(RE)PRESENTATIONS OF SELF-CULTURE: SAMPLING DIGITAL LITERACIES AND AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

by

Samuel Zuidema Hamilton

Dual Bachelors of Arts in English and Philosophy, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2006

Master of Arts in Teaching Secondary English, University of Pittsburgh, 2007

Master of Arts in English, University of Florida, 2012

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2017

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Samuel Zuidema Hamilton

It was defended on

May 5, 2017

and approved by

Annette Vee, Assistant Professor, Department of English

Peter Odell Campbell, Assistant Professor, Department of English

Matthew J. Lavin, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of English

Laurie E. Gries, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication (University of Colorado-

Boulder)

Dissertation Advisor: Stephen L. Carr, Associate Professor, Department of English

(RE)PRESENTATIONS OF SELF-CULTURE: SAMPLING DIGITAL LITERACIES AND AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

Samuel Zuidema Hamilton, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2017

This dissertation examines, promotes, and enacts the pedagogy of self-culture as it has developed since the nineteenth-century, and as it is called for in twenty-first-century composition and computers and writing classrooms. It samples 130 digital literacy course syllabi to situate contemporary pedagogical calls for "Doing-It-Yourself" (DIY) within the longstanding American interest in self-culture as an educational practice, and it uses different forms of digitally enabled analytic strategies to explore competing understandings of self-culture in nineteenth-century newspapers, African-American slave narratives, and leading intellectuals of the day.

Self-culture developed in the 1830s as a pedagogical principle supplementing the contemporaneous fomentation of the Common School Movement. Drawing from German pedagogues such as Humboldt and Pestalozzi, and further developed by US-based self-culturists such including Channing, Emerson, and Douglass, the pedagogy balances the individualized impetus for personal development against the socialized motivation for school-based cultivation. In addition to contemporaneous debates about schooling, promotions of self-culture also participated within the nineteenth-century "self-help" movement, notably among US phrenologists who co-opted the concept, infusing it with an at-the-time "scientific" method for measuring an individual's self-culturing progress, and transforming the impetus to self-culture from a probable personal and social benefit, to a necessary personal and social obligation. To this end, various social classes such as women and laborers took up and further nuanced the principle

of self-culture with their enactments of it, infusing it with the added notion that engaging in self-culture worked toward equity with regard to access to social and cultural rights. The expression of self-culture as an action aimed at equity is most clearly expressed in autobiographical slave narratives, particularly in those narratives' descriptions of slaves' efforts to learn how to read and write.

Understanding the development and circulation of these historical representations of self-culture enables contemporary digital literacy teachers and students engaged in personally and culturally motivated forms of digital literacy education, whether school-based or not, to attend to both the compositional requirements of contemporary digital writing situations, as well as to individual students' personal strategies for learning how to enter into and contribute to those situations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

As I will go on to write in my concluding chapter, "Contrary to the overstated wisdom emerging from the technological DIY community, there is no such thing as pure autodidacticism, and it is impossible for you to 'do it yourself.'" This is certainly the case with this project. Below is a non-comprehensive list of folks whose guidance, assistance, and support were essential to me in completing *(Re)Presentations of Self-Culture*:

Thank you to my committee: to Steve for his generous and pragmatic mentorship; to Laurie for her continued investment in my scholarly and personal pursuits, first at the University of Florida and now here at Pitt; to Annette for setting an example par excellence of how to be both a dedicated teacher and scholar, as well as a committed parent of young children; to Peter for his warmth and enthusiasm for both my scholarship and my teaching, as well as the interconnections between both; and to Matt for his patience in helping me understand the finer points of digital research.

Thank you also to my colleagues, both past and present: to Phil Bratta, Kyle Bohunicky, and Melissa Bianchi for their enduring support; to Kyle and Katie Winkler and Jennifer Saltmarsh for keeping me level-headed throughout the struggles of graduate school; to Peter Moe, Matt Kelly, and Tara Propper for helping me understand and navigate the professional and personal terrain of Pitt's English department; to Paul Kameen and Mariolina Salvatori, whose

1.0 INTRODUCTION: DIGITAL LITERACY AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CITIZENSHIP

"We cannot prepare the Technology Generation to be the innovators, leaders and entrepreneurs of the 21st century just using chalk and blackboards. Classrooms for the Future will not only help to boost achievement while our students are still in high school, but they will be primed for success in college and beyond." (PRNewswire September 20, 2006, para. 2)

—Former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, speaking at the first school at which I taught

1.1 CLASSROOMS FOR THE FUTURE

The first writing class I taught was a computers and writing class, though I didn't know it at the time. I was training to be a high school teacher, student teaching English to seniors at a Title I high school in Pittsburgh. This high school was one of the first 103 high schools in Pennsylvania to receive a portion of then-governor Ed Rendell's $200 million dollar "Classrooms for the Future" grant. According to Rendell, the CFF grant's goals were to "enhanc[e] our schools' learning environment, increas[e] student achievement and prepar[e] our students to compete in the global job market" (Wade, para. 9). Halfway through my first semester, over a weekend, someone installed laptops, a SMART board and digital projector, a web camera, high-speed Internet access, and new tables and chairs in our classroom. When we all returned to our twentieth/twenty-first century cyborg classroom, replete with both humming laptops and clanking radiators, no one was quite sure what to do. Business-as-usual (we were, the

week prior, discussing George Orwell's essay "Shooting an Elephant") didn't seem appropriate

for our newly enhanced learning environment; sure, we could keep *talking* about issues of

imperialist takeovers and the morality of killing a rampaging beast, but nobody was interested in

that elephant in the room. "Where do we sit?" I recorded one student asking.[1] "How does that

thing work?" said another, pointing to the blank SMART board. "What are we supposed to do

now, Mr. Hamilton?" wondered a third. "I have no idea," I remember responding. My mentor

teacher shrugged.

Only in hindsight have I come to understand that we were given these computers in the

spirit of citizenship. It seemed that as the notion of literacy had expanded to include digital

things, so too had the notion of citizenship. Teaching digital literacy was, in my first classroom,

now required of twenty-first-century English teachers as a part of a twenty-first-century

citizenship project. This is plain in Rendell's language, which situates citizenship directly in an

individual's ability to be a hard-working, productive member in his vision of Pennsylvania's

twenty-first-century globalized, post-industrial economy. Elsewhere, he elaborates on this point,

stating,

> "Classrooms for the Future is helping our high school students engage in learning
> on a new level. The new technology will nurture students' minds and feed their
> appetite for learning and it will prepare them to use equipment and machines that
> are commonplace in colleges and universities, corporate offices, production plants
> and just about anywhere they will go after graduating. By using technology as a
> learning tool, we are ensuring Pennsylvania's workforce will remain relevant and
> competitive in the global economy." (PRNewswire August 30, 2007, para. 3)

Our classroom's new technologies and the things we did with them, in other words, were

supposed to anticipate and mimic the technologies students would have access to at college or at

---

[1] As part of my student teaching internship, I was required to keep a daily journal reflecting on the goings-on of the school day.

work, as well as the things students would do with these technologies at college or work. And again, all of this was intended to keep Pennsylvania's changing workforce "relevant and competitive."

In his vision for both digitally infused high school classrooms, as well as in his motivations for that infusion of technologies, Rendell was participating in and contributing to a national movement of sorts that was attempting to reimagine twenty-first century learning and citizenship, and the interconnections between the two. In 2000, their last year in office, the Clinton-Gore Administration unveiled "From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity," a $2.38 billion budget initiative whose primary goals were to expand access to technologies, train educators to incorporate technologies into their classrooms, and "Promote online content and applications that will help empower all Americans to use new technologies to their fullest potential." In his 2000 State of the Union address, President Clinton linked access with opportunity,

> "Opportunity for all requires something else today — having access to a computer and knowing how to use it. That means we must close the digital divide between those who've got the tools and those who don't." (Clinton para. 46)

Though the bulk of the budget initiative ($2b) ostensibly went to generating access to computers by providing "tax incentives over 10 years to encourage private sector donation of computers, sponsorship of community technology centers, and technology training for workers," $150 million of the initiative was earmarked for training new teachers in the effective use of technologies (Clinton-Gore Administration para. 7). Though there may be some connection between the funding of the Clinton-Gore Administration's initiative and Rendell's CFF grant, what's of greater significance to me is the sense that both proposals participated in a sort of late-twentieth, early twenty-first century zeitgeist that emphasized digital technology's role in being a contributing member of globalized society; in being, in other words, a citizen.

In retrospect, expecting a student teacher to have a handle on how to participate in and also contribute to this digital age zeitgest was maybe a little unfair. I was trying to get a handle on teaching in my *present* classroom; how was I supposed to figure out teaching in what my students I started calling our "future classroom?" And so, no, this is not a heroic teacher story. Neither my mentor teacher nor I (nor the school's newly appointed technology coordinator) swooped in with brilliant and transformative lessons that achieved any of Governor Rendell's lofty goals. And though we all shared our students' authentic questions, this shared and authentic confusion did not transform our class into a newly cooperative learning experience in which the line between students and teachers blurred. After two weeks or so, the original novelty of the machines mostly wore off. We were no longer cowed by the technology, and our classroom no longer felt like a spaceship. It just had new furniture. We stopped playing and tinkering with digitally highlighting students' projected texts, and exchanging documents via email or digital dropboxes *just because*. From then on, we functioned in a way which was, at the time, how most high school English classrooms functioned. We read things, we wrote stuff, we talked about the things we read and the stuff we wrote, we listened to each other talk about the things we read and the stuff we wrote, and so on. And the devices supplemented how we did these things. We did more exchanging of digital drafts and more asynchronous, message-board discussions than we had prior to the advent of our future classroom. We even blogged a bit, but we certainly did not, as Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes might've suggested we should, "reenvision the processes through which we teach the genres we ask students to compose so that they have a strong sense of the possibilities — and so they do not (and we do not ask them to) transport the values of one genre or medium into another" (*On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies* 86). Mostly we did things by the book. And because both my students and I were set to

graduate at roughly the same time, we never developed a strong investment in the futurity of our classroom promised by the new technologies that had been plunked down into it. Instead, we adopted a sort detached, bemused attitude toward our future classroom. "I don't think this future classroom was ever really for us," one student confided in me as graduation day approached. "I think it was for future students." While imagined future students would likely become digital/global citizens as stipulated by the digital age zeitgeist, my present students and I were less certain of our digital/global citizenship status.

Yet this uncertainty notwithstanding, there were also small bursts of exhilarating confusion that leaked into our class any time we tried to incorporate some aspect of the technology into business-as-usual; that is, the tension created by this technological shift in our school culture wasn't all hems and haws. When I required students to exchange essay drafts via email, a flurry of hands shot up wanting to know how to add an attachment to an email. After emailing a YouTube video of Taylor Mali reciting "What Teachers Make" to my mentor teacher one evening, I walked into the classroom the next morning to find him hurrying around the room trying to connect his laptop to the projector to show other YouTube videos to the class. The day after participating in a message board discussion in my evening educational psychology graduate class, my mentor teacher and I lobbied for permission to set-up our own message board as a way to incorporate quieter students into class "discussions" about the novel *Kite Runner*. And after the principal reluctantly gave us the go-ahead ("I still don't understand," she said. "Everyone will just be typing quietly in the room while you all do what? Look at them typing quietly?" "Well, no, we'll be typing quietly too." "..."), the whole class spent the next week figuring out how to set-up the boards for our class, what rules should govern what people contributed, how much, and how often, and most importantly, what our usernames should be. Even though these

activities still, more or less, "transport[ed] the values of one genre or medium to another" and did not "reenvision the processes" of our classroom, they were still authentically compelling problems with which my students, my mentor teacher and I had to contend.

Both the uncertainty and the excitement born of this authentic and shared confusion motivates my project; these sentiments emerge equally from the uncertainty of how to teach and learn with digital technologies, as well as how teaching and learning with digital technologies promised to change or prepare us to be digital/global citizens. This exigence is typified by my student's question — *what are we supposed to do?* I see this question as fundamentally and specifically engaging the tension between students and teachers, both as individual selves and as collectives, and the shifting technological culture of our schools as institutions, but also generally engaging this same sort of tension that exists between any individual self and the broader shifting technological culture writ large. That is, it is a question we might ask ourselves in any number of situations where a culture of technology has changed how things are done. A new computer-screen checkout at the grocery store? What am I supposed to do? A new interface for operating my car? What am I supposed to do? A new device you can use to stream movies and TV? What am I supposed to do? Though each of these scenarios obviously engage a variety of complicated conceptual issues, all of these scenarios fundamentally engage a central tension between the individual self and the developing culture in which that self is hoping and working to fully participate.

I also see this question for the incipient procedural, axiological, epistemological, and ontological questions that lurk within it — *How do we do it? Why do we do it? What does doing it let us know? What does doing it do to us?* On the surface, these are standard and deceptively simple questions: *hey, we have computers now. How do we use them, and for what? Why?*

6

Moreover, in terms of general education, these are (or, ideally should be) pretty standard questions for *any* classroom, not just an English classroom, nor one designed "for the future." Yet, uttered in the context of what had been a familiar senior English classroom on Friday, but was suddenly shot through with technologies and technologically motivated initiatives and objectives come Monday, the question takes on a specified inflection: *what new kinds of English classroom work are we, students experienced in the goings-on of English classrooms, supposed to do in* this *English classroom with* these *devices and* these *initiatives? How do we do this new kind of English classroom work? Become versed in the goings-on of this new kind of English classroom? Operate these new devices? Meet these new initiatives?* As their teacher, but just as much a student of these *technologies* as they were, my questions were (and remain) quite similar: what new kinds of English classroom work am I supposed to do with my students in this English classroom with these devices and these initiatives? How do I do it or at least help facilitate it? How do I become versed in the goings-on of this new kind of English classroom which seems to be in a perpetually state of going? (How do I jump onto that moving train?) How do I operate these devices? Meet and make new initiatives? And to complicate matters, undergirding my students' procedural questions as well as my own, were questions about identity, both specific to our classroom context, as well as the larger educational cultural context that influenced the transformation of that context: what does it mean to be an English student/teacher now? How does a teacher *teach* now? How does a student *study*? Importantly, these questions were as significant for me as my students, and they were as much about how we all were able to *individually function* in our shared classroom space, as it was about how that new classroom space seemed to *expect us* to function; they are questions we asked of both ourselves as learners, and our new classroom as an unfamiliar culture of learning.

Rendell's Classrooms For the Future grant calls to my mind aspects of another Philadelphia-based politician's plans for the students of Pennsylvania, namely in his insistence that an infusion of classrooms with new technologies will help make students "relevant and competitive." In his 1786 "Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania; to Which Are Added, Thoughts upon the Mode of Education, Proper in a Republic," Declaration signer Benjamin Rush insisted that public schools would "lessen our taxes" (8). Unlike Rendell, whose vision of what, exactly, constitutes this future "global economy," is murky and ill-defined, Rush's proposal targets with laser-like focus the developing markets of farming and manufacturing which were considered, at the time, to be "the great basis of national wealth and happiness" (4). More specifically, Rush thoughts schools would

> "...enlighten us in the great business of finance. They will teach us to increase the ability of the state to support government by increasing the profits of agriculture and by promoting manufactures. They will teach us all the modern improvements and advantages of inland navigation. They will defend us from hasty and expensive experiments in government by unfolding to us the experience and folly of past ages, and thus, instead of adding to our taxes and debts, they will furnish us with the true secret of lessening and discharging both of them." (8)

And while Rendell thought the best way to prepare Pennsylvania students for a twenty-first global economy would be to equip them with laptops, SMART boards, and digital projects, Rush — a renowned physician — was preoccupied with equipping late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century students with a similarly new-fangled "technology," namely chemistry:

> "In a young country, where improvements in agriculture and manufactures are so much to be desired, the cultivation of this science, which explains the principles of both of them, should be considered as an object of the utmost importance." ("Thoughts Upon" 30)

Chemistry for Rush — much like laptops, SMART boards, and digital projectors were for Rendell — was the key to making Pennsylvania citizens not just contributors to the national economy, but leaders in it.

I don't draw a parallel between Rush and Rendell to suggest that the latter's vision for schools drew from the former's. Indeed, if anything the parallels that exist between Rush's plan and Rendell's grant draw equally from a sort of imaginary ur-blueprint for education proposals made by US political leaders. The basic thought seems to be that if local, state, or national governments (supported by citizens) are to be expected to do something for schools, then schools should return the favor. Oftentimes, therefore, proposals for schools made by US political leaders from the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first centuries all tend to ape the same rhetorical move made by Rendell's grant, Clinton's budget initiative, and Rush's plan: governments make schools for citizens and schools make citizens for governments. In his 1796 address declaring that he would not seek reelection, George Washington advised his successors to,

> "Promote then as an object of primary importance institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened" (qtd. in Cremin 103).

And as Thomas Jefferson put it, school-based education's aim, at all levels, was

> "To give every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business; To enable him to calculate himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts and accounts, in writing; To improve, by reading, his morals and faculties; To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment; And in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed." (qtd. In Cremin 110)

Of course, Rush's "Plan" for Pennsylvania schools — which mirrors Jefferson's plan for Virginia schools — retains notoriety not for the thoroughness with which he imagines a Commonwealth-wide system of public education, or even for its relatively before-its-time consideration of women's education. Instead, Rush is most known for his assertion that schools can and should "convert men into republican machines" (27). That is, Rush's plan remains notorious because he didn't tiptoe around the idea that the primary purpose of government-funded schools was to transform "the wills of the people" which he believed "must be fitted to each other by means of education before they can be made to produce regularity and unison in government" (27).

In addition to all procedural, axiological, epistemological, and ontological questions, both my students and I were also confronting — or, more accurately, failing to confront — the discomfort brought about by feeling our school's bald efforts to transform us. We had not, until those computers were dropped into our classrooms and we were expected to learn them and use them for clearly stated economic reasons, confronted (or, truly, been confronted by) the idea that that's what schools were trying to do: transform us, make us something other than what we thought we were. And so, what both my students and I were confronting was the discomfort brought about by change, specifically a change in what was expected of us not just as students and teachers, but as citizens; a change that we certainly didn't fully understand, and one in which none of us remembered signing up for. We were, collectively and individually, all used to doing things in a certain way, a familiar way, and suddenly we were thrust into a new culture of doing things, and it was not only uncertain and unfamiliar, it was also a little scary. This was the uncertain, unfamiliar, and moderately scary tension between what we all thought of as our stable

selves, our identities, who we were as citizens, and the fundamentally, even insistently malleable and shifting culture of technological change.

Autobiographically, and more specifically, it was a tension between what I thought I knew I was myself supposed to be and do as an English teacher in a public high school, and what the shifting institutional culture of my school was newly demanding that I be and do as a twenty-first-century English teacher in that cyborgized school. And I imagine, based on what they said and how they reacted to the new technologies, it was for my students a similar tension between what they thought they knew they were supposed to be and do and what was newly demanding that they be and do as student in a Classroom For the Future. And for all of us, it was a tension between how we thought we were supposed to prepare to be competitive in a global job market on Friday, and what the new expectations were for that market and that competitiveness come Monday. It's not that any of us well and truly objected to the idea that this Future Classroom was trying to turn us into competitive and viable Future Citizens, we just wondered how we fit into that Classroom's plans, exactly. All the attention and the focus seemed to be on this imagined or projected or anticipated future, nearly none on our actual present or past. And this imagined future seemed very much a Procrustean bed, pulling and stretching, lopping off and discarding the old-fashioned, out-dated, and out-of-touch aspects of all of us that did not jive neatly with it. We were, in Rush's words, being transformed into Future Machines, just as our classroom had been transformed into a Future Classroom. Yet, like our classroom we were hybrids, cyborgs, and as such, we felt that if the teaching of digital literacy were to truly contribute to a twenty-first century citizenship project by making us more competitive in the global job markets, then someone engaged in such teaching really should attend with equal vim and vigor to both the requirements of those markets, as well as to our personal struggles and strategies for learning

11

how to enter into and contribute to those markets. That is, we can't simply be fitted into the twenty-first century global economy like machines; we were not, as Rendell insisted we were, the Technology Generation.

This is a tension with which I have continued to struggle, first as a middle and high school English teacher for the first four years of my career, then as a graduate TA and adjunct writing instructor for the last six. As I've transitioned from secondary to postsecondary education, from a generalist working in a future classroom to a more digital/multimodal composition specialist, I have further clarified these questions: what new kinds of writing are students experienced in the goings-on of myriad different high school English classrooms supposed to do in my digitally inflected college composition courses? How do they do this kind of writing and become versed in this new kind of writing classroom? Just as I was transitioning into English education as a profession then, so too do I find myself transitioning into Composition and Computers & Writing (C&W) as disciplines now, and so my self-reflective questions are similarly infused with procedural, axiological, epistemological, and ontological concerns related to the disciplinary cultures in which I hope to professionally function. What new kinds of writing am I supposed to do with my students in a digitally inflected college composition course? How do I do it (or at least help facilitate it)? How do I become versed in the goings-on of this new kind of English classroom which seems to be in a perpetually state of going? That is, how do I jump onto these quickly-moving disciplinary trains? How do my students and I meet and make new educational/pedagogical initiatives? What does it mean to be a digital writer or a student or teacher of digital writing? How does a digital writer write, a teacher of digital writing teach *teach*, a student of digital writing *study*? And, more practically for both my students and for me: How do we operate these devices?

One can't suggest or employ a strategy for teaching students how to use the digital technologies in a digitally inflected college composition course without making some assumptions. These certainly include assumptions about what type of writing should be done in such a classroom, why that writing is important, why learning how to do that writing is desirable, and what doing that writing will do to the writers. They also include, however, assumptions about what teachers and students should value, how they know and learn, how their learning can and should change them, as well as how, upon being so-changed, they can and should function in and exert influence upon the society around them. That is, answering the very practical question can't be done without calling forth, intentionally or not, a wide variety of positions, implicit or explicit, related to values, knowledge, and being. To invoke John Dewey, perhaps the strongest link between my formal training to become a high school teacher and Composition's "tacit tradition," "If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental disposition, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education" (*Democracy and Education*, "Chapter Twenty-Four: Philosophy of Education," III.2). And so my conclusion relating to a Composition and C&W-specific agenda for teaching digital literacy sounds very similar to my conclusion relating to Rendell's/Clinton's motivation for teaching digital literacy. If the teaching of digital literacy contributes to a twenty-first century global citizenship project because (as I'll explore below) twenty-first century global citizenship requires an ability to communicate with other twenty-first century global citizens in a wide variety of digital/multimodal rhetorical situations, then a compositionist engaged in such teaching must attend with equal vim and vigor to both the compositional requirements of those situations, as well as to individual students' personal strategies for learning how to enter into and contribute to those situations.

1.2   DIGITAL WRITING | PARTICIPATION & ACCESS

The value position that digital literacy is connected with twenty-first century citizenship doesn't just dominate political rhetoric; it is also quite prevalent within Computers and Writing (C&W) scholarship. This is because of the many disciplinary foci inherent to C&W are the questions: "How do digital technologies alter traditional conceptions of literacy?" and "How and why should we teach students to understand and use these new conceptions of technological/digital literacies?" The primary stated motivation for the Clinton-Gore Administration initiative was to improve citizens' "[a]ccess to computers and the Internet" because "the ability to effectively use this technology...[was viewed as] increasingly important for *full participation in America's economic, political and social life*" (para 1. emphasis added). Though it may have seemed to some as though the Clinton-Gore Administration discovered this link between digital literacy, access to technologies, full social participation, and citizenship, folks working in C&W had been concerned about these links for at least two decades prior to 2000 budget initiative. Indeed, a year before the Clinton-Gore administration's budget initiative, Cynthia Selfe (1999) was admonishing compositionists to "pay attention" to digital technologies and their effects on education. Indeed, Selfe's call extended beyond simply,

> "Teaching students...to communicate as informed thinkers and citizens in an increasingly technological world....I believe composition studies faculty have a much larger and more complicated obligation to fulfill — that of trying to understand and make sense of, to pay attention to, how technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education in this country. As a part of this obligation, I suggest that we have some rather unpleasant facts to face about our own professional behavior and involvement." (414)

In other words, as you might expect, a not insubstantially sized cadre of educators had been worrying about the implications and opportunities of digital technologies, English teaching, and citizenship for quite some time.

Indeed, the Clinton-Gore administration's language regarding "full participation" parrots language from the New London Group's (NLG) "Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" (1996) published four years earlier. "If it were possible to define generally the mission of education," the NLG ambitiously opens their "Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,"

> "it could be said that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate in public, community, and economic life. Pedagogy is a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to *full and equitable social participation.*" (9) (emphasis added)

That is, both the Clinton-Gore Administration as well as the NLG regard literacy education as a citizenship project focused on ensuring "full and equitable social participation" in "America's economic, political, and social life," and the first step toward doing that was to ensuring that everyone had access to the means to do that. The argument goes like this: in order for students to fully and equitably participate in social (public, communal, economic, etc) life, those students need to be digitally literate (or "multiliterate"), and the only way to be digitally or multi-literate is to have access to the things upon which such literacy is built. And according to the NLG and Selfe these things include "a multiplicity of discourses" that are "culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised" and often manifest in a "burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (9). That is, the only way for students to be citizens in an "increasingly globalized world" is if they develop digital literacy, and the only way to develop digital literacy is to develop access to and an understanding of the myriad different cultures that make up that life, as well as the myriad different modes through which those cultures communicate with one another through new technologies.

Yet one of the "unpleasant facts" Selfe warns of is the fact that "access" is often unfairly and unevenly developed, with poor and minority citizens often having and developing less access to technologies than their wealthier, white counterparts. This was the case in my school, the

15

student body of which was 99% black, 90% of whom received free and reduced lunches. Two of my 84 students had personal computers. And while our school did have a computer lab located in the library, the lab had fewer computers than I had students in my larger classes, and in order to access these computers, teachers had to sign-up for usage time well in advance of the period during which such time was to be scheduled. The local library also had a handful of computers, as did a short-lived Internet cafe on the main street of town, one block away from the high school. Three of my students indicated they visited these places. As you might expect, my mentor teacher and I were better off than most of our students in this regards; both of us had computers at our desks. I also had a personal computer at home, as well as access to various technologies at the university where I was completing my MAT program. I suppose I was fairly digitally literate, but mostly only insofar as it pertained to personal computer use: corresponding with others, social networking, the odd file-sharing/downloading service, and so on. When I used a computer in aid of my teaching, however, it was almost always in order to produce some sort of physical product that I would then distribute in class, or share with supervisors; I created handouts, completed lesson plans, wrote up incident reports, and composed case studies and classroom talk analyses, all of which were printed out and distributed. As I think back, I must admit that even my mentor teacher and I, as well as a handful of students who did have access to computers, either at their homes or through the school or local library, none of us really seemed to have "full access" to all the functions and capabilities afforded by those computers, particularly insofar as those functions and capabilities applied to "the possibilities" for expanding how we took part in English class.

