

MAPPING A POST-PROCESS DIALOGICS FOR THE
WRITING CLASSROOM AS PUBLIC

By

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Abstract

The broad goal of this study is to better understand the rhetorical tasks faced by student writers in composition studies' "public turn." Questioning the common assumption that publicness resides *outside* of the classroom and *beyond* academic discourses, I sought to understand the classroom as *already and always* public. My theory building is primarily influenced by work in public sphere theory to define publicness in rhetorical terms—with a particular focus on the discourse negotiations that form publics and the rhetorical competence individuals need to maintain sustainable, deliberative publics. The Habermasian public sphere theory most often invoked in composition studies' discussion of public writing is appropriately complemented by these discursive understandings of publicness that help us address questions of individual rhetorical agency. The value of discourse-based investigations into public spheres—including the classroom public—is that this knowledge "can be used to *pursue a better public*" (Stob 27), characterized by access, active participation, and reciprocity with the discourses of other publics.

I integrate a range of theories including public sphere theory, post-process theory, and Bakhtinian dialogics to build this discursive understanding of the classroom as public. Investigating the rhetorical activities of an actual classroom public—a public-oriented first-year composition course—provides further insight into how the discursive realms of home, school, and public meet in these classrooms and how students uncover agency amidst these discourses. The resulting post-process dialogics for the writing classroom as public uncovers concepts potentially useful for fostering students' rhetorical agency in creating and navigating publics within and outside the academy. While the motivation for this project originated in a desire for greater facility in teaching public discourse, the end of my theory building is not a specific, desired model of public discourse for the classroom, but instead an argument for the centrality of discursive awareness to any well-functioning public. The provisional theory building I embark on in this dissertation attempts to bring into sharper relief some of the ways that we can build with our student writers a *better* classroom public.

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To “The Picture Lady”

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Chapter One

The Writing Classroom as a Public

The composition course has emerged as both a microcosm of the public sphere—a point of contact with the “real world” out there somewhere—as well as a place for students to prepare for immersion into public life—a point of departure to social and political spheres in society. (Weisser, *Moving Beyond* 116)

Our understanding of the possibilities for and the problems of society’s active members requires a framework that connects their material shape and activity to discourse. (Hauser 32)

Whether conceived of as composition’s *turn* or *(re)turn* to the public, the field’s increasing focus on audiences and situations outside of the academy has marked “the most recent and widely encompassing ramification of our discipline” (Olson, “Introduction” xi). Like many, I am attracted to these varied approaches that expand the agenda of first-year composition to include developing students’ rhetorical competence as public writers, and over the past several years, I have utilized service-learning, cultural studies, and critical pedagogies to access public issues and discourses with my students. But exploring ways to promote effective public discourse in my composition curriculum has also meant negotiating an ongoing and growing discomfort with the notion that I must, to invoke the title of Christian Weisser’s 2002 book, move *beyond* academic discourse to engage the public. For me, the elephant in the classroom, so to speak, has become the classroom itself. If the

public resides outside the classroom, then what is the classroom? Further, what becomes of academic discourse in the public-oriented writing classroom? What is its role in fostering students' public writing abilities?

My students have raised some of the same questions, both indirectly and outright, in their public writing assignments—for instance, when they struggle to locate the personal conviction necessary to write persuasively on behalf of an assigned community agency partner or when they openly express frustration about writing in nonacademic genres for a grade in a university course. Together, we have worked to define the relationship between the classroom and the public and have jointly been unsettled by the difficulty of doing so. For while our pedagogies may position the classroom as something other than (or *other to*) a public, we know that our students are *already and always* public, engaging myriad social issues that matter to them in the rhetorical venues appropriate to those issues. And although it may seem to students that the classroom is vastly different and distinct from the “real world,” we know that the academy is very much a public sphere, where various constituencies deliberate issues of shared concern, where external pressures force compromises, where dialogue, debate, resistance, and negotiation take place—enabled, mediated, and interpreted through discourse.

However, very rarely does this admittedly commonsensical definition of our publicness make its way into conversations about pedagogy. Instead, the dialogue about public writing pedagogies over the past decade is bound up in various arguments about how we can best strive to transform the classroom into something

more like a public, something more authentic, something more “real.” This goal takes shape in varied recommendations. Elizabeth Ervin adopts Robert Putnam to advocate for the classroom as a “secondary association” in which “interpersonal allegiances and commitments” build “social capital” (“Encouraging” 394-5). This social capital can prepare students for “authentic civic discourses,” the kinds they encounter outside the classroom in service-learning projects: “Writing [on behalf of a social issue] clearly isn’t the same thing as running for mayor, but it is a gesture of social connectedness in ways that simply writing a paper for class is not” (397). While I agree with Ervin that merely calling the classroom “a public exchange of ideas” (386) is not enough to make the classroom a public, I am also unsettled by such arguments that suggest writing an academic paper cannot be a gesture of social connectedness or an “authentic civic discourse.” In much of the literature on public writing pedagogies, the classroom and its discourses become partial to, or preparatory for, real publicness.

The approach exemplified by Rosa Eberly and Susan Wells similarly positions the classroom. While the academy, they argue, can come very close to the experience of a public, classrooms “will never be public spheres because of the institutional supports and constraints that allow [them] to exist” (Eberly 172). The best we can hope for is to mold the classroom as a sort of “proto-public” in which students can “practice public discourse in a writing classroom by thinking, talking, and writing about and for different publics” (172). Here again, the classroom is positioned at best as a developmental stopping-point on the way to the public, with students in training

for publicness. Further, the academic discourses we teach in first-year composition—both in their similarities and differences to discourses of the public sphere—are left unexamined, the tacit assumption being that academic discourses are essentially neutral and can serve as generic preparation for students’ participation in public dialogues. In other words, the comparison of academic and public discourses is rarely examined in the public writing classroom because it is assumed that facility in the former will ensure success in the latter.

However, this view of the classroom as training ground, and of academic discourse as easily transferable to other publics, chafes with what we witness everyday in the highly ideological discourses of the academy. This paradox is exemplified in the dual terms introduced by Mary Louise Pratt—her now famous “contact zone,” to invoke the classroom as a site of struggle and negotiation among various cultural viewpoints, and the “safe house” to describe the classroom as a “place of healing and mutual recognition. . . in which [we] construct shared understandings, knowledge, and claims on the world” (40). As much as our composition classrooms function as “safe houses” or training grounds for students to rehearse and thereby hone their skills as public rhetors, our classrooms are at the same time “contact zones” in which students struggle to integrate personal, academic, and public discourses. For certain, these discourses do not integrate easily. As numerous studies in the vein of David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University” have shown us, students’ personal or home discourses and related ways of knowing are often incompatible with the expectations of the academy, and assimilation to

academic discourses involves more than simply learning a new set of rhetorical conventions.

Likewise, we know that academic discourses are not neutral and cannot relocate effortlessly to other realms. Patricia Bizzell, for instance, warns us not to assume that academic discourse as “the language of detachment, penetration, and objective analysis” (*Academic Discourse* 20) affords any measure of disinterest or critical distance. Academic discourse does not, as Bizzell once believed, necessarily facilitate a Freirean “critical consciousness” that will enable students to enact radical change in the world. Instead, she cautions that “[a]cademic discourse outside the academy can issue in self-serving corporate policy statements, picayune legal documents, and responsibility-shifting government reports” (136). Deborah Tannen constructs a similar claim against academic discourse as neutral and, in fact, holds academic discourse as complicit in building our society’s “argument culture”:

Students are taught that they must disprove others’ arguments in order to be original, make a contribution, and demonstrate their intellectual ability. When there is a *need* to make others wrong, the temptation is great to oversimplify at best, and at worst to distort or even misrepresent others positions. . . . Sometimes it seems as if there is a maxim driving academic discourse that counsels, “If you can’t find something bad to say, don’t say anything.” (269)

In short, academic discourses often engender dispositions counter to the kinds of accessible, deliberative, and generative discourses that we invest hope in for a

sustainable democracy. Assuming that the academic discourses students have been steeped in prior to arriving in our first-year composition classrooms will have no effect on their ability as public writers is, to say the least, problematic, yet this assumption goes unquestioned in much of the literature on public writing pedagogies.

The issues raised by public approaches to the teaching of composition, only a few of which have been reviewed here, have forced me to examine the identity of the writing classroom and its discourses vis-à-vis notions of “the public.” When the writing classroom is maintained as what I call a *quasi*-public, a staging platform or threshold space from which students prepare to be public themselves, we reinforce the portrait of the academy as “ivory tower,” lacking “real” material and social exigencies. We negate the valuable experiences students, as public writers, bring with them to the composition classroom, and we overlook opportunities for helping them uncover and act upon the rhetorical agency they already possess. And finally, because academic discourses in the writing classroom as *quasi*-public are left unexamined and thus unquestioned, they are falsely depoliticized—either narrowly conceived as transferable (and thus benign), or equally condemned as inimical to dialogue in the public.

In response to limiting visions of the writing classroom, and its writers, as merely in training to be public at some future point, this dissertation proposes a theoretical frame for acknowledging the classroom, and its writers, as *already and always public*. I am not arguing here that the publicness of the classroom is in dispute; rather, I am arguing that when we limit our conversations about publicness to

sites outside of the classroom, we miss opportunities for better understanding the status and possibility for promoting deliberative discourses within the academy itself, and between the academy and other public spheres. The theory building I engage in this dissertation is primarily influenced by the work of public sphere scholars to define publicness in rhetorical terms, with a particular focus on publics as discursive phenomena. This work, largely underrepresented in the current scholarship on teaching public discourse in first-year composition, maintains that “the force, the meaning, of a public is not what it is but what it can do, where it can go, how better it can operate” (Stob 324) through the rhetorical activities of competent participants.

Over the next several chapters, I integrate a range of theories including public sphere theory, post-process theory, and Bakhtinian dialogics to build this discourse-based understanding of the classroom as public and to uncover concepts potentially useful for fostering students’ rhetorical agency in creating and navigating publics within and outside the academy. The provisional theory building I embark on in this dissertation attempts to bring into sharper relief some of the ways that we can build with our student writers a better classroom public. Therefore, my case for the classroom as already and always public is accompanied by an argument that we must promote students’ consciousness of their publicness in order to help them see possibilities for shaping the discourses that shape their lives. While the motivation for this project originated in a desire for greater facility in teaching public discourse, the end of my theory building is not a specific, desired model of public discourse for the classroom, but instead an understanding of the centrality of discursive awareness

to any well-functioning public. For, “in terms of language in [a] public sphere, the belief is not that by formulating a specific vocabulary humanity will forever be saved, but that by crafting linguistic solutions to specific problems, life can get better” (Stob 324). Instead of teaching fixed, normative discourse models, the classroom public focuses on understanding the nature of discourses as ideologies and the rhetorical tasks writers face as they navigate the dynamic interaction of multiple discourse realms within a public.¹

Defining “Public”

To undertake an argument for the classroom as public requires pursuing an understanding of what constitutes one. As I discuss in more depth in the next chapter, most compositionists who take up public approaches to the teaching of writing draw upon the foundational work of Jürgen Habermas. The model Habermas derives from the bourgeois public sphere of the early eighteenth century advances a singular notion of *the* public as defined by broad participation, deliberation of issues of common concern (what he calls “communalism”), and inclusiveness. Because discourse within this bourgeois public sphere was facilitated by the suspension of status markers so that deliberation could be judged solely on the merits of rational-critical debate, Habermas’ legacy for teachers of public discourse is often an easy fit between a generalized academic discourse of disinterest, logical appeals, counter-argument, and communicative success within the public sphere.

However, Habermas' many critics have challenged the bourgeois public sphere ideal and, accordingly, the seeming "fit" between academic and public discourses. These critics have noted, among other flaws, that the bourgeois public sphere was only accessible to a narrow range of participants, namely educated and propertied males. In place of a singular and inclusive public sphere, these critics, chief among them Oskar Negt, Alexander Kluge, and Nancy Fraser, advance revisionist conceptions more readily championed by compositionists who teach public writing. Through her historiographical study of public spheres, Fraser dismantles a normative or fixed public, arguing instead that "arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public" (122). She offers that "subaltern counterpublics" construct this plurality. Far from suspending subjectivities, these counterpublics are formed around them and serve as sites for participants to generate, test, and refine agitational discourses that respond to "exclusions within dominant publics" (124). Composition scholars like Eberly, Wells and more recently Derek Owens have utilized Fraser to construct the classroom as a similar space for inventing and experimenting with oppositional discourses within the relative safety of a community of like-minded individuals.

Informed by Fraser and other public sphere scholars who reject a singular public sphere, I favor language that acknowledges the diversity and plurality of "publics" and indeed the importance of "publicness." The latter term is at some points used in this project to connote consciousness of the classroom as public and at

others to underscore the importance of consciousness of the individual writer as public. Fostering writers' understanding of their own "publicness," I argue, enables a greater sense of and ability to act upon their rhetorical agency within publics. Similarly, I utilize the terms "realms of discourse" and "discursive spheres" to avoid reinforcing static models of "home" or "school" or "public" discourse. These terms are useful because they connote myriad discourses resident in any given public. As I argue throughout this dissertation, public writing pedagogies that invoke the classroom as *quasi*-public often rely on reified versions of discourses.

To complement the work that has already been done to connect public sphere theory to the composition classroom, I propose that there is value in looking to alternative work in public sphere theory that defines publicness not in terms of historical conditions, identity, or access, but instead by rhetorical criteria and the related rhetorical competence needed for active participation. A rhetorical, discourse-based understanding of publicness, namely that advanced by public sphere scholars like Gerald Hauser and G. Thomas Goodnight, holds that a public is constituted in and by the shared rhetorical activities of its participants. A public does not exist *a priori*; it is situated and unrepeatable, created and sustained rhetorically through the deliberation of competent participants.

Although underutilized in much of composition's discussion of public approaches to the teaching of writing, discourse-based definitions of publicness are not entirely new to our field. Joseph Harris, influenced here by Richard Sennett, first articulated a public vision for the writing classroom as

a site of conflict rather than consensus, of bartering rather than sharing. . . . where representatives of various boroughs or neighborhoods, the advocates of competing interests or constituencies, can come to argue out their needs and differences. . . . not a free market of viewpoint and ideas. . . . [but] where differences are made visible. (109)

The classroom public, because it renders visible these differences, is maintained by talk, the “sort of talk that takes place *across* borders and constituencies” (109). Rhetorical definitions of publicness advanced by public sphere theorists echo Harris’ emphasis on uncovering and negotiating difference. Most importantly, because these definitions are informed by the study of actual publics, they help us understand *how* this talk develops and is sustained through participants’ shared rhetorical activities. As Hauser expresses, “[o]ur understanding of the possibilities for and the problems of society’s active members requires a framework that connects their material shape and activity to discourse” (32). Because these rhetorical understandings deal with discourse and help us pursue questions of individual agency, they offer a useful barometer for measuring the extent to which the treatment of discourses in our pedagogies is consistent with the classroom as public. As I argue in the next chapter, the public writing pedagogies informed by Habermasian and even revisionist public sphere theories most often result in reinforcing the classroom as *quasi*-public, one consequence of which is a de-emphasis on students’ identity and rhetorical agency as public individuals. Rhetorical

understandings of publicness, in contrast, can help us restore the public in our classrooms.

Rhetorical Understandings of Publicness

Hauser—the primary public sphere theorist informing this dissertation—presents a thorough rejection of Habermas’ “universalized public sphere populated by disinterested participants who adhere to rationalistic norms and unitary modes of expression” (55).² Hauser argues that Habermas’ ideal is “at odds with the rhetorical features of discourse as it is practiced in a democracy” (55). Far from singular, and far from being sustained by a critical disinterest, Hauser’s rhetorical model of a reticulate public sphere “not only expects participants to have interests but regards them as essential for the exercise of prudent judgments on public problems” (55). However, unlike Fraser’s counterpublic, a model which allows for retreat, regroupment, and retaliation with oppositional and agitational relationships (often evoking those negative renditions of the academic discourse in the “argument culture”), a rhetorical model privileges interdependency. As Hauser explains, a public can be defined as “the interdependent members of society who hold different opinions about a mutual problem and who seek to influence its resolution through discourse” (33). In Fraser’s vision, counterpublics seek to develop arguments that will penetrate more powerful public spheres; conversely, rhetorical models of publicness, because they disallow this narrow (and perhaps exclusively negative) relation to broader publics, place more demands on the rhetorical competence of their

participants. Thus, I argue, these rhetorical models may be more helpful for compositionists in promoting discursive awareness in our classrooms and rhetorical agency in our public writers.

Hauser explains that a public is created as participants engage in shared rhetorical activities to negotiate and integrate competing interests. This work necessitates a common vernacular, a discourse that (returning to Harris' vision for the composition classroom) can traverse "borders and constituencies." Hauser conceives of this vernacular discourse as both the means and outcome of deliberation within a public. "A rhetorical model," he argues, "recognizes that we engage in civic conversation on particular issues with specific interlocutors and audiences. . . . [with] actual consensus forged through the heteroglossia, or myriad situated meanings, of a public sphere" (56). Consensus in a public sphere does not mean ascent to a singular point-of-view; on the contrary, it requires a negotiation of multiple, overlapping, and often conflictual ideologies that takes place through discourse:

Members of pluralistic societies belong to several, perhaps many, overlapping discursive arenas in which they experience the polyphony of concurrent conversations as vernacular languages that rub against one another, instigating dialogues. . . on the questions raised by their intersections and leading us to consider possibilities that might encompass their political, social, cultural, and linguistic differences. (67)

The shared rhetorical activities through which individuals constitute a public involve uncovering and participating where these overlapping discursive arenas meet. Here again, rhetorical understandings of publicness, this time those advanced by Goodnight, offer further operational knowledge of what it means to engage these “intersections” and to thereby uncover and build a better classroom public.

Students sustain a healthy classroom as public when they work together to identify and interrogate the similarities and differences among multiple discursive realms. Goodnight understands these as the “private,” “technical,” and “public” spheres of discourse and explains them using Kenneth Burke’s notion of identification:

One form [the private/personal³] is invoked when a person tries to show “consubstantiality” with another. Another form is invoked through partisan appeals—partisanship being a characteristic of the public. The third form is invoked through a person’s identification with his work in special occupations—the essential ingredient of technical argument. (217)

Goodnight continues, the “[d]ifferences among the three spheres are plausibly illustrated if we consider the differences between the standards for arguments among friends versus those for judgments of academic arguments versus those for judging political disputes” (216), defining academia as the prime example of a technical sphere.

Goodnight's commentary is especially helpful for identifying the rhetorical tasks faced by participants in the classroom as public, where not only home and school discourses circulate but also those of publics. To realize their agency in constituting the classroom public, students must uncover and openly navigate interests across these three discursive spheres. Engaging in analysis of the continuities and discontinuities of discourses within differentiated argumentative spheres enables them to craft a discourse that effectively bridges the personal, the academic, and the public.

Pedagogies that do not acknowledge these multiple and sometimes competing discursive realms maintain the classroom as *quasi*-public, compartmentalizing the discursive realms, often positioning academic and personal discourses in a lesser position to the public. In Goodnight's rhetorical model, a public is created and maintained by processes that effectively move an issue from private concern to informed judgment to arguments and forms appropriate for public deliberation. All three discursive realms—the personal, academic, and public—carry equal weight; importantly, the technical sphere (the classroom) has equal rhetorical influence on the public sphere and vice versa, suggesting that when the classroom is realized as a public, academic and public discourses can be consciously refashioned as they are considered alongside one another.

Vernacular Discourse and Rhetorical Agency within the Classroom Public

Goodnight's vision of publicness complements Hauser's rhetorical model by helping us understand what discursive negotiations students face in the classroom as public as they work to create consensus. But lest consensus be read as a replacement of Habermas' ideal speech situation or composition's own rejected "community," it might best be understood in Hauser's model as *intersubjectivity*, "meanings that constitute a *we* and that, in fact, are a source of significance for our own self-awareness in addition to our purely subjective stance" (67). These meanings are "more than communal understandings of denotation. They are public in character" (67). Locating agency to negotiate the discursive spheres within the classroom as public, and to uncover what Hauser terms a "vernacular" language to facilitate this deliberative dialogue, requires a certain kind of rhetorical competence:

Partners in rhetorical transactions, of necessity, must actively engage one another in attempts to understand issues, appreciate each other's views, and form their own judgments. They engage in an interpretive process in which they must consider perspectives not entirely their own. They must attend to motivations and rationales that lead to differences of opinion but that open the possibility for consensus.
(33-4)

In this notion of rhetorical competence is yet another significant contribution that rhetorical understandings of publicness have for our public writing pedagogies. Active participants within publics must possess the ability not only to engage in

dialogue that bridges perspectives but to uncover a vernacular discourse, common to all participants, that enables this deliberation.

At first glance, one might argue that the give and take, the interpretive process, and the consensus-building Hauser alludes to above are already firmly established in composition pedagogies, post-Freire. Indeed, much of composition's ethos as a field is built on democratic dialogue, problem-posing, and collaboration. In light of his larger rhetorical model, however, we see that Hauser's language of "rhetorical transactions" refers not only to deliberation between and among individuals but also deliberation *on the level of discursive realms*. Students' task in the classroom as public involves recognizing and negotiating the ideologies inherent in the discourses of the personal, the academic, and the public, to bring these realms into contact with one another and to identify a vernacular to engage talk across discursive realms. In the classroom public, students recognize that the debates and deliberations we have, those that we call "public," are not simply about the propositional content of this or that issue, irrespective of the languages used to engage our debates; they are about the languages themselves. Students in the classroom public accomplish this together using a vernacular discourse that provides the means for identifying how discourses frame arguments, constrain responses, and enable individual action.

Mapping a Post-Process Dialogics for the Writing Classroom as Public

I begin the task of constructing a theoretical frame to acknowledge the classroom and its writers as already and always public with a rhetorical definition of publicness informed by Hauser and Goodnight: *A public is constituted in and by the rhetorical activities of participants who share in open negotiation of personal, academic, and public discursive spheres using a vernacular discourse to effectively integrate these spheres.* In constructing this frame, my goals are heuristic rather than prescriptive—I seek to uncover and better comprehend the difficult negotiations that compositionists and students undertake as they confront multiple discourses within this space and to generate knowledge suggestive for my own work to promote the rhetorical competence and agency of public writers.

In the next chapter, I utilize this rhetorical understanding of publicness to examine a range of current public writing pedagogies. To that end, I review the scholarship on public writing pedagogies, organizing that scholarship to draw out implications for acknowledging the classroom as public. My argument is that current pedagogies often maintain the classroom as *quasi*-public because they do not engage students in examining and problematizing the multiple, overlapping, and often competing discursive spheres that intersect in the public writing classroom. Because the discourses of home, school, and public are often presented as static and distinct, students are not encouraged to develop their rhetorical agency in revising these discourses. I present three renditions of the classroom as *quasi*-public: the *micro*-public, the *counter*-public, and the *proto*-public. In defining these categories, I do not

seek to pigeonhole or indict current approaches to teaching public writing; rather, I see value in the classifications as a tool for discovering the ways that current approaches treat the discursive realms and to what extent these pedagogies engage students in (again to invoke Harris) “talk across borders and constituencies.” Finally, in this chapter, I note that although some current scholarship does address discourse negotiations, these negotiations are most often describes vaguely in terms like “civility” or “bargaining.” Recognizing the classroom as public opens up possibilities for inquiry into the concrete practices and processes of writers within that public.

Chapter Three suggests that progress towards acknowledging the writing classroom, and its writers, as public can be made by situating our approaches within post-process theory, which understands writing as already and always public. I note that although public writing pedagogies and post-process understandings of writing have flourished alongside one another since the mid-1990s, both sharing many of the same conceptual features, no one has considered the affinities of these two movements in the field, specifically what post-process offers to the public writing classroom. Instead, as evidenced by the two primary histories of public writing pedagogies (Christian Weisser and Paula Mathieu’s), these pedagogies have most often been theorized as social constructionist. I argue that post-process offers a relevant and useful backdrop for public writing pedagogies by validating and attending more fully to the public dimensions of our writing classrooms. Returning to public sphere theories that advance rhetorical understanding of publicness, I discuss the ways that post-process reflects the realities of writing within and between publics.

A grounding in post-process theory, I offer, complements and extends our existing public writing pedagogies, equipping us to not only theorize but to engage with students the work of building a better classroom public.

But even when complemented by post-process understandings of writing as public, interpretive, and situated, social constructionism leaves questions of individual rhetorical agency unanswered. While social constructionism acknowledges the self as already and always *social*, it does not fully address how the self as social gains rhetorical agency in public spheres. And although post-process helps us understand that *writing* is already and always public, it also does not account for the individual—in this case our student writers—as necessarily public. In Chapter Four, I look to some of the dialogic origins of post-process, specifically the work of Bakhtin, for insight into the writer as public. While post-process has most often invoked Bakhtin to validate its notion that all *writing* is public, I offer that Bakhtin's dialogism is also useful in giving us a portrait of what it means to be public on the level of individual consciousness, and why this is necessary for an understanding of rhetorical agency.

In this chapter, I explore the ways that Bakhtin's dialogism helps us further understand the tasks our writers face as they negotiate the discourses of the classroom public. Specifically I focus on Bakhtin's figurative peasant in "Discourse in the Novel," exploring the consequences of the peasant's deepened public consciousness. In giving us this portrait of an individual as always, already public, but having no prior consciousness of that fact, I argue that Bakhtin suggests the rhetorical

competence needed to *act* on that publicness, or, in terms of this project, to achieve greater rhetorical agency among the intersecting discourses of a public. I make links between the peasant's "socio-ideological language consciousness," his ability to craft "internally persuasive discourses, and what public sphere theory tells us about the rhetorical competence of public writers. Bakhtin contrasts authoritative and internally persuasive discourses using a pedagogical metaphor: Authoritative discourse may only be recited; conversely, internally persuasive discourse is "more akin to retelling a text in one's own words, with one's own accents, gestures, modifications" (Holquist 424). Since language, for Bakhtin, is linked to the project of selfhood, of ideological becoming, the ability to craft internally persuasive discourses is directly tied to individuals' awareness of their agency as social actors—as public. Although Bakhtin is silent on the exact method for crafting internally persuasive discourses, I argue in this chapter that hybridization emerges against the backdrop of his dialogism as potential language for describing—and lens for examining—how students mediate heteroglot publics, including the classroom as public.

Bakhtin defines hybridization as a "mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor" ("Discourse" 358). In Bakhtin's dialogism, this encounter of social languages is both fact—inevitable consequence of discursive spheres meeting—and aesthetic enactment. Bakhtin therefore distinguishes between *unintentional* hybridization and *intentional* hybridization, with

the latter an “*artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language” (“Discourse” 361). Not surprisingly given Bakhtin’s interest in novelistic discourse, the novelist makes ample use of intentional hybridization to dialogize authoritative discourses, to reveal the ideologies inextricable from these discourses. In bringing authoritative discourses into a zone of contact, importing them into contexts amenable for critical examination and transformation, the novelist can craft new, internally persuasive discourses. Hybridization made intentional reflects the heightened public consciousness of the peasant, the novelist, and our students as Bakhtin helps us imagine a method for bringing to light the classroom public.

To explore the usefulness of hybridization, I utilize in Chapter Five *unintentional* hybridization as a mechanism for further understanding what happens in the public writing classroom as the discursive spheres of home, school, and public converge. Because, as Bakhtin tells us, hybridization of either type never occurs without conflict among overlapping, intersecting language-ideolects, hybridization allows us to name some of the struggles that students face as they negotiate and integrate the discursive spheres. I report on volunteer students in a first-year public writing course who, through facilitated dialogues, offered insights about how our student writers manage the meeting of discursive spheres in the classroom. My conversations with these writers about the personal, academic, and public assignments they completed for their class revealed that their discourse negotiations

took place on the level of their writing processes. For these students, the language of process served as the means through which they could externalize the hybridization of discourses.

A secondary objective of my work with these students anticipated (albeit cautiously given my use of post-process) the pedagogical potential of hybridization. I reasoned if unintentional hybridization could be uncovered and externalized through talk about writing, that would further suggest *intentional* hybridization as a potential enactment of socio-ideological language consciousness, that deepened public consciousness that allows us to openly negotiate, take a position among, and transform authoritative discourses into usable, internally persuasive ones—in short, the rhetorical competence required to actively participate in forming publics, including the classroom as public. The students’ experiences and observations challenged my post-process orientation by offering that the language of the writing process remains relevant and indeed viable for students. Although some versions of post-process see little value in the process paradigm, my work with students proposes that to “bracket” process is just as impossible as suspending any other basis for our students’ subjectivities in the classroom as public. Following revisionist and rhetorically-informed notions of publicness, then, an expanded and pluralized notion of process may better capture the reality of students’ experience in the public writing classroom.

Thus, my work with public writing students contributed to the development of my post-process dialogics by articulating on what level students are conscious of the

discursive spheres meeting in the classroom as public. In identifying process as part of the hermeneutic strategy they employ to negotiate discourses, students suggest ways that compositionists can approach public writing pedagogies that openly bring the discursive spheres into contact with one another. In relation to rhetorical definitions of publicness, the ability to consciously negotiate these spheres parallels the rhetorical competence needed to move among and create new publics. With process as the mediating talk, the vernacular, students can uncover the language-ideolects of these spheres and craft internally persuasive discourses that bridge them.

