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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Regina Nadia Eastman for the Master of Arts in English were presented May 9, 1996, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Regina Nadia Eastman for the Master of Arts in English, presented May 9, 1996.

Title: Creating Knowledge About the Literacy Needs of Juvenile
Offenders: Reflections on a Qualitative Research Project.

This thesis attempts to problematize a collective silence around the concept of race that developed in a Research Methodology English 510 course taught by Dr. Gradin, the Director of Writing at Portland State University, during the Fall quarter of 1995. The members of ENG 510 created a qualitative research protocol that was intended to create knowledge about the literacy needs of juvenile offenders. This was done in partnership with the Juvenile Rights Project, a non-profit advocate for juveniles in the Multnomah county courts, and with Portland Youth Redirection, a program that offers detention alternatives to juvenile offenders. The research was supported by a community-based Learn & Serve Grant through Portland State University's Center for Academic Excellence.

I argue that our methods, critical self-reflection and interviews with youth, became fundamentally flawed when we allowed gender issues to displace the more difficult discussion around race. This displacement resulted in a rejection of the concept of self-reflexivity, thereby reproducing a self-serving racist power hierarchy which qualitative research explicitly

means to expose. I approach this issue through a critique of Enlightenment philosophy set within the framework of a post-modern theory that denies the truth claims of universalizing metanarratives.

The thesis analyses and reflects on theory, class dynamics, and interviews in the field. It also includes quotes from exchanges and spontaneous conversations with youth, juvenile counselors, and class members.

Recommendations for further research include highly self-reflexive discussions on the role of race, class, and gender in the researchers' agendas and in their interactions with youth, as well as possible ways to ground the research more strongly and with more visible continuity in a community-related context. Here, Portland State University's Writing Center could serve as a nexus.

CREATING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE LITERACY NEEDS OF JUVENILE
OFFENDERS:
REFLECTIONS ON A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

by

Regina Nadia Eastman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
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1996

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PREFACE

We Other Victorians¹

In my thesis journal Marcia Silver asked me, "Why did you choose to write a thesis?" "I'm not sure," I mumbled. "Did perhaps the thesis choose you?" Yes, that was it. Our research in English 510 on the literacy needs of juvenile offenders made me remember every issue on race and class I have ever grappled with, and it made me remember that I had been in reform school for a year when I was young and that, for all intents and purposes, I was an ex-juvenile offender. Both of those memories came back with a vengeance. When this class invited me, even dared me, for the first time in my university experience, to trace through writing a connection between my own understanding of the world and the academic work I do, I thought that it was both a shocking and a sweet demand. I have never situated myself so visibly within a text. I thought it would be easy, but the thesis draft was a disaster. Suddenly, I was writing like a novice again. I loathed revealing myself. At the same time, the narration of personal experience can move beyond confessional narcissism if one can place it within a critical framework where it is in turn related to the material under discussion. For me, it made possible a nexus between my academic work and social action.

Then I reflected back on the activity of writing a thesis. Tradition has it that we write academic theses in good Victorian fashion. Our words are trinkets that

represent our ideas and thus give meaning to the pale innocence of the page. This is an essentially romantic activity. But we don't think of the writing of critical theses as a romantic activity. We think of it as logically developing reasoning on paper. Yet, our writing--a narration structured not altogether unlike scientific discourse (just read Krafft-Ebing's 1890 *Psychopathia Sexualis*, certainly a foundational work)--is, to force the issue, the transformation of spontaneously overflowing feelings into detached thought recollected in tranquility.²

But our class was not at all detached. On the contrary, it re-attached and remembered ruptured connections. The confrontational subject demanded that we all speak. Even those of us who were afraid to assert ourselves as critical thinkers were pushed into a rigorous, critical discussion. This was not the stereotypical feminist model that claims women best come to voice in an atmosphere of safety, "one in which we are all going to be kind and nurturing," like real women.³ The class context was frightening, difficult, and very demanding for both women and men. I don't think any one of us, including Dr. Gradin, came out of the class talking about how much we had enjoyed the experience. And that is as it should be.

We literary types are often all too comfortable, too complacent, too sure of what we know. We are too good at being disembodied mind and universal man. We hide our hopes, we hide our fears, we hide our anger, we hide our complicity, and, most of all, we hide the passionate desire to express our-selves. I should like to advance an education that makes our world more real rather than less real. To do that, I invite the spirit of risk.

INTRODUCTION

Science and Racism: How the West was Won

English 510 in the Fall of 1995 was a Research Methodology course in Composition with an added component of community-based learning, taught by Dr. Sherrie Gradin, the Director of Writing. We were involved in the initial stages of a partnership with the Juvenile Rights Project, a non-profit advocate for juveniles in the Multnomah county courts. The members of 510 were invited to create a research protocol for finding out about the literacy experiences of youth involved in this program.

In light of the fact that within the last fifteen years composition has taken a decided turn away from quantitative research to qualitative research, we read a number of texts that introduced a variety of qualitative methods and their implications. The class, first of all, agreed to do research with juvenile offenders; secondly, the class discussed options and voted to create research teams, not only because that would aid in triangulation, but also because we wanted to think of ourselves as a research community rather than a loose collection of individual researchers; finally, the teams decided, through consensus, to choose interviewing and critical reflexivity as the two main research tools. Through much reading and vigorous discussion we arrived at a particular interview protocol we all found workable.

Later, however, things unraveled because of the silence around race. Even though silence entered on the scene early during the term, it was later, when we began our theoretical work around gender, that great tensions emerged and resulted in muteness, particularly on the part of the women. We allowed this dynamic, I would argue, to entirely displace the problem of race in our research. That experience has alerted me to questions around the concept of race (Does race influence how we or the youth experience the world? Is racism even still an issue?) that I would like to problematize, at least in part, through the framework of postmodern theory.

Therefore, my approach is framed by a critique of Enlightenment philosophy. If the sweeping success of the scientific revolution is one of the important accomplishments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is certainly underwritten by a collateral philosophical enterprise carried from Newton and Descartes to Hume, Kant and Hegel. The philosophical concept of pure knowledge, liberated from old constraints and superstitions, promoted the idea that scientific inquiry is radically separate from the muddy context of social and political tensions. The laboratory model becomes perhaps the only locus of true, that is, scientific, knowledge is deeply embedded in our cultural assumptions. But Immanuel Kant's idea of pure knowledge is permeated with underlying ideas of race. In "A Genealogy of Modern Racism" Cornel West traces racist thought in major Enlightenment figures. He quotes Kant (Hegel's teacher) who is also much influenced by Hume in his "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime:"

although many of [the slaves] have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the Whites some continually rise

aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color. (485)

It strikes me that the predominantly voiced views in our class were not all that different from those expressed here by Kant. "If those (fill in the blank) didn't have so many children, they could make it like everybody else," still rings in my ears. And those who don't make it, so the implication hovered in the classroom, are not naturally suited to higher education in the first place. For an Enlightenment thinker this is an entirely rational statement. Thus, we continue to think of objectivity as somehow true and, with that, like to believe it to be the most distilled form of knowledge that is entirely innocent of, for example, economic demands and underlying ideologies. That is why, when our underlying assumptions were challenged by the post-modernist qualitative research texts, we tended to flee back to the safe universality of Enlightenment concepts of science. And when we did consider contextual issues of class, race, or gender, we picked gender, the most self-interested one of these normative ideas.

Consequently, those of us who continued to reflect on the class disagreed on what was important. I argued that race was the most excluded discussion, and that therefore the silencing of women in the class was not the most important issue; certainly, it wasn't the only issue. Two other women limited their critiques to how we can create a "truly" open classroom in which women could speak. I would propose that our silences around race created more crucial issues because they helped maintain a sphere of power in which we exercised white privilege without acknowledging the power of race or our privilege as White university students. Our victimization had its limits. Our collaborative silence in fact

helped maintain a sphere of power in which we could exercise white privilege without acknowledging the power of race. With that, we reproduced dynamics in which we indulged through a kind of gothic exoticism--the Black "offender" becomes the deliciously dangerous other--without ever having to risk ourselves. In this reproduction of philosophical hierarchies we find the Hegelian concept of phenomenology. In Hegel's construction of mind as the ability to reason to an ideal state of pure transcending truth, the contextual actuality of embodied human experience is altogether irrelevant.⁴

Yes, the women were silenced by aggressive and overpowering men in the class, but it was a complicit silence. Since we are fairly privileged members of the academy, there comes a point where it is our responsibility to not be silent, to speak even when speaking is difficult or painful. When I listened to the women talk at the end of the term, it seemed as if our being silenced somehow qualified us to be members of the oppressed masses. But there are degrees of silence. It was much easier to lament the marginalization of women than tackle something like Kant's statement that "Many of [the Negroes] have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science"⁵ The racial implications of this statement would have become a direct threat to the very basis of our liberal ideas of education. Still, Kant's explication of fundamental differences among the races is not divorced from his philosophy; in fact, it is a widespread nineteenth century attitude as part of a nationalizing political agenda that one can find over and over again in the history of ideas. Therefore, I would argue that, yes, gender oppression is real, and dynamics in the course without a doubt worked to silence women; nonetheless, it is very probable that race, particularly if you are Black, Hispanic, or Native American, is even more silencing. Further, the silencing of women is not necessarily an

universal gender problem. In the African American community, according to June Jordan in "Don't You Talk About My Mama!" generally speaking, the men are the ones who get the dirtier end of the stick, who are even more powerless and more silenced than are the women. In that context, then, gender issues may well shift.

The members of the research class were unwilling to examine the different colors of silence. I, on the other hand, seem to be preoccupied with the problem of race. This preoccupation is marked by the fact that my life and the life of my parents (we are from Berlin, Germany) were shaped by the most significant event in recent history, the Holocaust. The overwhelming scope and the implications of genocide have left little room for anything else in my historical community. Thus, my own intellectual work is largely determined by the study of modes of accommodation and resistance to an underlying idealistic philosophy that, aside from socio-economical and political factors, made possible the organized, technically refined, and emotionally detached extermination of six million Jews. With that in mind, and since the inherited wisdom of the parent generation was altogether suspect, my generation has spent much time confronting the irreconcilable problem of the Holocaust in order to find out what can make meaning possible at all. From where I stand, the Holocaust signifies the great death of positive progress. This is what many postmodernist thinkers, for example, Jacques Derrida, mean when they talk about the death of the father. It is the end of logocentric discourse that insists that the law of the father forms the center of meaning, including scientific meaning. This absolute displacement of reason, in turn, radically questions the Enlightenment idea of progress. How else could an extremely educated high culture, on whose philosophy we base much

of our humanist thought today, engage in and execute the rational of organized genocide?

While I fear that confronting racism through reflections on the Holocaust may tempt me to overstate my point, I would still assert that we have in no way overcome the problem of racism.⁶ Our desire to attribute to the Holocaust a historicity that no longer concerns discourse as practice is a problem widely discussed by scholars concerned with revisionist Holocaust discourse. I find that to be particularly the case here in the US where possibly the “island mentality” of this country contributes to that attitude. All the same, I would argue that conditions may have improved, but the underlying dialectic of racism continues to inhabit the same paradigm as it did fifty years ago.⁷ Zygmunt Bauman also argues that the Holocaust as racism was not an aberration, but a logical continuation of modernist principles. In his understanding, the Jewish mass murder “was not only the technological achievement of an industrial society, but also the organizational achievement of a bureaucratic society” (13).⁸ Should the US American economy fall into a depression, should unemployment rates rise by only a few percent, modern racism would be ready to function immediately--either through armed partisan action and through the technology of the state, or both. On a less dramatic level, Cornel West’s *Race Matters* and Edward Said’s *Cultural Imperialism* agree that in many subtle ways we continue to support a régime of exclusion that finally and in all actuality manifests itself through a technology of writing.

All these reflections, then, play into my ideas around qualitative research as a postmodern scientific activity in which we consciously risk inter-subjectivity.⁹ So, too, does Donna Haraway’s *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. Haraway, a biologist, outrageously speaks of love,

science, and late capitalist economy in the same breath. Like a dancer she moves from a rhetoric of conviction to a rhetoric of teasing mockery. She mixes poetry with laboratory research, qualitative methodologies with a comedy of self and other. I mention Haraway, not only because she is one of the "hard" scientists who first opened doors to situated knowledges for women within the academy, but also because her fast, wild and brilliant transgressions of discourse conventions encourage me to take a more creative approach to science. She adds a terministic screen to the ways in which I read the silence around race in English 510.