This is because of another "unpleasant fact" regarding access: it's a much more complicated concept than either Rendell or the Clinton-Gore Administration seem to

16

acknowledge, and developing access extends well beyond simply handing a kid (or a classroom of kids) a computer, wiping your hands, and saying "have at it." As Adam Banks argues in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: In Search of Higher Ground,* "access" is not limited to simply having technology; you have to know how to use those technologies thoughtfully, critically, and meaningfully. Banks expands the common, simplified notion of material access with his rich taxonomy of access, adding functional, experiential, and critical access to the mix. According to Banks, while material access is the foundation upon which the other forms of access are built, as it pertains to ownership of or proximity to "computers, software, Internet connections, and other communication technologies" necessary to become digitally literate (41), it's not nearly enough. Building on material access is functional access, which is simply the "skills necessary to use those tools effectively" (41). Banks continues, noting that experiential access is a user's ability to "make...tools a relevant part of their lives" (42). And finally, critical access occurs when "[m]embers of a particular community . . . develop understandings of the benefits and problems of any technology well enough to be able to critique, resist, and avoid them when necessary as well as us[e] them when necessary" (42). Following Banks, in order to possess full complete access to technologies in a writing class, students must know how to and be able to use computers, with limited economic or physical restrictions, to complete activities relevant to their lives while simultaneously being aware of not only how they are using technology, but how technology might be using them. Having this full and complete access to digital technologies is a necessary condition of becoming digitally literate.[2]

---

[2] Banks recognizes, of course, that "full and complete access" — just like "full and equitable participation" — is chimerical. That said, he conceives of "full and complete access" as a sort of guiding principle for an individual's interactions with technologies. Though s/he is never able to have 100% complete material, functional, experiential, and critical access to a particular type of digital technology, that's still what teachers and students should aim at, just

Of course, yet another "unpleasant fact" is that developing full and complete access to digital technologies is really hard. When we situate digital literacy as a key component of global citizenship, we're forced to see both "digital literacy" and "global citizenship" as always moving and changing. As Kathleen Blake Yancey describes in her 2004 CCCC Chair's Address, "Made Not Only in Words," what it means to be digitally literate includes competence in understanding and composing with

> "words and images and...audio files on Web logs (blogs), in word processors, with video editors and Web editors and in e-mail and on presentation software and in instant messaging and on listservs and on bulletin boards — and no doubt in *whatever genre will emerge in the next ten minutes.*" (298) (emphasis added)

That is, being digitally literate includes the ability to use and understand present digital and multimodal genres, as well as anticipate future digital and multimodal genres. If digital literacy is truly an integral component of global citizenship, and if teaching digital literacy is a global citizenship project, then both have to *also* emphasize the significance not just of knowing how to use already-existing technologies to create already-circulating digital and multimodal genres of communication, but also of knowing how to *learn* or *teach yourself* emerging digital technologies to engage in other kinds of emerging forms of digital and multimodal communication.

In its statement on "Multimodal Literacies and Technology" (2016), the NCTE defines "Multimodal Literacies" as

> "meaning-making systems (alphabetic, oral, visual, etc.) ... 'Multiple ways of knowing' (Short & Harste) … includ[ing] art, music, movement, and drama … [the] combin[ation] and move[ment] between drama, art, text, music, speech, sound, physical movement, animation/gaming, etc." (paras. 3 and 5)

---

as the NLG maintains that "full and equitable participation" in a global community is what teachers and students should aim at.

Each of these 'meaning-making systems' (drama, art, text, music, speech, sound, movement, animation, gaming) represents a hard-fought victory, the result of heated and lengthy argument for its inclusion in the list. The "et ceteras" are not afterthoughts, either. They're recognitions that the list of modes that make up "multimodal" is far from complete, lacking both present/actual and future/imagined modal possibilities that still require advocacy and argument. "What this means for teaching" — as the NCTE statement puts it — is that composition instructors need to fundamentally reorient their understanding of what it means to teach reading and writing. The NCTE statement insists, "All modes of communication are codependent. Each affects the nature of the content of the other and the overall rhetorical impact of the communication event itself" (para. 5). As such, composition instruction requires careful attention to the codependent nature of these different modes, particularly if an objective of that instruction is to — as the NCTE's Position Statement on Teaching Composition insists — help students "learn about themselves and their world and communicate their insights to others" (para. 2) This statement goes on to explain, "Writing confers the power to grow personally and to effect change in the world." Reading both statements together, the implication is that "writing" here refers not just to linguistic/alphabetic writing, but myriad meaning-making systems: drama, art, text, music, speech, sound, physical movement, animation, gaming, et cetera.[3]

---

[3] Others, both within the field of C&W, as well as scholarly "allies" of the field, have argued for compositionists to focus on the affordances offered by specific modalities, specifically as those affordances might be worked into classroom instruction. A quick roll call: Erin Anderson, Cynthia Selfe, Bump Halbritter call for the inclusion of sound in composition classrooms, while Sid Dobrin, Diana George, and Laurie Gries signal similar benefits regarding visuals and visual literacy. In terms of the explicit intersections of multimodality and digital technologies, both James Paul Gee and Ian Bogost play with the idea that video games teaches us something about literacy and learning, while Annette Vee and Robert Cummings classify and identify similar benefits of computer programming. Debra Hawhee, Cory Holding, and Daisy Levy gesture toward the significance of bodily movements, and Sean Morey, John Tinnell, and David Blakesley augment these compositional benefits of movement with the digital interfaces of mediated reality applications for smartphones.

Selfe's "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning," is of particular significance, not just for its compelling arguments for including sound in writing classes, but for its concern with the larger issue of multimodality within composition studies writ large, and compositionists' ongoing obligation to "pay attention" to the communicative practices of a globalized citizenry. Selfe's piece is not merely another argument *for* the inclusion of sound in a composition classroom; it is also an indictment of the assumptions that led to sound's initial exclusion from those classrooms. In this way, Selfe asks composition instructors to examine their own "unacknowledged and often unconscious episteme[s]" that lead them to privilege alphabetic writing over all other meaning-making systems in their writing classes. Selfe argues

> "Young people...need a full quiver of semiotic modes from which to select, role models who can teach them to think critically about a range of communication tools, and multiple ways of reaching their audience. They do not need teachers who insist on one tool or one way." (645)

It's clear Selfe isn't just writing about sound and visuals and alphabetic writing anymore; sound is merely a representative example of all the other types of modalities which are not "allowed" in an alphabetic writing class. Indeed, though her essay makes a careful and compelling case for sound to be an important component of students' "full quiver of semiotic modes," her concluding paragraphs are an argument for a more expansive understanding of all the various modalities teachers can and should teach and students can and should learn.

"The Movement of Air" is also significant because it prompted an exchange between Selfe and Doug Hesse about the nature of composition classes, and how they might contribute to a larger literacy/citizenship project. In a response to Selfe's piece, Hesse raises two key questions: (1) what should writing teachers teach in a writing classroom?, and (2) Whose interests should be served by writing classes? Hesse's first question is not a new one; it's at least as old as C&W itself. In "Computerized Text Analysis and the Teaching of Writing," James

Collins answers the question by invoking a mostly made-up "principle" of writing instruction "[A] writing teacher is to teach writing, not word processing or computerized text analysis...*these features do little to improve the ways writers generate text or the ways teachers work with writers*" (Collins 31) (emphasis added). Collins' position is founded on the assumption that any class time spent teaching "word processing or computerized text analysis" is time *not spent* teaching writing. And as such, it is time wasted or misspent. Incipient in Collins' position is a sharp distinction between writing and writing with computers; he seems fine with the idea of writing with computers, but he also seems to think that one must first know how to write before one can write with computers (or, conversely, one must first know computers before one can start learning how to write with computers). This distinction views computers as a mere material tool or aid to inscribing the material product of writing (the composition itself). It seems to regard computers as some sort of newfangled pencil or pen, rather than an integral component and contributor to the *process* of writing.

That Hesse asks this question in 2010 does not suggest that Collins' "principle" for writing instruction still stands with the same firmness it seemed to twenty years earlier. Indeed, Hesse does not ask these questions with the same degree of antagonism as Collins seems to evoke with his "principle" of writing instruction. Hesse's questions are not a sort of old-school defense of alphabetic writing. Instead, he admits to being "persuadable but pragmatic" (603), recognizing, even welcoming the fact that changes are certainly afoot in terms of what constitutes the appropriate subject or topic of writing instruction. He simply seems to want these changes to be thoughtful, careful, and measured. "My purpose is to temper Selfe's thoughtful argument," he concludes his response,

"because the practices it advocates entail more than some supplemental tweak of current courses. At stake are fundamental boundaries of our curricular landscape and ours sense of its stakeholders, interests, and purposes." (605)

Lurking in Hesse's caution is an apprehension about how Selfe's argument might be applied in a classroom, not necessarily in the classrooms of teacher-scholars like Hesse and Selfe, but rather in the classrooms like my own, classrooms in which the advent of technologies generated more questions and confusion, than it seemed to reveal pedagogical opportunities.

In her "Response to Doug Hesse," Selfe reiterates much of her arguments from "The Movement of Air." "For me," she writes,

> "the inclusion of multiple modes of rhetorical expression represents a simple acknowledgment that a literacy education focused solely on *writing* will produce citizens with an overly narrow and exclusionary understanding of the world and the variety of audiences who will read and respond to their work." (606)

Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made* expands upon this larger argument of Selfe's, insisting that while it is certainly important to "rethink composition" to include various modalities, it is equally important to "rethink process" to include the various habits and skills individuals require in order to compose with those modalities. She argues,

> "if we are committed to expanding the technologies and representational systems that composition and rhetoric, as a discipline, work with, theorize, and explore, our frameworks must support us in making the shift from studying writing to studying composing practices more generally …. [This means] a thoroughgoing reconceptualization of *composers* at work requires that we attend to the integration of visual and verbal information and to the interanimation of linguistic and nonlinguistic sign systems." (37)

The bulk of Shipka's pedagogy, therefore, focuses on making sense of "composers at work" in her composition classrooms, and as Jonathan Alexander's and Jacqueline Rhodes' *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies* note, "*Toward a Composition Made Whole* perhaps comes closest to arguing for a radical expansion of what we consider composing and what we teach as 'writing'" (62). That is, much of what Shipka describes as "composers at work"

seems weird and out of place in a writing classroom: stick-figure drawings, t-shirts or ballet shoes covered with writing, texts rendered unreadable through various computer programs, and so on. She acknowledges this, stating

> "I am cognizant that a fair number of the texts my students have chosen to produce over the years have little resembled the kind of texts that are typically associated with writing courses (double-spaced, print-based, linear, argumentative texts)." (139)

Yet, to see Shipka's pedagogy as "radical" is to ignore how all the non-traditional modes used by Shipka's students are a part of an ever-expanding notion of what it means to be literate in the 21st century. That is, Shipka's "radical expansion" of what counts as a text is actually a simple acknowledgement of the myriad ways in which twenty-first century folks communicate effectively with one another. Moreover, to limit oneself to writing in a limited, "traditional" sense is a disservice to writing students as they attempt to figure out how to live, learn, work, and communicate in a 21st-century digital world.[4]

There's an undercurrent of exhaustion in the arguments of Selfe and Shipka, as well as in the NCTE statement of "Multimodal Literacies and Technology," as well as Yancey's CCCC address. Though Hesse may regard his apprehension as pragmatic, it is curious why, in 2010, he still needed to be persuaded of an expanded definition of literacy and composition. For Selfe et al., such an expansion is old hat, propelled not by a cadre of compositionists looking to incorporate more modalities into a writing classroom, but rather by a "simple acknowledgment"

---

[4] Criticisms of the "texts" Shipka assigns also falls into a product-over-process mentality toward composition. That is, though Shipka's writing students do compose texts that don't *look like* traditional texts, this is because both she and her students are less interested in the texts-as-products themselves, then they are in the complicated processes involved in producing those texts. In this way, Shipka assumes Selfe's conclusion: composition does and should include myriad modalities. What then, Shipka's pedagogy wonders, do students do when attempting to compose via these myriad modalities?

that folks around the world are *already* engaging in literacy and composition activities using a variety of modalities. If writing classrooms hope to enable to students to better participate in this global community shot through with multimodal and digital literacy, then they better stop couching their apprehensions about these new forms under the umbrella of pragmatism and update what they're teaching and how they're teaching it.

Yet Hesse seems to not be speaking for himself, but rather on behalf of other instructors in the profession. Operating as they are, at the forefront of a pedagogical movement of sorts, Selfe et al., might lose sight of the fact that composition as a discipline and the teaching of composition as a profession steers like a boat. As such, when Hesse suggests that "the profession needs to have this out...with the full participation of *all stakeholders in composition courses*" (603) (emphasis added), he's not just referencing the pedagogical vanguard, as it were, but the clunky, leaky, oversized and underfunded mass of composition teachers that follow this van as well (not to mention all the other stakeholders, from students to administrators to politicians and so on). That is, Hesse seems to recognize that incipient within Selfe's arguments in "The Movement of Air" is a sort of "follow-the-leader" attitude; Selfe is and always has been at the forefront of C&W, both in terms of advocacy, as well as in terms of scholarship. While Hesse acknowledges this position of authority, he also acknowledges the great degree to which C&W has expanded beyond its early days as a nimble cadre of like-minded compatriots circulating a ten-page newsletter.

While responses to Hesse's first question can come quickly and confidently, his second question is a bit stickier: whose interests should a composition class serve? He frames this question around the tension between what students already do and what we (as composition teachers) want students to do; that is, between "the rhetorical choices young people are making

24

and the rhetorical choices they are not making...the goals they set, the goals they don't" (604).

For Hesse, this question about interests is less a pedagogical one as such, and more

> "an ethical one. Part of it involves 'what's good for the student' — but the student as worker, citizen, friend, soul? Part of it is 'what's good for the various cultures and subcultures' in which decisions are made, resources distributed, and ideas championed." (605)

That is, even if compositionists expand their notion of literacy and composition to include the myriad multimodal and digital forms currently in use in the global community, teachers must still determine what forms to teach and how. Making such a determination emerges from an individual teacher's sense of not just what students already know, but also what they ought to know, as well as why they ought to know it. And ultimately, this sense emerges from that individual teacher's understanding of what digital literacy is and how digital literacy connects with 21st-century global citizenship. Or, as the 2004 "CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments" suggests, "as *we* refine current practices and invent new ones for digital literacy, *we* need to assure that principles of good practice governing these new activities are clearly articulated" (para. 5, emphasis added). And as Alexander and Rhodes wonder, "What might those good practices be? The assumption is that writing instructors know best" (51).

Set aside for a moment the fact that back in my first classroom, I definitely didn't "know best" what the good practices were that governed new digital literacy activities and how those participates helped my students develop into 21st-century global citizens. Even if I did have a sense of what practices might govern new digital literacy activities, and even if I did have an idea of how those digital literacy activities might help students develop into 21st-century global citizens, does that mean that I "knew best" what my students needed? Selfe seems to think so. I'll quote at length her response to Hesse:

"We can't...let students use the composing modalities they prefer; rather, we are also obliged to teach them how to compose with modalities that may be unfamiliar and difficult but expected of educated citizens and within workplaces....[O]ne goal of education is to broaden students' thinking and abilities, to add to their composing repertoires, rather than to limit them artificially. I might, in fact, go farther with this point, suggesting that faculty in rhetoric and composition..., too, are willing to...expand their own skills and abilities beyond the alphabetic by practicing with different modalities of expression that may be unfamiliar and difficult but increasingly expected and valuable in different twenty-first-century rhetorical contexts both in and out of the academy." (608)

That is, teachers committed to teaching digital literacy as a critical component of 21st-century global citizenship can and should determine the principles of good practice that govern what types of digital literacy activities that they teach and how they teach them. The implication is that teachers committed to teaching digital literacy as a critical component of 21st-century global citizenship have a firm grasp on what, exactly, constitutes digital literacy and how it foments 21st-century global citizenship. That is, such teachers know not just *that* students' thinking and abilities need to be broadened, but they also know exactly where and how to broaden students' thinking and abilities. And in their efforts to do this broadening, teachers ought to serve as role models to their students, showing them that they are also willing to engage in new types of digital literacy activities which are expected and valuable the rhetorical contexts in which 21st-century global citizens frequently engage. Ultimately, Selfe's answer to Hesse's question makes total sense given the "follow-the-leader" attitude lurking in her arguments: composition classes serve the teachers' interests, where the teachers here are experts with both a firm grasp on what is and is not expected and valuable, as well as the confidence to model the type of exploratory and experimental mindset toward new digital literacy activities they want to see in their students.

To be fair to Hesse, I'm fairly confident he understood this position of Selfe's when she first made it in "The Movement of Air."[5] As such, I don't think that when Hesse asked "whose interests should the composition class serve" he was really asking Selfe to reiterate her position. Instead, I reckon he was likely calling the legitimacy of her position into question, not because it is wrong, but because it is one of a handful of positions one can take in response to his original question. And since Hesse counts himself a bit of a pragmatist, I can think of at least two pragmatic issues that might prompt one to search for an alternative response than Selfe's "follow-the-leader" style answer to the question "whose interests should the composition class serve." First, as I've suggested above, what happens if a teacher just doesn't know how to broaden students' thinking and abilities in regards to digital literacy because that teacher herself does not possess broadened thinking and abilities? That is, what happens when the teachers that are tasked with teaching digital literacy are like I was back in my first English classroom? This seems like a blind leading the blind kind of teaching scenario.

Secondly, how is it feasible to take seriously both the idea that we're preparing students to be 21st-century global citizens by teaching them digital and multimodal communication strategies, as well as the idea that 21st-century digital and multimodal communication strategies are always changing and developing? That is, even if we grant Selfe the idea that teachers "know best" what their students should learn, what exactly constitutes the content of teachers' knowledge here if what's "best" now isn't what's "best" tomorrow, the next day, the day after that, and so on. Or another way, sure maybe teachers know about present communicative

---

[5] Selfe writes: "Students are intuitively aware of [hybrid communicative practices], being immersed in them...*they need help understanding* the implications of such cultural trends as well as managing their own communicative efforts in ways that are rhetorically effective, critically aware, morally responsible, and personally satisfying." (642) (emphasis added). And the person to help students to understand these implications is the teacher.

strategies and genres, but what of emerging communicative strategies and genres? It's impossible to "catch up" with these technologies or these kinds of writing. That is, we can't stop the development of either, and declare "There are 10,295 different digital technologies to learn, and 404,568 methods of composing multimodal, digital texts, so let's get cracking."

Beyond these pragmatic concerns, however, remain what Hesse describe as the "ethical" concerns that undergird the question "whose interests should the composition class serve?" These are the ethical concerns that focus less on what students do in digital composition classrooms and how teachers help them do it, and more on what digital composition classrooms do to students. Or, more specifically, how the expectations of digital citizenship influence the motivation for and manner in which digital literacy is taught, and how that teaching of digital literacy attempts to transform students, to make them something other than what they thought they were. Selfe writes, "Students...will join us as part of an increasingly challenging and difficult world" (645). More follow-the-leader, more insistence that composition teachers know best. Teachers are a part of an increasingly challenging and difficult world, students are not, and the only way that students might ever hope to *become* a part of an increasingly challenging and difficult world, it seems, is through the focused guidance of experts, those who know best, the leaders, as it were, be they state governors, presidential administrations, or prominent vanguard scholars.

Back to my first classroom: to a person, all of us — teachers and students alike — felt more was at stake than simply learning from experts how to use digital technologies in school. More specifically, who we were was at stake, and there was no going back from what we were doing and what we were learning. We felt on the edge of something, on the threshold between the old and the new, between analog and digital. It seems to me that anyone who participates in

28

our digital age zeitgeist likely shares this feeling that digital stuff is fundamentally changing not only how folks teach and learn, but also how we think and are. We were each of us individual Ships of Theseus; every time we had learned, were in the process of learning, or would learn something new, it was like replacing a board. Eventually we had to ask: are we the same Ship? And such a question is what seemed to assure us that yes, we probably were, as long as we continued to ask if we were every time we replaced a board. It isn't just that we had to learn how to use these new technologies, it is that in learning these new technologies, in learning these new things, we were changing ourselves, and the more we reflected on that possibility, the more exciting and scary it was, and the more we realized we will always be doing this. And "this" — learning new things, new technologies, and always changing, and always reflecting on how we learn new things, and how we learn new technologies, and how we change — feels more complicated than simply learning from experts how to use digital technologies in schools.

1.3   DIGITAL LITERACY AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CITIZENSHIP

As a former middle school teacher colleague once put it, "Theories about how to teach and why we teach circle back every thirty years or so. When you're as old as I am, if you've seen one, you've seen 'em all." Thirty years is about the disciplinary age of C&W; it's flagship journal, *Computers & Composition*, started out as a 10-page newsletter right around the time I started out as a human in early 1983. That said, as a discipline, that which C&W seems to want to do to and for students is much older than the discipline itself. Teachers of digital writing view "digital literacy" as a part of global citizenship, in the same way regular old pen-and-paper literacy was viewed as a part of global citizenship, it's just that the means and methods by which

they want to do it are new, and also perpetually renewing. Balancing between respecting both the individuality of their students and the demands and expectations of global citizenship was an unresolvable dilemma for teachers of pen-and-paper literacy, just as it is for teachers of digital literacy. In a sort of casual historicizing of this tension, Hesse states "The clash...is nothing new; in educational theory, it tracks through Dewey, Emerson, the German romantics, and so on" (604-5). It's hard not to read this statement and, with a fleeting familiarity with Dewey, Emerson, and the German romantics, assume that they championed the "rhetorical sovereignty of individuals," while folks like Benjamin Rush, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson advocated more strongly in promoting the expectations of work and civic realms. That is, it's tempting, though ultimately incorrect, to assume that there are camps of thought *vis a vis* the ethical problem that is the tension between students' individuality and the expectations of global citizenship. Indeed, Hesse's language is precise here: the tension "tracks through" — that is, is present and rigorously engaged — in the educational theory of John Dewey, once tagged by Janet Emig as a forerunner to Composition pedagogy and research, part of the discipline's "tacit tradition." From Dewey, Hesse identifies Ralph Waldo Emerson as someone who also struggled with this thorny tension. The link between Emerson and Dewey is thoroughly explicated by Cornel West in *American Evasion of Philosophy*, in which West names Emerson a "proto-pragmatist" whose optimism in an individual's capability to always improve despite an absence of both certainty and necessity of future events is revised and expanded by Dewey, "the greatest of the American pragmatists" (69). Hesse continues, highlighting just one set of Emerson's myriad influences: German romantics. As Emerson's extensive journals indicate, this set includes obvious philosophers such as Hegel, Goethe, and Schiller, but also their contemporaries, including pedagogues such as Johann Pestalozzi and his disciple Friedrich Froebel, as well as the

30

philosopher and one-time director of Prussia's national education system, Wilhelm von Humboldt.

Specifically, the influence to which Hesse refers traces from these philosophers' theories of teaching and learning forward through the work of Emerson and Dewey is the pedagogical program or impulse that Humboldt systematized when he served as the director of education: *bildung*. Humboldtian *bildung* conceives of education and schooling as contributing to a lifelong, holistic effort to develop as an individual, rather mere training or disciplining instruction in service of some trade or profession. *Bildung* was foundational component not just in the philosophies of teaching and learning advanced by Emerson and Dewey, it is also the central tenet of the Humboldtian model of higher education that would go on to influence the formation and continued operating principles of the modern-day research-university. At its core, Humboldt's notion of *bildung* recognizes the tension between conceiving of a student as a sovereign individual and conceiving of a student as potential world citizen not as an unresolvable dilemma, but as mutually co-constitutive and interanimating relationship between the individual and the society or culture of which that individual hopes to become a part. This is one of the reasons why, of all the English translations of the concept of *bildung*, I prefer the term "self-culture." Unlike synonymous terms like "self-cultivation" or "self-teaching," the lexical ambiguity of self-culture (is it a noun or a verb? Both?) highlights and respects both sides of the tension between a sovereign individual and an expectations-having global society or culture. And while this tension is inherent in the German word "*bildung*," it is all but erased in the various English translations/variations of *bildung*.

I think it makes sense to return briefly to the more stable ground of ordinary language and everyday teaching. When my students and I confronted the new technologies in our classroom,

31

we also confronted the tension Hesse historicizes in his response to Selfe. That is, we were forced to recognize that this new infusion of technology came with certain expectations of what we were supposed to do as teachers and students, and these expectations were tied in with incipient expectations about who we were supposed to be as citizens. We were supposed to come into being as, in Rendell's words, the Technology Generation, and we needed to become competitive in the global job market. We understood that this was the goal, even if we didn't understand how, exactly, we were supposed to achieve it. There was a sense that we all needed to spend a little time culturing, training, and educating ourselves on how to use this equipment *without* explicit aid or instruction from teachers; that being able to "teach ourselves" was not just something we had to do because there was nobody around to tell us what to do, but that "teach ourselves" was wrapped up and integral to becoming competitive in the global market. Again, Rendell's words again: "The new technology will nurture students' minds and feed their appetite for learning" (PRNewswire August 30, 2007 para. 3). Not just the new technology, but indeed the challenge of figuring it out "on our own" was part and parcel to twenty-first century *bildung*, to digital self-culture.

This assumption that *bildung* or self-culture is a crucial component of twenty-first century digital literacy education is not just merely a pedagogical specter haunting our extra-curricular attitudes toward teaching and learning. Frequently, we translate this assumption into codified curricular expectations. The chapter immediately following this introduction investigates this obligation students and teachers often feel to culture, train, and educate themselves on how to use equipment without explicit aid or instruction. The chapter surveys 130 other digital and multimodal course syllabi in which digital technologies play a significant role in both guiding the instructional content, as well as generating the conditions in which students and

teachers confront new technologies with which they are not experienced. Insofar as the requisite training and education for these technologies is concerned, no one — certainly not me, but also not my mentor teacher, and very few of the instructors who authored these syllabi — seems to adequately or comfortably occupy the space of the "expert" from whom guided culturing, training, or educating could be had. As Lisa Spiro puts it in her well-circulated, oft-cited 2011 blog post "Getting Started in the Digital Humanities," "many in the DH community are to some extent self-taught and/or gained their knowledge through work on projects rather than through formal training" (para. 1). In this sense, we are all of us, teachers and students alike, engaged in a sort of revamped version of self-culture: that is, many teachers of digitally inflected classes engage in and expect their students to engage training, educating, or otherwise cultivating our own digital literacy. This is probably why none of us think to name what we are doing as "self-culture." We have other, more "modern" names or descriptions. We are teaching ourselves. Students are directing their own learning. We are autodidacts, DIYers, Makers of a sort.

While these names rightly emphasize the significant role an individual can play in directing and guiding his or her own culturing, training, or education, they do so at the expense of much consideration about global society or culture of which that individual hopes to become a part. That is, these names, as well as the pedagogies that undergird them, overemphasize the individual when they conceive of the possibilities of "self-teaching." There is no such thing, nor has there ever been such a thing, as truly robust individualism when it comes to "self-teaching." Nowhere is this more evident than in the myriad works that explored and promoted self-culture in its heyday in American thought: the nineteenth-century. "Self-culture" was buzzword in the nineteenth-century United States in a way in which "*bildung*" never was. In both popular and academic publications, "self-culture" referred to a theory and process of education that emerged

and gained traction in the 19th century United States. As with *bildung*, self-culture was sometimes envisioned as a process by which an *individual* ("one's self") trained, educated, and otherwise cultivated herself by *her own efforts* toward her own ends, however in practice, self-culture often instantiated as a process by which *groups* trained, educated, and otherwise cultivated themselves toward the end of harmonizing or joining each other in a larger sociocultural construct. That is, self-culture was both a process of standing out and fitting in, a process of teaching one's self and learning with others, a process liberated from the confines of educating institutions, and a process dictated by the goals promoted and advanced by those institutions. It was and is a process for you for others and for others for you. As such, though more contemporary terms such as "self-teaching" or "autodidacticism" align synonymously with some conceptions of self-culture, these terms do not sufficiently capture the conceptual complexity of self-culture as it was defined elsewhere and with greater care throughout the nineteenth century. And indeed, in the second chapter of this work, I will unfold and trace these complexities of the concept of self-culture as it was promoted by folks such as those Hesse identifies — Dewey, Emerson, German romantics — as well as some of their prominent contemporaries such as Henry David Thoreau and Frederick Douglass, as well as their less renowned contemporaries such as George Emerson, Maria Georgina Shireff Grey and Emily Shireff, Samuel Smiles, William Unsworth, and (perhaps most importantly) William Ellery Channing.

Another thing my former middle-school teacher colleague said: talking's talking, doing's doing. Or, as Hank Morgan, the eponymous Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court from Mark Twain's 1889 novel, exclaims: "How empty is theory in the presence of fact!" The third chapter of this work seeks to move past the theory of self-culture as promoted by a mostly elite,

Massachusetts-based cadre of intellectuals, so as to explore the fact of self-culture as practiced throughout the nineteenth-century United States. While the previous chapter explored the complexities and complications of self-culture as explicated in just a small collection of texts, my third chapter employs machine reading strategies to engage not a handful of texts, but thousands of them. More specifically I will use machine reading and textual analysis tools to annotate, abstract, and analyze trends in the use of the term "self-culture" in 19th century US newspapers collected through the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* digital archive. In doing so, this chapter traces the uptake of the concept and practice of self-culture by an expanding labor class, as well as by women committed to the advancement of women's rights throughout the nineteenth-century and across the United States. This reveals both the spread of self-culture as a philosophy of teaching and learning as well as how its practice by workers and women influenced and altered it.

