Balancing Act: Student Valuation and Cultural Studies Composition Textbooks

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Abstract: Composition scholars have contributed many theoretical analyses that WPAs and teachers might apply to first-year composition textbooks in order to make informed decisions about book adoption and implementation. As they offer critiques of the ideological effects of FYC books, many of these studies call composition textbooks "tools" without exploring the implications of textbook *qua* tool. The following essay addresses this unexamined area by developing a theory of *valuation*, a linguistic and rhetorical process of assigning worth to students and textbook instructional apparatuses as student-readers might engage with the texts. An analysis of valuation by WPAs and teachers has the potential to foster the empowerment of students, the instruction of critical thinking and writing, the autonomy of new teachers, and the coherence of local writing programs.

While I worked on my master's degree in the 1990s and a doctorate in the 2000s, I was a teaching assistant as a part of my training and funding. At two different English graduate programs, the TAs of first-year composition, whether they were literature or composition graduate students, were required to enroll in a composition theory and practice seminar. In each program's curriculum, I was trained (and retrained!) with my classmates in the history, theory, and practice of teaching writing, with an emphasis on teaching first-year composition (FYC). The content of the courses was basically the same. We analyzed and wrote about the pedagogies of ancient and contemporary theorists and practitioners. We developed teaching philosophies based on our readings and personal inclinations toward writing. We wrote and peer reviewed syllabi, writing assignments, and classroom activities that we would have our students perform. And we shared successes and challenges of our classrooms as we contemporaneously taught FYC and took the training course. In each course, we read, wrote, and discussed what I suspect most composition training courses require their students to read, write, and discuss. The experience of having the same course at two different institutions certainly corroborates the results of a survey Karen Peirce and Theresa Enos conducted in 2004, which reported that the most common core course of graduate programs in rhetoric and composition is composition theory (205). While none of this is particularly extraordinary, one thing that surprises me on reflection, and what might surprise some readers, is that we did not talk much, at least in a formal way, about textbooks.

The fact that the graduate courses I describe here ignored a formal consideration of textbooks is surprising because textbooks are important. For better or worse, compositions textbooks are important to faculty development in FYC, especially new TAs, adjunct faculty, and faculty in English without a background, or with little background, in composition theory (Bleich; Connors; X. Gale; Lalicker; Welch). William Lalicker reminds us, grounded in his experience as a WPA of first-year writing and reiterating the claims of David Bleich, Robert Connors, Donald Stewart, and Kathleen Welch, that textbooks instruct teachers of composition in theory and practice as much as the texts purportedly teach students to write (59). Based on the experience that I can recall of my first semester as a

graduate TA of developmental and first-year writing, I would certainly agree that the textbook I used offered some theoretical instruction and practice. And maybe more importantly, the book offered a stable starting point and reference for when I felt unsure of my knowledge and abilities to teach. I depended greatly on that first textbook (and maybe a few others after that) because I was a neophyte, just beginning my compositionist career and developing the authority and theory to make informed choices about adopting particular textbooks, implementing mandated texts, or choosing no textbook at all.

But, of course, the textbooks used were not the only source of composition theory and practice that informed our teaching. To become the autonomous "theory-savvy" teachers of FYC who would adopt "theory-rich" textbooks during our current and subsequent semesters in a "theorized program," as Lalicker advocates in his article on the forces surrounding book adoption (54-5), we read theoretical and practical books, articles on composition and rhetoric in the flagship journals and sourcebooks, and bibliographic essays of various pedagogical approaches. Despite all the theorizing we performed in these courses for TAs—that is, the type of theorizing Lalicker argues will guide teachers to avoid textbooks of "stilted modes" (55)—I believe what we needed during this time of nascent development was more than the assumption or hope that, by our own volition or external encouragement, our theorizing would spontaneously and consciously surface when adopting texts and implementing their instructional apparatuses with our first-year writing students. We needed a high-stakes or low-stakes assignment, or a focused class discussion, or brown-bag workshops, or *something* devoted to the formal and focused consideration and analysis of textbooks, their content, form, nature, history, and so on. Not only would first-year writing programs benefit from having new teachers learn how to analyze and adopt books that support program outcomes and teach students "to take an engaged and theorized voice into their writing" (64), but new teachers who are just beginning to build their theoretical knowledge, confidence, and autonomy might also be able to avoid the three-phase arc that took Xin Liu Gale ten years to complete: "dependence, discontent, and disillusionment" (185).