The research community of ENG 510 broke down when we refused to discuss race; we fell back on the modernist scientific approach of the laboratory principle. "Let's study them objectively," a classmate proposed. Oppositional voices, while they protested, were not loud enough. If one considers that the majority of the class was White, while the majority of targeted youth was Black, this attitude is problematic. After all, we don't see a whole lot of African American graduate students of English running around to research the literacy needs of White juvenile offenders. Still, the general sentiment in class was that, yes, race, class, and gender do play a role, but we have already transcended these prejudices because we are enlightened academics; there is no need to discuss them in detail. This ideology of progress is itself an exclusionary dynamic that enforces the unquestioned privilege we carry within the academy. But: "The notion that Black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West" says Cornel West in "The Genealogy of Modern Racism" (477).¹⁰ Likewise, Bauman argues that racism continues to function today and is, in fact, made possible by the very concept of modernity. The voiced consent in the class was that "anyone can make it," if he really tries. This universalist approach to

science, to knowledge creation, and to minority student success, won over dissenting voices who preferred silence over confrontation.

This paper, then, tells the story of some of these silences. This approach does not mean to reduce the intellectual vigor of a critical thesis to dirty relativism; rather, this self-reflexive stance is a continuation of the qualitative research we began in 510. That kind of research includes Harding's ideas of local objectivities, of a science of the singular. It attempts the melding of fact, interpretation, and imagination. It tells stories about otherwise mute situated knowledges. The idea of story-telling, which has a particular genealogy of its own within theory, helps to trace otherwise invisible connections and ruptures between the public and private discourse of university students and their research "subjects." It also acknowledges that the writing is not only a medium to impart findings, but writing is here what we (as researchers) look for. In that sense, students can find a way to locate themselves within the text they write, not through narcissist display of self, but rather as part of a contextual critical framework. "Research," says Roland Barthes, "is the name we give to the activity of writing. Whatever it searches for, it must not forget its nature as language" (198).

Yet, science likes to negate the role of its own narrativity. Even as science is now undertaking a rigorous analysis of its own inherent biases--and qualitative research is part of this self-conscious critique--its practitioners tend to be trapped continually within positivist nineteenth-century representative models. In "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," Hayden White ponders the insights narrative can give into the nature of real events? What kind of blindness with respect to reality does narrativity dispel? "It will be revealed," says White, "that the very distinction between real and imaginary events that is basic to modern discussions about hard facts and soft ideas presupposes a notion of

reality in which “the true” is identified as positivist knowledge” (397). But this knowledge in turn is “real” only insofar as it realizes itself as discourse through narrativity. The experience in ENG 510 did not become real because it occurred but because, first, it is remembered and, second, because I now record it through writing.

It was through the “factual” narrativity of an “objective” discipline that scientists like Haraway, Harding and Rorty themselves have transformed narrativity from objectivist representation into a self-aware paradigm of writing as knowledge creation because, to quote Lyotard, “all metanarratives have lost their credibility, regardless of what *mode* of unification they use” (37). With that, Lyotard insists on the legitimacy of performative “small” narratives, little histories, so to speak, that create multiplicity and hetero-geneity of language. Consequently, the creation of knowledge is inseparable from the act of writing. All the same, using this particular method in an English Masters thesis is problematic because it is a new approach that I undertake, knowing full well that we fight not only about the meaning of words; we fight over the words themselves. But is there any way that we could discuss method without giving a narrative account of the history of objectivity itself, that is, a narration that already prejudices the outcome of the story we would tell in favor of, let’s say, juvenile offenders?

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

How Privileging Local Objectivities Can Revitalize Composition

In “Methodological Pluralism” Gesa Kirsch says that the strength of qualitative research is its ability to invite new questions, to encourage dialogue and inquiry, and to define knowledge making as a continuously changing enterprise. “For composition studies, this kind of research means opening up the agenda to subjects, listening to their stories, and allowing them to actively participate in the design, development and reporting of research” (257).

Broadly speaking, qualitative research is different from quantitative research in as much as it does not count and measure things in the same way that quantitative research does. I don’t want to create the impression that we, the 510 collective, engaged in systematic qualitative research; nonetheless, I wish to outline a few specific and important points about the concept. Qualitative research is more often than not naturalistic research, meaning, attempts are made to study a subject in its own environment. Qualitative research is interested in meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. We spent most of our time familiarizing ourselves with various theoretical approaches and critiques of strengths and weaknesses of this naturalistic research concept. We developed a few semi-formal question clusters,

and interviewed a limited number of youth at the end of the term. Due to time constraints we did not have a chance to carefully evaluate the interviews and reflect on them as a group.

Qualitative research often uses participant observation as part of its methodology. This approach assumes that the observer is never quite outside of the situation she observes, but rather, through her very presence, already alters the conditions she wants to investigate. According to Berg's Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, many qualitative researchers rely on interviews for data collection. That is what we did in moderate measure. Another tool the class found useful is "thick description." Using all five senses, one writes down as many impressions as one can. More sophisticated qualitative researchers experiment with natural settings, they use photographic techniques, historiography, textual analyses, sociometry, sociodrama, and similar ethnomethodological experimentation, ethnographic research, and other unobtrusive techniques. Data is then triangulated to combine several lines of sight, with results that are rich in perspectives. Qualitative researchers are most interested in "how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth" (7). Considering our project, this seemed like a helpful approach to find out what, for the juvenile offenders we were directed to, gives meaning to reality. Generally speaking, then, qualitative research, since it is based on a symbolic interactionist perspective, is most useful in finding out about the situated knowledges and "local objectivities" of any given group.

I can't say that I am altogether convinced by this concept of research. I am hesitant when Berg slides off into a moral discourse of empathy that has a

Victorian ring to it. When he speaks about how the researcher should get out of a research group at the end of a project, Berg explains, for example, that not only the subjects make emotional commitments, “so, too, do many researchers—even without going native” (116). He may use irony here, but I doubt it, since the tone of the whole text is more pedantic than satiric. Further, I have talked to a number of people who have tried to conduct this kind of research with the result that they don’t want to do it anymore. It feels too intrusive to them, even like an act of colonialization, due perhaps to the fact that it is intrusive indeed, even if Berg says that the researcher must fully immerse himself into the situation of the subject he is researching. But the very presence of the researcher changes the “natural” setting of the “subject” to be researched. It is an illusion to think that the well-read researcher can transcend certain differences (i.e., I cannot go into a Black community and blend in), and somehow become so “unobtrusive” as to not alter the “natural” setting of a research subject. Our “research subjects,” who were not laboratory rats but young people who already live with a deck of cards that is stacked against them, tended to be suspicious of our professedly altruistic research. And rightfully so: we came, we interviewed, we left.¹¹ We were what Berg calls “callous investigators” (116). Since we had initially convinced the youths that we were sincerely interested in their interpretation of the world, their suspicious attitude is an altogether understandable reaction.

This dynamic is perhaps the problem with the humanist’s will to help. Gesa Kirsch insists that we must develop enough critical self-awareness to “reveal that all methodologies are culturally situated and inscribed, never disinterested or impartial” (248).¹² Therefore, we needed to unpack the concept of “helping.” But the class resisted that discussion. I would propose that the majority of class members was motivated to interview juvenile offenders by a gothic desire to

safely explore the “dangerous other.” Admittedly, this is a bold assumption on my part that I find difficult to substantiate. All I recall are a number of belittling remarks about juvenile offenders, or even teenagers in general, that were possible (and went unchallenged) because we could so safely distance ourselves from their experience, all the while naming and renaming their presumed deviance. “You’d better watch your wallet when you go to talk to that little punk,” is one comment I remember. A group member who was going to interview a youth in lock-up, said: “Well, I hope nobody’s gonna knife me when I go in there.” I suddenly had visions of Wyatt Earp walking unarmed into a camp of hostile Indians.

This level of analysis revealed a certain lack of reflexivity. Words were flying back and forth so quickly during class, it was hard to jump, grab on to an implication, challenge it, and push it to its limit. Coming from a Marxist background, I can only think of qualitative research, certainly in this particular context, as an act of solidarity. That is: we have to realize that we are part of a collective and interdependent network of power relationships (academic and nonacademic) that is not necessarily static but nonetheless privileges certain literacies (and the economic rewards that go with that) over others; we need to find out if we have any common ground at all, and, if we can find that common ground, we can then trace this common ground to create a union of interests. We do this not for, but together with, the so-called juvenile offenders.

But even if qualitative research is an ambiguous and perhaps even embattled concept, it allows for reflection and the creation of narrative descriptions of research issues, even if that reads strangely. While qualitative research “will not necessarily produce a coherent or unified body of knowledge,” Gesa Kirsch concedes, she also points out that “it may reveal contradictions, fissures, and

gaps in our current knowledge of composition" (248). For Kirsch, qualitative research opens up the agenda to subjects, to listening to their stories, and to allowing them to actively participate, as much as possible, in the nature of the research. The young man I interviewed, for example, reads my drafts and gives me his comments and critiques. I also cite him as a source in my bibliography. Objectivity with a capital O is no longer the issue; neither is total subjectivity. Rather, the structure of the research validates the "local objectivity" of the youths we spoke to.

WHY SHOULD WRITING TEACHERS DO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

It May Create Possibilities for Social Meaning and Action

English education in America is trouble. English education acts as a gatekeeper.

English education closes down opportunities, especially for minorities and untraditional students.

English education narrows rather than opens the possibilities of social meaning and social action.

English education should stop doing this.

June Jordan in The Violence of Literacy

In the United States, so the story goes, we live in a society where everybody, regardless of class, race, or gender has an equal chance for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But the American Dream does not come true for an increasingly large segment of the population. Still, it is a powerful metaphor. People still think that death and poverty are somehow optional. Likewise, the myth of the melting pot is a great lie, told over and over again by those who want to protect their positions of power while pacifying the others who are implicitly and explicitly excluded from this fairy tale.

Clearly, academic literacy is central to the ability to influence discourse and, with that, to assert political power. At the same time, literacy or lack thereof is not the problem; instead, as Elspeth Stuckey argues in The Violence of Literacy, it is a manifestation of the problem. As a revisionist Marxist, she sees economy as the real problem. Academic literacy is not a noble ideal in and of itself, as Kant suggests in his lectures. For Stuckey it is also the technology of the state. She sees literacy as the tool used by those who have the power to forge an agenda that maintains their privilege as they parcel out disadvantage: "Literacy itself can be understood only in its social and political context." And that context, "once the mythology has been stripped away, can be seen as one of entrenched class structure in which those who have power have a vested interest in keeping it"

(vii). For Stuckey, literacy is what informs the status of a lower class that cannot say its name because in the US, so the story goes, we live in a classless society. That is why, I would argue, we still have a disproportionate number of racial minorities and women in low-prestige jobs, and that is why high-prestige professions continue to be overwhelmingly occupied by the traditional class of intellectuals for whom literacy remains their domain of supremacy.

This may sound a bit extreme, but the statistics are chilling. In The End of Work (1995), Jeremy Rifkin, an economist who frequently appears on Public Television and is thus not weighed down by Marxist theories of production modes, argues that we are in the middle of a third industrial revolution that will create a vast new urban underclass. In the chapter "Technology and the African-American Experience," he proposes that technological under-employment has fundamentally altered the sociology of America's Black community. Rifkin says that "permanent joblessness has led to an escalating crime wave in the streets of America's cities and the wholesale disintegration of Black family life." He cites various studies: "By the late 1980s one out of every four young African American males was either in prison or on probation" (77). This tendency, according to Rifkin, will escalate within the next ten years. Similarly, in her 1987 "Don't You Talk About My Mama!" June Jordan argues against a New York Times article that puts the blame for the disintegration of the Black family with Black women and mothers who work to support the family. Jordan points out in no uncertain terms that the Black family persists despite the "terrible deteriorating state of affairs prevailing in the United States." She asks: "Can anyone truly dare to suggest that the catastrophic 46-percent unemployment rate now crippling working-age Black men is something that either Black men or Black women find desirable?" (196).¹³ With these statistics in mind, it is clear that the exclusionary

violence of academic literacy is not a cause, but rather a manifestation of social injustice. I am interested in the stories of so-called juvenile delinquents because I think of delinquency as a social construct, meaning that we create delinquency like we create poverty or eating disorders, when all the while we have the material resources to render these conditions obsolete.

