.

John: Rereading America. Get the get people. Wake up, it’s 9:30. This class, this 367, that’s why I asked you guys on the first day of class what were your expectations coming into this class, ‘cause it’s kinda been dubbed the PC course on campus. So that’s an interesting thing, and I don’t know if you all knew that, but it’s kind of some meta-commentary. But I don’t think you’ll find me trying to indoctrinate you. But it does put teachers in a weird position, and I’m sure Theresa’s had some of this, too. Usually in a class discussion of this type, I kinda try to play Oprah, and just keep getting your opinions, you know, what do you think? what do you think? And sometimes I may or may not tell you exactly what I think because I’m wary of this indoctrination issue, and I believe that folks are entitled to their
opinions, for goodness sakes. But at the same time a teacher doesn’t want to appear subversive or slippery or I’m not—y’all have to bare your souls, I’m not gonna tell you what I think. So it’s kind of a fine line for a teacher to walk. It’s an interesting and difficult thing. So this class, some of the things we will be addressing in here are you know things that have been made into PC issues, you know issues of diversity affect this whole concept of America, particularly the American dream that we have been talking about. So this brings us to the other two questions, which are in addition to an educational viewpoint, just in general on campus in society, does everyone have an equal shot or is racism still apparent here at Ohio State, in Columbus, all that kind of stuff. James?

James: Among a lot of the students I don’t think it’s a real problem, but it’s a problem politically.

John: So you feel like students tend to get along okay?

James: Among the administration it’s more hidden.

John: Okay, you feel it’s hidden within the administration and in the way the administration administrates?

James: That’s right.

John: Okay, does anybody have examples? Has anybody run into that? There have been some blatant and some ugly things that have happened recently. There was an ugly thing over in the school of Social Work where somebody left some ugly letters in people’s mailboxes. So that was a bad thing. This is the kind of thing that can occur, but you feel like, just talking to students, get along okay for the most part? What about in Columbus?

Derek: Don’t walk too far south.

John: Don’t walk too far south.

[James laughs loudly.]

Derek: You find different sections of town. This is an Italian section, this is a black section, this is a white Irish section.

John: Okay, so you feel there is some neighborhood tension?

Derek: Oh yeah.

John: Okay, he sounds very confident. I haven’t lived here all that long and I kinda tend to sit in my apartment and read.

James: You have the southeast side, which has a majority of black, you have the west side, not the extreme west side, but you get some more whites over in that area. You got the northwest side, that’s a majority white. You have the northeast. . .

John: Okay, so racism still exists. Clearly, in society. And since we’ll kind of talk about some of the problem/solution things we’ve been using in this class, so here’s this problem that exists, and here is political correctness as a way of addressing that problem. How good of a job, is it making any real difference, what kind of effect is it having, do you think?

Billy: Well, I agree with what the guy is writing. One of the guys was saying that [?] is getting lost in the terminology.
John: Okay, that's interesting. You say you agree with Adler that it's not working—it's a matter of terminology.

Billy: Why do you have to say it's politically correct to teach people about different cultures? Why is that politically correct, why can't that just be the right way to do it? You know what I'm saying? Why does it have to be politically correct, why does it have to have that term associated with it, why can't we just kind of head that way without having this—to me, I think politically correct, I think I'm thinking you have to use businessperson instead of business man or woman. You know a child is a pre-woman. You know that's what I'm thinking when I think politically correct. I never knew that it was about trying to get people to learn different cultures.

John: Okay, so a couple of interesting things that Billy brings up there, actually two or three I think. First of all—you had your hand up I'll get to you in one second—is Adler—what is his attitude toward political correctness? Is he neutral towards it, is he just saying this is a battle that's going on, is he for it or against it. What do you think?

Male: Against it.

John: Okay, he seems to be against it. He kind of tries to be neutral. He tries to get both sides of the issue, but then he really seems to be against it. Can anybody point out some phrasing or a sentence that makes you feel that way?

Steven: Just the title. He calls it McCarthyism.

John: Okay, good. There's a question mark right. Yeah, he puts new McCarthyism on campus with a question mark as though he were to investigate whether or not it were McCarthyism, but towards the end of that article he says some things—it might be the very last sentence did it for me, he said okay, he's not so neutral. I do believe that he's against it. He says, [John reads]. So Adler seems to be negative even though he tries to take this kind of neutral stance. Okay. Now having established that, do you agree with his negativism because it's too much of a terminology thing—which is an interesting issue because in a lot of ways when people think PC that's what they think. It's just a language deal, right? It's what you call somebody. What can you call this individual. You call a 9-year-old a pre-woman. Quote unquote. But we talked earlier about how naming is important. We talked about that. So it becomes kind of a tradeoff. I think all of us want to be named, be called things that we are comfortable being called. Right, some of us wrote about how this nickname we got when we were kids or whatever bugs us. Some of us even wrote that our family names or whatever bug us. So, while we all agree that it's important to be called something that you want to be called and like to be called and so forth, at the same time some of us get annoyed by this fear of saying the wrong thing. You know, in a certain context. So what's the tradeoff there. I mean--

Billy: I think you've just got to realize that there's no way in hell you're going to please everybody in America. You know there's no way you can come up with a clear cut way of talking that's gonna make everybody happy or satisfied because the language that may be used may make a person using that language upset but he has
to use that language or she has to use that language. You can’t please everybody is what I’m trying to say, and that’s what political correctness is trying to do, and I just don’t think it’s gonna work.

John: Okay, so you feel like this effort to please everybody is inherently flawed. One thing that Adler gets at, I think one positive thing the Adler article does is kind of get to the crux of the issue which Billy sort of just summed up for us by example. Which is what forces are opposed in this issue according to Adler? Basic human, basic American rights. What two does he feel are clashing in this PC movement? One is free speech. Billy said some people might not like to feel like they have to say something a certain way. Okay, so there’s free speech on the one hand, and on the other hand is...

[Derek interrupts to tell John he needs a new marker.]

John: What’s on the other side?

Steven: Diversity.

John: Diversity, but even more so— I mean, diversity is diversity. I mean, it exists, right? So what else about it? Equal opportunity, right. Freedom from oppression. And so forth, these are the things that are opposed here, because you know as we all are aware. You know everyone has been called ugly names at some point in their life, you know for whatever reason. And we all learned that makes a person uncomfortable. And if you are labelled anything—you know, nigger—in a particular situation, it could your effectiveness in that particular situation. Right? So if someone would show up to campus, and be called horrible names by some folks, they might decide to leave. They did not have an equal opportunity. So on the other side of the coin though is that example in the Adler article where somebody just tacked a little sign up on their door and got booted off of campus. So these are the things that are opposing and it’s probably bigger than all of us. I don’t think we’re gonna solve it here in the next hour. But while people want to be able to say what they want to say, and don’t want to live in fear of you know, saying the wrong thing, people also want to be able to walk around campus and feel comfortable, and not feel like they’re being called things they do not want to be called. So, is it fair to say that the concern is legitimate? But maybe how you achieve you know making it comfortable for everyone. First of all, can that really happen, you know it might be utopia, who knows. How do you bring that about becomes a problem. Right. The examples in the book of the cases that have come up and so forth, which ones seem reasonable to you? What seems unreasonable to you? What would you have done, etcetera. First, there was the girl that tacked that thing up on her board that said, what was it, bimbos, men without hair on their chests, some reference to homosexuals, I forget what it said, whether it was gays or fags—homos will be shot on sight. Okay, so here’s somebody who tacks that up on her door. Okay, what happened to her? Boom, she got the big boot. But then she got reinstated. Was that too much? What do you think? Was that a fair punishment for the crime? Steven says no. James says no. Billy?

Billy: She should have been given the opportunity to take it down once she was aware that it would offend somebody, and then if she still left it up, then I think some
punishment should have been involved. But just for hanging it up there, without her realizing that she was making somebody mad, just to get evicted was wrong.

John: So you feel like maybe an RA should have confronted her and said—

Billy: Yeah, and said, please take that sign off your door, people find that offensive, and then if she doesn’t then go from there.