This article has two purposes. The first is to urge all Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) of first-year writing programs who currently do not formally teach new faculty to analyze textbooks to begin doing so, in order to mitigate the struggles and support the development of new faculty. I understand limitations exist for such an endeavor, but I believe there are ways to overcome those limitations. The major limitation directors of FYC probably encounter is available time—time in a semester course, time the WPA does not have, added time demands to underpaid adjuncts, and so forth. According to a quick Web-based survey of WPAs that I recently conducted, there are several common methods for helping new teachers make theoretically informed choices about textbooks and instructional apparatus that might help circumvent the limitations of time. If program directors are fortunate enough to teach a composition theory course—but do not have the time to assign a formal analysis of textbooks—then maybe they could offer it as a topic for student presentations, empowering student-teachers to teach each other. If a program does not have a required composition theory class, then maybe a discussion of textbooks could occur in mandatory pre-semester orientations. At one of the community colleges where I taught and coordinated a writing center, we had a week of professional development presentations for full- and part-timers before the semester and weekend orientations to accommodate adjuncts with jobs elsewhere. If programs do not have a course in composition theory or orientations, maybe directors could start a teachers-teaching-teachers brown bag series, where senior faculty, maybe encouraged as a part of service, are responsible for leading discussion about various issues in the composition classroom, including, of course, issues related to textbook adoption and implementation. I am sure experienced WPAs could produce an extensive list of creative ways to work with their time limitations and help new teachers develop their abilities to analyze textbooks and adopt books that support program outcomes.

Besides the issue of time, I also acknowledge that some WPAs might resist this type of faculty development and analysis to avoid program disunity in ideology and practice. They may worry, for example, that part of their programs' outcomes assessment is developed with the type of writing and thinking the textbooks foster. And if TAs and adjuncts veer from or revise the instructional apparatus of a program's core text, then the outcomes assessment will be invalid. While this might be a legitimate initial concern, I believe that this type of analysis, which should be shared with students in FYC, will enhance program unity, both practically and ideologically. In my experience with assessment, critical thinking, broadly defined and highly prized, is a common learning outcome of most, if not all, first-year writing programs. By encouraging instructors to analyze textbook apparatuses with their students, TAs and adjuncts can help students develop their question-asking skills and critical thinking. In addition to this assessment benefit, among other possibilities, directors of FYC potentially create unity by recognizing that their TAs and adjuncts are stakeholders in the local and general composition community. Agreeing with Lalicker, I would argue that allowing some autonomy—if not in book adoption, then at least in the adaptation of instructional apparatuses through the analysis that I develop and promote here—would allow a voice in policy and pedagogy, or the implementation of policy and pedagogy, to those who are so often denied a voice throughout academia (60-1). While threatened unity is certainly a legitimate concern, the analysis I develop and promote has the potential to build a coherent community of emerging teachers and an ideologically and practically unified program.

In addition to urging WPAs to begin formal activities to educate new faculty about textbook analysis and adoption, the primary purpose of this study is to present the idea of student-textbook valuation, which I develop in the next section, and add to existing studies to analyze composition texts. As they analyze textbooks for program-wide and individual classroom adoption, directors and teachers have at their disposal many studies about potential issues with the books. One can find on Rebecca Howard's online bibliography of textbook scholarship more than eighty studies or critiques on some aspect of specific textbooks (Hawhee; Wells), particular types of textbooks (Bloom; Faigley; Jamieson), and the general phenomenon of writing textbooks (Bleich; Carr, Carr, and Schultz; Connors; Ohmann; Rose; Stewart; Welch). A search of the *CompPile* database, using the keywords "textbook" and "data," presents approximately 80 entries. Besides the publications found on Howard's list and the database, Libby Miles reminds us that the concern about writing textbooks for FYC goes beyond the pages of our journals and books. Refuting Xin Liu Gale and Fredric Gale's claim in *(Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks* that the "conversation on textbooks" is "sporadic and sparse" (4), Miles writes that "there is a strong scholarly tradition of inquiry into composition textbooks—the Gales just didn't find it; much of the conversation has taken place outside the pages of *CCC*, one of the only journals they cite" (28). The WPA-L Listserv archive is still another resource for answering critical questions about the effects and challenges of textbooks for teaching writing, with a discussion thread on the topic that appeared in October and November 2009 as I began drafting this article.