But back to the problem of literacy research. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire points out that the dominant classes (quantitative and qualitative researchers both historically belong to that group) know full well that it is dangerous to develop a kind of education "that would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustice critically" (102). But that is exactly what we want to do here. We want to create a discursive revision in which race, class, and gender are no longer marginalizing factors. If marginal youth could learn to perceive social injustice critically, they would certainly be able to shift power networks. But this would demand that youth become actively involved in the making of a knowledge that is relevant to them as well as to academic discourse.

Our dilemma as writing teachers is that we can't directly change economic conditions. But we can change exclusionary dynamics by recreating academic discourse to allow the local objectivity of cultural literacies, while actively training historically excluded students to master the traditional tools of the trade. We need minorities with degrees. Otherwise, our idea of a multi-cultural curriculum will continue to be nothing but a colorful cocktail of folklorist subjectivities that maintains exclusionary practices while claiming progress. We need more than a few token minority students who get to share their cultural particularities in class. The United Scholars of Bennetton is not the idea of an education we strive for. We need highly trained minorities who graduate from university knowing how to master the technologies of power. The nexus of race,

class, gender, and writing as technology of power is where we as writing teachers live, and that is why I find this research full of possibilities. My notes then serve to reflect on our collective blunders. One of these blunders is that we continually fell back on familiar old historicist ideas of science as objective and disinterested key to human progress. "If they just tried hard enough, they could get a degree, too." There's that good old American story again.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SCIENCE QUESTION

Qualitative Research as a Science of Solidarity

To a degree, I would argue, the division between the sciences and the humanities as possessing distinctly separate methodologies only works on a surface level. If we were to ask a nineteenth century German philologist like Nietzsche, for example, if he thought he were engaging in a scientific activity, he would have answered, "of course. What else could it be?"¹⁴ Therefore, on a deeper level it becomes difficult to trace inherent differences between the sciences and the humanities. One can trace this faith in the promise of scientific certainty through our reactions as composition researchers. Like many scholars in any discipline, our notion of science as rational and objective analysis arises out of nineteenth century positivist philosophy.

Allow me to expand a bit on the idea. Darwin, Marx and Comte are philosophers of science who refer back to earlier natural philosophers like Newton, Kant, or Descartes. They all develop theories on rational analysis as the highest form of knowledge that transcends human context. These ideas have and continue to permeate our own style of thinking around science to a degree we may not even be entirely aware of. As the founder of positivism, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) diligently carries on the Cartesian project with a lasting effect. He offers a coherent set of explanations of the development of human consciousness that is well situated within the tradition of nineteenth century grand and universal theories. For Comte, so Lucien Goldmann points out, human consciousness progresses through three stages: (1) religious consciousness, (2) metaphysical consciousness, and (3) scientific consciousness. Some cultures have progressed further than others; that is why, for Comte, we have "primitive" and

"highly developed" cultures. To explain this dialectic, he uses the great nineteenth century metaphor of infancy, maturation and adulthood that emerges out of Rousseau's earlier ideas of the social contract.

But Comte's theories are well in concert with other powerfully emerging Enlightenment ideas. In 1828, Hegel, for example, gives a lecture on the history of unfolding consciousness in Berlin. For Hegel, the goal of history is to fully actualize freedom. Interestingly enough, in his lecture at the Free University he argues that freedom arises in the Orient.¹⁵ For Hegel, the Orient is everything that is not European. He doesn't bother with differentiations--it's all East. Classical Greco-Roman culture will expand on this idea. Then, for Hegel, the next stage is, not surprisingly, German Christian culture. In the Prussian state all citizens are free. Again the darker races are portrayed as being in a "natural" state of cultural "infancy," while the central European peoples have "matured" to the full actualization of freedom. You notice how powerfully this metaphor functions as an ideology and, by implication, also supports a philosophy of racial superiority.

In his "Genealogy of Modern Racism" Cornel West refers to this point by citing Jefferson's "Notes on Virginia" in which Jefferson meditates on "natural" race differences:

Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to Whites; in reason much inferior and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous.

Never yet could I find that a Black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture.

(485)

Clearly, in the mind of Jefferson and other Enlightenment thinkers, the "Negro" appears to be stuck in the infancy of human development. For Kant there is an inherent hierarchical difference in intellectual capacity among the races; for Jefferson, Blacks are likewise naturally inferior. In his mind, their "childlike" reason is not as well developed as in the "adult" White race.¹⁶ But Enlightenment thinkers have nothing against children; they just propose we do for them what they can't do for themselves because of an inherent lack of ability. If one keeps the infancy metaphor in mind, this rational positioning of racist hierarchies works rather well. I would even go so far as to suggest that we produce "teenagerdom" (as an American mainstream concept) along the same lines through which we produce a kind of adolescent deviance that we then culturally posit as natural.

Qualitative research actively works against the universalist assumptions of positivist philosophy of science. It consciously privileges the partial perspective by creating knowledge about cultural literacies. It is a contextual and subjective method; yet, it is also a scientific activity. And, while it does not mean to replace quantitative research, it offers possibilities for local objectivities and situated that are for our purposes more useful than the methods of quantitative research. It creates oral histories that have historically been excluded from academic discourse, and it can weave a more substantive picture of contextual understanding of the influence race, gender, and class have on a particular group.

With that, we once again come up against the problem of objectivity. Qualitative research makes no claims to objectivity. But, culturally speaking, we tend to think of an objective fact as something that is discovered, not made or constructed--the structure of DNA, for example. But the etymology of facts

refers us to human action, performance, indeed, to human feats (OED). Deeds, as opposed to words, are the parents of facts. That is, human action is at the root of what we can see as fact, linguistically and historically. A fact is the thing done, "a neuter past participle in our Roman parent language," Donna Haraway proposes in *Primate Visions* (3). In that etymological sense, then, facts are what has actually happened. Such things are known by direct experience, by testimony, by interrogation--lately privileged routes to knowledge. With that, facts become words, become "true" through language alone, particularly through written language.¹⁷

In our culture, the notions of "science," "rationality," "objectivity," and "truth" are all related to one another. We think of science as offering "hard," "objective" truth--the truth that most corresponds with reality, the only truth that is worthy of that name anymore. Humanists like us, that is, philosophers, historians, literary types, and composition teachers, have to worry about whether we are "scientific"--whether we are entitled to think of our conclusions, no matter how carefully we argue them, as worthy of the term "true." We tend to think that "objective truth" can only be found by using "reason," and so we think of rationality as a matter of following procedures laid down in advance, of being "methodical." So we then use "methodical," "rational," "scientific," and "objective" as synonyms.

In Richard Rorty's *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* there is a chapter titled "Science as Solidarity." Here, Rorty suggests that this worrying about "objectivity" is characteristic of a secularized culture in which the scientist replaces the priest. He is the "one" who keeps humanity in touch with something beyond itself. But, Rorty goes on, the distinctions between hard facts and soft values, truth and pleasure, and objectivity and subjectivity are awkward and

clumsy instruments. Not only do they belong to 19th century philosophy, they also create more problems than they solve. He proposes to recreate the sciences, starting with a new vocabulary. He makes another point I find very useful, especially since anti-scientific sentiments are a bit chic among the literati: "It is not a question of debunking or downgrading the . . . scientist, but simply of ceasing to see him as a priest" (39).

Donna Haraway, a biologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz (formerly at Johns Hopkins), makes a similar point in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." She proposes that for too long we have both selectively used and been trapped by two poles of a tempting dichotomy in the question of objectivity. It is time, she says, that we once and for all put the curious term "objectivity" to rest. Recent social studies of science and technology have made available a very strong social constructionist argument "for *all* forms of knowledge claims, most certainly and especially scientific ones" (576) (her emphasis). Within this theory, no insider's perspective is privileged, because all drawings of inside-outside boundaries in knowledge are theorized as power moves, not moves toward truth. Why then, Haraway asks, should we be cowed by science? "They tell parables about objectivity and scientific method to students in the first years of their initiation, but no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions" (576). She becomes even more explicit: "no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions" 576). Apparently, scientists know that their knowledge creation is as much an art as it is a science, and their practice acknowledges the contextuality of their work, Haraway reflects.

Consequently, in relationship to qualitative research we would do well to keep in mind the parable of objectivity when we argue universals to devalue situated knowledges. Paulo Freire says that it is high time educators move beyond the desire for lily-white objectivity. Inevitably, he suggests, educators come to a point where they either educate for oppression or for liberation. We as qualitative researchers must remember what it means for us to deny that knowledge is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world. If we agree that the world does not exist as a reality apart from us, that means our actions work to either liberate or oppress the subjects of our work. If we remember that, it won't be so easy to blink away our collaboration with exclusionary literacy practices so easily. To think of qualitative research as a science of solidarity makes it imperative to have a clear understanding of underlying theoretical bases. And since there is no practice that is somehow innocent of theory, sometimes theory is the most practical thing to do.

CHAPTER II

THE POLEMICS OF STEPHEN NORTH AS METHOD

58. Only as Creators: --This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to understand that what things are called is incomparably more important than what they really are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for--originally almost always an error and an arbitrary decision, thrown over things like a dress and altogether strange and foreign to their nature and even to their skin--all this grows from generation unto generation, simply because we believe in it, until it gradually grows into the thing itself and acts as if it were its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and operates as such. Only a fool would think that it is enough to reveal this origin, this foggy shroud of insanity, in order to destroy that "essential" world, this so-called "Reality." We may destroy only as creators. But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new "things."

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Book II

Members of ENG 510 were not enchanted with Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. I, on the other hand, rather liked it because I saw connections to a Nietzschean methodology. The above quotation from *The Gay Science* is one of Nietzsche's theoretical basis statements. Many postmodern thinkers use it as a point of departure. North is very much a Nietzschean scholar. The similarity in not only method but style is apparent in North's piece on the idea of the writing center, that caused great dissent in our PSU Writing Center. By Nietzschean I mean not only the provocative

argumentation, but North builds directly on Nietzsche's dictum that we may destroy only if we are willing to create something new. In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, North uses a polemic style that tends to irritate readers. But, and this is the purpose of his rhetoric, his readers start discussing. He forced us to question underlying assumptions. I have included the above aphorism because it speaks directly to that issue. It sketches Nietzsche's critique of science as the (pure) will to truth. Further, this aphorism is a central methodological statement for Nietzsche's later departure from idealist thought. That also makes it the point of departure for much of postmodern theory. Foucault, for example, took off with it to write *The Order of Things*, Derrida's *Of Grammatology* derives much of its argumentation out of Nietzsche, Jameson's critique of orthodox Marxist dialectic materialism also connects to Nietzsche's critique of philosophy. Further, Gallop's *Thinking Through the Body* plays with the hidden epistemological assumptions that Nietzsche has tickled out for us. Likewise, Nietzsche's groundwork has allowed for Harding's feminist critique of the scientific project. Any postmodernist worth her salt should be familiar with the genealogy of these theories.

A few words about the polemic style: in my understanding a polemic is a controversial argument, particularly in the sense that it means to refute a reigning doctrine that is deeply embedded in any given body of cultural knowledge. In Nietzsche's understanding, we, as a culture, desperately hang on to the concept of positivist science with its replicable quantitative research method that we have named "Truth," even if this truth is nothing more than an "arbitrary decision," that is "thrown over things like a dress." That is why, for Nietzsche, and for North in this case, the provocative faculty of a polemic is in order. In light of that, North has accomplished that people passionately argue

over the assumptions of their field. That is, if nothing else, worth the risk he took in upsetting his discourse community.

Further, North's title *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* is a Nietzschean wordplay in several ways. For one thing, it directly follows Nietzsche's suggestion that we may destroy only if we create something new, because "only a fool would think that it is enough to reveal this origin, this foggy shroud of insanity, in order to destroy this so-called *reality*." North takes a hard look at what we are told Composition is, outlines the shape of the body of "current/traditional" knowledge, and discovers its narrow limits (118). At the end of his argument he admits that in many ways his style is "raw, rough and ready, and polemical, very much of a piece with the sometimes comic scrambling" (374).

North's "comic scrambling" is part of his self-conscious critique of the epistemology of Composition research. Additionally, North's use of "knowledge creation" in the title of his book plays on the German word for science. In German, *Wissenschaft* means "science", but at the same time the word's literal meaning is "knowledge creation." This etymology is what Nietzsche plays with in the title of aphorism 58, "Only as Creators." He really asks why it is so much more important to rely on what things are called than "what they really are." The arbitrary naming of a thing grows from generation to generation, simply because we believe in it. The crucial part of his argument is his statement that only a fool would believe it is enough to point out, that is, to deconstruct, the erroneous nature of Enlightenment truth claims for reality. "We may destroy only as creators," he insists. At that level of reading, then, the term *Wissenschaft* as knowledge creation can no longer be clearly distinguished from the creation of, say, a sculpture, a piece of music, or even a novel. With that, Nietzsche

seduces the name of rationalist science with its claims to transcendent truth, into a relationship with aesthetics and the fine arts, that are in German called the "creative arts."