I conclude the dissertation with a preliminary remark about the writing pedagogy suggested by a post-process dialogics. This rhetorical move is intended to underscore that the post-process dialogics I have constructed are only provisional and can be usefully challenged, revised, and expanded based on more extensive and varied investigations into the classroom public. As I embark on such future investigations, I will be influenced by the rhetorical criteria for publics emerging from a post-process dialogics. Post-process resists codified pedagogies for *teaching* writing and instead focuses our attentions on the conditions conducive for *learning* writing; to that end, my final chapter presents implications for raising awareness of the classroom public and for promoting students' rhetorical agency within that public.

Notes

¹Readers may appreciate a definition of “discourse.” My use of the term follows David Jolliffe’s definition in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. “Discourse can have three senses: a meaningful passage of spoken or written language; a passage that reflects the social, epistemological, and rhetorical practices of a group; and the power of language to reflect and constrain these practices” (101-103).

²To invoke Bakhtin, a public is “once-occurring,” marked by its historical, material, and discursive situatedness. A public is usefully distinguished from *the* populace, which Hauser explains is necessarily unspecific, “since the populace includes all citizens regardless of interest, level of participation, receptiveness to stimuli, and like conditions pertinent to rhetorical transactions within a public sphere” (32).

³Although my work is informed by Goodnight’s discourse-based vision of publicness, I am not faithful to his categories of *private*, *technical*, and *public*. In the context of a project on composition pedagogy, and consistent with Goodnight’s own discussion of academia, I substitute “academic” for “technical.” Additionally, I favor “personal” over “private” to avoid reinscribing the often-invoked private/public binary. The advent and popularity among students of Web-based communication such as Webpages, blog software, and social networking sites also informs my use of “personal.” For most students, the rhetorical situations presented by these technologies blur the line between “private” and “public.” Thus “personal” in this dissertation is used to encompass a wide range of discourses students engage outside of academia.

Chapter Two

Composition Pedagogy in the Public Turn: Three Visions of the Classroom as *Quasi-Public*

The need exists for more critical reflection on a practice that has been taken for granted by many compositionists who underscore the commonsense and theoretical aspects of public writing rather than interrogate the complexities inherent in such a practice.
(Issacs and Jackson x)

In *Tactics of Hope*, Paula Mathieu argues that the proliferation of service-learning, community literacy, public writing, and similar engagement pedagogies is significant enough to denote a new era in our field: the “public turn.” Arguing that composition’s concern with the public over the last two decades represents more than simply an outcome of the field’s earlier “social turn,” Mathieu chronicles the scores of articles and book-length works tracing histories, theories, and diverse pedagogical models for connecting compositionists and student writers to issues and audiences outside of the academy.

Writing courses that involve public discourses represent a substantial revision of well-versed teaching methods: “Too often, composition pedagogies have been thoroughly arhetorical, directing students to write to no one for no apparent purpose (‘Write a three-page paper on abortion’). The move towards public writing is an effort to reinstate rhetoric as the heart of effective composition pedagogy” (Olson, “Introduction” ix). Indeed, if we envision a spectrum of goals from the expressivist agenda of nurturing the individual voice to the rhetorical efforts to make writers more

attuned to their specific audiences and exigencies, writing classrooms that prepare students for public discourse, as I will try to show, do not necessarily require that we reject any of the field's most venerable traditions.

Perhaps because public-oriented approaches to composition tap so many of our fundamental goals for the teaching of writing, these approaches often go unquestioned. Emily J. Isaacs and Phoebe Jackson write in the introduction to their *Public Works: Student Writing as Public Text*:

[Few scholars] critically examine the values behind the call for public writing, the ethics involved with asking students to write publicly, or the pedagogical approaches and strategies that are employed when students are asked to engage in public writing. *The need exists for more critical reflection on a practice that has been taken for granted by many compositionists who underscore the commonsense and theoretical aspects of public writing rather than interrogate the complexities inherent in such a practice.* (x, emphasis mine)

Public approaches to composition involve unique complexities. We know from David Bartholomae that first-year composition students place “themselves both within and against a discourse, or within and against competing discourses, and [work] self-consciously to claim an interpretive project of their own” (612). This process requires that they draw upon discourses in their existing repertoire—personal discourses necessarily being a part of that repertoire. But unlike Bartholomae, who understands our students' challenges exclusively in terms of the discontinuities

between home and school discourses, I would like to suggest that the struggles students in the “public turn” face are more complicated than that, since we now ask them to negotiate home, school, *and* public discourses. This chapter takes up Issacs and Jackson’s call for critical reflection on the assumptions tacit in our public writing pedagogies and, most importantly, the experiences of student writers in composition’s “public turn”—specifically, the complex rhetorical tasks students engage in the classroom public as they make sense of the changing agendas of first-year composition.¹

As I argued in the previous chapter, when we exclusively pursue publicness outside of the academy, we reinforce the assumption that the classroom and its rhetorical tasks are removed from the “real world,” and we de-emphasize the knowledge our students already possess as public individuals. Discourse-based, rhetorical understandings of publicness not only help us restore the public in our classrooms but also give us a lens through which to “interrogate the complexities inherent in such a practice” (Issacs and Jackson x). These understandings define a public in discursive terms, as a space in which multiple realms of discourse are openly negotiated by active participants who use a common vernacular to engage “the sort of talk that takes place *across* borders and constituencies” (Harris 109). With this definition in hand, I examine current pedagogies for teaching writing in terms of the attitudes about discourses their practices suggest and the extent to which they acknowledge the classroom and its writers as public. In doing so, I hope to illustrate

the value of rhetorical definitions of publicness to uncover ways that we can further recognize and build upon our classrooms as publics.

The following analysis situates public writing pedagogies in relation to the types of discourse negotiations they require of student writers and, subsequently, the public visions of the classroom they summon. These pedagogies, although categorized in this review, are not mutually exclusive and share many commonalities in what they ask of students. This organizational approach identifies the various ways students in these classrooms are asked to negotiate the discourses of home, school, and public. The overarching goal of this review is to orient readers to the range of current public writing pedagogies and to highlight the ways that they engage students in discourse negotiations. Although I align particular pedagogies with particular visions of the classroom, my choice to categorize in this way simply designates an argument that particular pedagogies typify particular discursive relationships and thus varying degrees of publicness.

Classroom as *Micro-Public*: Service-Learning

Service-learning pedagogies, although not the *only* public writing pedagogies to engender this vision, epitomize the classroom as *micro-public*, a site in which students reflect on a range of relationships among home, school, and public discourses they observe in their work with varied publics.

Once considered “relatively undertheorized” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters 14), service-learning is now rooted in theories as far-ranging as John

Dewey's pragmatism and Paulo Freire's liberatory education (Deans, *Writing Partnerships*), Cornell West's postmodern "prophetic pragmatism" (Long), and postcolonial feminist theory (Himley). While community service and activism can take place apart from the academic setting (and its penchant for theory), pedagogies of service-learning in composition explicitly connect these experiences to writing in the classroom. However, at the same time these pedagogies engage students directly in the work of communities, they also promulgate a view of the classroom itself as a protected space in which students prepare for, dialogue about, and reflect upon the issues raised their public writing experiences in relationship to academic disciplines and their discourses.

Although the classroom is but partial to the service-learning experience, it is an integral partner with the public in the learning equation. Jeffrey Howard's definition highlights the reciprocal relationship that exists between community and disciplinary outcomes: Service-learning is a "synergistic model [in which] students' community service is compatible and integrated with the academic learning objectives of the course" (21). In the classroom, students use academic discourse practices to identify and analyze the work of publics: "As a rhetoric, democratic processes bring into sharp relief the importance of analytical methods that are the stock and trade of any language arts classroom: evaluating hypotheses and conclusions. . . distinguishing between fact and opinion. . . formulating critical questions" (Cooper and Julier 86). Publics and public issues directly enter the classroom through the community service experiences of the students, and are

processed through academic discourses. In service-learning pedagogies, the composition course functions as “both a *microcosm* of the public sphere—a point of contact with the ‘real world’ out there somewhere—as well as a place for students to prepare for immersion into public life—a point of departure to social and political spheres in society” (Weisser, *Moving Beyond* 116, emphasis mine).

A synergistic relationship between classroom and public, however, is not commensurate with traditional views of the classroom—or traditional views about university students’ status vis-à-vis community populations. Taking up this first point in her discussion of Stanford’s Community Service Writing program, Nora Bacon describes the traditional classroom as a “contrived and atypical rhetorical environment. . . where the purpose of communication is easily subordinated to the purpose of demonstrating mastery of a skill or satisfying a requirement” (Bacon 42). Inserting community service into the classroom, Bruce Herzberg adds, will not automatically change this agenda, will not raise “questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice” (“Community Service” 309), nor will it provide students meaningful experience with academic discourses. Laura Julier discovered the limitations of community service alone in her service-learning course. Students could complete their community writing assignments without ever personally interacting with the community. Perhaps paralleling their instruction in academic discourse as a set of rules to be followed, Julier noted that “the focus of instruction and of students’ attention could easily turn to forms and conventions. . . how to create a brochure, which software application to use, what a ‘trifold’ was, and whether brochures could

use graphics” (143). In Julier and Bacon’s experiences, it is when students locate goals external to obtaining a grade that success is achieved—when they function as *writers* and not as *students* (Bacon 42). This shift in students’ perception of themselves as writers working within and with communities, those communities having unique rhetorical goals, strategies, and discourses, becomes possible only when faculty engage the community partner in a co-instructional capacity.

Just as the faculty in these courses must adopt a de-centered role so must service-learning writers disavow notions of privilege in favor of a reciprocal relationship with community populations. Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters identify the key outcome of service-learning as the “rearticulation” of the university as “part of rather than opposed to the local community,” noting the difficulty of establishing this relationship when “sometimes a large portion of the college population. . . [has] no past relation to the surrounding community, and often come[s] from different class, ethnic, or national backgrounds as well” (4-5). This disconnect is often manifested in a *noblesse oblige* mentality among students wherein the university is the service provider and the community, the “served.” Julier explains:

[the] rhetoric of sending students ‘out’ into ‘the’ community may in some settings and course designs, confirm for students an insider-outsider understanding of academic purposes, and replicate condescending models of charity and mission work that do more to

undermine than to advance the goals of multicultural education and social transformation. (142)

In addition to engaging community partners in the design and assessment of public writing assignments, the reflective component critical to service-learning should help students uncover and interrogate attitudes about privilege. “If our community service efforts are not structured to raise the questions that result in critical analysis of the issues,” Susan Stroud argues, “then we are not involved in education and social change—we are involved in charity” (3).

Herzberg’s service-learning courses at Bentley College engage these questions in reflective writing assignments around the topics of literacy and schooling. Herzberg describes his students as “[i]mmersed in a culture of individualism, convinced of their merit and a meritocracy” (“Community Service” 317) and thus encourages them to use writing to relate their individual actions to a social basis. More than specific demonstrations of proficiency in academic or public discourses, Herzberg instead looks to students’ writing products for the extent to which they reflect a “sense of life as a communal project, an understanding of the way that social institutions affect our lives, and a sense that our responsibility for social justice includes but also carries beyond personal acts of charity” (317). This shift of thinking is not just necessary for students from obvious positions of social and economic privilege, however. Adler-Kassner identified similar goals for her service-learning course with students at University of Minnesota’s General College. Although these particular students possessed first-hand knowledge that social problems and inequities

were relevant to their individual lives, they had to learn to think of themselves as part of the academic collective by using academic discourse to talk and write about issues of personal and community relevance.

Herzberg notes the difficulty of moving beyond the individual to the social when reflective writing focuses exclusively on the personal. Thomas Deans offers “interactive or dialogic” journals as one way of transforming reflection into dialogue, while David Bleich in “Literacy and Citizenship: Resisting Social Issues,” addresses this challenge through the combination of “personal” and “public” journals, suggesting that reflective journaling for audiences of self and others can create new discourses in the classroom. Chris Anson calls these “collective” discourses both “interpersonally meaningful” and “ideologically charged” (178). Requiring students to connect personal concerns to broader social issues in an academic discourse of critical consciousness, these classroom discourses mirror the tensions and opportunities that exist in the public sphere.

To ensure a reciprocal and thus sustainable relationship between classroom and community site, service-learning has increasingly turned to mutuality as a conceptual and practical framework. Mutuality is invoked in diverse ways but with the shared goal of ensuring the productive dialectic between university and community central to Deans’ definition. Deans, in particular, offers us a way of thinking of mutuality on the level of discourse. He offers three paradigms for service-learning as “experiential learning. . . a dialectical relationship between action and reflection, a synergistic pairing of community work with academic study, a

folding of community outreach experiences into research and writing, and a commitment to addressing community problems and social justice through writing and rhetoric” (*Writing Partnerships* 143-44). Deans writing *about*, writing *for*, and writing *with* paradigms represent a range of engagement with the community, the last category representative of full integration of classroom and community. The Carnegie Mellon University-Pittsburg Community House’s co-sponsored Community Literacy Center (CLC) is representative of this last paradigm, in which students and community populations define shared problems and collaboratively compose new “problem-solving” discourses in response to those problems (see Flower, Long, and Higgins).

Deans’ writing *with* paradigm is consistent with the ways that mutuality has been invoked as an ethic of practice. And yet such an ethic is a complicated one to enact. Margaret Himley’s “Facing (Up To) ‘The Stranger’ in Community Service Learning,” for example, situates this ethic of practice in feminist postcolonial theory. She explains that the “the stranger” in both feminist ethnography and service-learning embodies the “ethical desires, peculiar intimacies, agitated interactions, material realities, and power asymmetries” (423) involved in constructing the other in the community partnership. These constructions remove students from genuine engagement with community populations as fellow humans. Himley argues that in order to achieve mutuality, service-learning courses should follow the lead of feminist ethnography in eschewing detached and objective researcher roles in favor of subjective co-participation that extends beyond the boundaries of single semester

service projects. Mathieu's work similarly visions an ethics of mutuality that emphasizes authentic human relationships over prescribed interactions. Drawing on Michel de Certeau, Mathieu argues for a "tactical" orientation that "frames the community as a source of knowledge, genuine community involvement in planning and evaluation, and a rhetorical sense of timeliness and the limitations of time" (114). While a viable mutuality remains a staple of service-learning pedagogies, Ellen Cushman's most recent work envisions a "praxis of new media" that imagines critical, digital, and community literacies within new genres of academic and community writing. This emphasis on genre can be seen, as well, in Patricia Lambert Stock and Janet Swenson's "Write for Your Life Project," which invites students "to use their literacy to turn their preoccupations outside school into the occupation of their studies in school" (153). These writers start with personal narratives to identify topics of personal concern that could have public import. They then revise this writing into forms appropriate for display in relevant public agencies.

The service-learning writing classroom as *micro*-public serves as a sort of temporary (bound by the semester-long service experience) threshold site for students to reflect on the kinds of discourse practices they witness during their work with community partners. For the most part, academic discourses in the classroom as *micro*-public are facilitative discourses, neutral enough to relate unproblematically to the public discourses brought into the classroom through students' community placements. Conversely, the next public vision for composition, the classroom as *counter*-public, focuses on the discontinuities among discourses, positioning the

classroom as a site for inventing and rehearsing agitational discourses. Rather than serve as a threshold site for reflection on the connections between academic and public, the classroom as *counter*-public is a space in which academic discourses are marshaled in support of an exclusively oppositional stance toward other publics.

Classroom as *Counter*-Public: Critical Pedagogies

Nancy Fraser devised the term “counterpublic” in response to the singularity implied in the Habermasian public sphere. Fraser offers a postbourgeois conception of publicness wherein “arrangements that accommodate *contestation* among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public” (122, emphasis mine). Responding to “exclusions within dominant publics,” Fraser explains that these “subaltern” counterpublics “function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment [and also] function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (124). Fraser further describes that members of these counterpublics “invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpenetrations of their identities, interests, and needs” (123).² Thus, while the service-learning writing classroom as *micro*-public mirrors the same sorts of power relations at work in broader publics, allowing student writers to explore a range of relationships of discourses, the classroom as *counter*-public privileges openly critical and oppositional discourses about the relationship of schooling to society.

In these counternormative pedagogies, the classroom serves a site for uncovering, interrogating, and responding to the ways that “public discourse, civic action, and the educational systems of a society are inextricably bound up in each other” (Weisser 37). Ann George notes that critical pedagogy pursues similar aims as cultural studies and feminists pedagogies by an explicit commitment to educating for citizenship (93) and, I would add, by an explicit commitment to discourses decidedly contentious toward dominant ideologies. Peter McLaren underscores this language of dissent in defining the goals of critical pedagogies:

The moral choice put before us as teachers and citizens, a choice that American philosopher John Dewey suggested is the distinction between education as a function of society and society as a function of education. We need to examine that choice: do we want our schools to create a passive, risk-free citizenry, or a *politicized citizenry capable of fighting for various forms of public life and informed by a concern for equality and social justice?* (158, emphasis mine)

In many ways, *counter-public* classrooms enact a Deweyian vision of education, providing students “an opportunity for acquiring and testing ideas and information in active pursuits typifying social situations” (*Middle Works* 169). John Dewey’s ideas about experiential education and reflective inquiry aimed at social change resonate with the goals of all public writing pedagogies. However, it is Paulo Freire’s radical critique which serves as the primary theoretical backdrop for classroom as *counter-public*. While Dewey assumes that adopting an ethic of

“associated living” and “conjoint communicated experience,” can be “equivalent to breaking down. . . those barriers of class race, and national territory which [keep] men [sic] from perceiving the full import of their activity” (*Democracy* 87), Freire suggests to us a pedagogy that deals directly with class and cultural difference. As Deans explains, Freire focuses on “radical socioeconomic change, which problematizes (and politicizes) the educational system and its place in the dominant (and to his mind oppressive) social order, while Dewey focuses on communication and problem solving, assuming a largely benevolent social order in need of revitalization rather than revolutionary restructuring” (40). For these and many other reasons, Freire’s ideas are significant to any pedagogical project that attempts to link academic and public discourses. He highlights the complicity of education in fostering unequal social relationships—and an exclusionary public sphere—and thus opens up room for revisionary teaching methods, most notably methods that work against what he calls the “banking model” of education wherein the teacher “deposits” knowledge like a “gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (*Oppressed* 37).

Critical pedagogues such as McLaren, Ira Shor, and Henry Giroux work against these traditional classroom hierarchies by adopting the role of co-learner with students in identifying and resisting dominant ideologies. Recognizing these dominant ideologies is possible when we adopt what Freire calls a “problem-posing” or “dialogic” education grounded in students’ lived experience—that is, a pedagogy that accounts for the ways that students are both oppressed and complicit in systems

of oppression. Students draw on personal experiences and discourses to identify “generative themes” (for one example, see Derek Owens’ use of the keywords “place,” “work” and “future” to uncover generative themes in classroom dialogue). These experience-based themes are necessary, in Freire’s words, because they make “oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection [comes] their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation” (*Oppressed* 33). The result of critical reflection is always action, cycling back to reflection and more action in Freire’s notion of “praxis.” Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters provide a succinct definition of this reflection-action cycle and its grounding in lived experience. They define ideology as “an unacknowledged theory of experience,” adding that “[c]onscious theorizing does not liberate us from ideology but rather encourages critical reflection that may make us less subject to particular ideologies” (8).

Significant for the public writing classroom, this praxis is enacted through writing: “Because language and thought are inextricably linked, language instruction becomes a key site where dominant ideology is reproduced—or disrupted” (George 94). While personal discourses are featured in critical pedagogies as a means through which generative themes emerge, school and public discourses are also central to what Giroux calls “the discourse of textual analysis.” Textual analysis “refers to any form of critique capable of analyzing cultural forms as they are produced and used in specific classrooms. . . . in order to uncover the layers of meanings, contradictions, and differences inscribed in the form and content of classroom materials” (137).

Invoking Robert Scholes' paradigm of reading *within*, *upon*, and *against* texts, and Freire's own maxim about "reading the word and the world," Giroux outlines a process of textual analysis as involving reading, interpretation, and criticism of various personal, academic, and public texts (148). In Giroux's pedagogy, a primary dialectic is between the personal and the public, with narratives of lived experience serving to raise questions of "history, culture, community, language, gender, race, and class" (225). These issues are explicitly related to the public, not to "collapse the political into the personal" but to strengthen "the relationship between the two so as to engage in rather than withdraw from addressing those institutional forms and structure that contribute to forms of racism, sexism, and class exploitation" (224-25).

Some have argued the limitations of engaging this sort of critique of social inequities with students from privileged backgrounds who, in many ways, may be considered the "oppressor" in Freire's schema. In answering these critiques Linda Finlay and Valerie Faith argue that Freire's terms must be examined and defined in the context of each particular and situated classroom population. For Finlay and Faith's economically advantaged students, for instance, "oppression" manifested itself in the gulf between their private and public lives. Their students felt oppressed by the educational system that they felt prescribed and limited their uses of literacy and schooling to economic ends (mastering academic discourse to earn a degree to secure financial stability). It was when these students began to explore the connection between writing, the enhancement of their personal lives, and social issues they felt passionate about that Finlay and Faith saw the transformative potential of

critical pedagogy. Mary M. Juzwik, in her “Notes Toward a Post-Critical Pedagogy,” identifies a focus on the individual student experience as key for operationalizing critical pedagogy theory across student populations. She argues for a “rhetoric of the everyday” to move “pedagogy theory beyond textual and systemic critic, toward more agent-centered focus on classroom acts, texts, relations” (11).

In the classroom as *counter*-public, students examine academic discourse as it reflects and constructs social structures in order to “understand more critically who they are as part of a wider social formation and how they have been positioned and constituted through the social domain” (Giroux 141). Uncovering this “hidden curriculum,” however, must accompany inquiry into the public discourses that reflect, shape, and maintain society. Giroux identifies popular cultural forms as important objects of analysis as a “primary force in shaping the various and often contradictory subject positions that students take up” (149). The aim of this analysis of personal, academic, and public discourses is to enable students to “engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power” (147). Underscoring the role of the public writing classroom as *counter*-public, Giroux asserts that such “border crossing pedagogies” (or as he also calls them “postmodern pedagogies of resistance”) generate “counter-texts,” critical and oppositional discourses about power inequities in broader society. Students leave the writing classroom as *counter*-public with “a language that allows them to reconstruct their moral and political energies in the

service of creating a more just and equitable social order, one that undermines relations of hierarchy and domination” (225).

Forming this language is often not possible in the classroom setting—however progressive the politics of the teacher—without acknowledging and responsibly appropriating authority. Jane Tompkins’ now famous “Pedagogy of the Distressed” recounts her realization that “our practice in the classroom doesn’t often come very close to instantiating the values we preach” (653). In addition, reminding us that we must adopt the dialogic methodologies espoused by Freire in addition to his rhetoric, Tompkins’ use of a religious metaphor hints at an equally important challenge: negotiating teacher authority in the critical classroom. In *When Students Have Power*, Shor candidly recounts his attempts to decenter his authority in the classroom. It was not until he *exercised* that authority to establish an after-class group that those students who were willing felt free enough to begin co-constructing the curriculum and class architecture with him. The authority inherent in the position of teacher cannot simply be shrugged off but instead must be recast in ways that promote critical consciousness.

Patricia Bizzell addresses this challenge by teaching an explicitly rhetorical pedagogy wherein she uses shared cultural values (equality, rugged individualism, the “American Dream”) to persuade students toward greater social awareness and the negotiation of difference. In turn, students are encouraged to develop their own rhetorical agency in crafting persuasive arguments for their viewpoints (for more on this pedagogy see Bizzell and Herzberg’s textbook *Negotiating Difference: Cultural*

Case Studies for Composition). Just as Bizzell invites the language or critique through a foundation of commonly held values, Victor Villanueva's critical pedagogy asks students to juxtapose canonical and non-canonical texts, mediating them through their own experience. His pedagogy helps students develop "an understanding of the dialectical relationship between individuals and their environment" (George 100). Bizzell and Villanueva's successful adaptation of Freire's ideas rests on their willingness to reveal and problematize their own political agendas and subject positions in the classroom, opening up a space for students to dissent based on their own experience and opinion. Similarly, Philip Burns, in "Supporting Deliberative Democracy: Pedagogical Arts of the Contact Zone of the Electronic Public Sphere," argues that teachers must "join the electronic deliberation, arguing our points of view, listening to our students, agreeing with them, disagreeing with them, challenging them, informing them, accommodating them," leveraging the medium to model the "deliberative rhetoric we encourage our students to employ" (144-45).

Critical pedagogies applied to the public writing classroom not only offer students experience in negotiating home, school, and public discourses, these approaches do so with the "hope that students will emerge from the semester's work with the ability to participate in critical and reformative public discourse" (Weisser 39). "Hope" is a significant word in the lexicon of critical pedagogy in two main ways. Freire suggests to us an *ontological hope*, connecting education as a liberatory endeavor to the project of individual "becoming": "Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted

beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (*Reader* 77). Second, Freirean educators, or what Victor Villeneave calls “Freirestas,” posit a *pedagogical hope*, a “certain kind of faith—a faith that critical intellectual habits will translate into effective social action, that an attitude displayed in class will lead to action in the wider community” (Deans 43). This faith is made manifest in critical pedagogies by providing students not only Marxist-inspired “languages of critique” but also neo-Marxist “languages of intervention” (George 96).

It is important to note that these languages of intervention are rarely discussed in critical pedagogies in terms of concrete action in the broader public sphere. Deans notes “[w]hile most courses that espouse a liberatory pedagogy encourage student dialogue and student/teacher parity (and thus make for a more democratic dynamic within the classroom), they are generally not integrated with active participation in social justice movements or organizations outside the classroom” (43). Deans and others see this as a failing of critical pedagogy—that while classrooms may be “more dialogic, institutional practices in the academy and in composition still tend to infantilize students by casting them as learners whose writing matters to few beyond the classroom” (Deans 44).

However, it can be argued that this critical distance from the broader public sphere is not a shortcoming of these pedagogies but instead a necessary position from which to engage radical critique requisite for subsequent action. That Freire intended to conflate classroom and public spheres is debatable. In one of his only works to explicitly focus on higher education, Freire states “[w]e must expect curricula to

stimulate curiosity, a critical spirit and democratic participation” (Freire, et al. 69).

The suggestion here and throughout Freire’s work is that reformed educational practices can engender the kinds of critical consciousness (*conscientization*) requisite to undertaking transformative social action. Freire explains the achievement of critical consciousness as a developmental process from “intransitive” consciousness, ignorance of, or blind adherence to, dominant ideology; to semi-transitive consciousness, wherein the individual is aware of her agency to act upon problems but does not yet possess a systematic understanding of those problems; to a transitive consciousness or critical transitivity, in which the individual has a historical understanding of society, the relationships and systems that undergird society, and her agency as a social actor (see *Education for Critical Consciousness* for an expanded discussion).

In the writing classroom as *counter*-public, students and teachers collaboratively uncover the ways that schooling reproduces social inequities, and generate discourses of resistance. At the core of these pedagogies are practices of “critique, production, and difference, all of which provide important elements for a counterhegemonic pedagogical practice” (Giroux 137). The public image of the classroom engendered by critical pedagogies aligns with the *counter*-public, an incubator for critical discourses reflective of that consciousness. Similar to Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of the “safe house,” students in the writing classroom engage in storytelling, ethnography (and autoethnography), transculturation, and critique to

understand their experience and prepare to represent it in relation to dominant ideologies.

Although Harris argues for keeping classroom discourse on the level of a “wrangle, even if it is somewhat formless. . . that gives students a set of chances to come to their own sense of a text or issue than a dialogue whose course has been charted in advance by their teacher (116),” he is quick to point out in the Afterword(s) of *A Teaching Subject* the limitations of an exclusive focus on difference. Harris responds to what has become another dominant metaphor in the field, Pratt’s classroom as “contact zone.” Pratt’s contact zone embraces difference as embodied by her students and their responses to texts carefully selected to raise cross-cultural issues. Harris argues that although Pratt’s metaphor reminds us of the importance of difference and controversy to students’ intellectual engagement, “she is left in the end with no real answer to the question of how one constructs a public space in which the members of various ‘safe houses’ or affinity groups are brought into negotiation (not just conflict or contact) with other competing views and factions” (119). The classroom as *proto*-public explores Harris’ question of how diverse and often competing interests are negotiated to construct public spheres, with a focus on studying the histories and material practices of publics.

Classroom as *Proto-Public*: Public Writing

Rosa Eberly gives us the explicit language of the classroom as *proto*-public in her article “From *Writers, Audiences, and Communities* to *Publics*: Writing Classrooms as Protopublic Spaces.” Eberly argues:

Students can practice public discourse in a writing classroom by thinking, talking, and writing about and for different publics in different *ethe*. The students among themselves can form different and overlapping publics. But writing classrooms will never be public spheres because of the institutional supports and constraints that allow it to exist. (172)

Eberly defends her choice of term and related parameters for the classroom largely because “writing classrooms are in many senses prefab—the group has come together for institutional more than overtly political purposes—and because the instructor has a different position than the students vis-à-vis institutional power” (172). This problem of power, so to speak, cannot be reconciled by self-awareness, disclosure, or the de-centering of classroom authority, all strategies employed by critical pedagogues as ways of using their position in the classroom to foster critical consciousness and critical discourse. The institutionalized infrastructures, hierarchies, and even classroom practices that define and sustain the academy prevent it from being fully public in the eyes of public writing scholars like Eberly.