As one can see, WPAs and teachers have at their disposal a plethora of criticism to help them investigate the effects of composition textbooks on their programs and students. Of course, as with any tool, those effects can be intended or unintended (Feenberg). The basic intention of composition textbooks, to teach students how to write, has been critiqued, most notably, by Bleich, Rose, Stewart, and Welch. Bleich and Rose argue that one cannot teach writing well from textbooks because of the process nature of writing. For them, textbooks ignore or cannot convey what really goes on in the writing process. Stewart, Welch, and Xin Liu Gale write that one can use texts to teach writing if only they contained the right apparatuses that are informed by contemporary theory.

The unintended effects of composition textbooks—that is, the consequences of the textbook discourse anticipated neither by the textbook author nor the readers—has also been critiqued extensively. The unintended effects explored by composition theorists include the reinforcement of dominant political,

social, and economic ideology. For example, in "The Conflicting Rhetoric of Writing Textbooks," Lester Faigley concludes that the contradictory guidance or the mixed messages of three sample composition books conditions the obedient, rational subject, prepared for working within the conflicts and contradictory messages of dominant, capitalist and corporate America (133-4). And in her "Composition Readers and the Construction of Identity," Sandra Jamieson argues that multicultural readers have the potential to perpetuate the image of minority students as victims (153-4). The work of Faigley and Jamieson is just the beginning. Readers can find many studies before and after theirs that deal with the ideological implications of composition textbooks, rules handbooks, and rhetorics, such as the perpetuation of sexist language (Gershuny; Sakita).

Despite the substantial research on the intended and unintended effects of writing textbooks, at least one aspect of composition textbooks remains unexamined. While textbooks are frequently labeled "tools" (Connors 111), "teaching tool" (Hawhee 506), "pedagogical devices" (Welch 278), "technology of writing" (Carr et al. 64), and "disciplinary technologies" (Faigley 156), no one has explored the idea of textbook *qua* tool, the unintended effects related to the fundamental nature of this tool, and the pedagogical implications of textbooks' "tool-ness." From here, I want to begin to develop a theoretical framework for understanding textbooks as tools, which I hope will enable practical application by WPAs and teachers, especially TAs and adjuncts, as they analyze textbook options for their first-year writing programs and individual classes, or apply the theory to the instructional apparatuses of mandated books. Following the development of this framework, I will explain the pedagogy for which this theory especially matters and illustrate the discursive strategies a representative textbook employs to support (or thwart) that pedagogy. I conclude with general suggestions for applying the theory I call *valuation*.

Tool-ness, Valuation, and Reflexivity

To study the nature and potential, or "tool-ness," of the tools employed in our writing classrooms—whether computers, writing implements, or writing itself—rhetoricians and composition scholars often turn to Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (Dobrin; Inman; Wittman). I believe scholars in writing studies turn to Heidegger's theory of technology, of which tools or implements are only a part, because of its power to help reveal and analyze relationships of users, tools, and related variables in different circumstances. David Dobrin's "Is Technical Writing Particularly Objective?" uses Heidegger's theory to explain how objectivity of judgment is defined by the tools and the "habits, practices, and knowledge of people" in specialized groups (240). Heidegger's theory contributes to James Inman's explanation of "why the resistance to technologies is rarely included in accounts of the computers and writing community's history" (64). And in "Biopower and Pedagogy: Local Spaces and Institutional Technologies," John Wittman uses Heidegger as a springboard to define and thwart clichéd thinking, that is, thinking within technology/institutions that "dominates productions of discourse, and in doing so covers over the complexities of our existence." Though Inman suggests, invoking Andrew Feenberg, that Heidegger's theory is too "'abstract,'" (65) and Wittman believes Heidegger's work is too "preparatory" in some regards, I find Heidegger's work extremely valuable for just those reasons. The abstractness and preparatory nature of Heidegger's theory enable broad applicability despite specific circumstances and across disciplines.