Stephen North likes to talk about discourse as "lore." The idea of scientific knowledge as a story, even a fairy tale, also leans on Nietzsche's critique of positivism. In "On Truth and Lying in an Extramoral Sense," Nietzsche describes "truth" as an "army of mobile metaphors." He argues the continental claim for a genealogical heritage originating in the superior Classical Greco-Roman tradition, particularly in Aristotelian theories of ratio, is an illusion. The will of the West for pure knowledge is, for Nietzsche, never a disinterested enterprise. On the contrary, the will for knowledge is always the will for power, discursive power, if you will.¹⁸ Similarly, North proposes: "just what that term [revolution] means--who revolted against whom (or what), why, and to what effect--depends on who is telling the story" (318). In that sense, the question is not so much "is the story true?", but the more interesting question is, "who gets to tell the story and under what circumstances?"

With his methodological moves Nietzsche provides the tools to strip words of their reputations, names, and appearances. Now they weigh differently; they have different shapes. The idea, for example, that objectivity is a kind of intersubjectivity, creates possibilities by giving words new names, new estimation, and new probabilities. Who would have spoken of "local objectivities" twenty years ago? If for Nietzsche scientific truth in all of its natural ontology--take Kant's assertion that the "Negro race" is naturally inferior to the White race, or even the concept of race itself--is nothing but an army of mobile metaphors, then for Nietzsche, science is the great autobiographical metaphor of the West with which it claims its ownership of truth. In *Thus Spoke*

Zarathustra, he has an extended aphorism called "On the Thousand and One Goals." This title refers, if you recall, to the stories of *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, in which Sheherazade invents a new tale every night to tell the cruel Sultan in order to save her life and that of her family. Nietzsche points out that we, that is, the nineteenth century western tradition, are no different from Sheherazade: to survive, we tell one story after another. We place values on certain things, we posit goals, we give meaning to things that may be radically different in nature. But to save our lives we keep telling stories. The irony is that "Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil" (48). It is in that sense, I think, that North uses the terms "lore" and "story." It is a "less-than-serious," or perhaps "more-than-serious" approach to the history of knowledge and the creation of more. That again goes hand in hand with The Gay Science. For Nietzsche the idea of a gay, joyous, and playful science opposes the tragic German idealist view of science he finds in Hegel. But Hegel's and Kant's idealist beliefs in the science project were not disinterested. They were embedded in the larger task to form a cultural identity that would support the formation of the German nation-state.¹⁹

In this paradigm laughter is always suspect, even subversive. Nietzsche invokes laughter because it carries this image of the selfcreated genealogy of the west beyond the oppositional deadlock. The whole dialectic does have a comic aspect to it. All the same, this philosophical heritage likes to view itself as the embodiment of gravitas, tragic reason, as the noblest form of knowledge. I mention all this because the creation of the German research universities has so very strongly influenced the development of American research universities. North is very much aware of the subversive potential of laughter. His polemic is similar to Nietzsche's because like Nietzsche, he demands a self-conscious

critique of the genealogy of science that goes beyond just another "rational" opposition. Therefore, North's mischievous provocations are meant to cause discomfort in practitioners of old historicist science (like 510, for example) without the usual threat of annihilation.

North's mischievous provocations are directed against the positivist stance that quantitative researchers in composition have cultivated over the last twenty years, and that we, qualitative researchers though we are, have unthinkingly adopted. Through his provocations he tries to destroy the old will to power that likes to disguise itself as a quest for universalist truth. Instead he wants to tease out a desire for less aggressive knowledges. His taste for irony builds a vital and creative--even in an artistic sense--space for forceful possibilities in which, as North himself insinuates, "anything can happen" (375). His polemic works, I think, because it can shake Enlightenment thinkers of composition and their critics out of an inherited despotic style of thought that traps them in the questioning of limits and powers it has abused. But the transcendental Self of 510 felt threatened to the core. North challenged our most dearly (and secretly) held beliefs in the revealing truth of grand narratives. His polemic, though, is not meant to viciously destroy, but to provoke composition researchers into becoming conscious of the actual possibilities and freedoms to which we can have access. With that, North's preposterous ironies are part of a postmodern methodology that does not want to be serious all the time but have a bit of fun as well. This desire, though, is often not well received by Enlightenment thinkers who live through the earnest, even priest-like, responsibility of their search for truth. And, as English 510 demonstrated, one can never overestimate the importance of being earnest.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CLASS

The Public and Private Discourses of Students in ENG 510

White supremacy allows those who exercise white privilege not to acknowledge the power of race, to behave as though race does not matter, even as they help put in place and maintain spheres of power where racial hierarchies are fixed and absolute.

bell hooks

The following section contains a narrative account that Clifford Geertz calls *thick description*. With that, it is one of the qualitative research methods I use. The reflections below are therefore a self-consciously subjective contribution that seeks to trace ruptures and connections between the public and private discourses of ENG 510 which were not put in words while we were in class. They are not meant to be interpreted as an idealizing heuristic model of thought. Instead, to speak with Berg, they are a "subjective soaking" in cultural elements (including perceptions) that would otherwise remain opaque (87).

ENG 510 was a frustrating experience for most of us. It was also a class in which I learned a great deal. I felt continually belittled by some of the other students. Still, although I am sensitive to issues around gender, and am usually fairly outspoken about them, I also let the muteness around gender displace our silences regarding race and class. At times my feelings of anger and impotence were so overwhelming that I wanted to leave. Several people did leave, I remember. There was quite a lot of tension in the class for several weeks. Some students said they wanted more guidance from Dr. Gradin. I, on the other hand, was indignant at our own passivity and our own unwillingness to refute racist or sexist comments that made continued aggression possible. Dr. Gradin did as much as possible to channel brutal conflicts into productive waters of communal

responsibility; still, among the graduate students the desire for critical inquiry was by far outweighed by our somewhat adolescent desire for the authority of a traditional classroom. A retreat to the traditional was impossible, however; the connection to the community-based aspect of the course had so shifted boundaries that the traditional classroom was literally erased.

The silences around gender, class, and especially race, as part of the class dynamics ran parallel to those in our research. Our class interactions became more strained with pregnant silences; likewise, our theory discussions became dismissive of the influence race has on our impact as researchers on subjects. But, as bell hooks says, if we--particularly in this overwhelmingly Anglo seminar--are silent about issues of race, gender, and class, we help put in place and maintain these very same structures of oppression and exclusion that we proposed to have transcended through our awareness of things. That is an important fact those of us who continue this work need to keep in mind. The shift in authorial power that Dr. Gradin was hoping for went hand in hand with the collective intellectual responsibility qualitative research demands. But collectively we were so starved for the safe dialectic of a teacher-centered classroom that we could not make the leap to a practical awareness of mutual interdependency. This is another problem that most probably will resurface in the next class that works on the literacy project.

While during class an increasing number of us cloaked ourselves with silence, after class, we, especially the women, would talk about our frustrations. While that was helpful, our discourse did not move into the class sessions where they really belonged if, that is, self-reflexivity continued to be a mutual goal. We remained in what I dubbed "gossip land," home of the discursively less than powerful. Even our belated e-mail conversation around issues of aggression

were little more than locker room gossip, since the main objects of our gripes, the two men in the class who aggressively dominated discussions, were not a part of that discussion. They could have participated, of course, but they didn't. At this point, many of our important research principles, such as self-reflexivity, relevance to subjects, our own agendas as participant-observers, were irretrievably lost. All that is left is reflection.

This class that was intended to be student-centered and thereby, as one of my classmates liked to put it, "warm and fuzzy," turned out to be one of the most violent experiences I have had at this university. By violent I mean a kind of intellectual cruelty to which the body reacts as if to a physical attack. With that in mind, the question forced itself on the trapped participants: "what do you do in a 'warm and fuzzy' class when you have aggressors in there who violently dominate and usurp time and space?" While we were still in class, towards the end of the term, one of the other students told me he was not going to write down all of his critiques of class dynamics in his reflections: "I don't care about inquiry anymore. I'll just say a bunch of pleasant things. I just want to survive this class." Survival seems like a rather strong term, but actually the tensions were almost unbearably high. So, perhaps the idea of survival was not only one of those self-indulgent exaggerations that come all too easily to us academics. In that context I talked to Jo Buffalo Boy, a Native American drug and alcohol counselor who also regularly holds "cultural awareness" workshops, about the class dynamics around race. Her comment: "sometimes academics have the whole world on the tip of their tongue but they can't tell their ass from a hole in the ground." A bit too colorful for academic discourse, perhaps, but her bitterness about unacknowledged white privilege is not untypical. Most people of color who read my thesis draft reacted with similar cynicism; one African

American student, an English major, stated that she doesn't even bother anymore to try to discuss underlying ethnocentric classroom dynamics. She spends most of her time trying to garner enough energy to just do her school work. She and another African American student asked me not to mention their names in my reflections because they do not want to be singled out to represent their race in another enlightenment session for Whites "so that they (Caucasians) can feel better about themselves."

Inevitably, levels of stress and aggression in the class began to rise. After class I was emotionally, even physically, very exhausted. Others in the class had similar reactions, I found out later. At one point, then, I decided to pay attention to my physical reactions to the invisible daggers that were flying through the class. The body language of one of the men was signaling danger. Frequently, just listening to him, my stomach would lurch with fear. My research partner described the same reaction: "I spend the evening (after class) getting rid of that knot in my stomach." In class, she had taken to intensive doodling. I took to turning physically away from the flight path of cutting remarks. My body was constantly on guard. I was even prepared for a physical attack. That sounds a bit hysterical, one might think, but it turned out later that the man actually was in need of clinical help. In any case, whether or not any of us was actually in physical danger, the fact remains that our responses were visceral and somatic, thus adding to the deafening silence in our learning community. I don't want to overemphasize this particular class dynamic, since it was a rather unusual situation that did serve to increase tensions. These dynamics were not responsible, however, for creating problems that were already manifest. The problem of silences began early in the term. I remember one situation in which we were still formulating possible approaches to, and questions for, the

juveniles. I said, "I should e-mail my daughter because at this point she knows more about juvenile delinquents than I do." Following that, one man commented, "Ah, better watch out. You'll be a grandma real soon." It took me a moment to understand what he was insinuating. Then I realized that my comment led him to think my daughter hangs out on the seedier side of the tracks where young chicks put out for a drink of Thunderbird. What I had meant to say was that I used to be a social worker in a youth project in Berlin and used to be on good speaking terms with inner city youth, but that was many years ago. My daughter, on the other hand, is involved with a program through her university that aims at getting youth off the street into a less self-destructive environment. I had the urge to explain that my daughter is not about to get pregnant because she knows how to take care of herself and, aside from that, her body is her business and not my class mate's. And then I wanted to say that I resented the implication that my daughter sleeps around, or does what American teenagers are meant to do to fulfill the contemptuous expectations of condescending adults.

And I wanted to explain further that Jessica is bright, intellectually curious, graduated as Valedictorian from a Jesuit highschool, and that she won a twenty-thousand dollar scholarship to a private Liberal Arts college in Wisconsin that she finds radically alienating in relation to her own cultural experience. Then I wanted to take the man who made this remark, shake him, and ask him why he thinks he can make such insulting remarks about my daughter who is fighting for her life in an academic environment that is just as self-servingly stupid as he is. But I didn't say anything. I just sat there like a fool and thought all those thoughts.

I am not sure why I felt it would be useless to expose underlying assumptions. Some of the students in class continuously made derogatory remarks that put down a lot of people, especially youth. I remember phrases like: "Watch out they don't pick your pockets," or, "Well, we all know what those kids are like." Partly, I didn't think I had to respond to these insinuations because that would put me into a defensive position, and, secondly, I couldn't see why in the world I should even have to defend my daughter's . . . morality? In our class people didn't listen to each other very well. Since derogatory remarks went unchallenged most of the time, they continued to hover over discussions like bad air. I remember thinking that if I were a young Black man sitting this class, class dynamics might have been different.