The fourth chapter further considers the practice of self-culture throughout the nineteenth-century United States by focusing in on a set of folks who, though they certainly engaged in self-culture, received far less "press" about their efforts than did most other folks at the time. More specifically, the fourth chapter investigates the practice of self-culture among black slaves as that practice was represented in autobiographical slave narratives. While the elite intellectuals of the second chapter, as well as the workers and women surveyed in the third chapter oftentimes regarded self-culture as a complement to the various institution-based educational options available to them, slaves often had to engage in self-culture because it was the *only* educational option available to them. And even then, slaves' ability to self-culture was frequently compromised and challenged, both by individual slaveholders, as well as by state and federal laws restricting slaves' efforts to develop literacy. An investigation of slaves' efforts to

self-culture underscores the communal and collaborative aspects incipient in pedagogies of self-culture, as well as how problems of access inhibit, maybe even preclude one's ability to self-culture.

My final chapter understands our current investment in digital self-teaching, doing-it-yourself, makerism, and so on, as participating in a long and layered history of self-culture. This chapter seeks to curate, from both contemporary and historical sources, rich, rigorous, and practicable pedagogies of self-culture that will help prepare students to be global citizens in a world shot through with digital literacy practices. Or, more simply, the final chapter offers some tips and theories for helping students teach themselves better when they're using digital tools in their composition courses.

2.0   LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES

"If someone as old as me can learn computers, anyone can" (qtd. in Hawisher et al. 51).
—James Kinneavy

2.1   COMPUTERS AND WRITING

In light of the fact that many from Rendell's "Technology Generation" now attend our colleges and universities, Doug Hesse asks "What should writing teachers teach?" and "Whose interests should the composition class serve?" As my introduction suggests, these questions cannot be separated from one another: what I teach in my composition class emerges from my sense, fully formed or not, of my understanding of whose interest that class serves. Similarly, how I teach what I teach in my composition classes is influenced both by that which I am teaching, as well as my understanding of whose interests I am serving by teaching that which I am teaching. It's no wonder, then, that since the early 1980s, Compositionists generally, and Computers & Writing (C&W) specialists in particular have tended to promote and deploy a hybrid pedagogy in order to help students gain full and complete access to the digital technologies needed to develop multimodal/digital literacy. Or, more simply: C&W teachers teach different types of writing in different types of ways in service of different types of interests of different kinds of other stakeholders.

Seeing this hybrid pedagogy laid out in the academic writing of C&W tends to be fairly straightforward as one of the conventions of most pedagogical, academic writing is to do exactly that: to describe, in great detail, the pedagogy which you are examining, promoting, critiquing, or attempting to enact. Acquiring a perspicuous representation of these assumptions in classroom writing, however, is certainly less straightforward. How one represents her teaching in scholarly writing can oftentimes differ from how they actually teach. As such, in an effort to "see" how composition teachers taught their students (or allowed their students to teach each other or themselves) how to use the various digital technologies that were incorporated in their shared college composition classroom, I assembled a set of 130 syllabi for each Fall and Spring semester, broken into 13 subsets of 10 syllabi from both the fall and spring semesters from Fall 2009 to Fall 2015. I assembled this set through web-based keyword searches using Google's search engine using various synonyms of "multimodal" or "digital" writing, the word "syllabus," and the calendar year from which I needed a sample ("2006," "2010," etc.). I relied upon Claire Lauer's chapter "Contending with Terms: 'Multimodal' and 'Multimedia' in the Academic and Public Spheres," in which she outlines the myriad terms scholars use when referring to what I have labeled digital writing. Lauer not only identifies myriad different terms ("multimodal," "multimedia," "multi-media," "new media," etc), but also the terms favored by different disciplines (English, Communications, Journalism), sub-disciplines (New Media Studies, Composition), different professional organizations (NCTE, CCCC), as well as different professions (academics, journalists). I was not concerned with collecting classes *about* the same subject. That is, I didn't want 130 "Digital Writing" classes or 130 "Multimodal Composition" classes or even 130 "First-Year Composition" classes with an added technological component. Instead, I wanted to collect syllabi for courses that all contained the same learning problem for

38

students: how does a student learn how to use the digital technologies required for the completion of a course that doesn't focus explicitly on the teaching of those technologies. Or, more specifically: how does a student learn how to use the digital technologies required by a course in which those technologies will used in composing.

I assumed that there *would be* certain pedagogical attitudes present in the syllabi I collected, and I wanted to label and organize them. This could, I felt, show me trends in attitudes, relationships between course goals and assignment types, perhaps, or between assignment types and teaching strategies for learning and using technologies. Upon assembling the set, therefore, I organized and archived them through Diigo, a browser-based social bookmarking application that allows users to "save" a webpage or web-based file such as a .pdf or .doc and apply specific labels or "tags" to each page. Though I assumed pedagogical attitudes would be present in the syllabus, I did not (indeed I could not) assume I knew beforehand exactly what these pedagogical attitudes were or how to "tag" and organize them. So, after I collected the 130 syllabi, I pored over 50 of them, analyzing the various pedagogical attitudes incipient in those syllabi's course objectives and goal statements, their policies and procedures, their assignment descriptions, and so on. As I analyzed this subset of 50 different courses from different instructors at different schools and different years, I generated lists of descriptive, identifying, and analytical "tags" I could apply to each syllabus I located.

Though there are certainly nuances and idiosyncrasies within the hybrid pedagogy as represented in these course syllabi, what and how (computers and) writing teachers teach writing has tended to cluster into several pedagogical constellations of sorts that orbit relatively stable methodological or modal centers. These barycenters, which include direct instruction, project-based experimentation, and self-teaching, are visible both in scholarly representations of how

39

classroom teaching could or should happen (articles, books, addresses, etc.), as well as classroom-based representations of classroom teaching will happen (i.e. syllabi). While C&W scholars have offered myriad descriptions of and justifications for the modal constellations of direct instruction and project-based experimentation, there exist far fewer articulations of or arguments for self-teaching. Indeed, many who deploy self-teaching seem to do so because they believe students already have full access to the technologies required to participate in a digital literacy class. That is, it is less a promotion of self-teaching than it is an assumption that students have already self-taught themselves. Other C&W instructors, however, don't necessary assume students *already have access* to digital technologies, but they do assume that students are able to develop that access *on their own*.

Neither C&W scholarly representations of how classroom teaching could or should happen, nor classroom-based representations of how it will happen seem to exclusively favor any of the methods or styles of instruction I'm going to survey in this chapter. In partial response to Hesse's question, it's fair to suggest that when teaching writing, writing teachers use them all in different situations and with different degrees of success. Just as the discipline seems to operate, in significant ways, under the interrelated axioms that in order to be a 21st century global citizen one must be digitally literate, and in order to be digitally literate one must communicate and contribute to a global community of folks with each other through a variety of modalities, so too do C&W teachers *teach* under a similar axiom: it's best to teach students to be digitally literate (and so, a 21st century global citizen) through a variety of *teaching* modalities. Multimodal literacy begets multimodal teaching and vice versa. And while I don't think it's possible for one to become an expert in all the various modalities of teaching (just as it's probably not possible to become an expert in all possible modalities of composition), I'm still unsettled that one of the

key teaching modalities we sometimes use remains a bit of a mystery to me. I'm referring to letting students teach themselves. Compositionists know what they're getting into when they lecture to a group of students, and to maybe a lesser extent, they *know* what will probably happen when they have their students work on a project. We are aware of enough of the benefits of direct instruction and project-based experimentation, as well as of the problems and pitfalls of these modalities. And so I feel like when I use these pedagogical modes, I know what I'm giving up and what I'm gaining. When I ask my students to teach themselves, however, I'm at a loss. What, exactly, are they gaining? And more importantly, what are they giving up? These are troubling questions that emerge from the fact that unlike other pedagogical modes, expecting students to teach themselves is a relatively unexplored mode, though it is (as I'll illustrate below) still a fairly popular mode. What follows is an analysis of 130 digital writing syllabi culled from a series of simple web searches. Through these searches, I located, organized, and analyze 10 syllabi from the fall semester of 2009 to the fall semester of 2015. These syllabi come from courses taught at a wide variety of different types of postsecondary institutions, from small community and liberal arts colleges to massive state-affiliated research universities. There is even a syllabus from a high school. These institutions are spread throughout the United States.

2.2   DIRECT INSTRUCTION

One obvious way C&W scholars and instructors suggest they might help students develop rich access to digital technologies is through direct instruction. The New London Group (NLG) promotes direct instruction as a key component of their pedagogy of multiliteracies, insisting such instruction constitutes:

"active interventions on the part of the teacher and other experts that scaffold learning activities; that focus the learner on the important features of their experiences and activities within the community of learners; and that allow the learner to gain explicit information at times when it can most usefully organise and guide practice, building on and recruiting what the learner already knows and has accomplished." (33)

That is, direct instruction fine-tunes or hones students' understanding of the digital technologies they use (or could use) to produce digital and multimodal texts. It focuses attention to different features and functions of those technologies, as well as to students' experiences using those technologies within their community. It helps students build upon material access by developing their functional and experiential access. In "Computers and Basic Writers," Lisa Gerrard argues such direct instruction is necessary before students are able to experience any derivable educational benefits from digital technologies. She writes,

"[The] benefits...attributable to the computer...do not happen in isolation but in concert with the instructor's guidance...Just as it would be hopeless to expect a rhetoric and handbook *themselves* to teach writing, so it would be futile simply to hand students over to the computer. If not coupled with effective classroom instruction, the computer is unlikely to improve writing and may, in fact, do harm." (98)

The harm to which Gerrard refers stems from the possibility that students could simply adopt the computer as a mechanism for improving their pre-existing bad writing habits, rather than a device which could develop new and better writing habits. As Gail Hawisher writes in "Research and Recommendations for Computers and Composition," "While most writers adapt easily to a computer and find word processing an asset to their writing, they bring their routines and patterns of writing with them" (54). Hawisher acknowledges that even if students' material access lead — sans any instructional intervention — to functional, experiential, and critical access to technologies, the instructor has no way of ensuring students are richly accessing those

technologies in the right way or for the right reasons. As Liisa Ilomaki, Peppi Taalas, and Minna

Lakkala write in "Learning Environment and Digital Literacy,"

> "As digital competence is clearly becoming one of the core competencies that all
> citizens and especially young people should learn and possess, educational
> institutions as well as educational researchers have to react and face up to the
> challenge…. Counting on and leaving to informal learning is not enough for
> assuring adequate competence. For digital competence to build and develop,
> sustainable pedagogical and curricular structures are essential, not just the
> technologies or how they are used." (75)

Establishing these formalized and sustainable pedagogical structures is the primary goal of direct

instruction. Ilomaki et al., much like Selfe, acknowledge that what they call "digital competence"

(or digital literacy) is a necessary component of being a twenty-first century global citizen. As

such it is too important to leave up to chance; it requires direct instructional intervention.

Thirty-six of 130 syllabi indicate that instructors will directly instruct students, thereby

establishing — a la Ilomaki, et al. — the formalized and sustainable pedagogical structures in

which their students will participate and through which their students will be assessed.

Table 1. Direct Instruction in Digital Writing Syllabi

Semester	Direct Instruction
Fall 2009	1/10
Spring 2010	3/10
Fall 2010	3/10
Spring 2011	4/10
Fall 2011	2/10
Spring 2012	4/10
Fall 2012	5/10
Spring 2013	2/10
Fall 2013	1/10
Spring 2014	2/10
Fall 2014	4/10
Spring 2015	3/10
Fall 2015	7/10

Three of these courses were geared toward graduate students, while 33 were geared toward undergraduates, suggesting — as one might expect — that direct instruction is more often applied in undergraduate courses (30/110, 27%) than it is in graduate courses (3/20, or 15%). Interestingly, though 20 out of 130 syllabi described themselves — either in the course title or description — as "introductory" courses, only eight of those introductory courses indicated the use of direct instruction. One of these, John Jones' *Introduction to Electronic and Digital Communications*, includes a clear statement of exactly when and why these courses provide direct instruction on using digital technologies:

> "Occasionally, students will be introduced to new technologies that they may be unfamiliar with. When this happens, these new technologies will be explained in class. If students are confused by something presented in the course or don't understand how to use a particular technology, they should ask for help. However, if students are familiar with the technology being taught, they should be patient with others and lend a helping hand to their classmates when possible." (para. 14)

As Jones' syllabus suggests, direct instruction from the teacher is often represented as being potentially supplemented by direct instruction from other classmates, though it's impossible to guess at how regularly this pedagogical suggestion occurs. All of these classes had a productive (6/33) or hybrid productive/analytic (27/33) objective. That is, in all of the courses in which students received direct instruction from the instructor on how to use technologies, these students were tasked with creating something. In all cases — as Jones' syllabus' statement above suggests — the direct instruction applied specifically to programs, platforms, or other digital tools/technologies that students would be using to create whatever it is they were tasked with creating. It makes sense, then, that nearly half (16/33) of the courses emphasized learning tools, while only five out of 33 emphasized learning skills.

2.3   LEARN-BY-DOING

Another of Jones' courses, a Fall 2013 section of *Multimedia Writing*, adopts a different tact toward students' learning new technologies. Within a subsection of the course's technology policies entitled "Adopting New Technologies," Jones writes,

> "In this course, we will be *experimenting* with many different technologies for writing and reading, ranging from services like Twitter to software packages like Adobe's InDesign to markup languages like HTML5 and CSS. As *experimenters*, our method will be trial and error…. when faced with new tools and technologies you should expect to devote some time to *experimenting* with and learning these technologies, researching (or discovering) their possibilities and limitations, and, when possible, sharing what you have learned with your classmates when they need help." (Fall 2013 *Multimedia Writing*, para. 7 emphasis added)

That is, rather than receive direct instruction about how to use Twitter, InDesign, or HTML5, students are expected to learn through trial-and-error style experimentation, i.e. learn-by-doing. As I conceive it, the general move that learning-by-doing makes is this: teachers assign a project and students try to figure out how to complete that project. Other names for this method include project (or problem) based learning, as well as experiential learning. The NLG describes this method of learning as being "constituted by immersion in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences" (33). It's important to note, however, that the projects teachers assign are often only meaningful insofar as the classroom context is concerned.[6] This is not to suggest, however, that these types of projects aren't worthwhile, or that all projects *should* only

---

[6] These types of projects often inspire students' own version of the "Monday Morning Question": when am I going to need to know this after school?

be constituted by immersion in the meaningful practices of a community. As Ilomaki, et al., indicate,

> "Many researchers seem to share the opinion that the development of digital competence is best supported by pedagogical methods that include rich and integrated use of various technical tools, and a wide range of activities that are based on complex and challenging tasks, such as students' own knowledge creation or product construction, solving multidisciplinary problems, collaborative activities, or project work." (68)

The key marker of learning by doing is, as Jones' *Multimedia Writing* syllabus reiterates, experimentation. This is represented in syllabi by words or phrases such as "trial-and-error," "taking risks," "being bold," "practicing," or in Marissa Landrigan's Fall 2014 *Writing for Digital Media* course, "fuck[ing] up a little." In completing this project or solving this problem, students marshal resources (both technological and human) and develop strategies *on their own*, i.e. they must experiment.[7] As Michael Hoechsmann explains in "Update Your Status: Identity and Learning in Viral Youth Networks," in such a Situated Practice approach, "Pedagogy is just-in-time and task oriented...learning is networked, involving multiple learners with varying levels of expertise at multiple nodes, united by shared interests and goals" (35). Students are guided by the project-at-hand.

---

[7] The pedagogical/psychological underpinning of Situated Practice is Lev Vygotsky's conception of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which Vygotsky articulates in his *Mind in Society*: learners confront a problem or task that is just outside their immediate grasp or abilities. Though these learners have never solved this specific problem or completed this specific task, they have nevertheless engaged in all the activities and have access to all the necessary materials they could use in order to solve the problem or complete the task. The learning challenge, therefore, is not just the solving of the problem/completion of the task itself, but also figuring out how to appropriately activate the necessary and useful skills and experiences that one can deploy in solving the new problem/completing the new task.

Given Ilomaki, et al.'s claim that many researchers favor the learning-by-doing approach in their teaching, it is not surprising that 54/130 digital writing syllabi indicated *experimentation* as a key pedagogical method to be used in the course.

Table 2. Experimentation in Digital Writing Syllabi

Semester	Experimentation
Fall 2009	5/10
Spring 2010	2/10
Fall 2010	6/10
Spring 2011	3/10
Fall 2011	5/10
Spring 2012	5/10
Fall 2012	5/10
Spring 2013	6/10
Fall 2013	3/10
Spring 2014	4/10
Fall 2014	2/10
Spring 2015	4/10
Fall 2015	4/10

Of the 54 courses that emphasized experimentation, one was for both graduate and undergraduate students, eight were for graduate students only, and the remaining 45 were for undergraduate students only, suggesting there isn't a profound difference in terms of the use of collaborative projects in undergraduate classes (46/110, or 42%) versus graduate courses (4/20, or 45%).

These 54 courses emphasized developing competence with specific digital tools (20/54) over developing general skills (8/54) for learning how to use a variety of digital tools. Oftentimes, these tools were specific and emerged from the project on which the course was based. For example, in both Kathie Gossett's *Digital Rhetoric* and Bill Wolff's *internet & writing studies*, students learned HTML and CSS as they attempted to create a research-based website. Conversely, those syllabi that explicitly argued that students would learn transferrable

skills offered students an option to choose from a variety of different types of tools with which they could experiment, and two of these syllabi focused not on "digital composition," but rather on "teaching digital composition." That is, two of these courses had current or future *teachers* as the students. For example, in Sean Connors' *Teaching Multimodal Composition*, graduate students in the University of Arkansas' Department of Curriculum & Instruction were expected to "learn to compose and explore ideas in a range of modalities using image and audio editing software, as well as other computer software and hardware" that their future students would probably use (para. 2).

Seven of the 54 courses emphasized direct instruction as well as experimentation. In a dual-credit course offered at Lake Forest High School in conjunction with the College of Lake County, Steve Douglass' *New Media Production* suggests a chain linking direct instruction and experimental production:

> "This class will teach you how to tell stories visually, in a hands-on way that allows you to make people think, laugh or cry through the video production process. We will critique current media to better understand how story elements affect you as a viewer and producer of media. You will then have the tools to create your own meaningful creative media based on your new media literate understanding of how stories are told in our postmodern world." (para. 1)

Douglass' syllabus argues that while students will receive initial and introductory instruction directly from Douglass about how to use certain technologies, he includes the following statement that suggests that this initial introductory instruction will be supplemented by students' own experimentation:

> "New Media is based on "Failing Fast" so you can learn quickly. I want you to take risks, try to solve problems, figure things out and share your experience in our safe classroom community. We learn best from our own experiences and I want you to grow quickly- so fail fast!" (para. 2)

I have an inkling that the process Douglass describes — learning how to use the tools to make digital movies and then developing that understanding through using those tools to make digital movies — is a fairly common process present in digitally inflected college composition courses, so it is curious that only seven courses (including Douglass' course for dual-enrolled high school students) explicitly explain this process, let alone signal both instruction *and* experimentation as processes through which students will learn how to use digital tools.

2.4   CRITICAL CHALLENGES

If digital literacy is an important component of digital/global citizenship, then both direct instruction and project-based, learn-by-doing style instruction run the risk of being too domineering; what Jacques Ranciére describes in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* as "stultifying."[8] They may be effective, but to what end and at what cost?[9] As Ranciére describes stultifying pedagogy, "[w]hat stultifies the common people is not the lack of instruction, but the belief in the

---

[8] Ranciére uses the word "abrutir." The translator notes that, "[i]n the absence of a precise English equivalent for the French term abrutir (to render stupid, to treat like a brute), I've translated it as 'stultify'" (7, 2ⁿᵈ emphasis added).

[9] Direct instruction is not only plagued by its ideological shortcomings, but also by epistemological ones as well. John Dewey (in *The Public and its Problems*), and Paulo Freire (in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) both argue: direct instruction's reliance upon the distinction between teachers-as-experts and students-as-novices rests upon the assumption that individuals gain knowledge via transfer, and in the case of schools and other educational institutions, this transfer of expert knowledge moves from teachers and into students. As epistemological constructionists, both Dewey and Freire deny this picture of knowledge acquisition, arguing instead knowledges are co-developed between and among learners. Few in C&W object to the epistemological underpinnings of direct instruction in the same way that Freire and Dewey do; that is, few question whether or not knowledge actually happens in the way that direct instruction assumes it does. Instead, the loudest objections in C&W are of direct instruction's frequent use as what the NLG call a "socialising agent." This is probably because most folks in C&W have a closer disciplinary affiliation with cultural studies than they do with developmental psychology.

inferiority of their intelligence" (39). This belief, according to Ranciére stultifies both pupil and instructor (explicator), making the former dependent upon the latter for information, and the latter on the former for legitimacy. In short: both direct instruction and project-based, learn-by-doing instruction can be too controlling of what technologies students learn how to use, how they should use them, and also how they should *learn* how to use them. As the NLG writes,

> "Both immersion and many sorts of Overt Instruction are notorious as *socializing agents* that can render learners quite uncritical and unconscious of the cultural locatedness of meanings and practices." (32) (emphasis added)

Presumably, students shouldn't determine what technologies students should learn how to use, or how they should use them because the instructors — prior to opening the class — already have. As the CCCC "Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments" suggests, "[A]s we refine current practices and invent new ones for digital literacy, we need to assure that principles of good practice governing these new activities are clearly articulated" (para. 5). And as Alexander and Rhodes write in response to this portion of the statement: "What might those good practices be? The assumption is that writing instructors will know best" (51). This has implications for what kind of twenty-first century global citizens we expect our students to become. As Ranciére's mentor, Louis Althusser, puts it in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation)," "the school...teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'" ("Reproduction of Labour-Power," para. 13) (emphasis in original). This is because it is schools, as representative state institutions, who define what it means to be "digitally competent" or "digitally literate." Or, in Ilomaki et al.'s terms, schools (or teachers, either as agents of schools or free agents) determine the formalized and sustainable pedagogical structures in which students are educated. And by consequence, schools seem to define *on behalf of students*, what it means to be a digital citizen.

Of course every teacher of any subject in any school employs a little direct instruction every now and then, if for no other reason than the education students receive from a school is, by virtue of being *from a school*, some manner of *sponsored* education. My criticism of the ideological shortcomings of direct instruction isn't intended to explode the practice as ideologically, and therefore pedagogically bankrupt. Instead, I mean to highlight the relative lack of autonomy an individual student has in determining what is valuable to learn, how it should be learned, and how learning it will change them when that student is the passive recipient of direct instruction. For Ranciére, students' lack of autonomy amounts to stultification when both the instructor's will and intelligence supplement the students' wills and intelligences. Ranciére recognizes that while instructors supplementing students' wills with their own is occasionally necessary, it is oftentimes a tricky affair:

> "A person...may need a master when his own will is not strong enough to set him on track and keep him there. But that subjection is purely one of will over will. It becomes stultification when it links an intelligence to another intelligence. In the act of teaching and learning there are two wills and two intelligences. We will call their coincidence *stultification*." (13)

That is, in situations where an instructor not only prompts students to complete certain projects (supplementation of will), but also overdetermines exactly how students should complete those projects (supplementation of intelligence). For example, consider the processes Adam Strantz's *Multimedia Writing* course promises to enact on (and not with) students:

> "*This course prepares students* for writing in high-tech workplaces by covering the design principles, programming languages, and software tools needed to create multimedia documents suitable for professional contexts. Both writing and media are emphasized in *readings and assignments designed to improve a student's ability* to communicate effectively, create impactful visuals, and answer problems in unique and technologically-savvy ways." (para. 1 emphasis added)

The opening lines of this syllabus' course description represent students as not doing anything, but rather having things done do them. They are *prepared* by the course to enter into a high-tech

workplace, and the course's well-designed reading and assignments will *improve* their abilities to communicate, create, and answer problems. Certainly students can, and often do, *resist* the ideological control exerted via direct instruction, but it's unclear how often teachers accept these acts of resistance as anything more than the squirreliness of unruly fidgets.[10] In short, while direct instruction and project-based, learn-by-doing styled instruction may be effective at helping students develop material, functional, and experiential access to digital technologies, they are less effective at helping those students develop critical access.

2.5   CRITICAL INTERVENTION

There has been a longstanding concern in C&W pedagogical scholarship with critically analyzing digital and multimodal compositions. And in terms of the classroom, this longstanding concern manifests as the frequent and widespread recommendation for teachers of digital and multimodal composition to help their students develop critical access to technologies. In what would be a turning point[11] of sorts in the academic writing about C&W pedagogy, Nancy

---

[10] It is, perhaps, unfair to "pick on" syllabi in this fashion. After all, the ideological issues that are represented in the language of this, and other syllabi might simply be semantic only. If, however, we truly expect our students to "Understand the ethical implications of working within the nexus of technology and culture," as Strantz's syllabus indicates in its "Course Goals," then surely we should probably hold ourselves to the same standards.

[11] In their introduction to this chapter in *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies: Questions for the 1990s*, Hawisher and Selfe note that "In emphasizing the profound disciplinary changes taking place all around us, Kaplan sets the stage for the whole of the book" (8).

Kaplan, in "Ideology, Technology, and the Future of Writing Instruction" addressed the problem of developing critical access or resistance to technologies head on. Kaplan writes,

> "As electronic texts, hypertexts, and hypermedia texts proliferate and as our pedagogical practices add electronic discussion to the oral dialogues that have been the staple of the classroom, writing instruction can no longer concern itself exclusively with words on paper. Nor can writing instruction continue to ignore the ways tools implicate and are implicated in the power relations, or more broadly the ideologies, permeating reading and writing acts." (14)

Indeed, as Hawisher and Selfe (with LeBlanc and Moran) would later point out in *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education*, a critical turn in both Composition Studies and C&W took place during the transition between the 1980s and 1990s. This critical turn, they argue, "was characterized by the further expansion of [the fields'] ongoing inquiry into the contexts of writing and teaching, focusing more steadily and thoroughly than before on issues of gender, race, and class" (173). This expansion of inquiry into the contexts of writing and teaching is what the NLG label as Critical Framing. According to the NLG,

> "The goal of Critical Framing is to help learners frame their growing mastery in practice (from Situated Practice) and conscious control an understanding (from Overt Instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice." (34)

In a sense, one key goal of Critical Framing in a digital writing course is to encourage students to be better, more critically understanding *readers* of digital writing. And in being more critically aware readers, the hope is that digital writing students would, therefore, become better producers of digital writing.

As one might expect based on Hawisher, et al.'s claims, the majority of digital writing instructors' pedagogy is invested in Critical Framing. One hundred and six out of 130 syllabi

promoted critical analysis of digital objects and contexts (or a hybrid of critical analysis and production).

Table 3. Critical Analysis in Digital Writing Syllabi

Semester	Critical Analysis
Fall 2009	7/10
Spring 2010	10/10
Fall 2010	9/10
Spring 2011	9/10
Fall 2011	8/10
Spring 2012	10/10
Fall 2012	7/10
Spring 2013	9/10
Fall 2013	10/10
Spring 2014	8/10
Fall 2014	8/10
Spring 2015	6/10
Fall 2015	5/10

Three of these courses were for graduate and undergraduate students, 16 were for graduate students only, and the remaining 87 were for undergraduates only. This suggests that a Critical Framing was taken more often in a graduate course (19/20, or 95%) than it was in an undergraduate course syllabi (90/110, or 82%), though such an approach was the most common regardless of level.