In the public writing classroom, Eberly finds value in historiographic study of publics as a foundation for “teachers and students as they come to see themselves as

capable of thinking, writing, and acting in proto-public spaces and public spheres” (174).³ In Eberly’s pedagogy, students study “the formation of publics, the different subjectivities students might try out for different publics at different points in their formation or disintegration, the gradations of publicness and expertise in academic and professional writing, and the processes through which subalterns choose or do not choose to join larger or wider publics” (175). This emphasis on “publics” rather than “communities” or “audiences,” in Eberly’s opinion, “provides a rich and complex alternative to studying individual arguments tailored to ideal, prefabricated, homological audiences” (175).

In these *proto*-public classrooms, public writing figures prominently as the object of study into the anatomy of public spheres and in assignments that ask students to directly engage public genres. The classroom as *proto*-public is supported by pedagogical structures that promote collaborative learning and thus allow students to make their work “public” in various ways to each other. Isaacs and Jackson connect these practices to Kenneth Bruffee’s important work on collaboration: “Bruffee argues strenuously for students to go public with their writing to receive feedback, on the grounds that public writing in classrooms deemphasizes teacher authority and promotes student-writer’s abilities to see themselves as responsible writers and to view writing as a social activity” (xii). As the essays in Isaacs and Jackson’s collection evidence, regardless of specific pedagogical approach, public writing pedagogues seem united in viewing the classroom as not wholly public and

therefore ideally positioned to serve as a site for students to analyze and practice publicness as they develop as citizen-rhetors.

Scholars of the classroom as *proto*-public often draw on Jürgen Habermas' history of, and related normative model for, the public sphere as the conceptual basis for their arguments about the extent to which the classroom can serve as a public. In his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas historicizes the public sphere, marking its emergence out of the European bourgeoisie culture of the early eighteenth century; its concomitant rise with capitalism and the ways in which its discourses played out in the venues of coffeehouses, salons, and literary clubs. Although he also traces the subsequent erosion of the public sphere (due, in part, to the commercialization and de-politicization of its prominent communicative vehicle, the newspaper), he nonetheless asserts its value as a model. Growing out of and intimately connected to the sphere of private interests, the home, Habermas asserts that the bourgeois public sphere arose when individuals came together as a public to reclaim "the public sphere [once] regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor" (27). He subsequently posits three criteria for sustaining this sphere: access, communalism (as defined by shared concerns), and inclusiveness.

Habermas explains that despite the various settings and topics of these bourgeois public spheres, they all "preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from supposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether" (36). Not only

were “power and prestige of public office. . . held in suspense; economic dependencies also in principle had no influence” (36). Habermas himself points out that this access was seldom a reality but instead was “institutionalized and thereby stated as an objective claim. If not realized, it was at least consequential” (36). Consequential, that is, for the literate and bourgeoisie. Habermas also notes, that access did not extend to all; in particular, women, the illiterate, and the “propertyless” could not bracket their social statuses in order to enter discourse in the public sphere. Also betraying the class distinction of the public sphere, success in these sphere was defined by the “authority of the better argument” or as he also terms it “rational-critical debate,” surely the province of the educated.

Since markers of social status were bracketed or suspended in the interests of rational-critical debate in the bourgeois public sphere, the “the parity of ‘common humanity’” (Habermas 36) served as the required ethos for participants. The second criteria of the public sphere, then, was that the subjects of debate were topics of “common concern” as reflected in cultural products, aesthetics. These artifacts included philosophical and literary works once the protected domain of religious and legal institutions but now open to critique in the bourgeois public sphere. Habermas explains that the “private people for whom the cultural product became available as a commodity profaned it inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another, verbalize it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority” (37). But while specific cultural products may have served for the basis of specific and

situated discussions in the coffeehouse, the third principle, inclusiveness, mediated the locality of these discussions. “However exclusive the public might be in any given instance,” according to Habermas, “it could never close itself off and become consolidated as a clique; for it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public. . .” (37). That this public was “inclusive” for all persons—“insofar as they were propertied and educated” (37)—has garnered widespread criticism. Critics of Habermas, while all value his historical study as a starting point, have offered revisionist visions of the public sphere more applicable to the context of the contemporary writing classroom.

One of the field’s first to connect renewed interests in the public domains of rhetoric to public sphere theory, Susan Wells builds off of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s critiques of Habermas as idealistic and ahistorical. Wells notes that the public is “not simply a neutral container for historical events: it has its own history, its own vexed construction, its own possibilities of growth and decay” (328). Echoing Negt and Kluge’s analysis of the public sphere as necessarily laden with ideological power contestations between social classes, Wells draws a parallel to similar conditions in the composition classroom: As “contradictory, overdetermined, insoluble and peremptory—[the public] is *very close* to the experience of the classroom” (332, emphasis mine). Careful to not acknowledge that the classroom could, in fact, be constituted as a public, she continues that “life in the classroom is marked by *similar* inevitability, partiality of representation, and historical contingency” (332, emphasis mine). Thus, Wells argues that “the classroom itself

can be seen as a version of the public sphere; as model of the public, or a concentrated version of the public” (338). It should be noted that Wells does offer the *literature* classroom as “*potentially* public,” if we accept Habermas’ argument connecting the study of aesthetic forms to the study of public consciousness. Her analysis of the *writing* classroom, however, reinforces it as sort of training ground for preparation for public engagement. “A classroom that saw itself as a version of the public”, she notes, would “see how classroom rhetorical strategies affect individual projects of persuasion and how they open or foreclose possibilities for common work” (338). Wells’ comments speak to the value of academic discourse values of “connection to an audience, positioning, collaboration, and the articulation of texts in time” for helping us understand public sphere discourse “as a relation between readers, texts, and actions. . .” (338).

Wells continues by offering the metaphor of the “prison visiting room” (a metaphor played out in Negt and Kluge’s later work *History and Self-Will*) as a potential vision for the discursive life of the classroom. Wells explains, “[t]he image of the visiting room suggests that our work establishes a point of exchange between the private, the domain of production, and some approximations of the public sphere” (335). Again returning to her definition of the public sphere as existing in the relation of readers and writers, Wells argues that our work should not be “directed at the political opinions of students, however progressive or retrograde, but toward the production and reading of texts that move between the public (the political, the abstract, the discussable) and the private” (335). Wells identifies networked classes

(both technologically and geographically) and pedagogies that engage students in collecting oral histories as concrete pedagogical applications.

The most recent public writing approaches in this vein take up Wells' pedagogical suggestions. In Deborah Mutnick's "Inscribing the World: An Oral History Project in Brooklyn," she details a pedagogy of the public sphere, stemming from the community project "Our Legacies: Who We Are, Where We're From" to commemorate the centennial of her son's Brooklyn public school. Combining oral history techniques and the theatre methodology of the "story circle," Mutnick's writing students captured the private stories of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members and wove them into a cultural history of the school. The culmination was a community presentation of the histories that enacted "the dialectic between personal stories and social history [to help] explain experience without negating its rich complexity" (639). In her conclusion Mutnick explains that her project both investigated the public sphere (as defined as the school community) and contributed to its development, using academic research and writing to, quoting Weisser, "highlight the ways in which material forces shape what gets said, who gets heard, and how these forces have structured public discourse throughout history" (642). Mutnick's pedagogy, and resulting ideas for a "material rhetoric for the public turn," is a clear response to Wells' call for composition classrooms to mediate an idealized public sphere with the real experiences of individuals. Sarah Robbins and Mimi Dyer chronicle similar projects in their edited collection *Writing America: Classroom Literacy and Public Engagement*. Like Mutnick, they underscore the

importance of place-based, intergenerational, and cross-cultural research in helping students understand the diversity of discourse in public spheres. Last, addressing Wells' pedagogical suggestion involving the Internet, Irene Ward uses revisionist public sphere theories to explore possibilities for "cyberdemocracy."

Weisser's public writing pedagogy encapsulates the goals of the classroom as *proto*-public in which students study and, to varying degrees enact, processes for moving personal concerns into the realm of the public. Weisser argues that public writing classrooms should connect students to publics comprised of like-minded individuals, where they can "generate effective public discourse in a climate that is supportive and nurturing, which prepares them to enter larger public debates in the future" (107). He recounts his own "Environmental Discourse and Public Writing" course sequenced to first offer students a grounding in environmental readings before engaging them in analysis of the rhetoric of environmental issues. Student were then encouraged to "generate their own public discourse on environmental issues that affected or interested them. . . . articles written for environmental activist groups such as Greenpeace, to interviews with local developers, contractors, and builders" (114). Students connected with publics through the selection of a public genre, using the classroom as an arena in which to build the ethos to speak. The combination of traditional academic reading and writing assignments, personal response essays, and counterpublic writing allowed students over the course of the semester to "see that they don't necessarily stand alone in their views and opinions, and they [can] learn

from others with similar experiences and perspectives and often come away from such interactions with more complex and sophisticated views of public topics” (107).

A more sophisticated perspective on public topics can also be gained from a study of the texts of existing publics. Diana George notes that “[p]erhaps in the end, it is finding out where to begin that is left off in most our talk of public writing. And, it is in reading the extraordinary words of ordinary men and women writing for local, little known causes, that we might just discover where to begin” (16). Nancy Welch, in her “Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Post-Publicity Era,” engages her students in a historical study of the struggles of early twentieth century working class individuals, moving Negt and Kluge’s proletariat “theoretical construct” into a study of the actual and creative “mass rhetorical arts” of street performance, boycott, and the like that working-class activists used to create rhetorical venues in the broader public (see Gwendolyn Pough for other examples of historically-oriented writing pedagogies that study the written artifacts of publics). Inquiry into the histories and practices of publics, central to the classroom as *proto*-public, provides students with a range of models for integrating the personal and public.

Mathieu takes up this call to study the rhetorical acts of actual publics in her writing pedagogy, which is grounded in artifacts from the myriad communities she has worked with and within as an activist. Mathieu pays particular attention to the contrasts between academic writing assignments and the work of actual publics, in particular in the area of audience: “Public audiences are often unreceptive or difficult to move; clear measures of success or completion are difficult to find” (31). One way

that the classroom as *proto*-public addresses and reflects this complexity is by expanding notions of genre beyond an exclusive focus on form. Whereas traditional instruction in academic discourses often measures genre by the sum of its conventions, public writing classrooms must reject this view. Wells explains that public discourse is “a complex array of discursive practices, including forms of writing, speech, and media performance” through which writers “come to the public with the weight of personal and social experiences [to] render those experiences intelligible to any listener” (328). Mathieu similarly defines the public discourses she investigates by social exigency, as “transacting tools” enacted by “writers as subjects who need to gain power in order to achieve something else” (54).

The classroom as *proto*-public differs from the previous categories in that it engages students in examining the history, models, and contemporary enactments of public spheres. This understanding is seen as required education for students’ development as citizen-rhetors. While most of the scholars in this category base their pedagogies on the Habermasean model, or revisions of it, Trish Roberts-Miller points out that this is not the only model. In *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*, Roberts-Miller claims that “[j]ust as we think we know what teaching argument is, so we think we know what it means to engage in public argument. Argumentation textbooks typically say that skill at argument is important in a democracy, but they do not make clear which model of democracy they imagine” (3). She adds to the discussion of public writing classrooms an explication of various models, privileging the deliberative model in which the merits

of argument is the arbiter of success, but with an expanded vision of what constitutes argument, to include “narrative, attention to the particular, sensibility, and appeals to emotion” (5), some of the same identifying features Mathieu found for public sphere writing. Although Roberts-Miller categorizes models of the public sphere, her schema is not rigid. Each model, she explains, emphasizes, to varying degrees, agreement (irenica) or disagreement (agonistic) and, also to varying degrees, expressive or deliberative discourse. The public writing classroom, she argues, should interrogate and openly represent the model(s) of the public sphere undergirding its instruction in argumentation so that students can best negotiate the irenic-agonistic and expressive-deliberative axes of discourses. The classroom as *proto-public* provides a venue for reflecting and enacting public sphere writing that effectively integrates the private and academic discourses the students bring with them to class.

As the above review attempts to illustrate, public writing pedagogies, because they engage students in a wide variety of discourse negotiations, provide invaluable preparation for civic discourse: Notions of publics and counterpublics encourage “a productive combination of expressivist and public discourse in classrooms; and classrooms understood as *proto-public* spaces allow teachers and students to engage in education as the praxis of public life, widely defined” (Eberly 175). Because these pedagogies incorporate instruction in public discourse alongside an education in academic discourse, the first-year public classroom allows students to explore the interrelations of home, school, and public discourses. Learning how to effectively

integrate these multiple realms of discourses equips students for rhetorical agency within and outside of the academy.

The classroom as *micro*-public engages students in a wide variety of discourse negotiations, with a particular emphasis on connecting community-based issues and discourses to students' academic, disciplinary work in the classroom. In the classroom as *counter*-public, students generate oppositional discourses, uncovering the complicity of the educational system in reinscribing larger social inequalities. Personal discourses figure prominently as students situate their analyses of cultural texts in personal terms to determine the ways they have been acted upon and can act against oppressive normative ideologies. Finally, the classroom as *proto*-public serves as a laboratory of sorts for students to study the theory, history, and concrete practices of publics, thereby gaining models for making the issues that matter to them public.

Three Visions of the Classroom as *Quasi*-Public

All three public visions suggested by these pedagogies affirm the vast potential of first-year composition to contribute to students' development as public writers; however, in these visions the classroom is not a "site of conflict rather than consensus, or bartering rather than sharing. . . . not a free market of viewpoint and ideas. . . . [but] where differences are made visible" (Harris 109). Because these pedagogies do not foreground the negotiation of discursive realms, the classroom is not public, but *quasi*-public, a training ground of sorts, removed from the *real* work

of a democracy, a laboratory for examining, performing, and perhaps even reproducing the discourses of publics but for some future application. The discourses of home, school, and public are essentialized, reified, with little attention paid to their structural and ideological continuities and discontinuities, or to the ways that writers can achieve agency in transforming these discourses.

The classroom as *quasi*-public is an essentially neutral location from which public discourses and subjectivities can be explored, rehearsed, and challenged in relative safety. Although in many of these pedagogies, students do produce writing as part of and for public spheres, and in others the classroom houses very real agitational, counterdiscourses about social inequalities, the complicity of schooling, and students' lived experiences, the classroom itself remains outside of the "real." As Paul Heilker explains in "Rhetoric Made Real: Civic Discourse and Writing Beyond the Curriculum," the writing classroom "does not and cannot offer students *real* rhetorical situations in which to understand writing as social action" (71, emphasis mine). Weisser echoes this position in explaining the rationale for the public turn:

[S]uch an approach gives student writing real significance; public writing often allows students to produce meaningful discourse that has the potential to change their lives and the lives of others. In this respect, students see public writing as more 'real' than, for example, an essay about what they did last summer or an analysis of a particular piece of literature. (91-2)

The vacuous pedagogical practices Weisser cites would offend any number of compositionists who teach first-year composition in meaningful and relevant ways without including public components, but what is most disturbing about his and Heilker's comments in the context of this discussion is what they suggest about student writers. If the writing classroom itself is not "real" public space, offering real rhetorical situations, then public writing students are not "real" public writers. Instead, they are in training, just as the public writing classroom is but a staging area for the real public.

Discourse Negotiations and the Definition of a Public

Our pedagogies can acknowledge and capitalize on the publicness of the classroom, and of writers, by openly addressing the discourse negotiations students perform as the spheres of home, school, and public meet in our classrooms. The discourses of a public, far from suspending or bracketing subjectivities, acknowledge them openly. Effective public discourse "does not promote people expressing themselves from within enclaves—it requires that people try to present their own arguments in ways that people who are very different might understand" (Roberts-Miller, *Deliberate Conflict* 197). It is in this process of rendering the discourses of one sphere understandable to another that our abilities as public writers are honed. Although counterpublics, or what Habermas discusses in later work as networks of associations, are valuable and necessary in subverting "a univocal public sphere, and productively [challenging] convention" (200), even they must negotiate their

discourses with those of broader public spheres in order to realize their power in transforming official discourses. Discourse negotiations are central to deliberative argumentation and, appropriately so, to the classroom as public.

But in the current scholarship, these discourse negotiations are talked about in vague or theoretical terms or as givens. In Harris' vision of the classroom as public, for instance, "differences are made visible" not simply as a first step toward consensus or conformity but to "keep the conversation going" (116). The negotiation of these differences would neither serve to eradicate them nor to sustain them as polarizing agents; instead, Harris advocates for "something more like *civility*, a willingness to live with difference" (109). Roberts-Miller also underscores that discourse negotiations are fundamental to what it means to be public; recognizing that "negotiation may imply equality and reciprocally binding obligations," she prefers the term "bargaining" ("Discursive Conflicts" 555) to connote the give-and-take of discourses in a public. Nowhere in the literature on public writing pedagogies, however, is this negotiation, civility, or bargaining explicated in terms of the concrete practices and processes of student writers.

"If public argument is bad," Roberts-Miller asserts, "then perhaps there is something wrong with the teaching of public argument. Instead of replicating exactly the practice that leads to the consequences we dislike, we can reflect on it, and try to enact a practice that might get us the kind of public discourse we would like to see" (*Deliberate Conflict* 228). The scholarship to date on public writing pedagogies has offered us myriad ways to "enact practice," to work with composition students toward

the goal of better public discourses. This work has offered us valuable pedagogical models, grounded in the theory of how publics form, develop, and sustain themselves through discourses. However, this scholarship has not offered us an understanding of the student writers' experience in these classrooms—that is, *how* they go about “form[ing] their own voices as writers and intellectuals. . . . [to] imagine new public sphere which they'd like to have a hand in making” (Harris 116, 124). We are thus left to trust that what we ask students to do in these classrooms is similar enough to writing “real” public spheres that students leave our classrooms better prepared to engage as citizen-rhetors. A better understanding of not just the theory about but the actual practice of discourse negotiations in publics, including the classroom as public, is critical to the development of our pedagogies.

If the negotiation of various discourses of home, school, and public is the cornerstone of what it means to be public, to achieve rhetorical agency in a public, then *what do we know of how first-year writers negotiate the multiple discourses of home, school, and public, and how can we frame our understanding of what occurs in their struggles?* In answering both questions, it is critical that the public writing classroom be seen as more than a training ground for public engagement but as a public itself. As a public, the classroom is a worthwhile site for research into the composing processes of public writers. In a later chapter, I recount what I learned from investigating one such classroom public, but in Chapter Three, I turn to post-process theory for help further understanding the discourse negotiations that characterize publics. The current work to situate public writing pedagogies places

them firmly in a social constructionist paradigm. As I will show, the concerns of post-process theory resonate with work in public sphere theory to define the rhetorical conditions of publicness. This work to define publicness has important corollaries for understanding the classroom and its writers as public.

Notes

¹In recent years, public writing pedagogies have been analyzed and categorized, most exhaustively by Weisser and Mathieu. Their work focuses primarily on composition teachers and community partners in the “public turn.” Weisser organizes his review around the ways in which these pedagogies respond to radical educationalist critiques of social constructionism. Weisser’s appraisal has particular value in clarifying the political and pedagogical values that motivate compositionists to supplement traditional instruction in academic discourse with opportunities to engage public writing. Mathieu, in keeping with her focus on the various intersections of composition and “the streets,” classifies pedagogies according to the nature of and degree to which public agendas and discourses are integrated into classroom work. In emphasizing publics and their discourses, Mathieu helps us understand public writing pedagogies from the viewpoint of the community. Both of these reviews enhance our understanding of the scope; this existing work can be complemented by an analysis that considers what these pedagogies ask of student writers.

Because of the particular focus of my project on the experiences of student writers in the public turn, this chapter does not review conversations about the academic as public intellectual. However, it is worth noting that this body of work, ignited by Peter Mortensen’s 1998 “Going Public” and Ellen Cushman’s 1999 “The Public Intellectual, Service Learning, and Activist Research,” almost exclusively identifies the public roles and responsibilities for *faculty* academic writers, which serves to further a notion of the classroom, and its student writers, as not yet public.

²It is important to note that while these counterpublics generate critical and oppositional discourses, they also work to have those discourses incorporated into broader publics. In this way, the counterpublic model does not retreat from questions of common good. Therefore, the counterpublic Fraser advocates does not allow retreat from questions of common good. Fraser cites the late twentieth-century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic as one example of how the discourses, genres, and specialized terminology of a counterpublic can “recast. . . needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of. . . disadvantage in official public spheres” (123). Fraser’s account of how subaltern agendas make their way into broader public spheres is an important response to arguments that special interest groups and increasing trends toward privatization have turned an authentic and material public sphere into a “phantom” one (see Bruce Robbins’ *The Phantom Public Sphere*).

³While I see Fraser’s work as suggestive of the classroom as *counter*-public—typified by those public writing pedagogies based in critical theory—Eberly derives from Fraser the idea of the classroom as *proto*-public. Eberly’s interpretation doubtless owes to her focus on Fraser’s historical study of the ways that subaltern counterpublics move their agendas into broader public consciousness (as in her

example of the late twentieth-century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic). Weisser, too, uses the concept of the counterpublic in his pedagogy to help students see the value of generating, testing, and strengthening arguments in a body of like-minded individuals, the definition of counterpublic implicit in his pedagogy (107). Alternatively, my use of Fraser results from a focus on the agitational rhetorical activities and aims that Fraser ascribes to counterpublics.

Chapter Three

From *Quasi*-Public to Public: Reconceiving Public Writing Pedagogies as Post-Process

[Theory] and research in the current post-process era and in the yet-to-be-labeled future enable the profession to move beyond the limitations of process theory and models to address a host of other issues from diverse social, multicultural, ethical and other perspectives. (Bloom 31)

In composition studies' "public turn," "the classroom has been widely theorized as a public space" (Ervin, "Encouraging" 38), yet in its pedagogies, the public writing classroom remains a *quasi*-public. When assessed in light of rhetorical understandings of publicness, the classroom as *micro*-, *counter*-, or *proto*-public rarely addresses the overlap and interplay of multiple discourses; hence, these visions fall short of acknowledging the writing classroom as a fully-vested rhetorical public or, returning to Joseph Harris' definition, a:

site of conflict rather than consensus, of bartering rather than sharing. . . where representatives of various boroughs or neighborhoods, the advocates of competing interests or constituencies, can come to argue out their needs and differences. . . . not a free market of viewpoint and ideas. . . . [but a space] where differences are made visible.

(Harris 109)

Although compositionists who ground their work in public sphere theory highlight the discourse negotiations fundamental to the rhetorical life of publics, our

pedagogies seldom emphasize the discursive—indeed, ideological—challenges writers face as the discursive realms of home, school, and public meet in our classrooms. When our pedagogies do not address these ideological struggles, we further codify discourses as static, neutral, and easily transferable. We assume, for instance, that student writers can suspend their immersion in academic discourse values and practices, or that they can easily manipulate academic discourses to fit the expectations of public audiences. But transition from, or movement between, academic, public, and personal discourses involves more than simply learning a new set of rhetorical strategies, because we know that any discourse betrays an epistemological stance, or as Nancy Fraser puts it, “even the language people use as they reason together usually favors one way of seeing things and discourages others” (119). Our public writing pedagogies, then, must attend to the power relationships at play when discourses meet and, most importantly, the agency our students possess in negotiating and staking a position among these discourses. Viewing the classroom, and its writers, as public means attending to intersecting discourses, the ways that writers engage the “sort of talk that takes place *across* borders and constituencies” (Harris 109). This chapter argues that post-process theory, specifically its understanding of all writing as public, helps us better understand how writers negotiate these discursive border crossings in the writing classroom as public.

Paula Mathieu’s demarcation of the “public turn” suggests that composition studies’ current focus on the public sphere is more than simply an outgrowth of the field’s earlier “social turn.” In making her argument, Mathieu underscores our

writing pedagogies as not only social but public; yet, she and Weisser, the two scholars who have written most extensively about public writing pedagogies, both situate these approaches squarely within social constructionism and, pedagogically speaking, within the process movement. Mathieu traces public writing pedagogies through the field's varied "roots"—pedagogical, economic, and psychological/spiritual/personal—concluding that writing courses in the public turn “range from teaching writing as an activity with social consequences to writing about social issues grounded in a classical discussion of invention” (11). Mathieu acknowledges the contribution of “process pedagogy, which consistently blurs the lines between in-school and out-of-school discourse” (10). Weisser, too, notes the influence of process pedagogy, but he presumes a more linear history than Mathieu, positioning public writing as a natural outcome of the field's progression from a focus on the individual writer to expansion outward to consider the social construction of knowledge in various politicized spheres, including the public. Approaching public writing as an outgrowth of social constructionism recognizes the dialectic of individual and collective so critical to composition's history (from the deliberative polis to the writing center), and the legacies of process. I argue, however, this social constructionist perspective can be complemented in several important ways by post-process theory in recognizing the classroom as public.

It is no coincidence that public writing pedagogies and post-process understandings of writing have flourished alongside one another since the mid-1990s, both sharing many of the same conceptual features. However, what has yet to be

considered are the affinities of these two movements in the field, specifically what post-process offers to the public writing classroom. Reconceiving public writing pedagogies as post-process enables us to attend more fully to the ways that publics, including the classroom, are formed from discourse negotiations. Moreover, while social constructionism maintains the self as a product or outcome of social forces, post-process foregrounds individuals' agency in influencing—not merely being influenced by—discourse.

Post-process recognizes writing, and writers, as already and always public. Writing, as an entirely interpretive, situated act, cannot rely on Big Theories (to borrow from Thomas Kent), codified discourses, typified rhetorical situations, or schematized processes to capture and represent the work of writers. Public sphere theories that define publicness in terms of participants' shared negotiations of discourses further confirm that a post-process understanding of writing as public, interpretive, and situated is consistent with the realities of writing within and between publics. A grounding in post-process theory complements and extends our existing public writing pedagogies, giving us a more complete picture of the rhetorical tasks faced by public writers.

Post-Process (Anti) Foundations and the Public Writing Classroom

John Trimbur's "Taking the Social Turn: Teaching Writing as Post-Process" is credited for giving us the term "post-process" and, some would argue, the anti-process orientation with which it is often associated. Many post-process proponents

reject process outright because they see it as foundational, “a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time” (“Post-Process” Olson 8). Critics of process hold that representing the act of writing in terms of stages (prewriting, writing, revising), however recursive those stages are envisioned, “does not capture all the effective ways that human beings solve the problem of acquiring knowledge and communicating it to one another” (Couture 41) and, further, that process rests on shaky epistemological ground, often assuming a one-to-one relationship between linguistic expression and a singular, objective reality. Reflecting a postmodern concern with writerly agency, Susan Miller’s contention that process has positioned students in “an infantile and solipsistic relation to the results of writing” (100) reflects the concerns of many post-process advocates who see process pedagogy as reductive, as a sort of connect-the-dots exercise students must dutifully perform because they “can’t” write.

Lad Tobin summarizes well the main criticisms motivating some to embrace post-process theorists and to reject process as a foundation for contemporary composition. Process has reified into a one-size-fits-all approach to the teaching of writing that fails to acknowledge writers’ own subjectivities, the beliefs of their audiences, and the politicized locations for writing; additionally, process fails to offer “real” content, defined as material outside of students’ own writing (10-15). In contrast, post-process writing courses generate “real” content through the discussion, interpretation, and analysis of readings, often deemphasizing or omitting the hallmark practices of process pedagogy—discussion of composing processes, use of peer-

review, and, most important, efforts to uncover and represent what is “universal” about effective writing (16).

But Tobin and other post-process thinkers increasingly question an oppositional stance toward process and a sharp division of process from post-process. “Dividing the history of our field into pre-process, process, and post-process,” Tobin argues, “is as reductive and misleading as dividing the composing process into prewriting, writing, and revising” (15). Bruce McComiskey agrees, seeing more value in post-process as an *extension* of process. Post-process (in this case, postmodern understandings of language as unstable) can complement process pedagogies by advocating composing strategies as ways to “harness the polyphonic character of language in communities, to develop rather than constrict a writer’s sense of purpose. . . . [showing the student that] writing well transforms this unstable language into discourse that can accomplish real purposes” (“Post-Process” 39). Post-process illuminates the vast and continually-shifting ideological contexts surrounding each writing act.

