

Maybe Also A Colony: And Yet Another Critique of the Assessment Community

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Chapter 1

Composition, Assessment and the Postcolonial

I. Maybe Also a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Assessment Community

You see my ancestry is partially Filipino. And so, even as I remain a stranger to the Islands, and though regaining my mother's language was never a task I seriously undertook (the reason for which is related to a specific colonial history), I am a Filipino. As such, one of my many online identities is named "bunduk," a Tagalog word denoting "mountain," and connoting "remote area." When Filipinos talk about the people who live in those remote areas, the word is frequently used derogatively, as in when my mother used to talk about how she hated going to the movies with people from "the mountains" because they would talk loudly during movies. Significantly, bunduk is also the root word for the American word "boondocks," a place I might note in the American adaptation of the word is almost entirely associated with racial whiteness, though with a similar implication of social marginalization. The reason this word is significant to me is the number of erasures involved in the movement of the word from its Tagalog connotation to its American denotation, the most significant of which is the erasure of a specific history of brutal American colonialism, traces of which are written in the history of the word bunduk, and also on my skin. My hope in choosing that username was that someone would ask about it, and I would have the opportunity to talk about colonialism, but no one ever asks.

I chose to open this introduction by paraphrasing Villeneuve's important 1997 article "Maybe a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Comp Community" because I want to explore Villeneuve's important worries about composition's role in reinforcing

damaging language ideologies and whether or not these worries still have relevance, especially in an age of program assessment and machine scoring, both of which I see as pervasive technologies of social control, gatekeeping and assimilation. When Villanueva claims, for example, that “We have come to accept that language is a way of knowing, a means [...] for thought. That’s why we watch for sexism in our language, for example. But we don’t give the same kind of care to colonialism” (186), when he goes on to worry that “if we hear the term [postcolonial] without having read the substance [...] we’ll stop problematizing what we do in our assimilationist teaching” (186), I worry that Villanueva’s article has become, sixteen years after its publication, yet another in a long line of ideas championed by the composition community at the time of its publication, but quietly and neatly returned to the margins from which the idea was spoken. We can consider, for example, the Students’ Right to Their Own Language, and how, despite the statements’ existence, we continually fall back into assimilationist pedagogies that continue to privilege what Laura Greenfield has identified as a range of white, middle class language practices that we have come to call a unitary “standard” English.

In fact, as Janet Sorensen points to in some detail in her 2000 book *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing*, the very idea of a standard English only came about in early modern England as the empire struggled to define its national identity against imagined colonial Others. Her analysis of the creation of Johnson’s *Dictionary* is particularly useful in this regard as she points out the inherent philosophical contradictions in which Johnson had to engage in the writing of his dictionary:

The act of collecting the customary language of the nation is, then, a

cultural work far more significant than mere recording. If nationalist rhetoric contrives an image of a unified national people who can be traced backwards and who continue to move forward in time together, it can only do so by forgetting the linguistic evidence of social division. In this way the moment of linguistic preservation is also one of forgetting, a doubled movement that parallels the rhetoric of nationalism itself. (88)

In other words, because the idea of a national language is itself a fiction given the fact that variance rather than standardization is the norm of everyday literacy and language use, then the act of collecting the fictional language of a nation must necessarily erase reference to social divisions easily exposed through everyday literacy practices. And the idea of erasure is important, so it is possible to come to an understanding of the ways that Scotsmen participated in their own linguistic domination in order to understand how ideas of a fictional standard English continue to inform composition theory and practice in ways that might erase our own and our students' selves.

I should note at this point that my introductory paragraph, with its discussion of the word “bunduk”, practices its own linguistic erasure, supporting (by way of not denying) the colonial fiction that the Philippine nation is and always has been a singular culture with a singular language. Like the concept of a singular Philippine nation itself, it is a colonial fiction with real, material consequences on people's lives. Interestingly, it was not until the American colonial administration—almost five hundred years after Spanish conquest of the arbitrarily defined colonial administrative unit we have come to call the Philippines—that the necessity for a nationally spoken language was enforced.

Gonzalez (2010) has shown that, although Spanish influence can be seen in vocabularies of the many Filipino regional languages and dialects (516), because the Spanish mission in the rural Philippines was largely religious, most priests found it easier to learn the local languages and dialects than to teach Spanish despite “numerous directives” from the Spanish crown to develop an educational program for teaching of the Spanish language. (512) American missionary zeal was more economic in nature, however, and “decided that Filipinos should learn the language of democracy and enterprise” (513). The success of American linguistic imperialism is evident in the pervasiveness of English’s being spoken throughout the islands and in the most remote provinces. Whatever the reasons for the success of American colonials in their spread of English use throughout the islands, even in the most remote provinces, as compared to Spanish colonials’ attempts at mandating Spanish education, the differing levels of success shows the complicated relationships that colonized peoples have with dominant language practices.

While I do not want to make easy and false parallels between post-Unification Scotland and postcolonial Philippines, or between postcolonial Philippines and the contemporary composition classroom, the current linguistic situation in the Philippines—and my use of the word “bunduk” in the opening paragraph of this introduction—remind us that no colonial identity is ever established simply and directly from metropolitan center to colonized periphery, and that linguistic domination, though potentially thorough and devastating to one’s sense of identity, is always going to be nuanced and complex. In fact, a critique of such an over-simplified relationship is part of Sorensen’s project, which exposes the ways that language and literacy can be deployed as especially insidious

technologies of hegemony that require the participation of the margin in constructing the center and the justification for its own cultural domination. Sorensen's analysis, though decidedly literary in its focus on, for example, the poetry of Alexander MacDonald or Smollet's novels, is nonetheless useful for me not only in her departures from texts traditionally constructed as "literary" in character such as Johnson's *Dictionary* and even Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (addressed in more detail in a later chapter), but in the way her analysis shows that gentlemanly lowland Scottish efforts at personal improvement through language were conscious efforts to place themselves closer to the metropole by distinguishing themselves from imagined savage Others, including their own countrymen in the Highlands—the Highland identity itself being a fictional marginalized identity created in order to define a Scottish national identity. In other words, much of the rhetorical education developed during the Scottish Enlightenment and designed by Scotsmen themselves was assimilationist education, despite the fact that it was the result of attempts to democratize education. Sorensen references, for example, elocution classes taught by Thomas Sheridan, attended by "a rising elite [that] sought full legitimization as Britons through heightened language skills" (138). Further, she tells us that the "middle-class Edinburghers" for whom these classes were designed "understood mastering polite English as not simply a means of self-aggrandizement but also as an avenue of participation in the strengthening of the British nation" (138). We might draw parallels between the goals of Sheridan's elocution courses and our current composition courses and ask ourselves if our assessments do not, in fact, have similar nationalist and assimilationist goals.

The idea for this dissertation began with the idea to apply a feminist sophisticated historiographical reading (as defined by Jarratt in her 1998 book *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured*) of the belletrist movement, and in some ways I still follow that original idea, though my research has led me to follow a more postcolonial rather than deconstructivist feminist reading that Jarratt advocates. While I still consider this a feminist project at its heart—inspired as it is by Jarratt—the importance of identity formation in colonial contexts to my understanding of belletristic rhetoric has led to a more direct engagement with and application of postcolonial rather than feminist theory. Still, it is in the following ways that this project continues to be inspired by Jarratt’s historiographical method: she advocates for a method that “Rather than tracing a line of thought from A to B, the rhetorical historian will seek to regroup and redefine. The point is to expose an increasing *complexity* of evidence or data, to resist the simplification which covers over subtleties” (18-19) and further to “encourage an increased self-consciousness about that process of reconstruction as it functions to open for investigation fruitful questions about belief, purpose and self-definition rather than answer questions of ‘fact’” (16) in order to explore “issues of vital importance for the present and future” (23). And so my rereading of the role that the Scottish Enlightenment played in the development of College English and therefore Composition is intended as way to open up new avenues of self-consciousness in our professional practice. Though the dominant narrative within composition studies of the ways that the dominance of belletristic writing in the academy has served us well as a discipline, we should also be wary of the ways that we might deploy similar structures of domination, not only on

ourselves but also on our students. And again, following from Jarratt, I will not seek to trace a line from point A to point B, but instead will try to identify ways to “regroup and redefine” parallel structures in theory and practice. Given the recent attention that has been given to assessments, whether through discussions of machine scoring or standardized testing or of standardization efforts such as the Common Core, I have chosen assessment as the lens through which to draw parallels between Enlightenment and current thinking about rhetorical education. So while grammar and taste handbooks were the dominant technologies of linguistic social control during the Scottish Enlightenment, I argue that writing assessments, while unavoidable, are our current dominant technology of linguistic social control, and we must make ourselves aware of the values embedded in our assessment practices.

II. Grammar, Aesthetics and Standardization in the Scottish Enlightenment

The influence of Blair’s *Rhetoric* is well established in many histories of composition and English Studies. My own understanding of Blair’s influence depends heavily on Thomas Miller’s 1998 book *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces* in which Miller traces the rise of belletristic discourse during the Scottish Enlightenment and its influence on the eventual development of English departments in American universities. Though previous disciplinary histories, such as Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (1987) or Graff’s *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (1987) mention how influential Blair’s text was well into the twentieth century, Miller’s book is important in two ways: first, it looks not only at Blair’s influence in the

history of rhetoric, but also at his influence in the history of literary theory (and therefore why the split even exists in the first place); second—and more importantly for this project—he looks at the social and material conditions that made for the popularity of standardization both grammatically and aesthetically. Ultimately, though there is much to value in Miller’s book, Sorensen’s history of standardization of taste and English grammar during this same time period is nuanced in ways that exposes problematic assumptions brought forward through Miller’s history, despite its value.

These problematic assumptions, I think, are partially the result of his curious decision to classify Scotland as a “cultural province” of England rather than a colony, and partially his decision to carry forward the binary between literary and nonliterary texts problematically created by the belletrist movement. And though Miller does make similar ties between the standardization of grammar and tasteful discourse, Sorensen rightly ties standardization more closely to colonial relationships than to print technology as Miller tends to do, especially with regard to grammar. The carrying forward of this binary creates strange moments in which Miller is forced to oppose belletristic writing against “public” writing, as if literature is not public. This criticism of looking at Blair’s rhetoric too simplistically is not new. In the same year that Miller published his book, Lois Agnew argued in “The Civic Function of Taste: A Re-assessment of High Blair’s Rhetorical Theory” that our understanding of Blair ignores the fact that he was lecturing and writing at a time when his world was in the process of shifting from a largely oral culture to a largely print culture. Because Agnew sees writing as a largely private matter and speech as a largely public matter, she argues that Blair’s taste theories had a public, political

component for which we do not give them credit. There is clearly a metaphysics of presence operating here, and I will proceed with a more detailed critique of Agnew's reading of Blair in a later chapter. For now I will point out that she does ignore the relationship between a marginal Scottish identity and a metropolitan English identity that set the standards for taste, and further, the relationship that Blair established among Scottish, English and Native American identities. As such, though her reading of Blair attempts to identify some political potential within Blair's taste theories, the reading itself ends up being largely apolitical. For example, she can cite Crowley's criticism of the "19th century rhetoric texts" which promoted "a pedagogy of taste [...] to promote discrimination and exclusion" (27) without asking why this pedagogy of discrimination was able to so easily be adapted from Blair's theories. Though Miller's materialist reading of the belletrist movement can provide us with an answer to that question, a postcolonial reading, such as that undertaken by Sorensen provides a more nuanced, and—I will later argue—more presently useful explanation.

The tie between aesthetics and the establishment of the idea of a standard English grammar—what Sorensen calls "imperial grammar"—is important, then, because when we concentrate exclusively on the problematics of taste in the study of discourse, it allows us to ignore the fact that composition can and does, at times, participate in these very same colonial discourses by assigning English departments with the entire responsibility for the textual hierarchies which created composition while ignoring our complicity in their maintenance. Further, by relying too heavily on print technology as the explanation for standardization of English grammars allows us to ignore the role that

people played on both sides of the colonial relationship in developing problematic theories about language. The simple, unidirectional relationship from metropole to margin against which Sorensen works is what allows composition to ignore its own participation in colonial structures of domination. For example, we might ask why Thomas Miller can provide us with such valuable insight into the oppressive conditions under which Scottish Enlightenment thinkers came to embrace the belletrist movement in *Formation*, but then in *The Evolution of College English: Literacy Studies from the Puritans to Postmoderns* (2010) can advocate Ohmann's 1976 suggestion that one of the main ways that composition can "maintain its relevance" is by teaching "standard" English. Or why to many well-meaning compositionists and rhetoricians this might not seem like a contradiction at all. After all, the binary constructed by the belletrist movement between tasteful and non-tasteful discourses effectively erases ties between standardization of grammar and the standardization of taste that both Miller and Sorensen show to have been extremely important to Scottish Enlightenment rhetoricians. We might further ask why the continued privileging of the idea of a standard English continues to be an acceptable form of cultural domination while we question the textual hierarchies created by belletristic rhetoric. Composition studies has drawn the dichotomy between belletristic and non-belletristic writing so sharply that for all our self-reflexivity, we have continued to see our place within English studies simply as the colonized; and not only as the colonized, but as a colonized body that, we assume, does not help create or maintain the colonial structure of which we are a part. And so it might be worth asking whether the privileging of "academic" discourse in our composition classes doesn't serve a similar

function of linguistic nationalism and imperialism.

It should therefore be informative to us as compositionists that Sorensen's literary history illuminates more productive ways for us in rhetoric and composition to read the history of belletrism and its role in informing our own disciplinary discourses, not just those of literary studies. For example when Sorensen tells us that

The emphasis on taste relocated the determination of appropriateness from strict external rules to the individual's sense of correctness. The authority of "proper" language thus derived not from English rulers but from Scottish subjects (141),

I see parallels between these Scotsmen's attempts to enact some sort of linguistic agency in spite of their language that would immediately mark them as Other within the newly formed nation of Great Britain, and compositionists seeking to establish agency through critique of Blair and his contemporaries who established belletristic literature atop a textual hierarchy that depoliticized public writing through the privileging of aesthetic concerns in criticism (Miller *Formation* 229). Though Miller is right to point out that through Blair's *Rhetoric* "correctness became an end in itself" (229), Sorensen's argument illustrates that, having already been through an intellectual period in which language theorists were obsessed with standardization in reaction to new colonial Others—easily identified by their use of "non-standard" Englishes as well as Scots Gaelic—suddenly legally welcomed within the national identity, these Scotsmen were attempting to identify a fissure in the dominant discourse into which they could insert themselves. This, of course, was problematic as it ultimately served to entrench the colonial identities

and relationships at play while solidifying an assumed national identity with an imagined standard English and confirming gentlemanly English taste as the standard of taste.

III. Postcoloniality, Taste, Composition and Assessment Culture(s)

I want to reiterate here the importance of postcolonial perspectives on our reading of the now-dominant narrative of the Scottish Belletrist movement's influence over the creation of English departments in American universities, especially in light of the popularity of Blair's *Lectures* through the late eighteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. In short, a postcolonial reading—by exposing the colonial (as opposed to what Miller reads as cultural provincial) roots of Blair's *Lectures*—nuances the narrative in ways that might force composition to confront the possibilities of our own complicity in the maintenance of the dichotomy between literature and other discourses, and the idea of high, middle, and low cultures so many of us are quick to point to as harmful ideas regarding literacy education. It forces us to confront, for example, the problematics of Miller's uncritical acceptance of Ohman's suggestion that a major piece of Composition's mission should be the teaching of “standard” English simply because it is “the” language of power. My use of air quotes in the previous sentence is purposeful. I mean to emphasize the ties that the idea of standardization came about only in response to first, an imperialist culture's struggling to maintain its hegemony against a diversifying colonial population, and second, colonial subjects seeking ways to find agency within the imperialist culture's assertion of its cultural dominance. The importance of these circumstances cannot be overstated, especially when we consider the ways that standardization of language and taste were intimately connected in Blair's *Lectures*, and

how important this connection was to legitimizing the educational program in the dissenting universities. And standardization is important when we are specifically concerned with assessment culture. My hope is that the ties between standardization of language conventions and the universalizing of taste standards will expose the ways that we continue to allow belletrism to construct our professional identities in composition by continuing to cast ourselves as colonial others against dominant literary discourses.

In her 1999 article, “Looking Back as We Look Forward,” Kathleen Blake Yancey reminds us that, “writing assessment, because it wields so much power, plays a crucial role in what self, or selves, will be permitted—in our classrooms; in our tests; ultimately, in our culture” (498). And because assessments are a part of literacy education at every level—from the extremely local context of the classroom to the more global contexts of program assessments and national efforts like the common core standards—it is crucially important for rhetoric and composition to understand the values embedded in our assessment practices and what selves our assessment practices permit in our classrooms and programs. Further, when Huot said in 2002 that “We have evolved pedagogies that conceive of teaching as a coaching and enabling process, while holding onto conceptions of evaluation as a means for gatekeeping and upholding standards” (164), he is asking us to look at our assessment practices more critically so that we are more conscious of the selves our evaluation practices allow. I would extend that to include those selves our assessment practices create.

My review of assessment literature in Chapter 2 will show that the fourth wave of assessment Yancey saw coming in 1999 has been formed in response to discourses that

have attempted to narrowly construct both our students' identities as well as our own professional identities. Postcolonial theory, in fact, can shed light on the ways that maintaining the binary in written discourse created by Scottish belletrism creates our professional identities in ways that are similar to the gentlemanly selves created by Blair and his contemporaries, and creates student identities similar to ways that belletristic discourse helped create an othered Scottish identity. I do so with three important cautions that I want to briefly review before moving on into the first chapter in which I will give a more close reading of both Blair's *Rhetoric* and also of disciplinary narratives and analyses of Blair.

The first caution comes from Min-Zhan Lu in "Composing Postcolonial Studies" (2004) in which Lu warns against the use of postcolonial studies in ways that maintain the hierarchical binary in English departments which "continue[s] to mark composition as the 'needy' who 'cannot always afford to refuse' the gift of postcolonial theory" (12). In fact, I am aware of my own approach so far in presenting the importance of doing postcolonial readings of both one of our discipline's grand narratives and to one of our central practices. I want to note that Lu's critique of one-way relationship established between postcolonial studies and composition does not mean that this one-way relationship is without value for composition, but only that those of us in composition studies should be mindful about the ways that we deploy theory, especially those theories we adapt from English Studies, which for Composition is many. Lu's article importantly illustrates parallels that I see between the "colonized" self that Composition frequently sees in itself relative to College English and the actual colonized self I see in Blair's

Rhetoric. As will be evident later in this dissertation, in fact, one of Lu's suggestions for resisting this simplified one-way colonized relationship between English and Composition—namely, that of “Problematizing the Developmental Plot” (17), in which Lu asks us to resist the common assumption that one must “master” a discourse or a set of discourse conventions before resisting them (17)—will become especially important to my analysis of both the Scottish Enlightenment *and* current assessment culture.

My second caution has to do with the particular institution and writing program in which I labor, and which no doubt has heavily influenced how I research, write, and read composition studies. This second caution is, in fact, directly related to the first in one specific way. My department is not housed within an English department, though we do employ many teaching assistants from English. This is significant because the application of postcolonial theory in order to read what I am calling assessment culture means something very different to me than it does for Lu or even the compositionists she cites in her article. From my location, the introduction of postcolonial theory does not read like the gifting of literary theory onto the (wrongly) assumed untheoretical world of composition studies that Lu sees as necessarily part of the structure of the relationship between the work of composition and the work of literature. Nonetheless, I want to take her caution seriously. Toward the end of my Master's work in creative writing—an MA program in which we were expected to take a certain number of literature and theory classes not expected of the average MFA student—when I was applying to Composition programs, I had a well-meaning professor say “Oh, I thought you were interested in theory,” when we were discussing my interest in rhetoric. So I have experienced the

relationship against which Lu writes, and I do want to be careful to attempt to not maintain that binary relationship in my analysis, as I believe Miller and Agnew tend to do. And I believe composition tends to do in privileging an academic style that in our teaching of it, tends to deny the masculine, white, racialized aesthetics embedded in it, and which is intimately tied to ideas of standardization created during the Scottish enlightenment.

Importantly, Lu also believes that composition can enrich postcolonial theory and analysis with its rich history of scholarship regarding “the materiality of writing” (22). In particular Lu cites Fox, Canagarajah and Rallin as providing important scholarship that illustrates the ways that “access to the kind of time, quiet personal space, natural environment, and technologies [...] are not always available to all writers.” (22), and in particular to student writers. In fact, Lu points to the absence of such discussion from within postcolonial studies as limiting “how both the participants and readers [...] investigate the often privileged material conditions of various US academic postcolonial critics and writers” (24). It is this privileged position that I hope to explore from within composition studies, with the ultimate goal of allowing postcolonial and composition studies to illuminate and investigate the others’ privileged positions. As I will show in a later chapter, though Sorensen’s analysis of Blair’s *Rhetoric* nuances what I identify as a master narrative of the book’s contribution to the creation of English departments and, subsequently, composition studies, considering her analysis from within the position of composition studies exposes some limitations in the ways she accepts—and even in some ways celebrates—the text simply because of the limited agency gained by Blair and his

lowland contemporaries in the dissenting universities. Because her literature-focused analysis of the period does not ask her to consider the problematic student subjectivities created by this discourse, her acceptance of the limited agency gained by Blair is unproblematic for her.

The final caution I take from Lu is to always consider student subjectivity, what she calls representations of the student writer. Representations of the student writer are at the heart of composition studies, and in particular “recognition of the need of academic intellectuals to resist the temptation of speaking for the student writer” (26). Lu goes on to remind us that it is important to “problematize the role of postcolonial feminist teachers: our institutional power to rank rhetors along the literate (intellectual, published, student, basic writers) and illiterate (‘not a writer’) divide” (28). I believe that the part of assessment culture that lies outside of Composition Studies, and even a portion of that culture that lies inside our disciplinary borders, fails to see why such institutional power to rank is or can be problematic. My hope is that this project can shed some light on the role that our disciplinary narratives can play in disguising the problematic assumptions behind the very need to rank rhetors at all.

Chapter 2: “In the Language Even of the Rude, Uncultivated Tribes”: Hugh Blair,

Grammar and the Imperial Imagination

“This is not to describe ‘the way things really were’ or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history. It is, rather, to offer an account of how an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one.”

-Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak”

I. Taming the Insurgent Literacies of the Contact Zone

I begin this chapter as I began the introduction to this dissertation by referencing a postcolonial text that for a time was very fashionable in composition studies because of its disruptive potential, but I feel we have returned to the margins in order to continue with assimilationist pedagogies. In a 1991 address to the MLA, later published in the journal *Profession*, Mary Louise Pratt speaks of “Internal social groups with histories and lifeways different from the official ones [who] began insisting on those histories and lifeways *as part of their citizenship*, as the very mode of their membership in the national collectivity” (39, emphasis in original) as the students comprising the contact zones of American college classrooms. Looking back over twenty years later as a person who, admittedly, was not a member of the profession at the time of its publication, but who has in my short time in the profession of composition attempted to maintain a strong sense of the profession’s history, “Arts of the Contact Zone” seems to have offered English Studies a way of rethinking multicultural pedagogies that recognized difference in a way that attempted to preserve rather than erase it by allowing for the conflicts that arise in these postcolonial spaces we call American college classrooms, particularly those classrooms where issues of language, literacy and power on full display like college classrooms. And it seems that a lot of compositionists and rhetoricians who have taken up

postcolonial thought have taken these lessons seriously. For example, we might look at Susan Jarratt's work in her recognition of the inevitability of conflict in feminist pedagogies in spite of the anti-agonistic approach favored by a lot of feminist pedagogues, particularly a lot of second wave pedagogies. Or we might also look at the work of Horner, Lu, Royster and Trimbur in their proposing of a translingual approach to writing instruction.

And though our composition classrooms are certainly "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (34), I want to be careful about speaking of all composition classrooms as contact zones, and especially homogeneously imagined contact zones, and I also want to think about the ways that the latter part of this commonly-used quote to describe American college classrooms frequently gets left out: "such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34). Certainly, the United States is such a place where the aftermaths of slavery and colonialism are lived out, and certainly our composition classrooms are places created, if not entirely, at least in part by those historical realities. But because my project is to seek out the complexities in these postcolonial spaces, I think it is important to ask ourselves why, if Pratt's speech to the MLA was so influential, our answer in composition has not been to encourage transculturation, as Pratt asks us, but to continue practices that acculturate? Why do we claim to respect difference and the situatedness of literacy practices while still designing pedagogies that favor a monolingual, monomodal product? Have we really taken Pratt's speech seriously if difference is only the

background for teaching an officially sanctioned, monomodal and monolingual text such as the academic research paper?