Syllabi that emphasized an analytical or hybrid analytical/productive approach tended to assume (49/106, or 46%) students would either already know how to use these technologies and engage in critical analysis or these syllabi expected (71/106, or 67%) students to pick up on how to use these technologies or critically analyze as the course progressed.[12] Forty-four out of 106

---

[12] While the NLG presents Critical Framing as a pedagogical mode that is best deployed after Situated Practice and Overt Instruction, a handful of syllabi (9/130) emphasized critical analysis as a standalone pedagogical mode. That is, 9/130 syllabi focused exclusively on the critical analysis of digital objects and contexts, with no requirements to produce new digital objects (learn-by-doing), and oddly very little (1/9) direct instruction on how, exactly, students

syllabi (42%) both assumed and expected students to pick up on both using digital technologies and critical analyses tactics as the course progressed; that is, 42% of courses expected that a focus on critical analysis of digital writing would lead directly to students' ability to engage in critical production of digital writing.

This is problematic, as the direct causal link between critical analysis and critical production doesn't jive with common sense. As Ian Bogost snarkily puts it in *Alien Phenomenology*,

> "Just as one would likely not trust a doctor who had only read and written journal articles about medicine to explain the particular curiosities of one's body, so one ought not trust a metaphysician who had only read and written books about the nature of the universe." (92)

Bogost's anti-nerd/pedant rhetoric is obnoxious, but his point holds water. Following the second most-famous 20th century philosopher-turned-mechanic[13], Matthew Crawford, Bogost argues that "knowledge and labor are not opposites but two sides of the same coin — alternatives for one another" (92). Though his chapter "Carpentry: Constructing Artifacts That Do Philosophy" pillories academics (specifically philosophers) and academic writing (specifically philosophical argumentation), the incipient pedagogy in Bogost's call to "see that philosophy is a *practice* as

---

should go about engaging in critical analysis. In a sense, 9/130 course syllabi seemed to expect students to function as sorts of Post-Process, critically-minded composition researchers. This might be a fair assumption or expectation to have of the four graduate-level courses out of these nine critical-analysis-focused courses because one kind of learn-by-doing style "project" students in such a graduate-level course are ostensibly going to engage in is "be a Post-Process, critically-minded composition researcher." Yet for five of the nine critical-analysis-focused courses — particularly the one Introduction to Composition course(!) — such an overdependence and overemphasis on *only* critical analysis makes little sense, as it seems to assume that everyone enters into a college course well-versed in the intricacies and practices of critical analysis.

[13] See Pirsig, Robert, and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

much as a theory" and to "get [our] hands dirty" emphasizes the importance of coupling critical analysis *with* critical production.

Oddly, a not insignificant number of syllabi indicated they would provide direct instruction on critical analysis. Twenty-nine out of 106, or 27% of syllabi included direct instruction as a stated pedagogical tactic. This is odd because if, following Kaplan, one of the goals of teaching students how to critically engage technologies is to encourage students to understand the ways certain digital technologies and critical analysis tactics implicate and are implicated in power relations; directly instructing students on how to use a certain technology or how to critically analyze in a certain way would, following the NLG, "render learners quite uncritical and unconscious of the cultural locatedness" of that technology or skill. It is hard, perhaps even conceptually impossible, to directly instruct someone on how to develop critical access to technologies. Such critical access would be an empty shell of the type for which Adam Banks advocates in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*, which goes beyond simply "call[ing] attention to the systemic problems in the ways technologies have been used to further oppression" to include an acknowledgment "that there are always ways to resist, that there is always agency in the individual" (62). Such critical access, according to Banks, cannot be a received lesson, for such a received lesson, though it might call attention to systemic oppression, would deny the individual's agency in determine to and how to resist such oppression. As Paulo Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

> "Authentic liberation — the process of humanization — is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans—deposits) in the name of liberation." (79)

In a sense, instructors would have to lead students in the development of critical access to the technologies that the instructors promoted (via requiring them) in the first place. Or, another way: to employ a direct instruction approach to lead students in the development of critical access — i.e. to "use the banking methods of domination" — would have to implicate the instructors teaching those lessons.

This is precisely the process the NLG insists upon in their pedagogy of multiliteracies. Specifically, they insist

> "students…[and] teachers need to develop ways in which the students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a *reflective* manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values. They should be able to show that they can implement understandings acquired through Overt Instruction and Critical Framing in practices that help them simultaneously apply and revise what they have learned." (35) (emphasis added)

That is, students must use the "critical frame" they developed (oftentimes via their teacher's direct instruction) to reflect on their own past practices so they can amend those practices for future work. Reflection is the pedagogical mechanism by which students can marshall the knowledges they acquired and developed during early instruction in order to engage in a more nuanced and informed version of an digital literacy activity. Reflection requires students to revisit and revise their work by rethinking the assumptions of their prior work, oftentimes through the lens of some newly learned critical concept (Critical Framing). To do this re-visioning of previous work, students must be able to reflect upon the purpose of that work so as to make more thoughtful decisions as they reformulate or transform that work.

Startlingly, only seven out of the set of syllabi explicitly emphasize any kind of reflection or reflective work. This number likely belies the true extent to which reflection is deployed in these 130 digital writing courses and digital writing courses at large. That said, I also think this

startlingly low number does indicate several disheartening truths about the ways in which digital writing is taught, and the way that the teaching of digital writing is represented. First, I do think that requiring reflection is a woefully underutilized pedagogical approach. Moreover, even in those instances in which reflection was required, it was often conceived of and deployed as a standalone component of an activity or project, and not as a mechanism for transitioning from a "this is how I did this" perspective to a "this is how I can do this differently" perspective. Each of these seven syllabi that explicitly required student reflection, positioned this reflective *after* an assignment is complete. Indeed, only one of these seven syllabi requires students to reflect after *each* assignment; the remaining six only require a "reflective essay" following the final assignment. And while these reflective essays push students to not just consider how their personal composition processes/experiences have changed, but also what possible implications these changes might have for the meaning of literacy, authorship, and educational policy, they do not *also* ask students to then bring these reflections to bear on their future assignments, either inside or outside of the class. This misapplication of reflection can only result in questionable, if any, learning gains on the part of the students. Students — as well as teachers — should reflect on their past processes and activities *and then* use that reflection to improve future processes and activities. That is, the reflective assignments represented by the syllabi call for important conceptual work, but very quickly that work stops, the assignment is complete, the reflection is not used, and the course is over. That is, in the NLG's words, there is no *return* to the Situated Practice.

2.6   TEACHING YOURSELF

To recap: the problems of direct instruction and project-based learning as modes teaching are that they are perhaps too controlling over how students become digitally literate. Though they are perhaps good at helping students learn how to use digital technologies, they are not as good at helping students develop a critical awareness of how they are using digital technologies, or how those digital technologies are using them. And though the inclusion of critical analysis may help students develop a critical awareness of how others' use digital technologies, or how digital technologies use others, it is potentially less effective at helping students develop a critical awareness of how *they themselves* are using digital technologies, or how digital technologies are using them. This is because "critical analysis" is not a mode of teaching as such, but rather the content of a mode of teaching; a teacher may directly instruct students *how to critically analyze* a digital text, or the teacher may propose a *critical analysis* project for students to complete, but insofar as classroom teaching is concerned, when a teacher critically analyzes her students, she's not teaching them as she is when she lectures them or assigns them a project. Instead, she's studying them; important, but not instruction. Critical analysis transforms *into* a mode of instruction only when it is coupled with reflection. That is, when students use what the NLG calls a "critical frame" to look back on their own practices and their own experiences. That is, when they critically analyze/reflect upon their own material, functional, and experiential access; that's when and how they develop critical access as well. But reflection seems to be a sparsely deployed mode, and when it is deployed it doesn't seem to deployed as a sort of end-of-lecture or end-of-project activity, a throwaway activity. Rarely is reflection used to look back *to look forward;* mostly is reflection simply misused to look back.

59

The problems of these various pedagogical modes, I think, reveal some of the reasons *why* a digital literacy instructor might ask students to "teach themselves." Teachers can seemingly avoid stultifying their students via direct instruction or pre-determined projects. In other words (if they want to) they can avoid supplementing both their wills *and their intelligences* via a heavy-handed approach toward molding their students into the types of 21st-century global citizens they (the teachers) want them (the students) to be, as opposed to helping their students develop into the types of citizens they (the students) aspire to be. Moreover, when students "teach themselves" to be digitally literate, they can only do so by paying close attention not only to the digital technologies they are trying to learn, but also to the ways in which they are trying to learn them. As such, when students "teach themselves" to be digitally literate, they are ostensibly developing not just material, functional, and experiential access *on their own*, they are also able to develop critical access on their own as well. If teaching digital literacy is a part of a citizenship project and we take seriously the ideological snarls generated by directly instructing students how to be digitally literate, or requiring students to complete predesigned digital literacy projects, then simply leaving students to their own devices seems to limit the amount teachers can determine *on behalf of those students* what it means to be digitally literate, and how it means to be a digital/global citizen.

Ranciére argues that such a hands-off approach — i.e. leaving students to their own devices — is a kind of emancipatory pedagogy. His conception of an emancipatory pedagogy begins with the belief that students already possess the intellect to teach themselves. The teacher serves only as the questioning impetus for students to teach themselves anything. For example, the hero of Ranciére's *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Joseph Jacotot, taught Belgian students how to read, write, and speak French, though he himself did not read, write, or speak Flemish. To do

this, Jacotot — Ranciére's embodiment of an emancipating, humanizing teacher — merely handed his students two copies of the same book, one written in Flemish, the other in French, and let them have at it. Ranciére argues that Jacotot's purpose in doing this was to liberate his students, goading them to identify and develop their own intellects without any direct input or instruction from him. In this way, Jacotot's emancipatory pedagogy — not unlike the "leave them to their own devices" pedagogy adopted by some in C&W — emphasizes the concept that a student "is a will served by an intelligence" (52). While C&W instructors might supplement students' will with their own (either in the types of compositions they assign/require, or through explicitly stated goals for courses), the thought is such instructors can and should avoid supplementing students' intelligences with their own. That is, instructors should trust that their students can do what they want task them with doing, if they put their minds to it.

Moreover, as students "put their mind to" teaching themselves, they are able to develop not just the ability to accomplish tasks, but also a critical understanding of how they can and do accomplish those tasks. As Mark Ratto and Megan Boler argue in their introduction to *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*,

> "Critical making invites reflection on the relationship of the maker to the thing produced, reflection on how elements (whether nuts and bolts, bits, and bytes, or breath, blood, flesh, brain, and neurons) work together — in short, consideration and awareness of the mediated and direct experiences of interacting with the material world." (3)

That is, when "left to their own devices," students are able to develop critical access *as* they develop material, functional, and experiential access because they are constantly called to figure out on their own how, exactly, they're going to get the materials they need to make the things they want in the manner they want to. That is, via the process of doing it on their own, students are invited to reflect on how, exactly, they are doing it on their own. This invitation to reflect

61

prompted by doing it yourself undergirds what Ratto and Boler name a DIY ethos, which they see as being affiliated with other counterculture ethoi, most notably the hacker and cracker ethoi, as well as what Steve Mann describes as "maktivism," in addition to "the DIY...ethos of home renovation…[and] the DIT (do-it-together) ethos of the GNU Linux and Free Software Movement" (3) and the punk/counterculture movements of the late 1970s and 1980s. Though this DIY ethos was at one point pointedly "anti-establishment," Ratto and Boler argue that it now constitutes a significant component of what it means to be a 21st-century global citizen.[14] "DIY citizenship," they insist,

> "sits at the intersection of a series of tensions: between consumers and citizens, between experts and novices, between individuals and communities, and between politics as performed by governments and politics and DIY grassroots democracy." (5)

That is, it is not just that leaving students to their own devices is a way for teachers to try to *avoid* dictating how students might develop into 21st-century global citizens *as they might be*, it is also seems to be a way for teachers to allow students to practice being 21st-century global students *as they are*.

For example, consider the case of M Dot Strange, a DIY filmmaker profiled by Bonnie Kyburz in her web-based documentary + Prezi *i'm like … professional* featured in *Kairos*. Kyburz produces her own documentary about Strange and his indie film *We Are the Strange* (WATS) which was screened at the Midnight Movie Program in the 2007 Sundance film festival. In Kyburz's documentary, she explores the ways "M's method complicated the relationship

---

[14] Fred Turner acknowledges this turn in *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, tracing the influence of anti-mainstream publications and figures such as the *Whole Earth Catalog* and Stewart Brand through to decidedly mainstream technology icons such as Steve Jobs and Apple.

between filmmaker and audience," specifically the two audiences which viewed WATS: the more "traditional" Sundance audience, and the dedicated group of YouTube followers Strange accrued as he released short clips from his (at the time) as-of-yet-unfinished animated film through his personal YouTube account. Strange maintains — and Kyburz seems to agree — that what he was doing with WATS was not, indeed could not be appreciated by the Sundance audience. According to Strange, this audience of "40 and 50 year olds" "doesn't want to think...they want everything explained to them." WATS, therefore, is seen as "pointless," leaving the more traditional Sundance audience "speechless" and even wondering "how did this get accepted into the festival?" Strange's dedicated YouTube audience, however, "gets it." More specifically, they understand that WATS is as much a demonstration or performance of the importance of making and distributing a film on one's own, as it is a film about its characters Blue and eMMM. Both Strange and Kyburz (as well as filmmaker and educator Andy Blubaugh, whom Kyburz also interviews for *i'm like ... professional*) maintain that this discrepancy between the old Sundance audience and the new YouTube audience isn't merely another example of a smaller counterculture (YouTube) pushing against a larger mainstream culture (Sundance). Instead, it's an example in a shifting, of sorts, in how folks understand the words "filmmaker" and "movie." Blubaugh suggests that maybe there should be a different word for the kind of video work done by Strange and those like him. Even if more traditional, old-school filmmakers succeed in distinguishing between proper "movies" and whatever it is that Strange and those like him are doing on their own, Blubaugh still recognizes Strange as a 21st-century filmmaker, his audience a 21st-century reconception of audience, and what both are doing as fundamental reconception of what it means to engage in and appreciate 21st-century filmmaking.

And central to what makes Strange not just different, but new is that he made and distributed WATS on his own; he was left to his own devices.

While there are virtues of leaving students to their own devices, these are not the only reasons why a C&W teacher might choose to insist that students "teach themselves" how to use digital technologies. As James Collins writes in "Computer Text Analysis and the Teaching of Writing," "I hold firmly to the principle that a writing teacher is to teach writing, not word processing or computerized text analysis" (31). Collins argues that it is not only unnecessary to "teach computing," but it might also distract from the primary focus of a writing class, i.e. writing. Many early C&W scholars seemed to agree. In 1985, Linda Stine composed and distributed "Questionnaire: Computers in Composition Instruction"[15] to 223 members of "the CCCC special interest group on Computers" ("Answers That Raise Questions," 2), as well as through the February 1985 issue of *Computers and Composition*. The result of Stine's survey identifies material and functional access as two central "disadvantages" to incorporating digital technologies into writing classrooms. She writes,

> "Disadvantages...for the most part centered around two very practical problems: time and money...it takes time to learn how to operate computers, which limits how much of the computer's potential we can use while still meeting our curriculum objectives." (7)

The cost of instructional time motivated 88% of respondents to Stine's 1985 survey to indicate they spent less than 10% of class time per semester teaching basic computer skills. This is

---

[15] Stine's survey focuses primarily on Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), a very specific method of incorporating digital technologies into writing classes. In *Computer-Assisted Instruction in Composition: Create Your Own*, Cynthia Selfe describes CAI as a user-friendly program designed to lead students through a prescribed writing process (Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing, Publishing) through the use of questions and activities that prompt students to complete each stage of the process as they complete a writing assignment.

because, as Colette Daiute argues in *Writing & Computers*, such basic computing instruction stymies the degree to which students can engage with computers in the "social, physical, and cognitive process" (*vi*) of writing with computers.

Incipient in Collins' position is not just an outdated notion of what writing *is*, but also an implicit way teachers should teach writing (or rather an implicit way teachers should *not* teach writing). That is, writing teachers should *not* teach computers; they should *not* teach students how to operate (let alone be critical of) the technologies required to produce the digital and multimodal texts that will enable them to be fully realized, twenty-first century global citizens. After all, Collins might insist, back before all these newfangled technologies and multimodalities, writing teachers didn't teach students how to use a pen or pencil or even a typewriter. These were things students were *supposed to know*, or supposed to be able to pick up on their own. Other, more contemporary scholars in C&W seem to agree (to a point, at a time, and for a time, anyway). Yancey's 2004 CCCC address, for example, expresses an optimism about the skills and abilities her students *already possess* before they enter into her digital/multimodal composition classrooms. She writes of the "energy and motivation..students bring to other genres" that require and deploy a wide variety of computer literacy skills (298). In "why teach digital writing," Michigan State's Writing in Digital Environments Research Center (WIDE) echoes Yancey's optimism: "Increasingly, students already come to our classes with more and more of the technical knowledge to write online. *We teach very little basic computing in our writing classes*" ("how technology changes writing practices: Scope, Identity, and Mission Resistance: 2") (emphasis added). The position that students "already know" how to use digital technologies (and therefore, writing teachers *shouldn't* have to teach them) seems to rest on a sort of felt distinction between what Marc Prensky labeled "digital immigrants" and "digital

natives."[16] That is, C&W teachers[17] figure themselves to be digital immigrants because they can likely claim to *remember* what it *felt like* to not be always already interacting with computers, smartphones, touchscreens, and so on. And these same digital immigrant/teachers *imagine* their students to be digital natives because these same students were *born into* a world in which folks *were always already* interacting with computers, smartphones, touchscreens, and so on. As such, digital natives/students either know — by virtue of being *born* into a world shot through with digital technologies — how to use those technologies prior to entering a digital writing classroom, or they know how to teach themselves how to use them while in their classrooms.

Of the 130 digital writing syllabi I collected, 49 seem to buy into this distinction between digital immigrants and digital natives. That is, 49/130 digital writing syllabi *assume* students are already familiar with the digital technologies for that course. These syllabi represent the "leave them to their own devices" approach to instruction related to that technology.[18]

Table 4. Assumption of Skill in Digital Writing Syllabi

Semester	Assumption
Fall 2009	1/10
Spring 2010	4/10
Fall 2010	7/10
Spring 2011	5/10
Fall 2011	2/10
Spring 2012	5/10

[16] This is a specious and problematic distinction, as I will analyze below.

[17] "Teachers" here refers to those who have been in C&W for some or all of the last thirty or so years. Indeed, though my teaching career is only a little more than 10 years old, I also have the feeling of being a "digital immigrant," having not grown up in a world as shot through with digital technologies, as it became (for me) around 1998, when my family bought our first PC.

[18] That is, after examining each of the 130 syllabi, I determined that 49 of them made explicit statements or implicit assumptions about students' familiarity with digital technologies. I tagged these syllabi accordingly.

Fall 2012	4/10
Spring 2013	5/10
Fall 2013	5/10
Spring 2014	4/10
Fall 2014	4/10
Spring 2015	2/10
Fall 2015	1/10

Five of these courses were for graduate students, and the remaining 44 were for undergraduates only, suggesting (oddly, perhaps) that a lower percentage of graduate course syllabi assumed students' familiarity with those technology (5/20 or 25%) than did undergraduate course syllabi (44/110 or 40%).

The various reasons why a C&W instructor might choose to leave students to their own devices are reflected in the statements made within the syllabi themselves. Consider this statement taken from a shared syllabus for the University of South Florida's "ENC 1101: Digital Edition" Fall 2013 syllabus:

> "This section of ENC 1101 Online is predicated on the assumption that literacy in the twenty-first century is measured by an individual's ability to communicate and conduct research in both traditional print-based formats and in a variety of electronic and web-based media, including e-mail, Internet searches and navigation of online databases, web-based educational and collaborative tools, and other communication media emerging in today's global society." (3)

The syllabus' assumption regarding literacy aligns quite nicely with the attitudes and arguments that link learning digital technologies with digital literacy and digital literacy with 21st-century global citizenship. This is all well and good until one considers the complications that arise when this syllabus' assumption about literacy are coupled with its assumption about its students. In a "Course Technology Requirement" statement, the syllabus indicates:

> "Students enrolled in this online course should have moderate to high literacy with computers, computer software, and Web-browsing and should have readily available, dependable access to a computer for class assignments. You should be familiar with Canvas (including the Modules, Discussions, submitting online

assignments, and TurnItIn) or agree to become familiar enough with Canvas during the first few weeks of class to enable you to successfully submit assignments. Failed computer technology is not an excuse for missing an assignment due date." (4)

It is understandable that this section of the course expects enrolled students to have enough "literacy with computers, computer software, and Web-browsing" to be able to fully participate in an online class; after all, why would a student who did not possess such literacy enroll in an online class? That said, it's unclear what, exactly, constitutes "moderate to high literacy" here. Does one's level of digital literacy translate to an equivalent level of global citizenship? The syllabus seems to assume students have already achieved the full-on digital literacy it described in the first passage, and if it does make this assumption, then what is the class for?

It could be that by "moderate to high literacy" the USF syllabus refers to simply means the ability to "communicate and conduct research...in a variety of electronic and web-based media," and also "be familiar with Canvas," the Learning Management Software system used at USF at the time. That is, "high literacy" is a misnomer, of sorts, and the level of literacy students need might be better described as "some literacy" or even "enough literacy." What's missing from this remediation, however — what makes its dual assumptions about both what digital literacy means and how digitally literate its students already are — is any consideration of the literacy skills necessary to access not just *present* technologies, but also emerging technologies. That is, if the syllabus limits its notion of "high literacy" to the ability to *use* already-existing technologies in the ways those technologies are used in an digital writing class, then it's limited in terms of what actual benefits it offers to using *other* technologies (both existing and emergent) in ways other than those found in a digital writing class. That is, there's a limited possibility of any transfer of learning.

68

Yet even if "moderate to high literacy" only means "some" or "enough" literacy, this optimistic confidence in students' abilities still seems inaccurate. Anecdotally, 2006 — about a year after Yancey and WIDE wrote about the myriad digital tools their students knew how to use to compose in myriad new and exciting genres — was when my students and I confronted all the new tools and technologies that had been suddenly dropped into our English classroom. The world of digital tools and multimodal genres that Yancey, WIDE, and Prensky described was very different than the world of clanking radiators and oddly humming laptops in which my students and I lived. And this is not, unfortunately, a singular experience within the reality of C&W teachers teaching digitally-inflected composition courses. As Susan Kirtley writes in "Students' Views on Technology and Writing: The Power of Personal History,"

> "Though popular mythology and media often depict young people and especially teenagers as being the epitome of computer savvy, this is not necessarily true, especially with a diverse student body...As we explore the writing process in classes we teach, it is important for writing instructors to be aware of and respect the various histories and levels of competence with computers, particularly when they are teaching in a computer lab." (215)

Kirtley's analysis of her own students at the University of Massachusetts tilts against what she names "popular mythology," a representative image created by "media" regarding students' computer literacy. Within C&W scholarship, unfortunately, pieces such as Yancey's address and WIDE's digital essay contributed to this mythology.

I find this particularly odd because four years earlier, in "The Perils of Creating a Class Web Site," Yancey and Greg Wickliff "argue that the students in [a co-taught] course—highly literate and skilled in the production of conventional printed academic writing—performed much like basic writers when challenged with acquiring a broad set of new visual and computer literacy skills" (180) That is, Wickliff and Yancey seem to acknowledge that not only did the

introduction of "a broad set of new visual and computer literacy skills" "do little to improve the ways writers generate text," it may have actually served to deteriorate those skills. "Though they seem to understand (and can critique) others' efforts," Wickliff and Yancey explain, "they're stymied when it's time for production. Mostly, it's easy to explain why. Few have the skills or experience *writing* in this medium" (184). This lack of skills or experience requires remediation, specifically remedial training and experience in "new visual and computer literacy skills." That is, students seem to require time to teach themselves how to use computers *in order to* engage in digital writing.

My experiences, as well as Kirtley's and Yancey's and Wickliff's analysis demonstrates that students are not necessarily digital natives. And as educational psychologist Paul Hutchings notes — citing 2012 statistics on the Interact access and capabilities of citizens compiled by the UK Office for National Statistics — conceiving of younger students as *always already* digitally literate is not just factually inaccurate, it's potentially harmful. In his blog post "Digital Natives: Wrong Label, Harmful Label," Hutchings states:

> "The term 'digital native' is value-laden; it brings with it an expectation of competency and confidence. No need to train that person on computer use, they're 18, they must know what they are doing. No need to train them on the new technology they need to use, they're a 'digital native', they'll pick it up on their own… these are the types of attitudes that we are breeding, because 'everyone knows' that people of that age are 'digital natives'." (para. 12)

The optimism of Yancey's address, WIDE's digital essay, and Prensky's specious distinction between digital natives and immigrants is contagious. To combine the analysis of Kirtley and Hutchings: their optimism breeds a popular mythology. Yet, this mythology is certainly based on a kind of glittering generality, an appealing description of possible reality of teaching and learning that is unsupported by ready-at-hand facts. Such an attractive description attracts

70

approbation by appealing, not to the reality of our teaching experiences, but to our hopes and desires for what those experiences should be or might become. It's an alluring description, but ultimately a wrong one.

Far more of the 49 syllabi that leave students to their own devices, as it were, recognize the importance of the literacy skills necessary to access emerging technologies, yet they do so by assuming students already have access to those skills. That is, while USF's syllabus imagines students have full competence, other syllabi imagine students have full capability of developing competence. These syllabi advocate that students be left to their own devices not because they already know how to use those devices, but because they have the capacity to learn how to use those devices. In other words, these syllabi seem to agree with Ranciere's formulation that "Whoever looks always finds. He doesn't necessarily find what he was looking for, and even less what he was supposed to find. But he finds something new to relate to the *thing* that he already knows" (33). Of the 49 syllabi that expressed assumptions about students' familiarity with digital technologies or how to learn them, 45 articulated expectations that students be able to "teach themselves" how to work with any technologies. Like USF's syllabus, Kyle Stedman's Fall 2013 *Rhetoric 351: Advanced Rhetoric* syllabus shares some affiliation with the arguments regarding multimodality, digital literacy, and global citizenship. Stedman's syllabus describes the final project, a Multimodal Persuasive Project worth 25% of the final grade, thusly:

> "The changing face of communication technology means that scholarship is changing as well. You'll practice making a scholarly argument online by composing a lengthy, researched, persuasive piece of scholarship that can be shared publicly online (at a free web-development site called Wix). This piece will be composed in multiple modes of communication, meaning that it will be partly composed of text and partly composed of video, audio, or images." (para 15)

This project has the look of the type of project often proposed in a project-based or experiential learning class. What differentiates Stedman's final project from those types of projects, however, is the degree to which he expects his students to complete this project *on their own*. In a statement on "Technology and Privacy," Stedman indicates,

> "When technology fails to work correctly, I ask you to try to solve the problem on your own; often, reading the help files provided by a website can fix any problem you have, and a good Google search usually clears up anything they forgot to include." (para. 19)

Though this statements seems to blame the technology for failing "to work correctly," Stedman's statement is a recognition that his students probably don't have the "moderate to high literacy" the USF's syllabus imagined its students to have. Stedman shares, in other words, the USF syllabus' position on the significance of digital literacy, but it does not share the USF syllabus' assumption about how much digital literacy students possess. Instead, Stedman seems to assume that though students may not already know how to use the digital technologies used in the class, they do students already *know* how to figure out how to use them. For example, in a specially designated subheading labeled "Course Technologies," Kathie Gossett's Spring 2014 *Digital Rhetoric* syllabus addresses students directly, indicating

> "This course is focused on digital rhetoric. As such, you will need to have access to certain digital technologies in order to complete your work including the internet. In some instances, these technologies may be new to you. You are responsible for making time to ramp up, troubleshoot, and learn. This activity will require your patience, can-do attitude, and sense of adventure." (para. 16)

Like Stedman's syllabus, Gossett's assumes students have or can easily acquire technologies, but might not know how to use them. Both syllabi seem to recognize that though one *has* "certain digital technologies...these technologies may be new" to that person. And like Stedman's

syllabus, Gossett's assumes that students can "ramp up, troubleshoot, and learn" how to use these technologies on their own.