All the same, I did e-mail Jessica about formulating questions. She replied that in her experience "the biggest turn offs for youth are, of course, someone aimlessly trying to help them and maybe feeling like a statistic." She was alluding to what Berg called inconsiderate researchers. She added, "it seems basic to me but you may ask something like, "If you could make another person feel exactly what you do, what would you say? "Jessica mentioned further that she knows "a whole lot of people who have a whole lot to say but don't know how to go about it really, even in speaking." She finished with: "I don't know. You're in a pretty awkward situation." From her point of view, then, the key is once again to make sure that our questions, our interests, are relevant to the youths we interviewed.

In our class I was, to my own surprise, one of the people who had a whole lot to say but didn't know how to go about it anymore. In later discussions, many of us said we had felt a horrible loneliness, intellectual and personal, in the class. Were we a community? We were a learning and research community by virtue

of our collective task; at the same time, we were utterly incapable of acting with any degree of collective responsibility. At one point I wanted to mention that I spent time at a youth detention facility. It was called a Reform School, but mainly served to contain angry youth. I decided to keep quiet, though, because I suddenly realized that this kind of self-revelation would set me apart in an undesirable way, or, worse, make me a subject of scientific investigation executed by people I didn't trust. Again, the public silences and private discourses found no common ground in the seminar. These ruptures between discourses occurred frequently. During week four of the term, two men were hogging the discussion again. They were talking to each other about what one of the women in class had said, all the while ignoring her. Noticing this, I wrote her a note that read: "Why aren't we challenging this crap? I feel like psycho-bitch from hell." My classmate wrote back: "I'm following Dr. Gradin's cue. Maybe I should be more aggressive." We listened some more. I wrote again: "Did X just call you a kid or am I getting altogether paranoid?" Her answer: "Yes. One alpha-male told me I have a control problem, the other called me a kid. Like my grandmother used to say: Fuck them." Clearly, there was a great rift for us between the public and private discourses, and any claims to unity of theory and praxis went down the drain very quickly. At times, the discussion became so ludicrous that any participation seemed entirely pointless.

Like most of the others I had also dissociated from the goings on and decided instead to pass around a quote from Chiseri-Strater's book:

Male students need to listen and hear what their female classmates have to say rather than interrupt and dominate discussions. Women students need to hear their own voices raising questions and confronting issues. And

women's silences need not always be interpreted as unarticulated knowing but as thoughtful reflection and productive meditation. (148)

Even though my passing this quote around was meant as a cheaply subversive revenge against dominating speakers--and it did cause some conspirational snickering among the silent--I did not hear my own voice raising questions and confronting issues. My silence was not a "thoughtful reflection." But even one of the men in class, who by now was increasingly suspicious of things feminist, could relate to the quote. He was silenced, too. Every once in a while he made an effort to refute some blatantly sexist remark like, "if the minority students didn't have so damn many kids they could make it through school like everybody else!" by commenting something to the effect that this didn't seem like a very reasonable argument. Some of the women though, especially those who were raising children, were so angry that we couldn't speak.

This thick description of class dynamics seems useful because it transforms the opaque nature of interlocking classroom dynamics into a readable narration. It lifts the gossip, that is, the private discourse of students in ENG 510 into a public academic discourse that means to be self-reflexive. Further, it illustrates how we became so enamored with our marginality that, not unlike juvenile offenders, we began cultivating a sub-community that protested oppressive dynamics by becoming silent in a rather loud way. The examples also show how we allowed these tensions to entirely displace the problem of race and class. Our research lives became lost in the increasingly self-centered and competitive atmosphere of the class. In *Academic Literacies*, Elizabeth Chisery-Strater makes a similar point about the rift between the public and private discourses of university students. In her understanding "this artificial form of individualism is ultimately the loss of themselves as individuals" (x). Likewise, I would say that

our 'subversive' personalities ultimately lead to the loss of ourselves as articulate, reflective thinkers and researchers. Our use of language served either to engage in "bilateral" exchanges with the professor, or we used language as a weapon against each other rather than as a tool for constructed understanding. While we became, as Chisery-Strater defines it, verbally aggressive, we did not become intellectually aggressive (148). If one keeps in mind that one of our qualitative research objectives was self-reflexivity (to help us trace the situated knowledges and local objectivities of our own context, and how our underlying assumptions in turn informed our research bases), it becomes quite obvious that our research assumptions had some serious problems. If the silencing of gender issues in a class full of discursively privileged university students could cause such an onslaught of anger and pain, what would our silences around race and class do to youth we were to interview?

In addition to that, the above narration makes clear that the class collective was not able to adequately address any of the contextual issues of race, class, gender, in our classroom alone. How could we possibly assume that, because we are so conscious of such matters (as several students had stated in class), we might somehow transcend them? We did not transcend anything. Reality hit us like a ton of bricks. The Comptian ratio is not pure mind thinking universally; it does not stand outside the contextual experience of the social body. On the contrary, if we take qualitative research seriously, and if we have a degree of critical awareness of the problems faced by the youths we interact with, our conscious reason may not treat our research subjects as if they were toys in a phenomenological play pen, or the subjects of a laboratory experiment. For the youth, the experience is real. It may be a confusing experience for them because we, the researchers, never clearly revealed our relationship to the young people

we interviewed, and because our questions were perhaps not as relevant to the subject's experience as might be desirable, but, no matter how we look at it, our theory and practice in and outside the classroom are real.

REFLECTIONS ON METHOD

Situated Knowledges and Local Objectivities

Qualitative research acknowledges context. It does not only acknowledge context as an aside, it insists that context itself shapes the making of knowledge. In "Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies," Patricia Sullivan points out that not only the race, class, culture, and gender of the "research subject" are important considerations, but that the researcher herself must critically reflect on her own cultural, racial, and class assumptions that are never neutral and always "determine how and what the researcher sees" (Methods 36).

Therefore, I have tried to keep Harding's principles in mind: (1) the researcher's relation to the subject of her work is not neutral; (2) the purpose of the researcher's questions must be grounded in youth's experience and be relevant to them; (3) the researcher's agenda is not disinterested (Methods 256). It is important, then, that we as researchers confront our own biases by reflecting our own subjective reasons for this research. I find this research useful because, as I already said, I spent time in reform school and have since then spent a great deal of energy on not reflecting about how this experience relates to my current academic work. Still, to date, I am the only one (except my daughter) in my family who even earned a high school degree.

The point is that, as a culture, we produce juvenile offenders like we produce homelessness or eating disorders. With that I mean to argue against the myth that the state wants to liberate youth from criminalization. Instead I propose that we collectively produce more and more deviancy through increasingly intricate levels of administration. For support of this theory I refer the reader back to Michel Foucault's crucial methodological move in *The History of Sexuality*, where

in part one, "We Other Victorians," he argues against the "repressive hypothesis" which asserts that we now have freed ourselves from the repression of the "imperial prude." Rather, he says, we have taken Victorian restraint, its muteness, and its hypocrisy, and we have refined and extrapolated it to every imaginable level of discourse. He, of course, speaks of sexuality, but his work rhetorically invites the reader to put other areas of culturally normalizing activities in its place. Similarly, I would argue that we have refined silence and restraint around race, precisely because we keep repeating that we have freed minority groups from the shackles of their repression. Their continued muteness is our continued assertion that it is no longer necessary to discuss racism as a normal economic régime.

For instance, I know a five-year-old Hispanic foster child who has a record of sexual molestation because he and a Caucasian girl of the same age were found "playing doctor." I used to think of that as a normal expression of children's sexuality. But today we administer a delinquency that was unthought of twenty years ago. It is as if Freud never happened. Both the boy and the girl are now in counseling. He never spends a moment unobserved. I doubt that he or she will in the future be able to think of themselves in a way that does not include an ontology of sexual deviance. Now that he has a record, the boy is increasingly difficult to place with foster parents. He is "a runner." When he doesn't run, he is screened for "all and any petty offenses, minor indecencies, insignificant perversions" (Foucault 30).

Regarding the production of deviance, Foucault points to society's gothic desire to study The Other. In the context of the 510 class, the "dangerous and endangered adolescents" now become the focus of social control. "Under-taking to protect, separate, and forewarn, signaling perils everywhere, awakening

people's attention, calling for diagnoses, piling up reports, organizing therapies," the state produces adolescent offenders on every discursive level (31).²⁰

Recalling Bauman and Stuckey, one can suggest that we now indeed have a polymorphous technology that inscribes, produces, and administrates delinquency.

With these thoughts in mind I wanted to have a conversation with the young people we had targeted so that they might find it relevant to their own experience; therefore, my research partner and I agreed on an open-ended interview technique. We were interested to hear about their experience with writing from their perspective. Our questions were only semi-organized; we had a variety of questions in our sack depending on various areas he might address. We wanted to follow their lead. Before we went out to interview youths, I thought about what might make them feel less alienated from the experience. I decided that, since self-revelation lowers your status, and the research subjects would conceivably see me as somebody of a higher status, I would reveal things about myself as part of my method. I wanted to tell them that I too had run into problems with juvenile detention at an early age, that I got through high school (mediocre grades notwithstanding), that I later became a social worker in a youth task team in Berlin that was very much like Portland Youth Redirection: it had inadequate facilities, was notoriously underfunded, and was kept alive by people who obviously loved their work--and that I finally, against all odds, made it into the university. For our interview I was hoping that we could set a tone of equality, lightness, interest, and let the young men know that we didn't regard them as "juvenile offenders" but as three-dimensional people.

My philosophical premise for our contextual method is therefore a cultural materialist one. I would agree with Stuckey that literacy is not the problem;

economy is the problem. Even in the relation between race, gender, and literacy, the real problem is economy. I would argue further that, although we as teachers of writing are paradoxically called to teach academic literacy, we occupy a particular place in the network of institutional power-relationships that historically functions as a regime of exclusivity as to who masters writing as the ultimate technology of power to support the state. We need to be aware of that. Even more, I would suggest that we teach our students to be aware of the conflicts this contradiction engenders as they affect them. This does not constitute indoctrination, as some critics charge, but exposure to critical thinking in a historical perspective. Students are well able to make up their own minds once they are presented with a chance to think and write critically.

This is, of course, a revisionist Marxist approach inasmuch as it differs from the traditional Western humanist Marxist theory of dialectic materialism that argues against Hegel by asserting that consciousness does not determine material existence, but rather that our material existence determines our consciousness. Although I am fond of that theory, the recent developments of Realsozialismus show that it was a faulty one. After all, the Wall did come down in 1989. Nonetheless, increasing poverty, gang warfare, and the potential for rising civil unrest have not gone away. On the contrary, the economist Rifkin proposes that our post-industrial, increasingly computer-oriented production era will bring about radical changes of unprecedented dimensions over the next twenty years. By radical changes he means that vast areas of production in the US, as well as in Third World countries where US companies have production facilities, will become obsolete. This trend will bring about mass under- and unemployment, particularly in the ethnic working classes, but also in the middle classes. The only

people with high income potential will be those who are highly trained in computer technology and writing.

But, before my argument becomes too epic in its proportions, I want to stress again that Marx's old theory of consciousness as slave to material conditions is a bit too structuralist. One problem Karl Marx had was that he saw his theories of dialectic materialism very much as a scientific project. Although this idea is not often part of a critique of Marxist dialectics, the fact is that Marx presented his theories very forcefully indeed as a positivist project that only had to follow its inherent laws to their natural end--not unlike Newton's laws on motion. But Marx's structuralism was too static in its assumptions of binary oppositions. In retrospect we now can see that the divisions between the classes are not as rigid and as inevitable as he and Engels assumed, and that their change, or movements if you will, are not as predictable as Newtonian physics would suggest. Furthermore, I have confidence in the possibilities of this research project because I rely on Foucault's re-definition of power in his *History of Sexuality*. It is a most useful critique of dialectic that also informs much of qualitative research theory. In the chapter "On Method" he says that his idea of power does not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the overall unity of a domination are given at the outset. Rather, Foucault says, "these are only the terminal forms power takes (92). For him, power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, "but because it comes from everywhere." With that in mind, power is a "moving substate of fore relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable" (93). These local potentialities of power make qualitative research a tool that can tease out local and situated knowledges in highly interesting ways.

As a result, it seems that the relationship between material conditions and consciousness is more complex and less predictable than Marx had thought. At the same time, our teaching, our learning, our research, do not happen in a classless, value-free space, but are part of a particular material culture that implicitly and explicitly teaches and researches in a paradigm of exclusion and therefore maintains and reinforces inherited class structures. But, as already mentioned, literacy hierarchies are not as monolithic as one might suppose. Still, they resist change.