In his seminal essay, Heidegger constructs an argument that illustrates how technology is a cause-and-effect system of co-responsibility and *not* simply a means to an end, such as the right tool to get the job done (13). According to his interpretation of Aristotle's discussion of causality (Gross and Kemmann), the systems of production that craftspeople and fine artists use include four causes (6). Heidegger calls these causes (1) the "standing-reserve" or (raw) material; (2) the shape the material will take or *eidos*, "the outward aspect … that a visible thing offers to the physical eye"; (3) the

"destining" or the purpose, where form and matter come together; and (4) the "setting-upon" or the person and activities bringing the abstract and concrete components together (17-24). "Enframing" is what Heidegger calls, taken together, the interaction of the co-responsible causes, the perpetual ordering and revealing of usefulness and value of the standing-reserve, and the degree of consciousness of those processes (20).

An interesting aspect of Heidegger's idea of enframing is that tool users are simultaneously setting-upon and standing-reserve for tools and technological systems, an idea about which Dobrin suggests, "It's best if you just try to get an intuitive feel for what I'm talking about" (240). Tool users are standing-reserve because they adapt to and are affected by tools, in addition to the other causes. Tool users must sit, stand, move, lean, think, and so on, according to the physical characteristics of tools and how the tools will manipulate or transform the intended standing-reserve. Tool users' ideas/thinking and bodies are affected positively and negatively by tools. Tool users, like intended standing-reserve, are interchangeable (241).

Although tool users are both the setting-upon and standing-reserve—adaptable, manipulatable, interchangeable—Heidegger writes, "There is no demonry of technology" (28). That is, technology is not necessarily good or bad. On the one hand, technology can help us make sense of the world, gain the necessities of life, and understand our being. On the other hand, technology can produce pollution, encourage oppression and/or marginalization, and suppress individual and creative thinking. So, the problem is not with technology in itself. The "danger" (26) of technology is when we "subordinate" (Heidegger 18; Wittman) the value of the setting-upon human to the other causes, where we see humans as standing-reserve more than setting-upon, and when we ignore and/or fail to address reflexively the negative effects of implementing technology (Feenberg). The "saving power" of technology (Heidegger 28) is, as Wittman argues, the human "ability to develop a 'free relationship' to technology," where we can reflect upon technology and consciously and decisively confront it (Heidegger 35). Thus, we avoid the "danger" of technology by remaining conscious of and reacting to the intended and unintended (negative) effects from implementing technology and its tools, and by balancing the valuation of the technological causes.

While he explicitly describes a few examples of technologies and the development of "danger" (e.g., atomic energy, hydroelectric power, lumber industry), Heidegger leaves the idea of valuation unelaborated. What I mean by valuation is the worth of objects and people and the process of assigning that worth. The process of valuation occurs in diverse contexts where individuals and groups consciously and unconsciously attribute worth to objects and people according to an array of abstract and concrete variables and criteria. The variables and criteria are defined by traditional wisdom, novel and contemporary customs, and impromptu decisions. A simple illustration of valuation and the process might be observed at a holiday meal with family and friends, or even just an everyday dinner. At holiday meals I have experienced in the United States, guests might overtly praise one dish while politely criticizing another. The guests subjectively assign and enhance the value of the first dish, while assigning reduced value to the second. Or alternatively, and maybe more appropriately, the second dish is not overtly criticized. Instead, it is ignored, avoiding embarrassment of the chef, but still calling its worth into question and suggesting a low value. Additionally, the value of the chef, or at least the chef's skills, is, by implication, emphasized or diminished according to the guests' responses. Thus, valuation, that is the value and assignation of worth, can occur through celebration, denigration, or disregard.

While the dinner scenario might generally illustrate a simple process of valuation, a better example, in light of Heidegger's theory and for the purposes of an article about teaching tools, might be a common tool of writing and teaching: the computer. Like all tools, a computer is a means to an end with intended and unintended effects. Obviously, the intended effect of computers and software in the

writing class is to help students research, compose, revise, share, and publish their work. The unintended effects can be, for example, the reinforcement of ideology, among other possibilities (Selfe and Selfe 482).

In "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones," Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe argue that despite teachers' efforts to use computers to democratize the writing classroom and minimize, if not erase, oppressive educational practices, computer interfaces are "sites within which the ideological and material legacies of racism, sexism, and colonialism are continuously written and re-written along with more positive cultural legacies" (484). Specifically, the authors explain that computer interfaces "present reality as framed in the perspective of modern capitalism, thus, orienting technology along an existing axis of class privilege" (486). Computer interfaces reinforce the discursive privilege of standard English (488). And they privilege the "values of rationality, hierarchy, and logocentrism characteristic of Western patriarchal cultures" (491). Computer interfaces, argue Selfe and Selfe, reproduce and privilege the realities, terms, and values of English-speaking, "white, male, middle- and upper-class professionals" (487) by using corporate office icons, such as folders, documents, and desktops; by having standard English as the default language among various applications; and by using hierarchy (main folders, subfolders, folder "trees" that have a "root" folder) to organize information.