Gossett's syllabus assumes students possess not only material access — either through their own devices, or through some university-provided lab space — but also enough experience with these technologies, as well as enough time *above and beyond* their obligations for this and any other classes they are taking to figure out how to do things they don't already know how to do. This time students are expected to "figure out" how to use new technologies is not represented as typical homework time; it is not presented as being accounted for in whatever formula of in-class and out-of-class work time Gosset's institution, Iowa State, uses to govern students' effort.[19] That is, the expectation Gossett's syllabus makes of her students to learn new technologies is not the same expectations the syllabus makes with its list of assignments and projects; it is an *additional* expectation, a kind of uncompensated labor, if you conceive of the credit (points, grades, etc.) a student receives for her classwork as compensation. Much of the "work" Gossett's syllabus expects students to engage in above and beyond in-class and out-of-class work is experimental in nature, requiring "patience, can-do attitude, and sense of adventure." Similarly, 14 of the other 45 assumption-and-expectation-tagged syllabi also encourage this kind of independent experimentation. For example, Gerald Lucas' Spring 2015 *Writing for Digital Media* course includes the following statement: "I'm assuming, since you're taking this class online, that you are comfortable with working *by yourself* and have a basic Internet literacy" (para. 4, emphasis added). Lucas' course employs the Second Life platform, a

---

[19] For example, one credit hour will require two homework hours. So a three-credit course will require six hours of homework per week.

virtual world similar to other Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs).[20] Second Life is populated with an immense number of users, as well as the immense number of objects those users can interact with or create. As such, there an individual user can undertake myriad actions when she first signs into the platform, far too many to list and describe.

Though Lucas' syllabus overtly states students should work individually, his is not necessarily alone in making this requirement. Returning solely to the 49 syllabi that explicitly *assume* students always already know how to use digital technologies, only 12 syllabi explicitly encourage collaboration between peers in the course description, objectives, procedures, or assignment descriptions. For example, Cheryl Ball's 2010 *Multimodal Composition* course syllabus indicates, "You do not have to be a technological expert to do well in this class. You will be learning technologies throughout; sometimes you will know more or less than your classmates, and I expect everyone to help each other as we proceed" (para. 4). Similarly, Paul Schacht's *Literature & Literary Studies in the Digital Age* course syllabus indicates: "Digital humanities is project-oriented and highly collaborative. That goes with the heavy reliance on tools. Consequently, some of the work you'll do for this course will require teamwork" (para. 7). Both Schacht's and Ball's syllabi elaborate upon the expectation made in Gossett's and Lucas' syllabi by indicating that in learning new technologies, students are expected to work together. Other times, however — as in the case of Stephanie Hedge's *Writing in a Digital Age* — collaborative work is limited to Hedge's catchphrase: "plan :: make :: share" (para. 7). In Hedge's syllabus, collaboration is consumptive, but not prosumptive in nature; students

---

[20] Second Life is not a game per se, as there is no specific objective for an individual user or "player." Instead, it's merely a virtual space in which users can interact, build, create, and so on.

collaborate, but only in order to *share* their work — work they've planned and made individually — with their classmates. Even still, collaboration is infrequently touted in syllabi that assume students know how to use technologies, or know how to teach themselves how to use them. More often, the work students have put in (or are expected to put in) to learning digital technologies is presented as lonely, as in Frank Romanelli's Spring 2011 *Writing in Electronic Environments* syllabi:

> "This course is four credits because substantial independent technology learning is a required component. Technology learning is a form of independent, out-of-class practice that engages students in intensive and open-ended experimentation with tools for writing. In this course, you will be expected to engage in significant out-of-class practice with our course's main web authoring tools and online platforms. In addition, as a contribution to our group's learning, you will research and prepare a multimedia presentation that focuses on the critical literacies involved in writing for and with technology." (para. 5)

What WIDE seems to mean by "technical knowledge" is roughly the same as what Gerald Lucas, in his *Writing for Digital Media* syllabus means by "basic Internet literacy," and which Kathie Gossett describes in her *Digital Rhetoric* as the ability of students to "ramp up, troubleshoot, and learn." It would be inaccurate to state that either WIDE or Lucas assume or expect their students to know how to use the technologies of their respective digital writing classes in an expert fashion; that is, that neither assumes or expects students to have a cognitive understanding of all the different actions one can take with a device or program. Rather, both seem to expect that students know how to *teach themselves* to use these technologies in a passably competent way; that they have a metacognitive understanding of how to figure out what some of those actions are and what their results might be; that's part of what the culture of digital nativism is, not just a cognitive understanding of some digital tools, but a metacognitive understanding of digital tools in general. As such, both WIDE and Lucas expect their students to

do exactly that: to teach themselves to use technologies with which they are unfamiliar with and/or use technologies in unfamiliar ways technologies with which they are already somewhat familiar. Students will do this, Gossett suggests, by "ramping up" and "troubleshooting." Giving Gossett the benefit of the doubt (as I really don't know what "ramping up" means here), perhaps one way students who are not themselves experts in certain digital technologies can teach themselves how to use those technologies is by finding and using various tutorials or instruction manuals that will guide them through developing passable expertise on those technologies.[21]

2.7   CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Banks conceives of access almost entirely in terms the digital technologies and the various multimodal, digital genres those technologies afford. And while his taxonomy of access is quite helpful in clarifying *some* of the barriers that get in the way between an individual and digital literacy, it certainly does not clarify all of these barriers. He's not alone in this preponderant focus on technologies themselves at the expense of focus on the technology learners themselves; this is, perhaps, the key trouble with the DIY ethos incipient in C&W pedagogy. There is a correct acknowledgment that technologies are constantly changing, but perhaps an unfair assumption that the learners of those technologies (a) aren't constantly

---

[21] Manuals such as the IDG/John Wiley & Sons published "For Dummies" series, whose early titles (*DOS for Dummies*, *Windows for Dummies*, etc) specifically targeted readers interested in "teaching themselves" how to use certain digital technologies.

changing, (b) can all teach/learn on their own in the same way, and (c) that way is identical to the

way that C&W teachers taught/learned digital technologies on their own. Clearly, these

assumptions doesn't take into account the individual herself and how she goes about trying to

develop access to digital technologies. Given the complexity of what "access" to technologies

amounts to, it should come as no surprise that developing access is a similarly complex process.

While the NLG's statement about the "mission" of education emphasizes developing access to

things and processes outside of the student[22], one of the group's key pedagogical influences,

John Dewey, emphasizes the importance of students' developing access to things and process

inside of themselves. In *How We Think*, Dewey lays out what he views as "the business of

education" thusly:

> "[I]t is [education's] business to cultivate *deep-seated and effective habits* of discriminating tested beliefs from mere assertions, guesses, and opinions; to develop a lively, sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded, and to *ingrain into the individual's working habits methods of inquiry and reasoning* appropriate to the various problems that present themselves. No matter how much an individual knows as a matter of hearsay and information, if he has not *attitudes and habits* of this sort, he is not intellectually educated. He lacks the rudiments of mental discipline. And since these *habits are not a gift of nature* (no matter how strong the aptitude for acquiring them); since, moreover, the casual circumstances of the natural and social environment are not enough to compel their acquisition, the main office of education is to supply conditions that make for their cultivation." (27-28) (emphasis added)

There appears to be some tension between what the NLG considers the purpose of education and

what Dewey considers "the business" of education, though each promotes (in different ways)

students developing access. While the NLG emphasizes students gaining the ability to "public,

community, and economic life," Dewey emphasizes students gaining access to their own "deep-

---

[22] I.e., "a multiplicity of discourses" that are "culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised" and often manifest in a "burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (9).

seated and effective habits." Dewey might argue that one could not possibly hope to participate fully in this the public, community, and economy life without first developing effective habits for doing so.[23] But, the NLG would seem to counter, the distinction between "self" and "the world" is a false one; that the self is not distinct from, but constituted by and intermingled with the social, political, ideological elements of "the world."[24] Of course, the tension itself is specious; Dewey readily admits the "deep-seated and effective" habits are — just like the individuals who develop them[25] — abstractions, constituted by and intermingled with the social, political, ideological elements of "the world." So too, the NLG insists upon the need for individual students to "re-practice, where theory becomes reflective practices" (35).

In short, if C&W teachers seek to help students develop into twenty-first century global citizens, then our classes need to help those students develop access to both the processes of how (as twenty-first century global citizens) they are expected to communicate *and* how they actually communicate. To be more specific, what is called for is a pedagogy that, a la Dewey, seeks to help individual students "cultivate deep-seated and effective habits of discriminating tested beliefs from mere assertions, guesses, and opinions; to develop a lively, sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded, and to ingrain into the

---

[23] Indeed, educational psychologists from Lev Vygotsky (*Mind in Society*) and Jean Piaget (*The Grasp of Consciousness*) to John Flavell ("Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring") and the Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning (*How People Learn*) make the same argument: metacognitive awareness comes before critical awareness of "the world."

[24] In terms of composition pedagogy, it is tempting — though most certainly wrong — to view the tension between Dewey and the NLG as reminiscent of the tension between cognitivism (Dewey) and social constructionism (the NLG).

[25] Countering classic liberalism, Dewey conceives of the concept of the individual not as a given, but as an abstraction. See "The Ethics of Democracy," *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, and *The Public and its Problems.*

individual's working habits methods of inquiry and reasoning appropriate to the various problems that present themselves" so as to, a la the NLG, "participate in public, community, and economic life…[by] building learning conditions [that lead] to *full and equitable social participation.*" This is why Selfe insists in "The Movement of Air," that though

> "Students are intuitively aware of these [hybrid communicative practices], being immersed in them...*they need help understanding* the implications of such cultural trends as well as managing their own communicative efforts in ways that are rhetorically effective, critically aware, morally responsible, and personally satisfying." (642)

That is, writing teachers need to help students develop not just material access, but functional, experiential, and critical access as well, both to the communicative practices of the twenty-first century global world, as well as "their own communicative" habits and beliefs. Shipka argues for a similar instructional intervention, insisting compositionists "Creat[e] courses that provide students with a greater awareness of, *and ability to reflect on*, the ways in which writing intersects and interacts with other semiotic systems" (137) (emphasis in original). Our courses have to be about more than just the technologies and the new-fangled ways those technologies enable people to communicate with each other. They've got to also be about the individual student too, and the way that student tries to learn how to use those technologies and the new-fangled technologies enable people to communicate with each other.[26]

---

[26] This "dual purpose" of digital and multimodal composition courses is not new in Composition studies either. Each complementary "purpose" can be viewed in terms of the Bartholomae/Elbow debate. In terms of that debate, the NLG is somewhat Bartholomaean, while Dewey is more Elbowian.

3.0   A STORY OF SELF-CULTURE

"Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself" (para. 48).
—Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life and Writings*, 1796

"Self-culture, I am aware, is a topic too extensive for a single discourse, and I shall be able to present but a few views which seem to me most important" (para. 9).
—William Ellery Channing, "Self-Culture: An Address Introductory to the Franklin Lectures," 1838

"If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental disposition, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education" (Chapter Twenty-Four, III.2).
—John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916

3.1   THE NEED FOR SELF-CULTURE

The DIY, DIT, hacker, cracker, and maktivist ethoi that many regard as central components of twenty-first-century digital literacy (and, as such, digital citizenship) are three things: first, they are *descriptions of* (not *prescriptions for*) how *experts* (not students) approach the development of digital literacy and citizenship. Second, they are *learned*, and therefore *learnable*, "not a gift of nature" as Dewey indicates. And third, they are, though their names

suggest otherwise, old concepts. Indeed, within the US these ethoi are as old as school itself.[27]

This chapter explores the historical and conceptual foundations of these ethoi within the school-based education context of the United States. More specifically, the next three chapters tell a story of "self-culture," the most appropriate translation of the German pedagogical concept of bildung, and a sort of nineteenth-century pedagogical buzzword in the United States. In doing so, my goal is to start to, in the words of Lucille Schultz and Steve and Jean Carr in *Archives of Instruction*, "acknowledg[e] the stratifications of past practices [so that] we are better able to see layered investments in present materials" and practices. I'll extend my acknowledgement of these stratifications in the two chapters following this one. To bring forth two quotes from the previous chapter, if it is the case that, as Ratto and Boler argue in *DIY Citizenship*, twenty-first century literacy and citizenship "sit[] at the intersection of a series of tensions: between consumers and citizens, between experts and novices, between individuals and communities, and between politics as performed by governments and politics and DIY grassroots democracy" (5), then it is important to recognize, following Hesse, that these tensions are "nothing new; in educational theory, [they] track[] through Dewey, Emerson, the German romantics, and so on."

Though the term "self-culture" does not appear in either of the editions of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*[28] published before Noah Webster's death in 1843, the word and its definition does appear in Volume IV of John Ogilvie's 1850 expansion of Webster's second edition, entitled *The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language*:

---

[27] As I'll argue in a later chapter, the ethos of self-teaching was a significant conceptual component of the early proposals for school-based education. Self-teaching was, in a sense, a part of schooling's DNA, at least in the United States.

[28] The first edition was published in 1828; the second in 1841.

"Self-culture (self-kul'tür), n. Culture, training, or education of one's self without the aid of teachers. *Prof. Blackie.*" (24)[29]

Though this definition of "self-culture" — contributed by Professor John Stuart Blackie — is not the earliest or most complete definition of the pedagogical concept, it is a fine place to start this story of self-culture for a number of reasons. First, it is simple and straightforward; self-culture *does* have something to do with an individual cultivating, training, or educating one's self, and it does tend to happen *outside of* an institutional school setting. Secondly, it is the earliest appearance of what became a more-or-less stabilized definition of "self-culture."[30] Thirdly, as a definition composed by Blackie and added by Ogilvie to Webster's lexicographical work, the definition itself hints at some of the significant ways the concept of self-culture was taken up and redeployed by varying educational philosophers in and out of the United States, creating rich networks of meaning and variances of practice. And finally, in the definition's simplification of the concept of self-culture, and in the stabilization of that simplified definition, the definition itself seems to signal why folks today don't write or talk about "self-culture," preferring less awkward terms with which the concept is mistakenly conflated such as "self-teaching," "DIY learning," or even (for professional teachers) "student-directed learning" or (for the hifalutin) "autodidacticism." In a sense, while Blackie's definition of self-culture lends the

---

[29] Oddly, "*Prof. Blackie*" here does not refer to the John Blackie of *The Imperial's* Glasgow-based publishing firm, Blackie & Son, but rather to his contemporary, the Edinburgh-based poet and intellectual John Stuart Blackie. Among Professor JS Blackie myriad interests was — as his definition of self-culture attests — culture, training, and education, both inside and outside of formal schooling environments. (To wit: he argued just as forcefully for structured school reforms in 1846's *Education in Scotland: An Appeal to the Scottish People, on the Improvement of their Scholastic and Academical Institutions*, as he did for more personalized and less structured self-teaching in 1874's *On Self-Culture, Intellectual, Physical, and Moral*.)

[30] Both the *Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* of the late 19th century as well as *Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary* simply reprinted JS Blackie's definition, while *Webster's* 1913 edition defines "self-culture" as "Culture, training, or education of one's self by one's own efforts."

concept simplicity, utility, and a populist appeal, it does so by hacking through the concept's thorniness.

A return to the 1841 second edition of Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* begins to highlight some of these complications. In this edition, the elided complexity of "self-culture" emerges both from the swirling conceptions of "self" and "culture" (and "cultivate"), as well as in the odd conceptual and pedagogical consequences that arise by trying to jam these two terms together. What follows are the complete definitions of "self" and "culture," as well as "cultivate" which is offered as a definitional synonym to "culture" as a transitive verb.

> "SELF, a. or pron. ; plu SELVES ; used chiefly in composition. [Sax. *self*, *sylf* ; Goth. *silba* ; Sw. *sielf* ; Dan. *selv* ; G. *selbat* ; D. *zelf*] 1. In *Old Authors*, this word sometimes signifies particular, very, or same.— 2. In *present usage*, self is united to certain personal pronouns and pronominal adjectives, to express emphasis or distinction ; also when the pronoun is used reciprocally ; as, *I* myself 3. *Self* is sometimes used as a noun, noting the individual subject to his own contemplation or action, or noting identity of person. Consciousness makes every one to be what he calls *self*. 4. It also signifies personal interest, or love of private interest ; selfishness.— *Self* is much used in composition." (738)

> "CULT'URE, n. [L. cultura.] 1. The act of tilling and preparing the earth for crops ; cultivation ; the application of labor or other means of improvement. 2. The application of labor or other means to improve good qualities in, or growth. 3. The application of labor or other means in producing. 4. Any labor or means employed for improvement, correction or growth.
> CULT'URE, v. t. To cultivate. *Thomson*." (213)

> "CUL'TI-VATE, v. t, [Fr. *cultiver* 1. To till ; to prepare for crops ; to manure, plough, dress, sow and reap : to labor on, manage and improve in husbandry. 2. To improve by labor or study; to advance the growth of ; to refine and improve by correction of faults and enlargement of powers or good qualities. 3. To study ; to labor to improve or advance. 4. To cherish ; to foster ; to labor to promote and increase. 5. To improve ; to meliorate, or to labor to make better ; to correct ; to civilize. 6. To raise or produce by tillage." (213)

Taken in concert, these definitions introduce a few of the conceptual complexities of "self-culture" I will first describe briefly below before more fully elucidating in the remainder of this

chapter. First is the idea that in using the term "self" either on its own, or as a pronoun-based compound (myself, yourself, etc.), the subject (frequently a writer using the term "chiefly in composition") is engaged in a sort of metacognitive analysis or identification of her*self*. That is, in using the word "self," an individual is bringing forth her individual subjecthood into her own contemplation, and it is this very self-reflexive "Consciousness [that] makes every one to be what he calls *self*." This definition seems to expand upon the Cartesian cogito, placing "thinking" and "self" not in a causal relationship, but rather a mutually interdependent symbiotic relationship: it is not just that in thinking, I am, but rather that in thinking about myself thinking about myself thinking about myself thinking, and so on *ad infinitum*, I *become*. That is, self is not the end or conclusion of thinking, but rather self happens when thinking happens and thinking can only happen if self happens, i.e. interdependence, i.e. the conscious contemplation of the self forms the self which allows the conscious contemplation of the self, a sort of ouroboros played in reverse.

Second is the implication that though self-culture is, via Blackie's simplification, a *noun*, it is is also, by virtue of the second definition of culture, a transitive verb. That is, it is both a subject and a process that takes an object, in this case the individual engaged in it. Even as a noun, Webster's "culture" component of "self-culture" is — just as the "self" component is — always shifting, in the process of being tilled and prepared; laboring, applying, employing, improving, correcting, and growing; cultivating and being cultivated. In short, self-culture is both something that is and something that happens *to you* (think: "education," "teaching," "learning," or, indeed, "thinking"). Deeper still, as a noun, "self-culture" picks out both the general concept, as well as the specific *result* in the individual. It would be equally correct to write, for example, "Sam's and his students' self-culture" as it would be to write "Sam and his students self-culture

themselves" as it would be to write "Sam is writing about self-culture." And insofar as that which you are currently reading is concerned, it is most certainly the case that "Sam's self-culture develops as he self-cultures himself by writing about self-culture."

Taken together, the first and second implication of Webster's definition of "self" and "culture" yield a further implication regarding self-culture: it never ends. As John Lysaker puts it in *Emerson and Self-Culture,* self-culture is "a task whose completion is far from secure" (2). The ongoingness of self-culture emerges from the interdependent symbiosis of "self" and "culture;" as I self-culture myself, so too must I think about how I self-culture myself, and both actions — the cultivating and the contemplation of cultivation — change me, change my *self*, which I must continue to strive to self-culture (transitive verb) as I strive toward self-culture (abstract noun), and continue to contemplate how and what I self-culture, and so on.

Fourthly, as my intentional slip to "cultivate" instead of "self-culture" in the previous paragraph is meant to signal, there is close affiliation between culture/self-culture and cultivation/self-cultivation, or *bildung*. The actions incipient in culture-as-noun (tilling, preparing, improving, laboring, growing) are the exact actions that define culture-as-verb's synonym: cultivate. As a pedagogical praxis, self-culture draws extensively from Germanic philosophers and their various reflections on *bildung*, certainly from GWF Hegel, but primarily from those Enlightenment and Romantic-era philosophers and statesmen more focused on theories of teaching, learning, and schooling. Key among these are Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel. For these philosophers, as WH Bruford describes in *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann*, the praxis of self-cultivation was conceived of as old, maybe even timeless. Indeed, part of their conviction

as it pertained to their pedagogical principles, Bruford argued, stemmed from the fact that each felt they were *describing* how things are done best and not *prescribing* a way to do things better.

It is on these points that this chapter will expand. More specifically, rather than tell The History of Self-Culture, I'd like to tell a story about self-culture. The interest or tilt or bias of this story is guided by Hesse's casual historicizing of the tension between students' individuals selves and schools' cultures: that is, I'd like to tell the story that explores how the tension between self and culture was conceived of as a productive pedagogical force in the educational theories of John Dewey, Ralph Waldo Emerson and some of his 19th-century contemporaries, and German romantics. This story will expand upon four "core beliefs" among 19th-century advocates[31] as they pertain to the pedagogical praxis of self-culture: (1) Self-culture develops one's "whole self" according to one's "native propensities; (2) Self-culture happens outside of school; (3) Self-culture advances culture or society; and (4) Self-culture is a pedagogical principle. While elements of these core beliefs are evident in the dictionary definitions included above, this chapter — indeed this whole dissertation — operates under the wisdom of William Ellery Channing's remarks that make up the epigraph: as a concept, self-culture can't fit into a single discourse.

---

[31] Hereafter "self-culturists," which is not to be confused with my later use of "self-culturer." While self-culturists publicly advocate for self-culture in their writing or lecturing (i.e. their public discourse), self-culturers privately practice self-culture, or publicly write about their private practices of self-culture.

3.2   A TACIT AND SHARED TRADITION

For compositionists, it might be easiest to dive into my story of the pedagogy of self-culture with John Dewey in *media res*. That is, John Dewey — given his familiarity to and centrality within C&W and Composition pedagogy — presents a convenient starting point to tell this story, though chronologically the bulk of the story I will tell starts much earlier than him. Though Dewey prefers the simplified term "culture," the pedagogy of self-culture remains foundational to his philosophy of education as articulated throughout his works, from the earlier "My Pedagogic Creed" and *School and Society*, to later works such as *How We Think*, *The Quest for Certainty*, *Individualism Old and New*, and his most thorough articulation of his pedagogy, *Democracy and Education*. In this masterwork, Dewey writes,

> "Culture is also something personal; it is cultivation with respect to appreciation of ideas and art and broad human interests. When efficiency is identified with a narrow range of acts, instead of with the spirit and meaning of activity, culture is opposed to efficiency. Whether called culture or complete development of personality, the outcome is identical with the true meaning of social efficiency whenever attention is given to what is unique in an individual—and he would not be an individual if there were not something incommensurable about him. Its opposite is the mediocre, the average. Whenever distinctive quality is developed, distinction of personality results, and with it greater promise for a social service which goes beyond the supply in quantity of material commodities. For how can there be a society really worth serving unless it is constituted of individuals of significant personal qualities?" (Chapter Nine, III)

For Dewey, the process of education is a process of self-culture, of a self learning about culture and consequently changing as it learns about culture, and so too culture forming as a community of individuals learning about it. In this way, Dewey's philosophy of education springs from what Dewey calls in *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* his Ethical Postulate:

> "IN THE REALIZATION OF INDIVIDUALITY THERE IS FOUND ALSO THE NEEDED REALIZATION OF SOME COMMUNITY OF PERSONS OF WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL IS A MEMBER; AND, CONVERSELY, THE AGENT WHO DULY SATISFIES THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE

87

SHARES, BY THE SAME CONDUCT SATISFIES HIMSELF." (131)
(capitalized emphasis in original)

Dewey's Ethical Postulate was always already a central aim of his philosophy of education.

Moreover, Dewey argues, this interconnecting and interanimating mutually constitutive

relationship between self and culture is also always already the central aim of those theories of

education that argue education should follow paths of natural development[32] or those who argue

the aims of education should be to develop and maintain social order.[33] While the former group

rely upon a specious distinction between natural and social, the latter group relies upon the false

assumption that social order can only be established and maintained if citizens remain rigidly

uniform in their thinking and actions.[34] "[P]rovide[d] an environment in which native powers

will be put to better uses," individuals can better develop their own culture; that is, they can

better engage in self-culture (*Democracy and Education*, Chapter Nine, I.2). And when engaged

in self-culture, these individuals' education follows a path of "natural" development because that

which is "natural" is and always has been a product of their social conditions. And because in

following a path of development that emerged as a product of social conditions, the self-

culturing education of these individuals better ensures social order. As Dewey writes,

---

[32] Though Dewey identifies Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the primary representative of this group, it would also include Friedrich Froebel, as well as steadfast follower of Froebel and contemporary of Dewey, Elizabeth Peabody, who established the first kindergartens in the United States.

[33] This group has some loose affiliation with the epistemological and pedagogical writings of John Locke, but the clearest exemplars of "schools-as-social-order" advocates tend to be better known as politicians than philosophers. For example, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Benjamin Rush, and Horace Mann, the so-called "Father" of the Common School Movement.

[34] For example, Rush's notion of "republican machines."

"Social efficiency as an educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join freely and fully in shared or common activities. This is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning—without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one's perception of meanings." (*Democracy and Education*, Chapter Nine, Summary)

As I will explore in more detail below, the foundational centrality of self-culture in Dewey's philosophy of education is frequently reduced by so-called Deweyean pedagogues when they advocate for a more "student-centered" approach to teaching. Rather than trace forward all of the affordances and complications of Dewey's massive philosophical/pedagogical schema, followers tended to pick and choose what to emphasize and value and what to cast away. As Paul Lynch points out in *After Pedagogy*, Dewey's presence in the work of Compositionists is often as a popularized representation of his expansive pedagogical and philosophical insight. To refer to one's pedagogy as "Deweyean" often just means "learn by doing" or "experience-based learning" or "student-centered" or "progressive pedagogy," (depending on who uses this name-based adjective), as though these different styles or modes of learning were both perspicuous and synonymous. Though not wrong per se, these buzzwords (like all pedagogical buzzwords) belie the underlying complexity of Dewey's pedagogy and its inextricable connection with his pragmatic philosophy.

Dewey's pedagogical commitment to both self and culture (to larger structures, systems, and institutions as well as individuality and personality) is evidenced not only in his writing, but (as one would expect) in his pedagogical practice, most notably in the various schools he established, influenced, or ran. Of Dewey's laboratory school at the University of Chicago, Cornel West writes in *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*,

"The aim of the school was not only to serve as a model of how meaningful and enriching education could take place, but also to make a practical intervention

into the national debate on education….In sharp contrast to curriculum-centered conservatives and child-centered romantics, Dewey advocated an interactive model of functionalistic education that combined autonomy with intelligent and flexible guidance, relevance with rigor and wonder." (84)

Yet, it was the forced merger of this Laboratory School with several other schools in Chicago that created a rift between Dewey and the University of Chicago's administration, ultimately pushing him to Columbia University. To continue the simple story of self-culture, it seemed Dewey's pedagogical emphasis on individual student autonomy and flexible teacher guidance fizzled out, not just at Chicago, but also nationally. It seemed to do so for political, philosophical, and historical reasons. First, as psychologists in the early 20th century developed new theories conceiving of intelligence as a fixed and testable trait, much of the progressive pedagogy of Dewey was either ignored or aggressively dismissed.[35] As Leon Kamin argues in *The Science and Politics of IQ*, the need to sort large groups of citizens — first, World War I army recruits, then secondary students during the early 20th century "high school movement" — into easily manageable groups pressured educators to align their pedagogical practices with results of intelligence testing.