But, despite its conceptual value for compositionists, post-process, to quote McComiskey, is often a “negative dialectic,” offering no pedagogy and, as I argue elsewhere in this dissertation, offering no vocabulary accessible to our students for talk about writing. Those who use post-process theory in an attempt to rid process from the classroom (wrongly assuming such were possible given our students’ immersion in process-centered approaches) often invoke Kent’s now famous claim in *Paralogic Rhetoric* that writing, because it is not reducible to a fixed body of content

to be mastered, cannot be taught (36). Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch calls this post-process's "inherent pedagogy," that "[t]o articulate any kind of pedagogy based on anti-foundationalism would be to support the claim that knowledge can be rooted in a particular approach or system and therefore would no longer be anti-foundational" (132). Sidney Dobrin acknowledges another side of this paradox, namely that using process in the classroom, even in the broader context of liberatory pedagogies, robs students of "the opportunity to name the world since prescribed processes take care of the naming" (139). But Kent's claim that writing cannot be taught is easily misrepresented and misused to construct process and post-process as an either/or proposition. When assessed in light of his broader comments in *Paralogic Rhetoric*, we can understand Kent as arguing not against teaching as such, but against a certain approach to teaching writing, one which he calls, drawing from a Bakhtin's vocabulary, "monologic." Kent condemns writing pedagogies that "seek to test how little the student knows, or. . . to discover weaknesses in the student's analytical abilities" (36). These pedagogies disallow genuine engagement with other writers, including the teacher-as-writer. In short, these pedagogies focus on *teaching*, rather than *learning*. In contrast, "dialogic pedagogies" privilege writing as dynamic, interactional activity learned through experience with other writers. In a dialogic classroom, the student

would be asked to apply her background knowledge by responding to others. . . and keep the conversation alive. In turn, the instructor would treat the student's writing with the same regard as she would

treat a colleague's writing; that is, she would collaborate with the student. . . . Where this kind of [dialogic approach] asks the student to enter a conversation. . . monologic writing asks a student to end it. (36)

We see here that Kent's axiom that writing cannot be taught is not an indictment of teaching but rather a post-process affirmation of dialogic, transactional teaching approaches that position the student and teacher as collaborators, as co-writers. Undoubtedly, when process is transmitted as received knowledge, instead of a dynamic and adaptable tool used by writers in specific, unrepeatable communicative interactions, process serves oppressive ends. However, as I will argue, process—as an accessible, shared vernacular for our students—can be harnessed in ways that promote critical consciousness of discourses and facilitate individual action in the classroom public.

A more generative approach to post-process in the writing classroom as public—in which multiple realms of discourse overlap and are negotiated by students—rejects not the notion but instead the *singularity* of process. As Joseph Petraglia argues: “We now have the theoretical and empirical sophistication to consider the mantra ‘writing is a process’ as the right answer to a really boring question. We have better questions now, and the notion of process no longer counts as much of an insight” (53). These “better questions” prompt inquiry into the individual and social factors affecting composing *processes*. David Russell urges us to think in terms of “writing processes. . . played out in a range of activity systems in our culture(s)” (“Activity Theory” 88). Similarly, Debra Journet asserts the necessity

of pluralizing process; in a recent case study of disciplinary and interdisciplinary writing, she argues that while genres provide “the operative rules for behavior within particular social situations. . . . they also provide ways for rhetoric to act within those situations” (100). This relationship of “individual intention” and “socialized convention” reveals the cognitive and social dimensions of writing and the ways that “composing processes differ according to both individual ability or experience and rhetorical situation or context” (96). This post-process understanding of process helps us imagine how, out of what has been codified as “the writing process,” writers forge *multiple* processes in response to the myriad discursive contexts and situations they encounter in the public writing classroom. Similarly, as writing teachers use post-process theory to critically examine process, we can facilitate this work to personalize and pluralize process and, further, to challenge and transform process as static, received knowledge. Bruce Herzberg observes that students “will not critically question a world that seems natural, inevitable, given; instead, they will [only] strategize about their position within it” (“Community Service” 317). The post-process writing teacher focuses on the conditions that facilitate learning, adopting a de-centered role, and challenging students’ assumptions about how process will feature in the writing classroom.

Post-process theory, then, redirects our attention from the realm of what can be captured, codified, and transmitted about writing to that which is kairotic, unrepeatable, and fundamentally unknowable. Although its advocates may eschew the labeling of post-process as paradigmatic, sharing Lynn Bloom’s opinion that

“[e]ven among those who use the term with confidence, there is no readily identifiable configuration of commonly agreed-on assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that would comprise a paradigm” (35), others consider post-process “a shorthand for an eclectic assortment of frameworks devised for the study of human activity” (Petraglia 53) unified by three central values. Kent defines these values in his introduction to *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing Process Paradigm*—post-process holds that writing is *public*, *interpretive*, and *situated*. These values complement the aims of public writing pedagogies and provide a relevant, pedagogically-suggestive ground for realizing the writing classroom as a public—for problematizing the intersecting discourse of home, school, and public and for understanding writers’ attempts to negotiate these discourses.

Post-Process Contributions to the Classroom as Public

Writing as Public

“When post-process theorists claim that writing is a public act,” Kent explains, “they mean that writing constitutes a specific communicative interaction occurring among individuals at specific historical moments and in specific relations with others and with the world” (2). Writers are never without an audience, even if they themselves constitute that audience, and are never free from the task of making their message accessible. The contexts for and rhetorical moves within each communicative interaction are constantly shifting, with meaning derived not externally from discourse community or convention but instead internally as a

product of the communicative interaction or language-in-use. “We must give up,” according to Donald Davidson, “the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases” (107). No process—or disciplinary master narrative—then “can capture what writers do during these changing moments and within these changing relations” (Kent 2). Post-process, then, undermines the teaching of writing as *content* (which can be “mastered”) and instead promotes writing as *activity*, a communicative interaction (Kastman Breuch 113).

That language is replaced with language-in-use in post-process is key to understanding post-process’ relevance to realizing the classroom as a public, where various discourses interrelate in ways that defy categorization, and where there is no process apart from processes-in-use. Language-in-use is inherently public—that is, always accessible to and involving other language users, far too dynamic to be captured, represented, and transmitted as transferable content. As Davidson scholar Reed Way Dasenbrock explains:

Networks of meaning, thus, are both inner and outer, including ourselves and others in a web. It is not that we have something unique to say stemming from our personal experience before we negotiate the public structures of meaning, but what we have to say forms as a response to that public structure, to what has come before us and what is being said and done around us. (29)

Language-in-use is dialogic, rejecting the private and the public as utterly distinct realms. Rather, language-in-use calls our attention to the intersections of these public

and private discourses as part of broader contexts of meanings. Public sphere scholar Michael Warner provides a historical example of this infeasibility of maintaining a private/public distinction, citing Catharine Beecher's rejection of women lecturing in public. Although stemming from her personal conviction about the appropriate boundaries for the female voice, "her own writings on the subject were profoundly public: they were published (that is, printed and marketed); they addressed the powerful ideal of public opinion; and they established Beecher as a figure of public fame and authority" (27). In place of the Habermasean public sphere in which markers of private subjectivities—status, titles, various privileges, which accrue to individuals—are presumably bracketed in service of rational-critical debate on issues of common concern, post-process notions of public acknowledge the inextricability of private and public.

Language-in-use informs our pedagogies by highlighting the relational and dialogic—the public—nature of all communicative interaction. If there is no private apart from its relation to public, then there are no cloistered or ideologically-protected locations such as home or, in the case of this project, classroom. Public writing pedagogies that assign students to investigate, write for, or collaborate with various publics often promote a disconnect between personal conviction and public action. For example, in writing about service-learning courses, Herzberg notes "we come to view society as a research site and not as a realm of true engagement" ("Service Learning" 398). True engagement in publics outside of the classroom, and in the classroom as public, requires that students leverage, not suspend, personal

subjectivities as they invent their arguments and construct their ethos as public writers.

Fraser's notion of "subaltern counterpublics" also illustrates the necessary interplay of the personal and the public and its necessity to public discourse. As mentioned in Chapter Two, these counterpublics are formed in response to discursive gaps in the broader public and act as a venue for inventing and circulating counternormative discourses that transform and transfer issues perceived as "private" into the realm of the public "common" concern (128). Fraser cites as one example feminists who formed a subaltern counterpublic around the issue of domestic violence. Although once broadly conceived of as a "private" matter, the feminist counterpublic succeeded in disseminating "a view of domestic violence as a widespread systemic feature of male dominated societies" (129). Because that argument was first tested and refined within the counterpublic, it could enter into the "sustained discursive contestation" necessary to bridge "personal" and "public" concern (129).

We see this same pattern repeated in a host of issues like breast cancer, autism, and depression—all of which have made their way into broader social consciousness through the sustained discursive public activity of personally-invested advocates. In Fraser's vision, *the* public sphere is, in actuality, reticulate, a network of interrelating counterpublics. However, as I noted in the previous chapter, when compositionists take up Fraser's vision of the public sphere, what often results is the writing classroom as a singular, *counter*-public, with a decidedly and exclusively

oppositional stance toward other publics. The classroom as counter-public is a *quasi*-public because such a conception disallows the very multiplicity that Fraser's vision sees as critical to a new understanding of publicness. Although participants in a counterpublic are like-minded, unified by an issue of shared concern, they are not confined to that enclave but instead continually move within and between publics. An effective classroom public hosts multiple subaltern counterpublics self-organized around student-identified concerns and engaged in open discursive contestation.

What Warner and Fraser offer to the classroom as public is a focus on the necessary interplay between personal and public discursive realms. Our pedagogies fail to reflect this discursive feature of publics when we determine students' social commitments for them (through required service placements, for instance) or when we teach public writing based on academic discourse standards for unbiased and dispassionate inquiry. Rather than prescribing for students those "social contexts, kinds of feelings, and genres of language" (Warner 27) that ultimately define a *continuum* of private and public-ness, our public writing pedagogies can instead encourage students to form around personal interests and engage in the discursive activities that shape and transform those interests into public concerns. Motivated by personal investment, students can render visible "the ways in which societal inequality infects. . . inclusive existing public spheres and taints discursive interaction within them" (Fraser 121).

In his extensive study of the rhetorical practices of publics, Gerald Hauser offers an invaluable perspective on the classroom as public. Most scholarship on the

“public turn” in composition draws from Jürgen Habermas and a narrow range of revisionist responses to his bourgeois public sphere concept. Hauser and other communication scholars who investigate the rhetorical activities of individual citizens uncover important principles that can inform our daily work with public writers. In particular, Hauser proposes two related rhetorical norms of particular relevance to realizing the writing classroom as public: multiplicity of discursive arenas and what he terms “permeable boundaries.” A public requires that issues important to a like-minded enclave be negotiated outward. “Social actors must hear multiple voices to realize that they can do more than respond—they can choose” (78). Subjectivity forms the foundation for engaging in this “active interpretation,” ultimately defining publicness by rhetorical participation. “Whether attention to social exchange alters or reinforces personal views, collective participation in rhetorical processes *constitutes individuals as a public*” (34).

If, as Nancy Welch argues, “a precondition of writing is the belief that one’s experiences, perceptions, and spheres of participation are discussable,” then the public writing classroom is an ideal setting for dramatizing “how experiences and genres we’ve been taught to regard as personal and private are very much bound up in what is social, public, and arguable” (29). When personal subjectivities are privileged, and writers’ primary membership no longer defined primarily by their status as students, the writing classroom as public can house multiple, bargaining discursive arenas. Just as language is replaced by language-in-use, the public in post-process is indeed, I would argue, a *public-in-use*—“any given public exists in its

publicness, which is to say in its rhetorical character” (Hauser 33). Discourse approximations, generalizations about rhetorical situations and strategies, and theories about the formation of publics are of necessarily limited value in the post-process writing classroom as public. The classroom as public can never be a mere rehearsal site, launching area, proving ground, or miniature version of real public, or even counterpublic. As long as our concerns are with language-in-use, and as long as language-in-use necessitates a public understanding of discourse, our writing classrooms must then be considered *publics-in-use*, spaces that are always, already and thoroughly public. However, in addition to helping us acknowledge the publicness of our classrooms, post-process also contributes to our efforts to pursue with our students a well-functioning classroom public.

Writing as Interpretive

The second tenet of post-process that informs the classroom as public is that all writing is *interpretive*. Although writers make use of their previous experiences, knowledge of rhetorical conventions, ability to analyze audience expectations, and facility in manipulating genres, post-process thinkers consider writing, both in production and reception, a thoroughly “interpretive act” (Kent 2). Kent contends that the act of interpretation, or what he calls the “hermeneutic guesswork” of writing, occurs in the unique moments of communicative interaction, as we create new “passing theory.” Although our prior experiences as writers (which, for the classroom public, are arguably shaped by process) are valuable in enabling us to be

better communicative “guessers,” we cannot rely on this “prior theory” alone. Kent explains that “even with this knowledge and experience, we still may miscommunicate; we may make wrong guesses about the rhetorical exigence, or we may misunderstand our readers, or we may simply be unlucky and our readers may misunderstand” (3). While post-process discredits mastery of a singular writing process as a pedagogical end, it also carves out important territory for process as a primary informant of writers’ prior theory and, indeed, common ground from which writers approach new rhetorical tasks in the classroom public.

Interpretation “constitutes the uncodifiable moves we make when we attempt to align our utterances with the utterances of others,” and involves something more significant than translation or paraphrase; instead, it means “to enter into a relation of understanding with other language users” (Kent 2). Because language is inherently unstable, meaning is generated through communication, specifically the interpretive acts of participants. For post-process theorists, this interpretation is seen as penetrating all aspects of communication, or what Richard Rorty would call “interpretation all the way down.” In contrast to Thomas Kuhn’s “hermeneutic contextualism,” which limits interpretation as a function of community, post-process antifoundationalism is better understood as “hermeneutic universalism,” as Rorty’s “reinterpretation” or “recontextualization,” wherein every interpretive act responds to previous and anticipates future acts.¹ Despite the knowledge gained from recurrent situations, the particularities of each communicative act require unique combinations

of interpretive moves (Kastman Breuch 113-115) and, I would add, for students in the classroom public, unique appropriations of process.

Post-process holds that meaning is generated out of an intersubjective relationship between the immediate parties in the communicative event and the world, what Davidson calls “triangulation,” with successful engagement in hermeneutic guesswork hinging on the dialect of passing and prior theory. Prior theory taps the writer’s prior communicative experience and emphasizes the importance of being able to assess successful and unsuccessful guessing strategies. With that knowledge in hand, the writer enters the unique communicative event, out of which results “passing” theories, or the actual, in-the-moment communicative strategies employed.

Prior and passing theories, then, form a sort of recursive loop that over time builds a writer’s overall rhetorical skill. Post-process theorists warn, however, that embracing any schema can undermine post-process as antifoundational. In particular, Dobrin stresses the power relations that make each communicative interaction dynamic and unrepeatable:

If we are to understand the moments of communicative interaction as being individually unique and as occurring in noncodifiable systems, then we must also identify how such notions of communication inherently set up particular moments of power and dominance in each communicative scenario and how those particular instances lead to recurring trends, recurring strategies that appear to create structures of power and oppression. (143)

Part of recognizing writing as a thoroughly interpretive act means attending to the reality that power shapes both the access to and the outcome of each communicative interaction within the classroom, rather than relying on teacher-centered instruction that often assumes “innocent” interaction (Dobrin 147). One cannot help but reflect on, as one example, the pedagogies of peer response so common to process-based curricula. Although driven by a belief in the social nature of meaning-making, we seldom interrogate the social privileges and linguistic capital that influence some students’ ability to assess and provide guidance for improving academic discourse.

Attention to the power asymmetries involved in all communicative interactions suggests that the qualities of the writing classroom setting—both its macro-level positioning within larger networks of disciplinarity and its micro-level features, including student-student relationships and teacher authority—make it a public sphere. No longer a space that merely approximates a public, one “limited by its institutional constraints” (Eberly 172), it is, in fact, this very problem of power that makes the classroom a public.

The public writing classroom informed by paralogic hermeneutics—that is, attendant to writing as an interpretive act, shaped by power—is consistent with what we know about the discursive negotiations involved in communicating within and between publics. Returning to Hauser’s rhetorical criteria for publicness, he notes that the “permeable boundaries” of a public are tension-filled, relating to “rules of access that maximize or minimize border crossings, of freedom or repression of speech once access is gained, and of availability or exclusion of competent

participants” (77). Status markers that influence success within communicative interactions are not bracketed; instead, they must be openly negotiated in order to discover and “frame judgments indicative of shared realities” (77). Here, Hauser implies an important ethical norm for communication within publics, one that moves post-process beyond identifying power asymmetries to promoting communicative participants’ accountability to principles of access and inclusion, for a “*well-functioning* public sphere requires that its discursive arenas contextualize public problems in ways that foster clear apprehension of the issues” (78, emphasis mine).

Consistent with a focus on the rhetorical criteria of publics, Hauser discusses the ethical norms of communicative participants in discursive terms. Public discourse requires that participants adhere to the rhetorical principle of “contextualized language,” language that renders participants’ “respective experiences intelligible to one another” (78). Constitutive of the rhetorical identity of any public is its institutional setting, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the writing classroom, embedded in the larger university setting with its specialized discourses. Hauser notes that institutions, including academic ones, and “their epistemic elites” often work against contextualized language, “[preempting] the possibilities for vernacular exchange by substituting technical language as coin of the rhetorical realm” (78). Just as personal subjectivities, or the realm of the “private,” cannot be bracketed in a public sphere, the technical language and related status markers of the academy must be identified and openly mediated in the public writing classroom.

Thus, post-process illuminates a hermeneutic for public writing pedagogies reflective of meaning as a product of unique, unrepeatable communicative interactions; participants engage in an interpretive process to align their utterances, informed by previous experiences (prior theories) but ultimately reliant upon inventional strategies (passing theories) deployed in-the-moment. We cannot “master discourse [but] can only become better skilled in our hermeneutic skills” (Dobrin 147). Rather than relying on codified notions of discourse, post-process recognizes that we cannot define “public” by genre or discourse but that, in keeping with a rhetorical understanding of publicness, public is best understood as a way of acting:

Although no autonomous genre or discrete set of genres exist that can meaningfully be called ‘academic’ or ‘public’ or ‘educated’ discourse, people nevertheless interact (speak, write, use numbers, etc.) in ways that other people recognize as ‘educated’ or ‘college’ educated. That recognition depends on the history and activities of the group doing the recognizing. (Russell, “Activity Theory” 62)

In the work of publics, and of the classroom as public, writers utilize not discrete, defined discourses, but instead employ interpretive moves, the success of which is dependent on their ability to adequately perceive the recognizing audiences’ understandings. One function of the classroom as public becomes providing opportunities for students to better understand their own prior theories and how to “read” those of other audiences, to equip them to engage in better hermeneutic guesswork.

On the level of pedagogy for the public writing classroom, Hannah Ashley offers a “community-engaged procedural rhetoric” that conceptualizes the public writing classroom as a space for reflection and the development of “meta-skills to analyze what strategies and tactics worked rhetorically and materially to make change in a given situation, and to extrapolate this learning toward the future” (49). This rhetoric recognizes student writers as already public, with the knowledge and experiences to employ as material for reflection, and the membership in publics required to utilize the meta-skills gained from that reflection. Importantly, “community-engaged procedural rhetoric” functions as a heuristic for uncovering power relations, “underlying conflicting power relations” and the ways that agendas of both conflict and civility are negotiated in successful public writing projects (61). Simply put, students “tell the stories of what worked to make change, why, and how they might do it again” (62). Post-process public writing pedagogies like this one succeed in fostering rhetorical agency by helping our student writers see the ways that they are influenced, but not determined by, ideologies. Because these ideologies are not just discursive but contextual, influenced by the context of communication (or the third angle in Davidson’s theory of “triangulation”), post-process emphasizes writing as an intensely situated act.

Writing as Situated

The post-process assumption that writing is situated builds from the previous two axioms reviewed in recognizing the “indeterminacy of the writing act”

(Kastman Breuch 115). Our prior theories constitute the knowledge we have gained over time from our communicative interactions, and they reflect the unique constellation of factors that build our subjectivities. Our prior theories are constituted by our situatedness—that is, “people cannot communicate from nowhere; in order to communicate, you must be somewhere, and being somewhere—being positioned in relation to other language users—means that you always come with baggage, with beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears about the world” (Kent 4). This notion of writing, and writers, as situated is not advanced by post-process as a new idea; indeed, the recognition of situatedness is a hallmark of social constructionist-informed process understandings and, indeed, of the rhetorical tradition itself.

Post-process, especially as it can inform the public writing classroom, holds that situatedness cannot be controlled for, but in fact constitutes the hermeneutic guesswork communicative participants engage in: “[W]riting as a communicative act is possible only because we hold a cohesive set of beliefs about what other language users know and about how our beliefs cohere with theirs. In other words, we all require beliefs that help us start to ‘guess’ about how others will understand, accept, integrate, and react to our utterances” (Kent 4). Whereas the recognition that writing is *interpretive* focuses our attention on the prior theories that inform how the creation and reception of utterances, the post-process notion of writing as *situated* reminds us that all interpretive work occurs within contexts—that every communicative act responds not only to prior utterances but also to “what is being said and done around us” (Dasenbrock 29). For the public writing classroom, post-process accentuates

Davidson's third participant in any communicative act—the world, the context of communication.

Thus, hermeneutical success hinges on knowledge of not only the beliefs of the immediate parties in the communicative interaction but of the ideologies of the context. McComiskey's "social-process rhetorical inquiry" understands this situatedness from a cultural studies perspective as first functioning in global "cycle of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption" (*Teaching Composition* 54). In fact, McComiskey argues that individual agency through rhetorical intervention can only be realized by *first* understanding "how particular discursive formations operate (how their members produce, distribute, and consume discourse)" (55). McComiskey here reflects post-process' inversion of a typical hermeneutical process, which begins on the level of participant subjectivities to determine how those identifications inform the interpretive act. Post-process stresses the influence of ideological context (in our case, the classroom) as an *equal* in the communicative interaction, as itself a participant. This understanding is consistent with the rhetorical practices of deliberating publics.

Hauser notes that "any evaluation of. . . [the] actual state [of publics] requires that we inspect the rhetorical *environment* as well as the rhetorical acts out of which they evolved, for these are the conditions that constitute their individual character" (80, emphasis mine), thus stressing a dialogic relationship not only between the communicative participants but also with the context of those acts. When situatedness on the level of environment is bracketed—the influence of and

implications for that context ignored—deliberation risks becoming mediation, wherein agreement and compromise between participants replaces the production of shared meaning and new knowledge. As Trish Roberts-Miller explains, “[f]ocusing on achieving agreement between. . . two particular people can easily mean that one loses track of what might be just” (*Deliberate Conflict* 203) and what transformations, especially to received understandings of discourse, are possible.

Post-process’ emphasis on ideological context as an influence on communicative interaction is of vital importance in the public writing classroom. Specifically, by helping us uncover perhaps the most central, limiting assumptions of our pedagogies, namely that students can write unproblematically for a particular public—for instance, a community agency—while within a very different public—namely the academy. The classroom remains *quasi*-public when we bracket this aspect of situatedness: writers’ location within the academy.

A return to G. Thomas Goodnight’s notion of the public is useful here in illuminating the effects of writing for one discursive sphere when our primary membership, at least for the particular communicative interaction, is in another. Like Hauser, Goodnight advances a discourse-based definition, positing three overlapping discursive realms—the personal, the technical, and the public—distinguished via argumentative purpose. His notion of the personal, public, and technical sphere of argumentation offers us language for identifying, and talking with writers about, the discourse negotiations fundamental to communicative interactions within and between publics. For example, Goodnight can help us envision with students the

challenges involved in undertaking a community service-learning writing project. Goodnight highlights the classroom as a central province of technical argumentation, a narrow range of “permissible subject matter” wherein “rules of evidence, presentation, and judgment are stipulated in order to identify arguers of the field and facilitate the pursuit of their interests” (220), in contrast to public discourses which make use of commonly held “language, values, and reasoning” (219). In the academic public sphere, with its networks of disciplines, students are most often instructed to build their writerly ethos on disciplinary expertise, on technical discourses and dispassionate inquiry, invoking an audience of educated peers. As Hauser and other public sphere scholars show us, discourse in the public sphere is directly tied to an ethos built on personal exigencies, the ability to communicate with “contextualized language” to a broad and diverse audience and the open acknowledgment of subject positions.

Amy Goodburn notes the divergent ideologies of academic and public discourses in her article “The Ethics of Students’ Community Writing as Public Text.” Goodburn recounts her community writing students’ challenges reconciling the conflicting aims of the classroom genres of reflection and the requirements of writing for their placement within a community tutoring center. Specifically, the students found it difficult to engage in the “public” writing assignment (a memo) assigned by Goodburn in which they were to analyze ethnic and socio-economic issues on display in the tutoring center via the concepts presented in Lisa Delpit’s *Other People’s Children*. Because the community agency was to be a joint-audience

for the text, and because the students knew that the center director's philosophy was antithetical to the open discussion of these factors, the students struggled to meet both rhetorical agendas. Goodburn concludes that teachers "should consider how the public nature of texts can influence, shape, and even contradict the more academic genres of reflection that we ask our students to do" (33). At the heart of most public writing pedagogies rests this often unexamined belief that academic discourses can serve as effective training for public writing. This belief is understandable given our faith in the fundamental skills of rhetorical analysis and flexibility we associate with composition curriculum. We know that the academy has its own specialized modes of inquiry, its own discourse expectations, its own canon of genres, but the ideologies of academic discourse are often not on display as much in first-year composition as in a senior biology lab. When we suggest that the right kind of composition course can prepare students for involvement in the public sphere, ignoring the situatedness of the academic public sphere, we also suggest that classroom and its discourses are ideologically-neutral.

In practice, however, we watch students struggle to externalize and negotiate academic discourse conventions they have internalized before reaching our classrooms. On one level, we see this as a lack of genre knowledge—for instance, the student who writes brochure text that more closely resembles a five-paragraph theme. We might encourage the student to investigate the genre or to spend more time researching her audience. On another level, however, we sense a greater struggle, as we observe that public genres require an approach to knowledge, persuasion, and

authority substantially different from that academic discourse. Roberts-Miller argues, in fact, that making the classroom “more appropriate for a deliberative democracy. . . will *worsen* the problem of fundamentally incompatible objectives in first-year composition,” noting that the “only model of democracy that does not imply at least some inconsistency between acculturating students to academic discourses and refining their skills as citizens is the technocratic one” (219, emphasis mine). In this technocratic model which, like the classroom, Goodnight would classify as technical, participants interact *qua* expert (219) and not on the basis of broad access. When we oversimplify the shift from academic to public discourse as simply acquiring a new set of conventions or rhetorical moves, we overlook that discourse features are based in ways of knowing. Adopting a post-process understanding of writing allows us to name and attend to these struggles as basic to what it means to communicate while situated within a public. The classroom becomes a public sphere in which multiple discursive realms overlap and are negotiated in the passing theories of communicative interactions.

Sharon McKenzie Stevens’ recent study of mainstream and movement rhetorics affirms the discourse negotiations fundamental to rhetorical activity within and between publics. Adopting Hauser’s notion of the public sphere as reticulate, defined by networks of associations between discursive spheres, McKenzie Stevens demonstrates how activist rhetorics achieve access to broader public spheres both through *vir bonus*, understood as direct, face-to-face communicative interaction between individuals in different discursive spheres, and through indirect means,

namely the organization of like-minded individuals through counterpublics that generate discourses agitational to other spheres. McKenzie Stevens' study is significant in highlighting the necessary intermingling of discourses involved in public rhetorical activity. "The interaction of multiple spheres," she writes, "demonstrates that rhetorical agency is not limited to choosing between different publics or acting within the rules given in alternative spheres" (313). Critical to our pedagogies, rhetorical agency is not a product of bracketing situatedness—for instance, of bracketing personal, technical (academic) or public situatedness—but rather results from the ability to productively negotiate, or "build bridges between" (313) competing discursive spheres.

McKenzie Stevens' work also highlights that the discomfort caused by interacting discursive spheres need not be conceived in exclusively negative terms. When rhetors are able to identify and negotiate the situatedness of their locations, they can use "different rhetorics to critically reflect on one another, [crafting] hybrid rhetorics with the potential to reconfigure the rules of the game" (313). The interplay of discursive spheres in this model can be generative, illuminating the extent to which given discourses promote dialogue; discovering how discourses can productively interanimate; and even crafting new hybrid discourses out of the relations of discursive spheres. This orientation to discourses acknowledges their dynamism, the ways that they escape fixed categories and traverse locations of home, school, and public.

The post-process notion of situatedness requires that we attend to the broader culture of academic discourse students bring with them to the public writing classroom and, indeed, that students are simultaneously engaging in their other courses. Our public writing pedagogies can promote a situational awareness that recognizes the discursive context as an active participant in the meaning-making process. Although discursive contexts are not always readily amenable to one another—for example, when certain norms of academic discourses (as, in Goodnight’s terms, technical) chafe with the requirements of ethical communication in public discourse—this is not always the case. Discursive realms can intersect in mutually illuminating ways. For instance, Raymond Mazurek’s analysis of the ways that academic discourses, specifically those of cultural studies, can contribute to our ability to engage in informed deliberation in the public sphere: “Cultural studies is itself an essentially academic discourse, however much it attempts to study the broader culture or contribute to the creation of a democratic culture by providing powerful tools for understanding society and producing critical discourses for various political ends” (175).

Post-process understandings of writing as public and fraught with interpretive challenge dismantle divisions of “private” and “public.” Post-process promotes a hermeneutic universalism wherein meaning is the result of unrepeatable communicative interactions between participants and the world and brings into sharp relief the situatedness of participants and their locations for writing. Against the backdrop of post-process, the public writing classroom moves from *quasi*-public to

necessarily public. Given an understanding of writing as a public, interpretive, and situated act, discourses within the classroom-as-public can no longer be codified and bracketed based on assignment requirements but must be considered in terms of their dialogic relationship with other discourses. Thus, we are equipped through post-process not only to recognize the classroom as public but to work toward a *better* classroom public.

As antifoundational, post-process does not—and cannot—offer pedagogical directives. Rather, post-process offers informing principles, encouraging us to “re-examine the ‘foundations’ from which we may have been operating, as well as our communicative practices with students” (Kastman Breuch 122). For the public writing classroom, post-process reminds us that writing is not content to be taught and mastered but is an activity to be continually engaged in with students as fellow writers. In forming a post-process dialogics for the classroom as public, post-process helps us interrogate and revise those philosophical and epistemological assumptions that maintain the classroom and its writers as *quasi*-public. When complemented by rhetorical understandings of publicness in contemporary public sphere theory, post-process proves a relevant and pedagogically-suggestive theoretical grounding for the public writing classroom.