I ask these questions in light of two parts of Pratt's speech that I feel are particularly relevant to our current moment in composition studies and which I think are further relevant to discussions of assessment, and which I think got left out of most discussions of contact zone pedagogies. I want to emphasize here that my goal is not necessarily to advocate for contact zone pedagogies directly influenced by Pratt, but to point to questions her speech raised which I believe to still be relevant twenty years later. The first is the question she asks toward the end of her speech:

What is the place of unsolicited oppositional discourse, parody, resistance, critique in the imagined classroom community? Are teachers supposed to feel that their teaching has been most successful when they have eliminated such things and unified the social world, probably in their own image? Who wins when we do that? Who loses? (5)

These are questions that we should always ask about teaching practices, especially if our composition classrooms really are contact zones. The second is her discussion of Guaman Poma's *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, which is, in fact the example she gives of the kind of discourse she discusses. I need to spend some time with Pratt's discussion of Guaman Poma's text because in this chapter I will eventually take issue with Thomas Miller's claim that the standard English that formed in the contact zone of the Scottish Enlightenment is the type of transcultural text described by Pratt. To claim that it is so is the result, it seems of focusing only on the content rather than the form of

Guaman Poma's oppositional, parodic, resistant critique of Spanish colonial rule. So while it is true that "He praises good works, Christian habits, and just men where he finds them" and argues that "The Indies [...] should be administered through a collaboration of Inca and Spanish elites" (2), which would seem like a description of the ideal relationship imagined by Blair and other Lowland Scots between themselves and English elite, it is also true that Guaman Poma's text, "truly a product of the contact zone," should appear "anomalous or chaotic" to those who imagine "literatures as discrete, coherently structured, monolingual edifices" (3). The construction of a standard English in response to colonial relationships was anything but the "heterogeneous" text described by Pratt as the product of the contact zone. Rather, it was the result of an attempt not to critique the dominant culture, but rather to assimilate into it. This is especially clear in Blair's discussion of language development which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Chapter Two will explore this issue of heterogeneity in more detail when I discuss the history of writing assessments in American higher education, but for now I want to point out that Pratt is right to connect monolingual and monodialectical pedagogies to colonial histories. In fact, it is important to point to parallels that Pratt drew between the "speech community" and the "utopian" imagined community described by Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* in which members "will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson qtd in Pratt 37). Pratt is worth quoting at length in this matter:

Many commentators have pointed out how modern views of language exist as a shared patrimony—as a device, precisely, for imagining community. An image of universally shared literacy is also part of the picture. The prototypical manifestation of language is generally taken to be the speech of individual adult native speakers face-to-face [...] in monolingual, even monodialectal situations—in short, the most homogenous case linguistically and socially. The same goes for written communication. [...]

In keeping with autonomous, fraternal modes of community, analyses of language use commonly assume that principles of cooperation and shared understanding are normally in effect. Descriptions of interactions between people in conversation, classrooms, medical and bureaucratic settings, readily take it for granted that the situation is governed by a single set of rules or norms shared by all participants. The analysis focuses then on how those rules produce or fail to produce an orderly, coherent exchange. (38)

One of my major claims in this dissertation is that assessments are one of many technologies that maintain this monodialectal view of language use in the composition classroom, and this chapter will look closely at one influential colonial relationship in the development of monolingual and monodialectal theories of national identity and student identity. Further, it is not enough to welcome postcolonial voices and methods if we listen only to the ways that they might support the most conservative methods of our

professional practice, but ignore the ways that they resist these conservative methods, which is what I think has happened with much of our uptake of postcolonial theory in composition. Our assessment discourse as an obvious example of this conservative uptake. And while Thomas Miller and Janet Sorensen, two scholars upon whose histories of the Scottish Enlightenment I rely heavily in this chapter, make strong cases for what we have come to think of as a standard English grammar and tasteful discourse as examples of transculturation that takes place in the contact zone, it is important to keep in mind that transculturation is not unproblematic simply because it is a two-way process. As I stated in my introduction, Miller's history is somewhat more problematic than Sorensen when we consider the ways that he discusses attempts toward standardization of English by overemphasizing the role that technology played in these efforts and underemphasizing the role of imperialism. In Miller's analysis, it is as if the idea of a standard of taste in discourse and the idea of a standard English grammar are unrelated.

By way of example, I want to begin with both Sorensen and Miller's discussions of Johnson's dictionary. Sorensen's discussion is far more detailed than Miller's, and so I will depend more heavily on her analysis than on Miller's. There are two main reasons I want to begin my discussion of the imperial impulse toward standardization with Johnson: first, because his dictionary is perhaps the most famous text to have been transparently created directly as a result of this impulse toward standardization, and second because he can serve as a warning to compositionists in our professional practice in that, as Sorensen demonstrates, although he was openly anti-imperialist, he "helped develop an imperialist ideology that founded Britain's right to expansion on its supposed

superiority on language use and literacy [by] maintaining that literate societies were more advanced than ‘oral’ ones, and that English literacy could lead to colonial ‘improvement’” (72). And while compositionists might no longer believe in the inherent superiority of “literate” societies over “oral” ones, he can still serve as an instructive case for the ways that professional practice can advance agendas that go against our best intentions by insisting on an imagined monodialectical “academic” and/or “standard” discourse as the only means of access to education.

But Johnson’s case is even more instructive in the details than in the generalities. Though part of a larger movement that included such literary figures as Jonathan Swift who sought to standardize the English language, Johnson had a very different philosophy about standardization. While Swift could be more easily classified as a prescriptivist, Johnson could be more easily classified as a descriptivist. Miller describes the difference in philosophy between the two men thus:

As a dead language, Latin was impervious to change, and scholars of Swift’s perspective hoped to create a universal grammar with the same timeless authority. While Swift assumed a royal academy could simply dictate correctness, Johnson recognized that the reading public had grown beyond the control of traditional authorities. To distinguish the written language from the speech of common people, he compiled a dictionary of the language of printed authors. (38)

Interestingly, Miller’s distinction between Swift’s prescriptive approach to standardizing grammar and Johnson’s descriptive approach seems to assume that written usage could be

and already was standardized. Or if not standardized, then at least already conventional, and his description fails to address *whose* language was the basis for this conventional written language. Just pages earlier, Miller makes the statement that “In the eighteenth century print transformed reading and writing. Spelling became standardized, and prose styles became simplified and more accessible as people began to read more widely and less intensively than they had when books were precious possessions.” (35) Again, Miller is avoiding the question of *who* is standardizing spelling and *who* is making choices in this new technological environment. Whose spelling is being chosen as the standard? And is there really a single language of printed authors? The printing press on its own cannot standardize spelling or usage. It takes conscious choices for such a change to take place, and while I am sure Miller is aware of such choices having been made in the standardization of spelling, we might ask why, in this telling, the simultaneously nationalist and imperialist sentiments that Johnson’s dictionary represents is not present. There are only stable literate and unstable non-literate cultures whose membership may be dynamic, but whose criteria for membership are stable if not clearly defined. And absent from the linguistic changes brought about by the expansion of the literate culture are the transnational relationships at the root of the impulse toward standardization.

But of course Miller is concerned with the formation of English Studies as a discipline rather than the standardization of the English language. As such, it is somewhat less problematic for him on the one hand to claim that the discipline of college English is a result of the transculturation that occurs in the contact zone, but then not see the language identified as standard was free of the same contact. And of course, there is the

issue I addressed in the introduction of Miller's choice to characterize Scotland as a cultural province rather than as a colony, a choice which he claims to justify, but whose justification seems absent in my reading of this history. His justification seems based on the fact that an act of parliament created the nation of Great Britain from select English colonial possessions. Under such a distinction, we would have to ignore Villanueva's grounds for the colonial relationship important to the creation of his own identity (and my own similar claims), because the United States never used the word "colony" to describe their relationship with Puerto Rico (nor did they use the word to describe their relationship with the Philippines). The removal of the word colony does not necessarily change the colonial conditions between the two nations, of course, even if they might change the way we historically perceive those conditions. If the Acts of Union change anything about the contact zone the current chapter is exploring, it only makes relevant the prefix "post-" to the root word "colonial" rather than fundamentally change the volatility of the linguistic situation of the era or any era. What I think is important to point out here is that in Johnson's dictionary, as in Blair's *Rhetoric*, we may be seeing acts of trans- rather than acculturation, but we are also not reading Guaman Poma's "revisionist" *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* that is the centerpiece of Pratt's speech, but rather the assimilationist texts with which Pratt contrasts with *The New Chronicle*, the texts that, importantly, are the ones to become a part of the historical record and do not require reclamation by postcolonial scholars such as Pratt. Both Johnson's dictionary and Blair's *Rhetoric* are examples of assimilationist documents which give in to and create the dominant discourse rather than resist and attempt to

subvert it. And I find it curious that Miller recognizes this in the impulse toward standardization of tasteful discourse behind the creation of the textual category of “literary,” but not behind the efforts to standardize English usage.

Sorensen, on the other hand, in looking closely at the details of both the content of Johnson’s dictionary and the circumstances of Johnson’s writing process in compiling the dictionary, exposes imperial and even gendered assumptions behind his dictionary, not the least of which is the imperial/nationalistic motivation behind compiling a dictionary in the first place. Under Sorensen’s telling, it is less the technology of writing that enables the “standard” language that Johnson creates, and more so the colonial and nationalist assumptions behind English theories of language use which were prominent in response to metropolitan relationships with colonial others. It is worth repeating the quote from Sorensen with which I introduced her text in the introduction:

The act of collecting the customary language of the nation is, then, a cultural work far more significant than mere recording. If nationalist rhetoric contrives an image of a unified national people who can be traced backwards and who continue to move forward in time together, it can only do so by forgetting the linguistic evidence of social division. In this way the moment of linguistic preservation is also one of forgetting, a doubled movement that parallels the rhetoric of nationalism itself. (88)

And while Sorensen is talking about nationalism and not imperialism, it is important to point out that she is talking about an idea of nation that depends on the idea of colonial others and their “foreign” or particular uses of language to define the imagined

homogenous utopian national identity. Johnson, in fact, deliberately avoided collecting certain Scottish uses of words and, where he saw their inclusion as necessary—because, after all “The very act of making a very ‘full collection’ of an imperial nation’s language mandates the inclusion of such words.” (90)—warned against their use. (87-93) The question, then, is whether or not this is part of the process that Miller describes as fitting Pratt’s definition of transculturation? Certainly, this is a process by which “the dominant culture is itself transformed” (Miller 29) by contact with the non-dominant culture, but this is certainly not the “processes whereby members of the subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant metropolitan culture” (Pratt 2). It is, in fact, the dominant culture maintaining its dominance by placing—in print and laid out on a page for easy juxtaposition, comparison and explication—its own perceived “native” words alongside those of the empire’s conquered cultures and therefore making present to the dictionary’s users the empire’s colonial Others, reinforcing their otherness and naturalizing the ways in which these colonial Others become absorbed into the metropolitan culture, the idea of which is being created and reproduced in part by texts such as the dictionary itself.

And Miller’s narrative of standardization, though too reliant on the role of technology in a way that maintains problematic binaries (public/private discourses, print/oral cultures), we can still use his narrative to inform us about the kinds of class anxieties caught up in the move to standardization. Further, his narrative is important in exposing not only how important the move toward teaching college classes in English rather than Latin and Ancient Greek, but also the parallels that this move within Scottish

institutions of higher education and the English dissenting academies had with current composition practice and theory:

the institutionalization of the “new” rhetoric in the eighteenth century has basic parallels with the reintroduction of rhetoric into American English departments two centuries later, when open admissions led to the introduction of “basic” writing courses for those who were deemed to be too ill-prepared to study the classics of English literature. In both cases, more broadly based colleges introduced courses that elite institutions considered to be beneath them, and this so-called decline in standards occurred at the same time that previously excluded groups were gaining access to education [...] From one perspective, the need for such “remedial” instruction marks an era of decline, but from another, it marks a historical opportunity for cultural transformation because education is straining to maintain the hegemony of the dominant culture and the processes involved have been called into question and be subjected to productive critical analysis. (165)

When Miller mentions the “‘new’ rhetoric,” he means a movement away from classicism. I would extend this parallel to include—in addition to the creation of basic writing—the creation of the Harvard English A course that many histories of composition identify as the birth of composition in the United States. I explore this in more detail in the next chapter when I look at the history of assessment, but for now I want to look closely at how Miller describes the movement from introduction of new classes of students to

higher education and standardization, and how his assumptions extend problematic assumptions about language that maintain rather than question “the hegemony of the dominant culture” by describing the move toward standardization in ways that see “standard” English as a natural rather than created category of written language. So, for example, although Miller continues from the above statement to acknowledge the role that lowland Scots played in the standardizing of the English taught in their college curricula, his telling suggests two things: first, that linguistic standardization is necessarily a one-time process wherein standards are agreed upon and then solidified (with the implication that these standards are never to change again), and second that this solidified standard existed in its unchanging state by the time it was instituted in Scottish universities. So while he tells us that

The standardization of English within provincial universities themselves is clearly documented in the Minutes of the Edinburgh Faculty Senate [...] most of the motions were in Latin, but some were also in Scots, with numerous spellings, terms, and phrasings that are unfamiliar to *standard English speakers*. From 1700-1740, Latin became less common, and the vernacular moved steadily toward standardized English, with variations from *accepted* usage virtually nonexistent after the 1750s--the period when English was beginning to be formally taught in the classroom. (165-6, emphasis added),

the idea of a “standard” English is clearly uncomplicated and unproblematic. It is conflated with “standardized” English which, though the suffix “-ized” would imply a

consciously created usage (especially in connection with the narrative of a faculty senate making decisions about curriculum—this “standardized” language is still being compared to a static “standard” English with an already “accepted” usage. Because he sees the standard language as that of the “print” language and fails to look at the cultural assumptions behind the language that was standardized in print, it is unproblematic for him to compare the standardization of the English language within the Scottish universities to the creation of basic writers in the United States in response to open admissions. This easy comparison allows compositionists to overlook the similar reasons for creating the composition class at Harvard, and also allows us to overlook the problematics of teaching composition to any student population, not just those we have come to call basic writers, though these students are undoubtedly the students most obviously and perhaps immediately affected by our assimilationist pedagogies. Monodialectical pedagogies are not a problem as long as standardized languages are not racially or culturally marked, but marked only by the seemingly neutral technology of the printing press. The basic writing class of which Miller speaks is not the the basic writing class of, for example, Bartholomae’s “The Tidy House” (1993) or even the postcolonial space imagined by Harris (1995) or Lu (1991), even though the situation with which he compares the formation of basic writing is exactly a colonial one.

It is important, then, for contemporary compositionists to consider how problematic it is for the narrative of standardization to be too heavily reliant on print technology. While I have no doubt that the printing press and a wider reading public eased the propagation of the *idea* of a standard English, it was more than a matter of

choosing an already existing written language as standard, as Miller's narrative implies. Importantly, however, Miller's narrative does point to the growing importance of literacy in defining the boundaries of the class hierarchies within the nation. So while Sorensen's analysis of the same issues is useful in illustrating the roles that colonial relationships played in the development of the idea of a standard English language, Miller's analysis of the standardization of tasteful discourse illustrates the intersections of colonialism and class at play in the relationships between the Scottish colonial subjects who theorized the taste discourse that led to the creation of English departments that house the vast majority of composition programs in American universities. This same kind of intersectionality has been explored by Beth Fowkes Tobin in her analyses of art and natural history discourse in the eighteenth century. For example, in her books *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (2005) and *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century Painting* (1999), Tobin uses art to explore the intersections of colonialism and class in polite art. Tobin's analysis can serve as a basis for rereading Blair's *Rhetoric* through a lens that looks at the intersections of colonialism, class and understandings of polite gentlemanly ethos. As both Miller and Sorensen show, this ethos was the goal of standardizing both the English language and tasteful discourse using criteria that would appeal to a gentlemanly mercantile class profiting from imperial expansion. That lowland Scots such as Hume and Blair were active in deciding these standards is significant because it shows the ways that, as colonial subjects, they sought to find political agency through aligning themselves with a similarly new class of metropolitan subjects that established their social worth through imperial ventures. I want

to look closely at Blair's *Lectures* and in particular his discussions of taste, language, and writing to show the ways that he positioned himself socially against racialized colonial Others in farther-flung parts of the Empire. For Scottish taste theorists, taste and standardization were key to identifying one's national identity along this imagined spectrum.

II. Gentlemanly Discourse and the Imperial Character of Standardization

The importance of Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* to literacy education in nineteenth century American universities, and even into the twentieth century has been thoroughly documented; for example we can look to both of Thomas Miller's histories, *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the English Cultural Provinces* (1997) and his 2011 book *The History of College English: Literacy Studies from the Puritans to the Postmoderns* or to Graff's 2008 history of English departments, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*, all three of which document how popular Blair's rhetoric was in American colleges and universities through the nineteenth century, and how its popularity shaped the way writing was theorized and taught at these colleges and universities. Other composition historians such as James Berlin, Winifred Horner and Sharon Crowley have all discussed the importance of Blair's *Lectures* as well. Miller's first book, which I discussed in detail in the previous section, tells us that over one-hundred editions of Blair's *Lectures* were published during the nineteenth century (227), and in fact, the popularity of Blair's lectures even prior to their publication is discussed in Addison's preface to the 1783 edition which informs us that

the Author saw them circulate so currently [...] and found himself often threatened with surreptitious publications of them, he judged it to be high time that they should proceed from his own hand, rather than come into public view under some very defective and erroneous form.” (A2)

And so the publication of the lectures was undertaken by Blair in response to popular distribution of them in “surreptitious” formats over which he had no control, which is to say that the publication happened in reaction to what was already public popularity. It is interesting that Blair’s primary concern—at least in Addison’s telling—is inaccuracy. As we will see, Addison’s discussion of Blair’s decision to publish his lectures sounds similar to prevailing narratives in composition studies of authorship and originality that continue today. Miller traces this idea of authorship to publications such as *The Spectator* which he claims created the idea of the essayist as objective observer who stands apart and above political controversies (16-17). And in fact, according to Miller, it was this supposedly objective author, uninterested in political controversy, from which the belletristic essay was born, a form of writing that was characterized by a point of view rather than a set of textual conventions developed for social purposes (16-17). While I take issue with the binary way that Miller tends to talk about texts and their public and private origins and uses (as I discuss in my introduction), it is still useful for us to note that there was a relationship between the development of the belletristic essay and a particular view of authorship. Miller’s two volumes are important for this chapter because they trace practices and theories acted on by modern English departments to the belletrist movement brought to Scottish universities during the Eighteenth Century by such

scholars as David Hume and Hugh Blair who sought to standardize taste as a way of aligning themselves closer to English metropolitan culture and distance themselves from other colonized peoples in Britain's imperialist regime.

Though the theories advanced in Blair's *Lectures* were not entirely his own (Bizzell and Herzberg 2001), my analysis will focus mostly on his text due its popularity at the time of its publication and its continued influence in the following centuries. Hume's essays will also be of some importance to me, especially when considering the ways that taste theories were tied directly to the body by Hume. I will also consider the importance of the use of a standardized language in addition to standardized tasteful discourse in aligning their middle class Scots identity with a gentlemanly English one. I do so in order to enrich rather than undo or challenge the narrative that Miller's history has created for the formation of college English and composition. In particular, there are sections of Blair's lectures in which his references to, for example, "rude, uncultivated tribes" (2) I read as not only as a clear sign that the lectures were "calculatedly created to appeal to the tastes of the dominant culture" (Miller *Formation* 229), but did so by calling attention to and differentiating themselves from a common subordinate Other. This differentiation was necessary in the face of an English educational establishment which saw the linguistic reforms taking place in Scottish universities as a threat to educational standards.

What we will find is a Scottish colonial subject similar to Spivak's subaltern, and although I do want to follow Sorenson's caution against seeing the eighteenth century Raj as representative of all British imperial culture (hence my reluctance to apply Spivak's

famous question about the Indian colonial subjectivity to Hume and Blair), the idea is still useful “because at times [Scotland] functioned as a training ground for linguistic practices of imperial domination” (3). It is within this training ground, in fact, that we must read the linguistic practices of the Scottish universities that were, at this time, undergoing a radical transition from instruction in classical languages to the vernacular, as mentioned briefly in the previous section. This transition, though as *Foundation* illustrates was, in fact, a democratizing move, it is also important to understand the context in which this democratization takes place and who this democratization leaves out. Ultimately, this analysis will provide a basis for parallels in our own pedagogical assumptions about language. For example, the failure of Students’ Right to Their Own Language to truly value students’ everyday languages, or to claim that we value them, but undermine our own claims with practices that continue to privilege white, middle-class language patterns. The next chapter will show how assessment is a tool for maintaining white linguistic privilege. This section of this chapter examines the imperialist context in which such assumptions about language were first formed.

The complex relationships between metropole and colonized self, and the role that language plays in these complex relationships, are evident early in Blair’s treatise on taste. Let us return momentarily to the rude uncultivated tribes of Blair’s first lecture. Blair notes that it is

In the language even of rude uncultivated tribes, we can trace some attention to the grace and force of those expressions which they used, when they sought to persuade or to affect. They were early sensible of a

beauty in discourse, and endeavored to give it certain decorations which experience had taught them it was capable of receiving, long before the study of those decorations was formed into a regular art. (2)

I quote at length because I think it is important to not overlook the fact that although Blair's extensive use of the past tense would imply that Blair is referring at least primarily to past societies rather than current indigenous populations, he is actually asking us to imagine a universal humanity in varying stages of societal development; the depiction of indigenous societies as resembling societies of a past Europe provides an explanation for why—as we will see in this section of this chapter—it is frequently difficult to distinguish in his discussions of language development and tasteful discourse between past societies and current far-flung colonial societies when he discusses “rude, uncultivated tribes.” Under a model of societal development in which all societies move through similar stages toward the same end, past and current “uncultivated” societies are essentially the same thing. And if they all move toward the same “level” of advancement, then little justification needs to be provided for imperial domination. More specifically for our purposes, under this theory of social development language and elocution instruction becomes less a tool for imperial domination, but more one of social inclusion in the gifts provided by the metropole to its marginal subjects. The rest of this section will continue with an analysis of Blair's linguistic theories, especially with regard to development of language, but I think it is worth pausing and considering the ways that many composition pedagogies, especially some pedagogies that imagine composition as a space to provide access, are based on parallel theories of language use. Under these

theories, we can somehow unproblematically give students “the language of power” without acknowledging the racist/colonialist/nationalist ideologies behind the myth of a standard English.

Sorensen’s analysis of Blair’s discussion of language within the “four-stage chronology of human social development” (153) focuses almost entirely on Blair and other elite Lowland Scotsmen differentiating themselves from Highland Scotsmen along this chronology, but does not address moments when Blair explicitly differentiates from and discusses what he sees as the superiority of the English language from that of Native American language use (homogeneously imagined and depicted). But of course imagining language use homogeneously is not a problem if all people and societies are imagined to exist along a universal timeline where difference is described as stages or milestones in a cultural development with an assumed universal destination. I will discuss this in more detail later, but I find it necessary to point out here the parallels between the social developmental plot subscribed to by many Enlightenment thinkers and the developmental plot we often apply to student writer identities, especially regarding basic or developmental writers. One thing that I hope to demonstrate with this analysis is the ways that postcolonial studies and composition studies can inform each other. Though postcolonial theory can provide composition studies with an illumination of its own theoretical and pedagogical limitations (such as Pratt did in “Arts of the Contact Zone” or I hope my placing of Sorensen and Miller in conversation has done), composition studies can expose the limits of postcolonial studies when its object of study is limited to objects of study (literary discourse) created exactly as a result of the ways of thinking that

postcolonial studies is meant to oppose.

III. Other Others: Hugh Blair, Literacy Practices of the Contact Zone and the Developmental Myth

The colonial ideologies behind the idea of standardization are evident in Blair's discussion of the development of language. It is assumed that tasteful discourse is the eventual and desired endpoint of all language use. He lays out his idea of teleological development in discourse even more explicitly in the following paragraphs when he says that "among nations in a civilized state, no art has been cultivated with more care, than that of language, style, and composition" (2). Further, as society "improves and flourishes, men acquire more influence over one another by means of reason and discourse; [...] it must follow, *as a natural consequence*, that they will bestow more care upon the methods of expressing their conceptions with propriety and eloquence" (2, emphasis mine). Belletristic discourse, then, is the goal and pinnacle of language development. Interestingly, Blair feels no need to provide evidence for these assertions. In fact, throughout both his lectures on taste and his lectures on the development of language and writing, we find this same pattern. Though I am more concerned with his lectures on language, it is important to note that this pattern first shows up in the lectures on taste as it illustrates how closely tied together tasteful and "correct" usage were to Blair. As I will illustrate in this section, the development of language for Blair parallels the development of taste in that it follows the same chronology of human development. The movement that he describes with regard to tasteful discourse toward "eloquence and propriety" is also a move toward correctness, and this correctness imagined a language

that was free of metaphor or semiotic interpretation. Most importantly for this dissertation, it is in his discussion of language change and difference in which he first identifies “Northern American tribes” (108) as examples of the “rude, uncultivated tribes” he first mentions in his lectures on taste, and so we have a specific example of farther flung colonial others against which Blair can position himself and his contemporaries.

Before I move on to a discussion of his lectures on language and writing, I want to be explicit about the othering move that I see happening in Blair’s discussion. The “rude, uncultivated tribes” in question are indigenous inhabitants of land claimed as colonial possessions of European imperial powers. And though Sorensen makes a clear case for Blair and his contemporaries working to differentiate themselves from Highland Scots in a bid to legitimize their educational program, he is also explicitly positioning himself against indigenous American cultures. In fact, there is nothing in any of Blair’s lectures that would indicate that he sees himself as anything but a member of a learned, metropolitan English culture. This conscious alignment with rather than against the dominant colonial power complicates the claim that the new rhetoric of which Blair’s lectures were a part was a trans- rather than acculturated discourse. Blair’s lectures, whose popularity have been well-established even prior to their publication, are not Guaman Poma’s *New Chronicle*. Though certainly a product of the contact zone, they are nonetheless assimilationist texts. Importantly, it is not only taste that marks Blair’s lectures as assimilationist, but additionally his theories on language. So while many composition histories focus on the belletrist piece of Blair’s rhetoric, they in turn overlook the equally important theories of language; this over focus on belletristic

rhetoric allows us to rightly identify problematic theories of literacy perpetuated by English departments too heavily focused on the reception of literary texts, yet ignore our own complicity in perpetuating related theories in insisting on the production of monolingual, even monodialectal and even monomodal texts.

A philosophical link between monolingualism and monomodalism can actually be found specifically in Blair's discussion of language development which places "pictures" in a middle stage of development from speaking to representing speech through pictorial representation to finally, representing speech through written words. Further, he explicitly ties this development to different cultures:

Next to Speech, Writing is, beyond doubt, the most useful art of which men are possessed. It is plainly an improvement upon Speech, and therefore must have been posterior to it in order of time. At first, men thought of nothing more than communicating their thoughts to one another, when present, by means of words, or sounds, which they uttered. Afterwards, they devised this further method, of mutual communication with one another, when absent, by means of marks or characters presented to the eye, which we call Writing.