John: And go from there, okay. Alan.

Alan: I think it was justified because I don’t see why she put that on her door. I mean, if they believe that, fine, but that’s just asking for something, you know. If people believe that, that’s fine, but to post it on your door is another thing. That’s more like inciting a riot. You’re more likely to hurt yourself because people are likely to respond to that in a violent way. And I don’t see a justification for putting that on the door, and if you say it’s free speech, well I think that’s carrying it a little too far.

John: Okay that’s an interesting—and of course the free speech thing is you know, the example about free speech is can you go into a crowded movie house and yell fire! Yeah, I was just doing the free speech thing and all these people ran over each other. So that’s an interesting question. Okay, so Billy seems to say okay it was wrong to do it the person shouldn’t have done it but the punishment should have been—

Billy: I’m not saying that. I’m just saying it was wrong that she got kicked out. I don’t think it was wrong at all.

John: You don’t think it was wrong that she hung up a thing saying these folks will be shot?

Billy: I mean, if she thought it was funny, and the humor was lost. I think she was wrong in finding that humorous, but I don’t think she was wrong to hang it up. You don’t know her reasons for doing that. I mean that’s what I’m saying. Nobody questioned her reason, they just said, see ya.

John: Okay, and Alan said that it’s just wrong, that she should be punished in some way, shape, or form.

Derek: I can see you’re right [Derek points at Billy] about people having free speech and doing what they want, and not being punished directly for something without knowing hey, I did something that’s wrong... because a lot of different rules, you don’t know how to take them. But I can also see your argument [points at Alan] that you can’t just go around insulting people and [?] somebody pissed off. But I think free speech and equal opportunity. A lot of people just do things and say things, hey I can say anything I want. And if you don’t like that, tough. It’s a lot of anger, and just like what you said, the first quote was mean people suck. There’s a lot of that out there and that’s one of the things that the PC thing is trying to take care of. Hey you can’t just go out and offend somebody.

Billy: [says something to Derek—I can’t hear]

Derek: Well you can’t just incite somebody.

Billy: I’m not saying that, I mean how many people in this class thought that sign was funny? Am I the only one that thought that sign was funny, actually?
Eric: There was a reason she was brought up on charges. It wasn’t about chest hairs, it was the homos.

John: Okay, now that’s--

Eric: Well, I wouldn’t have found it offensive if I didn’t have any hair on my chest.

[laughter]

John: Okay, I’m glad you said this because it brings up another--an interesting tack here. Why didn’t bimbos or men without hair on their chest get angry at this sign? Why would they not get angry and a homosexual would? I think there’s an explanation for that.

Male: Because they’re not normally oppressed.

John: Exactly. Okay, is that what you were gonna say Ann?

Ann: Because there have never been any protection of those groups.

John: Exactly. There has been no systematic oppression of either bimbos or men without chest hair. In fact, the latter tend to be on soloflex commercials. So, this is an important issue. That, if you’re not someone who suffered from this then you’re not going to take offense. If you are a person in power, that has a relative amount of power, it doesn’t matter what somebody calls you, you don’t care. I worked at the Y with kids for years, you know, summer camp and all that kind of stuff. And sometimes those kids, you know, they’d be in trouble with me and some of them would be as rude as could be with me, you know, you can call me anything you want, you know. I don’t care, I’ll call your mother. I’ll kick you out of camp, you can’t hurt me. You know, you can’t do it. For this reason, you know, I was not threatened. However, if you know, my boss called me names, it would have scared me because this person had power and I did not. So that’s why. I think that’s a reasonable explanation for why that happened. But it does, you know I think what Billy was talking about backlash, is a reality. And the people who--Dennis Miller says I’m everybody’s asshole, you know, straight white male--but that’s part of it. I have, you know, all my life I have not been discriminated against because I am you know, gay, I have not been discriminated against because I am a person of color. I have not been discriminated against for all these various reasons. So that’s kind of a tradeoff. And there is a backlash. People say well how come nobody’s worried about men, or whatever. So it seems like there has to be some kind of meeting in the middle sort of thing, or something like that. Have you all experienced the PC thing? Have you experienced the PC backlash? Have you witnessed that or seen that? Like the bumper sticker on the car.

Drew: My junior year, when I was living in Taylor tower, my floor wanted to put up a little mermaid thing. I remember there was a big thing about that because her name was Ariel, which could be thought of as Arian, and it would offend people. And so they couldn’t paint this little mermaid--

John: Okay, it’s always interesting, and where you draw the line is an important issue. [switch tapes]

Steven: He’s talking about the notice on the door. I think if there was one iota that it would change anything, then it would make sense to do this to this girl, but I don’t think there’s any--her actions or beliefs are going to be changed, or really anybody

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on the floor's actions are going to be changed in my opinion. I think if somebody had— It doesn't make any difference whether somebody's fag-bashing or gay-bashing it would still happen. I have gay friends who don't care whether they're called gays, fags, whatever, but they just don't want to be persecuted for who they are.

John: Okay, interesting. And different folks have different attitudes about that. Ann.

Ann: Well, I guess we're taught that, in anthropology, that culture is something that separates us, and culture is something that's passed down, you know I learned culture from the things that my parents passed down, to me, and their parents passed down, and if, like you say, there are no consequences attached to doing something that hurts another person, that hurts another group of people, then how am I to learn—how are the people around me to learn that that is not acceptable? If we say well they're not going to change so let's just leave it alone, then we don't change it. If we say, okay, this is not acceptable, okay, you might think it's funny and I might even think it's funny, but it's not acceptable.

Steven: [I can't hear.]

Ann: You might not change that person, but you're setting examples. You're saying to them it's not acceptable, it's not acceptable.

Steven: [I can't hear] ...why shouldn't you be kicked off the campus for that? There's a lot of people who believe that.

Ann: I know, but what I'm saying is that it takes a long time for culture to change, but it's a fact that if we say continuously, this is against the law, this is not good, we need to change, we're not sensitive enough, eventually we will make some changes.


Ann: I hardly think putting that on your door is being super-sensitive. I think that's downright blatant.

Steven: I agree that that's wrong, but--

Ann: Should she not have had a punishment, should she not have had--

Male: I think somebody might have gone over and talked to her, or maybe even sent the gay groups themselves.

Ann: Yeah, but that would have affected her. What I'm saying is it has to go beyond her. It has to go to everyone. If I'm gonna--

Cathy: I think that kind of punishment though, probably just caused more irate people.

Eric: They're making a mountain out of a molehill here. I mean, Jesus Christ.

Ann: I'm not saying that particular, but something had to be done and it didn't need to be an individual thing, it needed to be an open thing.

John: Okay, let me jump in here real quick, because we've got folks who are--this is good. Debate is good. There are some folks with their hands up who want to get their two cents worth in. I will say, okay, a couple of things that have come up which I think are important. And then we'll talk about this a few more minutes and then take a break. Since we're running with this, I think we'll go a little longer. I think what good comes, what good could potentially come of some sort of punishment for putting this sign or any other kind of ugly sign on the door is
that’s saying okay, this is a bad thing, we do not condone this. That sign could make someone else uncomfortable. Right, if there were a homosexual on this floor—will be shot on sight—how would that make you feel even though you know it’s a joke. Okay, how would that make you feel. What if I was on the floor and it said people from West Virginia will be shot on sight, which is a fairly popular sentiment. [laughter] I may not feel so good. I might not feel welcome there, I might not feel comfortable there. Well, that can happen. And again this is the backlash thing that we were talking about. Somebody might say well I was just joking. You know, I didn’t mean any harm. This is America, I can say anything I want to, I’ve got the first amendment on my side. So again, it’s a tradeoff but it’s something that’s very important to think about and consider. Because if you just let it go, as Ann was saying, if you don’t talk about it or confront it at all, what’s gonna stop it? Okay, Alan had his hand up.