This political pressure emphasizes some of the philosophical shortcomings of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and pedagogy: most notably, his inadequate acknowledgement of the Marxist philosophical tradition. Unlike the Marxist tradition, Dewey does not seem to fully recognize or admit to the ways in which larger systems "preclude individuality, social freedom, and democratic participation" (West 70). In a sense, Dewey's philosophy and pedagogy failed to

---

[35] In "Edward Lee Thorndike and John Dewey on the Science of Education," Stephen Tomlinson examines the conflict between Thorndike's notion of "hereditarian behavioral psychology" approach to intelligence and testing, and Dewey's "organismic ontology modelled on the process of adaptation" (365). While the latter presented a complicated picture of learning for bureaucrats seeking to recast national public education as an "investment," the former provided quantifiable data and metrics for determining scholastic progress in terms of student performance.

adequately account for the various systemic pressures that would ultimately block either from

being widely adopted.[36] And just as the political roadblock to the widespread adoption of

Dewey's pedagogy emphasized its philosophical shortcomings, so too do its philosophical

shortcomings potentially underscore why much of what remains of his pedagogy today is a

reduction of buzzwords boiled down from its original philosophical and pedagogical complexity.

While Lynch is right to point to experience as a foundational concept for Dewey's

pragmatic philosophy and pedagogy, Lynch's emphasis on the role that reflecting upon

experience plays in pedagogy centers around instructors' experiences and how they can, by

teaching casuistristically, develop and improve upon those experiences. Lynch's is more

properly a theory of teaching, rather than a pedagogy *as such*. Indeed, as a theory of teaching,

Lynch's suggestion of teaching sidesteps a central concern within Dewey's pedagogy, vis a vis

"the intrinsic activities and needs...of the given individual to be educated" (*Democracy and

Education*, Chapter Eight, I.3.1). The activities and needs of the given individual to be educated

are, Dewey claims, the foundation upon which the aims of education are built. "It is as absurd,"

Dewey explains,

> "for [parents or teachers] to set up [their] 'own' aims as the proper objects of the
> growth of the children as it would be for the farmer to set up an ideal of farming
> irrespective of conditions. Aims mean acceptance of responsibility for the
> observations, anticipations, and arrangements required in carrying on a function—
> whether farming or educating. Any aim is of value so far as it assists observation,
> choice, and planning in carrying on activity from moment to moment and hour to
> hour; if it gets in the way of the individual's own common sense (as it will surely

---

[36] Both Tomlinson and Kamin argue that the "quantifiability" of education via the psychology of Thorndike (among others) proved irresistible to the Office of Education which, in 1939 under FDR's Reorganization Plan No. 1, was under the purview of the Federal Security Agency. In addition to the Office of Education, the FSA also managed the Social Security Board, the FDA, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the US Public Health Service, so the umbrella group's preoccupation with metrics and measurement as a mechanism for accountability makes sense.

do if imposed from without or accepted on authority) it does harm." (Chapter Eight, I.3)

Dewey continues,

> "And it is well to remind ourselves that education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents, and teachers, etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education. And consequently their purposes are indefinitely varied, differing with different children, changing as children grow and with the growth of experience on the part of the one who teaches." (Chapter Eight, I.3)

This makes the activity of teaching profoundly complicated, for teachers must be aware (or at least attempt to be aware) of both an individual student's common sense, as well as the conditions that influence and shape that common sense. As Dewey explains it in *How We Think*,

> "The teacher's problem is thus twofold. On the one side, he needs...to be a student of individual traits and habits; on the other side, he needs to be a student of the conditions that modify for better or worse the directions in which individual powers habitually express themselves. He needs to recognize that method covers not only what he intentionally devises and employs for the purpose of mental training, but also what he does without any conscious reference to it, — anything in the atmosphere and conduct of the school which reacts in any way upon the curiosity, the responsiveness, and the orderly activity of children." (46)

Dewey's analysis of the aims of education, as well as teachers' twofold problem that springs from these aims, represents the theoretical underpinning of contemporary praxes such as student-centered differentiated instruction.[37] It also highlights the most significant reason why

---

[37] It's also the underpinning for the myth of learning styles, which is often attached to the praxis of differentiating instruction; i.e. present a lesson through multiple "modes" (visual, aural, sensorimotor, etc) to better aid students with different learning styles. Learning styles' connection to differentiated instruction seems to hinge on direct instruction as being the only method of instruction at play. When I use the term "differentiated instruction" here I am referring specifically to the practice of allowing students to individually craft their own learning projects, and not to the practice of using audio/visual supplements during a lecture. As Dewey writes in *Moral Principles in Education*, "Imagine forty children all engaged in reading the same books, and in preparing and reciting the same lessons day after day. Suppose that this constitutes by far the larger part of their work, and that they are continually judged from the standpoint of what they are able to take in in a study hour, and to reproduce in a recitation hour. There is next to no opportunity here for any social or moral division of labor. There is no opportunity for each child to work out something specifically his own, which he may contribute to the common stock, while he, in turn, participates in the productions of others. All are set to do exactly the same work and turn out the same results. The social spirit is not cultivated in fact, in so far as this method gets in its work, it gradually atrophies for lack of use." (Chapter III)

Composition pedagogy shifted so aggressively from the so-called process "paradigm"; if writing instructors' must be a student of individual writers' traits and habits, they can't rightly prescribe a uniformed process of writing for those writers. That said, though Dewey's analysis certainly seems to present an argument against the Writing Process as it was envisioned and promoted by the so-called Process Paradigm, his analysis does not present an argument against processes as such. Indeed, incipient in Dewey's analysis is a sort of meta-process for teachers as they attempt to address the twofold problem of teaching: teachers must be a student of their students and the conditions in which their students function. That is, teachers must simultaneously observe students' traits and habits, as well as the social conditions that influence those traits and habits. Based on these observations, they must choose how an activity might affect individual students, either by developing students' traits and habits or by influencing the social conditions that influence those traits and habits, or both. Moreover, teachers must accept responsibility for both their observations, as well as the activities they develop based upon those observations. As such, it behooves teachers to attempt to anticipate how both students' traits and habits will be affected by their activities, as well as how the social conditions that influence students' traits and habits will be affected by their activities (which in turn, will affect the students' traits and habits). Teachers must then arrange and then carry out the activities, and once again observe students' traits and habits and the social conditions that influence students' traits and habits. Based on these observations, teachers must then amend any harmful activities that "get in the way of individual's own common sense."[38]

---

[38] As one might expect given the nature of his pragmatic philosophy, Dewey's pragmatic pedagogy doesn't finalize according to some pre-figured idea of successful completion. Instead, it merely stops, often because of some arbitrarily decided-upon time limit (such as the end of a class period or semester or scholastic year). In actuality, the

The incipient meta-process Dewey hopes will guide teachers — that is, Dewey's teaching philosophy — overlaps directly with what Lynch calls, at different times, "teaching casuistrically" or case-based teaching.[39] Unlike Lynch, however, Dewey doesn't limit his meta-process to teachers, nor the act of teaching. For Dewey, anyone engaged in the process of education ought to be engaged in a process that exercises what Dewey calls one's Individual Method. "What is required [of education]," Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*,

> "is that every individual shall have opportunities to employ his own powers in activities that have meaning. Mind, individual method, originality (these are convertible terms) signify the quality of purposive or directed action. If we act upon this conviction, we shall secure more originality even by the conventional standard than now develops. Imposing an alleged uniform general method upon everybody breeds mediocrity in all but the very exceptional." (Chapter 13, I.1)

Having thoroughly described the general features of one's individual method in the previous two chapters, Dewey summarizes these features thusly:

> "[C]ollection and analysis of data, projection and elaboration of suggestions or ideas, experimental application and testing; the resulting conclusion or judgment. The specific elements of an individual's method or way of attack upon a problem are found ultimately in *his native tendencies and his acquired habits and interests*. The method of one will vary from that of another (and properly vary) as

---

meta-process Dewey imagines for teachers, "The aim, in short, is experimental, and hence constantly growing as it is tested in action….Every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved" (*Democracy and Education*, "Chapter Eight: Aims of Education"). That is, it doesn't finalize; it is never-ending. It only ends when the individual ends or when the individual ends it.

[39] Indeed, given Lynch's acknowledged indebtedness to Dewey's philosophy of experience, it's unclear why Lynch named his proposed meta-process "casuistry" and how he distinguishes this meta-process from Dewey's proposed meta-process. He is, perhaps, simply rebranding Dewey's proposed meta-process, marshaling together Dewey's proposals under a common and catchy word — casuistry — that helps to distinguish it from other proposals. As I've mentioned earlier, though, there isn't a grand distinction between what Lynch calls "teaching casuistrically" and what Dewey merely calls "teaching." It is perhaps the case that Lynch does not wish to cast aspersions on those who call what they do "teaching," but what Dewey might call "lecturing," "preaching," or merely "telling." "That education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process," Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*, "is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory."

his original instinctive capacities vary, as his past experiences and his preferences vary." (Chapter 13, I.3) (emphasis added)

What Dewey called a generalized "Individual Method" Lynch named "case-based teaching" and I have identified as a meta-process. For Dewey, this Individual Method applied to any problem encountered in an educational setting, not just (a la Lynch) the problems teachers face while teaching.[40] In terms of schooling, just as a teacher must observe students and students' situations, choose and carry out activities, anticipate outcomes of activities, amend activities, observe outcomes and students, and accept responsibility for outcomes, observations, amendments, and so on, so too must students observe their teachers and their teachers' activities, anticipate how they (students) will engage and perform on those activities, amend their engagement and performance, observe how their teachers amend the activities based on their teachers' observations, and so on. This process will, as Dewey points out, differ from student to student, teacher to teacher, and student to teacher based upon original instincts and past experiences, all of which are, at one and the same time, unique to the individual, yet also influenced by the shared conditions in which each individual student and teacher finds himself or herself, i.e., the classroom in which those individuals are gathered. That is, according to Dewey education's goal is for both teachers and students to simultaneously use their individual methods. In doing so, teachers and students must pay attention to how their individual methods were developed

---

[40] Even still, if one thinks of "teaching" as the activity that a "given individual to be educated" (i.e. an instructor) must learn how to do or do better — that is, if one think of "how do I teach better" as the problem confronting all teachers — then Lynch's can perhaps be more than a philosophy of teaching. That is, Lynch's philosophy of teaching, by virtue of the fact that teachers must always be students of their students *before* they can be teachers of those students (as well as while they are being teachers of those students), is also a philosophy of studenting. In a sense, following Dewey's analysis, a student of Lynch can and should engage in studenting casuistrically just as Lynch himself can and should engage in teaching casuistrically.

according to what Dewey describes as one's "*native tendencies*"[41] (self) "*and his acquired habits and interests*" (culture). And in using these individual methods, teachers and students develop and build upon them, changing both their native tendencies and adding to their acquired habits and interests.

Student-centeredness is not, therefore, simply a matter of teachers focusing on students' interests, or of encouraging students to lead discussions. It is not a method of conducting an individual class or even of approaching individuals in a class. Indeed, it has little to do with classes or schools. For Dewey, the phrase "student-centered education" is redundant. All education is, by virtue of being education, student-centered. Dewey's pedagogy is way of insisting that each and every person be involved in an educational endeavor. And all educational endeavors challenge students[42] to simultaneously use and develop their individual method, regardless of the subject-at-hand.[43] This individual method emerges from the student's native tendencies and acquired habits and interests, between the student's self and culture, as well as how the student uses her individual method to develop her tendencies (self) and habits and

---

[41] As I'll explore later, "native tendencies" comes from John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

[42] For issues of relative clarity, I've limited my analysis here to teachers and students, though this is a specious distinction based on the arbitrary roles commonly assigned in schooling. In truth, Dewey's pedagogy is *self*-centered, as opposed to student-centered insofar as all individual selves are students.

[43] In "Explicating Our Tacit Tradition," Stephen M. Fishman orients this simultaneous use/development in terms of the revision stage of writing, arguing "What is at stake in the construction of a new text is a construction of a new self. For Dewey, the two are inseparable. And because they are inseparable, he would say the revision anxiety is not just apprehension about getting something correct. It is apprehension about giving up an old self while a new self is still forming" (326).

interests (culture). Moreover, the student, guided by her individual method, reflects upon how she deploys that method while studying the subject-at-hand (process), as well as while reflecting on her deployment (meta-process), and her individual method itself is influenced and further developed both in her deployment of it and her reflection on it. Or, somewhat simply, as the self (a product of self and culture) studies culture (also a product of self and culture), and as it does so it changes both self and culture.

Lynch's project in *After Pedagogy* seeks to recoup a central concept of the whole of Dewey's philosophy: experience.[44] As such, he is not writing against those Compositionists and other contemporary scholars and teachers who refer to themselves as "Deweyean," but rather he is contributing to the richness of the adjective they use to describe themselves. The story I hope to tell has a similar goal, I suppose. Like Lynch, I think a story of self-culture can contribute to the richness of the Deweyean moniker through a conceptual and historical analysis of another key aspect of his philosophy of education: the pedagogy of self-culture. But unlike Lynch (and Janet Emig and Stephen Fishman, as well as David Russell, John Trimbur, Tom Newkirk, and Louise Phelps before him), I don't mean to implicitly suggest that pedagogy (not even John Dewey's pedagogy) starts with John Dewey. As a pedagogical practice, "self-culture" doesn't "belong" to Dewey any more than do student centeredness, experience-based learning, learning by doing, or other progressive pedagogies. In more thoroughly exploring how self-culture, as a pedagogical practice that did much of its circulating in the half-century prior to John Dewey

---

[44] In this way, Lynch's project is not unlike Fishman's in "Explicating Our Tacit Tradition: John Dewey and Composition Studies." While Lynch focuses on experience as *the* central component missing from Dewey's adoption by Composition Studies, Fishman explicates Dewey's "idea of community" and "theory of perception" as they relate to his "goal of education" (316).

writing about it, emerged, developed, changed, got picked up or rejected, adopted or resisted, we get a better sense of the concept of "self-culture" as what Dewey (borrowing from William James) would call a "double-barreled" phenomena. That is, in terms of how Composition and C&W have *experienced* Dewey's pedagogy of self-culture — in adopting or rejecting it, in amending or nuancing it, and so on — that pedagogy has both content[45] and reference[46], all of which are important for understanding it.

And insofar as self-culture is concerned: an individual's experiences of both "self" and "culture" are similarly double-barreled. Both "self" and "culture" have content and reference; they both possess traits (sense-data), as well as connections, most notably insofar as education is concerned, with each other. Neither "self" nor "culture" are fixed, nor are either in constant flux. As Fishman (citing *Experience and Nature*) puts it,

> "Although we may long for stability, Dewey tells us that a totally stable world would be dead. And although we need change, Dewey also tells us that a precarious world unanchored by routine would be chaotic...In Dewey's discussion of perception, the stable and the precarious are represented by the terms doing and undergoing. We are 'doing' when we organize our experience by employing already established conceptions. We are 'undergoing' when we allow our encounters to modify our established conceptions." (324)

One of the key ways in which a self *does* education, according to Dewey, is through its individual method. It is through this individual method that the self *does* and *undergoes* learning, both about itself and about the world, i.e. culture. As the self learns (*does* learning through its

---

[45] "Content" here refers to how Dewey himself articulates what I am calling the pedagogy of self-culture.

[46] "Reference" here refers to how Dewey's concept connects with and influences other ideas/pedagogies; what Schultz, Carr, and Carr call "layered investments."

individual method) about culture, it *undergoes* change through that learning of and by culture

such that both the content and the reference of the self change. The self *undergoes* further change

as it reflects (*does* reflection through its individual method) upon to how it has changed in its

dealings with culture, i.e. its previous doing and undergoing. And just as the self undergoes

change by culture, so too does culture undergo change such that both the content and the

reference of culture change. Culture is further changed as the self reflects (*does* reflection

through individual effort) on how culture is changed in the self's dealing with culture. Through

education, the self and culture are co-constitutive. There is no "natural" end — both in terms of

"aim" and in terms of finality — to this mutually constitutive relationship. There are only

arbitrary ends, "indefinitely varied" agendas promoted by "persons, parents and teachers, etc."

with preestablished, yet still arbitrary deadlines. And such arbitrary ends are not a problem as

long as the familiar stability those ends provide to the self learning about culture does not

eliminate the unfamiliar novelty of the self learning about culture.

3.3   SCHOOLING IN THE US

Dewey, according to Cornel West, represents the "highest level of sophisticated

articulation and engaged elaboration" of American pragmatism (69). Dewey's grand

breakthrough was not only his consideration of "larger structures, systems, and institutions, but

also that he puts them at the center of his pragmatic thought without surrendering his allegiance

to Emersonian and Jamesian concerns with individuality and personality" (70). That is, in both

his pragmatic philosophy and pedagogy — which have a chicken-and-egg relationship[47] —

Dewey remains committed to attending to both the individual and society, to self and culture.

But then, how did Dewey learn all this? That is, how did Dewey, as a teacher and a student of students and teachers of students, as well as of studenting and teaching, of education, relying upon both his native tendencies and his acquired habits and interests, his Individual method, his self and his culture, how did he come to understand that which he claimed to understand about education? The convenient way — the way suggested by Hesse in his brief aside in his "Response to Cynthia Selfe" — to trace self-culture forward would be to situate it as a pedagogy lurking in the history of American pragmatism. This move suggests that self-culture, much like pragmatism, perhaps got its start in the writing and thinking of Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself influenced by "German romantics." West argues that Emerson is the protopragmatist forebear of the United States' most visible contribution to the Western philosophical tradition. From the works of Emerson, the incipient pedagogy of self-culture was taken up and nuanced by William James, possibly Charles Sanders Peirce, before being fully and artfully realized in the pedagogical writings of John Dewey. Convenient, yes; accurate, not really. Emerson, James, Peirce, even Dewey during the first half of his life and the early parts of his lengthy academic career all existed in a rich context of what I earlier named self-culturists, a veritable primordial, pedagogical soup in which swam lecturers, clergymen, educationalists, pseudo-scientists, and so on. This is to say, that if John Dewey truly does represents the "highest level of sophisticated

---

[47] "If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education….The most penetrating definition of philosophy which can be given is, then, that it is the theory of education in its most general phases." (*Democracy and Education,* Chapter Twenty-Four, III.2)

articulation" of Pragmatic philosophies, including a pedagogy of self-culture, than his accomplishment is not clarifying the disjointed philosophical positions of a handful of early and protopragmatists. Instead, his accomplishment is clarifying principles from myriad competing and complementary proposals of self-culture, at times philosophically and historically complex, at times simplified for popular consumption.[48]

Before highlighting these various proposals for self-culture, it makes sense to briefly and broadly outline some of the attitudes and proposals about school-based education that circulated in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to which proposals for self-culture were, in part, responding. I write "briefly and broadly" because as evidenced by the nuanced work of historians of early US schools such as Lawrence Cremin[49], Carl Kaestle[50], and Stanley Schultz[51] there truly wasn't any uniformity between the various proposals for school-based education that cropped up in the United States throughout the late-18th and early-19th centuries. This lack of practical and ideological uniformity, however, did not stop self-culturists from imagining such a uniformity into existence. It is in response to these imaginary monolithic attitudes toward schooling, these *mis*representations of schooling, that proposals for self-culture emerged. Though

---

[48] To be clear, I do not agree with West's thesis regarding Dewey as some sort of ultimate articulation of Pragmatic philosophies, let alone some sort of ultimate articulation of the pedagogy of self-culture. I do believe, however, that for Compositionists and those working in C&W, Dewey is a sort of lens through which the 19th-century pedagogy of self-culture filtered through.

[49] See *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876.*

[50] See both *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* and *The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750-1850.*

[51] See *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860.*

it'd be easy and mostly correct to accuse self-culturists of engaging in a little strawman argumentation, to do so would elide some of their important criticisms of what were at the time pervasive — though not universal — motivations for and methods of school-based education. In short: self-culturists weren't making it all up; they might've been overstating some of their descriptions of school-based education, but they weren't fabricating them.

It's important, therefore, that before I tell any kind of story about self-culture, I first tell the prequel to that story. Importantly, this prequel isn't a story about *how things actually happened*, but rather a story about *how self-culturists imagined things were actually happening*. Self-culturists represented school-based education in the early United States in this way expressly so they could offer their own counter-proposals of self-culture.

The attitudes toward school-based education and its place in a republican society that dominated the early US republic draw extensively from John Locke, both from his more systematic examination of metaphysics and epistemology *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, as well as from his smaller, less systematic *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. It should be noted — as John and Jean Yolton do in their introduction to the latter work — that there are significant contradictions between Locke's explicit metaphysical and epistemological arguments in *An Essay*, and the incipient metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that lurk under the attitudes in *Some Thoughts*.[52] Most notably, while Locke famously argues that a human is born a "blank slate" onto which knowledge is written only

---

[52] Of course, Dewey would recognize these differences the other way round: there are significant contradictions between Locke's explicit pedagogical arguments in *Some Thoughts* and the incipient pedagogical assumptions lurking behind metaphysics and epistemologies of *An Essay*.

through experience[53], in *Some Thoughts* he acknowledges various "unalterable frame[s] of [humans'] constitution[s]" (§66). That is, there are certain "*predominant Passions, and prevailing Inclinations...native Propensities*...prevalencies of Constitution" (§102) that frame how an individual receives and derives knowledge from experience. His suggestion for educating young children, therefore, starts with the instructor "study[ing] their [students'] Natures and Aptitudes, and see, by often trails, what turn they easily take, and what becomes them; observe what their Native Stock is, how it may be improved, and what it is for" (§66). This generates a contradiction as to both the end or aims of school-based education, as well as the starting point. If children are blank slates, then Lockean school-based education (which he earlier writes in §18 is all about the settling of good habits) is fairly straightforward: the teacher starts by selecting the "good habits" she wants to instill and then crafts experiences that will impress upon her students' minds knowledge of those habits. If, however, children have native, prevailing inclinations, the process gets messy: the teacher may still start by selecting "good habits," but this is a sort of false start. Her true start only comes when she examines those inclinations that frame how her students process and derive knowledge from experiences. Only then, could she craft experiences that do not simply impress upon her students' mind knowledge of her selected good habits, but must also jive with and improve upon her students' "Native Stock," "For as these are different in him, so are your methods to be different, and your Authority must hence take measures to apply itself different ways to him" (§102).

---

[53] Book 2, chapter 1 of *An Essay:* "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*: in that, all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself." (109)

The apparent contradiction between minds conceived of as blank slates versus minds framed by native propensities is rather unsatisfactorily resolved in the conclusion of *Some Thoughts* in which Locke doubles-down on both lines of thinking. At length, he writes:

> "Each Man's Mind has some peculiarity...that distinguishes him from all others; and there are possibly scarce two Children, who can be conducted by exactly the same method. Besides that I think a Prince, a Nobleman, and an ordinary Gentleman's Son, should have different ways of Breeding. But having had here only some general Views, in reference to the main End, and aims in Education, and those designed for a Gentleman's Son, who being then very little, I considered only as white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases; I have touch'd little more than those Heads, which I judged necessary for the Breeding of a young Gentleman of his Condition in general." (§217)

Though he consistently indicates throughout that his treatise is written specifically for the schooling of sons of Gentlemen, and not for the schooling of all, this is the first and only time Locke acknowledges that the "mind-as-white-paper" metaphor is a sort of thought experiment. That is, Locke only *considered* a young child's mind to be blank, white paper so that he might construct a system of philosophy around such a starting point, but of course, even Locke seems to acknowledge that a young child's mind is *not* like a blank, white paper. While it's unclear — and, indeed, unimportant to me — if this thought experiment traces back to *An Essay*, it does strike me that Locke is using these final paragraphs to subtly hedge the title of his short treatise. A better title might be: *Some Thoughts Concerning the Education of a Gentleman's Son if that Son's Mind Was, Upon Birth, Like White Paper or Wax to be Moulded and Fashioned as the Teacher Pleases*. That is, his thoughts are of little practical value as they place far too many philosophical barriers between theory and application.

Unfortunately, the subtle, strange contradictions highlighted by the difference between *An Essay* and *Some Thoughts* were erased, ignored, or simply forgotten by those who took up his ideas in their proposals for a system of common schooling in the newly formed United States. This is significant because had these early proposals at least recognized the complexity, or even

104

followed the attitudes toward individual cultivation Locke proposed in *Some Thoughts*, it is likely that common schools in the United States probably would have started out rather differently than they did. As it happened, however, Locke's hedging in the conclusion of *Some Thoughts* was slowly transformed by many early US "educationalists" into the rather unpalatable position that some folks (i.e. white, land-owning men, most often of English descent) *were* capable of and did deserve individualized cultivation, whereas others (i.e. all women, continental European immigrants, black slaves, laborers, etc.) were more or less stuck with their 'inferior' native propensities, and only deserved the basest of school-based education fit for the subservient, low-skilled class to which they were bound by birth. As Henry Ward Beecher states in his *Seven Lectures to Young Men*, "You can make a great deal more of a potato if you cultivate it than if you do not cultivate it; but no cultivation in this world will ever make an apple out of a potato" (qtd. in *Pillars of the Republic* 88). The South Carolinian, pro-slavery lawyer William Harper put it more starkly:

> "The Creator did not intend that every individual human being should be highly cultivated …. It is better that a part should be fully and highly cultivated and the rest utterly ignorant. To constitute a society, a variety of offices must be discharged, from those requiring but the lowest degree of intellectual power to those requiring the very highest, and it should seem that endowments ought to be apportioned according to the exigencies of the situation." (qtd. on 206-7)

Another modified variation of Locke's positions that early proposals tended to take up was the distinction between education that took place within a family, and that which was provided by external sources, i.e. schooling. Unfortunately, in conceiving of education as something that could, even should be provided by both families and by schools, these early proposals tended to emphasize the more conservative elements of Locke's work; specifically, the idea that school-based education's role was to teach individuals how to know their role and stick to it. In the early US, this meant that schools' primary function was to generate and maintain the

105

political stability of the new republic. In his 1796 "Farewell Address," George Washington advised his successors to, "Promote then as an object of primary importance institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened" (qtd. in Cremin 103). And as Jefferson put it, school-based education's aim, at all levels, was

> "To give every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business; To enable him to calculate himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts and accounts, in writing; To improve, by reading, his morals and faculties; To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment; And in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed." (qtd. In Cremin 110)

Aside from Jefferson's plan for a unified school system for Virginia, perhaps the most infamous example of this "molding" style of schooling is the practically (and plainly) argued for "Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic" by Philadelphia-based physician and Declaration-signer Benjamin Rush. Rush's proposal — drawing more from Locke's *Essay* than *Some Thoughts* in its supposition that children's minds were blank upon birth — is most readily remembered for his troubling claim that "it is plain that I consider it as possible to convert men into republican machines" ("Thoughts Upon" 27). Importantly, however, those that would be so converted were limited to the the majority of pupils who would attend the "free schools established in every township" ("A Plan" 6), for whom only the basics of reading, writing, the use of figures, and good citizenship would be the extent of their formal schooling; those that would go on to attend Pennsylvania's central University would conceivably receive more of the individualized instruction Locke wrote of in *Some Thoughts*. While the central University was the pinnacle of the Commonwealth's schooling system, the free schools were the

"lowest" of the four tiers in Rush's system, which was modeled on Thomas Jefferson's mostly unrealized plan for a school system in Virginia. Above district-based free schools were county-based colleges, above these were four-regional colleges. "By this plan," Rush writes, echoing Jefferson,

> "the whole state will be tied together by one system of education. The university will in time furnish masters for the colleges, and the colleges will furnish masters for the academies and free schools, while the free schools, in their turn, will supply the academies, the colleges, and the university with scholars, students, and pupils. The same systems of grammar, oratory, and philosophy *will be taught in every part of the state*, and the literary features of Pennsylvania will thus designate one *great and equally enlightened family.*" ("Plan for" 6, emphasis added)

Both Rush's and Jefferson's plans for schools, though influential, never came close to full fruition.[54] Indeed, for over fifty years after ratifying of the US Constitution, the "institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge" would remain decentralized. Starting around 1830, a variety of factors seemed to hasten the development of a unified school system in what would come to be known as the Common School movement. Certainly, as Cremin and Kaestle argue, key individuals such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard did a great deal to advance the cause of common schools, both through their work as educators and advisors, as well as through their

---

[54] Plans for unifying schools encountered not just political and ideological resistance, but also pragmatic difficulties, all of which emerged (in part) from the "neighborhood school" model that predominated in the colonies (and later the newly-formed US) from the middle of the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century (*Pillars of the Republic* 27). As Kaestle puts it, "In New England and the Middle Atlantic region, the district system of school control came about as population dispersed from town centers. Outlying neighborhoods resisted paying for schools that were distant from their homes and began to demand control of separate funds for their own schools….The decentralized system received legislative sanction in various laws — Connecticut in 1760, Vermont in 1782, Massachusetts in 1789, and New York in 1814 — but the practice existed before the laws." (26) Unifying these decentralized schools was not only resisted for tax-related reasons, but also for ideological reasons in places with a strong sense of regional independence (for example, in central Pennsylvania's predominantly German/Dutch immigrant communities). And in other places, it was near to impossible to unify neighborhood schools because they were sparse in establishment and sporadic in operation (for example, in much of the rural South). In a sense, it was impossible for the early US republic to establish a unified school system because some places lacked the necessary infrastructure to do so, and those places that did possess the requisite buildings and teachers were content to leave well enough alone.

extensive promotion of school-based education. Yet, these individuals' achievements took place in a context ripe for the development of a unified school system. The US economy, bolstered by the production of cotton in the South and the manufacture of goods in the North, and unified by a developing transportation system, was expanding. Chasing after new and better jobs in this economy, more citizens were moving from rural homesteads into expanding cities. This strained the degree to which an individual worker's home could provide for him or her the necessary education that it once did during the era of smaller, homestead-based agrarian economy. It also increased crime — or, at least, the visibility of crime — in these expanding cities. As Kaestle points out, "Population density in large cities increased tensions and made social problems more visible" (70). Given this social context, individual proponents of common schools (i.e. Mann, Barnard, among others) advocated for these schools as a mechanism through which not just republican sensibilities, but also "a set of moral values centering on hard work and subordination" (71) could be promoted. In this way, "[t]his lent urgency to the idea that schools could inculcate morality in the hope of maintaining social order. In cities the prevention of crime and poverty became the leading moral mission of public schools" (70).