Written characters are of two sorts. They are either signs for things, or signs for words. Of the former sort, signs of things, are the pictures, hieroglyphics, and symbols, employed by the antient nations; of the latter sort, signs for words are the alphabetical characters, now employed by all Europeans. These two kinds of Writing are generically, and essentially,

distinct. (125)

It is significant that the main difference between hieroglyphic writing and alphabetic writing is what they are symbols for, and that the written symbol is a further step removed from the object of signification, that a spoken word, a hieroglyphic symbol and an alphabetic word are not symbols for the same thing, but rather symbols along a temporal continuum that represent more abstract thinking. Further, more abstract thinking represents, under Blair's thinking, a necessarily more "advanced" society. But of course he is operating under the common Enlightenment colonialist assumption that European societies were the model of all societies' end goal, developmentally speaking. Further, and perhaps more importantly for the current dissertation, he refuses to consider the possibilities for non-alphabetic and non-Western literacy practices, and instead assumes limitations based, it seems, not on any evidence but on racist assumptions about the relationship between literacy practices and the capacity for abstract thought, a key component of which is a myth about social development.

As Blair's discussion of the development of writing continues, he uses the examples of Mexico "when America was first discovered" (126) and then-present-day China both examples of societies in previous stages in the development of written communication. An extended discussion of Blair's theories of language development is important because it uses local literacy practices to reinforce a dominant colonial social order while simultaneously positioning Blair and his students—well-off Lowland Scots—closer to the metropolitan center of this social order than racialized colonial and national subjects. According to Blair, as mentioned briefly in the previous paragraph, writing

evolves in all societies through the following stages: first, pictorial writing in which people first reproduce concrete objects and events directly by drawing them; second, hieroglyphic writing in which pictorial writing gets abstracted slightly, such as the eye in Egyptian hieroglyphics representing knowledge; third, non-alphabetical writing such as Chinese characters, and finally, alphabetic writing. As previously mentioned, each of these stages of writing represents a stage of abstraction farther away from the objects and subjects of discourse, and further, indicate an entire society's ability to think abstractly and to express an individual's interiority versus describing the outside world. Blair is very explicit in the consequences of a society's dominant literacy practices existing in one of the non-alphabetic stages of development.

Regarding the pictorial writing of Mexico, he says that written documentation "must have been extremely imperfect records; and the nations who had no other, must have been very gross and rude. Pictures could no more than delineate external events. They could neither exhibit the connections of them, nor describe such qualities as were not visible to the eye, nor convey any idea of the dispositions, or words, of men" (126). Regarding the non-alphabetic writing of the Chinese, he says "To read and write them to perfection, is the study of a whole life; which subjects learning, among them, to infinite disadvantage; and must have greatly retarded the progress of all science" (129), and of Egyptian hieroglyphics:

But, as many of those properties of objects which they assumed for the foundation of their hieroglyphics, were merely imaginary, and the allusions drawn from them were forced and ambiguous; as the conjunction

of their characters rendered them still more obscure, and must have expressed very indistinctly the connections and relations of things; this sort of Writing could be no other than aenigmatical, and confused, in the highest degree; and must have been a very imperfect vehicle of knowledge of any kind. (127)

The commonality shared by all of these literacy practices which Blair surmises—based only on the evidence that his own local literacy practices are so different that he cannot come to an immediate understanding of them to the same depth that he understands his own, is that these forms of writing are “signs of things and not words” (130). This distinction is significant because it establishes the superiority of European literacy practices by claiming an extra level of abstraction by tying alphabetic expression primarily to sound rather than sight. He is quite detailed in his discussion of how he theorizes the development of writing from the earliest societies who drew what he saw as direct depictions of objects and events in a need to communicate beyond the present moment, to alphabetic writing which is, under his system, necessarily more precise, complete and readily understandable. Spoken words are abstractions of things and alphabetic writing is superior in its abstraction from spoken language. Blair goes through pains to describe an imagined process of humans realizing that abstracting sounds rather than whole concepts will make for a more expressive form of communicating across absence. And absence is important to Blair. He cites it as the main reason for writing’s being “beyond a doubt, the most useful art of which men are possessed” (125).

So Blair’s history of language and writing partakes in what should be familiar

assumptions about language and literacy to contemporary composition practitioners. When he says that the languages of “rude” and “uncultivated” nations is “full of figures and metaphors, not correct indeed” (118), and that “Mankind never employed so many figures of Speech, as when they had hardly any words for expressing their meaning” (118), he is offering up a narrative of linguistic development that would necessarily favor English colonial power. And when he specifically identifies the Iroquois and Illinois as specific examples of such rude and uncultivated societies, he is clearly differentiating which colonial Others’ literacy practices are inherently lacking while simultaneously establishing an imagined singular European literacy practice (alphabetic writing) as the pinnacle of literacy. Though in his later lectures on grammar, he does go on to discuss similarities and differences between various European languages, the characteristic they share in Blair’s narrative of development is a movement from representation of things to representations of words. Further, Blair believes that alphabetic script, in its imitation of sound, is necessarily more efficient than other forms of writing. And so of course Guaman Poma’s text and any other products of the contact zone that resemble it would go unrecognized for centuries. Blair’s lectures on language are part of an order in which such texts necessarily would not make sense, or at least would not be able to make the kind of precise sense that he claims exclusively for European languages, both spoken and written. Under such a system, any critique of colonial rule could be dismissed as inadequate until such a critique is made in the language of the dominant discourse. Assuming, of course, that such a discourse is, in fact singular. And as if all of these movement were not enough in Blair’s efforts to set himself apart from colonized subjects

in other parts of the Empire, early in his discussion on the development of the English language specifically, he tells us that “The Language spoken in the low countries of Scotland, is now, and has been for many centuries, no other than a dialect of the English” (171). This is an example not only of the linguistic differentiation between Highland and Lowland Scotland that Blair and his contemporaries were so anxious to establish, but coming quickly on the heels of his lecture on the development of writing, a move to establish Lowland Scots such as himself as already established members of the Empire. As such, his pedagogy is assimilationist rather than insurgent, and it depends on establishing a monolingual and monomodal order to semiotic meaning making.

It is worth closing by pointing out the now-familiar criticism regarding the naturalizing of colonial assumptions behind wordings like “when America was first discovered” in his discussion of the indigenous writing of pre-colonial Mexico. This is important to point out because while we have perhaps—in theory—rejected the developmental myth regarding the development of societies, we continue to place literacy practices within a hierarchy favored by colonial subjects whose pedagogical goals were to align themselves with the center of imperial power. Specifically, when compositionists privilege an idea of writing that dichotomizes inside/outside status with regard to students and their relationship to the literacy practices through which they move, by thinking of these literacy practices only in terms of alphabetical symbols, and by privileging particular uses of alphabetic language, we simultaneously reinforce colonial educational assumptions and create composition as a space of maintaining rather than disrupting these colonial hierarchies. And it is these hierarchies upon which standardized assessments

depend and which allow the linguistic assumptions upon which machine scored assessments are built, which I will explore in the next chapter. And yet it is research in composition, and particularly in work with students we have come to identify as developmental or basic writers, that has shown us the radical potential for the contact zone of the composition classroom. As I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Lu has identified a resistance to the developmental myth as a radical contribution that composition is specifically positioned to make, and as I will discuss in the final chapter, we will see that much scholarship from basic writing has attempted to resist this myth, yet “mainstream” composition practice still reifies it. The next chapter will discuss the ways that assessment and how we talk about it is a tool of such reification. Finally, to return one more time to Pratt before moving on, I want to address Guaman Poma’s multimodal, multiliterate, multilingual text as an example of the kinds of resistant discourses that we can use to resist the discourses of standardization upon which large-scale assessments depend.

Chapter 3

Shifting Currents: Historicizing the Fourth Wave of Writing Assessment

I. Reframing, Revision and Reliability

This chapter takes as its frame Kathleen Blake Yancey’s “Looking Back as We Look Forward: Historicizing Writing Assessment” (1999)—in which she identifies three major waves in writing assessment—and then I attempt to identify the fourth wave that Yancey anticipated on the horizon at the time of her writing. In the article, Yancey proposed the following possibilities for what she saw coming in the fourth wave of assessment, which are worth quoting at length:

Perhaps this next wave will focus on program assessment as epistemological and ideological work; perhaps it will focus more on individual assessment as interpretive act; perhaps it will take on the challenges posed by non-canonical texts [...]; perhaps it will address the kinds of expertise and ways they can construct and be represented in writing assessment; perhaps it will include topics that are only now forming.” (501)

The fifteen years since has, in fact, seen all of these possibilities in the literature, including (perhaps not surprisingly) the “only now forming” topics of student self-assessment and machine scoring. The task of identifying a fourth wave, then, is the task of identifying a more general trend that can be traced in the movement of assessment literature through various dominant topics. My own attempts at identifying this general trend will use Yancey’s own approach in which she ties together a shifting struggle

between validity and reliability, expert and non-expert, and outside and inside the classroom. Through this approach she finds the movement from standardized tests to holistically scored essays to, eventually, the writing portfolio, as a movement from external reliability to internal validity to an eventual balance between the two; she also identifies a general movement from “expert” assessments administered by testing professionals to non-expert assessments by writing teachers which parallels a move from indirect to direct measurement—meaning a move from measuring “indirect” writing knowledge through grammar tests toward assessing an actual piece of writing produced by the student (486)—and finally a movement from outside the classroom to inside the classroom. In general, I think we have been in the midst of a shift back outside the classroom in the form of dominant concerns with program assessments and machine scoring. This parallels a shift back from non-expert to expert testing. Naturally, the shifts have been more nuanced than the generalities I lay out above. For example, student self-assessments are certainly more inside the classroom than outside, and are certainly more non-expert than expert. Such is the nature of waves. I would argue that the moment where the assessment literature was concerned with student self-assessment was the tail end of the inside/non-expert end of the third wave while the program assessment wave which constitutes a move back outside the classroom was already on the rise.

As such, the fourth wave has been a move back outside of the classroom, and though it is tempting to say that this constitutes a movement away from attempting to achieving balance between the concerns of validity and reliability, to say so would ignore meaningful efforts by “non-expert” testers such as composition researchers, teachers, and

administrators to design assessments that consider student needs and research in writing that early assessments designed by testing experts—for the most part—failed to consider. For example, the organic assessment model designed by Broad et al, or the portfolio assessment designed by Haswell and Wyche-Smith at Washington State University, are examples of WPA scholarship on assessment that is sensitive to both Yancey’s definition of validity: “measuring what you intend to measure” (487), but also a shift in the definition of reliability that Yancey claims is a key characteristic of the third wave of assessment in which “reliability is not a function of agreement, directed or otherwise, among raters so much as it is a function of rater experience with particular curricula” (496). Yet with the emergence of machine scoring, what we find is an attempted re-assertion of expertise by testing professionals and the re-emergence of a less sophisticated, less localized, less valid understanding of reliability. And these attempts, as we will see in this chapter, are no less than expressions of colonizing impulses regarding student literacy practices that fell out of fashion during the third wave. Further, we are seeing this re-assertion of colonizing impulses in response to the emergence of what Lu (2004) calls global Englishes that we confront in increasingly globalized universities.

From within composition, two important revisions to the concept of validity have emerged during the fourth wave. And though one of them has been adapted from testing professionals in the same way that holistic scoring was at the beginning of the second wave (Huot 2002), they both represent attempts to privilege values situated within composition rather than testing. In his 2002 book *(Re)articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, Huot complicates the definition of validity advanced by Yancey

in her history, which he characterizes as “outmoded” (ch. 2) and the use of which he contributes to the professional divisions between writing teachers (Yancey’s non-experts) and testing professionals (Yancey’s experts) (ch. 2). According to Huot, Yancey sees the rise of holistic scoring as “a victory” for teachers over testing professionals, when in fact, holistic scoring was developed by ETS (Huot ch.2). Given many of our professional assumptions in composition about, for example, the highly situated and contextual nature of writing practices, we might find Yancey’s misidentification of the origins of holistic scoring as a largely irrelevant matter. After all, despite whoever developed holistic scoring, was it not a victory for writing teachers to have an actual piece of writing scored instead of relying on indirect measures which much of our disciplinary research and theory and has shown to be based on inadequate understandings of literate practice? Further, isn’t it a triumph for students? But Huot demonstrates that our disciplinary narrative that sees holistic scoring as a method developed by Yancey’s non-experts as opposed to testing experts has calcified our own understanding of validity in a way that has allowed us to ignore more sophisticated and even a more socially just definition of testing validity that has been developed, perhaps counterintuitively given our professional narrative of the triumph of the non-expert, from within the testing community. (ch. 2)

The more recent definition of validity favored by Huot is “the adequacy of the theoretical and empirical evidence to construct an argument for making decisions based upon a specific assessment” (ch. 2). In short, this newer definition of validity accounts for how the results or data gathered from the assessment are put to actual use. Further, this definition recognizes that the methods we use to answer the question of validity are going

to be a constructed “argument” rather than an essential characteristic of the assessment’s design. As such, this definition is a better reflection of current disciplinary theory and practice than the older definition which seems to assume that an assessment can be inherently valid, despite the uses to which it is put and the social consequences of these uses. Providing us with a compelling example under the “outmoded” definition favored by Yancey, Huot claims

the recent writing assessment used by City University of New York can be pronounced valid, since the consequences of denying university entrance to scores of minority students does not interfere with what the test purports to measure. The test continues to be used to deny educational opportunities to students even though there is a body of evidence that shows that students who worked in developmental and mainstream programs were able to pass ‘the core courses at a rate that was even higher than the rate for our pilot course students who had placed into English 110.’ (ch. 2)

Though Huot does not provide much explanation of the CUNY test beyond its relationship to Yancey’s definition of validity, I quote this example at length in order to point to the importance of considering the use to which an assessment is put under the umbrella of validity. Under the older definition, judgments of an assessment’s validity see the data as separate from its social uses, and because reliability and validity are the twin concepts—historically and currently—upon which large scale assessments’ social uses are determined, these social uses should be included. In Huot’s example the social uses of

a particular assessment, though arguably valid under the older and less nuanced definition, are essentially racist. And the racist social uses of this particular assessment are that the assessment allows composition to continue to fill a gatekeeping function for minority students rather than provide avenues for access.

In his 2009 article “The Technology of Writing Assessment and Racial Validity” Asao Inoue further nuances Huot’s definition of validity by focusing more closely on what he calls “rationales” (109) and what Huot, in the quote in the previous paragraph calls “argument.” Under both terms, the contingent nature of a particular assessment’s validity is recognized, but Inoue differentiates his approach to validity from Huot by claiming that “If validation is centrally concerned with judging the degree to which someone’s (or a group’s) expressed values and interests are promoted through the inferences and actions taken from an assessment, then validity is deeply rhetorical and hegemonic” (109). I believe that Huot would agree with the “rhetorical” part of this statement, but that Inoue and Huot differ on the extent to which they see validity as hegemonic. Whereas Inoue states directly that validity is necessarily hegemonic, Huot seems to imply the possibility of a valid assessment that avoids the trap of racial hegemony. In fact, Inoue’s main criticism of Huot’s favored definition of validity, adapted from Cronbach’s consequential validity (Inoue 111), is that racial formations that contribute to understandings of language use that might drive criteria for assessment, what he calls “expressed values,” are too easily ignored in judging an assessment’s validity. According to Inoue, although consequential validity might ask us to consider any number of social and political consequences of a given assessment, the concept itself is

so general that we might similarly ignore the very same social and political consequences. More specifically, because consequential validity does not explicitly include a consideration of racial formations, it could still be deployed in such a way that ignores that privileging particular language practices is itself a racialized act (110-12). Further, because both Huot and Inoue use as a base assumption Hanson's (1993) assertion that assessments actually create the results they are meant to find, we might wonder why Huot would not theorize a definition of validity that includes racial formations when he is clearly concerned with the consequences of assessments on minority students. We might similarly wonder why Inoue does not make similar allowances for similar constructions of gender, sexuality or class. I do not mean to paint Inoue in a way that depicts him as overly concerned with race at the expense of other social formations or political concerns. In fact, I think he is probably very concerned with these issues. However, I do think he makes a sound argument in favor of racial validity, but also think that we should make similar considerations for social constructions along other identity axes and intersections such as gender and sexuality.

This extended discussion of shifting definitions of validity is important because if Huot is right in his claim that Yancey is only correct about the second wave being about a shift in focus from reliability (the dominant concern in the first wave) to validity if we accept the definition of validity favored by her and White—and I believe he is—then we will have to shift our reading of the second wave, and thus the third wave, before making claims about the fourth wave. So while Yancey is correct to claim that shifting in dominant notions of writing assessment from multiple choice tests to holistic scoring was

a shift away from being overly concerned with reliability at the expense of validity, and that this correlated with shifts from outside to inside the classroom, from expert to non-expert, and from indirect to direct sampling of data, validity theory went through its own changes that went unrecognized by us within writing studies. In fact, Huot makes the claim that the period of time that Yancey identifies as the second wave was, in fact, dominated by reliability concerns (ch. 2). What I want to suggest is not a total redefinition of Yancey's second wave nor even a comprehensive rereading, but just a shift in the extent to which we consider the twin concepts of validity and reliability as criteria for defining the parameters of each wave.

All of this redefining of validity is especially important for the fourth wave of assessment because I will claim that not only have conservative notions of validity dominated writing assessment throughout its history—as both Huot and Inoue claim—but also that the fourth wave has seen a shift back toward reliability as the dominant concern in assessments while notions of validity have remained constant at the expense of minority students and others such as non-native speakers whom we might easily qualify as developmental or basic writers. This is especially evident in many of the arguments about machine scoring of student essays which appear to be part of a larger shift outside the classroom as larger scale assessments become an increasing concern for writing programs. Later in this chapter, I will look more closely at machine scoring as an example of this shift back to reliability concerns, but first I want to look at the larger discourse around assessment in general outside of academic professionals. It is here, in what Gallagher (2007) calls the “accountability agenda” that is driving much of the

discourse surrounding assessment.

Adler-Kassner and O'Neill provide a good analysis of this discourse in their 2010 book *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning* by analyzing documents such as the Spelling Commission Report on Higher Education and other "crisis-minded" education reports. Significantly, their analysis demonstrates that many large-scale assessment efforts are framed by traditional, often contradictory theories about the social value of education. They borrow three theories of education's purpose from Labaree: first, a theory that sees education's purpose to prepare students for democratic citizenship; second, a theory that sees education's purpose to prepare students for roles in the economy; third, a theory that sees education's purpose as means to social mobility (21). They see the first two of these theories aligned with a theory of education as a public good, and the third theory as aligned with education as a private good, and further, that the ideas of public versus private good in education can be aligned with whether or not we see education as filling a "stewardship" versus "technocratic" role (22). The stewardship role could prepare students either by "help[ing] students find their ways into particular roles [or] identify the roles best suited to students and groom them for these roles" (22). Alternately, the technocratic theory of education claims that "progress is achieved through the competition of one individual against another and the amassing of social and intellectual capital" (22). Much of the discourse from outside the academy that is driving writing assessments within it favor the technocratic model in their methods by seeking to prove that certain things are happening in the classroom, while claiming a stewardship model in their purpose by claiming to prepare students for

participation in the economy (34-5). It is the stewardship philosophy, after all, that drive the crisis-minded frame behind many of these reports such as the Spelling Commission Report. Yet the technocratic philosophy drives the methods and content of the assessments.

These contrasting theories of education parallel the shifting concerns in Yancey's history between validity and reliability in that the stewardship model reflects what Yancey identifies as validity concerns, and the technocratic model reflects what Yancey identifies as reliability concerns. These reflections become particularly clear when we consider Yancey's inside/outside and non-expert/expert polarities. Remember that Yancey locates the classroom as the center of validity in assessment. It is here in which the content of valid assessments—that is, direct measurements of student writing—is produced. And the classroom is also the location of Yancey's non-expert testers: writing teachers and composition professionals. These polarities explain Huot's assertion that "as a profession" we believe that "assessing student writing somehow interferes with our ability to teach it" (163). I think this is particularly relevant in the current assessment environment which is particularly concerned with program assessments which are frequently imposed from outside. The Spelling Commission Report is perfect example of the kind of outsider discourse that produces large scale assessments that claim stewardship as their impetus but use technocratic approaches to sampling and evaluation. It is these technocratic approaches to sampling and evaluation that make teachers and composition professionals (rightly) skeptical about assessment. What Huot is arguing for is not that we see these kinds of assessments as enabling teaching, but that we question

the common insider assumption that these kinds of assessments make up the entirety of all assessments and allow us to ignore the ways we assess text every time we encounter it. The fourth wave has been heavily influenced by Huot and Yancey.

Even with the important criticisms of Yancey's use of a dated definition of validity, the tension she establishes between reliability and validity as the defining dialectic at play in the history of writing assessments is nonetheless useful, especially if we recognize the parallels between the validity/reliability polarity and the stewardship/technocracy binary. Before moving on to a closer look at the fourth wave, I want to explore this parallel a little more closely because the fourth wave is characterized by shift back towards reliability because of outside-imposed assessments, as opposed to assessments favored by composition professionals whose values are aligned more with validity concerns. This alignment happens both in the "dated" sense deployed by Yancey in that compositionists largely recognize that assessments—like the literacy practices they examine—should be situated and also in the sense that scholars such as Huot and Inoue have spent so much time redefining it. Ultimately, Huot's and Inoue's complications of Yancey's definition of validity continue to align validity with Yancey's insiders/non-experts, but rather (rightly) expand the number of concerns we should consider when we consider validity. Simply because Huot borrows his updated definition of validity from psychometric testing theory does not signal a shift outside of the profession of composition, but rather is an appropriation of a psychometric concept. And this is important to note first because it means that Yancey's waves remain largely intact and second because while composition professionals have been debating validity,

educational technocrats have been asking for assessments with reliability as their core concern. This is especially obvious in machine scoring, which I will explore in some detail below. First, however, I want to continue with Adler-Kassner and O’Neill’s discussion of frames because their technocratic/stewardship binary not only exposes the ways that composition professionals have participated in allowing technocratic/reliability concerns to dominate the fourth wave, but also because we can use their framework to expose parallels between current assessment culture’s privileging of technocratic/reliability concerns to standardization concerns developed in the colonial relationship between England and its colonial Others that I discussed in the previous chapter.

Adler-Kassner and O’Neill extend their discussion of frames beyond dominant theories of education to the ways that composition has been framed within the technocratic framework and even how composition professionals have been complicit in these framings, especially in regard to writing assessments. In fact, their discussion of these frames exposes the ways that portfolios present a direct challenge to reliability in that they are designed to consider the situatedness of the writing process in evaluation. (50) Thus, while portfolios are valuable in classrooms, they are less valuable for large scale assessments which are far more technocratic in their orientation (68). Further, Adler-Kassner and O’Neill even cite studies that show that when portfolios are used for large-scale assessments, these assessments “can undermine the theoretical and pedagogical rationale for using [portfolios]” (69). One study, for example, which looked at the state of Kentucky which mandated portfolios for purposes of “accountability” (69)

in high school writing classes found that “[The teachers] experienced the assessment as a test of their competence as a department and felt great pressure to produce good portfolios’ scores but little incentive to explore ways portfolios might best be used in the classroom” (Callahan, qtd in Adler-Kassner and O’Neill 69). Though Adler-Kassner and O’Neill avoid discussion of Yancey’s history, this opposition they set up between the situated, process-oriented practice of portfolio grading and the non-situated, product-oriented practice of large-scale assessments resonates with Yancey’s discussion of portfolios as the triumph of validity and the non-expert writing teacher. We can further use Adler-Kassner and O’Neill’s frames to illustrate how despite later revisions of validity, the history of assessment is still shifting along a continuum between validity and reliability, with validity concerns being more closely aligned with stewardship, the classroom and writing teachers, and reliability concerns more closely aligned with technocratic theories of education, large-scale assessments and standardized testing experts. What is important to note is that the revisions of validity only shifts the currents running through Yancey’s waves. We no longer, as Yancey does, identify portfolios as a balance between reliability and validity, but rather as an even further move toward validity from holistic scoring. Instead, the movement back toward reliability concerns characterized by composition professionals’ resistance to reliability happens in the fourth wave. The opposition between portfolio grading and large scale assessments are an example of why composition professionals are so skeptical of large-scale assessments: these assessments, frequently imposed from outside the profession by a bureaucratic entity, are rooted in educational theories which we see as oppositional to many

professional values we hold as educators and writing researchers. Yet we have, historically as now, been complicit in allowing ourselves to be seen as practicing a technocratic approach to education even as we have argued against it or shifted professional practices away from those practices that would be more easily aligned with technocratic approaches to education.

II. Professional Identities, Stewardship and the Myth of Linguistic Competence in Technocratic Writing Assessments

In response to this disconnect between professional values and reliability, Adler-Kassner and O'Neill borrow from assessment theorist Jay Parkes and claim that we should shift reliability discussion away from methods and towards values: "These values [...] include 'accuracy, dependability, stability, consistency, or precision'" (79). And for the purposes of Adler-Kassner and O'Neill's book, which is to provide composition professionals with the tools, including the vocabulary, to argue for assessments that more readily align with professional values, such as seeing writing as a situated process rather than as a static product, or against assessments that focus too much on standardization and correctness, reframing of reliability in terms of values rather than methods could indeed be useful. In fact, such a reframing seems much in line with the revisions of validity by Huot and others which ask us to look beyond the thing being measured for validity judgments and toward the context of the assessment and how the measurement is being used. What I want to focus on for the purposes of this chapter are the values identified by Parkes and how they share parallels not only with technocratic approaches to education, but also with the impulses in the Scottish Enlightenment toward

standardization. It is particularly instructive to look toward stability and precision when drawing comparisons between contemporary composition practice and Scottish Enlightenment rhetoric. As discussed in the previous chapter, the period following the Acts of Union were times of rapid change, though many histories tend to overemphasize technological change (the change from oral to written argumentation, for example, or the printing press and the rise of large-scale literacy) at the expense of the role that aggressive English imperial expansion played in the impulse towards standardizing language.