Alan: Well, going back to that thing on the door, I think if somebody I knew showed me that, I probably would have thought that was funny. I would laugh. If somebody I didn’t know come up to me and showed me that, I’d be like, are you serious, or joking, or how do you mean this by showing this to me? You know, I wouldn’t think it was humorous if someone came up and showed me— If someone told me a racist joke, yeah I’ll laugh. But if somebody I don’t know told me a racist joke, I wouldn’t know if they were racist or not. So that was one of my concerns, whereas it’s fine for that person to show this little sign to people she knows, if everyone in her dorm knew her and could say, oh she just put that up it’s fine, you know, that’s fine—but if people don’t know you they don’t take it that way—the same way that you would. And I think you have to consider that.

John: Okay. Consider your audience, as it were.

Eric: She’s getting kicked out because people don’t understand her which is the same thing as she doesn’t understand that these are the homosexuals. You’re kicking her out because you don’t understand her point of view.

John: Her point of view, okay.

Eric: Which was just intended to be a joke.

John: Which was intended to be a joke, okay. James had his hand up so I’m gonna let him join.

James: Well, I agree that she should be punished to a certain extent—talked to, and made to take the sign down. But you’re in college and you’re allowed to express your opinion, and I believe the first amendment also. But you have to remember that the first amendment is a guideline. You don’t follow it to a T because it can be abused. Lawyers beat people over the head with the first amendment and get somebody who murdered somebody off the hook. I feel that it’s a guideline. What if somebody put shot on sight—niggers. How would you feel about that? How would I feel about that? I would be ready to tear the door down.

Steven: So is there an equation there? If somebody had the sign is that like a violent threat?

James: Yeah, yeah. I feel that it’s like making a threat. Even though they may not have meant anything by it, but it has to be corrected in some way. They have to bring
the sign down because it offends somebody and that person who put the sign up could get hurt. See what I’m saying? That’s to protect the person who put the sign up with that opinion. The constitution also protects those with unpopular opinions.

Steven: When I think of infringing on the rights of somebody who wants to say what they want to say, look at where we’re going with the information highway and stuff. Are we going to have thought police monitoring the internet? Because people want to say what they want to say. That’s pretty scary to me.

Male: I agree with what you say, that you don’t need people out there offending people for no reason.

John: Okay, Eric had something.

Eric: I already said it.

John: Which was all that business about she was misunderstood. Misunderstood in that she meant it as a joke, but it wasn’t necessarily taken as a joke.

Eric: Yeah.

John: Is that what you mean? About misunderstood?

Eric: I guess.

Billy: I had something. Who makes up the rules for political correctness? Who says that this is the right way to say it and this is the wrong way to say it. I mean, I just don’t know where it’s coming from. Who’s to say that one person’s sensitivity doesn’t affect—in the same race and the same culture—doesn’t affect somebody else. I mean, how do you distinguish between that. That’s my question.

John: That’s always an interesting question for questions of power—who polices the police?

Billy: If it affects one person out of thousands and millions, then do you not say it?

James: When you say race, okay, that’s incorrect, it’s culture, race, there’s the human race. The difference between race is the difference between a monkey and say, man. So race, is incorrect.

Billy: Species.

James: Well, I’m sorry— Well, I still, race I still feel is incorrect. It’s the human race, not black versus white races.

Billy: I agree with that, that’s— I mean, I can deal with that, different cultures. But who’s to say, I mean, who says that if you offend one person in that culture do you not ever say it when the other 99.9% of that culture accepts it? Or just not say it when you’re around that person?

Alan: Well, what’s the reason for saying it, why would you want to upset that one person?

Billy: How do you know, but you don’t know you’re saying it, that’s what I’m saying. How do you know that that’s offensive if the other 99.9% of the culture accepts that term as acceptable, then how do you know that it’s unacceptable to the other person do you not say it then?

Ann: That’s the reason for consequences. That’s the reason for saying this is not acceptable, don’t do it. If there are people that it bothers, then it’s not right.

Billy: So if it bothers one person?
Ann: Yeah. If there are ten people and one person gets hurt, is that person not just as important as the other nine? I mean, because it takes this long to think about how we’re saying things, because we have to put more thought into it--

Billy: Because you're sanitizing what you're saying.

Ann: Well no, just like he’s saying. I use culture and you use race. I had to think about it. I have to think about what race means.

Billy: What does it mean?

Ann: It means a different thing to him than it does to you. It means something different. But I have to weigh your feelings with his feelings and come up with something that I believe I can discuss and communicate with without offending either one of you.

Billy: As long as you use culture, then that to me means something else, but what you're trying to say, your context is getting lost in the word that you're using.

Ann: But is it offensive? What I’m saying is, yes, you’re right.

Billy: So we have to sacrifice context.

Ann: Yes, we have to struggle hard to communicate, but do we not have that obligation to communicate with everyone? Not just the nine out of ten?

Billy: So we walk around saying half-truths and not being able to express what you feel.

Ann: No, I’m not saying --we have to re-think the way we communicate. We have to expand and change the ways we communicate with everyone, not just the nine out of ten.

Eric: It’s impossible.

Jason: It’s impossible.

Eric: It’s impossible.

John: Okay, here’s what I want to do at this point. First of all, I want to thank everyone for putting their views forth and being open and stuff like this. I’ve had this discussion--having taught this course before--y’all did a good job in that sense. I do think, I will tell you where I stand--not as an attempt to indoctinate you, but so as not to be a slippery weasel-y kind of guy. It seems like you know, you can take a lot of common sense and cut through a lot of this. You know, if you know more than one term for saying whatever it is you want to communicate, you know if you know more than one way to get your meaning across, and you know that one way is less likely to offend someone or make them uncomfortable, then why not use it? Makes sense to me. You know, if putting this sign on your door is you know has the potential to bother or disempower people, why do it? I don’t know. It seems to me if folks could put a little thought into it, the world could be a better place. But at the same time I can understand the frustrations that different people feel. That’s—the times they are a changin’ And they’re always changing, so that’s my 2 cents. So, good job, let’s take a breather, and we’ll come back here and talk about this next essay.

[Break begins]

[Chatter among members of my small group]
Ellen: I just kept my mouth shut!
Cheryl: I was afraid to say anything because of Billy, geez.
Billy: Was I that bad?
Ellen: no, I was just afraid to say anything.
Billy: I wasn't jumping on people, was I?
Ellen: No, no, you were just saying what you feel, nothing wrong with that.
Billy: I agree with that
Ellen: Why doesn't he want you to say race?
Theresa: Well, it implies separation.
Billy: Well, to me culture means something totally else.
Theresa: Billy was talking about losing meaning, but to me that's being a lot more precise and clear about what you mean.
Cheryl: Well, you can say African American culture.
Billy: You can have different cultures and people of the same race.
Theresa: Well, that's right. You're talking about losing meaning, and to me that's a term that's a lot more precise and conveys a lot more meaning. So you can communicate better with terms that have
Billy: [?]
Theresa: [?]
Billy: Well, if you can talk about the whole black race.
Theresa: Well, what about African American culture?
Ellen: They don't all have the same culture.
Eric: There's no such thing as African American. You're American, I'm not German American.
Cheryl: I agree
Eric: You're black, I'm white.
Billy: I'm a mutt in society
Eric: I just kind of take everything with a grain of salt. I don't go for all that. We're all here, we're all Americans, I think.
Theresa: But so much of that stuff influences who you are. I'm midwestern--
Billy: It only influences you if you let it.
Ellen: Exactly.
Billy: It's true because when people come together, like in the Air Force we all came together from all over this country, yet we were able to get along. You only let it bother you if you let it bother you.
3. Aspects Discussion

Jim Bob: WHO AM I

Jim Bob: WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT

Spock: Hey, what's up!

Petula: what's my name?

Jim Bob: THE BIG PICTURE

Jim Bob: WORRY FORGOT THE E

Jim Bob: SOMEBODY START

Petula: I think all the controversial issues we've talked about were the best.

Spock: We've done something important?

Jim Bob: GEE THAT HEOPS THE START OF DISCUSSION PETULA

Longfellow: h

Petula: Well let me get to the rest

Spock: heops?