Selfe and Selfe's key idea that the computer interface privileges elements that constitute a dominant ideology implies worth and a process of valuation between the tool and users. If the computer-tool limits to a high degree the ways a user can interact with the tool itself and with the information a user is trying to access and manipulate, then the computer's value is enhanced while the user's value is reduced, if not completely ignored. But if computer manufacturers and programmers create hardware and software tools that offer options for users to adapt the interfaces and programs to their specific ways of thinking, speaking/writing, and conceiving reality, as Selfe and Selfe hope in their 1990s article, then a balanced valuation is possible, one that avoids Heideggerian "danger," where, generally speaking, humans are more the standing-reserve used by the tool than the setting-upon using the tool.

Selfe and Selfe seek to "encourage [teachers] to adopt a more critical and reflective approach to their use of computers" (482). I seek to encourage directors of first-year writing to teach new teachers to examine the unintended effects of textbooks, in general, and to analyze textbooks for valuation, in particular. Though these goals tend to support all twelve of the teaching approaches covered in Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick's *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, the pedagogy that seems to align most with critical reflection and foreground reflexive practice—that is, the process of and reaction to pedagogical self-reflection—is critical pedagogy. When they subscribe to critical pedagogy, as I imagine it and as Ann George describes it in "Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy," WPAs and teachers empower student-citizens not only to think and write critically about the power relationships in their larger communities, but also to interrogate the power relationships and practices in the classroom-institution of which teachers are a part. This interrogation includes, of course, the critical examination of the tools teachers choose to implement, such as computers and textbooks.

Textbook Strategies of Valuation

Based on Heidegger's theory of technology, my commonplace scenario, Selfe and Selfe's theory of the computer interface, and a central practice of critical pedagogy, textbooks might employ several possible strategies to produce balanced (or imbalanced) student-book valuation: (1) open engagement/genuine inquiry (Huddleston 866), (2) options for engagement, (3) statements of praise/disregard, and (4) reflexive instruction. To define and illustrate these strategies and the theory of textbook valuation, I want to turn to an analysis of Diana George and John Trimbur's *Reading*

Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing. Besides the fact that it is a cultural studies composition textbook that generally supports critical pedagogy, I chose *Reading Culture* as an illustrative example because of the explicit, though limited, suggestions in the preface about how students (and teachers) might engage with the tool and because of its user- or student-centeredness, both concerns in the study of valuation.

The authors intend to support critical pedagogy, as I have broadly defined it, by promoting "critical distancing so that students can begin to observe and evaluate as well as participate in contemporary America" (xvii). Further supporting the goals and practices of critical pedagogy, George and Trimbur emphasize user control of the textbook-tool and student valuation when they write, "*Reading Culture* is designed to be used flexibly and creatively. Instructors may wish to ask students to work on the chapters … as they are arranged, but this is only one possible order" (xviii). Talking about a specific instructional apparatus, they specifically tell readers that "Writing Assignments … give students and teachers choices" (xviii). The authors conclude the preface with "The seventh edition of *Reading Culture* offers opportunities… . The work you do with this text will … depend on your needs and your students' interests. We think that with this edition, *Reading Culture* has become a more flexible resource" (xviii). All of these statements immediately emphasize the value of student readers (along with teachers) by anticipating the third strategy of valuation, options for engagement, and they suggestively anticipate the use of the other strategies. What is left to be discovered is how and where the authors fulfill their promise of flexibility and choice, along with the anticipated emphasis on student valuation.

After examining approximately 390 instructional apparatuses in the introduction and ten chapters—which include pre-reading prompts, post-reading discussion and writing assignments, and end-of-chapter lessons and research projects—I discovered that *Reading Culture* generally fulfills its promise of choice and flexibility and emphasizes student valuation by using all four strategies of open engagement/genuine inquiry, options for engagement, statements of praise/disregard, and reflexive instruction. Specifically, I found that approximately 280 apparatuses emphasize student valuation or balance student-book valuation, while 114 apparatuses emphasize book valuation. In the following paragraphs, I define and illustrate the four strategies from the most to the least frequently used in *Reading Culture*. I then conclude this section with an illustration of how *Reading Culture* emphasizes book valuation.