Understanding the Rhetorical Activities of the Writing Classroom as Public

Post-process illuminates the values, ethics, and pedagogical approaches undergirding public writing pedagogies, offering a conceptual framework and

vocabulary for critically reflecting on the limitations and possibilities of these pedagogies. Further, post-process corroborates those rhetorical conceptions of publicness that define the classroom public by rhetorical conditions, activities, and competence.

Post-process directs our attention to the dialectic of prior and passing theories, of the experiences and knowledge writers bring to bear on each communicative act, including process, and the hermeneutical moves they make in-the-moment to align their utterances with interlocutors. The situatedness of the hermeneutical process requires attention to the power asymmetries and ideologies of the communicative context. Accordingly, one area of inquiry confirmed by a post-process examination of the public writing classroom—if we are to recognize it as a public—becomes examining the rhetorical practices of writers within that public. Of importance for our pedagogies becomes ascertaining what abilities are requisite for sustaining well-functioning publics, for “membership in a public requires rhetorical competence, or a capacity to participant in rhetorical experiences” (Hauser 33). Participants in a public “must be receptive to alternative modes of expression, engage in active interpretation to understand what is being said and how it relates to them, and be open to change” (33). Our ability to foster a well-functioning classroom public, then, is directly tied to the extent to which we understand and can promote rhetorical competence in our student writers.

If, as Kay Halasek suggests, “dialogue” is the guiding metaphor for post-process (3-4), then inquiry into the practices of student writers in the classroom as

public—specifically how writers recognize and negotiate overlapping spheres of discourse—might be guided appropriately by a dialogic framework. In the next chapter, I continue building a post-process dialogics, drawing on the work of M.M. Bakhtin to further understand how writers in the classroom public negotiate multiple discourses. In giving us a portrait of the individual as public, Bakhtin also identifies what it means to *act* on that publicness to achieve greater rhetorical agency amidst the circulating discourses of a public. Specifically, I discuss Bakhtin’s concept of hybridity as capturing what happens when discourses meet in the classroom public and how we might investigate and talk with writers about what it means to be “public.”

Notes

¹My understanding of Rorty and Kuhn's influences on post-process theory is indebted to Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch's analysis in "Post-Process Pedagogy: A Philosophical Exercise."

Chapter Four

Discursive Awareness, Rhetorical Agency, and the Individual as Public

Sensible thought about publics requires capturing their activity: how they construct reality by establishing and synthesizing values, forming opinions, acceding to positions, and cooperating through symbolic actions, especially discursive ones. (Hauser 33)

What is hybridization? A mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor. (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 358)

When assessed by rhetorical definitions of publicness as the active negotiation of overlapping realms of discourses, most public writing pedagogies conceive of the classroom as, at best, a *quasi*-public—that is, as either a micro-, or counter-, or proto-public that portrays the classroom as an essentialized and protected space from which students may venture out, experiment with, challenge, and perhaps even rehearse public discourses, but which ultimately remains distinct from the public. The previous chapter supposes that our pedagogies maintain this division between classroom and public, at least in part, because of a foundation of social constructionism. While social constructionism acknowledges the self as already and always social, it does not attend fully to the rhetorical dimensions of this version of selfhood—especially how individuals locate agency amidst multiple and often conflictual discourses. Indeed, in its extreme versions, the socially-constructed self is

little more than the effects of such discourses; while social constructionism helps us see how individuals are constituted by discourses, it leaves minimal room for envisioning how those individuals can, in turn, influence discourses. Understanding our student writers as not only *social* but *public* means engaging them in pedagogies that help them discover and develop their rhetorical agency in moving among and creating new publics out of discourse. This rhetorical agency, often expressed by public sphere scholars as rhetorical “competence,” is defined not by specific strategies or outcomes but instead by the degree to which an individual is conscious of her power in relation to the discourses that surround her. Individuals equipped to constitute and sustain well-functioning publics possess this discursive consciousness, what M.M. Bakhtin would call “socio-ideological language consciousness.”

Further pursuing a post-process orientation for public writing pedagogies, this chapter hones in on the dialogic dimensions of post-process, specifically Bakhtin’s contributions, in order to illuminate a path for inquiry into the experiences of writers in the classroom public. As post-process theorists have noted, Bakhtin’s dialogism validates the notion that all writing is public. As I argue in this chapter, however, perhaps Bakhtin’s most important contribution to our pedagogies is his portrait of the *individual* as public. Because rhetorical perspectives on publicness hold that a public is constituted in and by participation, Bakhtin’s understanding of publicness on the level of individual consciousness has important pedagogical implications for fostering students’ rhetorical agency within and outside the classroom public.

While we know that our students are already and always public, Bakhtin holds that acting on that publicness requires consciousness of it, for without this consciousness, students' capacity to exercise rhetorical agency is limited. Although social constructionism has made heavy use of Bakhtin to underscore that knowledge is produced out of the rich heteroglossia that surrounds us, it has not addressed how we achieve this agency within stratified discourses, or in post-process terms, *how* we actually undertake writing as a public, interpretive, and situated act. For Bakhtin, achieving rhetorical agency relates to the ability to dialogize the heteroglot environment of our lives, to recognize and transform distanced, codified and authoritative discourses into usable, internally persuasive ones. The public individual in Bakhtin's work has the conscious ability to uncover and quarrel with the ideologies behind discourses, to find positions among those discourses, and to create new possibilities out of the interrelations and integrations of discourses.

Bakhtin's dialogic theory of language contributes to our understanding of the rhetorical agency of the public individual. Specifically, Bakhtin's dialogic renditions of hybridity provide one response to a central question posed by this dissertation: *What do we know of how writers negotiate the multiple realms of discourse in our public writing pedagogies, and how can we frame our understanding of what occurs in their struggles?* To the project of mapping a post-process dialogics, hybridity offers an important heuristic for understanding, examining, and shaping pedagogies responsive to the composing tasks students in the classroom public undertake in their negotiation of home, school, and public discourses.

Bakhtin's Dialogism and Post-Process Theories of Writing

Like the notion of a singular writing process for which we have developed universal models, the “sentence,” according to Bakhtin, is artificial, endlessly repeatable, abstracted from communicative context. In contrast, the “utterance,” kariatotic, situated—answering and answerable—is not. This *metalinguistic* notion of dialogue captures the dialogic nature of communicative interaction. Bakhtin asserts that the word cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue: “Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word” (“Discourse” 280). Constituent of the utterance as the fundamental unit of speech communication is its addressivity; the utterance both responds to and anticipates response, and its boundaries are marked by a “hermeneutical pause” that unites its rejoinders in dialogue. Thomas Kent calls this anti-Cartesian, externalist position Bakhtin’s most salient contribution to the theories of communicative interaction, of language-in-use, that sustain post-process—that “words and sentences mean nothing until they are used” (“Hermeneutics and Genre” 34).

The significant Bakhtinian overtones within the post-process lexicon of writing as public, interpretive, and situated are most often acknowledged when post-process theorists sketch, however cautiously, post-process contributions to writing pedagogy. Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch notes that because post-process resists, even disallows, any defined pedagogy, post-process advocates frequently label their pedagogies “dialogic” to underscore post-process values without countering their

anti-foundationalist position. Indeed, these dialogic pedagogies, best exemplified by Irene Ward and Kay Halasek, provide post-process an entrance into the classroom without prescribing specific methodologies, instead emphasizing one-to-one instruction and critical reflection on communicative interactions. But while those who do see a Bakhtinian dimension to post-process highlight the parallels between dialogue as social meaning-making and the post-process assertion that all writing is public, they most often do so in ways that reinforce a division between classroom and public. Ward's Bakhtinian-inspired pedagogy, for instance, echoes a post-process emphasis on language-in-use to conclude that "a functional dialogic pedagogy will have to employ a great deal of public writing—that is, writing directed to others capable of and interested in responding. . . . thereby enabling students to become active participants in communities *beyond* the classroom" (*Literacy* 170, emphasis mine). Here the writing classroom is again invoked as a sort of developmental stopping point on the way to true publicness, the implication being that the kinds of writing and discussion produced within the academy are not sufficient, lack genuine (i.e., public) exigencies, audiences, and responses, and that our student writers are not yet capable of effectively engaging, negotiating, and situating themselves among the multiple and competing discourses the classroom public.

Bakhtin's dialogism offers more than a simple confirmation that the public writing classroom should emphasize dialogue within and outside of academic publics, for this can easily fall back on limiting interpretations of social constructionist pedagogies that see the classroom as more of a cloistered and privileged Burkean

Parlor than a diverse and deliberative public sphere. The addressivity of the utterance, for example, importantly implies intonation, the speaker/listeners' *evaluative* attitude, and throughout Bakhtin's dialogism the implausibility of neutrality, the inevitability of conflict among realms of discourse and, importantly, within languages themselves, is underscored. Bakhtin notes that "[o]ur speech, that is, all our utterances. . . is filled with others' words. . . . These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" ("Speech Genres" 89).

Bakhtin tells us that all discourses are marked by heteroglossia, broadly conceived as the stratification of speech types, or social dialects; these languages cannot co-exist without struggle because they each represent "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values" ("Discourse" 291-92). Because "[u]tterances are not indifferent to one another" ("Speech Genres" 91), we find within discourses both centripetal forces, those which centralize and unify, and centrifugal forces, those which seek to fragment and disperse. Within each utterance is the meeting of these forces and their negotiation by the speaker: "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process" ("Discourse" 294). The more discursive awareness the writer possesses, the more agency she can uncover to engage in this negotiation.

For post-process, then, Bakhtin offers all language as essentially dialogic, public, language-in-use, not only because all languages are populated with the intonations of speakers (and, indeed, other languages across time) but also because all utterances serve as links in a larger and ongoing chain of communication. Bakhtin's theory of communication, at the heart of which is his notion of the dialogic utterance, captures the interplay of discourses and the fluidity of discourse realms that characterize the discursive life of public spheres. Explicating Bakhtin's contributions to public sphere theory, Michael E. Gardiner offers that "Bakhtin problematizes [Habermasian] demarcations, sees them as fluid, permeable and always contested, and alerts us to power relations that are involved in any such exercise of boundary maintenance" (30). These false boundaries are sustained by pedagogies that compartmentalize home, academic, and public discourses. It is only when students are encouraged to uncover the ideological continuities and discontinuities between discursive spheres that they can better position themselves within and against discourses, uncovering possibilities for acting on their rhetorical agency in the classroom public.

Achieving the rhetorical agency required to create publics, "to participate in rhetorical exchanges, to have rhetorical experiences" (Hauser 34), requires a certain a subjectivity not found within the like-minded enclave of the special interest group, where "members often proceed on closed-minded assumptions of the wholly-knowing" (34), or even in the counterpublic, when conceived as a protected space, a rhetorical training ground for future agitational activities. Rather, this subjectivity

denotes an individual's consciousness of and active participation in social exchange, what Bakhtin understands as "dialogized consciousness." Although all communicative interaction is heteroglot, each meeting of centrifugal and centripetal forces within the utterance is dialogized only through individuals' conscious negotiation of discursive ideologies, "not the result of purely abstract forces (systemic imbalances), but of real people's actions in response to their daily lives" (Morson and Emerson 144).

By locating publicness within individual consciousness, Bakhtin challenges the disembodied theoreticism of most conceptions of the public sphere: "Only when we think and act in a 'participative' fashion, in tune with the rhythms and textures of everyday life, can we be wholly answerable for our actions, in the sense that we are conscious of and can actively respond to their existential and ethical implications" (Gardiner 32). The ability to dialogize the heteroglot environment of life requires not only awareness of our positioning within discourse but what Bakhtin would term our "answerability" to those discourses that shape our daily lives. Although every utterance is in a dialogic sense answerable, Bakhtin's use of this term carries with it decidedly ethical norms for understanding the post-process notion of writing as situated. Deborah Hicks articulates the ethical obligations of public writers:

Dialogue, as depicted by Bakhtin, entails a form of answerability that is morally responsive to unique others and particular relationships. Considered outside of such moral ends, social actions and discourses lose a crucial part of their concreteness—their embeddedness in

relationships constituted by thoughts, feelings, and histories between unique individuals. (227)

Alice Gillam relates this ethical dimension of answerability to the writing classroom. Because “writing is the author’s ‘answer’ to others and to the world,” our pedagogies must help students seek that “the writer is responsible for the response set in motion by her ‘answer’” (133). Echoing the post-process emphasis on the situatedness of language-in-use, for Bakhtin, the only ethical communication is situated communication, with the individual answerable for her everyday communicative interactions, her efforts to cultivate or suppress dialogue.

If deliberative, sustainable publics are formed out of individuals’ “collective participation in rhetorical processes” (Hauser 34), then the writing classroom as a public is indebted to a Bakhtinian dialogism that addresses publicness on the level the individual consciousness, as a result of the rhetorical abilities and actions of individuals. Important for our pedagogies, Bakhtin also implies a discourse ethics. Part of the rhetorical competence students need to be successful communicating within and between publics involves an “integrative social influence between self and other [which] lends itself to collaborative deliberation and reflective inquiry” (Jost and Hyde 3). In rhetorical understandings of publicness, including the classroom as public, this “integrative” relationship between self and other is enacted on the level of discourse by competent participants. Mary Juzwik is helpful here in elucidating this particular aspect of rhetorical competence; applied to discourse, Juzwik’s “ethics of answerability” (which differs from an “ethics of difference”) does not stop at the

identification of different and competing discourses and their ideologies within a public but seeks reciprocity, “a kind of unspoken yet mutually agreed upon contract to be negotiated and achieved in the moment of a particular interaction” (541).¹

Thus, within his theory of the utterance, Bakhtin confirms post-process visions of writing as public, interpretive, and situated. Bakhtin’s dialogism highlights the generative “inbetweenness” of the composition classroom in terms of home, school, and public. Like all publics, the classroom public is sustained by the intersection of multiple realms of discourse and their ideologies. Importantly, this heteroglot environment can be dialogized, its discourses populated, evaluated, and re-accented through the active and conscious participation of writers. Here Bakhtin substantiates the kinds of rhetorical competence needed to sustain deliberative publics. Drawing upon Bakhtin in his study of the rhetorical life of public spheres, Hauser explains that in a public, “[c]ontact among words, utterances, and whole discourses challenges their self-contained meanings by bringing each into the space between them” (8). Discourses are dialogized by individual interlocutors to “create new possibilities through the interaction and interanimation of meanings that are half ours and half others” (8). As I go on to explore, Bakhtin suggest to us that the creation of these “new possibilities” implies a process of hybridization wherein authoritative discourses are transformed into internally persuasive ones.

The Socio-Ideological Language Consciousness of the Public Writer

Public Consciousness as Dialogized Consciousness.

In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin provides a concrete example of discursive, dialogized consciousness. In doing so, Bakhtin shows us that consciousness of one’s publicness—that is, one’s status and agency within a heteroglot world—is dialogized consciousness. In a now famous passage, Bakhtin introduces us to a peasant, unconsciously living, as we all do, in several discursive realms. Of importance to our discussion, Bakhtin illustrates in this figure the development of public consciousness. He explains that the peasant “prayed to God in one language (Church Slavonic), sang songs in another, spoke to his family in a third, and when he began to dictate petitions to the local authorities through a scribe, he tried speaking in yet a fourth language (the official-literate language, ‘paper’ language)” (295-96). While aware of the different languages that he inhabited, the peasant had not yet dialogized those languages; instead, “his various languages [were] automatically activated by these different contexts, and he [did] not dispute the adequacy of each language to its topic and task” (Morson and Emerson 143). Put differently, while the peasant was already and always public, navigating multiple languages within the contexts of his everyday life, he had not yet attained consciousness of his publicness, his rhetorical agency, which Bakhtin sees as concomitant with the ability to dialogize languages.

As soon as critical interanimation of languages began to occur in the consciousness of our peasant, as soon as it became clear that these

were not only various different languages but even internally variegated languages, that the ideological systems and approaches to the world that were indissolubly connected with these languages contradicted each other and in no way could live in peace and quiet with one another—then the inviolability and predetermined quality of these languages came to an end, and the necessity of *actively choosing one's orientation among them began*. (296, emphasis mine)

The peasant, while already practiced in the use of public languages, achieved a deepened public consciousness when this critical interanimation of languages occurred, when he became capable to some degree of “[regarding] one language (and the verbal world corresponding to it) through the eyes of another language” (296). When languages interanimate, they are no longer monologic, indisputable; “[t]o the extent that this happens, it becomes more difficult to take for granted the value of systems of a given language” (Morson and Emerson 143). We are then faced with the task of negotiating and situating ourselves among the languages we inhabit, which Bakhtin later calls the peasant’s achievement of “concrete socio-ideological language consciousness” (295). Echoing a post-process emphasis on situatedness, Eileen Landay explains, “[i]n choosing the utterances we want to appropriate and precisely what meaning we want to attribute to them, we choose the stance we want to take” (111).

Helping us to further grasp the significance of Bakhtin’s peasant to our rhetorical understandings of publicness, Ken Hirschkop explores the ideological

dimensions of dialogized consciousness in *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*. Hirschkop argues that the peasant's turning point, his deepening public consciousness, occurs when he recognizes not "the distance between" but the "hierarchy of languages, and the substance of those on top" (268). Hirschkop continues:

Language is unevenly structured in the sense that it is composed not of more or less equivalent utterances spoken by more or less equivalent individuals, but of a series of interacting forms of discourse and intersubjectivity, which vary according to the durability of the utterance, the size and nature of the speaker and audience, the degree and kind of literacy required for participation, as well as the social context in which such a discourse can take place. (251)

Here Hirschkop rejects the *quasi*-public, with its bracketed intersubjectivities and protected status, in favor of a Bakhtinian public square in which the struggles of competing discourses and their ideologies, the power inequalities of social status, and the rhetorical facility necessary to succeed in various contexts, are all brought into the open. The public square in Bakhtin's work, which Morson and Emerson note is best translated *ploshchadnoe slovo*, "the public-square word" (446, emphasis mine) is the domain of dialogized public consciousness. When socio-ideological language consciousness becomes creative, discourses cease to be determinate and monologic and can be "novelized" by the writer: "Where language was once unself-conscious and categorical, after being novelized, it becomes polemical and double-voiced; it

takes a sideward glance at other ways of speaking” (Morson and Emerson 304). The peasant becomes “empowered with a new kind of reason. . . having recognized that this structure of multiple and internally variegated languages [heteroglossia] defines a geography of power. . . and is now able to situate himself in relation to the various interest that control his world. . . carnivalize and subvert authority” (Garvey 382).

In the context of the classroom, Bakhtin’s socio-ideological language consciousness, which enables individuals to identify and negotiate language-ideolects, parallels the rhetorical competence needed to actively participate in publics. Therefore, engendering the critical interanimation and deepened public consciousness experienced by Bakhtin’s fictional peasant emerges as a desirable pedagogical norm for the post-process public writing classroom. To be sure, Bakhtin’s peasant and our students are literally worlds apart; however, Bakhtin describes a process that he sees as universal, insofar as the role language plays in the development of a desired kind of consciousness. No longer in waiting to become public, Bakhtin helps us see writers as already and always public, engaged in a developmental process of becoming more fully conscious of, and able to act upon, that publicness.

Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourses.

Although Bakhtin spends most of his time in “Discourse in the Novel” explicating the dialogized consciousness uniquely captured by novelistic genres, he does address the pedagogical realm as well. Specifically, Bakhtin contrasts the two verbal disciplines “reciting by heart” and “re-telling in one’s own words” (343). The

former approach is the domain of “authoritative discourses,” those discourses maintained by centripetal forces. Bakhtin tells us that authoritative discourse “can not be represented—it is only transmitted. Its inertia, its semantic finiteness and calcification, the degree to which it is hard-edged, a thing in its own right, the impermissibility of any free stylistic development in relation to it—all this renders the artistic representation of authoritative discourse impossible” (344). Bakhtin continues his discussion of the nature of authoritative discourse by locating this discourse in a “distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past” (342).

Academic discourses are often authoritative discourses; as Joy Ritchie notes in her analysis of beginning college writers, “writing in school is seldom heuristic and is usually evaluative, to test mastery of subject matter or conformity to institutional rules” (133). Indeed, the classroom as *quasi*-public does not recognize the discourses of home, school, and public as interrelating, or dialogized whatsoever; instead these discourses are objectified, crystallized, authoritative. A student writer’s relationship to the discourses—whether in the classroom as proto-, counter-, or micro-public—remains fixed, with discourses rehearsed rather than interanimated. A post-process view of writing as interpretive topples this authoritative orientation, as does Bakhtin’s second category, “re-telling in one’s own words.” This pedagogical act suggests the conditions needed to stimulate socio-ideological language consciousness, and thus the rhetorical competency, of our writers as public.

Internally persuasive discourses result when codified, authoritative discourses are expropriated from their distanced zone. The discourses of any given realm—personal, academic, or public—are available for “maximal interaction” (Bakhtin “Discourse” 346). The internally persuasive word is marked by its “semantic openness to us, its capacity for further creative life in the context of our ideological consciousness, its unfinishedness and the inexhaustibility of our further dialogic interaction with it” (346). Because of this semantic openness, internally persuasive discourses can “reveal ever newer *ways to mean*,” with the varied realms of discourses in the classroom-as-public serving as “new contexts that dialogize” (346). Pedagogies that encourage “re-telling in one’s own words” facilitate students’ discursive awareness and their ability to consciously dialogize discourses to reveal and challenge them as ideologies. In a well-functioning classroom public, one that fosters the socio-ideological consciousness of the public writer, personal, academic, and public discourses cannot be kept distinct but must be presented in their dialogic relationship to one another to: “Only as they struggle to endow the words of others with their own intentions do writers progress beyond the level of functionary or bureaucrat” (Ritchie 135) and, I would add, only then might they realize their agency in forming and reforming discourses. Internally persuasive discourses possess this generative potential because, again, to echo post-process theory, these discourses result from the *interpretive* work of communication, the writer’s appropriation and transformation of the authoritative word.

According to Bakhtin, internally persuasive discourses are the outcome of socio-ideological language consciousness and are distinguished by varying degrees of double-voicedness that reflects the writer's evaluative intonation. As Bakhtin says, "[a]s a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language. . . lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. . . It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (294).

What is less clear, however, is the process by which these discourses are produced, a fact which Bakhtin himself acknowledges: "Expropriating [language], forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, *is a difficult and complicated process*" (294, emphasis mine). However, if we pay attention to Bakhtin's own words, we may be able to infer something of the nature of that process. Because he describes internally persuasive discourse as "half-ours and half-someone else's" (345), we may look to *hybridization* as a likely method by which individuals dialogize authoritative discourses. Bakhtin defines hybridization as a "mixture. . . an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses" (358). Understood in terms the classroom public, we can see that students encounter the task of hybridizing personal, academic, and public discourses in order to craft internally persuasive versions that effectively negotiate the spheres.

The extent to which these hybrids are successful in meeting simultaneous and sometimes conflicting rhetorical goals, and the extent to which they build students' rhetorical competency, however, is tied to the extent to which they are consciously

fashioned. The word becomes “‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent...” (293). I argue that there is value in pursuing Bakhtin’s dialogic renderings of hybridization as a frame for understanding how writers negotiate and create internally persuasive hybrids out of the interplay discursive spheres within the classroom public. Additionally, I offer that hybridization has the potential as a pedagogical feature for promoting students’ deepened understanding of their public consciousness and their rhetorical competence to actively participate in publics. Although in the context of the novel, Bakhtin offers hybridization as an aesthetic act, in the public writing classroom, hybridization holds potential for helping students achieve socio-ideological language consciousness as they illuminate and re-accentuate personal, academic, and public discourses.

Hybridization in the Classroom Public

Just as he recognizes that individuals enact dialogized heteroglossia to varying degrees based upon their progress towards socio-ideological language consciousness, Bakhtin also acknowledges varying degrees of intentionality to the process of hybridization. While *unintentional* hybridization naturally occurs as languages interact and develop within a heteroglot social environment and, I would add, as students encounter new discourses, or situations in which discourses are forced to meet, *intentional* hybridization is an “*artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image

of another language” (361). The last phrase here is significant; as Bakhtin goes on to explain, intentional hybridization differs from “internally dialogized interillumination of language systems” in that it directly mixes two languages “within the boundary of a single utterance” (362), thereby creating a new internally persuasive discourse, “tightly interwoven with ‘one’s own word’” (341), rather than simply enacting a dialogue that leaves both discourses essentially untouched.² In the writing classroom as *quasi*-public, the ideological continuities and discontinuities between the discursive realms are not openly interrogated; discourses fail to fully interanimate and thus, because they are treated as absolute and distinct from one another, they remain authoritative for students. Although students may gain facility in analyzing the rhetorical demands of various kinds of discourses, even in switching between academic and public discourses, their agency in consciously evaluating and refashioning these discourses is not emphasized. Even home discourses are often rendered authoritative when solicited and prescribed through external prompts, and treated in isolation from other discourses.

Authoritative discourses are discourses that have not yet been dialogized in the individual’s consciousness. In “Liberal Education, Writing and the Dialogic Self,” Don Bialostosky writes about the power of the authoritative word to stunt students’ ideological becoming; the “authoritative word remains aloof from that dialogue, co-opts it, or even silences it” (191). Further, a writer “under the influence of the authoritative word repeats it thoughtlessly or imitates it confusedly or cites it passively or complies with it formally or defers to it silently” (191). In Bialostosky’s

dialogic pedagogy, the solution is “to modify the terms of disciplinary education in the students’ favor by letting them in on the secrets of genre and convention that the disciplines silently observe” (191).³ But fostering access to and mastery of authoritative discourses, while it may lead to students’ enhanced ability to appropriate those discourses for their own purposes, does not equate to the dialogization suggested by Bakhtin’s intentional hybridization because, in the end, those authoritative discourses remain unchanged. What changes is only students’ orientation toward those discourses; students no longer see them as “alien languages [that] threaten from without,” but rather as “new resources for seeing and saying” (192). Bialostosky assumes that allowing students access to the “insider” knowledge of skilled academicians will lead to them transforming academic discourses into internally persuasive ones, but Bialostosky conflates mastery with dialogization and in doing so falls short of the potential suggested by Bakhtin’s intentional hybridization. The ability to dialogize extends beyond achieving familiarity with or even taking a stance toward authoritative discourses to transform them into new internally persuasive ones.

But before continuing on to explicate the value of hybridization as a heuristic for investigating the composing practices of students in the public writing classroom and in inspiration for our pedagogies, it is important to note that any discussion of hybridity within composition studies must first answer recent criticisms of the very term “hybrid.” With the article “Hybrid Discourses: What, Why, How,” Patricia Bizzell sparked the field’s discussion of the hybrid discourses invented by students to

both disrupt and reconcile academic discourses with those of their personal and public lives. Since then, Bizzell has co-edited a book-length discussion of these discourses to explore specifically the hybrid forms of academic discourses students generate, with varying levels of intentionality, in response to the authoritative discourses of the academy. As Bizzell notes in her later work, the debate over terminology has uncovered negative overtones attached to the use of “hybrid” as a descriptor, leading to replacement labels such as “alternative” or “mixed.” Bizzell herself rejects the term “hybrid” as it can assume by implication a fixed and singular definition of academic discourse (“Intellectual Work” 4).

Indeed, much work in hybrid, alternative, or mixed forms does promulgate a view of discourses as ubiquitous or fixed, and this work largely focuses on the deficiencies and totalizing tendencies of academic discourses that motivate students to subvert them with new forms. Similarly, when post-process invokes Bakhtin to construct a dialogic pedagogy, it is most often to advocate moving outside of the academy and beyond its discourses to engage “real” people and “real” publics, further condemning academic discourse as authoritative. In fact, Jon Klancher, like many, sees the ultimate aim of a dialogic pedagogy “to disengage student writers from crippling subservience to the received languages they grapple with” (27), those languages typified in the specialized academic discourses students struggle to imitate. Bakhtin’s conceptions of hybridity become even more valuable as they do not have to be wrested out of larger disciplinary debates about the value of first-year composition or the oppressive nature of academic discourses, for nowhere in Bakhtin’s dialogic

hybridization are received languages or authoritative discourses exclusively aligned with or defined by a specific discursive sphere.

Bakhtin's description of intentional hybrids is particularly important in answering the criticism among compositionists that the notion of hybridity further inscribes, or essentializes, discourses. The more intentional the act of hybridization, Bakhtin explains, the more double-voiced and internally persuasive the resulting new discourse, the novel exemplifying the internally persuasive discourses that can arise from a fully dialogized public consciousness:

Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogized.

This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, an argument between styles of language. . . . it is a dialogue between two points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other. ("Prehistory" 76)

Intentional hybridization "consciously dialogizes and attempts to estrange more authoritative forms of discourse" (Monberg 207). The "creativity and productiveness" of a writer's internally persuasive discourse—indeed its potential to enact change within the individual and in dialogue with other discourses—"consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition" ("Discourse" 345). While the compartmentalized, static discourses of the classroom as *quasi*-public are represented and examined for their objective

value, an internally persuasive discourse “is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts” (346). Essentialized visions of home, school, or public discourses cannot subsist in a classroom informed by Bakhtin’s dialogic hybridity, because students are constantly engaged in uncovering and making intentional hybridization across discursive realms.