Jim Bob: I MEAN HELPS NOT HEOPS

Jim Bob: LETS GO WITH SOMETHING HERE PEOPLE

Jim Bob: HOW ABOUT HOMOSEXUALS

Longfellow: gays

Longfellow: ok

Jim Bob: HOW ABOUT THE PC MOVEMENT

Longfellow: BOARING

Petula: I think the issue about gays and lesbians was a good one. Every one seemed to have a strong opinion.

Jim Bob: QUEERS FAGS AND OTHER NAMES I CAN'T DISCUSS

Longfellow: YUP

Petula: You are a mature one Jim Bob!

Longfellow: PAGING SPOCK

Spock: yes

Jim Bob: IF THE U.S.A WAS AN ANARCHY I WOULD KILL ALL HOMOS

Longfellow: WHY?

Spock: I agree, kill em all

Jim Bob: SHOULD WE BE TALKING ABOUT THIS

Jim Bob: I AM MATURE I JUST DON'T THINK HOMOS HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE

Longfellow: THEY HAVE THE SAME FEELING AS ALL THE REST OF US JUST NOT FOR THE SAME PEOPLE AS US

Jim Bob: WHATEVER

Jim Bob: LET'S TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE

Longfellow: PAGING DR. PETULA

Jim Bob: HOW ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Longfellow: OK

Jim Bob: OR MAYBE WE SHOULD ALL BEAT UP ON PETULA
Petula: I don't think because I am gay and I don't like the idea of being told two of you would stand up right now and kill me.

Longfellow: I THINK THE MEDIA IS LULLING US ALL IN TO A COMPLACENT BED OF MEDICOCRACY

Petula: Well where is everyone
Jim Bob: I DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOU PETULA! YOU DO NEED SOME SEVERE HELP THOUGH

Longfellow: PETULA ARE YOU REALLY GAY?
Jim Bob: THIS COULD GET UGLY
Longfellow: NO IT WON'T
Longfellow: WE CAN CONTROL IT
Longfellow: SPEAK!
Jim Bob: WELL WHAT SHOULD I SAY, I HATE ALL QUEERS
Longfellow: COME ON WHY DO YOU REALLY HATE GAYS. ARE YOU HOMOPHOBIC ARE YOU AFRAID?

Petula: No I am not gay! I just wanted to see how everyone felt knowing they may be talking to a gay

Jim Bob: ARE WE BEING SERIOUS HERE OR ARE WE JUST JOKING AROUND, CAUSE IF IF WE ARE SERIOUS I'M NOT KIDDING

Petula: We know that!
Jim Bob: GOOD ONE PETULA, I FEEL BETTER NOW! I DON'T HATE YOU ANYMORE

Jim Bob: CAN WE BE FRIENDS.......AS LONG AS YOU TRULY ARE NOT GAY
Spock: Gays are people too. I don't like them but I accept their existence.
Spock: Jim bob - grow up!
Petula: Jim Bob, Why do you hate gays? What would you do if your son said he was gay?
Jim Bob: I DON'T ACCEPT ANYTHING ABOUT THEM SPOCK. THEY ARE A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ABOMINATION.

Spock: And what are you jim bob
Jim Bob: I WOULD KICK HIS __S!
Jim Bob: I LOVE WOMEN
Petula: Why??????
Jim Bob: WHY WHAT
Petula: why would you kick butt?
Jim Bob: OH I GUESS I SHOULD SAY THAT I AM A MAN, WHO HAPPENS TO LOVE WOMEN
Jim Bob: MY SON WOULD NEVER BE GAY
Jim Bob: I WOULDN'T LET HIM
Spock: Jim bob, are you really this racist, this ignorant, or are you just doing this to make us mad?

Longfellow: WELL, I FOR ONE DON'T LIKE FAGS BUT THE MEDIA AND THE KINDER GENTLER WORLD DOES AND IF THEY HAVE THEIR WAY YOUR NOT ONLY GOING TO LIKE THEM YOUR GOING TO GIVE UP
JOB SLOTS TO THEM AND SUBSIDIZE THEIR WAY OF LIFE AT THE
COST OF YOUR OWN. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THIS COUNTRY,
THIS WORLD? ------- HEY WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ALL BABBLING
ABOUT?!

Jim Bob: I'M NOT RACIST! I LOVE JUST ABOUT EVERYONE EXCEPT I HATE
FAGS. ACTUALLY I HAPPEN TO BE QUITE SMART

Petula: After you are through he would still be gay. and how do you know he won't be
gay.

Jim Bob: IF YOUR MAD MAYBE ITS BECAUSE YOUR GAY

Spock: good job longfellow you just summed up the entire world in a paragraph - can you
make it any simpler?

Longfellow: NO

Spock: no

Petula: Simpler - Why hate -just love!!!!!!!!!!!

Spock: I love to hate

Longfellow: SORRY IT TAKES TOO LONG FOR ME TO TYPE

Jim Bob: HE WON'T BE GAY 'CAUSE I WILL RAISE HIM WITH A STRONG
SENSE OF RELIGION, AND MORALS AND THAT IS ENOUGH

Spock: whos to say whats right - you??

Jim Bob: I LOVE TO HATE GAYS

Petula: GOOD LUCK TO YOU AND YOUR SON -JIMBOB

Jim Bob: GOD SAYS WHATS RIGHT AND THAT IS WORD ENOUGH

Longfellow: NO IT ISN'T YOU'VE GOT TO TEACH HIM OR HER TO KNOW
WHY IS IS WRONG TO BE A GAY

Spock: yes - good luck

Jim Bob: THANKS PETULA HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY

Longfellow: SEE YOU THROUGH MY SIGHTS GUYS!

Petula: THANKYOU

Jim Bob: AND I TRULY MEAN THAT

Petula: ME TOO

Spock: me three
APPENDIX G

Class B Transcripts

1. Small-group Face-to-face Discussion

Monique: But I mean guys, I've had trusting parents to a degree, ok, I mean I was allowed, because I had a really big room with like a desk and a raised like um just a little loft, so I did a lot of entertaining in my room because a) my parents were like we're just kinda homebodys and they stayed around all the time and they didn't want us on their TV so they got us our own you know. We had our own little set-ups in our rooms. And a guy could be in there but a) the door was open you know wasn't nothing going on because I knew better and my mom didn't have to say ‘don't close the door.’ That was it you know. But these kids just, they're not real. They're not real and I'd love to see a child who could do this.

Boris: ...What. ...maybe that could see love that was more beautiful and more. . .of course life in general. . .

Hannah: That's true, you don't want to turn on the TV and see a reflection of your own life.

Monique: Yeah, but let's face it, let's face it, this, these shows are pretty, they are pretty unreasonable. And...

Hannah: Maybe that's why they're successful.

Monique: Let's figure it out here. The problem is is that they alienate so many people, you know what I mean. I wouldn't be invited to be a guest on the show, I mean there's a lot of people who just don't fall into this category. And I like...

Nicole: These types of shows are targeted towards a certain audience and...

Monique: They target it towards whoever wants to watch it.

Nicole: Yeah but if they think...

Monique: The more popular they are, if there was only a certain group of people watching it then they're not going to be very popular in the rankings. Cause there are a lot of people out there who just don't fit that description.

Nathan: There aren't too many forty and fifty year old people watching 90210.

Nicole: All shows have a type of audience.

Monique: They have. . .

Hannah: I think all shows have some sort of target audience in mind when they set it up, because like you know, I can't even think of something right now. Maybe like Fresh Prince, I think Fresh Prince of Bel Air was kinda funny
you know. That's not a realistic show at all. And I think it's funny so I watch it. Maybe for some people, they're not going to watch it and that's ok.

Monique: I don't think it's realistic at all either.

Hannah: Because you make, right, when they set it up they thought about who they wanted to get, who they wanted to get to...

Nicole: Every show they do have a target audience because I mean that's part of my major.

Hannah: Oh good, tell us more.

Nicole: And um when they, they take into consideration the scheduling, the um ratings, it's a major part of it.

Hannah: . . . soaps and commercials that go with them.