With these theoretical ideas as part of our methodological basis, we wanted to create an inclusionary interview environment. In further preparation for our interview I tried to keep in mind that I tend to romanticize oppressed minorities. Simultaneously, like most Caucasians who deal with issues of race, I tend to objectify the objects of curiosity, even if my gaze is benevolent. To subvert this cultural imperialist impulse, I knew that I would show the youths I have interviewed everything I write about our conversations. Additionally, I would invite their comments and formally acknowledge them as sources for my paper. This approach is, of course, one of the crucial ethical elements of qualitative research since it is meant to empower the interview partner to critique, change, and challenge my researcher assumptions.

CHAPTER III

INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH:

The Interview that Wasn't

The following is a thick description of a failed interview with Michael, an African American youth. The narration of the attempted interview illustrates how it was in fact not possible for me to transcend particular conditions in terms of race and, further, how my own underlying ethnocentricity stood in the way of my creating a context that was relevant to the youth. I attempted the interview with Michael²¹ at the end of the eighth week of the term.

On November 12, I went to interview Michael. To meet him at his home, I got on the number eight bus at PSU which took me to lower North East Portland. A lot of Black people got on as well. I noticed it because usually the busses I take carry very few African Americans. It was about 4 pm. The Whites who got on had a sharp, I-am-on-top-of-things business air about them; they got off again at the Lloyd Center. But the African Americans, many of them youths, had a more withdrawn appearance. They all stayed on the bus until after we had passed Prescott, which is where the Black neighborhood begins. Sitting on the bus, I was trying to tune in to all these young people dressed in primary colors, so I put an unobtrusive smile on my face. I started wondering if we could have a conversation. I started wondering if I could have a conversation with Michael. Would he look like them? How would I look to him? It didn't worry me too

much, since his grandmother had promised me on the phone that, yes, he'd be glad to talk to me.

Finally, I got off on the forty-five-hundred block on 15th. Here everybody was Black; I was the only White. The houses were run down, very different from the ones ten blocks further east where some of my professors live. I was looking for the right house number when, two houses ahead, I saw a few young people standing around an old Chivvy talking to the people inside the car. Ah, I thought, they want to check me out. But what if they're doing gang-business? No, that's a racist assumption. At the same time, several other large old cars were cruising around the block. Hmmm. I wasn't too nervous because I knew this atmosphere, so I kept walking.²² When I was maybe fifteen steps away from the house, the Chevy pulled away, the other youth walked off, and one boy who had obviously seen me approach the house, leisurely walked inside and banged the door shut without looking back. Oh great, I thought, I suppose that's Michael. I climbed up the stairs to the porch, an old couch in one corner, three car tires in the other, and knocked on the screen door. Inside I could see a number of people in the living room. It was dark inside, everybody was sitting around, the TV was on. The young man who I thought was Michael was standing in a still darker corner, but I could see him. All in all there were about seven or eight people just a few feet away from me, but nobody answered the door. So I knocked again. I had an interview to get to. And I knocked again. Finally, an older lady came to the door and looked me up and down suspiciously.

"What do you want?" she asked sharply.

"I'm from PSU. I'm here to see Michael," I said, suddenly feeling like an idiot.

"What?" she yelled.

This had to be grandmother. (It was the same voice, but she didn't acknowledge our earlier conversation.) The screendoor had plastic windows, so she couldn't hear me very well, but she wouldn't open the door. I hollered back:

"I'm from PSU!"

In the back of the livingroom somebody asked what's going on. Grandmother turned around and yelled, "It's that woman from the school."

Oh great, now I was "that" woman.

"He ain't here." Her eyes were piercing.

"But," I insisted, "we're supposed to meet at four thirty?"

"I told you he ain't here." She was shouting now.

I, easily cowed by strong matriarchs, hung my head, turned around and left. Then I got the strange feeling that I remind the people who live here of these Pentecostal missionaries who, with the regularity of bowel movements, arrive at their door every other weekend. Very confused, I walked down to the corner to call Dr. Gradin. The cars were still cruising. Strangely enough, I didn't mind the reaction of Michael's family. I didn't see it as a manifestation of deviance. On the contrary, I had to grin. Still, I felt like the master idiot of the month.

On my way back to PSU it occurred to me that I might try meeting Michael again in a more neutral environment. Our initial idea had been to meet youth in an environment they feel at home in, but that hadn't worked out in this case. A café might be a good place to meet. Just then the bus passed La Charterie, a coffee house not ten blocks away from Michael's house. Through the big windows I could see intellectuals sitting on graciously iron-wrought French garden chairs at equally charming French garden tables, sipping designer coffee, reading newspapers or having animated conversations. This looked good to me. Needless to say, all the coffee-drinkers at La Charterie were White. It was a

strange sensation to look into this coffee house from inside a bus filled with African Americans. I realized again that segregation continues to function with a fairly high degree. I also realized that I can expect to walk into that beautiful café and not feel out of place because everybody has my color of skin.

For once, while I was in Michael's neighborhood, I was the minority. For once, I could not expect to see people of my color widely represented in the environment; for once, I could not expect instant acceptance; for once, I could not be sure that if I ask to talk to someone "in charge," I would be facing a person of my color; for once, I could not go to a meeting and expect to feel tied in. For one brief moment, I was forced instead to feel isolated, out-of-place, held at a distance and, worst of all, for once I had to face the fact that people feared me.

But even in this economically depressed African-American neighborhood I can count on being able to choose a public accommodation like a bus without fearing discrimination. I can still be sure that, should I need legal or medical help, my race will not count against me. I know I can go into a store and pay with a check or a credit card without being regarded with suspicion because of the color of my skin. Nobody would dare ask me to speak for all the people of my ethnic group. I can still turn on the television or look at the front page of the newspaper and--unthinkingly--count on seeing people of my race widely represented. And, it will be fairly easy for me to get this paper accepted at an academic conference.²³

After some thought, I decided not to reschedule an interview with Michael because, for one thing, I very much felt like an intruder into his personal life; secondly, I couldn't see a way in which I might be able to transcend the differences that separated us; and finally, I couldn't think of a way to make my research relevant to Michael's experience.

THE INTERVIEW THAT WAS, or:

"Writing could be exciting if we could write a story."

In the middle of our interview, after we all had relaxed a bit, Roy said:

"Writing could be exciting if we could write a story." That sounded good to me. I like writing stories, too. We had asked him, "What was your worst experience writing for school?" "Writing isn't exciting," said Roy, because he and the other students had to write for fifty minutes at a time, his fingers get cramped and, worst of all, "you've got to write the same thing everybody else writes." "It could be exciting," Roy reflected, "if we could write a story, make things up," but this way "it's too much stress. You have to read a book first, and then you have to write three drafts and make sure the paper is perfect on the fourth one." The way I understood Roy was that, well, of course, you have to write research papers for school, but it would be great to have more opportunities for self-reflexive and creative writing that is not so focused on mechanics, but rather on ideas instead.

We interviewed Roy on December 5, 1995 at Portland Youth Redirection, 1033 North Webster in Portland. Early on the class collective had decided to interview subjects in an environment that is comfortable for them. Also, we did not want to use a questionnaire, but had a list of questions (generated earlier in class), such as: If you could write anything you wanted to, what would that be? Therefore, we drove to North Portland where PYR is located in an older house on the edge of the freeway. Youth Redirection apparently operates with very little funding. It is a youth program that aims to create detention alternatives in order to lower disproportionately high rates of incarceration of African American youth. As I walked into the lobby I saw a little coffee maker (to which I was immediately

attracted), children's paintings on the walls, an *Ebony* magazine, and a poster with a Ghanaian proverb: "The destruction of a culture begins in its homes."

Then my research partner and I went to sit in the meeting room where Roy joined us a few minutes later. At the beginning of the interview I felt nervous. I was trying my best to sit there and look relaxed. My research partner was writing furiously. I wanted to put Roy at ease, especially after Ted (Roy's case worker) had dragged him into the room like a stubborn calf he had just roped, but that didn't work. I felt very much like I was intruding.

Meanwhile, Ted was saying, "This young man is very intelligent, you know?" "I'm sure he is," I answered. That in turn made Ted say, "No, I really mean that. He is very smart." Now I sounded like I wasn't taking him seriously. Oh great, I thought, I'll just shut my big mouth.²⁴

My research partner and I began our interview with an explanation of our own student standing, the purpose of our research, and the personal connections that ground our interest in literacy needs of marginal youth. Roy didn't mind my small Sony tape recorder during the interview. It seemed to have no obvious effect on narration or recall.

After Roy sat down I remember saying something like, "poor thing, are they making you do this?" He answered, "Oh, no. No, I don't mind." But Roy seemed very uncomfortable. Therefore, I especially appreciate his patience to listen to us and answer our nosy questions. My research partner and I probably came across like we were from outer space, and I had no clue what he thought we were going to do to him. So, at first we were all a bit nervous, but after a while we relaxed and had a conversation.

In some ways our conversation with Roy brought no big surprises. He has to write a lot in school. He doesn't really like his English class because he has to

write lots of analytical papers and book reports that he finds alienating because they are boring. His assignments are usually on autobiographies of great men like Martin Luther King or Abe Lincoln. This work he has to do for a teacher who seems also bored, and has little control over the class. "If the teacher's bored, why shouldn't we be bored?" Roy asks. Still, he likes to write in his journal and enjoys looking back at earlier entries.

Something that was unexpected for me was the fact that Roy has to write a lot. I was surprised, but then I don't have a very clear picture of what high schools require from their students. He has to write book reports, do grammar corrections on many of his papers, maybe all of them, he does daily extended in-class writing, and keeps a journal every day. Most of this is boring, Roy says.²⁵ The journal is the only thing he enjoys writing.

Later in our discussion Roy mentions an author, L. Duncan, who writes novels. Roy was introduced to him through his fourth grade teacher. She would read from the novels and the class that would usually terrorize the teacher would become quiet. He has read nine of those novels at least, he says. When my research partner asked how he would feel if he could write about Duncan for school, he says "That would be fun. That would be a lot better, cause that class, man, I just want to drop it, but you need it to pass..." Another thing that bothered Roy is being graded down for grammar. Or rather, if I understand him correctly, having to go through each paper and correct every single mistake puts the greatest importance on mechanics like grammar, punctuation, and sentence structures, so that he doesn't really get around to reflecting how he can best say what he wants to say. Later Roy told me he doesn't get the impression that the teacher is at least as interested in his ideas as he is in the mechanical correctness of his writing. His journals, on the other hand, are freewritings. They are not

corrected: "It's like you accidentally stutter and you write it down." But, while this kind of writing is not as perfect as the drafted essay, it seems to be more authentic, more real, more alive, for Roy. His Mom used to read to him every night, he remembers. His Dad, too. But Dad would read bible stories. The fairy tales were more like adventures in which he could ride along.

Roy likes to read books that he can relate to. Duncan, he mentions, writes in "everyday language" that people actually speak. "There's even cussing in there. It's something that someone would really say." Duncan doesn't use highly abstracted language. But this kind of connected writing doesn't seem to be a possibility in Roy's writing class. As a researcher and teacher I find myself thinking about what might engage Roy. I decide, perhaps too quick to avoid feeling a bit like *The Colonizer*, that it might be a good idea to develop a plan in which Roy could write a paper on an author he likes, or on no author at all, but just write a story about an event that is important to him and arrange with his school for credit. Later, after critical reflection and more interviewing, I still think this might be a good idea.

When we ask Roy what he wants to do after high school, he says that he'll probably go to college. But later he explains that he's thinking of getting out of school with a GED because two more years seem like a waste of time. "And people say that you can get just as far with a GED." Roy wants to be a carpenter or an electrician like his Dad who lives in Mississippi. That would be his dream job, he says.

During our conversation I was trying to find a way to tell Roy about myself. I had this idea in my head that I could tell him that I had been to reform school as a youth, that I had been a "juvenile offender," that I ran away from home a lot, that we even had a little gang, that I was very close to dropping out of high school,

that I later became a social worker. I thought that might be helpful because he treated me so much like an authority person that he must have thought my background must be lily-white, so to speak. But that seemed impossible. I also sensed that Roy didn't want to talk about his involvement with Youth Redirection; neither did his case worker. That was none of my business. Fair enough. I am glad, though, that we kept the open-ended interview idea in mind, because towards the end of our talk I mentioned that I was a returning woman student. Roy said, "My Mom is a returning student at PCC Sylvania." That's the same campus I started out with. His Mama went back to get her high school diploma when she was twenty-five. Roy's Mom goes to school, takes care of her husband, cooks, cleans, and takes care of her seven children, too. "You know," Roy said, "my Mom has to do the journal thing too." Then he told us that he and his mom often sit down and read their journals to each other, so "she'll know what I've been through for the day."