Student valuation is most often emphasized in post-reading apparatuses with prompts that promote open engagement/genuine inquiry and options for engagement. Open engagement/genuine inquiry occurs when a textbook allows or encourages student readers to respond freely to imperative and interrogative prompts in a variety of (reasonable) ways. The imperative prompts command students to perform particular tasks, seemingly emphasizing the book-tool, yet the content students produce or gather in response to the command is broadly defined (e.g., "Identify and analyze the rhetorical strategies the author uses."). Genuine inquiry, either as an individual question or set of questions, avoids closed interrogatives in the form of polar questions, limited-variable questions, and presupposing or biased questions (e.g., "What rhetorical strategies do you see in the reading and how might you analyze them?") (Huddleston 865-902). That is, interrogative prompts avoid limiting student readers to one of either two answers, yes or no (868); restricting student readers to a limited set of answers the authors present (868-9); and/or presupposing a truth about the question topic and predisposing student readers to limit their replies to a truth asserted by the authors (879).

The post-reading prompts in *Reading Culture* that invite open engagement/genuine inquiry include the discussion prompts, labeled "Talking about the Reading," "Talking about the Visual Essay," and "Suggestions for Discussion." While they initially present the topic of discussion and direct students' activity, suggesting an emphasis on book valuation, these prompts conclude with interrogatives that

typically avoid or limit polar, limited-variable, and presupposing questions. Or, if the prompts include closed interrogatives that seem to favor book valuation by limiting the possible responses student readers might give, then student valuation is promoted in the way the individual prompts complement each other.

For example, one "Talking about the Reading" prompt from chapter four illustrates open engagement/genuine inquiry in complex and interesting ways:

> Share the public health messages you collected with a group of your classmates. How would you describe them? Do they conform to or break with the images of men and women and sexuality that you see in the Visual Essay? To what extent are some older attitudes preserved in newer messages? To what extent do newer messages break with those older themes and warnings? How effective are these newer messages? (227)

The above apparatus for group discussion begins by directing the activity, and it quickly moves on to a question that invites responses about students' perceptions. Though the second question presents an alternative, limited variable, or either/or question, the emphasis is on students' perceptions and thus student valuation. If we consider the next two questions individually, each one would emphasize the value of the book/question because of their presupposition. That is, in the first question the authors presuppose the truth that to some degree the older attitudes exist in the newer messages, and in the second question the authors presuppose the truth that to some degree older attitudes do not exist in the newer messages. But, of course, the questions complement each other, recognizing more than one presupposed truth. Taken individually, each sentence, with one exception, might suggest book valuation, but taken as a whole, the prompt promotes student valuation, or at least balances student-book valuation.

While the post-reading discussion apparatuses emphasize student valuation by employing open engagement/genuine inquiry, the post-reading writing assignments use both open engagement/genuine inquiry and options for engagement to increase valuation. Simply put, options for engagement present students with two or more activities, such as writing, reading, and research, from which they can choose to perform. Most of the writing assignments present three prompts from which students might choose. And within each prompt option, students are directed to respond to a topic or reading(s) with a high-stakes traditional or visual essay, and the invention and development of the essay response is guided by imperatives and questions that, like the discussion apparatuses, emphasize student valuation in complex and complementary ways, or at least balances student-book valuation.

The same goes for the end-of-chapter lessons and research projects. In these sections, *Reading Culture* presents contextual information about a topic, such as the Hollywood star system (104-5), and then the book invites students to reflect on and respond to the topic with open engagement imperatives and interrogatives, such as the following concluding section of "Hollywood Stars: Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Marilyn Monroe:"

> Consider the 1950s films of one of these three stars. Think in particular of roles in which Brando, Dean, or Monroe is cast. What do these roles have in common? What makes them a likely vehicle for a star? What does Brando, Dean, or Monroe bring to the role that seems uniquely their own personality? What is the appeal to film-goers? (105)