And as the interest in common schooling increased, so too did the interest in self-culture, though certainly the intensity of the interest in former far outstripped that of the latter. Indeed, as a rough Google Ngram chart seems to indicate, the terms "common schools" and "self-culture" seemed to ebb and flow, to breathe in roughly the same way throughout most the 19th century:
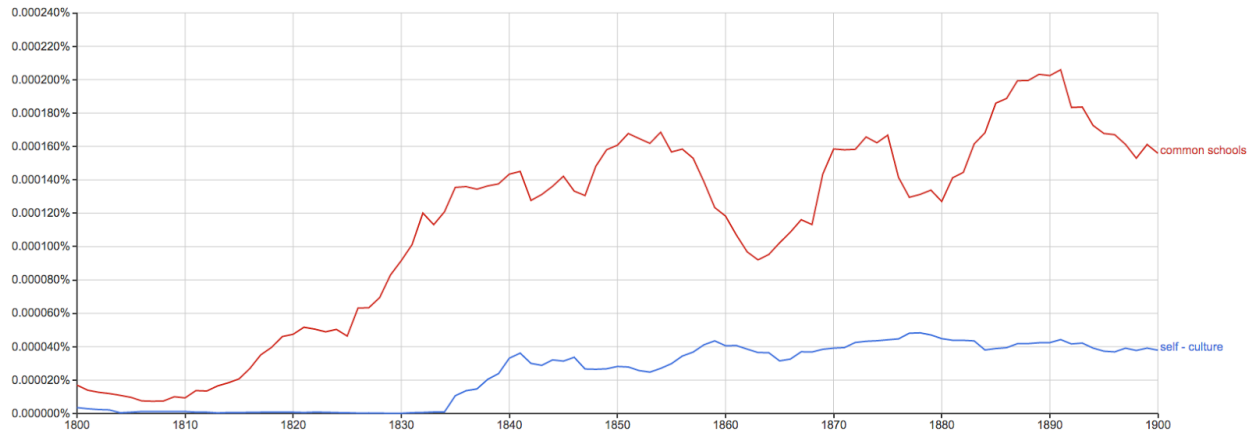
Figure 1. Google Ngram, 'Self-Culture'and 'Common Schools'

A sharp expansion starting in the 1830s, a plateauing from the 1840s to 1860, then a relatively

sharp decline in both to coincide with the Civil War years, before another relative increase

following Appomattox, and another decline during the Long Depression of the 1870s, and so on.

What this chart — and the various proposals for self-culture I'll explore below — seem to

indicate is that schooling and self-culture co-exist. They are not, as one might imagine, mutually

exclusive concepts. This may seem odd, for as the push for schooling increases, one might

imagine the need for self-culture would decrease. So too, as the prevalence for self-culture

increased, one might imagine the need for schooling to decrease. This seems intuitive if you take

Blackie's definition at face value: self-culture happens outside of school, and schooling doesn't

involve self-culture. As I'll describe in greater detail below, for some self-culture was proposed

as a sort of pedagogical antidote to the stifling republican indoctrination promoted by advocates

for common schools; that is, it was a *reaction* to school, not a replacement. For others, however,

self-culture was not antithetical *reaction* to common schooling, but rather complementary

supplement; not as a countermeasure, but as a counterbalance to ideological training in schools.

Still other proposals and advocates saw self-culture as the only viable educational option for

those who were left out of the schooling system of the United States. Whatever the case, though

self-culture might happen "without the aid of teachers," it most certainly always happened *with* (as in, alongside) schooling.

3.4   FOUR CORE BELIEFS

Self-culture develops one's "whole self" according to one's "native propensities." This core belief of self-culturists starts with the supposition that an individual has, as Locke acknowledges in *Some Thoughts*, certain "native propensities."[55] That is, each person has certain abilities that she can attempt to develop. Self-culture, as with the methods of schooling suggested by pedagogues such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Pestalozzi, is guided by the individual's natural abilities, rather than by some external message or set of values. As such, self-culture eschews the idea incipient in many early proposals for US schools that education should instill within students any sort of value, let alone the values of being a good republican citizen. In a sense, self-culturists resisted the common conflation of "education" with "school-based education."

The challenging thing about "native propensities," self-culturists agreed, was figuring out what they were and how to develop them. This process is much easier said than done. It is not as

---

[55] Though Locke acknowledges individuals may have "native propensities," and that educators should consider these propensities when teaching students, it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile, or On Education* who fully developed the idea education must attempt to develop and build upon an individual's native propensities. "The wisest men concentrate on what it is important for men to know," Rousseau writes, "without considering what children are in a condition to learn....Begin, then, by studying your pupils better" (34).

though one's natural abilities are front-and-center in our minds; frequently, we are simply blind to them. Moreover, oftentimes we are made blind to them by those external forces that aim to develop or change them, i.e. schooling. It is this type of blinding outside influence that prompts Emerson to open "Self-Reliance" with the following claims, themselves sort of axioms of his notion of self-culture:

> "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages." (para. 1)

The "gleams of light" here refer to the native propensities which Locke references, while the "lustre of the firmament" refers to the type of received knowledge individuals acquire from external influences, in this case "bards and sages," or experts. Emerson, as did other self-culturists, resisted the 'wisdom' of experts, not simply because they questioned their legitimacy, but because they believed traditional expertise, when foisted upon someone, stymied that individual's personal genius. Traditional expertise or inherited genius, Emerson maintained, insisted upon itself at the expense of personal genius. There is much at stake in eschewing inherited genius; as Emerson acknowledges, those who do so are often the subject of ridicule by the inheritors and promoters of "the firmament of bards and sages." "Firmament" here refers not just to the stability of the tradition itself, but also to the stable footing that tradition provides to those step onto it. Implicitly here — as well as throughout "Self-Reliance" — Emerson recognizes the insecurity of stepping out to find and develop one's natural abilities, to follow the gleams of light that flash across one's mind. These gleams might be inconsistent and fleeting, and there is no pre-established plan or method for recognizing or following them. As such, it's unlikely that when one strikes out to identify and follow her personal genius, she can do so with much strength, stability, or security. "We must," Emerson insists, "go alone" (para. 30). And the insecurity of "going alone" is frightening; Emerson writes,

111

"The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them." (para. 12)

This is why Emerson's cousin George, the president of the American Institute of Instruction, insisted in his lecture *Moral Education*, "We should *convince a child* that he has within his own nature, at his own control, and almost independent of external circumstances, many sources of happiness which will certainly yield it, if allowed to flow in their natural, appointed channels" (14) (emphasis added).[56] In short, as the cousins Emerson recognize, perhaps the first barrier to recognizing one's personal genius, one's natural abilities, is the fear of being judged by others for doing something inconsistent with tradition. This fear does not only inhibit one's willingness to engage in self-culture, but also one's willingness (or even ability) to recognize one's natural abilities worthy of self-culture.

A perfect example of these faculties in action comes in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. Franklin was regarded by self-culturists as an example of American self-culture *par excellence*, and his autobiography was often reprinted and redistributed as a sort of guidebook on how one might engage in self-culture.[57] Part of the reason for this admiration emerged because of the great detail Franklin put into describing his "bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection" (82). For this project, Franklin identified and described thirteen "virtues" that he would attempt to perfect in himself. He'd dedicate himself to perfecting one

---

[56] *Moral Education* was subsequently reprinted both independently by the Institute, as well as in the fourth edition of Horace Mann's *Common School Journal*.

[57] For example, in 1895 Charles William Bardeen printed a volume entitled *Helps to Self-Culture* as part of his School Bulletin Publications series. The volume included a lecture by Horace Mann entitled "Thoughts for a Young Man" and an abridged version of Franklin's *Autobiography*.

virtue at a time, "and when I should be Master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on till I should have gone thro' the thirteen" (84). Significantly, Franklin's *Autobiography* leaves out much of his daily struggles with mastering these virtues. What it provides, however, is a detailed description of exactly how he *monitored* his struggles, and how he sought to improve upon his efforts. His autobiography includes, for example, a mock-up of the daily journal he used to keep track of his transgressions, as well as several proverbs and poems he used as motivation for sticking to his plan, and even a sample entry from the daily diary he kept as he "enter'd upon the Execution of this Plan for Self Examination" (89). Though Franklin ultimately admits defeat, he still regards the attempt — more specifically, his own thorough recording and analysis of the attempt — a wholly worthwhile endeavor. "I was by the Endeavor a better and a happier Man than I otherwise should have been, if I had not attempted it….I hope therefore that some of my Descendants may follow the Example & reap the Benefit….of my Method, and that it be serviceable to People in all Religions" (90-91).

In *Thoughts on Self-Culture, Addressed to Women,* Maria Georgina Shireff Grey and Emily Shireff make a similar claim regarding the universality of what Channing labels the faculties of the human soul, and what Franklin promoted as a method for employing those faculties while developing one's personal virtues. In a chapter focused on "mental training," they state,

> "Independently of all other considerations, the mind to which such an exercise has become habitual, that has learnt to *unfold the intricacies of its own ideas*, to clear *away the mists of prejudice from its own mental vision*, and to *examine the sources of its principles and actions*, has thereby trained the reason to a high capability of *exertion in any other field*." (311) (emphasis added)

The sisters Shireff's claim nicely packages the positions of Emerson, Channing, and Franklin: in order to engage in self-culture, an individual must (a la Channing) turn her mind inwards and reflect on her "own ideas" as well as "principles and actions," so she can (a la Emerson) identify

113

"the mists of prejudice" luring in her "own mental vision." If she's able to engage in this (a la Franklin) habit "independent of all other considerations," then she will be able to succeed "in any other field."

As Emerson, Channing, Franklin, and Grey and Shireff all acknowledge: none of this is easy. Self-examination and evaluation is a painstaking, unending, lifelong process. And though some (Channing and Grey and Shireff) admitted that others might aid an individual in this investigation, ultimately any discoveries one makes seem, by their very nature, an entirely personal experience. This painstaking and lifelong process was quite different than the educational process envisioned by Locke and the early proposals for schools described above. The metaphor of an individual as a "blank slate" or "white paper" seemed to dominate these proposals. The extension of this metaphor suggested an educational process whereby a teacher's responsibility (as an agent of the school) was to write knowledge onto that slate, thus filling it up with the right story of what she should believe and how she should behave. This process seemed relatively simple and straightforward, as well as easily repeatable once the message of knowledge was decided upon. It is the process imagined in the mechanized notion of schooling promoted by both Rush and Jefferson.

While the early school proposals imagined a process based on a metaphor of an individual student, self-culturists focused on developing a complicated metaphorical conception of the educational process itself. This process they likened, at different times — as Grey and Shireff do in the quote above — to either "cultivating" or "unfolding," and oftentimes to both at the same time.[58] "Self-culture," Channing states, is "the care which every man owes to himself,

---

[58] Both metaphors are affiliated with what W.H. Bruford names with the title of his 1975 book, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation, Bildung from Humboldt*. "Self-cultivation" or *bildung*, primarily as it was first articulated by Wilhelm von Humboldt, an educator/philosopher/statesmen involved in reforming German's

to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature" (para. 5). By extension, it is the individual's nature, mind, or "native propensities" that are the objects which deserve cultivating or unfolding. It is tempting, therefore, to see self-culturists as operating with a sort of mixed metaphor: how can an object be both cultivated and unfolded? This confusing tension is exacerbated when reading the process of "unfolding" in light of the contrasting process of "writing on" or "inscribing" information onto a white paper. To do so makes it seem like that which is being unfolded (an individual's nature or mind) is a crumpled or carefully folded up piece of paper, its message (perhaps) already inscribed. The individual's responsibility, therefore, is to unfold this paper and read the message.

In actuality, though, "unfolding" cannot be read against its competing metaphor (blank paper), but rather with its complementary one, that of "cultivating." "Cultivation" circulates in the literature of self-culture as both an agricultural metaphor[59], as well as a link anchoring self-

---

educational infrastructure after the 1806 Battles of Jena and Auerstedt, had a profound influence on the development and enactment of theories of education and schooling in the United States. These include prominent philosophers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche (whose work Bruford, a scholar of German literature, investigates), as well as pedagogues such as Johann Pestalozzi and his disciple Friedrich Froebel, John George Fichte, Anton Gruner, Karl Christian Wilhelm von Turk, and Wilhelm Harnisch (whose work Bruford doesn't address). Bruford's lack of attention to the likes of Pestalozzi and Froebel likely stems from the fact that unlike the philosophers he *does* profile in his work, pedagogues tended to produce far less written texts, and those they did produce were far less systematic and complete than those their more literary-minded contemporaries produced. It is significant to note, however, that while Schopenhauer, Goethe, Nietzsche, and so on have left a much larger literary mark on history, it was the work and influence of Pestalozzi and Froebel that have had a much more significant and direct impact on schooling and theories of education in the United States. This is because it was the everyday work in schools done by the likes of German pedagogues was carefully studied and replicated by American pedagogues as they struggled to establish a school system in the US. Both von Turk and Harnisch, for example, hosted Horace Mann during his tour of German schools, Elizabeth Peabody modeled the US's first kindergarten on the work of Froebel, and disciples of Pestalozzi such as Joseph Neef, William Maclure, William T. Harris, and Bronson Alcott all established and conducted schools based on their interpretations of the Swiss pedagogue's theories.

[59] In "Self-Reliance" Emerson encourages the "American artist" to "study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government" (para. 42) (as part of an argument *against* foreign travel. As with much of "Self-Reliance," Emerson's words here carry a double meaning, referring not just to physical travel away one's physical home, but also to intellectual or "mental" travel away from one's "natural genius." If you stay close to home, Emerson argues

culture with the Germanic tradition of *bildung*.[60] And, in the examples of Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, both of whom were farmers prior to becoming prominent pedagogues, "cultivation" refers to both simultaneously. Among US-based pedagogues, this double meaning of cultivation is most prominently expressed in the various lectures, letters, and treatises of Elizabeth Peabody, a former student of Ralph Waldo Emerson, disciple of Froebel, and the founder of the first kindergarten ("garden for the children") in the United States. In her *Theory of Teaching, with a Few Practical Illustrations*, Peabody articulates the core of her pedagogy thusly:

> "my object is to be the unfolding of their intellects in a natural manner, the putting them in full possession of their intellectual strength, whatever it may be, and the supplying to them in each stage the nutriment most suitable and abundant." (10)

Elsewhere, in her *Lectures in the Training Schools for Kindergarten Teachers*, Peabody is less subtle when applying the school-as-garden metaphor. Kindergarten students "are to be treated as a gardener treats his plants," she writes, "It is because they are living organisms that they are to be *cultivated* — not *drilled* (which is a process only appropriate to insensate stone)" (4-5), or presumably, a blank slate.

---

you will "create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also." That is, if you stay both physically within the United States, and mentally within your own natural genius, Emerson argues (echoing the "sunny dome in air" Coleridge constructs in the final stanza of "Kubla Khan"), one can "create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also."

[60] In his 1872 lecture "Self-Made Men" — a sort of retrospective on the 19th century obsession with self-culture — Frederick Douglass writes "when we consider what man, as a whole, is; what he has been; what he aspires to be, and what, by a wise and vigorous cultivation of his faculties, he may yet become, we see that it leads irresistibly to this broad view of him as a subject of thought and inquiry" (para. 2).

The agricultural metaphor seems to break down a bit, however, when one considers how an individual plant might go about cultivating itself.[61] But, as the 2nd through 5th definitions of "cultivation" above indicate: the process is about much more than tilling the earth and growing plants. It's about laboring — as Frederick Douglass puts it, "we may explain success mainly by one word and that word is WORK! WORK!! WORK!!! WORK!!!!" (para. 35) — managing and improving one's self, about refining individual strengths and improving individual faults through hard work and study. More than that, it's about valuing, even loving this process, and recognizing that it serves both yourself, and those around you. And these actions and attitudes seem are far easier for an individual to engage in than are the actions a plant would need to take in order to cultivate itself.

Self-culture happens outside of school. As indicated, Peabody's pedagogy focused primarily on young children, and one of its central tenets was that while children should be given enough space to explore and play on their own, they still required the nurturing guidance of a teacher-as-gardener. Early childhood school-based education, insofar as Peabody envisioned it, was not unlike the early childhood school-based education promoted by Rousseau (even Benjamin Rush) in this regard: it's goal was to prepare children for the next step in their educations and life. Also like Rousseau (though unlike Rush), Peabody expected that her kindergarten students would be able to carry their habits of mind — more specifically, the habits of cultivation — with them into this next step. Unlike Rousseau (and certainly unlike Rush), however, Peabody imagined kindergarten students to carry these habits with them as they enter

---

[61] Though this seems to ignore the "self-cultivation" habits of "weeds" such as dandelion, clover, lamb's quarter, and burdock, all of which were at one time widely cultivated, but now seem to pop up where they have not been planted, and where they are not wanted. Dammit.

into and contribute to a larger society. That is, though she expected kindergarten to teach students how to continue cultivating themselves on their own (i.e. how to self-culture), she assumed this ability to self-culture complemented, rather than competed with, the individual student's ability and willingness to enter into society. In short: kindergarten, for Peabody, was a sort of culturing or cultivating project (a la Rush), but one that understood a true mark of culture or cultivation to be the ability to, once outside of school, self-culture or self-cultivate.

This idea — that schools should culture students so they could then self-culture — was not wholly new. Indeed, in many circles, teaching students how to teach themselves was a central goal of the developing US school system in the late-18th and throughout the 19th centuries. In *Age of Reason* Thomas Paine articulated that the primary goal of schools should be that "every person of learning is finally his own teacher" (Part 1, Section 11, para. 7). And as Rousseau insists, the ultimate aim of any education — school-based or otherwise — is to guide a child "from the moment of his birth up to one when, become a grown man, he will no longer have need of any guide other than himself" (50). This feedback loop between self-learning and self-teaching, in which the more you teach yourself, the more you learn, and the more you learn, the more you can teach yourself, was thought to be the best way to produce a self-sufficient and independent citizenry.

At its core, it is based on the assumption that there is only so much a school can truly teach a student; believing schools can and should cultivate *every aspect* of students was both impractical and undesirable. As Samuel Smiles writes in *Self-Help, with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* "Even the best institutions can give a man no active aid. Perhaps the utmost they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition" (15). According to Smiles, self-culture is "the education or training of all parts of a man's nature ;

the physical and moral, as well as the intellectual" (309).[62] The balance between physical, moral,

and intellectual inherent in Smiles' notion of self-culture is significant, for he believes "[i]n our

day, [the development of all three] have somewhat fallen into disrepute, and education has

become more exclusively mental" (310). That is, according to Smiles schools focused too

heavily on developing students' intellectual faculties at the expense of their physical and moral

faculties, resulting incomplete men "an enthusiast or a maniac...a diseased oddity, it may be a

monster" (309). Though Smiles' observations of the deficiencies in schools were limited to those

that existed in Scotland and England (he was a Chartist reformer who travelled between

Edinburgh and London), those familiar with the state of schooling in the US made similar

observations. As James Freeman Clarke writes in *Self-Culture, Physical, Intellectual, Moral, and*

Spiritual: A Course of Lectures:

> "A boy begins to go to school, say at seven years of age; and he leaves college,
> say at twenty-one years. He has then spent fourteen years in study; and the object
> of nearly all his study has been to store his mind with knowledge. What, then,
> does he know?....he ought to know something about his own body and soul, his
> faculties and powers, the laws of thought and of physical culture. In fourteen
> years ought there not to be learned at least as much as this?" (4-5)

Channing, a Unitarian minister like Clarke, also emphasizes that "Self-culture is moral" and

"Self-culture is religious."

  For Smiles, Clarke, and Channing, self-culture supplemented school-based education by

allowing the individual to develop moral and religious sentiments on his or her own. This was

because, as Kaestle notes in *Pillars of the Republic*, there were many pockets of resistance to

---

[62] Smiles' notion of "all parts of man's nature" was another key expansion/critique of the Cartesian cogito. Rather than imagining a mind/body split, self-culturists regarded both mental and physical development was key components of an individual's whole person development. In this way, the imagined the mind and the body to be inextricably entwined with one another.

state-sponsored schooling. While some objected to common schools because they didn't want to pay taxes to support them, and others[63] objected because they felt schools promoted "individualistic values and unequal distribution of wealth," (142) still others objected for religious reasons. This included folks who objected to the *lack* of religious instruction in common schools, as well as those who objected to the *preponderance* of the wrong kinds of religious instruction in common schools. For self-culturists such as Smiles, Clarke, and Channing, the best way to make everyone happy was to allow the individual, through rigorous and personal enactments of self-culture, to deliver to himself or herself the kind of religious instruction he or she deemed most appropriate. By encouraging individuals to self-culture, it not only allowed them the freedom to choose what instruction they deemed most appropriate, it also encouraged them to resist forms of school-based instruction they deemed potentially inappropriate. "One of the chief arts of self-culture," Channing writes

> "is to unite the childlike teachableness, which gratefully welcomes light from every human being who can give it, with manly resistance of opinions however current, of influences however generally revered, which do not approve themselves to our deliberate judgment." (para. 36)

This hearkens back to the idea from the previous section that a key motivation for and result of self-culture is resisting the undue influence of authorities, in this case school-based authorities.

Though they do not explicitly articulate them, self-culturists nonetheless make several key assumptions about self-culture when describing its relationship with school-based education. As indicated in the pedagogical theories of Peabody, Locke, and Rousseau, there was a understanding that self-culture is done by adults; children cannot and should not attempt to self-

---

[63] Notably US-based Pestalozzians such as Robert Owen and William Maclure.

culture. "Adults" here picks out folks who have received some instruction from others, while "children" here picks out folks that have not. Whether by parents or tutors, or (as was more often the case starting in the 1830s) through schooling, children must be first be taught *how to* self-culture, before they can *start to* self-culture. And while the process of self-culture must be directed by the individual, the process of learning how to self-culture must be guided by some other teacher, either one that works in and for a school. Importantly, this does not mean that self-culture can only *happen* after *all* instruction from others — schooling or otherwise — has finished, just that self-culture can only *start* after *some* instruction from others has started. Oftentimes, one's self-culture and one's schooling happen at the same time. This leads to the second assumption, an individual can benefit from both schooling and from self-culture, but she will always benefit more from self-culture. While self-culturists believed schooling could be a part of self-culture, they flatly refused the idea that self-culture could be a part of schooling. That is, in an individual's efforts to self-culture herself, she may derive inspiration, even instruction from schools, but this can only ever serve as a means toward the end of self-culture; it cannot stand in as a replacement for self-culture itself. Thirdly, and finally, schooling may stop, but self-culture never does. Schooling, self-culturists believed, was a means toward accomplishing some socially recognized and sanctioned end. In the conclusion to *Walden*, Thoreau emphasizes effort over accomplishment when he famously states, "Let every one mind his own business, and *endeavor to be* what he was made" (*Walden* "Conclusion: 9", emphasis added); that is, it is not *being* that is important, but *trying to be*, not living up to your native propensities, but trying to. He then shares a brief allegory highlighting both impossibility of personal perfection, as well as importance of still trying to attain it:

> "There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that

121

in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life….His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him." (*Walden* "Conclusion: 11")

Though he eventually finishes the staff, the artist does so after the world ceases to be what it once was ("his friends grew old...and died," "the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin," "the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end," "Kalpa was no longer the pole-star," and "Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times"); that is, the artist from Kouroo does what is impossible. In this way, Thoreau indicates that "perfection" is an abstract and unattainable concept toward which one might endeavor, but never (actually) reach.[64] Like Thoreau, Channing conceived of perfection as an unattainable end, and self-culture an unending pursuit. Channing puts it simply in the conclusion of his address "Self-Culture," so it is with his words that I will end:

> "You can not, without guilt and disgrace, stop where you are. The past and the present call on you to advance. Let what you have gained be an impulse to something higher. Your nature is too great to be crushed." (para. 64)

Self-culture advances culture or society. Self-culturists maintained that self-culture would lead to the advancement of civilization. Specifically, they argued individuals' efforts at self-culture would lead to political stability and spiritual/moral perfection. As William Unsworth writes in *Self-Culture and Self-Reliance, Under God the Means of Elevation* "We cannot afford to crush mind; its proper cultivation is for the good of the church and the weal of the nation, and contributes to the uplifting of the race" (8). Incipient in Unsworth claim — and reiterated

---

[64] This endeavoring towards abstract and unattainable perfection is what Thoreau means by "being good." Earlier in the conclusion of "Economy" section of *Walden*, he writes: "Men say practically begin where you are and such as you are not aiming mainly to become better, and with kindness aforethought go about doing good. If I were to preach at all in this strain, I should say rather set about *being good*" (134) (emphasis added).

throughout his short pamphlet — is a double argument: a positive argument for the benefits of self-culture, and a negative argument against the detriments of schooling and a class-based society, both of which "crush mind[s]" of "THE YOUNG MEN IN THE MENTAL AND MORAL IMPROVEMENT CLASS" (i.e. the working poor), to whom the pamphlet is "AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED." Unsworth's negative arguments against the stymieing influence of schools/society are mostly rehearsals of the arguments outlined in the first section of this chapter. What's unique to his work, however, is that though it is dedicated to those who would engage in self-culture, Unsworth's pamphlet does not directly address this group. Instead, the direct address of his pamphlet are those who, through their cold indifference towards the plights of others, might be inadvertently barring the way for others to engage in self-culture. "ALL of us ought to feel deep and abiding interest in the improvement and elevation of the people," he opens his pamphlet,

> "Indifference to the welfare of the multitude, coldness towards, or want of generous sympathy with them, is the reverse of the feelings and actions of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as opposed to the spirit of universal brotherhood taught in the New Testament." (3)

In framing his description and advocacy of self-culture in this way, Unsworth is making an argument eerily similar to the arguments regarding schools and schooling made by the likes of Rush, Jefferson, Washington, and so on. That is, just as many of the founders lobbied for support for government-controlled, citizen-funded schooling on the basis that it would create a more stable republican society, so too does Unsworth lobby for support of individually-controlled, charity-funded self-culture for much the same reason.