Nicole: Yeah cause you'll see you'll see a lot of the children's shows, like the kid vid on after school hours or in the early mornings. You'll see the daytime...

Monique: Well now they have the cartoon channel. Twenty four hours of cartoons.

Nathan: What kind of commercials do they do during 90210?

Hannah: Um we were just talking about that and that's . . . we were thinking that they done fashion ones but then I think that on 90210 and Melrose Place, they always, whatever they're wearing is the advertising for the fashion. And then they drink actual Coke and they eat actual food...

Monique: . . . brands so they get the free advertising on the show. Which is probably better than commercials.

Hannah: Which cuts down on the advertising, yeah, it cuts down on commercials which of course let's the show, the show seems kinda long comparatively. You know, an hour long show.

Nicole: They still have the same amount of commercials though.

Monique: Do they?

Nicole: They have to. Because advertisers pay for that time that air time. If they don't have that funding then. . .

Monique: I don't know. . . they don't have those long ones. Have you ever seen how commercials are either long, extended or like the short version of the commercials? It seems like they do, maybe the same amount, but they don't do the long ones. They do the little short blurbs.

Nicole: Certain commercials are blocked in different segments of the hour or half hour.

Monique: But couldn't those minutes be included in how much time the product is shown on the program.

Nicole: Well they pay for what they get on the air. So if they pay for a thirty second spot the that's all they're going have.
2. Small-group Face-to-face Discussion

[My group is quiet. We can hear Monique arguing at the next table.]

Dan: I'm listening to their conversation. It's not hard to hear.
Nicole: We'll say what they said.
Dan: Just wait until [the teacher] comes over here every day, then we'll say our piece.
Nicole: Is this for your Ph.D.?
Theresa: mmm-hmm
Nicole: Are you working on it right now?
Theresa: Not really. I'm just collecting data right now. I haven't started transcribing tapes or anything like that. I'll probably have about 30 tapes by the end of the summer. I figure each one will take about 8 hours to transcribe...
Nicole: What's your topic again?
Theresa: I'm interested in how discussions take place differently on-line than they do off-line, in face-to-face discussions. Most people who have done research on computer-mediated communication say that
Nicole: they're more open and...
Theresa: Right. Students are less inhibited and students who might be silent in class discussions are very "vocal" in on-line discussions. But there haven't really been any comparative studies to see how the same group of people participates in both environments. So that's what I'm trying to do.
Peggy: Just based on this class?
Theresa: This class and one other class.
Peggy: Okay.
Theresa: You know, they say that women students might participate more in on-line class discussions than in face-to-face class discussions. It's pretty interesting because women are completely outnumbered in both of the classes I'm observing.
Nicole: This class has six women.
Theresa: Yeah. The other class I'm observing has four women, and a male teacher too.
Nicole: Wow.
Theresa: So my data is probably a little bit skewed because of that. But it's interesting because the women in this class are a lot more vocal than the women in the other class. So it will be interesting to see... But since I haven't transcribed the tapes, I have some ideas about how things are going, but I haven't really looked at it yet.
Barb: Did you find it interesting the other day when he gave us a choice whether to go on the computers to have a discussion or just talk? You'll probably be able to use that, right?
Theresa: To the computer, to the computer, I was thinking to myself, and then you said, "just talk."
Peggy: Well sometimes it's just easier than typing. You've gotta think, "I hope I don't spell this wrong."
Barb: I know. I know.
Theresa: Well it's interesting, because some people don't. But some people really do.
Dan: We obviously know that you know how to talk, and that's one thing. It's one thing to misspell a word but another thing to just totally use incorrect English.

Theresa: Well, I was talking to a couple of professors in the department the other day, and they were saying it's almost like there's a hierarchy of participation in networks, in that if you're very important—if you're a professor and you're very busy, then you just don't have time to edit your work. So it's okay for you to misspell things and have typos all over the place because you're so important, whereas a student might feel more concerned about the way her or his writing represents her or himself, so might go back and correct spelling errors because you don't want anyone to think that you don't know how to spell a word.

Nicole: Well, you're being evaluated in some ways.

Theresa: Right. So it's interesting how people with less power maybe have to be more conscious about editing their work. It might be interesting to look at the way women and men might make choices about that

Nicole: That's true.

Theresa: I'm not sure what kinds of patterns will emerge.

Peggy: Well it affects what people think of you too, you know.

Theresa: If you are the president of a university or the CEO of a company then you figure people probably know that you know how to spell but that you're just too busy.

[pause] We're a little off the subject.

Barb: We're way off task. This is more interesting. This paper topic is just bugging me out completely.

Dan: I don't like it at all. I don't find it interesting.

Peggy: That's the way I was. I changed mine 3 times trying to figure out what the heck I was going to write on.

Teacher: What's bugging you out about it?

Barb: Because, first of all, I don't watch much TV because I don't have time. And secondly, I haven't seen a ton of films lately. I could probably think of films from the past to talk about, but I mean, I haven't been able to think of anything remotely interesting to pull into this. So there. When it's not interesting to me, I'm not having fun doing it. I'm having a really hard time with it.

Teacher: That's the problem. If you're not in tune with the media

Barb: In our last class discussion I was having the hardest time. Because some of the films and shows people were talking about I have no... I have nothing to contribute because I haven't seen them. I don't watch MTV. I don't watch most of the sitcoms.

Teacher: Is there any that you have watched— even if it's a rerun?

Barb: Like The Cosby Show. I've seen it here and there. I could talk about that.

Teacher: There's a lot of great stuff written about The Cosby Show.

Barb: So I would need to go find articles on what people have to say about it.

Teacher: I don't know right now of any channels showing Cosby reruns. I don't have cable. You might have to write as much from memory as possible. You could see what other people are saying and write a response.

Peggy: I have the last episode on tape.
Barb: You do? Maybe I'll borrow it.
Teacher: It would be interesting to...
Nicole: in real life, most black families don't have families where the husband is a doctor and the wife is a lawyer and they live in a nice place and have a lot of money. . .It's kind of like unrealistic. . .
Peggy: People would criticize it because the kids never ran into any racial problems. They were really bashed for that. Bill Cosby wanted to portray a nice side of the black race, and they bashed him for that. You just can't win.

[It's really hard to understand what is going on here—Monique is talking very loudly at another table, and I can't hear what the teacher is saying to Barb about race issues and Cosby]

Barb: Yeah. A million things are running through my head right now.
Teacher: What is your topic?
Dan: I don't want to write about anything really. I just sat down last night and I was thinking what's...
Teacher: Maybe that's the problem—that you started last night.

Dan: Well, I've been thinking about it, but I really don't know where to start I guess... Like I saw a show that had the hidden you know behind the scenes, like you know when McDonald's shows you that hamburger and french fries that's on TV they inject ketchup with a syringe, like perfectly into place. Like the ice cream you see on TV is not really ice cream. It's a mixture of a bunch of different materials. Sometimes it's butter. And like the lines they put on chicken it's like with an iron—a hot iron they perfectly burn them on. And the butter they put on corn, it just slides down the just happens to be... it was on TV. That's a whole career to artistically present food for TV. You wouldn't believe what they do.

Peggy: I saw that. Like ice cream isn't ice cream because it melts, so they have to...
Dan: Yeah. It's like a dough. Well, it's better than the ice cream you get. When you scoop it out it never looks as good as it does on TV. And that pat of butter that just happens to slide down the corn as they're filming, well, they put it on there and then they take a torch, and they get it really gooey, and then right as it starts to slide they start filming so they catch it. It's amazing what they do. That to me is more interesting than arguing over male and female roles in advertising. Because everybody sees that. I mean, it's pretty much taken for granted in my eyes. I mean you can...

Teacher: [I can't hear]
Dan: I'm back to this conversation.

[Again, it's hard for me to hear what's going on because the argument at the next table is louder.]