At the end of the interview, my research partner and I delineated participant rights and researcher responsibilities as carefully and as clearly as possible to Roy. But the form we had, while the content was decidedly meant to empower the interviewee, was almost impossible to explain. The more I tried, the more I sounded like a sleazy insurance salesman. After the transcription of the taped interview, Roy received a copy of his transcript for comments or revisions, but he hasn't given it back yet. He will also receive a copy of the final draft of this paper.

The chosen research tools, interviews and self-conscious critical reflection, provided useful insights on qualitative research. I think that this interview with Roy was a good start. But it was only a start. To make the project work, it is really necessary to develop interactions with an organization like Portland Youth Redirection on a long-term basis, so that the young men and women there, their

counselors and case workers, and the researchers can get to know each other and develop a degree of trust that, in turn, will make it possible for them to write with us. Otherwise we are only another fly-by-night outfit that pops in, does something, and pops out again. That approach to researching literacy needs of juvenile offenders entirely defeats the purpose.

If you recall, our interview with Roy was in December. Since then, I've kept at least in sporadic contact with PYR. Now, in May 96, Roy thinks he may want to write a little story. Erik, Roy's new case worker, Dr. Gradin and I, now have plans to start a small interactive writing group at PYR. We will go visit with their groups, but we will also invite them to PSU for writing workshops. Dr. Gradin and I both agree that it is a good idea to bring the groups to the campus.

My critical reflections that will, hopefully, be read by students who continue this literacy project, may help avoid some of the pitfalls ENG 510 spent so much time scrambling out of again. The interviews and the critical connection between public and private discourses of, at least, some university students were immensely helpful to me in writing myself out of deafening silences. These qualitative research tools have certainly furthered my knowledge around research methodology and race.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE HISTORIES AND THE PROBLEM OF SILENCE, or:

"We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything."²⁶

I was hoping that I could find some common ground with Roy. But that was very difficult. We don't have a whole lot in common. Or perhaps we do, but we were strangers to each other, there were a lot of barriers, and he was probably not sure what in the world we wanted from him. Therefore, a number of things I would have liked to know were impossible to ask. I would have felt even more like an intruder. And there were probably a number of things Roy would have liked to say, but we only met for a little while. In *The Discourse on Language* Foucault says: "we know perfectly well that we are not free to just say anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything." We know the prohibitions like we know any other signs of danger. Foucault discusses three types of prohibition: "the covering of objects" with mantles, "ritual with its surrounding circumstances," and the "exclusive right to speak of a particular subject." These prohibitions appear as in a web that interrelates, complements and reinforces itself. Note that the area "where the web is most tightly woven today, where the danger spots are most numerous, are those dealing with politics and sexuality." Sexuality aside, our ideological prohibitions in ENG 510 were so powerful because words were not only the medium which manifests desire (for knowledge); words were "the very object of

man's conflict" (216). In other words, the majority of 510 was comprised of practitioners of metanarratives who resisted the methodological challenge to their cherished belief that Comtian reason can transcend context. Here the web of ideas was most tightly woven; here the "danger spots" of the Self were most protected from the dangerous Other. The women in the class identified with this Self just as much as the men; as a result, at least in relation to race, the class united in silence.

On the other hand, this silence wasn't quite as monolithic as I portray it here. But I kept these quiet tensions in mind as we went to interview Roy. I didn't want to talk to, and about, Roy as if he somehow represented a whole group.

Question: "Do you as a Black person feel discriminated?"

Answer: "Well, perhaps just a tiny bit."

Note: Research subject has quickly recognized the liberal for what she is; ergo, he tells her what she wants to hear. He knows perfectly well that she doesn't really want to hear about his rage.

But perhaps she does. Give the woman a chance. I really would have liked to know Roy's feelings about race and class. Of course I feel awkward talking about African Americans as if I were somehow preoccupied with that problem of race when I myself am White and clearly privileged--and, with that, presumably very comfortable in the academic environment. Why then would I want to bother with other people's problems around race and class? I'm okay; you're okay. You can't make it through college. Hey, you'll probably drop out of High School, and that's too bad, but we love you anyway.

I do want to bother with race and class because, in many different ways, it relates back to my own experience with institutional normalizing. Writing this contextual thesis has forced me to reflect on my own experience with juvenile

detention. I haven't discussed it about it in fifteen years. When I was fourteen, my parents handed me over to a closed reform school in Berlin. I was always running away from home because home wasn't very nice, or safe, to use a more current term. I was released from reform school in 1969, after I had been diagnosed with a chronic kidney infection.²⁷ After I got out, I saw Ulrike Meinhof's film *Bambule*. At the time, Meinhof was a social worker concerned with the welfare of street youth. In *Bambule* she showed interviews with street youth. In her mind, youth detention facilities were the policeman of the system, "a stick with which to beat the proletarian young," and impress upon them that it is no use defending themselves, no use wanting anything other than a lifetime on the assembly line (73). "Bambule" means rebellion, resistance, counter violence--efforts toward liberation. "Such things," she said, "happen mostly in the summer, when it is hot, and when the food is even less appealing than usual, and anger festers in the corners together with the heat."

Admittedly, I was very taken with Meinhof's reasoning. There is one sentence she said that I remember very clearly: "Such things," Meinhof said, "are in the air then--they could be compared to the hot summers in the Black ghettos of the United States" (74). Her film also showed Black ghettos in, I think, Detroit. To add fuel to our resistance ideology, we read James Baldwin and Stokeley Carmichael in high school, and Marx, Engels and Bakunin at home, and we began hearing about Angela Davis. There's my link to this research project. Another silence is made visible. But the problem with revolutionary counter-violence, that is, the emancipation of human beings through class struggle--a Marxist idea I grew up with--is that it is another one of those grand 19th century metanarratives which, according to Lyotard, are dead. He is correct, it seems, although I would insist that we have in no way overcome issues of race, class and gender--even if I

sound like my needle is stuck. But yes, Marxist ideas of counter-violence are dead; Meinhof is dead; positivist science is dead. Qualitative research, on the other hand, allows for little histories to be told. It is a creative approach towards social justice.

With Foucault's critique of Marx's dialectic materialism we now know that the power structures that keep literacy hierarchies in place are not as rigid as was earlier supposed. Their fluidity increasingly allows minorities into the academy, although, make no mistake, they do not "trickle in" automatically.

These are ideas I would really like to tell Roy. He doesn't sound like he's particularly interested in finishing high school. I can understand the sentiment; I could not see what use a high school degree would be to me. But as a student of color with a GED alone the cards are stacked against him even more. I wish there were a way Roy could feel encouraged enough to continue with school, even if it is difficult. I also want to tell him what Jo Buffalo Boy told me: "Make no mistake: there are enough people out there who don't like to see a minority student succeed. They may not say it out loud, but you can feel institutional resentment surrounding you like a cold fog." Still, college is interesting. If nothing else, it is always a good idea to familiarize oneself with the strategies of the Master discourse.

This is a silence Chiseri-Strater talks about when she says that the public and private discourses of university students are often radically different. Academic success, especially for minority students, often requires such a high degree of alienation that, in order to make it, you have to radically dissociate yourself from who you are in the world. The more marginalized a student you are, the more you have to dissociate yourself from your own cultural context. She includes gender issues, but leaves out the impact class and, particularly, race has in that

context. But in *The Violence of Literacy*, Stuckey drags those issues out of the underground to the forefront of the discussion. She quotes June Jordan, an acclaimed educator, professor of African American Studies and Women's Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Black, female, and politically aware, Jordan talks about race and class. According to Jordan, English education closes down opportunities for social meaning, especially for minorities and untraditional students. "English education should stop doing this," she says (97).

While I certainly don't mean to idealize Meinhof (a dangerous enterprise, to be sure) I am encouraged by June Jordan's articulate grievances against quietly exclusionary practices that are similar to those I try to address as the silences we produced in 510. To transform this dynamic it is necessary to discuss, to speak the words, that make these silences visible, particularly in a qualitative research project that makes this kind of awareness and a degree of discomfort imperative. Therefore, even if it feels strange to talk about somebody else's race--even if there's always a degree of interracial stutter one has to get through to make a dialogue possible--we still might want to try to sustain that, live with the tension, the vague discomfort, and the not knowing how things will go, rather than ignore the impact that race has on people's life experience and educational success. That is why I brought Peggy McIntosh's short essay on white privilege into the research methods class for reading and discussion. But still, our class more or less draped a fleece of golden silence over race, class, and gender. This prohibition of speech might have been disrupted if there had been even one African American or one Hispanic or one Native American student in there.

Let me define racism as I understand it. Racism combines prejudice with power. Racism is the routine, institutionalized mistreatment of a person based on her/his membership in a group on the downside of power. Racism is a

catastrophe for every person. Racism is based on lies. Racism is interwoven with class issues. Racism is damaging to you whether you are on the giving end or the receiving end of it. Personal prejudice becomes racism if it is backed up by institutional power. People of color do not have institutional power. That is, they are not represented in any institutions in the US in proportion to their numbers in the population. Here it becomes evident how class and race are interlocking realities that serve to maintain traditional educational structures. People of color are underrepresented as teachers, lawyers, business people, police, doctors, dentists, politicians, plumbers, construction workers, etc. At the same time, people of color are disproportionately found in prisons, low-paying jobs, housing projects, unemployed and receiving inadequate diets and medical care. These facts represent racism in institutional power relationships as we live in them. Racism affects all areas of our lives, political, economical, social and personal.

We who are here, in moderate positions of power, one might say, can either enforce these hierarchies or break them down. The methods through which we teach or, in this case, research have a direct influence in this power network. There are a number of us, students and teachers, who think that our own activities, because we have a degree of awareness of underlying structures, are somehow innocent of such dynamics. We prefer reading passionate theoreticians to re-examining our own practices. But that is exactly what we have to do. That is what I mean with self-reflexivity, not only on an individual level but also in terms of institutional dynamics, and in terms of a research methodology. And, while we as educators may be able to say that racism is not our fault, taking action against racism through the way we teach and research is certainly our responsibility. This was the intent of ENG 510, but for many varied reasons, one

of them a desire for a teacher-centered over a communal classroom, the majority of students silently agreed that we would not engage this concept as real.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS

The Violence of Literacy as Enlightenment Despotism

.....The Enlightenment returns: but not at all as a way for the West to become conscious of its actual possibilities and freedoms to which it can have access, but as a way to question the limits and the powers it has abused. Reason -- the despotic Enlightenment.

Foucault, *The Normal And The Pathological*

It doesn't seem that our critical consciousness regarding racism has advanced much over the basic assumptions of nineteenth century thinkers like Kant, Hegel or Comte. In a recent (March 13, 1996) PSU Vanguard article titled "PSU Proves to be Free of Racism," the author explains that at PSU racism is really nonexistent, and if there are racial incidents they are nothing but a problem of miscommunication. The article was written to contrast PSU's progressive multicultural stance to a racial incident at another university earlier that week, where White students kicked and spit on Black students. In my response to the Editor (April 5, 96) I expressed that the article struck me as a bad joke. If PSU were free of racism, I argued, we would have lower drop-out rates for minority students, and we would have proportionally more people of color in positions of institutional power. That is not the case. I wrote: "So, let's not act as if our brains had been surgically removed at an early age and we somehow can't seem to remember the procedure." My tone was not meant to be a conciliatory. My body

metaphor was meant to polemicize this insidious faith in reason that was nothing but a veiled insult to ethnic minorities--cloaked as progress on the march. It would be fair to say that my research in 510, particularly the insights I have gained through the methodological tool of critical reflection, has allowed me to speak an otherwise unspoken sentiment in an at least somewhat public arena.

In his "Genealogy of Modern Racism" Cornel West chooses another entertaining body metaphor. He speaks of "significant secretions" generated from the creative fusion of scientific investigation, Cartesian philosophy, and classical aesthetic norms. At the end of the essay it becomes altogether clear that he is referring to bowel movements, the fumes and secretions of which "continue to pollute the air of our postmodern times" (486). The irony is that I, with all my enlightened little insights, cannot transcend race or class as part of an intricately interlocking régime of exclusion. All the same, the reflexive stance of our project has lead me to realizations I would not otherwise have had. One thing I realize is that such a project needs more time. If future researchers give ideas and contacts more time to develop, it will become easier for all parties involved to realize the actual freedoms to which writing can give access.