Adler-Kassner and O'Neill provide some framework for discussing how compositionists have allowed ourselves to be framed in particular ways that make it difficult for us to argue for assessments that account for professional values that are frequently ignored in large-scale assessments. Relying heavily on Connors' *Composition-rhetoric: Backgrounds, theory and pedagogy*, their discussion of the underlying theories driving composition history only trace as far back as Harvard in the late Nineteenth Century, a reasonable place for their purposes since that is where the composition class as we know it started. I want to connect assumptions behind the Harvard English A class and the Scottish Enlightenment in order to emphasize the importance of colonialism to the linguistic assumptions at the heart of composition and also at the heart of large-scale writing assessments. These assumptions are ultimately the reasons that technocratic approaches to writing assessment and composition practice continue to be so persuasive to many outside of composition and even to many within the profession. They are why the current wave of assessments signal a move away from validity and back toward

reliability, and why these assessments are perceived as such a threat to many within composition. It is also why there continues to be a disconnect between what university administrators from outside of the departments where writing is taught frequently want from assessments and what composition professionals want assessment to be about. And they are the reason why testing professionals, and especially those advocates of machine scoring of student writing make claims for machine scoring that many composition professionals—the same compositionists who would advocate for portfolio grading as the most valid writing assessments—would claim are not only undesirable in an assessment, but also impossible for a machine to measure.

In 2002, Horner and Trimbur argued in “English Only and U.S. College Composition” that “assumptions about language that were institutionalized around the turn of the century, at a high tide of imperialism, colonial adventure, and overseas missionary societies, have become sedimented in the way we think about writing pedagogy and curriculum” (608). Horner and Trimbur offer many useful parallels in their discussion of professional identities of compositionists and the frames discussed by Adler-Kassner and O’Neill. And while these assumptions, which I explore below, may have been institutionalized in American universities during the early twentieth century, there are useful parallels here with the Scottish Enlightenment. The “high tide of imperialism” and “colonial adventure” referenced by Horner and Trimbur, for example. What they refer to is the outcome of the Spanish American War, which ended with American territorial possessions in places such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico, the very colonial history that I reference in my introduction. Though the Harvard course was

first established prior to the Spanish American War, it is in the period following the war when the assumptions about language practices were “institutionalized.” Further, Horner and Trimbur illustrate--though they do not state so directly--that not only did the linguistic assumptions behind the founding of a required composition course have a colonialism in common with the Scottish Enlightenment, but also an educational program that was in transition: “Writing instruction in the modern university [...] was institutionalized [...] as part of a larger modernizing initiative to replace the classical curriculum of the old-time pietistic college with a secular education in the vernacular” (595). Though the vernacular reforms in Scottish universities were far from secular, the movement towards teaching in the vernacular rather than classical languages was a key reform taking place in the Scottish universities during the Scottish Enlightenment, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Horner and Trimbur’s history of this period in writing instruction parallels Miller’s history of the Scottish Enlightenment in that the move toward standardization is largely portrayed as an imposition from the metropolitan center. In fact, histories that cover this period in writing education, like current assessment literature (as I will discuss in the following chapter), provide us with little information about marginal attitudes towards standardization, unlike documentation from the Scottish Enlightenment like Blair’s *Lectures*. There are, of course, very different social dynamics in post-Civil War United States than in post-unification Great Britain, and there are certainly voices erased by history from the period of English colonial history discussed in the previous chapter. And because I am more concerned with the parallels between our language assumptions

and those in the Scottish Enlightenment, I will not explore the social dynamics of post-Civil War United States in as much detail as I did the social dynamics that created the possibilities for the creation of the fiction of a standard English and of tasteful discourse during the Scottish Enlightenment. It is nonetheless important to note the similarity in both late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States and eighteenth century Great Britain of an aggressively imperialist culture creating the same possibilities. Though in the case of the Harvard English A class and the eventual first-year writing requirement, we are not talking about colonized national Others, the same nationalistic impulse informs the fiction of a standard English tied to national borders which then serves to sort students similar to the ways that Highland and Lowland Scots were sorted socially by the languages they used, and similar to the ways that Lowland Scots who took Sheridan's popular elocution classes had been taught to see themselves relative to a "standard" English:

the territorialization of languages according to national borders puts into place a reification of social identity in terms of language use: one's social identity is defined in terms of nationality, which itself is defined in terms of a single language. Next, language use itself is reified and identified with a reification of language, located most commonly in writing, so that the variety, range, and shifting nature of language in use are reduced and restricted to the canons of "proper usage" embodied in standard written English. Finally, and of great relevance to writing teachers, these reifications are used to locate individual learners on a sequence of

development fixed in its order, direction, and sociopolitical significance.

(596)

Even further, the final step discussed here by Horner and Trimbur should resonate with even the most well-intentioned large-scale assessments designed to provide access to students. And we might be reminded of the values of consistency and reliability that Parkes identifies as being associated with reliability concerns. As we saw with the Scottish Enlightenment, the very impulse toward standardizing language comes from a nationalist/imperialist ideology that seeks to deny the reality of inherent variation in language as it is used in practice.

When discussing how these language ideologies influenced the history of assessment, Horner and Trimbur's history becomes especially important because in discussing the opposition between testing experts who often favor current-traditional approaches to writing and compositionists who have moved beyond these assumptions toward more situated and process-oriented approaches to writing theory, Adler-Kassner and O'Neill overlook many of the ways that composition is in some ways complicit in the continuation of current-traditional approaches to writing. Because they are more concerned with finding ways for compositionists to speak to testing experts and those from outside of composition persuaded by current-traditional theories of writing instruction, their focus is necessarily on those aspects of professional theory and practice that expose gaps that need to be bridged in order for dialog to happen. Horner and Trimbur's history, however, shows the ways that compositionists continue to privilege static views of language practices even as we attempt to move beyond such views.

Horner and Trimbur argue that the monolingual privileging of English in our composition classes is rooted in the changes that took place in modernizing the curriculum away from teaching in classical languages and toward vernacular, and that the decision was made to map languages onto national borders. The large quote in the previous paragraph explains the series of ideological reifications involved in creating views of student identity that inform large-scale assessments, and it is important in composition that we not ignore the nationalist/imperialist roots to our monolingual practice. Interestingly, Norbert Elliot's *On a Scale: A Social History of Writing Assessments in America*, confirms Yancey's claim that it was not until the nineteen sixties with exploding college admissions, that large scale writing assessments were carried out by anyone other than testing experts, and as long as current-traditional approaches to writing instruction and theory were dominant in American universities, there was not much need otherwise.

And while this fits largely with Yancey's history, Elliot's is important in that it shows that as early as the famous Harvard course that many disciplinary histories, including Horner and Trimbur's, locate as the beginning of composition as we know it, writing assessments were handed over to testing experts who not only endorsed a current-traditional approach to writing instruction (as did composition professionals) but also a technocratic approach to education. Additionally, Elliot's history discusses *in detail* how many of these professionals were motivated by blatantly racist theories of testing that used assessment data to argue "that the Nordic race has the most to offer in genetic terms and that intermarriage with other groups led to debilitation" (70). Interestingly, it was validity theory that eventually led to the College Board in rejecting what Elliot calls "the

race hypothesis” of intelligence that was dominant at the turn of the twentieth century. Validity theorists, influenced by such progressive educators as John Dewey, began to question whether what was being measured in writing assessments was actually what was being measured (75-84). Thus, in 1932, we find the first appearance of the “outmoded” definition of validity used by White and Yancey when they discuss holistic scoring as the triumph of validity as also a triumph for writing teachers. So again, although Yancey’s waves are largely right, we should shift our understanding of the relationship between validity theory and the locations of assessments. Holistic scoring, as important as it was to the involvement of composition professionals in the assessment of writing, actually predated the time period that Yancey identifies as the arrival of the third wave. As did the questioning of whether or not highly reliable multiple choice grammar tests were collecting valid data. The arrival of the second wave is more clearly marked by the involvement of writing teachers who capitalized on already existing theory and methods to design assessments that fit better with their educational theories and goals.

However, Horner and Trimbur’s history explains why, as composition professionals have successfully argued for greater involvement in the design and administration of writing assessments, the large scale assessments emblematic of the fourth wave are asking for measurements that, when we attempt to account for reliability, are in confrontation with the situated way we have come to think about literacy practices. Recent studies (Behizadeh and Englehard 2011 and Dyer 2013) have shown that “writing theory has had minimal influence on writing assessments, which [are] laboring under formalistic constructs of writing that are at odds with the sociocultural/contextualist

construct dominant in the contemporary writing research community” (Dyer 24). These formalistic constructs were born in the Scottish Enlightenment, designed at first in response to the presence of colonial Others in the empire and further developed by Scotsmen themselves as a means toward agency in the newly formed nation of Great Britain and also to provide some legitimacy for their educational reforms, and reinforced in American universities during its own period of aggressive imperialism. Behizadeh and Engelhard identify lack of communication between writing researchers and measurement specialists as the reason for the gap between contextual, situated writing theory and actual practices in writing assessments, and Dyer cites what he sees, rightly, as an inherent difficulty in describing and therefore scaling writing ability, while Horner and Trimmer show us that, additionally, compositionists are complicit in that

just as in the English Only debates, the boundaries separating one language from another are imagined as fixed, so in representations of students, the language of the academy is seen as discrete from the language of the outside, associated with students’ home neighborhoods or ethnic, class, and racial identities. Finally, the composition course [...] is charged with moving students/foreigners to the academy toward that ideal state of competence in academic English writing through a predetermined set of stages of writing development. (614)

In short, the idea of the student as linguistic outsider to the academy parallels or resonates with the idea of immigrant as linguistic outsider, an idea that does not accurately describe acts of language use or development in actual practice. This gap between an imagined

level of competence and actual practice can explain what Dyer describes as the difficulty in describing writing ability. There is no minimum level of competence that can actually be described. Yet we continue, as a profession, to either actively argue that we can provide students with a minimum level of competence, or quietly allow others outside of the profession think that we can. Perhaps it is because to argue otherwise to those outside of the profession puts us against deeply held cultural assumptions that are at the root of the very existence of our profession (if we choose, as many disciplinary histories do, to place the beginning of modern composition practice in the Harvard English A class). Behizadeh and Englehard observe a seemingly widening gap between measurement experts and what they call “writing researchers,” despite efforts of some composition professionals such as Huot and O’Neill to bridge these gaps. As a profession, we might want to look at studies such as Horner and Trimbur’s and ask in what ways we might be contributing to such gaps in the professional identities we project to those outside of composition, especially as this gap is emblematic of the fourth wave of assessments.

III. Large Scale Assessments, Machine Scoring and Minding the Gap

In this section, I want to talk about two assessments as examples of the measurement side of the fourth wave: machine scoring and program assessments. I discuss the former because I think they are emblematic of the measurement side of assessment and the latter because much of the assessment literature from within the profession covers program assessments, especially with regard to validity-focused assessments. As an illustration of the gap between composition professionals and testing experts observed by Behizadeh and Englehard and implied by Yancey in her discussion of

validity and reliability and Adler-Kassner and O’Neill in their discussion of stewardship and technocratic approaches to education and testing, I will begin with both the the “NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities” and “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” by the CCCC Committee on Assessment, published in 2006 and revised in 2009. But in addition to representations of the professional values that composition professionals have claimed as their own in opposition to certain values frequently associated with measurement, I will argue that these position statements, as representative of the composition professional side of the gap, nonetheless reinforce some of the problematic language use assumptions that inform large-scale assessments to which many composition professionals are opposed.

Both the NCTE-WPA white paper and the CCCC position statement, as descriptions of ideal assessment situations guided by current research and best practices, are good representations of the values discussed in the first section of this chapter which Adler-Kassner and O’Neill frame as stewardship values, and which Huot and Yancey discuss as validity concerns. For example, both statements emphasize the importance of assessments that are locally designed because of the situatedness of all literacy practices and the contextual, social nature of writing. Additionally, both statements value “language variety and diversity” (CCCC 2). The NCTE-WPA statement even cites “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” directly in their discussion of language diversity. The two statements about language diversity are worth placing side-by-side. First, the CCCC statement:

Best assessment practice respects language variety and diversity and

**assesses writing on the basis of effectiveness for readers,
acknowledging that as purposes vary, criteria will as well.**

Standardized tests that rely more on identifying grammatical and stylistic errors than authentic rhetorical choices disadvantage students whose home dialect is not the dominant dialect. Assessing authentic acts of writing simultaneously raises performance standards and provides multiple avenues to success. Thus students are not arbitrarily punished for linguistic differences that in some contexts make them more, not less, effective communicators. Furthermore, assessments that are keyed closely to an American cultural context may disadvantage second language writers. The CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers calls on us “to recognize the regular presence of second-language writers in writing classes, to understand their characteristics, and to develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural needs.” Best assessment practice responds to this call by creating assessments that are sensitive to language varieties in use among the local population and sensitive to the context-specific outcomes being assessed. (2, emphasis in original)

Of particular interest to me in this statement is first, the discussion of language learners in terms of an insider/outsider dichotomy, and second the decision to cite the Statement on Second Language Writers and Writing rather than the “Students’ Right.” Regarding the latter of my concerns, the discussion of students “whose home dialect is not *the* dominant

dialect” (emphasis added) is in contrast to what much current research says about the inherent variability of language practices. I want to be careful and state that I realize that this statement alone does not necessarily implicate the members of the committee as believers in problematically nationalistic views on language use, but I do want to emphasize that this way of discussing “home” and “dominant” dialects in a public statement about language practices meant to represent our profession as a whole does nonetheless maintain the binary that Horner and Trimbur question in their disciplinary history. And while it is important that the statement is careful to oppose assessments that focus on “grammatical and stylistic error,” the language chosen in doing so still talks about language practices in a binary manner and in a way that does not question the developmental myth of acceptable levels of competence.

The NCTE-WPA statement is somewhat less problematic in this regard, and it is perhaps related to the choice to cite the “Students’ Right”:

Writing assessment should recognize diversity in language. The methods and language that teachers and administrators use to make decisions and engage students in writing, reading, responding, and revising activities should incorporate meaningfully the multiple values and ways of expressing knowledge by students present in the classroom and local communities. Assessments and the decisions made from them should account for student’ rights to their own languages (see the Guideline approved by the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1974 and reaffirmed in 2003). (2, emphasis in original)

Notice the very different way of talking about language diversity. What is present here is language of rights, and a resistance to talking about dominant and non-dominant language practices in binary ways. Further, the statement recognizes that the language that “teachers and administrators use to make decisions and engage students” is just as important as the methods. There are very different values expressed in this statement than the statement drafted by the CCCC committee on assessment. And again, while I am sure that the drafters of the CCCC statement are very aware of how important the language we use is when we engage not only students, but also our publics and ourselves, their statement nonetheless maintains the problematic insider/outsider linguistic binary that Horner and Trimbur show us to be at the root of the very existence of the contemporary composition class. I want to contrast the way these two statements talk about language diversity because language diversity is one of the issues inherent to the gap between composition professionals and measurement specialists. Further, it is an issue at the heart of composition itself, and of course it would be, considering that the classification and standardization of English language practices has always been nationalist and imperialist in nature and composition—as discussed the previous chapter—similar to Sheridan’s elocution classes or Blair’s lectures, were formed in response to colonial relationships.

Interestingly, the CCCC statement also lists “a variety of appropriate purposes” for writing assessments, including “placing students in appropriate courses, allowing them to exit a course or sequence of courses, certifying proficiency, and evaluating programs” (1). I selected these specific “appropriate uses” because these are most associated with high-stakes large-scale testing, and further, the uses which, if not

carefully designed, can most easily, and historically have been, so extremely oriented towards reliability at the expense of validity, or designed with outmoded definitions of validity that fail to account for the local, situated concerns that both the CCCC statement and the NCTE-WPA white paper both state should be central to all good writing assessments. But where the CCCC statement is more vocal on a controversial issue is machine scoring. While the CCCC statement mentions several times that assessments should be practiced by “human readers,” the white paper only does so indirectly by stating that assessments should use “multiple measures and perspectives [that] include the use of several readers and the perspectives they bring to student texts” (2). This statement implies that maybe the writers of the white paper assume that good assessments involve human readers, but given some arguments made in favor of machine scoring, all argued for in terms of reliability, it seems risky to not make direct mentions of human readers.

In 2012, an unpublished study funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation made the claim that “In terms of being able to replicate the mean [ratings] and standard deviation of human readers, the automated scoring engines did remarkably well,” (Shermis, qtd in Kolowich). Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, the study appears to no longer be publicly available, but it was heavily reported on in *Inside Higher Ed* and argued against in an unpublished paper by Les Perelman, who claimed that not only were the machine raters easy to fool with nonsense papers, but that the methods and analysis were flawed in that they were designed to favor machine raters. Further, even with the flawed analysis, “the data support the assertion that human scorers performed *more* reliably than the machines on longer traditional writing assignments” (3,

emphasis added). As stated at the beginning of this section, I discuss machine scoring because its growing presence, and in particular arguments made in favor of and against it in recent years, is emblematic of the current gap between writing theory and practice and assessment theory and practice identified by Behizadeh and Englehard. Further, these arguments for and against machine scoring fit not only on opposing ends of Yancey's validity/reliability continuum, but also on opposite sides of Adler-Kassner and O'Neill's stewardship/technocracy binary. If we continue with Shermis as the example—and unfortunately, because the original paper seems to be no longer publicly available, I have to depend on media reporting and Perelman's critique for my own discussion of his study—we find that not only is he overly concerned with reliability, but that he subscribes to a totally different set of educational values than, for example, the drafters of either the CCCC position statement or the NCTE white paper subscribe.

A year after their initial reporting on Shermis' paper, *Inside Higher Ed* followed up with a story about a statement that NCTE made in response to the media attention given to Shermis' headline-grabbing claim that machines were just as reliable in scoring as human raters. While Perelman's paper makes a strong case for the invalidity of the study for not measuring what it claims (the study used single paragraphs rather than full pieces of student writing) (4), and the unreliability of the study for not using consistent measurements (there were separate scales for the machine and human raters) (5), and that the analysis was questionable (as stated in the previous paragraph, the analysis ignored the fact that according to their own data, humans consistently outperformed machines), I want to focus more on the arguments made on either side in terms of the values expressed

in the arguments, and the relationship of those arguments to validity, reliability, stewardship and technocracy. In the follow-up article, Shermis responded to his critics in the following ways: first, he claimed that NCTE “fails to make the distinction between scoring used for summative assessment and that employed in the process for providing feedback in the instruction of writing.”, and second claims that “[O]ne (sic) has to be a good writer to construct the ‘bad’ essay that gets a good score [...] A Ph.D. from MIT can do it, but a typical 8th grader cannot”. The latter statement comes in response to Perelman’s claim to have tricked machine raters with nonsense essays. Both statements are actually somewhat insightful and so probably persuasive to certain audiences. His former claim is somewhat accurate in that he is correct about composition professionals valuing feedback and instruction over “summative evaluation,” in what he calls “a high-stakes testing environment” (qtd in Budryk). Of course, his argument dodges the validity issue addressed by both Huot and Inoue by not asking if high-stakes testing is even an appropriate environment for a writing assessment at all, and not asking to what end the assessment is to be used.

We might further ask, if Perelman is correct about Shermis’ study being so suspect in its methods and conclusions, in particular Perelman’s claim that Shermis actually argues a conclusion not backed by his own data, why Shermis is so invested in arguing for the reliability of machine scoring. It would be informative to return to the values identified by Parkes associated with reliability: accuracy, dependability, stability, consistency and precision. The unavailability of Shermis’ study makes it hard to make a direct analysis of the presence or lack thereof in the study, but these values seem to be

behind some of Perelman's criticisms. For example, the criticism that Shermis used two different scales is an attack on the study's consistency. The criticism of the study's claims not being supported by Shermis' own data is an attack on the study's dependability. I should note that Perelman never mentions any of these values in his paper. Rather, he exposes specific flaws in Shermis' paper which appear to be related to these reliability values. Stability and consistency seem to be particularly important to Shermis. In a comment to *Inside Higher Ed*, he said: "In terms of being able to replicate the mean [ratings] and standard deviation of human readers, the automated scoring engines did remarkably well". But nowhere in Shermis' comments is there a concern with what is being rated, just whether or not the measurements are consistent. His response to Perelman's experiment that claimed to fool machine raters with nonsense papers actually misses the point in a way that expresses the values on each side of the gap between composition professionals and measurement specialists when it comes to writing assessments. The actual writing being rated is irrelevant to Shermis, as long as the machines are consistent in scoring. His responses to the press even illustrate that high-stakes assessments seem to be product-oriented in a way that is problematic for process-oriented composition professionals.

While the CCCC statement is rather silent on the concepts of validity and reliability, at least directly, the NCTE-WPA white paper interestingly makes mention of reliability, but only after a somewhat long section on the importance of assessments that are "appropriate, fair, and valid" (3). Each of these concepts receives twice as much space as the discussion of reliability, and especially interesting is the decision to tie the values

of appropriateness and fairness to validity by grouping the three paragraphs dedicated to these concepts together in a single section entitled “Appropriate, Fair, and Valid Use of Writing Assessment”. The former value, appropriateness, seems to be related to Huot’s redefinition of validity: “The Appropriate use of writing assessment, whether in a classroom or large-scale context, means that it fits the context and decisions that will be made based on it” (3). Fairness is related to Inuoe’s redefinition: “A concern for fairness should guard against any disproportionate social effects on any language minority group” (3). Because reliability is going to be a larger concern with larger scale assessments, it especially becomes a concern for any assessment that is designed and used any context larger than a local context. In fact both the CCCC statement and the NCTE-WPA white paper advocate for locally-designed assessments that consider local student needs rather than imagined universal standards that pretend to describe an acceptable level of competence which have historically always been described in terms of a dominant language practice. But placing ourselves in a binary against an imagined monolithic dominant language practice merely reinforces the tendency to see our students’ relationship with language in the problematic insider/outsider dichotomy. This dichotomy forces us to promise outcomes for students that we cannot deliver. And such promises, rooted as they are in a disabling fiction of developmental competence, are precisely what allows measurement specialists to overlook meaning in ratings of student writing, to continue to design assessments that do not account for the inherent localization of literacy practices.

In the next chapter, I will review a pilot study I undertook with a first-year writing

class at the University of Minnesota. The study consisted of eight open-ended survey questions about an assessment practice that all students are very familiar with: grading. Student responses to these questions reflect the following claim made by the CCCC position statement: “In the minds of those assessed, each of these methods [timed tests, portfolios, directed self-placement, etc] implicitly establishes its value over that of others, so the first impact is likely to be on what students come to believe about writing. For example, times writing may suggest to students that writing always cramps one for time and that real writing is always a test” (4). Throughout the responses, students show very little awareness of the possibility of agency when issues of competency and placement within a social hierarchy are at stake in an evaluation.

Chapter 4

Grading as Mechanism of the Constitution of Student as Other

This chapter discusses student perceptions of assessment through answers to survey questions I asked about a specific classroom assessment practice: grading. Because student responses are at the center of this chapter, I want to first address the ways that I understand my representations to be somewhat problematic. One issue raised by composition scholars I have written about in this dissertation so far, in particular those compositionists whose work is sensitive to or sensitive to issues of race and the effects of colonialist histories on current writing theory and pedagogy. This study has a number of limitations and so will serve as a pilot for further study into student perception of assessment practices. I will discuss these limitations below, but first I think it is necessary to discuss the background of the study and why I think a postcolonial reading of the responses I did receive is important. I will then describe the study and discuss some of the responses that are interesting when read through a postcolonial lens.

We should, I argue, be conscious also of representing ourselves and students on opposite sides of a static self/other binary which misrepresents the ways that power is enacted in our classrooms and in our research. We should be especially careful in composition because our research is frequently so pedagogical in its focus. Further, because this dissertation is so concerned with the colonial, I feel that I have to be aware of Spivak's argument that it is "sustained and developing work on the *mechanics* of the constitution of the Other" that we can use "to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the *authenticity* of the Other" (294). Thus all of the work I

did in previous chapters on the construction of Scottish identity and the standardization of English grammar, as well as looking at similar structures in how we discuss assessments. I mention all of this here before discussing the content of this chapter in order to signal to the reader that I will attempt to read and present these student responses in ways that attempt to address these problematics, but also that I recognize the possibility of the impossibility of completely avoiding problematic representations. I hope that the theoretical and historiographic work I have done in the previous chapters has established parallels between the Scottish Enlightenment rhetoric and composition theory and practice in the United States, in this chapter I hope to show how these theories are also reflected in student understandings of writing in ways that I hope most, if not any, compositionist would recognize as counterproductive to our own goals.

In addition to Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", I have returned to another influential postcolonial text to caution my representations: "Arts of the Contact Zone" by Mary Louise Pratt. Particularly compelling is Pratt's discussion of the ways that nontraditional discourses created by colonial others frequently are ignored because we tend to think of cultures "as discrete, coherently structured, monolingual edifices" (36). And this, Pratt argues, reflects the ways that we tend to think about communication and community: "Many commentators have pointed out how modern views of language as code and competence assume a unified and homogeneous social world in which language exists as a shared patrimony [...] An image of a universally shared literacy is also part of the picture" (38). All of these assumptions about language, community and culture lead to ask the question I addressed in Chapter One about the place of unsolicited, oppositional

discourse in the classroom. While the student responses in this chapter are not examples of unsolicited oppositional discourse, parody, resistance or critique, I find that assessment literature, with all its concern for what student identities are limited by assessments, marginalizes students by presuming to speak for them, as much discourse in composition studies tends to do. I think Pratt's statement that "Teacher-pupil language [...] tends to be described almost entirely from the point of view of the teacher and teaching, not from the point of view of pupils and pupling (the word doesn't even exist, though the thing certainly does)" (38). And while Pratt has the word pupil upon which to build the word "pupling," no such analog exists for assessment. Perhaps this is why so much assessment literature is so focused on the assessors.