Teacher: You said you had a problem getting a topic.
Nicole: I might change.
Teacher: What are you writing on now.
Nicole: I'm writing on this magazine that I had never seen before, but actually I have it right here. I was looking through it and I go, "my god."
Teacher: Six dollars just for the damn magazine.
[Again, I can’t hear.]
Dan: They need to put up a stand here so I can sit and have a bag of popcorn.
Barb: What are you guys talking about?
Dan: They’re totally arguing back and forth. It’s great. It’s hilarious. It’s hilarious. It’s like the Brinkley roundtable. Have you ever seen that? It’s great, it comes on like Sundays. You have your liberal democrat, you have your conservative republican, you have your conservative democrat, and you have your liberal republican, and they all argue with each other about stupid stuff. They just totally slam each other. It’s great, it’s like this. You’ve got your white female, and your black female. You’ve got your quiet male. You’ve got your outspoken male. They all have different lifestyles, and they all sit around and argue with each other. They’re arguing about True Lies. It just came out, but I haven’t seen it... That would be interesting to read her papers and see the points she would come up with.
Nicole: [still talking to the teacher about her paper]...comparing the ways different ethnicities are represented. I might do a sitcom.
Peggy: They’re talking about True Lies.
Theresa: [to teacher] So you didn’t jump to Monique’s defense, but you agree with her?
Did you like it as a Schwarzenegger film?
Dan: Every movie he’s in, it’s just ‘I’m Arnold. This is my stage crew with special effects this and special effects that.’ I liked Kindergarten Cop. That was good.
Theresa: I thought that movie was more violent than Total Recall. I thought the violence in Kindergarten Cop was more disturbing.
Nicole: I saw the one where he could see...
Dan: Predator.
Nicole: After I saw that I said, I never want to see another Schwarzeneger film.
Dan: It’s scary at the end.
[Monique (shouting): Let’s think back to what happens after she hits him with that.
What is the first thing Arnold Schwarzenegger does? And he laughs. He laughs.
Do you remember the movie? I’ve seen it twice. He laughs. He laughs.]
Peggy: I’m in a different conversation.
Nicole: Is there a remote control? [She wants to turn down LaShe].
Peggy: Yeah, really.
Barb: Is anybody revising their last paper?
Peggy: No, I’m happy with my grade.
Barb: I mean, I got a B+. I’m not psyched about it, but...
Peggy: I got that back and realized I had printed it on a scrap piece of paper. I couldn’t believe I turned that in. I must have been totally out of it that day. He was probably wondering what in the heck...
Barb: You’re supposed to be a future educator!
Peggy: I know. I couldn’t believe it.
Dan: That will be something you can tell your students.
Barb: She’s probably gonna give handouts and have some secret note on the back.
Peggy: You know what I did one time? I had like my name and telephone # in the middle of this math test. I cut and pasted it somehow. He was like, the class doesn't need your phone#. I don't know how I did that.

Nicole: Did you get any phone calls?

[They listen to the other conversation, and Nicole makes another comment about a remote control.]

Barb: I think The Cosby Show will be a good topic. Where can I find articles?

Nicole: Go to the Columbus library.

Peggy: I wanted to write on a current film, but I thought, how will I find out where the reviews are written. I'll have to scan through every magazine.

Theresa: It's kind of fun though, if you're doing something current. You can sort of do very much your own... 

Peggy: That's what I wanted to do, I wanted to do Forrest Gump...

Dan: Did anybody see The Stand?

[interruption—changing tapes]

Dan: It's kind of quiet now.

Nicole: Oh. I wonder why.

Dan: I found the remote control... 

Nicole: It was really quiet last Thursday.

Peggy: Yeah. It was. [laughs]

Dan: That's cause she wasn't here

Barb: I didn't notice.

Nicole: Really? How could you not notice?

Barb: I have a lot of patience.

Nicole: Obviously. I have zero.

Dan: I just find it amusing.

Nicole: I find it annoying.

Dan: Yeah, it gets annoying after a while, especially in the class discussions. Like in small groups like this I can avoid it.

Nicole: I wrote him an e-mail.

Dan: You wrote him an e-mail?

Nicole: I said there's this certain individual in this class who is really annoying, and she's getting on more than just my nerves.

Dan: Oh, everybody. Everybody.

Peggy: You can't have class discussion if you have one person leading the whole discussion.

Nicole: I just said, I hope that her interjections don't hinder our grades since we don't have the opportunity to say much.

Dan: I wore my special cap today thinking it was gonna be really cold in here. See it's got flaps that come down. Maybe I should just do that whenever I want to mute somebody out.

Barb: Great idea!

Nicole: Maybe you should just put your left one down.

Dan: Yeah. That would be a good one.

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3. Large-group Face-to-face Discussion (excerpt)

Mike (teacher): Alright, time to get this show rolling here. Okay, let's give our attention to group #3 for their oral presentation.

Hannah: Good morning and welcome to our show. Today we’re going to be discussing the influence of television media on our daily lives, the way we think about ourselves and the way we act. The format we’ll be using today is to show you a short clip and then have our panel of experts debate the issues that are in the clip. Also, watching these clips, we have some questions for the studio audience to ponder and possibly jot down some notes of what you think you see. By the way, these will be collected for use in our research lab later on. Clip #1 is the “Regulate” video by Warren G. and Nate Dog. While you’re watching this video, I would advise you to watch for images of violence, and how women are portrayed in this video clip.

Zachary: The tape is kinda double image, like out of focus. So listen to what they say, too. A lot of the images are in the lyrics.

[sounds of video clip]

Hannah: Here to discuss this video today is Dave, who feels that violence and references to drugs have a negative influence on America’s youth. Also here today is Monique, who feels that images portrayed here are an accurate depiction of black culture and that it’s okay to show reality on TV. Dave, would you explain your views?

Dave: The video simply glorifies a lifestyle that’s legally and morally wrong.

Monique: Behind closed doors I can honestly say...

Dave: ...

Monique: but that is your depiction of the word “freak.”

Hannah: Excuse me, Dave, I don’t understand what you mean by that.

Dave: In the video they call women freaks. I don’t know. Can you define the word “freak”?

Monique: Okay, it is a term used by African-American men and certain African-American women. They feel the need to address women in a certain way. Freak is a term used for a pretty woman. It’s not a comedown. You say bitch, freak is defined as a pretty woman wearing something that would be sexually attractive. In your terms it would be bad, but what is wrong with a pretty girl. He notices her...

Hannah: Do you think it’s degrading to women?...

Monique: Okay, I’m going to begin with language. The language here is different, and we all have our own dialect. None of us would have a problem with a doctor calling someone a cadaver and dehumanizing a human being. Does anybody have a problem with that? But we all have our different languages... Instead of judging it you have to understand what you are listening to.

Dave: They’re called freaks. Okay. They’re taking 5 or 6 freaks to an East Side motel. Is that okay?
Monique: Let's start from the beginning. I would like to re-examine this. This is a story. It has been characterized as a gangsta story. In my opinion and in the opinion of people I've talked to, a gangsta story is when a rapper is trying to glorify—Okay? The person who was singing this song was a victim of crime. He was not identifying with the crime. If anyone has ever seen *Above the Rim*, it was about a man who was victimized—

Hannah: I have a quick question. There was a crime in the movie. I don't know if you guys saw this but the one guy gets his jewelry stolen and gets beat up. His friend comes along in the car with a gun. Is that okay?

Monique: But he is not the robber. He is telling the story.

Hannah: But his friend has a gun. Is that okay?

Monique: Does anybody know Dirty Harry? Dirty Harry shot all the bad guys. Never once in the video did anyone hit the floor. There was no bloodshed. The guy came out of the car with a gun, but you never saw anyone get shot. If you want to rewind it, you can tell.

Hannah: I have to agree with you, but Dirty Harry is a movie. You're saying that this is depicting real life.

Monique: No one gets shot.

Hannah: That's true. But you're saying this is real life.

Monique: What's the difference between a movie and a video? I would like to tell you a couple of things about this story. There is a coherent story here. His main story is that he is out with friends having fun. Some people come up and they rob him. His friend protects him.

Hannah: Protects him by shooting the guys.

Monique: How do you expect to protect a friend on the streets? That's where they were. I don't think getting out of the car without a gun would have protected his friend. He would have been violated further.