To be sure, however, this intentional hybridization does not take place without struggle nor can it flourish in idealized or ideologically-protected classroom space, an additional criticism expressed by compositionists about the usefulness of hybridity. In his study of hybridity in the cross-cultural classroom, Bronwyn T. Williams answers this criticism, arguing that composition studies has misconstrued hybridity as “falsely optimistic and apolitical. . . . It has frequently been used to describe an almost carnivalesque space, a benign melting-pot synthesis that emerges from parodies of the dominant culture and the overt appropriation and reversal of colonial symbols” (600). For Bakhtin, intentional hybridization “demands enormous effort; it is stylized through and through, thoroughly premeditative” (“Discourse” 366). Intentional hybridization results from struggle to reconcile competing and alien ideolects, not from bracketing or ignoring of power asymmetries. Here Bakhtin is consistent with postcolonial notions of hybridity as fashioned by Homi Bhabha: “The hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration” (58).

Failure to recognize the interactions of personal, academic, and public discourse realms within the public writing classroom results in the rigid categorization of discourses that accompanies the classroom as *quasi*-public. Instead of reinforcing essentialized notions of any particular discourse, Bakhtin's dialogic hybridity moves our understanding of the classroom from training ground to public by facilitating the conscious interanimation of multiple discourses. When discourses cease to be determinate, students see the "necessity of actively choosing one's orientation among them" (Bakhtin, "Discourse" 296). In the public writing classroom informed by a post-process dialogics, choosing this orientation could mean crafting intentional and internally persuasive hybrid discourses of not just home and school but also public discourses. These hybrids represent not only students' successful negotiation of their multiple ideolects but also their development of the kinds of rhetorical competence that give them agency in revising and re-intoning authoritative discourses as participants in an ongoing dialogue of social knowledge constructing, of the rhetorical agency they have in offering alternative discourses outward to the public. The achievement of this socio-ideological language consciousness, this deepened public consciousness, comes "not from the ability to negotiate interest in a power-neutral environment" (Garvey 383), but can only occur in the classroom as public when we openly acknowledge and problematize the intersecting and competing discourses among which students must achieve agency. In short, composition studies can help students deepen their public consciousness not by

moving away from, or beyond, the academy and its discourses, but instead by recognizing and dialogizing the heterolog environment of the classroom.

Using Bakhtin, we can map a post-process dialogics for the public writing classroom that not only acknowledges all writing as public, as embodied utterance both responsive and inviting of response, but writers themselves as public. If, as recent work in public sphere theory informs us, publicness emerges out of the collective rhetorical participation of competent individuals as they negotiate multiple, overlapping, and conflictual realms of discourse to sustain deliberation, then the model of dialogized public consciousness Bakhtin offers in his peasant becomes an attractive goal for our work with writers. Within his figure of the peasant, we encounter a model of dialogized consciousness and the rhetorical abilities that can follow critical interanimation of languages: awareness of living in multiple discursive spheres, each with its own languages; capacity to situate one's self among those ideolects; and, most suggestive for our pedagogies, the facility to inhabit and therefore transform authoritative discourses with our own internally persuasive word.

In a post-process dialogics for the classroom public, hybridization keeps us attentive to the artificiality of those rigid categorizations of discourses that can accompany our pedagogies and serves as a heuristic for investigating and shaping our pedagogies in response to students' struggles to negotiate the diverse demands of these multiple discursive realms. While *unintentional* hybridization emerges as a fact, an inevitable consequence of discursive realms meeting within the public writing classroom, Bakhtin's aesthetic complement, *intentional* hybridization, suggests itself

as a potential pedagogy for facilitating socio-ideological language awareness—for moving the public writing classroom from *quasi*-public to public.

Hauser and other public sphere theorists assert the importance of testing our theories about what makes a public by the practices of those individuals who constitute that public. “Sensible thought about publics requires capturing their activity: how they construct reality by establishing and synthesizing values, forming opinions, acceding to positions, and cooperating through symbolic actions, especially discursive ones” (Hauser 33). Following this admonition, Chapter Five investigates the presence and nature of unintentional hybridity in one public writing classroom in order to consider the potential implications for a pedagogy of *intentional* hybrid-making.

Notes

¹For a fuller discussion of the ethical dimensions of Bakhtin's dialogism, and their implications for fostering deliberative public discourses, see T. Gregory Garvey's "The Value of Opacity: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Habermas' Discourse Ethics". Garvey notes that Bakhtin's emphasis on the ethics of everyday communicative interactions contrasts with Habermas' ideal of rational-critical debate: "Even though Habermas understands bracketing as an effort to ensure undistorted communication, it is also an effort to control signification. . . . In Bakhtin's lexicon, when a word becomes transparent, it becomes the property of a single social interest. Thus, the effort to achieve a 'rational consensus' through 'undistorted' communication would strike Bakhtin as a move in the direction of ideology hegemony" (377, 380).

²The processes of hybridization yield new, internally-persuasive discourses, rendering their authoritative parent discourses obsolete. That hybridization not only interanimates but transforms authoritative discourses explains Bakhtin's comments in "Discourse in the Novel" that authoritative discourse "is by its very nature incapable of being double-voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions. If completely deprived of its authority it becomes simply an object, a *relic*, a *thing*. It enters the artistic context as an alien body. . . it is not surrounded by an agitated and cacophonous dialogic life, and the context around it dies, words dry up" (344). Because hybridization brings authoritative discourses into new contexts, new situations, those discourses cannot survive.

³Bialostosky fails to acknowledge that authoritative discourses are often not as receptive to appropriation as they are to assimilation. As Bakhtin explains, "the tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideologically becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth—but strives rather to determine the very basis of our behavior" ("Discourse" 342). Here Bialostosky reinscribes what Teresa Lillis terms the "transparency model of language implicit in official discourse" (168). In *Student Writing: Access, Regulation, Desire*, Lillis argues that "the official discourse on communication in HE [higher education] is implicitly framed by the notion of language as a transparent and autonomous conduit" (168), thereby eliding the reality that authoritative discourses are ideologically-invested discourses that *work on* students, so to speak, just as much as they can be *worked on* by students.

Chapter Five

Uncovering Discursive Hybridization in the Classroom Public: Process as Vernacular

[M]any of the fault lines in composition studies are disagreements over the subjectivities that teachers of writing want students to occupy. (Faigley 17)

Thus far I have mapped a post-process dialogics for recognizing the classroom as a public and for promoting students' deepened awareness of themselves as public. Consonant with public sphere theorists who espouse a view of publicness as a discursive construct, my theory for classrooms in composition's "public turn" draws upon post-process theories of writing as public, interpretive, and situated, and dialogic understandings of rhetorical agency that emphasize discursive consciousness. As I argued in Chapter Four, publicness on the level of individual consciousness can be gauged by what Bakhtin terms "socio-ideological language consciousness," or the awareness of living within multiple, and often competing, discursive spheres. This discursive awareness allows writers to recognize the interrelating discourses of these spheres, the unintentional hybridization inevitable when home, school, and public languages meet. A goal for our public writers, socio-ideological language consciousness leads to the ability to position oneself among, dialogize, and intentionally transform discourses, and parallels the rhetorical competence public sphere scholars tell us is needed to actively engage in the creation and maintenance of well-functioning publics. A post-process dialogics looks to hybridization both as a

reality of the classroom public and as a potential pedagogical means for fostering student writers' rhetorical agency to actively participate in the classroom public.

To further build a post-process dialogics for the classroom public, I analyze the rhetorical activities of an actual classroom public, in this case, a first-year composition course focused on public writing. In this chapter, I examine the value of Bakhtin's notion of *unintentional* hybridization as a lens through which to study the discursive life of a classroom public, and the composing practices and hermeneutic strategies of our public writing students. In offering the story of my work with this first-year composition course, I acknowledge that any theory for the writing classroom can be made stronger by the experiences and insights of our students. It is my hope that this chapter, when combined with the theory built in the first three chapters, will yield suggestive possibilities for our work with public writing students and for future research into the complexities of the classroom as a public.

Purpose and Context of Inquiry

In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition Studies*, Steven North argues that philosophical knowledge, or "that impulse to account for, to frame, critique and analyze the field's fundamental assumptions and beliefs," often fails in moving beyond "the great debate," to "action," rarely moving "outside of itself for verification" (91- 97). Desiring that my project, in its emphasis on uncovering limiting assumptions behind current public writing pedagogies, will leave readers with something more than a replacement theory for how the public writing classroom

should be envisioned, I tapped students' expertise to refine my ideas about the reality and potential pedagogical benefits of hybridization in the classroom public.

Following Bakhtin's dialogic renderings of hybridization, I embarked upon my work with student writers with an understanding of unintentional hybridization as *fact*, as unavoidable consequence of the meeting of multiple discursive spheres within the public writing classroom. The primary objective of my classroom inquiry, then, was to better understand the nature of this unintentional hybridization—how it occurs—to thereby enhance the conceptual frame I was building for understanding our classrooms and writers as public. A secondary objective, anticipating the pedagogical potential of this hybridization, was to explore mechanisms for working with students to externalize, or make explicit, this hybridization. Following the post-process dialogic theory constructed in the previous chapters, I reasoned that unintentional hybridization, if it could be uncovered and externalized through talk about writing, would suggest *intentional* hybridization as a potential enactment of socio-ideological language consciousness—that deepened public consciousness that allows us to recognize and refashion authoritative discourses into usable, internally persuasive ones. I articulated the following questions to guide my work with students:

- *Can unintentional hybridization be uncovered and externalized through talk about writing?*

- *If so, how does this unintentional hybridization manifest itself in the public writing classroom as students negotiate the multiple discourses of home, school, and public?*

To pursue answers to these questions, I held a series of three facilitated conversations with a small volunteer group of first-year composition students, supporting those discussions with informal, reflective writing prompts aimed at generating ideas for and stimulating dialogue.¹ Although my work with students cannot be classified as exhaustive qualitative educational research, it is informed by Cindy Johaneck's contextual theory for research in composition studies. Johaneck argues that we must focus "our attention not on form or politics, but on the processes of research that naturally produce varied forms in the varied research contexts we encounter in our work" (27). Rather than impose a methodology onto our work in the classroom, Johaneck offers that researchers should consider their motivations, knowledge, and resources and draw upon both quantitative and qualitative traditions to arrive at an appropriate methodology for inquiry. Because reflective talk about writing is an established feature in most composition courses, it offered a contextual means for incorporating student voices into my inquiry.

I was also influenced by the social science literature on focus groups and naturalistic research. I was drawn to focus group methodologies because they privilege local, situated knowledge, and they allow for the facilitator to be both recorder *and* participant, actively shaping and contributing to, in this case, conversations about writing (Steward, Shamdasani and Rook 73). Critical to my

project, which aims to develop a theory for, and to stimulate continued work in, conceptualizing the classroom as public, focus group inquiry is open-ended, formative, and generative of “insights” rather than “generalizations.” Because of the social nature of focus group discussions, and their limited number of participants (6-11, ideally), the dynamic is one of conversational ebb and flow: “Individuals laugh, tell personal stories, revisit an earlier question, disagree, contradict themselves, and interrupt,” their comments shaped by those of others (Grudens-Schuck, Allen and Larson 1-2). Although it is left to the facilitator to identify emergent themes of relevance to the inquiry rather than to create any sort of generalizable or repeatable design, I attempted to mediate the influence of the group setting by also examining reflective writing that students produced prior to each focus group about their perceptions, experiences, and writing processes in each unit of the course.

Privileging inquiry experiences that grow out of and respond to our immediate conditions aligns with the emphasis within post-process and Bakhtinian dialogics on historical and material situatedness. So while my classroom inquiry aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about public writing pedagogies, it does so carefully, recognizing both the unique, the “once-occurring” (to invoke Bakhtin) instance of any given composition classroom research site. My dual theoretical and pedagogical objectives and my position as a Ph.D. student conducting dissertation research within a classroom that was not my own limited and shaped the study in particular ways to serve rhetorical rather than empirical ends. “While talk about writing occurs in many venues and for many purposes,” Peter Mortensen explains,

“our representations of that talk in research reports cannot begin to capture the texture of what people say when they discuss [their] writing. . . . Consequently, the value of these representations is primarily rhetorical” (“Analyzing” 106). “Effective representations of talk about writing,” he concludes, “make for persuasive arguments about the nature of discourse” (106). Indeed, the discursive activities of any public, including the public, are far too dynamic and shifting to be captured within a theory; thus, Mortensen’s conclusion is a helpful check on the scope of my project.

The value that Mortensen assigns to these rhetorical representations is also consistent with the contextual research approaches accepted in the field of composition studies. “Anecdotal forms of research,” like the classroom anecdotes I offer here, reflect the “current climate of our field” toward narrative (Johanek 16). Furthermore, as research, this kind of inquiry into the classroom is held to both disciplinary and professional ethical standards, including the requirement to obtain approval through one’s Institutional Review Board (see the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s 2003 Position Statement, “Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies”).²

Context and Design

To explore the unintentional hybridization that occurs as discursive spheres meet and are negotiated in the public writing classroom, I chose to work with first-year composition students in an English 101, Composition, course at a large doctoral research university located in the Midwest. At this institution, English 101 is the first

in a sequence of three required English courses, routinely taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who are given ample academic freedom in constructing curriculum around a set of shared learning outcomes common to all instructor syllabi.

I solicited the participation of Erin,³ an experienced GTA in the Master's program who had shaped her last several semesters' English 101 courses around the idea of "public writing." From a list of departmentally-approved textbooks, Erin selected Amy Devitt, Mary Jo Reiff, and Anis Bawarshi's *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres* as the primary text for the course; indeed, Erin's textbook selection influenced my decision to invite her participation. Although a full discussion of genre theory's contributions to our understanding of publicness is outside the scope of this project, it is worth noting the potential suggested by the affinity between the generic concept of scene—which the authors describe as "a place in which communication happens among groups of people with some shared objectives" (7)—and the rhetorical understandings of public that inform my project, particularly Hauser's definition of a public sphere as constituted in and by the shared rhetorical negotiations undertaken by participants. Genre, like discourse, is conceived not as static form or neutral tool but as ideology and thus is certainly implicated in these "shared rhetorical negotiations." As Devitt explains in *Writing Genres*, genre exists "as a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context" (31).

Further, as recent work in public writing pedagogies has invoked genre theory's emphasis on genres as social actions (see, for example, Deans' "Genre

Analysis” and Jolliffe, and Stock and Swenson), genre may be useful in helping us frame an understanding of the negotiations of personal, academic, and public discourses writers face in the classroom public. While genre and discourse should not be conflated, genre can be regarded as a central influence on our understanding of discourse (Devitt 215). In the discussion that follows, I undertake an admittedly incomplete discussion of some of the genre theory connections that emerged as we used the language of genre analysis to uncover the hybridization of discourses on display as students navigated this first-year public writing course. Though my treatment here could not possibly be exhaustive, a number of useful connections became apparent, connections that point to future work to explore the distinctive benefits of a genre-based approach for teaching public writing and for constructing the classroom public. For the “real complexity of genres, as of societies [and as of publics], can best be suggested in examining actual genres in actual settings” (Devitt 66).

Despite the fact that Erin deployed a genre-based approach with which I was largely inexperienced, I noted that in many ways her course structure mirrored my own approach to teaching public discourse in first-year composition and raised some of the same issues that motivated me to pursue this project. Organizing her curriculum around the broad discursive realms of home, school, and public, Erin devoted discrete units in her class to “personal,” “academic,” and “public” writing. Given the similarities between her approach and mine, and her interest in exploring the overlaps between discursive spheres, Erin’s course provided an ideal context for

me to explore the possibilities for engaging hybridization as a conceptual frame; additionally, through reflective writing and facilitated conversations with the volunteer students, I was able to explore, within a limited scope, hybridization on the level of pedagogy.

Before entering Erin's class, I obtained Human Subjects Committee Approval with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Kansas to facilitate discussions with and to collect written work from student participants (see Appendix A "Consent to Participate in Research Study"). In keeping with CCCC's guidelines for ethical research conduct, I solicited voluntary participation from the students, and informed them in writing that their participation would have no effect on their course assignments or grades, and that their work would be represented anonymously (see "Letter of Invitation," Appendix B). That I chose to work with a course that was not my own helped further distinguish the study from the grade-bearing content of the course, and Erin reinforced the voluntary nature of the study through a written note about my work that appeared on her syllabus and when she invited me to speak with the class in person.

Twelve students, six from each of two sections of Erin's English 101 course, volunteered to participate in the facilitated conversations and to have their reflective writing assignments for the class available for me to read and represent in my project. In keeping with the organization of Erin's curriculum, I scheduled a facilitated conversation after each unit of the course, totaling three conversations. Given my interest in how unintentional hybridization could usefully frame and make explicit

how students negotiated the multiple discursive realms intersecting in the public writing classroom, I designed reflective writing prompts and discussion questions that asked students to consider these realms alongside and in comparison to one another (see Appendix C, “Selected Writing and Discussion Prompts”).

Uncovering Hybridization: Insights and Emerging Themes

Genre, Audience, Ethos

The first question that structures this chapter—*can unintentional hybridization be uncovered and externalized through talk about writing?*—was answered affirmatively from my very first conversations with Erin’s students. I asked the students, who had just embarked upon a unit examining “personal” genres, to talk to about what makes a genre “personal.” In their responses, students immediately drew a comparison with public genres; however, they did not draw the comparison to reinforce the expected private/public binary. Instead, they cited examples of genres that challenged the distinction between private and public, turning first to a communicative context they were all familiar with: social networking sites. The students explained that facebook.com and myspace.com provide venues for much of their writing outside of class. On these sites, students express deeply personal content in ways that do not have to be censored or converted for public consumption by using the sites’ user controls to block public access to the online journal (i.e. blog) feature. At the same time, they noted, they could make other “personal” content (i.e. interests, school affiliations, age, etc.) “public.” If, as genre theorist Anis Bawarshi argues,

genres define a “sphere of social action,” then the scene, and related genres, of the social networking site serves as a salient example of how a genre-based approach can help students problematize fixed boundaries between private and public discursive realms.⁴

From our earliest conversations, students were able to articulate that the lines between discursive realms (home, school, and public), and purposes (personal, academic, and public) is blurry, often speaking in terms of *degree* of privateness or publicness. They identified genre as a means of both allowing and constraining the degree to which something can be personal or private. Audience, in these early conversations, anchored students’ conversations about genre. The consensus appeared that audience, not necessarily content, determines the classification of discourses. Private genres have more restricted audiences. In fact, as one student pointed out (much to Erin’s and my delight), the writer alone could constitute the audience for a private genre. A letter to the editor and a private diary could have the same content, but the different genre is what matters most. One student offered, “When you choose a genre, you choose an audience.” The more defined the audience is, the closer the genre falls on the spectrum between private and public, with public writing, according to the students, appealing to the broadest, most heterogeneous audiences.

But I want to note before moving on that students were careful not to reduce genre to a *tool*, in this case, for selecting audience—instead, they saw audience and rhetorical purpose as inextricably bound, with genre as the articulation of this union.

They expressed this modified vision of the rhetorical triangle (with genre in the middle) through ample examples, chief among them music. Students noted that artists often composed highly personal content, but their choice of a song genre served, to use my terms, as a vehicle for hybridizing the personal and the public. “Eminem,” one student noted, “has important social messages to share, which is why his diaries aren’t in notebooks but blast across the public airways.” This example, and others like it, were significant in helping me understand that, for these students, genre served as a way of concretizing connections between discourse realms. In one student’s words, “Public action results from private conviction. . . . Genre helps you move your message to readers in the public it will matter to.” In this way, students recognized genre as social action or, to quote Carolyn Miller, as “a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (37).

It can be argued that a certain dialogism is implied in Miller’s association of “public” with “recurrent.” Although students did not use the language of “addressee,” the dialogic emphasis of my dissertation project influenced my interpretation of their observation that public genres were public, not necessarily because of their content, but because of the degree of responsiveness inherent in them. Bakhtin explains that speech genres, as “relatively stable” types of utterances, reveal an implicit sense of that which has come before, the present material situations to which an utterance responds, and the utterances which it invites. At several points in the students’ discussion of the genre, “addressee” could have served as a substitute

term for “audience” (if the former had been within the vernacular of that classroom public). For instance, in discussing their processes for selecting a public genre for their final projects, students talked about first considering the genres widely used and accepted in the “scene” they chose (the university, the offices of a large music label, a hometown church), analyzing the degree to which response was likely and then determining which genre would best stimulate the response they desired. The language of genre analysis facilitated a dialogic view of genres as “based in rhetorical practice, in the conventions and discourse that a society establishes as ways of acting together” (Miller 37).

Students’ observations also reinforced another dialogic perspective on genre—that genres reflect and construct ideology, that genres are ways of viewing the world. In their discussions of the similarities and differences between personal and public genres, students honed in on the ethos common to both spheres. According to the students, the ethos for public and personal is built on “who you are as a person, your fundamental beliefs, opinions, life experiences, and convictions.” In short, it does not have to be invented, developed, or proven. Personal and public genres disallow writers to construct an identity of objectivity or disinterest; in short, the “eyes of the genre” (to invoke Bakhtin’s co-author P.N. Medvedev) are the writer’s own eyes. How one builds credibility as an academic writer, however, and what purposes academic genres accomplish, personally and publicly, was more difficult for students to articulate, even with the facilitative language of genre analysis. Where addressivity and responsiveness were invoked in students’ discussion of when, how,

and where genres crossed the line between personal and public, they were not a part of our discussion of academic discourses. In light of my post-process dialogic perspective, it appeared that students had already achieved a degree of consciousness of the overlap between the personal and the public; it appeared that, while students could articulate the meeting of those spheres—indeed, how they themselves used genres like social networking to hybridize the personal and public—using the language of genre analysis, they could not do the same with academic discourse.

Recognizing a role for academic genres within this interplay of discursive spheres emerged as a component of unintentional hybridization students could not externalize as readily. Further, this group's struggles challenged my preconceived notions of what discourse negotiations would be most difficult for students in the classroom public. I wrongly assumed that most students were familiar with writing courses that engaged the personal alongside the academic, courses that helped students reconcile their personal discourses with the expectations of the academy. The missing piece for the classroom as public would be, I reasoned, the public. Realizing that the missing piece was, instead, the *academic* served as an uncomfortable but important reminder of the distance between my perspective as a composition teacher, invested in the relevance of academic discourses, and the perspective of student writers in this first-year composition course, who despite their years of working with academic discourses did not find those discourses quite as usable, as internally persuasive. Thus, engaging students in the open negotiation of personal, academic, and public discourses in the classroom as public may be most

challenging at the nexus of the academic—both how academic discourses can complement their personal and public writing goals and the ways that the academic expectations for argumentation challenge the ethos they perceived as shared between personal and public writing. These students, particularly in scenes like social networking, which in their genres resist personal and public demarcations, were already consciously negotiating (and as I go on to discuss, hybridizing on the level of process) the personal and the public. The goal emerging for the classroom public, then, is to bring the academic into this dialogue.

Although students did not discuss the academic in comparison with the private and the public, or in terms of the dialogue that academic genres prompted, where academic genres fell on this spectrum was also a matter of audience to them, specifically the degree to which students could claim knowledge of this audience. When I asked students what distinguishes an academic genre, they answered that the formality of academic writing is required because the audience is relatively unknown. Students noted that their professors were a primary, and (at least somewhat) known, audience, but they acknowledged the breadth of audiences within the academy and, following that premise, generalized academic audiences to be mostly strangers. Because of this lack of knowledge of audience, or rather, what I interpreted as a lack of *identification* with academic audiences or discourses, academic writing requires the writer to take on a sort of anonymity, with formality serving to mask subjectivities.

Students described academic genres (citing the usual suspects of research papers, essays, critiques, lab reports) as highly stable, static, formatted, and in many other ways, prescribed. When asked about what roles there are for academic genres within the public, they indicated that academic content (they called “facts”) have a role, but academic genres do not because “most people aren’t going to voluntarily read my history paper.” The purpose of public writing in their minds was to “capture people’s attention and persuade them to do something.” In academic writing, “you already have the audience’s attention; it’s more about the facts and proving that you know those facts.” Students did not discuss the ethos of the academic writer as stemming from or informed by her personal convictions, what they used to connect private and public discourses, but instead by the ability to conform to the ethos of anonymity required by academic genres.

The fact that conventions emerged most strongly when students talked about academic genres reflected students’ difficulty identifying with the social actions these genres would articulate. Although the genre framework of the course gave students a way of seeing rhetorical conventions ideologically, as reflective of norms, values, and rhetorical agendas, it was again easier for students to apply this knowledge to a discussion of personal and public genres. Their deeper engagement in discussions of personal and private genres as social actions was aided by the motivation and credibility—what they called “personal conviction”—they viewed as common to writing in both spheres.

However, in keeping with the notion of “bracketing” that emerged in my analysis of the classroom as *quasi*-public, I was also able to see students’ relative disengagement with the academic as reflective of the tendency of our public writing pedagogies to ostensibly remove, or urge students to move beyond, academic discourses. Perhaps in our discussions—or rather our *lack* of discussions—about academic discourses as ideologically-invested, we suggest to students (and ourselves assume) that they can “bracket”—or at the very least transfer—their previous instruction in academic discourses to meet the unique rhetorical demands of public writing. In contrast to personal and private discourses, academic discourses often require a writerly ethos based on disciplinary specialty, on “facts” and dispassionate inquiry. A post-process dialogics that acknowledges the classroom as public foregrounds these and similar tensions that arise when the realms of the personal and private meet the “technical” realm of academic discourses (cf. Thomas Goodnight’s contribution in Chapter Three). The classroom public is built upon the examination of highly situated discourses and open negotiation of the personal, academic, and public; the academic is not transparent or disinterested but instead presented in all of its situatedness, as discourse with a point of view, ideology, or agenda (political or otherwise). Academic discourses become an equal arbiter in defining the basis for shared rhetorical activity, for deliberative discourse, in the classroom public. Importantly, these discourses become, like personal and public discourses, equally open to critique and revision.

Genre theory again complements the aims of a post-process dialogics by calling our attention to the “exclusionary features” of genres or, as Randall Popken describes, features that “limit the ways one can construct self” (93). While these features exist and grow out of the culture around them, they are also “internalized in the discourse itself. . . . the very fabric of the genre” (63). Part of the critique and revision of discourses that takes place in a well-functioning classroom public becomes identifying these exclusionary features and how they circumscribe roles for participants, including addressees, of a genre. For instance, how the features of some academic genres often discourage or disallow the qualities of effective public discourse—an ethos built on personal exigencies, appeals to broad audiences, and the open acknowledging of subject positions. When we assume that academic discourses can serve as ready preparation for communication within other publics we overlook the ideological dimensions of discourse.

To be sure, although these students seemed to have very narrow ideas about how academic genres could contribute to dialogue in other publics, they viewed *all* genres as relatively impenetrable the further the distance from the personal. In our last focus group conversation, for instance, we spoke specifically about the students’ public writing assignment, for which they wrote in a public genre. Students had been encouraged in classroom dialogue, in writing conferences, and even in a writing assignment about generic flexibility that genres, as social actions rather than rigid forms, invite varying degrees of modification and adaptation. But even with this explicit instruction, students reported that they made every effort to not only follow

the conventions of the genre but to model specific examples they found. Thus, there did not emerge from students a sense that genres were open to personalization or revision.

Drawing upon Bakhtin's dialogics, we can understand this tendency toward imitation of genres as reflecting an as-yet-unrealized potential for transforming authoritative discourses into internally persuasive ones. Perhaps because the students located genre primarily as an external concept (defining it as a choice of, and sometimes even equating it with, audience), or perhaps because they rejected genre-as-tool in favor of genre-as-ideology, they were hesitant to see genres as malleable. The shared "eyes" of personal and public genres (expressed by students in terms of a common ethos) made the ideologies of those genres easier to read and place themselves within; however, students were not able to readily adhere to or identify with the ideologies of academic genres. This ability is requisite for creativity—indeed agency—within genre: Writers must "come to see those aspects of reality to which. . . genre is adapted, to visualize them in the genre's way," in order to "exploit the potential of that vision to express something genuinely new and valuable" (Morson and Emerson 276).

In terms of the classroom public, part of identifying the realities privileged by certain genres is acknowledging the extent to which those realities are consistent with the genres of other discourse realms. Indeed, genre theory emphasizes that examining the tensions between genres yields possibilities for individual rhetorical action in resisting and revising discourses. Moving beyond "metaphors of context and contents

of conversational dialog” (510), David Russell uses activity system theory to understand the complex interactions among communities, individuals, and genres—specifically, how genres mediate interactions and are also the outcomes of those interactions. Genres, like individuals, can function in multiple activity systems, the ideologies of which may be in conflict. Important to a discussion of how discursive spheres intersect in the classroom public, Russell acknowledges that individuals often experience “double binds” (“Rethinking” 533) when their genre knowledge and purposes chafe with those of other activity systems. Similarly, a clash of genres can be seen as a clash of activity systems, and following Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin, a clash of values, norms, ideologies, and epistemologies (13). These contradictions, according to Russell, are “crucial to understanding the circulation of texts (or voices) in both individual and collective behavior” (512) in that they reveal underlying ideological struggles:

[P]ower (social control, domination, hegemony, exclusion, etc.) is not some force that is mysteriously transported or conspiratorially hidden in discourse. Power is analyzable in terms of dialectical contradictions in activity systems, manifest in specific tools-in-use (including written genres) that people marshal when they are at cross-purposes. . . . genres come historically to fully mediate human interactions in such a way that some people (and some tools) have greater and lesser influence than others because of their dynamic position(s) in tool-mediated systems or networks. (523-24)

Russell acknowledges that genres can reveal power relationships—specifically how genres reproduce dominant ideas, function as agents of cultural hegemony, and, conversely, how genres may be used to disrupt power hierarchies. The tensions that public writing students feel when they write for publics outside of the classroom while within the academic activity system certainly result in the “double-binds” that Russell mentions. When we fail to help students name and invent responses to these double-binds, we further reinforce a view of discourse as objective and impenetrable.