Here, the authors direct students to reflect generally on these film stars and their roles without specifically telling which one to consider or limiting the films or roles that student readers should choose. These imperatives create shared responsibility that Heidegger argues is the ideal quality of the tool-user relationship that avoids the "danger." Though the questions appear to presuppose a truth—that there is a commonality among the films, the films are "likely vehicles," and the stars bring

something unique to the films—I still interpret them as balancing valuation, if not clearly emphasizing student valuation, for the following reasons: (1) students have many possible answers with which they could reasonably respond to the second, third, and fourth questions, and they are not limited to an explicit set of answers that the authors put forth; and (2) the presupposed truth to these questions, especially the fourth, is reinforced by facts; that is, it is safe to assume there is an appeal since these films made money and continue to draw viewers. As one can see, the analysis of student-book valuation is a tricky affair. Yet if one weighs the individual valuation of sentences against each other, after interpreting the levels of open engagement/genuine inquiry and options for engagement, then a fair assessment of valuation is possible.

The other possible strategies of valuation listed at the beginning of this section—statements of praise/disregard and reflexive instruction—that tend to emphasize the student reader and support an overall student-book valuation (unless the statement ignores the student reader)—also occur in *Reading Culture*, though there are fewer instances than the first two strategies discussed above. Statements of praise/disregard occur when a textbook celebrates students' knowledge, abilities, and experience or when it ignores student readers and focuses on what it has to offer in the form of knowledge, direction, and object of study (i.e., a reading or visual text). I found three instances of praise, two in the introduction and one in chapter six, and five instances of reflexive instruction. Two of the three instances of praise celebrate ability, when the authors write the following in the book introduction: "In many respects, of course, you are already a skilled reader of culture" (2), and "Very likely, you do not accept without question all that you see and read" (3). While introducing the chapter on public space, the authors write a statement of praise about student knowledge: "you already know a good deal about how public space is organized in contemporary America, and you probably make more judgments about public spaces than you think" (281). Though this type of praise might not be unexpected, what is worth noting is where the praise is located: in introductions. One implication of where the praise is located is that the authors are trying to encourage confidence and predispose students to positive engagement with the subsequent readings and instructional apparatuses.

In addition to promoting student valuation or balanced student-book valuation through praise, the authors offer moments of reflexivity, which supports both balanced valuation and critical pedagogy. Reflexive instruction invites students to challenge, adapt, or ignore a prompt or set of instructions that the book itself has to offer. One can find the clearest instance of reflexivity in a "Fieldwork" project at the end of the "Images" chapter, when the authors write as a part of the project instructions, "In other words, you are testing the premise of this chapter by doing fieldwork of your own" (244). The premise of the chapter is "visual images … compete for our attention. They carry information … and they ask us to buy, to give, to believe, to subscribe, to respond, to understand, to act" (194). I interpret this instance as evidence of student valuation and support for critical pedagogy because it asks student to challenge an idea that the textbook is trying to promote, not to support or prove the truth of the proposition.

Although the bulk of the textbook presents instructional apparatuses that promote student or balanced valuation through open engagement/genuine inquiry, options for engagement, statements of praise, and reflexivity, *Reading Culture* also contains prompts that emphasize book valuation and limits the types of thinking and response students might give. The recurring pre-reading prompt, called "Suggestion for Reading," is the most common apparatus that emphasizes book valuation through statements of disregard and narrow or limited options for engagement. Of the approximately eighty "Suggestion for Reading" prompts, sixty emphasize book valuation and twenty emphasize student valuation. One example of book valuation from this pre-reading prompt includes the following:

> As you read, notice how Kress, in the first two paragraphs, presents a sweeping view of the shift from page to screen and its social and cultural effects. Then, in the five paragraphs that follow, Kress responds to possible objections to the way he has characterized this shift. Consider how these responses complicate the shift from page to screen you find in the opening two paragraphs. (19)

Despite the connotations of the word "suggestion" in the label of this apparatus, I claim that this is an instance of book valuation because it basically does the reading analysis for students by telling them the author's rhetorical intent and strategies in the piece, finally presupposing that there is a complication in the first paragraphs, all of which disregards students' analytical autonomy and opportunity for discovery. As an example of how one might attempt to balance student-book valuation by emphasizing opportunities for student response, a revision of this pre-reading prompt, which would still encourage the development of critical and rhetorical thinking, could include open interrogatives or genuine inquiry that ask, "What is the author's initial view of his topic?"; "What rhetorical strategies are employed after the author presents the topic and views?"; and "What is the result of the author's rhetorical strategies?"