Zachary: There was no bloodshed, but "[quotes song]" so I think he killed them. I mean whether or not they showed it.

Monique: If he killed them, what is wrong with killing people to protect your family? ...In a family setting, you protect yours.

Hannah: Dave has a statement.

Dave: But if I'm not mistaken, Dirty Harry was a police officer. But you get into this... Snoop Doggy Dog. The guy's got a rap sheet—murder charges... and he's out there and he's a role model to young black teens and young white teens. Violence, drugs.

Monique: ...The problem is that you don't understand what a real gangsta video is. It is one that glorifies violence. This does not glorify violence.

Hannah: We have a comment real quick from the audience.

male: You have your opinion and he has his opinion. That's all it is...

Monique: ...I'm not saying that only a black person could understand this. I'm saying that he doesn't have enough information to understand it. He doesn't have a black history background. I bet if I asked him, he wouldn't understand half of the icons that were put in the video. I'm taking quotes from books and experience. He has
his opinion, but I think that he should dig a little deeper; he doesn't have the proper information to back up what he's saying.

Dave: You don't have to be black to see that that video glorifies violence, glorifies drugs-that's what they're saying.

Hannah: We have a comment from the audience.

Nicole: Why does he have to know the history of black culture or black whatever to see that or to understand or to make it so it's right that it's realistic, or that violence is okay?

Monique: You're saying to make it realistic, right?
Nicole: No not realistic but...

Monique: That's what you said.
Nicole: Sorry. Cut that out.

Monique: I didn't say that it's okay. I just said that it's one experience that he has never had and I'm saying that's an experience that many more sheltered, and for lack of a better word, non-minority would not be able to understand.

Nicole: What's the difference if you're black or white? It's still killing people.

Monique: The circumstances which they're under. Do you feel that if you're walking into Bloomingdales and someone tried to rob you and take your personal things and pulling down your dignity and someone came up and took out the people who were trying to rob you, would you feel that that was justified?

Boris: No.
Nicole: It's not justified!

Boris: What about Nazi Germany? After the war, everyone tried to explain by circumstances. They killed 10,000 people just taking orders. We're just taking orders. What I'm trying to say, there is no excuse to violence. No situation is excused. Your example... Dirty Harry movie was very criticized. It's not role model for anybody. If violence is bad, it's bad no matter what circumstances and no matter what excuse.

Hannah: That is a very good point.

Monique: I'm sorry, but I disagree. There are times to stand up to your rights nonviolently, but sometimes there is a point. But I'm sorry, sometimes there is a point. But I'm sorry, in white America, there is not the same point because they are not faced with the same challenges.

Mike (teacher): Let's think about the difference between excusing and explaining as we move on.

Zachary: Dillon is the other person in our group, but we don't know where he is. [Zachary shows a clip from an MTV ad.]

Zachary: There are blatant sexual references... Why is MTV using all this sex to sell their videos? I'm on the pro side for this, so I'll say, they want you to watch their programs. Their advertisers pay for a target audience to watch MTV, which is probably kids from 12 to 20. Sex sells, especially in that age group, there's no doubt about it... If that turned you on, you would watch MTV.

Hannah: On the other side, is it okay to use sex to advertise a product? Is it okay to use anything to make money?... There are other things they could do.
Zachary: It's not really hurting anyone though. The kids who are watching this have seen this stuff before. It's not graphically explicit at all. If they want to see it they're going.

Hannah: That's true but is it okay.

Zachary: . .

Hannah: So that's just making the bucks. Moving right along, does anyone have any comments?

Zachary: We have three more clips which we'll show and then we can just discuss any of them.

[Zachary introduces other clips, including an ad for Clear and Present Danger, a Levi's commercial, an ad for On Deadly Ground.]

Zachary: The ad for On Deadly Ground was right after the Levi's commercial, so you can see the frequency with which tv ads are saturated with violence. I think it says something about who is doing all this action. There aren't any women. It's all guys.

Hannah: Can anyone think of a movie with a woman who is the main figure and she's blowing up things and shooting people?

Dillon: Bridget Fonda

Nicole: . .

Monique: Bridget Fonda is also an evil character.

Hannah: That's true. But other than that, I was trying to think.

Boris: Undercover Blues.

Hannah: Undercover Blues. I haven't seen that one.

Monique: Well, she was not the main hero in Undercover Blues. She is a partner in the heroics there, but she is not the whole thing. . .

Hannah: Someone just mentioned Terminator, but who was the main star?

Dan: Well, Arnold was, but she was the good guy.


Sigourney Weaver. I think the Levi's commercial is pretty interesting. They normally show women's bodies. But they are focusing on the man's rear end. How do you feel about that? Is that good? bad? Did men feel weird?

Monique: Is it poetic justice?

Mike (teacher): What is the man doing in that ad?

Hannah: He is leaning over, playing pool.

Mike (teacher): So he's active. What is the woman doing?

Hannah: Sitting. Watching.

Mike (teacher): How is she watching? Leaning against the wall provocatively. What is he holding in his hand? A big long stick. He is still the active one.

Monique: So in a sense are they fooling us?

Zachary: You can find that in those commercials

Hannah: Does anyone have any other comments about these clips?

Dave: I think another point is that it's hard to find a minority in any of these ads.

Advertisers just don't think it sells to have minorities. They are good on Taco Bell.
commercials, but they don’t put them on to sell a product that they don’t think minorities would buy.

Monique: They also do something else. You would see a minority in a Levi’s commercial, but it would be aired on a black network. They don’t run those commercials on “regular” tv.

Hannah: I’ve seen Levi’s commercials with black men.

Boris: If you see a commercial about technology, they always include some sort of Asians like Japanese or Chinese. Always. If you look at Saturn commercial, I think one out of three is black or Asian so they emphasize minorities. It’s a pretty good counter-example.

Zachary: I think that’s an advertising strategy... They make that effort... Saturn is committed to appeal to thinking people, who like to see nice diversity. That in itself makes some people look at Saturn.

Bob: Well, how many blacks do you see wearing Levi’s?

Boris: No, but you see the whole image of the jeans is that it’s some sort of American product. Jeans are a very American product. It’s hard to sell “American” products while emphasizing minorities. They could emphasize minority to sell cars, technology, something like that.

Monique: Are you saying that only white people are American?

Boris: No, but... Monique: Is that the message they’re sending? If it’s hard to put minorities in that depiction, that’s saying that America is white America. It’s not the cultural diversity that we’re supposed to have. And that is wrong.

Nicole: Are they sending a message, or are viewers interpreting it?

Monique: It’s a very strong message, if you ask me.

Nicole: But you see, that’s your opinion.

Bob: But you’re talking about Levi’s. Whites wear Levi’s. Look at shoes.

Monique: I own a pair of Levi’s! Does that make me white?

Bob: When you see a shoe commercial, you see blacks. Blacks wear shoes.

Monique: White people don’t wear shoes? You’re wearing shoes now

Mike (teacher): Oh my. When you see black men wearing shoes, what are they doing?

students: playing basketball

Mike (teacher): Playing basketball. Or street ball. What an incredible stereotype, that they’re associating black men with playing basketball. That’s a culturally acceptable role.

Monique: How American is it?

Bob: They’re showing what sells.

Monique: When you say that black people don’t wear Levi’s, I’m sorry, but that is a wrong exaggeration... You don’t know what kind of jeans I have on unless I pull up my shirt! You don’t know what kind of jeans I have on! Are you going around looking at people’s behinds? Just because you have a big Lee sign on your butt doesn’t mean anything? Most people wear jeans. Where do you get that? How many people would agree that jeans are a big part of society, no matter what cultural background you’re from? I have on jeans. You have on jeans. How
many people in here have on jeans? I’m not going to check and see if you have Levi’s or Bugle Boy. Have you checked the demographics?

Dave: I feel sometimes that advertising is just unconscious ignorance. But there’s no excuse.

Mike (teacher): On whose part?

Dave: I don’t think they mean to offend, but they do.