Russell’s activity system theory makes room for individual agency in transforming genres and activity systems, and in this way he suggests the contributions genre theory could make to a post-process dialogics. He writes, “[b]ecause participants themselves have many affiliations (identities, subject positions) with many other activity systems, ongoing social practices constantly change as tools-in-use are appropriated across boundaries and eventually are operationalized (sometimes in new written genres) to transform activity systems” (531). When participants in an activity system experience contradictions, they “must make difficult choices for and about *themselves* when they write” (534). Out of these contradictions and their resultant influences on the participants’ identities arise change in genres and activity systems. Russell identifies the processes of discursive reproduction (and transformation) at the center of which are genres and their individual participants.

Genre theory has the potential to help us connect this change process to the ways that genre knowledge equips individuals for active citizenry, for participation in

public spheres. This potential cannot be realized, however, if genres are maintained as tools, or even, as in Russell's theory, tools-in-use, for this vision "disembodies" genre:⁵

For genre to act as agent independent of human operators is to magnify its force too much, to enlarge the nature of genre to material action that makes people do things or that does things without working through people. It is instead the nature of genre both to be created by people and to influence people's actions, to help people achieve their goals and to encourage people to act in certain ways, to be both-and.

(Devitt 49, 48)

Devitt's challenge to Russell's conception of genre, while it does not strip genre of its ideological force, acknowledges that individuals possess equal agency in accommodating, resisting, or integrating that ideological force. Devitt's pedagogy of genre awareness dovetails with the aims of a post-process dialogics in helping students uncover ideolects and more consciously stake a position among them, to learn genres. For the students I worked with, this pedagogy of genre awareness did help them see the ways that through genre, individuals take action, especially in relation to the personal and public discursive realms.

With that said, students also reported that the power dynamics of the classroom also affected their freedom to critique and modify genres. At all points along the way, they reminded me (as I prodded them about why they adhered to generic conventions so faithfully) that our conversations were taking place in the

context of a composition course and they were not going to risk bad grades, which they saw as a potential consequence of straying too far from genre models. But that the students were able to recognize that genres enable and enact rhetorical purpose (as in the Eminem example), nevertheless points to the value of a genre framework for helping students talk about hybridizing the personal and public discursive spheres and, with perhaps more discussion of their agency in shaping genres, for carving out a role for academic discourses.

Fortunately, recent work already points the way for utilizing genre analysis in ways that help students find ways of leveraging academic discourses in their pursuit of a voice in public spheres. Lisa Bickmore and Stephen Ruffus, writing about research as service to the community, argue that most public writing assignments, because they are not fully “historicized or contextualized,” elicit “either essays addressed to the academic world that at best are apprentice work, or pieces nominally addressed to the public sphere that do not fully participate, even imaginatively, in a thoroughly conceived approximation of that environment” (180). As a remedy, they offer that genre analysis can make space for academic ways of knowing to have a role in public writing by helping students understand writing as situated. Using genre, students engage in “heuristic inquiry into sites and subjects” (180). Indeed, pedagogies for genre inquiry and analysis provide a “productive means to name the world,” to help students uncover what knowledge is “legitimate” in various spheres and what possibilities exist for students to make that knowledge “contingent” (180). These pedagogies can help students forge connections across the personal, academic,

and public units of a first-year composition course that disrupt rigid categories and classifications and emphasize the productive interplay of discourses.

Hybridizing Process

Students more easily externalized their conceptions of how personal and private discursive spheres overlapped and how genres could be used to mediate the continuum between. Students did not place academic genres along this continuum as easily, and, although our professional literature might suggest otherwise, the students tended to think of the academic as having limited relevance to the other spheres. However, their training in academic discourses did play a very significant role in our exploration of hybridization. In fact, the culture of writing instruction that had shaped students' experience with academic discourse prior to English 101 revealed itself in the answer to the second question shaping my inquiry—*how does unintentional hybridization manifest itself in the public writing classroom as students negotiate the multiple discourses of home, school, and public?*

In the second and third facilitated conversations, the students' term projects served as the context. This term project asked students to write in a public genre on the topic of music, a topic they had explored in the first unit from the perspective of its role and effect in their personal lives; then as the basis for an academic paper in the second unit, a response essay to a claim of their choice in Allan Bloom's "Rock Music has Harmed American Youth." For their term project, students selected an issue of interest to the "music public sphere" and then a genre that would serve as an

effective way to communicate a message about that issue to participants of that public sphere. A companion analytical essay provided a venue for reflection on their genre choices.

In these last facilitated conversations, with their developing term projects as concrete material for examination, I hoped to learn more specifically about how students engaged in negotiation of multiple discursive spheres by identifying particular instances in their writing where this negotiation was visible. To that end, I led with questions that asked students if they could identify moments in their term projects (which ranged from blog posts to letters to *Rolling Stone* to petitions to change radio station formats) where traces of the personal and the academic could be detected in the public. Specifically, I wanted to gauge their ability to make explicit their work to negotiate and effectively integrate the personal, academic, and public discursive realms. However, even with their written products in front of them, students refused to talk about personal, academic, and public discourses in terms of their written product. Questions like “where and how did the academic show up in your public genre?” yielded primarily *process*-oriented answers. In the first facilitated conversations, students spoke in terms of genre, audience, and how to establish credibility in their personal, academic, and public writing tasks. In these later conversations, most significant to my interests in how *unintentional* hybridization might be made an *intentional* act of traversing discursive boundaries, students discussed how they *acted upon* that knowledge by manipulating their writing processes.

Emerging from the early conversations was a pattern of talking in terms of “beliefs,” “opinions” and “convictions” in relationship to the personal and public, and “facts” for academic genres. Not surprisingly, students did not see academic genres as open to the personal. One student, writing an editorial column for the University’s daily newspaper, talked about how she used rhetorical questions: “They lend credibility to the author because, by asking questions instead of always making statements, the author is seen as stating an opinion as opposed to a fact.” Another student echoed this by saying that the public genre assignment was the easiest because “making someone aware of something is easy to do if you have the same beliefs as what you are writing.”

Students spoke about their writing processes in terms of the degree of “translation” needed to connect their personal opinions and the requirements of the genre. The process for writing most public genres, they reported, was more similar to that for writing in personal ones because “you can be more explicit and there aren’t as many constraints on what you can say.” “Constraints” on word choice, organization, and overall purpose (as one student noted, “in academic writing, you *have* to critique”) represented required stages in the process of converting personal belief to an acceptable end product. Where the personal ended up in the final product—i.e., the extent to which their opinion was still recognizable or had been subsumed, as one student noted, in the formal requirements of an academic genre—varied in terms of where the writing task fell along the continuum between personal and public. Perhaps not surprisingly, the student who produced blog postings, which the students

aligned with the personal genre of the diary, reported spending little time in translation, even though their postings would be accessible to anyone surfing the Internet. The student who produced the newspaper editorial reflected that although her personal experience could be explicit, she had to spend more time translating her beliefs into the requirements of the genre than she would have had she selected a blog post.

At the other end of the continuum, the letter to a music-based organization, more akin in the students' minds to academic writing, necessitated much translation, a process similar to that used for the academic writing assignment: analyzing audience, brainstorming and locating factual evidence that would appeal to that audience, figuring out if "opinions could be stated outright as my own or if I needed to hide them in a thesis statement for the letter." Reflecting on the academic writing assignment for the semester, in her response to the Bloom essay, one student stated, "It was really hard not to just come out and state what I thought, but the assignment required that I just had to relate what Bloom said to the thesis." The student perceived the thesis of her paper was not her own, perhaps because the academic discourse feature of the "thesis" had not become a usable, or internally persuasive concept for her.

Interestingly, the degree of translation needed related to the length and complexity of students' hybridized writing processes and the extent to which peer response factored into their composing. Several students mentioned utilizing peer response more in public genres they perceived similar to academic writing tasks. Part

of traversing the space between the personal and the academic, more vast than that between the personal and the public, was utilizing peer readers. Although the structure of Erin's course included peer response connected to each assignment, students reported investing more in peer response workshops with their academic writing assignment and when the public writing genres they chose seemed to make similar rhetorical demands. It could be argued that the immediacy with which students can participate in and publish their contributions to public discourses via the Internet, in particular through social networking sites, has affected the quality of public exchanges just as much as it has fostered greater involvement in deliberative discourse. Although our discussions of how peer response factored into students' writing process were very limited, that this pattern emerged suggests future work to explore how this now established part of how academic writing processes are taught could serve as a key contribution that the academic discursive realm could make to public discourses.

The lexicon of the writing process movement appeared prominently in our conversations as a way for students to talk about their experiences with each of the genres. The language of "brainstorming," "drafting," and "revising" shaped the students' approach to all of the classroom assignments. One student stated, "The writing process is just a taken-for-granted, something ingrained within you; it's a default that I start by analyzing the assignment, who my audience is supposed to be, what the acceptable forms of evidence are, how many drafts I'll probably have to write." Arguably, these students had probably never experienced writing instruction

outside of the process paradigm; process had become a deeply internalized concept, but, I would argue, not an altogether authoritative one. For these students, process had become internally persuasive enough to be usable a mechanism for achieving the “translation” work necessary in bridging the personal (the realms of their beliefs, values, opinions, and convictions), the academic, and the public.

Students’ use of “translation” and “translating” as a way to describe the distance between the realm of the personal and the realm of the academic or public calls to mind Linda Flower and John R. Hayes’ “Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.” Indeed, there are similarities. In the Flower and Hayes model, translating refers to the “process of putting ideas into visible language” (282). For these students, translation involved a similar movement to externalize—in this case, to externalize process itself, to make something that had arguably become invisible, visible. By doing so, I would argue, the students revealed process as the vernacular discourse of the classroom public. A vernacular, as Hauser tells us, is essential to sustaining a deliberative public: Dialogue “depends on language that is understood, even by those whose views and yearnings do not coincide, and that projects a world shared in some meaningful way” (152). For these students, the language of genre theory certainly facilitated reflective dialogue about their writing tasks, but it was the language of process that emerged most strongly among them as a vernacular, a common discourse they could draw on to frame their efforts to negotiate the discursive realms.

According to the students, the personal and public writing assignments necessitated less time brainstorming early on because “we already had our ideas and opinions in hand,” but more time brainstorming while drafting those ideas within the constraints of the genre. For the academic writing assignment, one student said, “I followed all of the high school rules for writing a paper—first the outline, then the first draft, and so on.” Similarly, revision factored into their conversations most when talking about either their academic writing assignments or, for some students, their public assignments, if they chose genres they perceived to be more academic and “fact-based” than public (i.e., a business letter, memo, or proposal). Again, students admitted participating more actively in peer response and seeking the opinions of other readers outside of class for their academic writing assignments, viewing peer response as most valuable to writing for school. When judged in light of their earlier comments about ethos, this tendency to seek external validation for their academic writing could be explained by students’ unwillingness to see themselves as “experts” or even intended audiences for academic genres. This distrust in their own ethos and authority as academic writers, and their related belief that in personal and public genres, “I am the expert, so I don’t have to run my work by as many people,” sheds light on one reason why students could not externalize relationships between the academic and public as readily as they could bridge the personal and the public.

For other students, however, their training in academic discourse norms, including the writing process paradigm, could not be maneuvered or shrugged off as easily. One student in particular spoke about how he struggled with the public

writing assignment because “[t]here was no structure to how I was supposed to write it” and “I was uncomfortable writing something so one-sided, even though that’s supposed to be okay in public writing.” Some students like this one expressed deep discomfort about writing openly about their personal experiences and beliefs, not necessarily because of the context of English 101, for they had been taught “how to use personal experience as evidence for your thesis,” but because this particular English 101 was not following the “script” for “what we expected to do in our college English class.”

In externalizing how they saw the discursive spheres intersecting, and their successes and failures in negotiating those intersections, students did not point to specific features or moments in their term projects where discourses hybridized. Instead, they were conscious of hybridizing the *writing process itself* and could make that explicit in reflective conversations about their writing products. Students examined their writing task, and the genre that would reach their audience, but where they seemed to locate the “real” work of writing as an interpretive act was on the level of their writing processes, building a hybrid process of length and complexity adequate to bridge the distance between themselves (the realm of beliefs, opinions, and convictions) and their audiences. In short, students operationalized the hermeneutic guesswork of writing through process. The language of the canonized writing process in which they had been schooled constituted much of the “prior” theory they used to negotiate the foreign moments of communicative interaction they encountered in an English 101 that, rather than excluded, emphasized the personal

and the public alongside the academic. Thus, process emerged as a way that students locate their rhetorical agency among the multiple discourses of the classroom public, with the language of process forming the shared basis for communicative interaction within the classroom public.

A Place for Process: Implications for a Post-Process Dialogics

Although many compositionists associate post-process theory with an outright rejection of process, my work with these students confirms the ongoing relevance and currency of process. I am reminded of the often vast difference between our disciplinary literature and the experiences and perspectives of our students. As Lester Faigley observes in the quotation that introduces this chapter, “many of the fault lines in composition studies are disagreements over the subjectivities that teachers of writing *want* students to occupy” (17, emphasis mine). Part of sustaining the classroom as public, then, becomes not simply interrogating and interanimating the discourses circulating in the classroom but also laying bare our pedagogical narratives as well, considering them alongside the realities of student writers’ experience. Process, it would seem, is part of the academic ideolects students bring with them to the public writing classroom, ideolects which cannot be bracketed but which must be identified, negotiated, and transformed in their relationship to the discourses of the personal and the public. While we may be tempted to argue that process’ time has passed, our students help us see that, just as Sharon Crowley concluded about current-traditional pedagogy, process “remains alive and well in composition in the

university” (191). Viewed through the lens of a post-process dialogics, these students’ experiences suggest that process can complement the aims of post-process. In the classroom public, for example, process can serve as a common language and mechanism for students to engage intentional hybridization. Thus, just as hybridization works against the codification of discourses, so too can it help us resist rendering process obsolete.

Following Bruce McComiskey and others who advocate for an expanded rather than altogether absent view of process, I agree that there is room for (and indeed has to be room for) process in a post-process world. Perhaps not ironically—but certainly rhetorically—process itself has sometimes been reified, essentialized, in our post-process turn, raising some of the same questions about the place of individual rhetorical agency that social constructionism has failed to answer persuasively for many of us. The analysis of subjectivities, material conditions, and the consumption of texts foregrounded in a post-process classroom seems to rarely circle back to the individual writer, which is essential if our pedagogies are to promote the kinds of “socio-ideological language consciousness” that leads to rhetorical agency within publics.

Challenging a post-process view of process as reductive, or what Joseph Petraglia dismisses as mere *techne*, a post-process dialogics for the classroom as public instead values a study of *techne*, of both the art and concrete rhetorical strategies that create and sustain publics. Furthermore, a post-process dialogics fosters awareness of “prior theory” that, for most students, is primarily shaped by

process.⁶ Leveraging, rather than bracketing, this prior theory can help uncover the means for making intentional hybridization that inevitably occurs as discursive realms meet in the classroom public. Dialogic renditions of hybridization, considered on the level of process, can capture the reality of what students undertake in the public writing classroom as they negotiate multiple, overlapping, and sometimes opposing genres. Making this hybridization of writing process explicit through reflective talk about writing opens up possibilities for students to identify ways of entering and interacting within the genres of publics (or as one student put it, “communicate with and through genre”).

Moreover, in upholding the plurality of process, it would seem fitting for future work in post-process dialogics to explore more extensively than permitted here differences in writers’ composing processes across each of the personal, academic, and public discursive realms to better understand what those processes could offer to one another (how the practices of peer response so central to academic writing processes, for example, could promote more dialogue and deliberation surrounding the production of genres in other publics). In the classroom public, students are called upon to openly negotiate multiple discourses, and although they draw upon prior theories chiefly informed by process, they modify those understandings of process, creating usable (internally persuasive) passing theories in the moments of communicative interaction. Rather than enabling students to rely on the strategies developed for papers that assume a seamless type of discourse, the classroom public confronts students with rhetorical purposes that entail multiple discourses, forcing

them to revise their previous understanding of the writing process, hybridizing the multiple writing processes in their repertoire. In the post-process dialogics I have been constructing in this project, student experience has made room for an expanded view of process, one that recognizes process as a mechanism by which students engage in the hermeneutic guesswork of writing.

However, process for these students was not a wholly enabling construct; as previously discussed, there emerged several points along the way when students struggled with or rejected process as non-transferable to their tasks within the personal and public discursive realms. At these points, process proved complicit in setting up “particular moments of power and dominance. . . to create structure of power and oppression” (Dobrin 144). This was reflected in the moments of frustration expressed by students because the prescribed writing process they had been taught in high school was not expansive enough to facilitate the critical thinking and reflection required of the writing tasks in Erin’s course. Viewed dialogically, the extent to which process served as an internally persuasive concept for these students was tied to their awareness of its power to enable and constrain their communicative purposes in various spheres, and their facility in modifying the terms of their process framework accordingly. Through talk about writing and reflection on their written products students were able to articulate an understanding of the varied writing processes they employed for personal, academic, and public writing tasks, and explore the necessity of hybridizing those processes to successfully participate in the classroom as public. In short, the language of process emerged as the vernacular

discourse through which students in the classroom as public navigated multiple genres and expectations.

The experiences and insights of these students further shape a post-process dialogics for the classroom as public. A public is constituted in and by the shared rhetorical activities of its participants, the conscious negotiation of multiple and overlapping discursive realms. And while post-process helps us apply this understanding to the writing classroom by giving us a view of writing as public, interpretive, and situated, and Bakhtin's dialogics offers a frame for how the individual as public undertakes this work, a post-process dialogics is incomplete without the contributions of students in composition's "public turn," who provide perhaps the most valuable information about how to shape the classroom as public.

Sidney Dobrin articulates a vision consistent with a post-process dialogics for the writing classroom as public:

[T]eaching students to become aware of oppressive discursive structures, such as academic discourse or other phallogocentric discourses, is less of a liberating pedagogical agenda than is giving students the opportunity to become more skilled in their own hermeneutic guessing skills and being able to resist the twist of triangulation. (144)

Dobrin does not condemn academic discourse as oppressive, noting that "the naming that we associate with discursive groupings—academic discourse, for example—is not as concrete as we would like to think (144). The "twist" Dobrin alludes to

recognizes that not all participants in communicative interactions, whether individual or discursive, are equal in any given moment. In dialogic terms, without awareness of these power dynamics, we are susceptible to discourses as authoritative, as codified and impenetrable. When our public writing pedagogies compartmentalize the discursive realms, we reinforce the potential for students to internalize a generalized and thereby limiting vision of discourses (of academic discourses, for example, as not relevant in the public sphere) rather than working with students to identify mechanisms by which they can achieve rhetorical agency in making those discourses internally persuasive and usable for their participation in classroom public.

At the same time, a post-process dialogics helps us not succumb to an unqualified and naïve rejection of process implied in Dobrin's argument that "there are no codifiable processes by which we can characterize, identify, solidify, or grasp discourse, and hence there is no way to teach discourse, discourse interpretation, or discourse disruption" (140). Because writing is situated, we must approach the classroom from the context that frames our students' experiences of our pedagogies. Because writing is interpretive, we must investigate what knowledge our students are drawing upon to engage in hermeneutic guesswork in our classrooms to determine what language will make us effective interpretive partners with them. And because writing is public, we have to grapple with process and not simply "bracket" it as a subjectivity that does not belong in classroom dialogue. Just as the open negotiation of multiple discourses and ideologies is part of what constitutes a public, a post-

process dialogics for the classroom acknowledges process as one way that students can uncover and intervene in the hybridization of discourses.

A post-process dialogics leads us in the direction of a certain rethinking of assignments—assignments that stretch students in new ways, assignments that in fact work against the codification of “the writing process” that they embrace as part of their prior theories, and assignments that provide the *conditions* for students to learn. As I offer in the next chapter, while post-process dialogics does not prescribe pedagogy, it does point us toward rhetorical features or criteria for sustaining a classroom public in which students can become more conscious of their agency as public individuals.

Notes

¹I am choosing to describe my dialogue with students as “facilitated conversations,” rather than focus groups, to acknowledge my approach as contextual, informed by both focus group methodologies and reflective writing.

²According to the CCCC position statement on research, these “guidelines apply to all efforts by scholars, teachers, administrators, students, and others that are directed toward publication of a book or journal article, presentation at a conference, *preparation of a thesis or dissertation*, display on a website, or other general dissemination of the results of research and scholarship. The guidelines apply to formally planned investigations and to studies that discuss writers and unpublished writing that composition specialists encounter in other ways, such as when teaching classes, holding student conferences, directing academic programs, conducting research in nonacademic settings, or going about their professional and personal lives” (par 2, emphasis mine).

³The cooperating instructor’s real name, used with permission.

⁴In discussing genre emergence and evolution, Bakhtin and Medvedev explain that “genre appraises reality and reality clarifies genre” (“Elements” 136). Social networking sites, as familiar contexts for students, can serve as a concrete example of the genre’s relationship to society: “New genres reflect changes in real social life. Those changes lead to new views of experience and to different genres of speech, social behavior, and literature” (Morson and Emerson 277).

⁵Devitt notes that Russell’s choice to describe genres as “tools-in-use” calls upon a history of genre that contemporary genre theory seeks to challenge: “It is not a far step from equating genre with the use of tools to equating genre with form. . . [or] formula. . . . To the extent that genre becomes a tool, it loses its rhetorical nature” (48).

⁶Future work in connecting a pedagogy of genre awareness to the aims of a post-process dialogics could consider the antecedent genres that, like the writing process, form the prior theories that students draw upon. For students in the classroom public I studied, the genre of the five-paragraph theme emerged as a power antecedent genre that affected their approach to academic writing tasks. Likewise, the genres involved in social networking scenes heavily influenced students’ writing experiences outside of class. In particular, research into the ways that social networking shape students’ conceptions of public writing could be usefully approached through the lens of genre analysis.

Chapter Six

Rhetorical Features of the Classroom Public: Remarks on a Post-Process Dialogic Pedagogy

The use of theory must be both to intervene in the continuity and consensus of common sense and also to interrupt the dominant and dominating strategies of generalization [which] say in a very settled and stentorian way: this is the general and this is the case; this is the principle and this is its empirical application as a form of proof and justification....the importance of theory is to unsettle the complacency of those relations.
(Bhabha qtd. in Olson and Worsham 12)

The broad goal of this dissertation is to better understand the possibilities for writing classrooms and student writers in composition studies' "public turn."

Questioning the common assumption that publicness resides *outside* of the classroom and *beyond* academic discourses, I sought to construct a theoretical frame for acknowledging the classroom as a public and to promote students' rhetorical agency in forming that public. In doing so, I tapped theory's disruptive function, its ability "to unsettle the complacency"—in this case, of the belief tacit in our pedagogies that our classrooms—and more problematically, that our students—are somehow *not* public.

In "Public Writing and Rhetoric: A New Place for Composition," Christian Weisser argues that there "is much more to be learned about public spheres and public discourse by looking outside of our own discipline" (246). Indeed, my theory building is primarily influenced by work in public sphere theory to define publicness

in rhetorical terms—with a particular focus on the discourse negotiations that form publics and on the rhetorical competence individuals need to maintain sustainable, deliberative publics. This line of inquiry, largely absent in the literature of our field, asks, “what happens when we focus on the ‘linguistic possibilities of a public coming together’ . . . ‘on how language can solve problems and build communities’” ? (Stob 228). The issues of power, access, and identity routinely addressed by public sphere theory are not ignored here but instead pursued as inextricable from the language practices of publics. The Habermasian public sphere theory most often invoked in composition studies’ discussion of public writing is appropriately complemented by these rhetorical understandings of publicness.

However, in utilizing a rhetorical perspective to argue that our classrooms and writers are already and always public, I am not seeking to invalidate composition’s pursuit of the public or to offer a glib, “postmodern” response that oversimplifies the complex task of realizing the classroom as a well-functioning public. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, publics are intentional, crafted out of the shared rhetorical activities of competent participants who undertake negotiation of multiple discourse realms. The value of discourse-based investigations into public spheres—including the classroom public—is that this knowledge “can be used to *pursue* a *better* public” (Stob 27), characterized by access, active participation, and reciprocity with the discourses of other publics.

To pursue this better public necessitates examining those attitudes about and practices for teaching public discourses that maintain the classroom as *quasi*-public.

Applying a post-process understanding of writing reveals the already public nature of our writing classrooms. Moreover, for the classroom, post-process focuses our attention on the hermeneutic strategies writers employ in the unrepeatable moments of communicative interaction and how that “passing theory” is incorporated into writers’ repertoire of “prior theory” within an ongoing dialectic. Just as post-process emphasizes language-in-use, it also suggests the importance of moving away from normative, fixed models of publicness in favor of *publics-in-use*. The writing classroom as a public-in-use is dynamic, consciously fashioned and refashioned out of the multiple personal, academic, and public discourses forced to meet within that sphere. Within the classroom public, students draw upon prior theories for communicative success undoubtedly influenced by their years spent successfully—or unsuccessfully—reconciling personal and academic discourses. Part of the discourse negotiations students face in the classroom public becomes reconciling those prior theories with the rhetorical demands of their public writing tasks. Consequently, post-process, as I discuss later in this chapter, points to a model of reflection that helps students more consciously build effective prior theory to draw upon.

While post-process gives us language to talk about the classroom as public, the dialogism of M.M. Bakhtin extends this notion to consider the individual writer as public. Specifically, Bakhtin clarifies what rhetorical agency might mean in the classroom public, where discourses must be static enough to name and discuss but not so fixed that they are perceived to be impenetrable. Although all individuals possess agency, Bakhtin reminds us that it is *consciousness* of that agency that equips us for

action. In what Bakhtin describes as “dialogized consciousness,” discourses are no longer taken for granted and movement among them no longer unconscious; dialects become “ideolects,” far from indifferent to one another; and the individual realizes her opportunity, and responsibility, to choose a position among discourses.

Consciousness of our rhetorical agency, for Bakhtin, is expressed as the ability to transform authoritative discourses into internally persuasive ones, to interrogate and revise—and I argue, to intentionally hybridize—received models of discourse. The composition students I worked with as part of this study used process as a vernacular for identifying multiple discourses intersecting the classroom public. The fact the students utilized process in this way indicates that process, as an important prior theory, could be tapped to teach students how to hybridize discourses intentionally, as passing theory, in the communicative interactions of the classroom public.

The post-process dialogics I have built in this project is simply a first step toward understanding the complexities of the classroom public and, further, the opportunities compositionists have to promote students’ awareness and agency in relationship to the influences of discourses. Recognizing the unique and situated public-in-use I studied, as well as the need for future work with students in a diverse range of classroom publics, this chapter offers a preliminary sketch of some of the salient pedagogical implications that emerge from a post-process dialogics.

In offering remarks on pedagogies for teaching public writing, I also acknowledge the conundrum faced by post-process advocates when they seek to translate theory—in this case best exemplified by Thomas Kent’s argument that

writing cannot be taught—into something relevant to our daily work with (and as) writers. By compelling us to ask (and answer) the question, ““what does it mean to teach?”” (Kastman Breuch 122), post-process disrupts our comfortable pedagogical foundations. Post-process focuses us on writing—and teaching—as *activities* rather than a body of content to be mastered and calls us to engage in one-to-one dialogue with writers—as writers. In directing our pedagogical attention away from content, post-process usefully privileges the conditions which best cultivate dialogue in the classroom public. For, as rhetoric scholars note, “although concern with agency began as a rear guard action against the post-modern critique, the discussion appears to have shifted to more productive investigations in to the *consciousness* and *conditions* of agency” (Geisler 9, emphasis mine). A post-process dialogics highlights three primary rhetorical features that set the conditions for a well-functioning classroom public, one which cultivates students’ consciousness of and strategies for actively negotiating discourses.

Rhetorical Features of a Post-Process Dialogics for the Classroom Public

Disrupting Personal, Academic, and Public Discursive Boundaries

A post-process dialogics helps us see that although our pedagogies may neatly compartmentalize discourses, these distinctions are artificial. In a public, the boundaries between discourse realms, to use Gerald Hauser’s terminology, are necessarily “permeable.” “Civil judgment presupposes that these issues are unresolvable in an enclave of like-minded persons. . . . issues are exposed to a host of

diverse observers who, despite their unique perspectives, collectively assert a prevailing tendency of belief and action” (77). What may originate within the realm of personal experience and conviction is strengthened through exposure to other ways of knowing, not for the purpose of consensus or conformity, but because a public works together to “frame judgments indicative of shared reality” (77). The classroom public is sustained by an open examination of the connections between discourse and ideology to allow participants to see how various discourses “frame judgments” and portray reality. Determination of issues of common concern happens on the level of discourse, as participants determine a vernacular that will facilitate dialogue across multiple, and often conflicting, discourses.