In fact, my research for this chapter has only turned up one study that directly asks students about their perceptions of assessment, "Grading as a Rhetorical Construct" by Carbone and Daisley (1998). Because this is yet the only study I have been able to find My own study shares a limitation with Carbone and Daisley in that it focuses on a specific assessment practice (grading) within a specific composition program, limiting. While the current study and Carbone and Daisley's share some methodological similarities (survey research on a particular assessment practice within a specific institutional setting), one key difference is that my interest in student perception of grading in general led to my asking open-ended and general questions. However, I found my questions to be too general; for example, because I was asking about grading, I received a number of responses that gave examples of grading practices or experiences in classes other than writing, such as math. I will discuss these limitations in more detail

below. Another important difference is that my survey population was much smaller. While Carbone and Daisley surveyed students across all sections in their university's composition program, I limited my study to one section. The composition program that served as the background for Carbone and Daisley's study appears to be a more standardized program than the one in which I teach, so a study across all sections would probably face reliability issues, but I was also partially interested in studying the effectiveness of the grade negotiation process.

Carbone and Daisley's conclusions are still important for the current study in that they reflect much of what Huot has said about assessment in general, and so even though Huot has warned against always conflating assessment and evaluation—that this conflation is the reason that so many in composition tend to think of assessment as a practice that necessarily hinders the teaching of writing—their conclusions are still useful. Partially they are still useful because since Huot made that claim in 2002, little has changed in the way of assessment professionals and composition professionals talking to each other. As discussed in the previous chapter, Huot's main argument is that our failure to talk to assessment professionals has resulted in our continued use of outdated definitions of validity that, although originating from assessment professionals, fit more closely with our professional values. Huot's is a very specific criticism which does not invalidate the data in the current study, though I do believe that a future study built on the current one would be more explicitly sensitive to Huot's concern in its design. Interestingly, Carbone and Daisley's survey led to their drawing conclusions similar to my own about how students perceive their role in the grading process.

They tell us that their main purpose was to explore a number of paradoxes related to the grading of writing, such as “Even in departments such as ours where formal criteria have been agreed upon [...] the actual grading of a paper or a portfolio, or the assigning of a final grade for a course, ultimately is done in isolation by a lone teacher who sits in judgment” (78), or “teaching process writing methods, while grading written products” (78). These are two paradoxes, incidentally, that have piqued my own interest in researching grading which eventually led to a wider interest in assessment, in addition to my main critical and feminist pedagogical issues of power. They conclude that, though “many of the teachers” participating in their study “work with students to develop the criteria used for grading, and work to build a common vocabulary of evaluation [...] a significant number of students seem to feel they have no speaking role in the ‘dialogue’ that grades should represent” (78-9). This conclusion about how students see their own roles in the grading process are reflected in student responses to my own questions, which I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter. Carbone and Daisley draw further conclusions, however, that are worth discussing in detail before I move to a discussion of my own survey.

Their main takeaway is that grading should be seen as a rhetorical process, and that gaps their survey exposes between teacher and student perception of the purpose and function of grades illustrate that teachers and students perceive grades as different rhetorical constructs. Carbone and Daisley explain this disconnect with the previously mentioned paradox of teaching process while grading a product: “given that students mention text-based features of writing significantly less often than their teachers do, there

is a schism between process pedagogy and a grading system that in many respects looks at writing in a more current-traditional, product-based way” (88). Given the imperialist background of much current-traditional pedagogies that I discussed in previous chapters, this finding is of interest to the current study. Even more significant for my purposes is the finding that “although the question invited both teachers and students to reflect on what they thought a grade ‘said about a student’s writing,’ many respondents offered comments about what grades said about the students themselves” (89). Because I am concerned with what Spivak calls the mechanics of the constitution of the other, and because I see assessment—and in the case of the current chapter, the assessment practice we call grading—as an educational mechanism through which Othered student identities are at least partially constituted, I am particularly interested in this finding, yet I find curious the conclusions they draw from this finding: “Few were able to view the grades entirely as statements about the writing done in the course. Grading, then, *is* about the work—the writing—done in the course, but because grading speaks directly to and of the person being graded, it is also about the person doing the work. Subsequently, we surmise that the locus of the process/product schism is in the recursive, work-intensive nature of process writing pedagogies” (89). I am initially convinced by the following as sending the message to students that work is the more important than the product:

Writing class strategies at UMass include workshops, conferences, and multiple layers of feedback, with emphasis on doing the work—completing assignments on time, coming to class with completed drafts, and revising. During the course, teachers spend, in many cases, more time

emphasizing the ‘effort’ because they believe in the value of doing the work. (89)

And I am further convinced by the suggestions they make for the role that rhetoric can play in guiding discussions between students and teachers in negotiating evaluation criteria and final grades with a careful consideration of the issues of power and authority involved in doing so. What concerns me is the way that student and teacher identities are subsumed within these proposed systems. I further wonder why they seem so uninterested in exploring further the idea that a grade says something about the student and not just the student’s writing. In fact, their logic seems to imply that grading a students’ writing necessarily *does* say something about them as a person. And whereas I believe that grading as an assessment of only a student’s work and not the student is an unattainable ideal, I do think the analysis could benefit from an interrogation of that assumption rather than merely accepting it.

Significantly, the only explicit discussion of the role that student identity plays in these negotiations, it is to describe student resistance to the self-evaluation process necessary to any negotiation. They point out, rightly, that “underlying this model there still seems to be an assumption that once invited, or instructed, students will take an active role in such a dialogue” (91). However, they observe that students will sometimes “resist the notion that they are writers” (91), and providing an example of such an act of resistance, they quote a student who, in her self-evaluation claims to “hate” the questions being asked of her, calling them “unfair” because she “wrote because I had to make the grade” and that “I have become more independent and responsible, but in writing I guess

I wouldn't see a change unless I was really into it like you or a writer or even a journalist. I'm just a freshman trying to get a good grade" (91-2). I have experienced similar resistance from students when practicing similar self-evaluation activities. And similar to Carbone and Daisley, and like the student quoted above, I have frequently thought that this resistance as coming from a student's idea of how they are supposed to and want to perform in the role of student. I think we can do better, however. While I am sympathetic to the disappointment felt at a student's writing only to make a grade, a postcolonial reading that seeks to deal with the kinds of unsolicited resistance discussed by Pratt would at the very least ask if there is anything productive in the student's act of resistance.

Carbone and Daisley are correct to suggest that students be encouraged "to not simply assume their instructor's evaluative language, but [...] reconstitute or critique that language in their own words" (91). I believe that doing so would open up possibilities for student self-evaluations to participate in dialogue with the teacher. Yet this suggestion is followed immediately with their discussion of the student who is attempting to resist this dialogue. I do want to be sure to emphasize that I do agree with many of the pedagogical recommendations made by Carbone and Daisley regarding grading. And further, as stated earlier, my own data, despite its limitations, do lead me to draw similar conclusions about the ways students see their roles in the grading process.

I want to take a moment to analyze their discussion because it is relevant to illustrating ways of reading student identity that I will attempt to avoid in the analysis of my own data. When discussing this single student's act of resistance to the self-evaluation

process, they draw the following conclusions: “using a workshop-style pedagogy, we are encouraged to transform our writing classes into ‘communities of writers.’ Many students, however, seem to resist the notion that they are writers, much less part of a community of writers” (91), and

This student’s resistance seems to reflect the perceptions of many students in our survey who indicated they felt writing skills are acquired a priori to the situation, that teachers determine grades, and that students succeed when they do what they are told to do. This student could not conceive of herself as “writer”; she could only imagine herself as “student.” (92)

I think they are correct in their conclusion that this student thinks that doing as she is told is what makes for a successful student. I have no doubt this is a reflection of her previous schooling, and probably what many of our freshmen have experienced before entering our first-year writing courses, but that is just a guess. And I think it is insightful of them to point to the connection between this perception of the way grading does and should work and the student’s tying of this to a particular conception of the identity of “writer.” Yet, I disagree with their conclusion that this student’s response reflects their finding that many students “felt writing skills were acquired a priori.” In fact, what the student says is that “in writing I wouldn’t see a change unless I was really into it like you or a writer or even a journalist” (91-2). This student does, in fact, believe that writing can be learned, but ties it to interest in writing. It is the interest in writing that the student sees as acquired a priori rather than “skills.” This is a significant distinction because it speaks to the identity of student and the identity of writer in ways that are relevant to the colonial

hierarchies of literacy practices and how we as composition professionals and our students see our and each other's roles relative to these identities. Though, again, I agree with the pedagogical suggestions offered by Carbone and Daisley, the roles they imagine for the identity of student are limited by a student-as-Other binary; most importantly, they fail to question the assumptions about literacy practices that limit the student's, and their own, ideas about what a student writer is capable of.

In short, what is missing are questions of why this student saw it as beneficial to make this statement on a portfolio self-assessment. Given what little we know about the student, and her performance in the class, it is possible for us to read this student's response not as refusal to take a role of active participation, as Carbone and Daisley present it as an example of, but as honestly participating in the dialog. Yet, also because we know so little about the student and the class and the context of her answer, I want to refrain from making a lot of guesses at, for example, what kind of socioeconomic factors might contribute to the student's response, and my own experience would lead me to believe that students could have any number of reasons for answering in a similar manner. The point I want to make is that there are any number of factors beyond what the student provides in her text for why she feels the way she does about self-assessment which a focus on the product/process binary does not ask us to consider. Neither does a casual acceptance of the idea of student-as-Other. All of this is the result of a decontextualization of the student and the writing situation. From an assessment perspective, their analysis is the result of reading a validity-centric assessment practice (portfolio self-assessment) through the lens of reliability, thus discrediting the student's

situated reaction to a specific writing context. At play is a generic and ill-defined student identity that necessarily lacks the agency or ability to enjoy writing, and a negotiation imagined as generically representative. In any case, this student's text is dismissed because she chooses to answer in way that the teachers do not expect, despite its honesty. I do not want to dismiss this student's response as a problem for a teacher who is then charged with assigning a grade, it is the analysis of the student's answer and what that analysis tells us about grading that I want to focus on.

Susan Jarratt, in her 1998 article "Beside Ourselves: Rhetoric and Representation in Postcolonial Feminist Writing" tells us that the value in postcolonial theory for composition is that "this theory demands that scholars and teachers of literature and literacies ask rhetorical questions the answers to which had been for many years assumed: who speaks? on behalf of whom?" (160) More specifically, she asks us to consider "the problem of speaking for others by looking at how 'others' speak." (160), which she sums up in the following way:

when someone uses power over others to represent them politically [...] there is an unavoidable, concomitant symbolic process underway: the represented group is sketched, painted, described in a particular way through that process. And this description may or may not "represent" them in ways they themselves would endorse. (161)

These are questions and issues that I want to keep in mind in my own analysis, questions that point to what I see as inevitable problematics in analyzing student response to my questions (or even using student writing as research data in general), and they are

questions and issues that I wish Carbone and Daisley had considered as a way of strengthening their already strong analysis. I also will attempt to keep these concerns in mind when I discuss suggestions for further study.

As I previously stated, the survey was supposed to serve two purposes. First was to prepare students for the self-assessments that they were going to have to perform in their final portfolios. This first purpose was what led to the generality of the questions which I have already cited as one of the limitations of the survey from a research standpoint. I wanted students to have produced text in which they identified what they thought were the purposes of grading prior to performing their self-assessments. I was imagining these texts, then, to have two audiences: me and the students themselves. The second purpose of the surveys was for a research project that would report on student perceptions of grading practices in first-year writing. Though I originally imagined that this would be a full study, the limitations of the survey, in particular its generalities, mean that it is now a pilot for further study into student perception of grading practices.

My survey consists of twenty-four responses to eight open-ended questions. The students surveyed all came from one section of first-year writing at the University of Minnesota. Twenty-two of the students were freshmen, two of them were seniors. Because I anonymized the data, it would be impossible for me to say which responses came from seniors and which from freshmen, but with only two seniors it would be difficult to draw any generalizable conclusions from differences in response. The survey questions focus on a form assessment that students are familiar with: grading. There are problems with the ways that I asked the questions, which I will discuss later in the below,

but first the questions themselves:

1. What is a grade?
2. Why do we (teachers) do it? Try to list as many reasons as you can think of.
3. What is a grade's function, both in the local sense of its role in the classroom, and in the larger sense of its role in society?
4. How important are your grades to you, and why? Does it differ from one class to the class or from assignment/test to the next? For example, are you more concerned with your grades in your major than other classes? Think about other motivating factors as well, such as scholarships, your parent(s), liking or disliking a teacher, or liking or disliking the subject matter.
5. Describe a situation in which you thought you were graded unfairly. What were the teacher's reasons for assigning that grade, and what are the reasons you disagreed?
6. Looking back, has your opinion changed about that situation? Why or why not?
7. Now describe a situation or situations where you thought you got a better grade than you deserved. What were the teacher's reasons for the grade and why did you disagree, or did you not even ask?
8. (Optional) List at least 3 criteria that you think should be taken into account in grading a single piece of writing, and give a reason for each criteria. Also, rank the criteria in order of importance, and give reasons for your ranking. If you're having trouble thinking about this, it might help to think in terms of first, what makes a piece of writing good.

The intent behind these questions was to find out what students thought about an assessment practice that they have experienced first-hand throughout their schooling. My hope was to be able to uncover assumptions about being assessed that students have learned in a very general sense. I was less interested in their views on a specific grading practice, and more on their thoughts on grading.

Because of the generality of the questions, it was difficult pinning down consistent patterns or themes across the students' answers. Any patterns or themes that I did identify as common, were in no way universal, but were nonetheless prevalent enough to be worth exploring both in the current analysis and for focusing follow-up studies. Interestingly, one of the patterns I did identify was a gap between those who identify grades as measuring process and those who identify grades as measuring product. This is similar to Carbone and Daisley's finding regarding the process/product binary. These categories were somewhat difficult to tease out in student responses because I did not provide them with the vocabulary to discuss process and product as we understand these things professionally. So, for example, if a student talked about "effort" or the the work put into an assignment, I classified the answer as a process-oriented answer, and if they talked about completed text or comprehension of a subject matter, then I classified the answer as a product-oriented answer. Though this use of student language made classifying answers difficult, this is something I believe would be worth carrying forward with a follow-up study.

For example, in response to question 1, one student responded with the following: "A grade is a way to get credit for work that you complete. It shows your competence in

a specific subject area and measures whether or not you are learning and mastering the material.” I identify this as a product response, not only because it is focused on the completion (rather than process) of the work done in a class, but also it’s focus on mastery of material. By contrast, in response to the same question, another student responded with the following:

A grade, in writing, is more than just a quantification of correctness. It is a representation of the quality of work a student has done. Since it is so subjective, a writing grade is made to show how much effort one has put into their work. If a student doesn’t try and writes a quite (sic) paper, it shows through misguided organization and minute points. I don’t feel a writing grade should compare different students, but more reflect the growth of the student from preceding papers. Each student has a different writing level and style, so it is difficult to judge just exactly who has the best paper. These grades should be given to give a student an idea of how their work is progressing and how much they need to try next time to continue that growth.

Although this student’s response mentions features of a text that can be easily tied to a product-orientation, such as “misguided organization and minute points,” these characteristics are the result *of* the process. Further, according to this student, grades given to final products should be intended for measuring progress, and the subjectivity of writing leaves a teacher with no choice but to measure “effort.” What I find most fascinating about this answer is how much it resonates with process pedagogy values: a

good product is the result of process; writing classes are about progress; and most importantly, writing classes are not about correctness. It is worth asking how many other students may or may not have answered similarly if I reworded the questions to specify grading in writing classes rather than asking about grading in general.

But this process answer, so readily able to be aligned with professional composition values, also shows an interesting theme that I saw in these student responses: the role that assessment plays in the ranking of students and their writing. The subjectivity of evaluating writing not only means that teachers should focus on the “effort” a student put into a class, but also make it “difficult to judge exactly who has the best paper.” It is this notion of “best” that I am most interested in. Like the product/process divide, the theme of student ranking was by no means universal, but did show up across a number student responses to various questions. For example, one student made the following statements in their answers to questions 1 through 3 in the following manner:

1. *A grade is a score that describes the quality of work done by the student. A grade is by no means an indication of how smart a student is. Grades allow teachers and professors to rank students based on the work that they show. Few students will work their hardest and put forth their highest possible effort, therefore a grade is only related to the amount of work the student shows, and not necessarily related to their intelligence.*
2. *Teachers give grades because there must be some system to differentiate between students. Today’s educational system and careers are too competitive for everyone*

to get a pass or failing grade. *Without grades, everyone would appear to produce the same quality of work when that simply is not true.*

3. *In the classroom, grades are used to rank students so that the teacher may compare students.* Grades also can be an indication of how well the teacher is teaching. If the teacher gives what he or she thinks to be an easy test and no student receives higher than a C on the test, the teacher may not be teaching at an appropriate level. Likewise, if all students receive an A on the test, the teacher may not be challenging the students enough. *One could argue that grades matter less and less as time goes on and people build their career path, but grades are still used to rank people even after they are out of school.* Employers look at grades and GPA as a sign for how hard of a worker a student might be. This is not to say that poor grades will give you no hope in having a successful career, but employers do take a close look at grades. (emphasis added)

That this student's responses across multiple questions involve the idea of ranking is significant, especially considering that this student would *like* for grading to measure the work put into a class, the issue of ranking makes it necessary for a teacher to focus on product. And not only does this student think that ranking is necessary in education, but also in the workforce. Further, this same student, in response to the final question, gave the following three criteria for grading a piece of writing: content, sentence structure, and grammar. Another student who was interested in the role of ranking gave among their reasons for why teachers grade: "Enjoy the power of being able to critique work 'below' them." The same student, in response to the question of what a grade's function is, wrote

“A grade, in the sense of the classroom, functions as a rating in which one can know where they rank pertaining to the kind of work they are given, when critiqued by a “more educated” person.” This same student, who chose to give six criteria for grading (rather than just the top three that the question asked for) listed grammar as the top criteria, with the following commentary: “This is a must for me when I rank papers. How the heck is someone suppose to grade or understand a paper when it’s not even written in an understandable manner? Fix those darn sentence structures and spell that correctly please! Oh, and use the RIGHT punctuation too. I hate it when people don’t know how to properly use the semi colon or colon or comma...” Though it is certainly interesting that this student conflates usage, spelling and punctuation and classifies these things under the concept of grammar (not entirely surprising given that these are common connotations and given that this student likely had not at the time of taking the survey had much, if any, training in linguistics), and further that the student connects these things with intelligibility, the consistency between these two students of placing a high value on product and ranking is what interests me. Given these two students’ answers, I think it would be worth exploring if this intersection between some sort of concept of correctness and ranking is common to more students’ ideas of writing assessment. It would be further interesting to find out if intelligibility is another point of intersection with correctness and ranking. Given the historical conditions under which theories of standardization have been theorized and reified, I suspect that these themes (linguistic correctness, hierarchical ranking and intelligibility) would commonly intersect when students consider purposes and methods of and reasons for assessing students and their writing.

So despite the limitations of my survey design—too general, too unfocused—the open-ended nature of the survey answers still yielded interesting themes worth pursuing. The study should go beyond the important findings made by Carbone and Daisley, in that the exploration should be more situated in an attempt to better honor the viewpoints students bring with them and contexts in which they compose, including the context of writing in response to a survey question. In fact, my initial reading of survey data focused, as Carbone and Daisley's does, on the product/process binary, given that so many student responses dealt with, for example, whether grading should measure characteristics of written texts or whether it should measure the work put into the production of texts (see Appendix for the complete list of student responses). Ultimately, the responses to the questions varied to such a degree that reporting a summary of findings is difficult, and partially this is a result of the questions' generality. Yet despite this generality, the product/process binary is evident across several question responses and almost all students, and I find it interesting that Carbone and Daisley found the same binary expressed in the responses to their survey questions. Though the examples I cite above represent extremes (there were many student responses that, for example, expressed that, ideally, grading would be able to fairly measure both process-related concerns and product-related concerns), they are nonetheless representative of the presence of the product/process binary in student opinion about grading. And given that both studies found this binary expressed in the results, this binary would be a good starting point for a follow-up study. Yet, as I stated above, the follow-up should go beyond this binary to understand in depth the situation to which the student imagines they

are responding.

In order to address this issue, feminist composition researchers have borrowed ethnomethodological research from fields such as “anthropology, oral history, and sociology.” (Kirsch and Ritchie 141); such methods, Kirsch and Ritchie argue, are useful for feminist researchers because of their “long history” of reflecting “on the role of the personal in research” (141). This history of reflecting on the personal has led to the introduction of what Kirsch and Ritchie call, borrowing from Adrienne Rich, a “politics of location.” This politics of location asks researchers to consider their relationships with research participants and the influence that the role of researcher plays in that relationship. It further asks that researchers consider the biases, assumptions and positions that researchers bring with them to the research situation. Further, they suggest that composition researchers use more collaborative methods with participants by, for example, involving participants in such parts of the research process as developing researching questions and assisting with the interpretation of the data they helped create. Patricia Sullivan (1992) suggests using such in-depth research techniques such as open-ended interview to “generate descriptions from the point of view and in the language of the writers they are studying.” (137), though of course even when using students’ own words, there will still be the problem of interpretation of those words, which may or may not truly represent the ways that students wanted to represent themselves. Ultimately, I look to feminist research methods because they have developed to address the very issues of representation of Others that are raised or made obvious by a postcolonial reading of both the research situation and the situation that is the subject of the research.

The follow-up study into what students think about being assessed would use feminist research methods to build on the important findings of the Carbone and Daisley and my pilot survey as well as address shortcomings in both. Most importantly, the most interesting finding upon which to build is the tension between claiming a process orientation and designing a pedagogy around this orientation, while finally grading a product. Even in a portfolio grading system based on revision, this tension is present. I think, however, that ending our exploration at this tension is not enough, even if we use it to revise our situated grading practices as Carbone and Daisley (rightly) do. When they conclude “that the locus of the process/product schism is in the recursive, work-intensive nature of process writing pedagogies.”, they are probably partially right, but the conclusion on its own sees the composition class in a vacuum, and assumes that students’ responses are not informed by previous experience. The more in-depth methods preferred by feminist researchers would not only allow for a deeper exploration of student experience with grading, but also would ask me to be more careful in the ways that my research depicts students, not only in my interpretation of their participation, but also in the design of the survey. As such the follow-up study should take the following approaches: it should be conceived of as participatory research from the start, meaning that student input should be invited during the early stages of research design, including the writing of research questions. Student input should also be invited during the interpretation of data in an effort to alleviate problematic representations of their words.

And student words are at the center of the study. It is nonetheless important to keep in mind that student participation is not a perfect solution for the problem of

representation, but rather is an attempt at addressing the issue head-on rather than avoiding it altogether and pretending that the problem does not exist in the first place: “Relations between researcher and participants will always retain the potential for misunderstandings, even exploitation,” but “ researchers can learn to explore sites of conflict for the shifting, multiple and contradictory positions researchers and participants inevitably occupy and for the ethical questions raised by collaborative research.” (147-8). These ethical questions are particularly thorny when we deal with populations of students, such as basic writers, whose identities as student writers have been created *by* assessments, and whose student identities probably resonate closely with the student comment from Carbone and Daisley’s study in so far as a basic writer’s position in the composition program likely creates some barrier to that student’s understanding of themselves as a “writer.” How does our reading of a student writer identity change when that student’s investment in writing is informed not by whether or not they enjoy writing, but whether or not they’ve been told that they can do it? Naturally, this judgment about basic writers’ student identity and the subsequent question I built off of that judgement is only a blind guess based on my own assumptions, and as such could be entirely off-base. This is an example of the kind of assumption that collaborative research is meant to address. Ultimately, Kirsch and Ritchie tells us that a politics of location in composition research

leads us to research centered in the local and the individual while at the same time acknowledging that research has social consequences in the world [...] Under these circumstances, it will not be possible to walk away

from the research site or those who live in it. Our research instead will need to extend to theory-generating in a self-reflexive and mutually dialogic context to help researchers and participants challenge and change the conditions that keep oppressive structures in place. (156)

I end my research methods discussion with this long quote because the next chapter is going to tie together the three threads I have been tracing throughout this dissertation, colonialism, identity and writing assessments by looking at basic writing. My belief is that basic writers have been, at least in part, created and sustained by these three interrelated discourses. This is especially the case when we consider large-scale assessments and machine scoring. Large-scale assessments and machine scoring, rooted as they are in technocratic approaches to assessment, concerned as they frequently are—and in the case of machine scoring, must be—with consistency and stability, with standardization, in order to function, depend on colonialist uses of language which sought to stamp out difference and, if we are not careful, look towards products over writing processes in order to measure student “success” or to decide where students fit within a hierarchy of linguistic and literate practices or whether or not a writing program is sufficiently moving students through the hierarchy. More importantly, when assessments are based on imperialist ideas of writing and language use deny composition and basic writing their radical potential.