That is why I, together with Dr. Gradin, am still in contact with Roy and two case workers at Portland Youth Redirection. As I mentioned earlier, PYR provides support to youth. It is meant to nurture and encourage youths who are otherwise drawn to gang membership, which also provides a kind of support system--along with violence, drug abuse, and a possible criminal record. PYR also has a program for young women and men that provides counseling and access to jobs, housing and other necessities to young people who want to escape gang involvement. The primary goal of PYR is to reduce the over-representation of youth of color in secure detention; rather it seeks to hold them accountable in a

supervised but less restrictive manner. In that context PSU's Writing Program can play a role. Following the ideas of Eric Dunn, a case worker at PYR, the Director of Writing and I are planning to initiate small writing groups that can meet, write, think, and discuss in an environment that allows them to make writing a tool for self-expression. Here the Writing Center may be a helpful nexus. Not only are we invited to participate in group activities at PYR, we also encourage supervised groups to come into the university.

Since this project will continue in another methods class, I have a number of suggestions for potential qualitative researchers:

1. A sound theoretical basis would be helpful.
2. Historical consciousness is a good thing; so is a sense of humor.
3. Think about screening people before they engage in fieldwork.
4. Use a pedagogy that openly declares itself to be uncomfortable to students. (I think here of bell hooks' ideas in "Towards a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy.")
5. Make clear that feeling safe is not as much a concern as continued and rigorously displacing self-reflexivity.
6. Students might be told at the outset that they have to participate in the discussion. If they don't think they can handle it, they should consider dropping the class.
7. Bring minority speakers into the classroom (and I would include women here. Johanna Brenner strikes me as an excellent possibility). I know from Candice Goucher of Black Studies that this department has any number of teachers who frequently train on minority sensitivity.
8. Make the students read this paper.
9. Make students read related texts written by minority scholars.

10. Begin arranging interviews early in the term.
11. Try to get funds so that this qualitative research methods class can be taught over a full school year.
12. Get a sense of solidarity that goes beyond the diarrhetic Victorian desire to help, because that particular hobby mostly serves to purify the soul of the colonizer while it leaves surrounding souls feeling more sullied than before. That is what I would call the violence of literacy in which we participate more often than not.

Therefore I should like to repeat that, while we as teachers of writing are paradoxically called to teach academic literacy, we must be conscious of the fact that we occupy a place in the network of institutional power-relationships that historically functions as a régime of exclusivity as to who masters writing as the ultimate technology of power to support the state.

Let me then, without any carefully delineated transition, go on to the last point I want to make. One of the more painful things I have learned about gender through this project is that, while, generally speaking, men easily grant that women are disadvantaged (silenced, in our case), they have a great resistance to acknowledging that they are over-privileged. Men want to improve women's status, but if that means to lessen their own privilege, the disadvantaged suddenly hit a brick wall. Denials such as this manifested in our research methods class. The denial of male privilege served to protect that same male privilege from being lessened or even discussed.

Perhaps the most difficult thing I have become aware of, is that we (women included) were engaged in white privilege. In ENG 510 our denial of white privilege amounted to a more radical and perhaps more insidious silence,

considering the circumstances of the research project and its subjects. The issue of race became a taboo, invisible, erased. As Enlightenment thinkers it was easy enough for us to grant that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged. But when that realization demanded—even if only in thought alone—that we give up some of our “unearned assets” which we have stashed away in our invisible backpack, and on which we cash in every day, we became accountable in a way that was altogether too uncomfortable. Whites have been taught that racism is something that puts others at a disadvantage, but, McIntosh argues, White persons are carefully taught to not recognize the privilege they carry (264).

If, then, qualitative research on the literacy needs of juvenile offenders is to be successful, it is necessary not to assume that our goal is to make our research subjects more like us. To do so defeats the research and reifies the power structure that limits literacy to disenfranchised youth. It may well be necessary that we become more like them. Who knows, perhaps we already are juvenile offenders of a different kind? In that case, we are also in need of detention alternatives.

NOTES

¹ The title is borrowed from chapter one of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, which is subtitled in the French edition as "La Volonté de Savoir," "The Will to Knowledge."

² Paraphrase of Wordsworth's dictum on the composition of poetry as expressed in the 1849 *Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads*.

³ From: Bell Hooks' "Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy," in Richter's *Falling into Theory*.

⁴ To be sure, though, I should say that Hegel's dialectic of ideal thought initially did not have the metallic clang that we often attribute to it now. In his early writing he reveals that he is, in fact, moved by a great and desiring love for knowledge. In that sense, my quick and dirty dismissal of Hegel is just that: quick and dirty. But, as mentioned already, it wasn't Hegel's fault. We have, I would propose, constructed a Hegel who is all we have on Hegel.

⁵ In: Cornel West's "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," in Appelby's *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*.

⁶ When I asked Eric Dunn, case worker at Portland Youth Redirection, if he thought I was overstating the issue of race, he answered, "Oh, no. I think you are right on target."

⁷ After all, there is Affirmative Action, although, and I hardly need to mention it, the purpose of its existence is questioned.

⁸ In Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

⁹ You will have noticed that we live in an era of "posts." The term connotes a kind of genealogy. First there was modernism, positivism, industrialism; then there was post-modernism, postpositivism, and postindustrialism. The list suggests a timeline. But it seems that someone like

Vico or Augustine could easily be named a postmodernist. Sor Juana Ines and Hildegard von Bingen were postmodernists, although they were not aware of that particular ontology. The point is that none of them put their faith in a philosophy of reason that will explain the true nature of universal laws. In any case, one thing is clear: postmodernism cannot exist on its own without constantly groping back to what it resists.

Often critics (like Habermas) dismiss postmodernism as cynicism that thinks of itself as the only subversive reason left after the failures and broken promises of western Marxism in the 1970s and '80s. Here Peter Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason* offers a very helpful argument that leads out of false oppositions, accusations and counter-accusations, and offers alternative methods. Similarly, thinkers like Foucault, Haraway, or North dance away from these false and increasingly bitter oppositions toward a more playful renaming and reestimation and recreation of science as art.

¹⁰ in: *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*. Ed. Joyce Appelby et al. New York: Routledge, 1996. This is a very useful reader that unravels the concept of "postmodernism" through the re-presentation of primary Enlightenment texts and juxtaposes them with a wide variety of postmodernist responses.

¹¹ "Veni! Vidi! Vici!"

¹² Gesa Kirsch's "Methodological Pluralism" in *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*.

¹³ In *Women: Images and Realities*. A 1995 multicultural reader that Johanna Brenner and I used in last Fall's Introduction to Women's Studies class, because it covers a wide variety of views on race, class, and gender in relation to socio-economic contexts for women.

¹⁴ We should not lose sight of the fact that the creation of American research universities was strongly modeled after nineteenth century German university research methods through the efforts of the university presidents of Harvard, Yale, and Stanford. Postmodern scholars like Kimball in *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*, or Toulmin in *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, argue along these lines by saying that it was, at least in part, through the methodological paradigm developed in philology that the sciences were encouraged to develop experimental models that no longer searched for meaning (they no longer asked the naive "Why?" question—the "What does it all mean?" question was now relegated to the study of classical

literature as character builder--but rather researchers now asked the more scientific question "How does it (the text, the phenomenon) work?"

¹⁵ Paraphrased and translated by me from Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, book two, "Die orientalische Welt.

¹⁶ It goes without saying that, through the work of anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss and the later Landrine, the concept of race cannot at close scrutiny be clearly delineated without revealing an underlying racist ideology.

¹⁷ In *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*, Bruno Latour makes that point even in relation to the discovery of the structure of DNA. He doesn't argue that DNA really has a different structure; rather, he traces how, within the socio-economic and political power networks in which scientists and research institutes are embedded, at a particular point researchers "agree" on the structural facts of DNA.

¹⁸ Martin Bernal continues this discussion in his *Black Athena*, where he not only suggest that the genealogy of Western civilization never was a disinterested enterprise, but he also proposes that it just may be possible that classical Greek civilization had in fact adopted much cultural knowledge from the Asian and African continents. Many historians fiercely oppose this in their view "outrageous" claim; they tend to dismiss him for a "sloppy" methodology. Once again method is the culprit.

¹⁹ For a closer discussion of this idea see Stephen Toulmin's *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*.

²⁰ Initially, this sentence read "the state produces juvenile offenses . . ." I changed *offenses* to *offenders* because as a part of a criminalizing economy we not only produce juvenile delinquency as an attribute, but we create an ontology of criminality. One *is* a juvenile offender; one *is* a sexual molester; one *is* a criminal. Once the pathological ontology becomes true, it seems fairly clear how it must be contained.

²¹ This is not his real name.

²² By "I knew this atmosphere" I mean to say that I used to live on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, while I was married (my daughter is one half Oglala Sioux). The living conditions on Pine Ridge in the 1970's were pretty much comparable to those of Third World countries, haven't

changed all that much over the last twenty years, and therefore are a rural variant of the urban ghetto, which is why the atmosphere in this part of North Portland struck me as oddly familiar.

²³ The two above passages are a paraphrase of Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack," to be found in Kesselman's *Women: Images and Realities*.

²⁴ In fact, and I hope Eric and Roy read this, the idea that Roy is intelligent is pretty much a given for me. I have this theory that young people generally are very intelligent. Usually, it's circumstances outside their control that lead to problems our youth experience.

²⁵ After having lived on the reservation I have to think twice when I hear someone use the term "boring." In the Lakota (Sioux) language there is no word for boring. I don't speak Lakota fluently, but while I was translating for a Native American delegation who at the time worked with the Committee for Non-represented Nations on land- and water rights at the United Nations in Geneva, one of the delegates, Wallace Black Elk, who speaks a kind of Lakota-English, told a member of the press who had asked if he weren't bored with the proceedings, that there was no word for "boring" in Lakota. In Lakota, Mr. Black Elk said, the only way I could express that I am bored would be to say "I am lonely."

This struck me as an interesting twist in concepts. Now, every time I hear people say "I'm bored," I wonder if they're lonely.

²⁶ From Foucault's "Discourse on Language." Appendix in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

²⁷ In the reform school *Haus Heilbronn* ("Healing Fountain") we regularly received cold water treatments as one method to develop character. I often refused to eat, but had to sit at the table, sometimes for several hours, until I had eaten all the food. At one point I started wetting the bed. To punish me, the group supervisor forced me to lie in the wet bed during afternoon naps. She also made sure everybody knew I was a bed-wetter. I got out after I became sick.

I already knew that I would not go home again. I was lucky enough to be taken in by a group of social workers who lived and worked together in a youth project in my part of town. Later, I started working with the Youth Task Team and so was able to finance myself until I finished high school.

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APPENDIX

List of Proposed Questions:

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

SEQ POSSIBLE FOLLOW UP INQUIRY

Instead of particular questions, we prefer categories, primarily these four:

S = School

A = Arts

H = Home

P = Self (Personal)

We intend to imply these categories into the discussion as fluidly as possible (i.e., we may start on the periperal and move towards the deeper stuff.)

What do you think about school?	S	Describe the English class (reading/writing) that you feel you got the most out of. teacher atmosphere material feedback
What would you do if you could do anything in the world you wanted to do?	P	
What are some of the things you are good at?	P	What things do you enjoy doing?
Have you ever had a teacher you liked? What made him/her special?	S	If "no," what would a good teacher be like? What has your experience with school been like so far?
Tell me about the last time you had to write something. (What was the last thing you had to write?)	HSPA	Do you like to write? What kind of writing do you usually do? Do you think you could write a story about a day in your life or about a member of the group you hang out with?
Tell me about the last thing you wrote.		How are reading and writing part of your day? What kinds of books or magazines do you like to read?

This differs from the last question in that this allows for **personally motivated** writing as opposed to assigned writing.

Do you have a favorite author?
 Are there any stories that you particularly remember?
 How do you feel about reading and writing?
 competence personal validation
 What (conditions or circumstances) make you want to read or write?

If you could create your own class for school, what would it be like?

S/P

While you were growing up, did anybody in your family sit down and read with you?

H Did you or anybody in your family, or maybe your friends, ever make up stories to tell each other? If so, did you ever write any of them down?

What kind of TV do you like to watch? A

What is your favorite show?
 Who are some of your favorite characters?
 Why?

If you were asked to write about something--anything you wanted to write about--what would you write?

P Describe the best, an the worst, writing experience you have ever had.

If you could read anything, what would that be?

P Describe the best, and worst, reading experience you have ever had.