This vernacular discourse mediates the highly personal and the highly technical (in this case, academic) in the classroom public. I offer that this vernacular helps reveal what Bakhtin calls *unintentional hybridization*, the new, hybrid discourses that naturally result when the discourses of home, school, and public are forced to meet in the classroom public. But, most important, this vernacular can also be used by participants to uncover possibilities for acting on their knowledge of how the discourses interrelate. The tensions that arise from the interplay of discursive realms, and the unintentional, unacknowledged hybridizations that result, are typically dealt with in our pedagogies only indirectly, often being wrongly identified as error, or wrongly remediated as a simple lack of rhetorical knowledge—for instance, when we use academic discourse criteria to assess a student’s post on a political blog, or when a student writes website text for a community organization

that parrots the disinterested and objective voice she has learned to associate with academic writing. A post-process dialogics helps us identify these tensions as a natural outgrowth of negotiating multiple discourses, as both composition students and teachers reconcile prior theories developed in academic writing courses to the unique rhetorical demands of the public writing classroom. Moreover, a post-process dialogics helps us exploit the creative potential of these tensions through *intentional* hybridization of discourses.

In a classroom public informed by post-process dialogics, students are positioned to traverse boundaries between discourses and dismantle the authoritative by intentionally bringing discourses into contact with one another. Our pedagogies can promote this work by purposefully engaging students at the boundaries of discourse realms—for instance, by buttressing personal, academic, and public writing units with interchanges that allow students to compare and contrast the writing typical of each realm. These intermediary units provide students time for sustained reflection on discourses as utterances, responsive to other discourses and inviting (and perhaps prescribing) response in return. Further, students can examine their own individual instantiations of discourse (i.e. their written products) as utterances, examining the ways that “language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other” (“Discourse” 295).

In a post-process dialogics, “dialogics” is not marshaled as a critical stance toward literary texts (as in Don Bialostosky’s famous piece “Dialogics as an Art of Discourse in Literary Criticism”), or as an approach to studying the novelist’s artistic

use of the everyday, as in Bakhtin's own work, but rather invokes a different kind of aesthetic—in this case, intentional hybridization as a pedagogical art for bridging discursive spheres.¹ Just as unintentional hybridization naturally results from discursive contestations within a heteroglot world, intentional hybridization involves struggle, but it is one of artistic enactment. Joe Marshall Hardin's description of hybridized discourses captures this generative struggle:

[H]ybridized discourse. . . is not about a mix of cultures; nor is it about a place where all ideas are magically given equal opportunity. Instead it arises from the notion that it is hegemonic struggle itself that constitutes culture within the politics of a social democracy. Discourse, text, and rhetoric become sites where writers negotiate the spaces between their own values and the values of other writers in a way that exposes and critiques the power imbalances of that particular moment and space. (112)

A post-process dialogics recognizes the artistic interpretation involved as writers uncover and consciously “negotiate the spaces” of multiple discursive realms, creating intentional hybrids that effectively integrate the personal, academic, and public. Much like Bakhtin's novelist, our students engage in the aesthetic as they “assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate” (“Speech Genres” 89) *other people's words* in the classroom public.²

To consciously disrupt discursive boundaries, a post-process dialogics structures interplay among discursive realms, engaging students in laying bare the

continuities and discontinuities of discourses, “the ideological systems and approaches to the world. . . indissolubly connected with. . . languages” (“Discourse” 296), so as to stake a position, perhaps through intentional hybridization of discourses, that cultivates further dialogue. To be sure, these discourses do not integrate easily. Peter Elbow observes that most students “experience a conflict between the language that comes most easily to them and feels like ‘their language’ (how I talk and experience myself as myself) and the language they are supposed to use in writing, especially writing for school”. He continues that “if students *don’t* notice and feel this conflict, they are in a bad place as writers” (viii). In the classroom public, students have no choice but to notice differentiated discourses, whereas the classroom as *quasi*-public deemphasizes, misrepresents, or simply avoids this conflict altogether. Consequently, in the *quasi*-public composition students and teachers “are unlikely to question received values and beliefs, therein accepting and spreading dominant oppressive ideologies” (Keller 112). In this way, the classroom as *quasi*-public often suppresses the very rhetorical competence students need to be effective public actors.

In writing about the rhetorical criteria that sustain publics, Hauser notes the connection between discursive awareness, flexibility, and success within a public. When “individuals talk to the same enclave, they become powerless to effect change. Eventually they either buy a point of view that strips them of their autonomy or they become insulated from and insensitive to perspectives of others whose cooperation is essential for resolving problems” (78). In the classroom public, analysis of the ways

that various discourses frame issues and the extent to which they promote ongoing dialogue sets up the conditions needed for students to discuss how “[c]ontrolling the language in which issues are discussed determines how they are expressed, relevance of experience, and expertise in adjudicating the issues they raise” (78). The classroom public engages students in examining boundaries among discourses to consider how discourses can usefully illuminate one another and to stake a position among the “voices” of the discourse realms. Because, as Bakhtin writes, with “each literary-verbal performance. . . [c]onsciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*” (“Discourse” 295), the discursive analysis facilitated in the classroom public must be connected to the larger project of further developing students’ public consciousness.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that as currency of the technical sphere of academia, the language of “literary-verbal performance” (and, indeed, even of “discourses”) is of limited usefulness outside our disciplinary conversations. In operationalizing a post-process dialogics in the classroom public, we must communicate in concert with the vernacular of that public. Liz Bryant, in her recent *Voice as Process*, makes a compelling argument for the benefits of engaging student writers in an open examination of the tensions among discourses they face in the composition classroom from the familiar standpoint of “voice.” Bryant’s novel approach to an often romanticized concept moves the privatized subjectivity that informed so many of the early process models in the realm of the “public.” When we eschew the notion that composition pedagogy must help students develop a unique

“voice,” and understand voice as a negotiation of multiple subjectivities instantiated by language, “voice” becomes an adequate metaphor for discourse negotiations.

Invoking Bakhtin, Bryant explains:

Writers struggle to construct hybrids. It is easy to be on one side of the voice border—difficult to be in between. Easy to write in a voice like one group or the other—difficult to write in a voice that bridges both sides of the border. And yet, this struggle becomes the essence of constructing a new voice, a hybrid that represents the writer’s reality.

(103)

When the continuities and discontinuities among discourses are examined not only as rhetorical but ideological, through the common ground created by a shared vernacular, students are provided opportunities to construct their own voices rather than have those voices wholly constructed by normative discourse models. Bryant’s research about how students hybridize voice complements a post-process dialogics; in particular, Bryant outlines an approach that involves students in *navigating*, *negotiating*, *rejecting*, and *integrating* the voices they encounter in discursive spheres.

Bryant’s discussion is valuable in reminding us that writing is a developmental activity. Given that the traditions of schooling that our students have been exposed to have probably not encouraged the questioning of discourse norms, a first step in creating the conditions facilitative of the classroom public is simply naming those discourses circulating in the classroom. Bryant’s sequence, specifically

her positioning of *navigating* before *negotiating*, is doubtless intentional, reminding us that we must first recognize authoritative discourses before being able to disrupt them to make them our own internally persuasive discourses. Similarly, and also using the metaphor of voice, Hauser emphasizes that “[s]ocial actors must hear multiple voices to realize that they can do more than respond—they can choose” (78).

Promoting Discursive Transaction and Reciprocity

Importantly, Bryant’s concluding stage, “integrating,” underscores the fact that positioning oneself among the discourses circulating in the classroom public involves a productive transaction—a reciprocity—among discourses. Indeed, discursive multiplicity is requisite in a well-functioning public. “Presupposing conformity of values and ends or imposing a preordained orientation reduces the capacity of discursive arenas to accommodate the range of opinions on an issue and the strength of judgments that emerge from civic conversation” (Hauser 78). A focus on conscious interplay among discourse realms not only works against the reification of discourses but opens up possibilities for discourses to illuminate each other and offer to each other something useful as an outcome of intentional hybridization. Of particular importance to forming the classroom public is clearing a space for *academic* discourses to both contribute to and be refashioned by its interactions with personal and public discourses.

Emergent work in teaching public discourse points the way to structuring classroom publics in which students consider how the discourse realms can

productively interrelate. Lisa Bickmore and Stephen Ruffus, for example, argue that academic research can foster the situational knowledge students need to be able to intervene in public issues that matter to them.³ They write, a “more attentive understanding of any situation—which we take to be part of the heuristic enterprise of research—allows also for a more strategic and calibrated understanding of the self as part of the web of relationships involve in any act of writing” (172). Academic research can help students discover multiple perspectives on a given issue, as they seek to act on personal conviction. In the classroom public, for instance, the academic construct of the counter argument can be transformed from a tool for shutting down dialogue to an inventional device for discovering multiple perspectives on an issue.

Amy Goodburn is another scholar exploring the productive interplay among personal, academic, and public discourses. In “Writing the Public Sphere through Family/Community History,” Goodburn argues that a focus on students’ “lived experience” as “cultural and social production” (9) can help bridge the personal and the public in the composition classroom. Goodburn notes a recurrent problem in the public writing classroom that “students often are not already committed to a particular problem—or even to the belief that they have the right or the skills to participate within the public sphere” (11). This “lack of exigency,” she observes, is often wrongly viewed as “apathy or resistance or laziness” (11). Pedagogies that first engage students in personal writing assignments that “consider how they are, already [and always], connected to and participating in public spheres,” (12) can help students

uncover their ethos as public writers. Like Bickmore and Ruffus, Goodburn asserts the value of academic discourses to help bridge the personal and the public:⁴

By emphasizing research as an act of construction and interpretation connected to one's social location. . . . students learn[ed] to see their own stories and those of their families as a legitimate form of knowledge-making—not simply in terms of affirming the “private” sphere but in developing a rhetorical awareness about how experience and knowledge is constructed and contested, validated or rendered invisible, within both private and public spheres. (22)

More recently, Jane Danielewicz, in “Personal Genres, Public Voices,” reaches a similar conclusion about ways the composition classroom can help students bridge the personal and public spheres and the place of the academic in that dialogue. She argues that composition courses that emphasize personal genres enable students to see more clearly that “they are supposed to have something at stake in writing an argument, academic or otherwise” (421).⁵ Echoing rhetorical understandings of publicness, Danielewicz argues that “students who do write when something is at stake are participating in public discourse; they expect something to happen as a result of writing. This profound belief in the possibility of action is the best prospect we can offer as teachers” (421).

The above examples point to important ways that academic discourse practices can facilitate the movement between personal and public. But while this work is valuable, it is equally problematic as academic discourses remain largely

unchallenged—reinforcing the assumption that these discourses, at least those taught in first-year composition, are ideologically transparent. The prevalence of this assumption about the perceived neutrality of academic discourse was reinforced by the students I worked with in this study. It would seem that connections between personal and public realms were facilitated through their public writing curriculum, largely because they were able to draw comparisons between personal and public genres based on the ethos they perceived as common to these realms; however, the students had difficulty articulating the norms and values at play in their academic writing. Although they noted, for instance, that academic writing required formality, they did not draw conclusions about what that rhetorical feature meant in terms of the differences between academic, personal, and public ethos.

Part of the discursive reciprocity that sustains the classroom public involves viewing the academic through the lens of other discourses so as to reveal and disrupt the ideologies of academic discourses. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb are among those who observe that the humanities do not share a history of contributing to public issues that the sciences, or even social sciences, do. In contrast, they argue, writing in the humanities “is conceived not as a realm where specialized or recondite reflection is needed but as a set of disciplines devoted to transmitting a cultural heritage. . . . [in ways that are] *needlessly* obscure” (2). Indeed, some academic discourses may work against the transparency needed for healthy publics. Hauser notes that a “well-functioning public sphere requires that its discursive arenas contextualize public problems in ways that foster clear apprehension of the issues” (78). Both Hauser and

G. Thomas Goodnight point to the danger of technical discourses, often aligned with the academy, that “preempt the possibilities for vernacular exchange by substituting technical language as coin of the rhetorical realm” (78). Although all discourses, as ideological, are self-interested, students are often not as attuned to this fact as it relates to academic discourses, which have been transmitted to them as neutral, objective, or disinterested. It becomes particularly important in the classroom public, then, to engage students in seeing how certain academic discourses can perpetuate unproductive agonistic relations rather than promote dialogue.

Beyond the classroom, on the level of disciplinary identity, Elizabeth Ervin makes a similar argument in her recent “Composition and the Gentrification of ‘Public Literacy.’” Ervin contends that while our turn to the public has caused the field to examine its ethical obligations to constituencies outside of the academy, we must also challenge our own “traditional forms of academic success rather than simply accommodating them” (49) in our pedagogies. She proposes an “intellectual work document for public literacy” that would ask such questions as “does our work challenge or disrupt the academic system of publishing to circulate cultural capital? If not, then our desire for professional acknowledgement and material reward may be leading us to exploit our subjects” (50).

Discursive transaction and reciprocity seek productive interplay between all three realms—personal, academic, and public—in order that the discourses of each might be seen as contingent and available to students to make internally persuasive, as part of the work of intentional hybridization. In the classroom public, locating

opportunities for academic discourses to contribute to students' understanding of the personal and public realms is key, but equally critical is engaging students in examining how academic discourses can be productively refashioned in light of the personal and the public so that writers can engage the artistic work of revising these discourses.

Utilizing Process as a Vernacular for the Classroom Public

Disrupting discursive boundaries to promote transaction and reciprocity within a public requires a shared vernacular discourse that can be used to negotiate and integrate multiple overlapping discourses. In fact, in contemporary rhetorical investigations of publicness, this operational “language is the element guiding the shift from what [a] public is to what it can do” (Stob 237). The classroom public is not defined by issues of common concern, or disallowed because of the presence of institutional constraints or inequalities among participants; instead, a well-functioning public is discourse-based, arising out of the conscious negotiation of personal, academic, and public ideolects.

To engage in this collective negotiation successfully, publics-in-use require a vernacular that enables participants to uncover, deliberate, and stake a position among multiple and often competing discourses. This vernacular, as studied by Hauser, is necessary for achieving the intersubjectivity that characterizes healthy publics, “meanings that constitute a *we* and that, in fact, are a source of significance for our own self-awareness in addition to our purely subjective stance” (67). The emergent

vernacular discourse of the classroom public in this study was the language of process. As students came together to reflect on the negotiations they navigated among personal, academic, and public discourses, they collectively utilized process as a touchstone, a commonly accessible and internally persuasive vernacular discourse. Students in this classroom public were able to use process as a vernacular for uncovering and interrogating the intersections—the unintentional hybridizations—of personal, academic, and public discourses.

That process emerged as the vernacular, or operational, language for this classroom public would undoubtedly offend the sensibilities of some post-process advocates who resist what might be construed as the totalizing influence of process. However, this finding resonates with a post-process dialogics in a couple of key ways. First, process as vernacular reminds compositionists that, for students, process is a primary influence of those prior theories they draw upon to approach communicative interactions in writing. Hauser says that the “language that dominates a discursive arena is index to the symbolic resources that contain the norms and values of groups and classes, their knowledge of their past and their commitments to the future” (78). Indeed, in the writing classroom, process certainly reflects the “norms and values” of much composition pedagogy *as it is experienced by our students*.

As a compositionist influenced by post-process theory, I admit embarking on my work with student writers with the desire to see our reflective conversations lead us to examining specific instances of unintentional hybridization within their written

assignments, especially in the public genres they produced for the course. Instead, students talked about their discourse negotiations in terms of how their understandings of process were challenged and modified as a result of the rhetorical situations they encountered in their “public” English 101 course. The “expectation failure” (as Ken Bain might call it) I experienced working with these students gave me a better understanding of the necessary role of process in a post-process dialogic classroom. In creating passing theory in response to communicative situations that ask them to consider multiple discourses, students drew upon and transformed their received notions of the writing process—thus as a prior theory called upon in a post-process dialogic classroom public, process is not further codified. Process as prior theory and operational language for the classroom public, in fact, affirms a dialogic perspective on hybridization. Bakhtin is careful to point out that hybridization cannot be detected on the level of language *per se*: “Since hybrids can be read as belonging simultaneously to two or more systems, they cannot be isolated by formal grammatical means, by quotation marks” (“Discourse” 429). A post-process dialogics acknowledges that the situatedness of any act of hybridizing makes the result unrepeatable. Discourses do not “hybridize or clash in empty space. . . the outcome of hybridization is determined in large part by the particular environments in which these experiments are conducted” (Keller 115). With that said, we can examine the environments within which hybridization occurs, which in a post-process dialogics involves focusing on the prior theories that shape those environments.

In the classroom public, process becomes the anchor for students' navigation of multiple discourse realms, and a means through which they can stake a position among discourses. The fact that process serves as a common, internally persuasive vernacular contributes a second insight for classroom public informed by a post-process dialogics: process could serve as a tool for promoting *intentional* hybridization—that discursive awareness at the heart of the rhetorical competence needed for individuals to actively participate in a public. As Hauser argues:

A well-ordered public sphere is inherently tied to the quality of its rhetorical exchanges. The particularity of its issues and its civil judgments requires a commitment to language and thought and their limits, as these function under conditions of contingency. Its rhetorical features encourage open consideration of a question from a variety of perspectives, making the quality of our public life a rhetorical achievement. (77)

Students' shared vocabulary (and, indeed, their shared experience) of process can serve as a way of shaping the kinds of rhetorical exchanges Hauser identifies as important to a well-functioning public. Engaging students in reflective conversations about their personal, academic, and public writing processes can reveal the ideological continuities and discontinuities among these discursive spheres. Based on the knowledge gained from that reflection, students can utilize process—can intentionally hybridize their writing processes—to discover and invent responses, new passing theory for consciously bridging and integrating the spheres.

Making this hybridity of process explicit through reflection on product enables students to identify ways of entering and interacting within publics. Although reflection is an established component of most public writing pedagogies—chief among them service-learning—reflection in the classroom public is not solely focused on helping students see how their academic learning outcomes have been enhanced by or realized through interaction with publics. Reflection in the writing classroom as public becomes a key mechanism through which the students who constitute that public develop a common language for understanding personal, academic, and public discourses as revisable, as contingent.

This model of reflection can be best termed “critical reflection,” following the lead of scholars like Patti Clayton. Out of her extensive research on the role of reflection in civic engagement pedagogies across the disciplines, Patti Clayton proposes a reflection sequence comprised for *describing*, *examining*, and *articulating* learning. Of particular relevance to this project is the second stage of reflection “examining” in which students consider their course or community-based experience from personal, academic, and public perspectives. Some of the reflective prompts Clayton offers, modified here to focus on language, can generate dialogue in the classroom public about discursive ideology, rhetorical agency, and ethical communication: “What personal strengths/weaknesses did the situation reveal? How did this situation uncover and challenge my own attitudes or biases? What similarities and differences are there between the perspective on the situation offered by our academic material, and the situation as it in fact unfolded? In what ways did

power differentials emerge in this experience and how were they on display through language? What were the sources of communicative power in this situation and who benefitted and who was harmed? What communicative privilege did I/others bring to this situation? How am I, or others, disempowered by a lack of that privilege?

Such reflective activities would help students uncover the intersection of multiple discursive spheres and exploit the potential of those ideological clashes as “teachable space where we can help students explore options for addressing dissonance” (Chaden, Graves, Jolliffe, and Vandenberg 38). Intentionally hybridizing process emerges as one option students might explore for addressing the rhetorical demands of public writing. In a course organized via discursive realms, reflective activities that engage students in identifying the writing processes they employed in their personal, academic, and public writing assignments could equip them to determine what those processes have to offer one another and, consequently, to the quality of the resulting products. As but one example, noted in the previous chapter, peer response as an established feature of how writing process is taught at the secondary and post-secondary level emerges as a salient offering to the ways that public discourses are now commonly produced—potentially contributing a much-needed check on the immediacy with which individuals can engage in public genres via the Internet.

Opportunities for engaging intentional hybridization through process can also emerge from examining with students genres that cross discursive boundaries, like the essays produced in the *This I Believe* series for public radio. I have used these essays,

and, in fact, an assignment to produce one, with public writing students to interrogate the merging of personal and public spheres encapsulated by the mantra of the program: “A public dialogue about belief—one essay at a time” (www.thisibelieve.org). Further, identifying examples of this genre for academic discourse features—in other words, how “This I Believe” writers call upon the antecedent genres of the academic essay—emerges as one example of bringing the academic sphere into reflective dialogue about process. In a course that makes use of these kinds of assignments and reflective activities, I have found that a cumulative reflective writing assignment helps students synthesize the outcomes of their learning and articulate more specifically how disrupting the discursive boundaries has influenced their understanding of “the writing process,” thus accomplishing some of the recursivity implied in post-processes dialectic of prior and passing theory.

Indeed, there are a number of ways that composition teachers can help facilitate intentional hybridization by highlighting the permeable boundaries between the discursive spheres. The students I worked with as part of this study were particularly interested (and engaged in) discussions that addressed the role of the Internet in disrupting these boundaries. It would seem that bridging personal and public discursive realms is increasingly easy for students, in particular through social networking technologies that blur the lines between personal and public. But we can also turn to the Internet for potentially generative examples of genres that call upon all three discursive spheres. Social knowledge-making tools, like Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com) and Helium (www.helium.com), for instance, blur the lines

between personal (personal interests typically motivate contributors); academic (the sites “seem” akin to academic, peer-reviewed genres); and public (such sites boast widespread participation). In addition to supporting genres that bridge all three discursive realms, these, as I am calling them, social knowledge-making tools are valuable for the classroom public to examine because they are increasingly considered “Web democracies”.⁶ In a classroom public, academic discourse values (and related practices) can help students illuminate and evaluate the dimensions of this claim, particularly as it relates to validity and access. However, key to utilizing hybridity as a check on the reification of discourses is reciprocity, and I would argue that public discourses, flawed as many of us would admit, can usefully illuminate weaknesses in academic discourses, especially in relation to access and the use of personal appeals.

A well-functioning classroom public, then, would purposefully structure conditions under which students can problematize the discourse boundaries, utilizing process as a vernacular. Process as vernacular doubtless makes the admittedly daunting task of investigating discursive hybridization more accessible for composition teachers and students. For students, process may prove internally persuasive enough to use as a means of responding to the knowledge gained from this kind of critical reflection on discourses.

“Concerns over the public’s possibilities should begin with concerns over the possibilities of the public’s discourse” (Stob 241). Composition is well-equipped to address these concerns and help form possibilities for better public discourse—our

history shaped by the ideals of civic rhetoric proposed by Aristotle and our future paved by pedagogies that acknowledge the publicness of our classrooms and, most importantly, our students. An understanding of the classroom as already and always public refigures teaching as “boundary work” (Chaden, Graves, Jolliffe, and Vandenberg 38). But rather than reinscribe false boundaries among the discourses of home, school, and public, the classroom public consciously disrupts those boundaries to help students gain a greater awareness of their agency in identifying and solving problems through rhetoric, for the task before students as public intellectuals is to “reconstruct a specific thread in the discursive fabric that unites person to person in the public sphere” (Stob 241).

Notes

¹Much like the “pedagogical arts” Mary Louise Pratt alludes to in “Arts of the Contact Zone,” intentional hybridization as a pedagogical art plays out on the borders, and at the intersections, of discursive realms, move “*into and out of* rhetorics of authenticity; ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect; [and represent] a systematic approach to the all-important concept of *cultural mediation*” (40).

²Thank you to Frank Farmer for this (and many other) insights into Bakhtin’s dialogism.

³As noted in the previous chapter, Bickmore and Ruffus integrate the academic and the public discursive spheres through a pedagogy of genre analysis.

⁴Readers might also be interested in a piece Goodburn co-authored with Deborah Minter, “A Critical Reading and Revision Strategy: Glossing Arguments as Cultural Work,” which makes a similar claim about the value of academic discourse practices to equip students for deliberation in other public spheres.

⁵See also Janice Chernekoff’s “Teaching the Rhetorical Possibilities for the Personal Essay” for a compelling argument about the necessity of teaching students that “academic writing isn’t necessarily the most important or even the most sophisticated kind of writing” (41). To do this, Chernekoff subverts the typical hierarchy of writing assignments by assigning the personal essay as the culminating experience in her composition courses *after* students have completed “traditional” academic research papers. Part of her pedagogy also involves students in comparing the two writing assignments to reveal how narrative is a valuable form of argument, one that can bridge the personal and the public.

⁶It can be argued that because of the popularity of social networking, and of what I am calling social knowledge-making technologies, students may wrongly perceive those scenes and related genres as “democratic.” Students are often (helpfully) surprised to learn about the research that has considered the socio-economic issues surrounding usage of Facebook (www.facebook.com) and MySpace (www.myspace.com)—for instance, Danah Boyd’s article “Viewing American Class Divisions through Facebook and MySpace.” Also illuminating are statistics showing that only 1% of Wikipedia visitors are active in producing, and controlling, content for the site (see Christopher Wilson’s article “The Wisdom of the Chaperones: Digg, Wikipedia, and the Myth of Web 2.0 Democracy,” published on www.slate.com).

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Appendix A
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Approved by the Human Subjects Committee University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus (HSCL). Approval expires one year from 7/24/2006
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UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Project Title

“Hybridizing Personal, Technical, and Public Discourses in the Citizenship Writing Classroom” (doctoral dissertation)

Investigator

This study will be conducted by Emily Donnelly, a doctoral student in the English Department at the University of Kansas.

Introduction

The Department of English at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this department, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

Invitation to Participate & Purpose

You are being invited to participate in a study of the different types of writing done in first-year composition courses like yours, ones that include the study of private and public genres alongside traditional instruction in academic writing.

Procedures

The methods of data collection for this study will be focus group discussions, each of which will last no longer than 1 hour. The sessions will be audio-taped to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide. No one’s name will be asked or revealed during the focus groups or individual interviews. If another participant calls you by name, the researcher will remove all names from the transcription. The first focus group will occur in September, the second in November, and the final focus group will occur during your final exam time.

To prepare for the focus group discussions, the researcher may read some of the writing assignments you complete as a regular part of the course requirements. The researcher will not evaluate, or play any role in grading, your written work for the semester; her examination of your writing will only be for the purposes of formulating focus group questions and gaining a better sense of how you are conceptualizing the various types of writing you do in English 101.

Risks

No risks are associated with this research project. Participation in this project requires no additional class work or class time (as all focus group discussions will occur during regularly-scheduled class periods). Participation in this study has no bearing on your course grade.

Benefits

A potential benefit of participating in this study for you would be having an opportunity to discuss your experiences in an English 101 course that engages you in writing in personal and public genres in addition to academic ones. Your insights will contribute to current conversations about effective composition curriculum at the University of Kansas and beyond.

Payment to Participants

No participant payment is associated with this study.

Participant Confidentiality

Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected from you—either your written work or your comments in the focus group discussions. The researcher will use a study number or a pseudonym instead of your name.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

Refusal to Sign Consent and Authorization

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

Canceling this Consent and Authorization

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Emily Donnelly, donnelly@ku.edu. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before she received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about Participation

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

Participant Certification

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email dhann@ku.edu or mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Researcher Contact Information

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Appendix B

Letter of Invitation

August 2006

Dear English 101 student,

Your instructor, Erin Williams, has graciously allowed me to use your course as a research site for my doctoral dissertation project. My project investigates the ways that students learn and combine different types of writing in a first-year composition course. Your English 101 class is an ideal research setting as you will be writing in a variety of personal, public, and academic genres throughout the semester.

The curriculum and work demands are no different than in other sections of English 101. The only difference in this course is that those of you who volunteer will have the opportunity to share your insights and feedback about writing with me in three short group discussions (one in September, one in November, and one in December), scheduled during your regular class meeting times. You will not be graded, or assessed in any way, based on your participation, and your contributions will be represented anonymously in my project.

If you are willing to participate in the focus groups, you will be asked to sign a consent form and return it to Instructor Williams.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Donnelly
University of Kansas Doctoral Student
donnelly@ku.edu

Appendix C

Selected Writing and Discussion Prompts

- What are some examples of personal or private genres?
- Now that you have spent a few weeks investigating and analyzing these genres, can you tell me what one is? What makes a genre *private*?
- Genre is a word that often makes us think about forms and formats. What makes a genre personal, academic, or public? It is more the form or the content?
- Many of you have talked about personal/private genres in relationship to public ones. Can you talk more about the line between a personal and a public genre?
- How is writing a personal genre different for you than writing in another genre?
- Is there a role for the personal in an academic setting? What about in a public one?
- What the difference between a personal and an academic genre? Which is easier for you to compose? Why?
- In your academic, analytical essays on “Why Rock Music has Harmed American Youth,” where did the personal show up?
- How do you draw upon the personal/private when writing for school?
- What about academic writing in the public? Is the academic a “good fit” in the public sphere?
- Did you stick to the “generic” rules for the public genre you produced, or did you manipulate the genre in some way. If so, how?
- Where did the personal show up on your final product, or did it?
- Where did the academic show up in your final product, or did it?
- How is writing for the public different from writing for a school assignment?
- Is public writing closer in spirit to academic writing, or to personal writing? Show me some places in your text where you see the academic or the personal emerging?
- Do you think that an English 101 class—i.e., instruction in academic discourses—helps a person write effectively for the public sphere?