Chapter 5

Colonialism, Assessment and the “Basic” Writer



Figures 1, 2 and 3 (from left to right). Excerpts from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, qtd in Pratt, Mary Louise, "Arts of the Contact Zone"

I. Basic Writing, Multiliteracy, Multilingualism and Resistance in the Contact Zone

T the epigraphs above are excerpts from Guaman Poma's *New Chronicle*, the resistant contact zone text so important to Mary Louise Pratt's canonical article and also so important to my own reading Blair's *Rhetoric* in the second chapter of this dissertation. Although a very simple Google search of the name "Guaman Poma" pulled up versions of the text that would have allowed me to pull my own quotes, I choose to quote them from Pratt's article because the fact that Pratt chose these specific excerpts to help make her point is just as important to my text as the excerpts themselves and what the excerpts say. In fact, I know little of what these excerpts say beyond what Pratt tells us: in the quote to the left, for example, which depicts Adam and Eve:

Eve is depicted on the right-hand side below the moon, and slightly lower than Adam. The two are divided by the diagonal of Adam's digging stick. In Andean spatial symbolism, the diagonal descending from the sun marks the link of power and authority dividing upper from lower, male from female, dominant from subordinate. (36)

In the following two excerpts, Pratt tells us that the same spatial symbolism is at play in depicting the relationship between Spanish colonists and the Inca. In the middle excerpt, the Spanish and Inca are depicted as equal in height with the Inca in the same place as Adam, but in the excerpt on the right, which depicts "Spanish abuses of power, the symbolic pattern is reversed." (36). The takeaway is that "the Spanish conquest had produced 'un mundo al revés' 'a world in reverse.'" (36). Beyond what the texts say, however, is the fact that

the transcultural character of Guaman Poma's text is intricately apparent in its visual as well as its written component. The genre of the four hundred line drawings is European—there seems to have been no tradition of representational drawing among the Incas—but in their execution they deploy specifically Andean systems of spatial symbolism that express Andean values and aspirations. (36)

But remember that Google search I mentioned earlier? What it revealed to me was that the *New Chronicle* was composed not only of multimodal and multiliterate passages as those quoted by Pratt, but of pages of monolingual writing as well. Knowing nothing about the history of the Spanish language, I cannot comment on the character of the

Spanish, meaning that I cannot say whether or not the Guaman Poma's Spanish would have been considered a legitimate Spanish by the colonizers, but I do think it is significant that Pratt chose to quote multimodal excerpts of text to demonstrate what resistant texts born of the contact zone look like. By choosing passages of text that mix European and Andean symbol systems, Pratt is explicitly pointing to passages in which the mode is part of the message, and this is the exact characteristic of the text that ensured that it would be ignored for centuries until reclaimed by postcolonial scholars. This is the characteristic of that text that has rarely, if ever, been talked about in the pedagogical articles inspired by Pratt, and our continued denial of multiliterate, multimodal and multilingual texts in composition is exactly why large-scale assessments and machine scoring have so much power. I believe it is also why we continue to have basic writers and why the identity of the basic writer continues to be built upon deficit notions of education.

In his 1993 essay, "The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum", another piece that discusses the relationship between Pratt's unsolicited oppositional texts and basic writing, Donald Bartholomae says that

to the degree to which the rhetoric of the American classroom has been dominated by the topic sentence, the controlling idea, gathering together ideas that fit while excluding, outlawing those that don't; to the degree that the American classroom has been a place where we *cannot* talk about race or class or the history of the American classroom [...] it produces basic writing as the necessary institutional response to the (again)

overwhelming politics and specifics of difference. (177)

This is a very different David Bartholomae, I think, than the one who, ten years earlier wrote “Inventing the University.” In the earlier essay, he imagined basic writing as a transitory space, as exactly the kind of imperialist, acculturating space of the developmental narrative, where students would be easily and unproblematically introduced to the culture of the university through its language. To be fair, this is still the dominant way we tend to think of composition, with rubrics and outcomes that sound not all that different from the list provided by Bartholomae in the quote above. Although I am not so quick as Bartholomae to call “finally stupid” basic writing discourse that claims that “every nonstandard feature of a student’s prose is a sign of opposition,” (182) (and in fact am sympathetic to such discourse,) and though I question the cause-and-effect logic of the statement (theories following directly from practices), I ultimately agree with his conclusion that in basic writing we continue to be defined by unproductive binaries:

the profession has not been able to think beyond an either/or formulation; either academic discourse or the discourse of the community; either argument or narrative; either imitation or expression. Part of the failure, I think, is rooted in our inability to imagine protocols for revision, for example, that would negotiate rather than preserve the differing interests of student and the academy. (182)

Even twenty years after the publication of this essay, the composition profession still struggles with these dichotomies, and nowhere is that more stark than in discussions over basic writing and assessments, especially when we consider conversations imposed from

outside the profession. Consider, for example, the fight in the California State University system that led to Ed White's adaptation of holistic scoring and its already outdated notion of validity discussed in chapter three. And consider that these same assessments create basic writers in that system by being the means through which students are sorted.

Similarly to her book on assessment, Linda Adler-Kassner provides useful ways for us to talk about basic writing in the book *Basic Writing as a Political Act: Public Conversations About Writing and Literacies* (2002), co-written with Susanmarie Harrington. Adler-Kassner and Harrington use the concept of "objective" or "autonomous" literacy, terms which they seem to use interchangeably. These terms denote a view of literacy as a set of neutral skills that can be acquired, rather than as a set of culturally embedded practices. This objective or autonomous view of literacy is clearly what informs the thinking in "Inventing the University" and, depending on what he means when he says we have to develop protocols to "negotiate [...] differing interests of the student and the academy.", might still to some extent inform his thinking in "The Tidy House". Notice, for example, that immediately after offering rightful criticism of binary thinking within the profession, he offers up the student/academy binary. Again, he is unclear about what he means by "negotiate," and given the way he sincerely wants to shift the way we talk about students, and reminds us that the term basic writing was originally intended to do just that (184), I want to think that he means something similar to what Adler-Kassner and Harrington are far more explicit about. In discussing proposed curricular approaches to basic writing, the persistent issue they identify is that "these strategies [...] perpetuate the view of autonomous literacy because they concentrate on

developing acumen with those conventions, but not necessarily understanding of them.” (20). The problem with not developing understanding of the conventions is that “focusing exclusively on pedagogical strategies perpetuates objective notions of literacy by separating conventions from their ideological contexts.” (23). Ultimately, what this means for the profession and for students is that it “elides the larger issue surrounding the act of basic writing itself—that is, participation in particular functions and roles for students and teachers—and thus perpetuates those roles.” (24). It is in considering the potential functions and roles for teachers and students that exposes the subtle way in which Bartholomae’s writing is still informed by the developmental narrative he questions that was a such a large part of his early career, even as he deals with questions raised by Pratt about the ways we tend to read students and their work. He suggests pedagogical responses that “negotiate” those roles, but it is unclear to what extent he is or is not interested in shifting those roles.

II. Belletrism, Assessment and the Limited Roles for Students and Teachers and Basic Writing

Adler-Kassner and Harrington make their own contribution to basic writing research that attempts to resist the objective view of literacy by asking “how basic writing classes can become sites for investigating the contexts and ideologies associated with a range of literacy practices [...] (and even the basic writing class itself)” by interviewing students about their views of writing inside and outside the classroom. Such research, they claim, can “shift attention away from trying to classify writers’ (cognitive or cultural) characteristics, and reorient the work of the basic writing class toward

collaborative action with teacher and student” and “make basic writing the political act that it must be” (31). The main finding of these interviews was that “students perceive a vast difference between what they imagine to be ‘writing’ and what they are doing in classes and learning in school, a difference that is perpetuated by basic writing classes and placement procedures” (34). Importantly, they find inadequate explanations that explain the difference in terms of “issues of different audiences and purposes” because “doing so simply reinvokes the separation that students identify between ‘writing,’ something that is [according to student interview answers] relatively subjective, and ‘writing in school,’ something that is relatively objective” (34). Specifically they found that both the subjective and objective notions of writing were related to or resonant with current-traditional views of writing instruction (35). When discussing writing—in what seems to resonate with the student quoted in Carbone and Daisley’s study in the previous chapter—students tended to talk in belletristic terms, which Adler-Kassner and Harrington sum up as “the movement of ideas into objective word-forms that are transmitted directly to the minds of audiences” (40), but when discussing learning writing, they tended to discuss sentence-level correctness or surface features of text (34-41). Also similar to Carbone and Daisley, Adler-Kassner and Harrington conclude that “writers do not think that they are ‘becoming writers’ in writing classes” (41). Unlike Carbone and Daisley, however, Adler-Kassner and Harrington do not restrict their analysis to what happens in that specific class, but consider students’ previous literacy experience and schooling. They recognize the importance of “placement procedures” in contributing to these students’ views on literacy. Even systems intended to “rely less on

objective conceptions of literacy,” such as directed self-placement, they find, tend to reinforce autonomous notions of literacy in that the criteria students are asked to measure themselves against “are often the same ones used in more traditional placement practices [...] Thus, rather than challenging the notion of objective literacy embodied in more traditional placement systems, alternatives like DSP simply ask students to rank themselves against this conception of literacy, rather than having the institution do it for them” (42). One thing that I see played out here is the connection between belletristic notions of literacy, specifically belletrism’s reliance on a hierarchy of literate practice and the role of both standardization in the hierarchy, objective or autonomous notions of literacy, and assessment practices in the roles we imagine for students in basic writing.

Pedagogically, Adler-Kassner and Harrington suggest not only making literacy practices central to the basic writing course, as practiced by a particular tradition of basic writing scholars with which they align themselves and with which I align this chapter, but additionally discussing what it means to be a “basic” writer in particular classes and particular institutions (45). Many students they interviewed were unaware both what basic writing was and that they had been placed in a basic writing class; additionally, many of these same students were unaware of the role that the placement test played in putting them in these classes (44-5). Though they do not explicitly state it, implied is suggestion that in order to make the institutional identity of basic writing and the student identity of the basic writer a part of the basic writing course, assessment must also be a part of the course so that students have an understanding of how the institution sees them. In other words, if a basic writing course must make the category of “basic” one of its

subject matters in order to resist “the ways in which composition instructions in all respects, from placement testing to curriculum, is designed to perpetuate the languages (and their concomitant choices and ideologies) already embraced by those doing the placement exam reading, or the teaching, or the administration” (25), then it should necessarily include the assessment practices that perpetuate the category. And further, we have to ask if a course that makes as its goal a political act that resists the autonomous or objective model of literacy is doing its work, or *really* working toward this goal if in practice it seeks to transition students toward monolingually imagined academic writing conventions.

Adler-Kassner and Harrington go on to review a variety of basic writing course descriptions and syllabi, and note such a wide variety of approaches, theories, learning outcomes, activities, assignments and projects that even coming up with an operating definition of basic writing is virtually impossible (83-87). They note, however, with rare exception, most courses see the basic writing course as a space to transition students from home literacy practices to academic literacy conventions, which they (and I) associate with autonomous models of literacy, and further, that there are many examples where this is the case despite a course description or learning outcomes that describe a more progressive pedagogy that is aware of the situatedness of the various literate contexts through which students move (89-92). Ultimately, they leave us with the question that had plagued any teacher who has struggled with making writing the subject of a writing course, which is how to design a writing course *about* writing, but in which the production of text is still central, and how to do so within particular institutional demands

(96-99). I would argue that this is the struggle not only of basic writing, but of composition in general, but that basic writing is a valuable space in that it makes this struggle most obvious. Further, with today's basic writers, we are treading similar territory to the Harvard English A students at the end of the nineteenth century and the lowland Scots in Edinburgh University following the Acts of Union.

III. Toward a “Basic” Writing Made Whole

In a presentation at the 2014 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Cynthia Selfe in a presentation entitled “The Disciplining Disposition of Print” reported on a forthcoming article in which she makes the claim that the impulse toward monolingualism in composition is the same impulse toward what she calls monomodalism, or the privileging linguistic text. The remainder of this chapter follows Adler-Kassner and Harrington's call for basic writing as a political act by reviewing two approaches to composition, the first a conscious attempt to resist monolingualism and the second an attempt to resist monomodalism. I understand basic writing as political act to mean making the institutional practice of basic writing as the space of radical rhetorical and linguistic practice, a space precisely for the production of multiliterate and multimodal text that Pratt represents with Guaman Poma's *New Chronicle*. Before proceeding, I want to acknowledge that what I describe is an ideal, and that myriad contextual pressures, concerns, issues and affordances would combine by their nature combine to complicate this ideal in practice.

Building on the same theories of language use favored by Pratt that question the ideal linguistic situation, Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and

John Trimbur propose what they call a “translingual” approach to writing instruction, which they sum up thus: “When faced with difference in language, this approach asks: What might this difference do? How might it function expressively, rhetorically, communicatively? For whom, under what conditions, and how? The possibility of writer error is reserved as an interpretation of last resort” (303-4). Interestingly, they differentiate translingualism from other approaches to writing instruction that attempt to resist the autonomous model of literacy in that these other approaches assume “that each codified set of language practices is appropriate only to a specific, discrete, assigned social sphere” (306). This assumption about language, even when used in the spirit of honoring the literacy practices that students bring with them to our classrooms, is problematic in the following ways:

First, its codifications of language overlook the fluctuating character of each set of language practices. Second, it overlooks the ways in which each of these codified sets interacts with other sets within and beyond a given arena rather than being restricted to one discrete sphere. Third, [...] it overlooks the role that readers’ responses play in granting, or refusing to grant, recognition to particular language practices as appropriate to a particular sphere. Fourth, it fails to acknowledge the operation of power relations in defining what is appropriate, and often resigns itself to these—for instance, designating certain English usages as appropriate only for a specific private sphere and thus inappropriate for public discourse. (306)

The issue that this approach shares with a current-traditional approach is codification.

Although it honors language variety, it also partakes in the notion of language practices as discrete and unified and uniformly appropriate for homogeneously imagined social contexts. By contrast, the translingual approach assumes legitimacy first, and unlike the version of the contact zone pedagogy favored by Bartholomae in “The Tidy House”, the translingual approach does not require all non-standard usages to be acts of resistance in order to be legitimate. They need only be intentional and productive. From an assessment standpoint, Horner et al’s critique of this approach illustrates at least one way that even attempts to resist technocratic approaches to education tend to fall back on problematic assumptions. This will continue to be the case as long as we continue to focus on products over processes even in our most situated assessment contexts. But this approach also moves toward depoliticizing the act of basic writing by—in “resigning” itself to the power relations enacted during the writing process—reifying the social relations responsible for the literacy hierarchies that place students in these classes in the first place.

In her 2011 book *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, Jody Shipka draws on Yancey’s notion of a “new” composition which Yancey sees as having been brought about by emerging technologies for composing. This new composition, not yet fully realized, is one in which “Print and digital overlap, intersect, become *intertextual*” (Yancey, qtd in Shipka 8). Though Shipka is an advocate for this new composition in that she is a champion of composition that openly recognizes the intertextuality of writing and makes this recognition a part of its everyday practice, she is troubled by the ways that only seeing this intertextuality only as text “mediated by the screen” (Yancey, qtd in

Shipka 8) does not recognize the ways that writing, especially if we take seriously the common disciplinary idea that writing is a process of meaning-making, has always been intertextual and multimodal:

I recognize how new media texts and computer technologies have the potential to “bring us together in new ways”, (Yancey 2004a, 100) to “change the way students write, read and think,” to “cultivate multiple literacies, to blur the writer/reader boundary and to broaden notions of ‘composing’” (Zoetewey and Staggers 2003, 134, 147). Yet I am also aware of how writing on shirts, purses, and shoes, repurposing games, staging live performances, producing complex multipart rhetorical events, or asking students to account for choices they make while designing linear, thesis-driven, print-based texts can also broaden notions of composing and greatly impact the way students write, read, and perhaps most importantly, respond to a much wider variety of communicative technologies—both new and not so new. (9)

Shipka’s goal in seeing the ways that writing has always been intertextual and multimodal is to address the same problem that interested Carbone and Daisley in their study of student perceptions of grading in the first-year writing program in which they taught, namely the disconnect between, on the one hand insisting that writing is a process and designing pedagogies around that idea, while ultimately choosing to evaluate static products. In fact, Shipka claims that, as a profession, we have “a fading interest in the composing process” altogether (13).

Shipka proposes what she calls “mediated activity-based multimodal framework” that emphasizes choices students have in the composing process in order to meet their own goals. She draws on a long tradition in composition, but differentiates her framework from others in this tradition with “the responsibility it places on students to determine the purposes of their work and how best to achieve them” (87). In this framework, the teacher does not pre-determine the genre(s) or mode(s) with which students will work, and they are also asked to propose at least two potential alternatives to the genre and/or mode in which they plan to compose in order to demonstrate their awareness of the rhetorical situation and the choices available to them in that situation (87-91). What Shipka hopes to develop in students is “metacommunicative awareness,” which she defines as “greater awareness of communicative options and alternatives.” (86). It is important to note that even Shipka acknowledges that this awareness could potentially be developed in classes in which the teachers pre-determine the genres, depending on the way the assignments are designed (89), but to me the important difference in Shipka’s approach is that a class in which the genres are pre-determined could too easily fall into product-centric assessment criteria.

This is not to say that Shipka’s framework necessarily prevents a teacher from ultimately privileging the final products over the process if they are so inclined. Just as assessment practices such as portfolio assessment and directed self-placement were designed to resist pervasive problematic assumptions behind more traditional assessment practices (a product orientation in the former case and an autonomous or objective view of literacy in the latter), when put into practice, the measurement criteria can ultimately

undo good intentions. However, when the act of choosing is a central activity of the course, and when students are asked to be deliberate in these choices, then teachers are asked to necessarily pay attention to process in less prescriptive ways, especially when asking students to provide alternatives. Further, this process provides added opportunity for cooperation and negotiation between teacher and student. This is a particularly valuable opportunity for any composition class that would include assessment as a part of the class itself. Shipka does, in fact, provide a chapter about how to evaluate student work under her framework, but rather than review the specifics, I want to step back and finish from a wider perspective because I want to talk about important similarities between Shipka's multimodal practice and translingualism and from there talk about evaluation and assessment more generally.

Shipka's particular idea of a multimodal composition class shares important similarities with translingualism: first, the focus on process and intentionality, and the resistance to pre-determined genres or singular linguistic and textual features forces composition professionals to shift focus when considering assessment and/or evaluation criteria. They ask us to value a wider range of texts, and more specifically texts that we may have otherwise not considered or valued or possibly even imagined as possibilities. And further, these two approaches speak to each other in important ways. The fact that Shipka's approach to multimodality does not discount a thesis-driven essay or other linguistic text allows for application of a translingual approach, and the translingual approach is important because it adds an important wrinkle by reminding us that when students do choose linguistic texts, or integrate language into multimodal projects—as

they inevitably will—that there are more than standard forms available to them. And again, because the texts are produced in a context where choice is the main activity of the class, and when they are required to propose alternate texts, an additional opportunity is presented to explore the ideologies behind the different literacy practices they choose to explore. Ultimately, what these two approaches do is present a resistance to the assessment cultures that create basic writers, to turn basic writing into a political act, to resist the colonialist linguistic assumptions behind our impulse to rank literacy practices.

Similar ideas about basic writing are not entirely without precedent. In her book *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and Basic Writing Instruction* (2008) reports on the basic writing program at Texas A&M-Commerce which was designed specifically in response to ubiquitous high school writing assessments and No Child Left Behind. The term Carter uses to describe the learning outcomes of the program is “rhetorical dexterity”, which she defines as “the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one” (14). Like me, Carter is influenced by Adler-Kassner and Harrington’s call to explore the ideologies behind different literacy practices. And similar to Shipka, Carter is influenced by activity theory. Yet, despite the fact that Carter describes classrooms in which students are asked to explore literacy practices in different communities and different modalities (video games are a frequent example), multimodal practice is not the goal in itself, but only the means toward understanding academic literacy. As such, what Carter is describing is ultimately the problematic approach described by Horner et al, quoted

above, in which non-schooled literacy practices are valued, but only to the extent that they are codified and only with the final goal of assimilating students into a homogeneously imagined academic culture. To her credit, Carter does so only because of what she identifies as institutional demands. As such, her approach might be more useful to certain classes in certain institutions, especially if we consider institutions that require exit exams, for example. The problem, of course, is the question of to what extent rhetorical dexterity is assimilationist. Ultimately, I have to wonder what would become of Guama Poma's text within such a system. What is important to this chapter is that Carter's pedagogy is an example of a basic writing pedagogy that uses multimodality as a means to resisting standardized assessments that identify students as "basic" based on arbitrary standards.

IV. Conclusions

Founded as it is on problematic assumptions about literacy practices, basic writing is in many ways inherently problematic, but in many of the same ways that composition is, and the ways that Blair's belletristic rhetoric lectures. All three educational practices came in response to efforts to democratize higher education. As Thomas Miller notes in *The Formation of College English*:

the institutionalization of the "new" rhetoric in the eighteenth century has basic parallels with the reintroduction of rhetoric into American English departments two centuries later, when open admissions led to the introduction of "basic" writing courses for those who were deemed to be too ill-prepared to study the classics of English literature. In both cases,

more broadly based colleges introduced courses that elite institutions considered to be beneath them, and this so-called decline in standards occurred at the same time that previously excluded groups were gaining access to education. (165)

As Horner and Trimbur have shown, the same anxieties about student “readiness” were behind the Harvard English A class, but just as importantly, they demonstrate the direct role that colonial attitudes played in the development of curriculum and assessments in the period between the Harvard class and open admissions. We should not discount the role these same assumptions played in the formation of basic writing, as the same racially and nationalistically coded language assumptions were behind the “so-called decline in standards” behind the formation of Blair’s rhetoric lectures and basic writing. Because of the problematic nature of basic writing, there have been those, as in composition, who have called for its abolition. Bartholomae sums up the abolition arguments thus: “in the name of sympathy and empowerment, we have once again produced the ‘other’ who is the incomplete version of ourselves, confirming existing patterns of power and authority, reproducing the hierarchies we had meant to question and overthrow” (182). Alder-Kassner and Harrington discuss other abolition arguments that are administrative in nature: “colleges and universities being pressured to eliminate ‘remedial’ education, by state legislatures mandating particular kinds of testing, and by outsourcing of basic writing and other ‘zero-level’ or ‘remedial’ courses.” (3). Ultimately, Bartholomae argues against abolition for the following reasons: “I fear what would happen to the students who are protected, served in its name. I don’t, in other words, trust the institution to take

this as an intellectual exercise, a challenge to rethink old ways. I know that the institution would be equally quick to rely upon an established and corrupt discourse [...] it would allow the return of a way of speaking that was made suspect by the hard work and diligence of those associated with basic writing” (184).

I think we need basic writing not only for the reasons listed by Bartholomae, but also because, as Adler-Kassner and Harrington point out, basic writing has potential to be a site of radical composition practice. Further, basic writing is a practice that is created and sustained largely by standardized assessments which are based on current-traditional theories of writing instruction. The practices advocated in this chapter are meant to resist the current-traditional assumptions that identify students as “basic” writers. As such, the practices politicize basic writing by denying technocratic educational assumptions and objective views of literacy practice. We can choose to look at basic writing as remediation, as a space created to maintain social hierarchies, or we can choose look at it as an opportunity for radical composition practice. Translingualism and Shipka’s provides possibilities for this kind of radical practice. I turn to them because I think that as a profession, we are beyond the contact zone pedagogies of the 90s that proliferated in response to Pratt’s article which frequently seemed to be either a case of adding culture and stirring or considering culture only in the context of teaching traditional genres and forms, but I bring them up in the context of Pratt because she asks the question that machine scoring cannot (at least as far as technology has developed so far) and program assessment frequently do ask us to ignore: What *kinds* of texts do we allow in our classrooms? By making this question central to the contact zone that are our composition

classrooms, especially in the context of basic writing, our practice can call into question the validity of assessment practices that depend on standardization and reify colonialist hierarchies and stratifications.

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Appendix 1 – Table 1: Student Survey Responses, Questions 1 and 2

Question 1: What is a grade?

Question 2: Why do we (teachers) do it? Try to list as many reasons as you can think of.

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 1	In the classical sense, a grade is the most important external measure of how well you understand the material you are being taught. Its purpose is to give some kind of comparison for the student, so that they might be able to see where their comprehension should be at, and for the instructor, so that they have a means by which to report to the institution about how well the student is comprehending the material. In actuality, however, grades tend more to be seen as the guidelines by which to play the game, so to speak. Students are more interested in doing whatever it takes to earn a specific grade, and instructors are more interested in driving those grades higher, in both cases often in the interest of appearances. Grades, then, become more of a measure of volume instead of a measure of value.	Teachers give grades because, despite the drawbacks of such a system and the externalities that it fails to capture, it is still seen generally as the most accurate way we have to measure success in the educational setting. A grade provides a concrete ranking system by which students can measure themselves and see where they should be at in their comprehension. It also gives instructors a neat little number they can use in conjunction with other numbers to create a final measurement of what a student has learned in a class. It's also just plain easy and straightforward.
Student 2	A grade is a measurement of different levels of achievement.	-Keep students motivated -Reward/Punish students for their work -To keep order
Student 3	A grade is a letter for an assignment (A, B, C, D, F, or I) to show the quality of work and how well done the assignment was. It also is a marker for students to improve from and take in their quality of work.	Teachers grade to: help the students improve, give the students a marking point for their work, get the assignments flowing, give the students an idea of their quality of work, give the students feedback and sometimes to (sic)

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 4	A grade is a score that describes the quality of work done by a student. A grade is by no means an indication of how smart the student is. Grades allow teachers and professors to rank students based on the work they show. Few students will work their hardest and put forth their highest possible effort, therefore a grade is only related to the amount of work the student shows, and not necessarily related to their intelligence.	Teachers give grades because there must be some system to differentiate between students. Today's educational system and careers are too competitive for everyone to get a pass or failing grade. Without grades, everyone would appear to produce the same quality of work when that simply is not true. Grades are also a way for the instructor to get feed back on how they are doing in their teaching efforts. An uneven distribution of grades can mean that the material being taught is too easy or too hard, or that the teacher is not properly teaching the material (see below).
Student 5	A grade is the score that a teacher gives you. The grade is made final by the percentage you got in the class from all the assignments or it is what the teacher feels you deserve.	To show what the student is capable of in that certain subject.
Student 6	A grade is a form of measurement of how well you do on an assignment.	To see if we can pass a class. See how well we learn over the course
Student 7	I think a grade is the way that teachers tell students how well they believe they are performing. A low performance results in a lower grade and vise versa.	Tradition, it's their way of feedback
Student 8	A grade is a way of giving subjective feedback to a person's work, such as a written paper or a test, in the form of a letter or a percentage.	I think teachers give out grades because it's a way of ranking that person's work on a large scale, and because of that, giving grades makes people try hard on their work to reach a certain grade, like a goal. I think that some students believe teachers give out grades just to make them feel bad about themselves because they get "Ds" and "Fs", while making the kids who get "As" feel cocky and good about themselves.