Applications of Valuation Analysis

The theory of valuation and the analysis of textbook instructional apparatuses add to the analytical repertoire that WPAs of first-year writing should consider when they train developing composition teachers and design professional development programs. If we teach emerging compositionists to analyze student-book valuation, along with analyzing discourse that reinforces dominant ideology (Hawhee; Faigley; Gershuny; Jamieson; Sakita; Selfe and Selfe), then we might contribute to their theory-savvy abilities (Lalicker), encourage the growth of their autonomy, and empower them to take control of one pedagogical tool, as they begin learning how to "modify, resist, or just plain dispense with the advice and suggestions" of textbooks (Perdue 281). Confident and autonomous teachers who can skillfully and consistently analyze and revise the prompts of their textbook-tools can, in turn, invite students to apply valuation and concepts in cultural studies to engage critically, not only with the discourse the textbooks direct students to analyze and write about, but also with the instructional discourse of the textbook itself.

Because of the time constraints that I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I by no means advocate the type of comprehensive examination I performed to illustrate the analysis of valuation. Instead, I recommend that WPAs and teachers with extreme time constraints at least perform a cursory analysis of the first two or three chapters when choosing a book for a program or individual classrooms; that teachers-in-training analyze a chapter or two from different cultural studies composition textbooks to practice as an assignment in their seminar in teaching writing; and that teachers and students extemporaneously analyze each week's set of reading prompts, lessons, and projects. Based on my experience with this project—and as a faculty member with teaching, research, service, and administrative demands—the first two recommendations might take a week or two, while the third recommendation would occur daily or weekly with each new reading and set of prompts.

As I discovered during the course of this study and in previous research on composition textbooks (Rendleman), WPAs and teachers need to analyze only the first few chapters to test for overall student-book valuation because a general pattern of valuation emerges quickly. They will be able to conclude by the third chapter whether or not a book supports critical pedagogy and balanced student-book valuation. For a teacher-training course and during a unit on the content, form, nature, history of textbooks, the professor could assign each student a chapter of one book to analyze or have groups of students analyze all the chapters with each group assigned different books. For the third scenario, and maybe the most important one for critical pedagogy, teachers and students could analyze the reading

prompts in preparation for a unit and collaboratively revise those prompts that emphasize book valuation and limit the types of thinking and response students might give. In addition to skills in analysis, this type of collaborative analysis could develop the question-asking skills of both teachers and students.

In whatever scenario WPAs and teachers find themselves, I offer the following set of genuine inquiry interrogatives as a springboard for analyzing the readings and instructional apparatuses of their current and potential textbooks, and I encourage readers to modify them according to local pedagogical goals. Because I believe an analysis of valuation should complement the examination of other unintended effects of our pedagogical tools, I also include questions I have developed from the work of composition scholars in critical pedagogy and cultural studies, whom are cited at the beginning of this article:

- To what degree do the textbook readings and instructional apparatuses engage students with the many points of view of political, economic, and social issues?

- To what degree do the textbook readings and instructional apparatuses reinforce dominant and hierarchical ideology?

- What type of thinking and writing (e.g., intuitive, empirical, critical, rhetorical) do the textbook's readings and instructional apparatuses promote, and to what degree is each type represented?

- To what degree do the instructional apparatuses balance student-book valuation with open engagement/genuine inquiry, options for engagement, statements of praise/disregard, and reflexive instruction?

- Based on the above questions, how can my students and I add to and revise the existing questions of the textbook to empower students and teach them critical analysis, yet allow adherence to our local policy and pedagogy?

As with any analysis—of textbooks, popular media, visual discourse, and so on—the analysis of FYC textbooks is an exercise in consciousness raising, the type of reflexivity or "reflection … and decisive confrontation" Heidegger implores us to perform with all technology and tools (35). We should want to develop and maintain not only a consciousness of our part within a technological system and our relationship to our tools, but also a hyperconsciousness (Jamieson 169) of the possible unintended effects of the material and discursive tools we employ to teach our students how to think and write critically. By becoming hyperconscious of race, class, gender, and valuation in our textbook tools, and sharing the analytical approaches and the results of that hyperconsciousness with our graduate and undergraduate students, WPAs and teachers of FYC can collaboratively support the general mission of critical pedagogy and productively implement the instructional apparatuses of textbooks to meet local pedagogical goals and learning outcomes of critical thinking.

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