Mike (teacher): Advertisers pay obscene amounts of money to sell their products, so there’s a lot of very conscious effort on the part of advertisers. I can’t think there’s a lot of innocence.

Zachary: But is it a conscious effort to offend?

Mike (teacher): Not to offend, necessarily.

Hannah: But to sell.

Mike (teacher): And in that effort to sell, there is great potential to offend. 

[Monique passes out handout on Cut and Mix: Cultural Identity in Cambodian Music.]

Monique: We’re going to be moving on to music here. I want you to think about what you listen to and what you hear. I have invited a friend in. This is Paul Miller. He is a graduating senior this year and he is also a student in Black Studies and Sociology. He is a very good authority on rap music. If you have any questions, you might want to ask him. So I’m going to pass out these and then we can talk about other things.

Zachary: ...I never thought of it that way and I wonder if it’s intentional or not.

Mike (teacher): Do you ever hang out at the Out-R-Inn?

Zachary: Yeah.

Mike (teacher): Pool is a big big thing there. Women are all over watching frat boys play pool.

Hannah: ...

Mike (teacher): There is a lot of sexual exchange.

Zachary: ...racist game and colored balls

Hannah: We have a comment from the audience.

Dan: Well, if blacks are depicted as playing basketball, what are whites depicted as? We play tennis and we play golf on TV. Like no white person has ever touched a basketball in their life.

Monique: But isn’t that a disadvantage for both?

Dan: Yeah.

Monique: But, but, but that isn’t all you’re depicted as. African-Americans are rarely put in commercials as intellectuals. How often are white people left out of those things? What there is is no balance for African-Americans. What there is for white Americans is balance. As a matter of fact, it’s an overwhelming monopoly on these types of things. You probably have more white people in commercials. But there are just as many degrading things for white people as there are good things.

Hannah: Monique, I have a questions. Maybe the reason that we’re not depicted evenly is the difference in population. How many people who live in America are African-American? I don’t know the answer
Dillon.: 10%
Monique: How many minorities are there in ratio to white America?
Hannah: Okay, that’s a good question.
Monique: Do you know the answer?
Hannah: No, I don’t know.
Monique: It’s a pretty good balance. Believe me, I’m not talking about just African Americans. I’m talking about minorities in general. African Americans are not the only minority and I know that. Why should it matter if there are just 10% when all of the 10% that they do show on commercials is degrading?
Dillon: But if 90% of your target audience is white, your’re going to want to appeal to them.
Monique: So you degrade the other 10%?
Mike (teacher): Wait a sec. We need to get a grip, and the Gloria Steinem can help do that. What happens when you present hard fast data to advertisers? ...What did they decide to do? They used stereotypes. The issue here is now with race. Unfortunately, this class is not very diverse. This class is not representational. White America is not 90% of America. It is not. Last I heard was more like 55%. So you have a significant consumer base. Consumers of color. But you don’t see 45% of advertisements being targeted that way for those particular populations. Advertisers are working on what they think, or what they want, consumers to be. They are not looking at what is the actual consumer. They are presenting a fantasy of what they want the American consumer to be . . . That was Jean Kilbourne’s message. The way that advertising is conducted in this country is harmful for everyone. Her studies show that advertisers reflect about 15% of actual America. . . The ideas floating around this classroom are absurd . . .
Zachary: Jake, is that your name? I was wondering if you don’t mind—what nationality are you?
Jake: Filipino
Zachary: You don’t see Filipinos . . .
Jake: I consider myself American because I was born in the United States.
Zachary: Right, I know you’re American, but are you concerned that in commercials that you don’t see people like you, that are born here and everything, but you know, Filipino. How do you feel about that?
Jake: ...I support whatever . . .
Mike (teacher): You don’t have to answer.
Zachary: Right, I was just curious how you feel about that.
Jake: I guess I don’t have strong feelings about that.
Zachary: Andrew, do you have anything to say?
Andrew: I never thought about it. I’ve seen a couple of Indians on a 7-11 commercial. I’d like to see more though.
Hannah: That’s how they’re always depicted. Like on the Simpsons. Why does the 7-11 guy have to be Indian? I mean they are playing on a stereotype, right there, big time.
Dave: It's not just advertising; it's tv in general. It's the news. When you watch the news, how many women, Asians...

Monique: Is it destroying the little bit of heritage that people do have left. Are you Indian as far as India or are you Native American?

Andrew: from India

Monique: Okay, so but a Native American would not find...

4. Aspects Discussion

Patch: hi
Captain Hook: hello
Pricillia: Hello
Patch: how's it goin guys?
Pricillia: Now, that we have all introdced ourselves, what are we going to talk about?
Pricillia: Has anyone decided what they are going to write their third paper on?
Captain Hook: This class has had so much controversy over the past 9 weeks.
Captain Hook: yey- pricillia ---aids
Walter: Well, we could discuss gays in the military
Patch: I agree but I think we all handled it pretty well
Scotty: Hello
Captain Hook: hell with the fags
Patch: I haven't decided on my paper topic yet
Scotty: Captain Hook, what enlightened views.
Captain Hook: Well, that's my opinion and you have yours.
Patch: does anyone here need another person for a group paper?
Walter: I think that part of the problem is that many of the people in our class are a little naive about cernet issues. Also I think that some people are unwilling to accept other opinions as valid.
Pricillia: Gays in the military would be an interesting topic. There is probably a lot of information out there.
Scotty: What exactly does "hell with all the fags” mean anyway?
Captain Hook: it means that I don't give a shit about them
Pricillia: Walter, I agree. The reason why arguments become so heated is because some people aren't educated on certain issues. People need to learn to try to see the other side. They don't have to agree with the other side, but they should consider why other people think that the way they do.
Walter: Have you ever known any gay men, Captain Hook? Or are you just writing them off?
Jill Bob: hey guys
Patch: hi jill bob
Scotty: Captain Hook, do you question your sexuality?
Pricillia: How many gay men do you know Captain Hook? Has one personally offended you.
Troublemman: Hi guys
Jill Bob: enough about questioning sexuality
Yeltsin: Hello everyone
Pricillia: Scotty just ones to get Captain Hook’s goat.
Troubleman: I don’t think we’ll ever talk about anything except sexuality
Jill Bob: her goat?
Scotty: ‘ones’ or wants
Peter: I agree with Troubleman
Captain Hook: I definitely know my sexuality and I don’t know any gays but I just think
    that they are sick!!!!!
Jill Bob: What about race
Pricillia: Wants, sorry.
Troubleman: No don’t bring up race!!!
Scotty: I don’t want any goats
Pricillia: Do you want chickens?
Peter: What are you talking about?
Jill Bob: no more livestock jokes
Troubleman: Who brought up all of this goat crap?
Yeltsin: Is this what we learned in this class?
Troubleman: I think so
Pricillia: Getting someone’s goat is just an expression.
Scotty: New Subject!!!
Troubleman: No douby
Troubleman: Oops, I meant doubt
Scotty: What have you guys thought about for paper topics?
Pricillia: Lighten up, after all, they did have the sale of champions at the fair this past
    seek.
Captain Hook: Who is looking someone to write a paper with?
Troubleman: AIDS, what about you?
Walter: So, where is the conversation monopolizer today?
Jill Bob: baaa, baaa, baaa
Yeltsin: Gay men in the militaty. I don’t think so!
Troubleman: You go Jill Bob
Scotty: She is noticeably absent, maybe the rest of the class will get to talk today.
Jill Bob: go where
Pricillia: Walter, that what I was wondering. We probably wouldn’t have had to do
    this Aspects thing because she wasn’t here.
Walter: Good point, Pricillia
Captain Hook: Hopefully she won’t be here today. I would like to get a word in. I guess
    this is my chance.
Troubleman: Good point
Peter: You never know, she might show up at the last min and take over
Troubleman: Yeah, speak now or forever hold your peace
Jill Bob: or bring in a guest speaker
Pa: calm down a bit guys...
Troubleman: That was low, but funny as hell
Pricillia: Cutting deep, aren't we?
Captain Hook: new subject
Scotty: no doubt
Troubleman: No, this is more exciting