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 9	A grade is something that measures the quality of one's work.	Teachers grade assignments because it is a way to let students know how they are doing on the assigned work. It's a way for teachers to show students what they need improving on or to tell them what they are doing a good job on.
Student 10	A grade is an evaluation of how well someone performed on a given assignment or task.	-The institution they work for demands that a grade be given -An attempt to fairly judge progress of students -For competition -To urge improvement"
Student 11	I think a grade is a measure of a student's effort on an assignment. Students who work hard on assignments will do better work and then will receive a better grade than the students who spend less effort on it.	Teachers need to give grades because grades measure a student's academic performance. They give them so they can compare students to one another and to see who is working harder or who is smarter
Student 12	Basically what the Internet say was a grade is an evaluation of a person's performance. It usually is regarding a teacher's evaluation of a student's work. I completely agree with this definition, so I used it. It is a way to compare a group of students to each other. It shows where a student's work is compared to his or her peers. It also shows how hard a student worked compared to another student, but not always. Some students try really hard, but do not have the skill level to another student. For example a freshman's work should be or is less than a senior's skill.	See where students are (skill wise) to each other. Evaluate a piece of work. Give feedback to a student to see where they need to improve on. Show their opinion to a student (bad grades if they do not agree, I have had it happen to me!) Correct poor grammar, sentence structure, etc. Because they are forced to by the University. Give credit to students who are working harder or not hard enough"

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 13	<p>A grade is a way to get credit for work that you complete. It shows your competence in a specific subject area and measures whether or not you are learning and mastering the material. Furthermore, grades can be given in many different formats including letters (A-F), ranges (0-4.0), and descriptions (poor, average, excellent). Also, the act of grading is all perspective and as a result, grades are often on the receiving end of much criticism. There is always a constant battle between teacher and student about how to grade in a fair, compromising manner.</p>	<p>Teachers use grading as a form of communication with students- a good grade shows a student is performing well and learning the material while a poor grade shows the student must put forth more effort. To add, keeping a record of grades of all students in a class allows the teacher to observe trends and see areas where many students performed well or not so well. As a result, they can plan their lessons accordingly, make adjustments to their teaching style and help the majority of students understand more difficult concepts. Finally, teachers give grades on assignments, quizzes, and tests because there needs to be a basis for passing or not passing a class. A student must show through satisfactory or above grades that they understand and have mastered the majority of the material in order to pass a class and move on to the next level.</p>
Student 14	<p>A grade, in writing, is more than just a quantification of correctness. It is a representation of the quality of work a student has done. Since it is so subjective, a writing grade is made to show how much effort one has put into their work. If a student doesn't try and writes a quite paper, it shows through misguided organization and minute points. I don't feel a writing grade should compare different students, but more reflect the growth of the student from preceding papers. Each student has a different writing level and style, so it is difficult to judge just exactly who has the best paper. These grades should be given to give a student an idea of how their work is progressing and how much they need to try next time to continue that growth.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) They have to 2) It tells the teacher how well they are teaching. If they get subpar papers they know they have something to improve on. 3) It tells the student how well they are writing. The students need some way of knowing how their writing matches with the expectations of quality. 4) It gives a student a way to learn better. Much of the learning in writing comes after one gets their work back and is able to analyze the grade they got. 5) It sets a precedent. Once a grade is given it sets a scale. It tells people what is a A and what is a failing paper. This curve can motivate people to put more effort into achieving the grade that they want.

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 15	A grade is something that reflects how well the student knows/understands a topic or, in some cases it reflects how much effort and thought was put into a project.	You guys do it so 1. You know how much a student is learning. 2. So you know how well you, as the teacher, are teaching the subject. 3. How much time and effort the student is putting into your class.
Student 16	A grade is a letter ranging from A-F, with A being the best and F being the worst, that evaluates the work of someone and how well he or she accomplishes the goal that the work he or she did was supposed to do	-to see how well students are understanding the material -If students are not doing well, the teacher can evaluate his or her teaching methods and see how he or she can improve how well students are comprehending -to let the student know how well he or she is doing in the class -to give the student a goal for improving their grade if he or she is not getting the grade he or she wants"
Student 17	A grade is a symbol given for the effort a student has put in to work. Grades are based on a pretty standardized scale – A for above average, C for average, F for fail. There are also check marks and percentages.	Grades show how hard a student worked. They are used for the future of the student. Teachers grade because they have to, at least at most institutions. Grades are also given to show progress or a lack thereof.
Student 18	I believe a grade is a way of assessing a person by means of a common standard that is equal to all.	To make students upset jk. It can be used to equally treat their students, it allows them to equate where there class is and each students success in the class, to motivate and encourage students to achieve greater, to create a consequence if students do not do what they are asked. Teachers grade because they are required to, they have to know how well the class is doing by means of assessment by giving out grades

Respondent	Question 1	Question 2
Student 19	A grade is a quantification of how well you accomplished a goal.	-To give credit for hard work -To show a student if they have improved
Student 20	A rating received based on how well a student fulfils the requirements of an assignment, or a class.	It gives us an idea of how well we comprehend a subject matter. We need some type of indicator as to how well we are doing in a class and a grade gives us that information. It also is a rating system to compare students. We are always compared to one another and most of the time it's based on the grades we receive.
Student 21	It is a measurement used in school to determine how well a student does on a certain assignment / class in general.	Measure success. Incentive for students to work / compete with others.
Student 22	Something you get in school that shows how well you did.	So that you know if someone is improving and who is good at something and who isn't
Student 23	A grade is an instructor's attempt to rank the caliber of a certain piece of work in comparison to his/her own level of expertise and/or to specific criteria the work pertains to.	Try to reach a level of mutual understanding. Signify how close a piece of work relates to given criteria. Incentive for learner to continue working well or work harder. Enjoy the power of being able to critique and rank work "below" them.

Appendix 2 – Table 2: Student Survey Responses, Questions 3 and 4

Question 3: What is a grade’s function, both in the local sense of its role in the classroom, and in the larger sense of its role in society?

Question 4: How important are grades to you and why? Does it differ from one class to the next, or from assignment/test to the next? For example, are you more concerned with your grades in your major than other classes? Think about other motivating factors as well, such as scholarships, your parent(s), liking or disliking a teacher, or liking or disliking the subject matter.

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 1	The function of a grade is to give students in the classroom an idea of where they are at in relation to the material they are interacting with, as well as in relation to other students in the classroom. A grade also provides a very basic form of satisfaction to the broader society, that a performance has met some set of requirements that makes it more trustworthy and therefore, “better.”	Grades are important to me when I’m getting good grades. It’s kind of funny how that works, now that I think about it. I’ll be very happy with a high grade, even if I don’t feel as though I “earned” it, and will still hold that example up to myself and others as a demonstration of how well I’m doing in a certain class. However, when I feel as though I did earn something and the grade doesn’t seem to agree with me, I won’t be concerned as much with that measure because I know that it’s not accurate.
Student 2	A grade is a tool used to measure a student’s effort put into a class. When you place one letter grade in the larger sense, it really does not affect much in the role of society.	My grades in each class are important to me because they each affect my GPA, however, I do tend to put more effort into classes that are more concerned with my major.

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 3	<p>The function of a grade is basically what I stated above; the marking point for the quality of the students' work and a standpoint from which they can improve. In the larger sense, a grade serves as a way for students to get prepared for society and how their work outside of school. The grade can show them where they can go from there.</p>	<p>I feel that grades are important, however they can sometimes be skewed. For example, I am not as concerned about the grade I get in a Biology course because it is not included in my major. I also feel less concerned about individual tests or assignments rather than the grade as a whole in the end because that is what matters the most. If I am not particularly interested in the subject, I will also give myself a bit more leeway on grades. I sometimes feel that grades are not important as effort, depending on the situation. This is true in classes such as Biology for me because I can give it my best shot and still not receive a perfect grade.</p>
Student 4	<p>In the classroom, grades are used to rank students so that the teacher may compare students. Grades also can be an indication of how well the teacher is teaching. If the teacher gives what he or she thinks to be an easy test and no student receives higher than a C on the test, the teacher may not be teaching at an appropriate level. Likewise, if all students receive an A on the test, the teacher may not be challenging the students enough. One could argue that grades matter less and less as time goes on and people build their career path, but grades are still used to rank people even after they are out of school. Employers look at grades and GPA as a sign for how hard of a worker a student might be. This is not to say that poor grades will give you no hope in having a successful career, but employers do take a close look at grades. affect much in the role of society.</p>	<p>My grades are very important to me. I plan to attain some sort of graduate degree so my grades will have even more of an impact on my future. My grades earned in the next 3 years may affect where I go to graduate school. Naturally I am more motivated to get a high grade in a class taught by a teacher I enjoy and on material that I find interesting, but I do my best to be equally motivated in all classes. If a class is boring, I try to look at it as an opportunity to do well because the material is easy. When I think of the cost of my education I get even more motivation, not wanting to waste money. If I am paying for a class I should do my best to get the most out of it..</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 5	In the classroom a grade is to display how hard the student worked in the class and how well the student knew the subject. In society it is used to get a student into college, grad school, receiving scholarships, and being admitted into other grade based organizations.	It doesn't matter what the subject or if I like the teacher or not, I will do anything for a good grade. It might suck at the time if I don't like something about the class but grade in the end is so important to me. I just push through the class and do the work and put forward the best effort I can hopefully the teacher can see that I have flaws on certain things but I believe that the effort I put forward with all my work is worth a very high grade. And I don't do it for anyone else but me.
Student 6	In a class its whether you pass or not and in society usually people who get better grades are looked upon more highly.	Very because if I get bad grades my dad will kill me. Yes, it does differ. Yes.
Student 7	A grade is a way of judgment of the quality of work. In a classroom it is to tell you individually how you perform on a specific assignment, and it's also a compilation of your effort you've put into all your work. In society I think it's the same thing. A grade is a judgment of the quality of something, i.e. grades of gasoline	In high school, my GPA was over a 4.0. I was always concerned with my grades and status in my classes. When I first got to college it was really hard for me to realize that college was a lot more difficult and I would have to work a lot harder to receive the same grades I had been in high school. I think since I've started college, I worry about my grades, but a lot less than I used to. I understand if I want to be accepted into a professional school later in my educational career, I need to keep my grades up, but I also realize too that I only live once. I work hard on my school work and put forth MY best effort. If the teacher doesn't like it, I don't worry so much anymore about the grade. The grade is just one person's interpretation of my work.

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 8	I think its function in the class room is a letter which corresponds to your GPA, or a letter that corresponds to doing well in a class or passing a class, but in society it functions as a rank. If you get “Cs”, then you’re just another average joe blow or if you get “As”, then you’re one of the elite’s in society who is supposed to get a good job and have a successful life.	For me grades are very important and have been important since I was young. They are important because my parents expect me to do well and get good grades and if I don’t get good grades then I’m letting them down along with myself. The importance of good grades is the same for every class cause first of all, each class is important to me, and second, each class affects my GPA
Student 9	A grade’s function is to measure the quality of someone’s work. It lets people know what they should improve on and what they are doing good on.	Grades are very important to me because I work very hard to get them, good or bad, and they are something that lets me know what I need to work on or what I’m understanding. I care more about the grades I get on bigger or more important assignments and tests that affect my overall grade more however, I do try my very best on each assignment and test because I do care about
Student 10	A grade attempts to show how students perform compared to their peers. In the “real world” it is much the same, however coming in different form. A grade of an ‘A’ will get you a promotion and an ‘F’ will get you fired in your job. What’s more, beyond school, I think a grade can even be considered how one judges himself. The five-point scale merely gives another name to ‘excellent’ or ‘not bad’ or “Wow, I really messed that up.”	As of now, grades are not the most important aspect of my life. That is not to say that I don’t try, it’s more that I don’t think about them and the ultimate goal but rather have the ultimate goal be the experience of learning (which for the record has been extremely beneficial). If I don’t enjoy a class or teacher I suck it up, if school were about loving every single second of it we would lie in the grass all day and talk about our favorite ice cream flavors.

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 11	<p>A grade's function in the classroom is to establish hierarchies and to see who is smarter than (sic) others at that subject. A grade's role in society is to determine or predict the how successful a student may become.</p>	<p>Grades are very important to me. It is important because getting good grades show my parents I'm not wasting money and time going to school. Also many scholarships look at grades to determine the recipients. Grades in all my classes are important to me, however; I try to work harder in classes that are in my major. This is because they are more interesting to me and will pertain to my future more than my general requirements</p>
Student 12	<p>A grade in the classroom is to evaluate a student's work (as said previously). It is to help a student improve on their work if they would like to improve. It is a way to give credit to students who are working harder, or excel in that certain area (not always the sense). In society, grades are meant to rank people. In a work environment, coworkers are given evaluations or grades on how hard they are working compared to others in the same field. Basically in the world, grades are to rank people based on how the evaluator sees them</p>	<p>Grades are really important to me. If I receive a good grade, I feel more confident and proud of myself. If I receive a bad grade, I feel horrible like I have not done enough work. It differs from class to class because I am more motivated in different classes. I enjoy like some classes over other classes, and some classes mean more for the future. I enjoy math class, so I enjoy doing the homework, and will try harder to understand the material. Physics is not one of my favorite classes. However, I try hard to get a good grade in that class because it is required for my major. This is motivation to receive a good grade. Other classes that are not required for my major and are not required hold the lowest priority on my list of things to do. Though I do care about grades, I do not have enough time or energy to put all of my effort into everything. So a hierarchy is placed on classes and grades.</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
<p>Student 13</p>	<p>In the classroom, a grade simply shows whether or not a student understands the material and turned in assignments give the teacher an opportunity to assess their teaching style and skills. If the majority of the class seems to get the same question wrong on a test or incorrect complete a homework assignment, the teacher can see that more time needs to be spent on that subject matter. On the other hand, in a larger sense, grades represent competition. From my experiences as a first semester freshman, I quickly learned the importance of “riding the curve” and the harsh reality of teachers giving grades instead of student earning them. Students are consistently competing against each other to get an “A” so they can improve their GPA, graduate higher in their class, and get a better job. Even in the work force, people are graded on performance and the risks can be even higher, depending on the job. One or two mistakes or one time performance isn’t up to far can lead to losing a job. Basically, the idea of grading or assessing performance puts pressure on both students and people working in society to learn the material or work their hardest.</p>	<p>My grades are definitely very important to me. I take pride in my work ethic, whether it’s in the classroom, at my job, or on the soccer field. However, I feel like that pride was partially instilled in me by my parents and peers. I attended a high school where a 4.0 was a common grade point average and my peers and I were always competing for the better grade. To add, my parents both went to college and earned high enough grades to get into medical school and their determination to achieve success was passed down to me. However, my interest in a class as well as whether or not it is required for my major also effects how much work I put forth. For instance, this semester I am enrolled in a seminar for my major, biomedical engineering, and the speakers we listen to each week really spark my interest in medical research. As a result, I am more motivated to do complete the assignments in a timely manner and hand in my best work. On the other hand, I am also taking a government class that I do not enjoy at all. I don’t find the lectures interesting and it is hard for me to complete homework. I even find it very difficult to put in the time to study for tests and find myself not caring what my final grade is because it technically doesn’t count towards my GPA to get into higher level engineering classes</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 14	<p>The role on a local level is to give order and direction to the course. It sets a pathway of how well people need to do in order to get the expected grade. Without the grade people would be lost as to what is expected and how to achieve that. We couldn't really tell people how to improve because telling them is a form of grading their work. On a large sense, grades are a way of unifying and representing the school community. The grades that the students get in courses are reflective of how well they are taught. Therefore, the community gets a look at how well the school is teaching their students. Just as it gives a direction on the local level, it also does on the larger scale. It lets people know what school is doing the best and without the grading system we wouldn't really be able to tell.</p>	<p>Grades matter to me only because they matter to other people. Those people being the ones that are going to give me opportunities to get me closer to where I want to be. However, other than that, grades don't matter to me at all. Of course it is a good feeling to always get the good grade but that is not important. It is more important to focus on the actual education than what you are physically getting out of it. Knowledge should be respected on a level that is less materialistic than grades. If you take a test and feel like you understood the material and learned a lot, that is what matters. The grade does reflect how well you understand but that is not the only factor in a test grade. There also is the timing of the test, how well you could study for it, how good your professor is at preparing you, and how well the people that grade it actually look at if you understood the material. I respect my education and the grades are just a benefit I get from the act of gaining knowledge.</p>
Student 15	<p>A grade is the classroom shows how well the student understands the topic as compared to his classmates or previous class members. On a larger scale it shows how dedicated and diligent a student is and this, therefore, reflects on how diligent he/she will be in the workforce.</p>	<p>I, personally, take on the idea of my AP chemistry professor in high school. Grades are useless, they are easily manipulated and mean very little in the long run. What truly matters is, not how much you cram before a test or how many hours you spend making your reports sound smart and appealing, but rather how much you truly take from a class and how much of that you apply to your life</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 16	<p>-In the classroom, it evaluates the class as a whole on how well the students are learning what the teacher is saying, usually producing a bell curve</p> <p>-In the society it determines how well a student does among other students graduating at the same time and can determine what job one is able to get and may even affect a starting salary.</p> <p>-Society: Grades determine which college a person is eligible to get into</p>	<p>My grades are extremely important to me. Not just in classes relating to my major but to every class. I know I am capable of producing A work if I put my mind into the class and study for it the way I know I need to and am capable of. Part of the reason I have this mind set is because of my dad. He always has pushed for me to have excellent grades, and this has also given me the mind set I need to have excellent grades. Whether or not I like or dislike a teacher has nothing to do with how I feel about my grade in a class. I need to learn the material one way or another, even if I have to teach myself, and produce the standards my teacher is looking for in "A" quality work. Whether or not I like or dislike the subject applies in the same way. No matter how much I dislike a class, I need to work my hardest to get the A I want. If I do receive a lower grade, I'm very disappointed in myself and analyze how I can do better next time, because anything lower is just not acceptable. If I met these standards last semester, I know I am capable of doing it again with hard work.</p>
Student 17	<p>A grades function in the classroom depends on the classroom. In some, a grade might mean that one student gets a prize. In others grades are meant for the teacher and student to show the students progress or lack thereof</p>	<p>Grades are important to me because without good grades I won't be able to graduate college. It's important for me to do this so I can get a good job and please my family. I always care about grades no matter what the class, it does not change from major class to non-major class. I think I care about grades less when the assignment is not worth many points.</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 18	<p>Grades functions as a ladder in the classroom. From top to bottom is goes, A's, B's, C's, D's then F's. Some students are content with being at the middle of the ladder, and some are not content until they are at the top with A's. I believe grades have a role in society as well. We don't receive grades on a grade report like we do in school, but we do receive promotions at work, or get higher on the ladder of success in life. There is a ladder in the larger society, this ladder is constantly getting higher and higher. We start off with going to college, then getting a degree, then getting married, having a career, moving up your career, having kids, then grandkids, traveling, retiring. This ladder is something we are climbing, trying to get higher than we are.</p>	<p>Grades are important to me, but it definitely depends. They are important because they are important to other people, but if it were just the grade that is important then it probably would not hold such importance to me. The grades I get do differ from class to class and assignment to assignment. Each class and assignment is a different level of difficulty and the importance depends on importance in my life. If I really value a class then I will work harder to achieve a better grade, for example for my Jesus in History class I want to receive a good grade because I have a passion for this, but for something like gym in high school I really didn't mind that I would receive a bad grade if I didn't do ten laps. It also matter whether or not the class is a more "important" class, for math and science, I would try to get a good grade because there are the essential classes for "smart" people, and for classes like art or child psych I held to a not so high standard</p>
Student 19	<p>In the classroom, a grade is a measurement of your effort and you improvement. In the real world, grades are used to compare people which can be unfair because different teachers grade differently and all people are different and have different skill sets</p>	<p>Grades are important because they can affect what jobs and experiences we will be able to have in our lives after college. I worry about all of my grades because I want to be well-rounded and not just be a science nerd :) Although I worry about all of my grades, I do have different expectations in each class depending on how well I understand the subject and how well the teacher is able to convey the material.</p>

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
Student 20	In the classroom it is a rating of how we comprehend the subject at hand. In society it is a rating system to compare students. It doesn't tell how smart we are because how hard we work does come into play but it is a standard with which students can be compared.	Grades are important but they don't tell the entire story of a student. Someone who is really smart but doesn't work very hard can get lesser grades than someone who is average but works their butt off for a good grade. We need a standard with which to compare students as far as applying for things like college or jobs, but grades only tell half the story
Student 21	Similar to my answers above it allows society to measure one's success in school. In a classroom it gives students something to work for and grades allow students to compare / compete	Yes grades are important to me because they are what I work for right now. Good grades will hopefully allow me to get accepted into a good law school. All grades are important, because they all count towards GPA in the end, which is what ultimately matters. My parents also have always pressured me into getting good grades. Its easier to get good grades if the subject matter is interesting but it doesn't make it more/less important..
Student 22	Society: to set those who are alike together (4.0 students get better jobs) Classroom: see who is doing well in class and who needs help	My grades are very important to me and have always been. I need to be an A or B student. Not only because if I don't get a 3.0 or better I could get in trouble with the university. All classes are the same whether they are hard or not I need to get the same grade in all.

Respondent	Question 3	Question 4
<p>Student 23</p>	<p>A grade, in the sense of the classroom, functions as a rating in which one can know where they rank pertaining to the kind of work they are given, when critiqued by a “more educated” person. In the larger sense of its societal role, it most likely relates to their general level of scholarly progression according to the conventional laws of modern education.</p>	<p>Grades are highly important in the sense that it is the main barrier between you and that/those degree(s), so you have no choice but to do well and want those high grades if you wish to obtain that/those certain degree(s). But they are also useless in the fact that grading, for the most part, largely depends on one’s ability to regurgitate information, which doesn’t necessarily require one to UNDERSTAND the material, therefore information is habitually stored only for important occasions and forgotten when occasions have passed. Then what happens after graduation? To me, if my life didn’t depend on the grades to get that degree in college, I could care less. I’d rather do field work than sit in a classroom all day listening to someone talk talk talk for an hour+ straight. I’d rather be critiqued in the field and taught in the field than be bound to conventional education. You don’t necessarily need a degree to get a good paying job, you just need the right connections and the required experience, which you can gain outside of the classroom. At this particular point in my life though, I do want good grades in all my classes, whether it be part of my major or not, because that shows how much effort I’m willing to put in whatever I am given or whatever I choose. It does not make sense to choose a class and not even try in it; I am setting myself up for my own disappointment that way. Kind of like, do I only want to try being good at playing games and shopping for clothes, or should I try being good at academics and managing my time as well? I should put all my effort in all those activities because they all benefit me, in some major or minor way.</p>

Appendix 3 – Table 3: Student Survey Responses, Questions 5 and 6

Question 5: Describe a situation in which you thought you were graded unfairly. What were the teacher’s reasons for assigning that grade? What are the reasons you disagreed?

Question 6: Looking back, has your opinion changed about the situation? Why or why not?

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 1	A situation in which I felt I was unfairly graded happened just last week, actually. In the relatively short 35-minute time period which I was assigned to complete a major test, I answered the questions as concise and accurately as I possibly could in the small space provided to answer. When I got the test back, there were markings all over the thing telling me that I needed to expound on my answers and provide more context and detail. I was given a C-. I did not think this was fair, because it was clearly stated that the test was a “short answer” test, and given the short amount we were given to complete the test- as well as the small spaces we were given in which to answer- there was no possible way I could have given any more detailed answer than what I had given. And being as it is that the grade I received was very close to the average of the rest of the class, that tells me that most others did not do very well for these same reasons. This was not a fairly graded test	It has not, because I still believe I know that material and was given a fair measurement of my knowledge.
Student 2	A teacher once graded me down for not having the same opinion as her. She claimed that I simply did not fully understand the topic; when in reality, I did. I just had an opinion she did not like.	No, I think I have a right to express an opinion without worrying if I will be graded down because of it. doesn’t make it more/less important..

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 3	I believe that I was graded unfairly with some of the papers that I had to write for A.P. Language in high school. These papers were grade a lot off of the opinion of the teacher and if I did not have the same opinions as him, my grades would suffer. I disagree with this because he was grading out of opinion and not out of the quality of the work	I still hold the same opinion because, no matter where this type of grading takes place, it is most likely unfair to the students.
Student 4	In my AP literature and composition class in high school, I received a C on a rough draft paper because I only submitted 7 pages. The teacher did not specify how long she wanted the rough draft to be and it was obvious that she was grading entirely on length and not content. Student who submitted 10 pages or more received 100% because their rough drafts were considered adequate in length. Having put many hours into my rough draft I was very displeased with my grade. When I met with the teacher to discuss my grade she reasoned that any writing under 10 pages would be too short given the style of paper and that content did not matter as much because it could be improved or added in later drafts	My opinion has remained the same. Although it was only one grade, I still think that the teacher should have specified how long the rough drafts should be and how she would be grading them.
Student 5	One time on a math test I got a lot of points taken off because I did a problem in a way I was taught in high school that was easier for me to understand than the way the teacher demonstrated it but I still got the same answer in the end. When I asked the teacher why I would get points taken off for it he really had no real answer and just kept saying it was the wrong way to do it. I totally disagreed with that grade because the beauty of math is that there are a lot of different ways to do a problem and still get the right answer, you just have to find the best way for you. I told him exactly that and he said he would think about it. I was never given the points.	No my opinion has not changed at all. I am still not happy that the teacher graded that the way he did. It was not fair and I put a lot of time and effort into studying and taking that test.

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 6	For archeology, I wrote a paper and the TA graded it and I argued my points and the teacher bumped me up 1 [?] grade because she didn't even agree with her own TA.	No
Student 7	I really hate group projects, especially when they are graded as a group grade. I don't remember a specific time when this happened, but I know that I've felt I've been graded unfairly on a group project before. I think the teacher expected us to work better as a team to produce a better product, but I don't think group projects should ever be graded as a group. Most groups I'm in, the effort of every member is not equivalent. I would prefer to be graded individually.	My opinion has not changed on this situation. Although I like being a team player, I don't like not receiving credit where credit is deserved.
Student 8	I remember getting a C on a paper that I was sure I should have received at least a B if not an A. I had worked hard on it and put in a lot of time and I truly felt like I did the best I could have done on it. Each paper that I had written previous to this I had gotten an A if I did the best I could do, so it was weird to get a C when I had done the same amount of work and quality of work as my "A" papers. I didn't really understand why I got a C. The teacher just wrote some things that she didn't like on the final draft of my paper, but it didn't seem to amount up to enough deductions for a C, but it was the grade she thought I deserved and it's her choice so that's that.	No, because I still think I did "A" quality work on that paper, and if I believe that, then nothing is going to change my feelings even if the teacher disagrees with me.
Student 9	I was once graded unfairly on a paper that was part opinion and I believed the teacher disagreed with my opinion which was unfair because I should've received a better grade for my quality work not for my 'wrong' opinion.	No it hasn't changed because I think opinions shouldn't be graded based on whether the teacher agrees or disagrees.

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 10	<p>My junior year term paper is the sole reason why I dislike the grading system of writing (and also the reason why I took creative writing senior year). We had the option of writing on an author and comparing and contrasting three of their books or writing on some bland history topic. I picked to write on Kurt Vonnegut who, in an unrelated note, had some incredibly sassy and incredible quotes to use. Apparently I was the only person to choose to write about an author of my 200 some person class. Long story short, the grader assumed I was writing on the history of Kurt Vonnegut's life (which I tied in briefly to his novel Slaughterhouse-Five. I received a C because I didn't develop his history properly (not the point of my paper at all). I tried to meet with the grader but it was not allowed and alas I believe I was unjustly graded, especially for something worth 40 % percent of my semester grade (which is a lot in high school). The same grader is also known to have said "I will never give a student an A on a term paper because I myself received a B+."</p>	<p>I think the passive aggressive nature of my description shows my opinion has not exactly changed. Besides the fact that my favorite author is Kurt Vonnegut, it was insulting to me that the teacher did not even pay attention enough when grading such a large assignment to understand the point to the paper.</p>
Student 11	<p>The class had to write a paper on a highly debated topic. It was clear that the teacher had an opinion about the topic because she shared it with the class. She told the class that as long as we had support for our argument it does not matter what way we decided. I disagreed with the teacher, and I felt I had a strong argument with plenty of citations to back up my argument. I received a C for the paper because my argument was weak, but there were very little comments on the paper to help me strengthen my argument or why it was weak.</p>	<p>No.I feel I should have gotten a better grade on the paper. I still feel like my argument was strong even after my However, I did not want to ruin my relationship with the teacher because I felt it would have affected my grade on later assignments. I feel that everyone has their opinions about people, and it is hard to keep those feelings out of grading even though opinions are not suppose to be an input on grading.</p>

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 12	I think I was graded unfairly on group assignments. We all received the same grade, but it was a lower grade because one group member didn't finish their part of the project. The teacher gave me this grade because I was part of the group, but I don't think it was fair to penalize the whole group because of one member's mistake.	I still think it was unfair, but I do realize that group members should watch the work of others. The other members of the group could have made sure that everyone was on top of their school work.
Student 13	My junior year of high school, I had to take a writing class called advanced composition. My teacher was a very subjective grader and as result, I disagreed often when her assessments of my papers. Common with many writing classes, I had to write a persuasive research paper and both rough drafts as well as final drafts were turned in for grades. My rough draft grade was pretty far below average and I took her criticism as motivation to improve. So, I spent almost thirty hours the last week before it was due to edit and make changes. When I turned it back in, I received a C+, only a half grade above my rough draft. When I talked to the teacher after class, she told me that it looked like I hadn't made many changes between rough and final and some parts of the paper were written in a way that she didn't "agree" with. By the end of the semester I felt like the only way for me to receive a good grade was to write the way my teacher wrote. However, I believe that a writer's strongest asset is his or her own voice	No, my opinion has not changed about that situation. I understand that teachers need to grade students on their writing skills; however, the categories assessed should be ones like ideas, organization, and grammar, not whether or not a teacher liked the topic or liked the way the topic was presented. If a student shows improvement between a rough and final draft and their ideas are clear and organized, I believe a good grade should be given. Besides, experienced teachers usually have a sixth sense about whether or not students put forth their best efforts to complete an assignment and a writing grade should be based around improvements or the process between the rough and final draft, not just the final product.

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 14	<p>The physics department at the University of Minnesota is synonymous for being terrifyingly bad graders. They do not look at the work you have done and give points based on how well the student understands the material. They look for small parts and give points for that. Even if it is in a different, but still accepted form it is marked wrong. They do not look at any of the work the student has presented and I feel that is not an accurate representation of how people would actually look at a person's work. My most unfair test in that class was a mind-boggling screw up. For the curve the professor actually decided to multiply one of the three questions on everybody's test by a factor of 2.5. This is not a curve. People that got twenty points on this question got an extra sixty points on a hundred point test. The people that needed the curve got close to nothing. To be honest, I don't know how some of the most intelligent people I have ever met can think that this is anything close to acceptable and fair.</p>	<p>No it has not at all. There is no acceptable reason for trying to give that curve. A curve should not be designed to punish the people that do poor. People's grades actually became lower and that not at all what a curve should do. Why should somebody that did poor be punished more because somebody that did well brought the curve up by getting 131/100 on a test? Yes, that was the actual high score on the test. Still the average was only 65/100. Even though I did relatively well, if there is a relative for this situation, I still think the system is horrible.</p>
Student 15	<p>I don't have any situations when I thought I was graded unfairly but I do have one about my brother. We were in the same class together with an openly sexist teacher, she did not like guys. My brother and I have always gotten almost exactly the same grades on projects but in this case he got a C- and I got an A-. We both put in the same amount of hours and I read his report and thought it was just as good as mine. His final grade in the class was similar to this project. Although we had put in approximately the same amount of hours for this class my brother received a C+ in the class while I got a B+ like the only way for me to receive a good grade was to write the way my teacher wrote. However, I believe that a writer's strongest asset is his or her own voice</p>	<p>As you can probably tell from my response I still feel that my brother, along with many other guys in that class, was cheated out of a grade which they deserved. This teacher has since retired with much "persuasion" from the school district.</p>

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 16	I thought one time I was graded unfairly in music class this semester on a quiz. The teacher assigned the grade because I did not put the requirements he was looking for in the correct place. I disagreed because I still had what he was looking for, just further along in my answer than he expected. I still got a good grade so I did not bother to talk to him and ask him to change it.	No, my opinion has not changed about the situation because I still feel I am correct. I mean I still had the right answer, he just did not look further along in my answer to see that I actually put the correct answer.
Student 17	I don't often think I've been graded unfairly. When I do it's usually a hard class and if I talk to other people they also got poor grades. In one of my classes, I always got low grades on tests, but so did everyone else.	No my opinion hasn't changed. I don't know why.
Student 18	I believe I was graded unfairly with writing in the past, I wrote a paper about Jesus and His baptism, and I got graded poorly because I used my own interpretation and added my own personal thoughts into it. The rubric never addressed that we couldn't say what we thought, but when I got the paper back it criticized me for using "invalid" points. The T.A addressed the issue and said that for the purpose of the class, we couldn't/shouldn't use our own personal thoughts/opinions about Jesus or bring faith into the class. I don't know how one can teach a class about Jesus and not include faith or our own understanding of who He was.	No, but I do understand that for the purpose of the class we should focus on the facts and that is it. I don't believe that including our own understanding should affect our grade, but I do understand where the T.A is coming from, because the U of MN is not a bible or Christian college.
Student 19	When teachers do not explain their expectations and then dock your work because you are missing what they feel is an important part, I believe, is unfair. People do not have the ability to read minds and therefore I feel that teachers need to say exactly what they want or expect and then need to not deviate from what they say.	No, that has always been my view although I could not specify a specific example.

Respondent	Question 5	Question 6
Student 20	Last fall I felt graded unfairly on my final project for one of my classes. I had met every requirement and I was proud of my paper. I was told my information wasn't good enough for the project. I felt that I had covered my subject completely and that is where we didn't see eye to eye.	Looking back I should have picked a totally different subject to write about; something that had a plethora of information so that I wouldn't have to stretch the information I have to fit the length requirement. I still feel that my grade was too low.
Student 21	My creative writing class senior year I turned in a paper that was about an object that was special to me. I received a C- on the paper. After meeting with the teacher he said I received this grade because he did not like some of my word choices. I really liked the words I choose and there was nothing in the rubric that said specifically "choose words that I will like". I turned the same paper into my English class and received an A+ on it	No, I still think he graded me on something that I cannot change. Creative writing is a way to express ones self, not to guess how others want yourself expressed.
Student 22	Last semester in a freshman seminar: my teacher didn't like what I wrote about and how I wrote it so she made me redo the paper the way she wanted me to write it or I would have gotten an F. I have been writing this way for a long time and even on my ACT writing I did pretty well so I didn't know what her problem was.	No, not really. I looked over the paper and I didn't think it was A material but it wasn't F material either maybe C or B
Student 23	I don't believe I've ever hit this obstacle before; if I ever had any doubts to the grade I was given, it was usually justified by common sense or the actual answers.	No. I got what I deserved.

Appendix 4 – Table 4: Student Survey Responses, Questions 7 and 8

Question 7: Now describe a situation or situations where you thought you got a better grade than you deserved. What were the teacher’s reasons for the grade and why did you disagree, or did you not even ask?

Question 8: (Optional) List at least 3 criteria that you think should be taken into account in grading a single piece of writing and give a reason for each criteria. Also, rank the criteria in order of importance, and give reasons for your ranking. If you’re having trouble thinking about this, it might help to think in terms of first, what makes a good piece of writing.

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 1	In all honesty, I cannot think of a situation like this. That probably makes me some kind of hypocrite or something.	Clarity – does it communicate the information clearly and in a way that can be understood? Composition – is it organized in a way that makes sense for the purpose of proving the point? Substantiation – are claims backed up with credible sources? Grammar – are words spelled right and used correctly?
Student 2	During my first in class timed writing for my AP Language class, I was overwhelmed and really nervous. It literally took me 45 minutes to write two paragraphs. My teacher was very lenient and gave me a number grade equivalent to a B+. I didn’t think I deserved this grade and spoke with him after class, he told my two paragraphs were well written and not to be too hard on myself because it was my first timed writing	Connection with the audience – If a writer is not clear and does not explain his/her thoughts clearly; the writer fails to connect with readers. Interesting writing style – Having the ability to play with words and sentence structure, will entertain the audience – making more interesting to read. Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling – it is always important to play by the rules.

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 3	<p>I think I got a better grade than I deserved in some of my assignments for A.P. Literature in high school. In papers or small assignments I would describe my thoughts completely, but I feel that I would sometimes lack feeling or reasoning behind my thoughts. However, I did the opposite in most of my assignments so I think the teacher took that into account and possibly went into grading the assignments with a preconceived thought about me.</p>	<p>Emotion-I feel that putting your emotion and opinion into the right type of assignment can make a world of difference.</p> <p>Examples-Examples back the assignment up and give it a reason. Good examples can form more ideas and create a better understanding of the topic.</p> <p>Effort-Putting time and thought into an assignment also plays a large role. Even if it is not perfect, the fact that the student gave it their all says so much about the assignment and the person in general.</p>
Student 4	<p>I received an A on a poster about world religions. I but no more than an hour and a half into the project and covered only a bit of information on each of the assigned religions. I think my high grade was because my poster was one of the best and the teacher was grading subjectively, comparing my poster to the others. I accepted my grade because I wanted to make sure I received an A for my overall class grade.</p>	<p>Subject Content – If a paper lacks proper content, there is little left to the paper. Unclear content takes away from the purpose of the paper and therefore should be the first criterion taken into consideration when grading writing. If subject content is unclear or unorganized, the writer’s credibility is also diminished. While writing is not always about pure communication, proper content in a piece of writing shows that the writer can communicate their ideas well.</p> <p>Sentence Structure – A variety of sentence structures makes for a more enjoyable read and shows the intellectual capability of the author. A paper full of simple sentences and a paper full of complex sentences can both be difficult to read. Sentence structures also show how the author is capable of organizing his or her thoughts and presenting them in a variety of ways.</p> <p>Grammar – Grammar is important and shows that the writer understands the use of language well, however often times the idea of the writing can be communicated without proper grammar.</p>

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
<p>Student 5</p>	<p>In a Spanish class I got a 99/100 on a presentation. I felt I was prepared, but my group members were not and I thought it showed. I thought we would be lucky to get half the points but when we had to talk to the teacher after the presentation she said “nothing is perfect, but that was pretty close to perfect”. I was shocked. I wasn’t going to argue and say that we shouldn’t get that grade but I felt a little bad because I don’t feel that it was an almost perfect presentation.</p>	<p>Effort – I think that the amount of time and effort put into writing should be the most important thing. A teacher can tell if a student has put time into the paper and I think students should be rewarded for caring about their work and trying rather than writing it two hours before.</p> <p>Punctuality – I think that having a paper in on time shows that you care and are serious about your work. But with punctuality comes the responsibility of the teacher getting the assignment out in its entirety too. This semester in this class, I was assigned an online forum and I did my assignment right away and answered the question fully. After the assignment was due, I found out the teacher changed the whole question, so I probably did not the full points for that forum. But that was not my fault because I answered the original question so I think that the teacher should take into account when I submitted my response and when the question was changed. Punctuality is something that people look very highly on and with that people tend to take more time on it rather than rushing to make a dead line.</p> <p>Writing/Answering the Question- I think how you write and that you are answering the question being asked is very important to a good paper. You can have something really great being said but it it’s totally off topic it’s kind of pointless.</p>

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 6	To be honest I have never thought I have been graded better than I deserved.	N/A
Student 7	In my AP Chemistry class, my teacher used my final as the answer key to grade everyone else's test. Although I was honored that my score was well enough for him to do this, I do not think he should have made my test the determinate of the curve for the class without even having an answer key other than my test. (Hope that scenario makes sense). I got over a 100%, but had missed some questions. I didn't ask my teacher why he used my test as the curve so I will never know his reasons behind doing that.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The piece of writing must be understandable. This is my first criteria because its hard to even judge something if you can't understand it. 2) It must be clear there was effort and thought into the paper. Not every person is going to be the next journalist for the New York Times, but if you try to put your best paper forward, you should receive a good grade. If the paper has been well thought out and executed, it deserves a good grade. 3) Improvement from paper to paper. If the writer learns from his/her mistakes, the grade should increase. I think this is important because writing can always be a learning process and by taking this into account, the writer is maximizing this opportunity.
Student 8	Some classes I feel like they are not as demanding as other ones and are considered to be a "blow off" class, so I've written a paper in one of these "blow off" classes and not put in as much effort as I would in a harder, more demanding class, and still got an A. I didn't ask why I got an A because I was happy with it. Why would I want to question a good grade?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The writing has meaning and understanding to it. It makes sense and intrigues the reader/grader 2) The writing has its own sense of style to it that is unique to the writer. This is something that distinguishes a paper about the same topic between two students' papers. 3) The writing has good form and mechanics and it follows the paper's requirements

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 9	There have been a few times where I have completely put off an assignment until the very last day and still gotten an A or B on it. Maybe my work really was good but I feel that I could've given more effort.	Quality, Effort, Improvement
Student 10	Basically every paper I've turned in since I've gone to college. In high school all my papers earned Cs or Bs. For my first Lit paper last semester I got an A and seriously doubted whether my professor was pitying me. I asked him why he gave me an A and he said that I had strong analysis and worked quotes well. It's not that I didn't agree, I didn't think I deserved the A because I wasn't used to receiving them. Looking back, I think its because I despised step up to writing and didn't use it when all my teachers told me to.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Analysis – Nothing is worse than a paper that says nothing. 2) Structure – It's hard or impossible to get good meaning out of a paper with no structure. 3)

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 11	<p>I started a paper at ten o'clock at night the day before the paper was due. I totally forgot about it because I was so pressed with other homework. I tried my hardest to add as much support as possible, but my flow was horrible and the paper just was not my best. I ended up receiving an A on the paper because I had great support. Though I do agree with that, I do not think the paper was A worthy; especially because I did not receive an A on other papers I tried a lot harder on. Of course I always love an A, so I did not ask for any other reasoning in fear of being docked.</p>	<p>Support-Is the piece of writing supported well? Does the writer explain their thesis with logical evidence? I feel this is important because I do not think a good paper cannot have support.</p> <p>Thesis-Is their main argument or topic the paper is focused on? This is my next important criteria because a good paper needs a central topic. It is hard to follow a paper if the topic is not defined.</p> <p>Though support would help with following the paper, a thesis or topic statement is a strong and obvious way of telling the reader their argument.</p> <p>Flow-If a paper jumps from one place to another it is hard to follow, and it I just plain give me a headache. A good paper needs to have logical order from one topic to another.</p> <p>Introduction and Conclusion-This is definitely not super important to me because I have the hardest time with it. I don't a good paper has to a strong introduction and conclusion to receive an A. I feel support and clear thesis are the most important. I strong introduction will capture a reader's attention, but support will keep the reader reading.</p>
Student 12	<p>Basically every paper I've turned in since I've gone to college. In high school all my papers earned Cs or Bs. For my first Lit paper last semester I got an A and seriously doubted whether my professor was pitying me. I asked him why he gave me an A and he said that I had strong analysis and worked quotes well. It's not that I didn't agree, I didn't think I deserved the A because I wasn't used to receiving them. Looking back, I think its because I despised step up to writing and didn't use it when all my teachers told me to.</p>	<p>Grammar: I think grammar is important to take account when grading writing because grammar is something that is either correct or wrong.</p> <p>Depth: I think how deep the thoughts go into the paper is a good measure of how much time was spent working or thinking about the writing assignment.</p> <p>Structure: Structure is important to make a paper flow.</p>

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
<p>Student 13</p>	<p>I think I received a better grade on a report. I did the report the night before it was due and it did not reflect my best work. I was surprised on the grade, but I did ask the teacher why I earned that grade.</p>	<p>Idea: good ideas take time and effort to put into words in an essay. Strong ideas show that a writer cares about his or her work and help bring out an author's voice.</p> <p>Organization: presenting ideas in a clear, logical manner is important to the success of a paper. The reader should never be confused about what the focus of a paper is or what question the author is trying to answer. However, every writer has a slightly different way of presenting their ideas so grading on organization should be objective.</p> <p>Improvement: another very important aspect of writing is the process of editing and revising. Making improvements shows a writers ability to take criticism and use it as motivation to improve their writing skills. I believe that a teacher should not only grade the final product, but also grade the improvements made in between the first and final drafts.</p>

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 14	<p>Last semester, I took a world literature class to fulfill a liberal education requirement. On our midterm, we had to write an essay that tied together similar themes from the novels we had read throughout the first part of the semester. However, this essay was timed and I ended up having to bullet point the last few paragraphs because I didn't pace myself and ended up spending too much time looking up quotes to support my ideas. I felt like my ideas were unorganized and my quotes didn't support my thesis. The next week, the tests were handed back and mine showed I had received an A-. Surprised (but happy), I looked through her comments and she actually liked my ideas and thought I had picked strong themes. I didn't end up asking her about my grade because I just glad it was going to help my grade. Sometimes, students, including myself, look at the big picture and don't question a good grade because it helps boost the GPA.</p>	N/A

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
<p>Student 15</p>	<p>During my senior year of high school I had an economics class that I got far too good of a grade in. I did absolutely nothing in that class and still got an A. I would go to class but I would not even do the assignments. Part of it was because it was my senior year, part because I knew I wouldn't really use the knowledge from that class, and mostly because we knew the teacher did not care at all. We didn't have to ask why we got such a good grade because we knew she didn't care. She would correct tests based on if we filled in the blank or not. During tests she would help us with answers and leave the room. That class was more of an hour break than a class.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The students background writing skills. Have the students write an initial paper and grade on the progress rather than their quality of writing. Some students are naturally good writers while others struggle. If the students who struggle constantly get bad grades no matter how hard they try they will start to not care and therefore stop trying to perfect their writing skills while the students who are naturally good at writing will never challenge themselves and therefore never become better. 2) Writing styles of each person. Just because someone has a different writing style does not mean you should grade them lower. Grade them based on the quality of the style they are writing in, not how you want them to be writing in. Writing can be a way of expressing ones personality therefore trying to change ones writing style can be like trying to change ones personality. 3) Proof-reading. Proof-reading a paper really shows whether a student is proud of it or whether they just wanted to get the paper over and done with. Therefore if you can tell a paper was proofread I would grade it higher because the student has taken the time and effort to produce something that she/he is genuinely proud of.

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 16	There were several cases in AP Calculus class, a class which I never had to study for and was an unofficial tutor for many people in the class. When we had long calculus based projects that we had to turn in reports for I would add pictures and not answer the questions but rather add words so it was the approximate length. The Calculus teacher, knowing I knew the information and not wanting to waste his time, would give me an A without even reading my report.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Very detailed and understandable, goes into depth about trying to explain an argument and why something is significant because this is the entire basis of a paper and backs up the writers argument. 2) Depending on what type of paper it is, it meets the requirements of the purpose of the paper because that's the whole reason a person is writing the paper. 3) Grammar and punctuation. Yes, they are important, but they don't really add as much to the main purpose and argument of the paper.
Student 17	There were several cases in AP Calculus class, a class which I never had to study for and was an unofficial tutor for many people in the class. When we had long calculus based projects that we had to turn in reports for I would add pictures and not answer the questions but rather add words so it was the approximate length. The Calculus teacher, knowing I knew the information and not wanting to waste his time, would give me an A without even reading my report.	N/A

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 18	<p>This happened in my high school math class. I disagreed with my teacher because I had the right idea and set up the problem correctly, but I couldn't get the algebra to work out correctly to get the correct answer. I knew the correct answer I was supposed to get because I was able to graph the problem to find the right answer. So I just left all the work I had down on the paper and just put the correct answer I knew I was supposed to get, and I got full points for the problem. I did not address the teacher about why he gave me full credit for the problem. I figured he would just leave my grade the way it was anyway, since he had done that before earlier on in the year when I actually did tell him about a problem I did wrong a test and should have gotten full credit.</p>	<p>Passion-when writing you have to bring the readers in with the passion you have for the topic. You should be able to inspire a passion in others as well. Originality-one should come up with something new and creative, in the way they write or the topic they chose. Improvement-the writer should always be improving in writing style and technique. If the reader start off as an ok writer they should become a great writer should become an amazing writer.</p>
Student 19	<p>Last semester I wrote an 8 page history paper that was two pages too short and filled with pictures to fill space. My teacher still loved the content and is now using it as an example of a historical research paper for future classes. I think his reasons for the grade were good.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clarity/Understanding of the topic 2) Hard Work/Time Spent 3) ?
Student 20	<p>I have never received a better grade then I thought I deserved.</p>	<p>First thing to consider is how well does the piece being graded cover the requirements. Second basic mechanics such as grammar and word choice should be taken into account. Third should be how well the paper has been composed. Does it flow like it should? Does it make sense how the subjects were ordered?</p>

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
Student 21	I cannot think of an example, but in that situation I would probably just accept the teacher's reasoning and not question it too much. But I would defiantly read the comments and trust that the teacher gave the grade I deserved based on their criteria.	N/A
Student 22	In that same class I was given a final grade of an A. This didn't make sense because the final paper was 50% of the grade and I received a C. I didn't ask because I just figured the whole class was curved up quite a bit.	N/A

Respondent	Question 7	Question 8
<p>Student 23</p>	<p>I passed my pre-calc in my senior year of high school, even though I knew I was failing horribly. The reasons for me passing are highly ambiguous though, I'm not sure myself. Corruption in grading perhaps? I don't know. But I only did it my first semester and changed to Phy. Ed the next semester, where I got an actual deserving, fair grade.</p>	<p>"1.) Grammar - This is a must for me when I rank papers. How the heck is someone suppose to grade or understand a paper when it's not even written in an understandable manner? Fix those darn sentence structures and spell that correctly please! Oh, and use the RIGHT punctuation too. I hate it when people don't know how to properly use the semi colon or colon or comma...</p> <p>2.) Content relation to thesis- You DO know what you're supposed to write about, right? Don't go too off topic or people will just think you're venting.</p> <p>3.) Organization of content- Make sure everything flows together smoothly, like the river on a calm, sunny, and blissful morning. If you have too many haphazard paragraphs and/or sentences put together, it just goes back to correcting the order of sentence/paragraph structuring, like in #1! Otherwise the river will NOT be calm, the sun will disappear behind storm clouds and the morning will be ruined!</p> <p>4.) Support- To make sure I don't misinterpret your work, can you please elaborate on your supporting sentences? Nothing beats the judgment when someone believes you're purposefully attacking someone else's work when that wasn't your purpose.</p> <p>5.) Plagiarism- Uh, haven't I seen this before? You're not genuine, you're just trying to cop off of other genius' work! If it's not your original work, CITE CITE CITE it. Otherwise there's a whole world of pain from the educational system ahead of you. And besides, you want to be known as that copycatter who didn't know how to think for himself? That's bad rep right there.</p> <p>6.) Mood- If it's professional, keep it that way, no slang! If it's informal, throw in whatever is allowed; just make sure it makes sense.</p>