Smiles makes a similar argument, writing,

> "the worth and strength of a state depend far less upon the form of its institutions than upon the character of its men. For the nation is only the aggregate of individual conditions, and civilization itself is but a question of personal improvement." (16)

123

Though Smiles acknowledged schools could "give but the merest beginnings of culture" (20), he also argued they were quite limited in terms of the impact they could have on an individual's improvement and development. Because the abilities of schools to improve individual students was limited, Smiles reasoned, the societal benefits derived from those individual students was also limited. Emerson elaborates on this point, arguing the specific ways schools and other institutions are limited relates to the shared tendency of "The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind" to "look backward and not forward" at "some past utterance of genius." "But genius," itself, Emerson indicates,

> "looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates...There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair." ("The American Scholar," para. 15)

Emerson's binaries highlight a key deficiency of schooling that is overcome by self-culture. Schools present individual students an assembled collection of "past utterances of genius," but not genius itself. An individual engaged in self-culture, on the other hand, is prompted[65] by these past utterances of genius to create his or her own genius. As such, schooling is (at least insofar as it was conceived of by Emerson, Smiles, and other self-culturists) fundamentally conservative in its very nature, while self-culture is fundamentally progressive. And it is this conception of self-culture as fundamentally progressive nature that prompted its advocates to insist that it is only

---

[65] Rather than "prompts," Emerson prefers "inspires," which is a fundamental, but underdeveloped concept in his educational philosophy, such that it is. "Inspiration" seems to be a faculty of what Emerson labels the "Over-Soul," and it seems it can be triggered by beauty and grace, but also through a Divine intervention. All in all, Emerson seems to maintain that inspiration just sort of happens, and so it isn't truly worth it to reflect back on how it happens, or how one might go about establishing conditions for it to happen other than "read a lot of books, and don't allow yourself to be cowed by the utterances of genius they contain."

through self-culture (perhaps as a complement to schooling, perhaps on its own), and not through schooling alone, that can society might advance.

Self-culture is a pedagogical principle. Just as I am situating the complicated notion of self-culture among and between the competing and complementary works of 19th-century pedagogues, essayists, and preachers, so too did those same self-culturists understand self-culture to be an old practice situated among the lives and works those that came before them. As Frederick Douglass notes in the opening lines of his lecture "Self-Made Men,"

> "The subject announced for this evening's entertainment is not new. Man in one form or another, has been a frequent and fruitful subject for the press, the pulpit and the platform. This subject has come up for consideration under a variety of attractive titles, such as "Great Men," "Representative Men," "Peculiar Men," "Scientific Men," "Literary Men," "Successful Men," "Men of Genius," and "Men of the World;" but under whatever name or designation, the vital point of interest in the discussion has ever been the same, and that is, manhood itself, and this in its broadest and most comprehensive sense." (para. 1)

Indeed, many of the self-culturists surveyed above cite each other. More than that, though, frequently 19th-century situated their theories of self-culture in a rich (oftentimes Western) history of pedagogical writings, as well as biographical anecdotes. For Channing, self-culture can be traced along a fairly standard Western route, with early examples in the lives and works of "Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes" and tracing forward to "Milton...Shakspeare...Franklin." Emerson understands self-culture to trace a similar path, starting earlier with Moses and tracing forward to Plato, then Bacon and Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, and then Washington and Franklin. To a small degree in "Self-Made Men" (though certainly more so in his autobiographies, as I'll explore in a later chapter), Douglass unsettles this Western focus of self-culture's history, citing working class examples such as Hugh Miller and Elihu Burritt as accomplished self-culturists (in addition to Abraham Lincoln), before offering up examples from "the African race…[to which the tradition of self-culture] is indebted for examples equally

125

worthy and inspiring" (para. 74). These include Benjamin Bannecker, William Dietz, and Toussaint L'Overture. Samuel Smiles also identifies both Miller and Burritt as accomplished self-culturists. Smiles' *Self-Help* is a veritable "Who's Who" among self-culturists throughout history. Not only does Smiles expand the German and English/Scottish contributions to the history of self-culture, adding Boyle, Cavendish, and Rosse to complement Bacon, Kepler to complement Newton, and so on, he also considers the work of industrialists (James Watt, Robert Peel), visual artists (Michelangelo, William Hogarth), musicians (Haydn, Beethoven, Bach), and so on. And his cataloging of all of these self-culturists comes before his twelfth chapter, "Example, — Models" in which he, in 24 pages, rattles off dozens of more examples.

All this is a way of pointing out that those I have named "self-culturists" never represented themselves as having invented anything new with the concept of "self-culture." Indeed, most of the time they articulated their advocacy of self-culture as a *descriptive*, rather than *prescriptive* project. It is, as this chapter's epigraph indicates, "a topic too extensive for a single discourse." While Channing is here referring to his own brief introductory remarks for the Franklin lecture series, the same statement applies with equal force had Channing written a course of lectures, as James Freeman Clarke had done. Like Channing, Clarke also acknowledges the expansiveness of self-culture as a topic worthy of consideration, and he also admits that though his work consists of 21 lectures, it can't begin to touch upon all the intricacies and facets of self-culture. Clarke directly associates self-culture with education. Specifically, self-culture encompasses one of the "three grand divisions of education," namely "DEVELOPMENT, or education in its special meaning, — the unfolding of the whole nature of man" (3). While schools contribute greatly to the other grand divisions of education — INSTRUCTION and TRAINING — "other sources…Nature...life...society" contribute to

development. For this reason, self-culture is a topic that doesn't just encapsulate how an individual teaches herself — how she *instructs* or *trains* herself — but how she *develops* herself, with nature, with life, and with society. That is, the topic of self-culture encapsulates teaching, instruction, training, nature, life, society, and the individual engaging in and with those things and changing them and engaging in and with them again, and herself changing, and so on. It was, in short, a principle of pedagogy, not merely a pedagogical fad or buzzword, and it was and is much too big for a single discourse.

3.5   THE PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLE OF SELF-CULTURE

Clarke's division of education into three main components reflects, in key ways, Gibbon's division between two educations in this chapter's first epigraph: one education comes from teachers (Clarke's "Instruction" and "Training"), while the second, "more personal and important" comes from ourselves (Clarke's "Development"). As with Blackie's definition, these simplified divisions remain a useful way of understanding how "self-culture" relates to "schooling," and how both represent different "divisions" of education. They live alongside one another and they happen at the same time. Sometimes these divisions compete, sometimes they complement, sometimes they even overlap. But both are there, forever and always, as long as there are individuals and as long as there are things for individuals to learn, and places called schools where individuals go to learn things.

And all *this* (that is, the previous paragraph) is a way of saying that when I wrote "Self-culture was a particular mode of self-education that emerged and gained traction in the 19th century United States" at the opening of this chapter, it was a lie. Of course "self-culture" as a

127

term gained prevalence and traction in the United States in the 19th century, but self-culture as a concept is much older than that. And with due respect to David Hume's arguments against causality, just as self-culturists imagined continuity between the *concept* of self-culture of Milton, Shakespeare, Bacon, Newton, Washington, Franklin, and each other, so too do I imagine a continuity between 19th century conceptions of self-culture and the practice of self-culture in which I, and my students, engaged in our classroom.

The link between Milton, Shakespeare, Newton, Franklin, Emerson, Channing, Douglass, and my students hinges on this idea that self-culture wasn't just a trend or a fad promoted and discussed by 19th-century advocates. Instead, it was and remains a complicated pedagogical concept that happens in that weird space and time when you feel prompted by social forces outside of you (a government, a school, and so on) to gain some sort of knowledge or engage in some sort of learning, but that process of learning is not supported, nor structured by those forces or the institutions or agents that represent them. That is, you feel compelled to learn something, but you have to "do it on your own." Sometimes, the prompting comes directly from some powerful social force: a call from an official, a task from a school, for example former President George W. Bush's 2002 call that "every child receive a first-class education in America." Other times, the prompting comes from those who want for you to resist the direct call from a powerful social force: a call to resist an initiative, to protest a practice, in modern parlance to "stay woke." These calls are fairly easy to respond to, in a way: you hear the call, you do the "WORK! WORK!! WORK!!! WORK!!!!" Other prompts, however, are more nebulous, a felt need to learn about some topic so as not get left behind, be caught asleep, or miss out.

In the case of my students and I, it is true that we were directly prompted by schools to learn something for schools. In political terms, my students and I were handed an unsupported

mandate to become digitally literate. As such, what we were doing was, at one and the same time, both as simple as Blackie and Spiro suggest, but far more complex. Yes, we were teaching, training, and educating ourselves in how to use digital stuff, but we were also *changing* ourselves, *becoming* something other than what we had been prior to our efforts. And we were self-consciously aware of these changes, both as we seemed to preternaturally anticipate them, as we felt them happening, and as we looked back on them having happened. When we had to learn how to use those digital devices and processes, we had to lean on and build upon an awareness both of the devices and processes, and also how we would or could go about trying to learn them. And though our "school" — here a stand-in concept signifying both our physical high school, as well as the statewide Classrooms for the Future initiative that put computers in our classroom, as well as the pervasive attitude that putting computers in classrooms was a good thing to do that prompted this work that compelled the CFF initiative, and so on — it was work that was neither guided nor recognized by school. But we — my students and I — still recognized that we needed to do this work, not for a grade, and not because the school told us to, but because of some felt worry that if we didn't, we'd miss out and get left behind.

This complicated processes of transforming one's self by teaching one's self has been obfuscated, in part, by the *language* we (I'm talking educators now, teachers and those who write about teaching, both in syllabi and in academic writing) use to talk about those processes — first, by an oversimplification of the concept "self-culture," later by replacing the term (and concept) of self-culture with the ostensibly more banal, less conceptually thorny notions of "self-teaching," "autodidacticism," or even DIY. *This* is the primary reason why a return to the complexities of 19th century self-culture (not necessarily the *term*, but certainly the *concept* picked out by the term *prior* to Blackie's simplification of it) is so important: because when we,

as we so often do as teachers and scholars (see Chapter 1), talk about teaching ourselves digital stuff (or, when we assume or expect our students to do the same, either inside or outside of our classes), we're talking about a far more complicated pedagogical process than that process which our language represents. We're talking about our students (and hopefully ourselves) developing ourselves according to our native propensities outside of school in a way that advances society. That is, we're talking about self-culture.

4.0   SELF-MADE, OR NEVER MADE

NUMBERING AND DEFINITION OF THE ORGANS.

Figure 2. "Symbolical Head" from O.S. and Lorenzo Fowler's *The Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology,* p. xv

"Self-knowledge it the essence of all knowledge" (ix).
—Orson and Lorenzo Fowler, *The Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology, With One Hundred Engravings, and a Chart of the Character* (ix)

4.1   WHO SELF-CULTURES?

Though Channing was certainly correct in asserting that a treatise on self-culture cannot fit into a single discourse, the survey of the competing and complementary discourses of the previous chapter seems to suggest that these multiple discourses can fit into a single geographical

and cultural location, i.e. New England. Channing[66] was a mentor to Ralph Waldo Emerson (the cousin of George Emerson), as well as Henry David Thoreau. Samuel Smiles directly cites Channing, just as William Unsworth directly references Smiles. Like Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Freeman Clarke was a Unitarian minister, and — like George Emerson, Emily Anne Eliza Shireff, Maria Georginia Shireff Grey, and Elizabeth Peabody (herself a former student of RW Emerson) — Clarke was an active abolitionist, oftentimes working closely with both William Lloyd Garrison and his one-time protege, Frederick Douglass. George Emerson, the sisters Shireff, and Peabody were also deeply involved in the movement to establish and promote women's schooling throughout the United States. Peabody's colleague, Amos Bronson Alcott (friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and also a lifelong abolitionist), was an admirer and imitator of Johann Pestalozzi, as was Pestalozzi's student Friedrich Froebel, of whom Peabody was a self-proclaimed disciple. Pestalozzi cites both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the theoretical and governmental work of Wilhelm von Humboldt as primary influences in his theories of teaching and learning, and Rousseau indicates in *Emile* that his work is directly responding to that of John Locke. As the newly appointed national director of education, Humboldt established what would go on to be the same highly structured and systematic system of national education that Horace Mann studied and analyzed during his travels throughout Germany in the early 1840s.

---

[66] Channing graduated from Harvard College in 1798. Harvard's president at the time, Joseph Willard, had been accused of inculcating his students with the controversial *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by British historian and Parliament member Edward Gibbon. Of the many controversial statements Gibbon made during his career, perhaps the most relevant to the topic at hand: "Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself." This quote would, along with "Self Made, or Never Made" go on to become the boilerplate assumptions of the self-culture movement. Gibbon's quote was even the consistently printed epigraph for every issue of the late-nineteenth century magazine entitled *Self-Culture*.

Though the core beliefs of self-culture — that it develops one's whole self, that it happens outside of school, that it advances society, and that it is a pedagogical principle — are taken up in the discourses and treatises of all of these educational theorists, it's not clear the degree to which these core beliefs were taken up by US citizens outside of the cloistered community of Massachusetts. While the influence of the common school movement pervade both across the country and throughout the nineteenth century, it is unclear if the same can be said of the contemporaneous and conceptually overlapping self-culture movement. Indeed, calling it a "movement" might be a bit of an overreach, though there is enough evidence of circulation in different media to suggest fairly wide influence. While the previous chapter sought to unpack the conceptual complexities of the pedagogy of self-culture, this chapter seeks to trace its historical applications. Who, above and beyond those that advocated for its practice, engaged in self-culture? Where and when did folks self-culture? With whom and to what ends?

In following the path of the term "self-culture," I am able to see who is printing the phrase, where, and (sometimes) to what end. And in identifying who is printing the phrase, and to what end they are using it, I gain further knowledge about how the concept of self-culture slowly, but surely shifted and changed in both its promotion and through folks practicing it. Ultimately, this analysis suggests two significant conclusions about the pedagogy of self-culture: first, it is a nimble and multifactorial pedagogy that vacillates between optimism and pessimism vis a vis an individual's need and ability to engage in it. To clarify: most of the self-culturists surveyed in the previous chapter promoted self-culture as a practice worth engaging in because of its ability to improve upon the lives of those engaging in it. Self-culture, in other words, started out as a pedagogy imbued with optimism and hope; hope for an individual's ability to improve, hope for a better future, and so on. What the analysis in this chapter reveals, however,

is that as the concept of self-culture circulated, and as it became linked with the burgeoning social sciences (pseudo and otherwise) of the mid-nineteenth century, the reason for an individual to engage in self-culture transitioned from a should to a must. That is, self-culture transformed into a practice one must engage in if one hoped to retain social or cultural "fitness," a la Herbert Spencer qua Charles Darwin's notion of "survival of the fittest." Secondly, and as a consequence of self-culture's affiliation with what would be later dubbed Social Darwinist theories, the ways in which self-culture was taken up generated tensions about who was *able* to engage in the practice and who wasn't, as well as who *should be allowed* to engage in the practice and who shouldn't. That is, while the *theory* of self-culture as promoted by Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, and others was exceedingly optimistic, expansive, and universally applicable, frequently the optimistic and expansive application of self-culture was governed for folks who were not relatively elite and financially secure property-owning white men.

4.2   DESCRIPTION OF ARCHIVE AND METHODS

In this section, I'm going to describe the archive on which this chapter's analysis focuses, as well as lay out and explain the various methodologies I used to trace representations of the concept of "self-culture" through that archive. This explanation of methodologies may be tedious, but it is necessary, as my use of these methodologies creates a representation of nineteenth-century self-culture that is conceptually different than the representation created in the previous chapter. Anyone interested in the grist and not the mill (or the process of milling) can skip ahead to the next section. That said, in anticipation of the pedagogical conclusions presented in the final chapter of this document, my motivation for "showing my work" in this

and other chapters (specifically "Chapter One: Left to Their Own Devices" and "Chapter Four: Must We Go Alone?") is that doing so — that is, reflecting carefully and thoughtfully on one's habits and methods — is part and parcel to the practice of self-culture.

The act of sorting out the conceptual thorniness of self-culture is quite different than the act of tracing its uptake; it requires fundamentally different kinds of reading and interpretation strategies applied to fundamentally different kinds of texts. While the previous chapter relied fairly exclusively on the mostly familiar (if often idiosyncratic) strategies of close reading a fairly limited collection of interrelated texts, this chapter will venture into broader strategies of what Franco Moretti polemically names "distant reading." I write that this chapter attempts to trace the uptake of self-culture, i.e. its practice, but in truth all that this chapter traces is the uptake of the term "self-culture" itself. More specifically, I will use key term search and collocation techniques, topic modeling, and geographic information systems (GIS) or mapping to trace and represent the path of the term "self-culture" as it spreads across the United States over the course of the nineteenth-century.

I apply these strategies to a large corpus (3,500+) of nineteenth-century newspaper pages, which themselves were culled from the Library of Congress' *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, a 10,000,000+ page archive of newspaper pages from the late 1700s to the early 1900s. While the textual content pertaining to self-culture found on these newspaper pages will be significant to the study offered in this chapter, of comparable significance will be the metadata of those pages: the date and location of issue, the number, date, and location of prints and reprints of their content, a comparison of the total number of mentions of "self-culture" to the total number of pages in a state in a year in which those mentions occur, and so on.

The archive on which this chapter focuses is entitled *Chronicling America: History American Newspapers*, a searchable selection of over eleven million digitized pages from US newspapers published between 1789 and 1924. The archive is produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) in partnership with the Library of Congress (LOC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The archive builds upon bibliographic work completed during the NEH-sponsored United States Newspaper Program (USNP). The USNP contributed funds to libraries throughout the United States so those libraries could locate, describe or catalog, and selectively preserve historic newspaper that had been published in their state between 1690 to the present day. These original preservations were done via microfilm. From *Chronicling America's* about page:

> "Under this program, each institution created machine-readable cataloging (MARC) via the Cooperative ONline SERials Program (CONSER) for its state collections, contributing bibliographic descriptions and library holdings information to the Newspaper Union List, hosted by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). This data, approximately 140,000 bibliographic title entries and 900,000 separate library holdings records, was acquired and converted to MARCXML format for use in the Chronicling America Newspaper Title Directory." ("About Chronicling America" para. 3)

The *Chronicling America* collection continues to expand as more NDNP members (typically colleges and universities, or large city library systems) digitize more pages and submit them to the collection. Again, from the about page:

> "In order to plan for phased development, the annual award program began with targeting digitized material for the decade 1900-1910. In subsequent award years, the time period was gradually extended decade by decade, to cover the historic period 1836-1922." (para. 4)

The digitized pages in the archive from newspapers published prior to 1836 (about fourteen thousand total between 1789 and 1835) come from newspapers published in DC, Philadelphia, New York, and Richmond.

Given the multi-tiered method of collecting, cataloging, and digitizing pages, as well as different states' willingness and capability to participate in the the various tiers of the program, the resulting archive features an unpredictably uneven distribution of page counts between the 43 participating states. In "'Q i-jtb the Raven': Taking Dirty OCR Seriously," Ryan Cordell provides the following map of state contributions to *Chronicling America* that was prepared by Abby Mullen, a research assistant for Viral Texts:
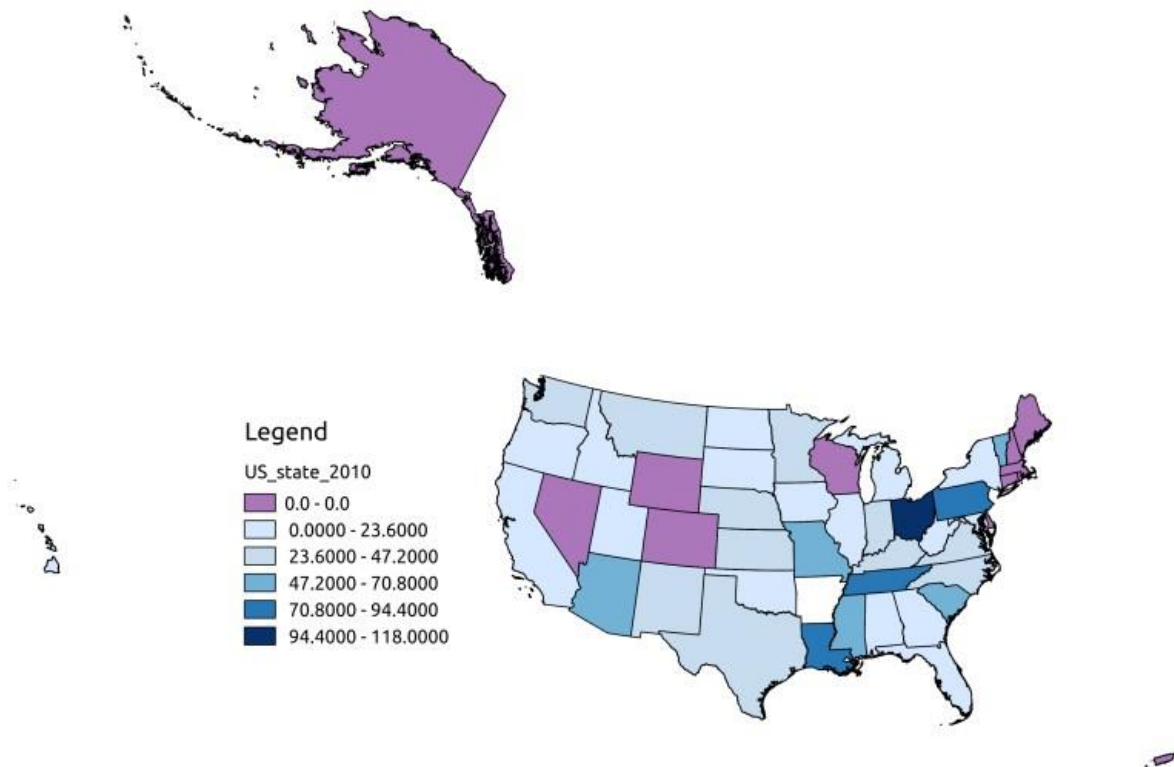
Figure 3. A map of state contributions to *Chronicling America*, prepared by Abby Mullen

Cordell-qua-Mullen's map represents data gathered and represented in late 2015/early 2016. As of the end of 2016, the state-by-state contributions changed, sometimes fairly significantly. As of the end of 2016, the archive features digitized pages from 43 states and Puerto Rico. There are still no digitized pages from Alaska, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, and (most problematically for me) Massachusetts, ostensibly a hotbed of self-culturist

activity based on the readings of a previous chapter. In the Figure 3 below, the first number indicates the number of total pages available in the entire archive (1789-1924), while the second number indicates the number of total pages available in the archive between 1800 and 1900:

Table 5. Number of Digitized Newspaper Pages in each state in *Chronicling America* archive

Alabama	31,401 (31,401)	**Iowa**	206,308 (15,461)	**N. Carolina**	204,455 (104,174)
Arizona	311,217 (80,004)	**Kansas**	335,048 (166,684)	**N. Dakota**	227,912 (36,277)
Arkansas	2,717 (0)	**Kentucky**	331,189 (92,964)	**Ohio**	320,282 (227,854)
California	300,182 (151,243)	**Louisiana**	324,464 (195,175)	**Oregon**	327,475 (79,804)
Colorado	3,992 (106)	**Maryland**	211,263 (112,190)	**Pennsylvania**	372,568 (221,895)
Connecticut	146,437 (13,034)	**Michigan**	204,261 (93,240)	**S. Carolina**	304,558 (143,367)
Delaware	22,849 (15,784)	**Minnesota**	361,695 (155,164)	**S. Dakota**	122,468 (48,925)
D.C.	809,567 (305,853)	**Mississippi**	133,166 (95,228)	**Tennessee**	298,070 (189,032)
Florida	165,718 (12,933)	**Missouri**	355,346 (121,059)	**Texas**	309,631 (139,829)
Georgia	47,532 (31,582)	**Montana**	275,813 (136,012)	**Utah**	379,603 (105,554)
Hawaii	300,091 (117,641)	**Nebraska**	274,377 (109,613)	**Vermont**	372,936 (170,193)
Idaho	110,530 (37,138)	**Nevada**	104,994 (49,951)	**Virginia**	482,634 (244,402)
Illinois	313,526 (98,852)	**New Mexico**	306,251 (54,825)	**Washington**	318,604 (95,608)
Indiana	246,479 (112,163)	**New York**	901,607 (451,464)	**W. Virginia**	193,209 (93,884)

Both Colorado and Nevada are now "on the map," as it were, with the latter state making significant contributions over the course of 2016. And more and more states have reached "Ohio-like" status in terms of their contributions to the database: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. This list does not include the archive "powerhouses": Washington, D.C. and New York, which collectively make up roughly 15% of the total archive in terms of digitized page totals.

Though the ongoing expansion of *Chronicling America* is heartening, there remains a paucity of pages from some states (Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware), and an abundance of pages in other states/regions. This amounts to not just an uneven distribution, but perhaps also an inaccurate representation of the past. Cordell notes, not only do different states participate in the NDNP at different rates, but their participation itself takes different forms. This is because the

> "[M]easures of newspapers' significance vary from state to state. In their applications for NDNP funding, groups must articulate a rationale for choosing 'historically significant newspapers' from their state. While these rationales share many features, they are not identical." (para. 31)

Indeed, there is a sort of "trickle-West" spread to the page counts, starting in D.C. and New York and spreading out across the Piedmont and Appalachian regions, into the Midwest and Northwest and down to the Southwest. As with many cultural and historical trends within the United States, there seems to be as slight coastal/urban emphasis and flyover/rural de-emphasis in how *Chronicling America* expands its collection. Cordell goes on to argue:

> "An understanding of the corpus's outlines and the technical composition of its materials allows us to qualify the claims we make using CA while benefiting from the remarkable possibilities of access, comparison, or analytical scale enabled by digitization." (para. 40)

I take all this to mean that whatever representation of the distributed understanding of or participation in self-culture the *Chronicling America* archive offers me, it is certainly not a

photoperfect snapshot. Instead, my constructed representation of self-culture's path across the US throughout the nineteenth-century will present an occasion for further, more nuanced examinations of individual appearances and idiosyncratic uses of the phrase "self-culture." This is why, in addition to the so-called "distant reading" strategies that focus primarily on metadata (date and location of issue, the number, date, and location of prints and reprints of their content, a comparison of the total number of mentions of "self-culture" to the total number of pages in a state in a year in which those mentions occur, and so on), I will always supplement a "distant" analysis with a "close" analysis. That is, I will use the "distant" analysis of metadata to identify possible trends in the use of the term self-culture across the United States and throughout the nineteenth-century, and when such potential trends are signaled, I will swoop in to closely analyze and consider specific and isolated newspaper pages within those trends to enrich my understanding of the puzzle that is *Chronicling America's* representation of the past.

This chapter's study focuses on a much smaller corpus of approximately three-thousand, seven-hundred digitized pages between 1800 and 1900 on which the phrase "self-culture"[67] appears.[68] The first of these appearances is on the front page of February 8, 1839 edition of *The*

---

[67] I focus exclusively on "self-culture" for a number of reasons. First, several related terms such as "autodidact" and "*bildung*" appear infrequently within US newspapers printed in English (11 and 45 times, respectively). Other related terms such as "self-made" and "self-reliance" appear with great frequency (37,703 and 22,041 times respectively), but often appear in contexts related more to business success and the accumulation of wealth. "Self-culture," on the other hand, nearly always appeared in contexts pertaining to teaching and learning.

[68] Nineteen-hundred is not an entirely arbitrary stopping point. As reported extensively elsewhere (Richard Ohmann's *Selling Culture,* Frank Mott's *A History of American Magazines,* as well as *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940,* edited by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier), the late-1880s/early-1890s were an incredible boom period for print culture in both the United States and abroad. New and cheaper printing technologies ranging from easier-to-produce paper, to cheaper-to-transport ink, as well as extensively developed transcontinental railroads and roadways caused a tremendous proliferation in the number of printed materials available to American reading public.

Vermont Phoenix in a reference to Elihu Burritt, the "learned blacksmith" about whom a variety

of biographical and autobiographical sketches circulated at the time, and the last appearance is

on the sixty-sixth page of the December 30, 1900 edition of *The San Francisco Call* in an

advertisement for the Page and Company's "Day's Work Series" of "stories and short treatises

on religion, self-culture, and reform." Between these two dates, "self-culture" appears in nearly

every state featured in the *Chronicling America* archive (to exceedingly varied degrees), and its

appearance takes a variety of forms and is associated with a variety of movements, organizations,

people, and ideas. It is, in other words, a well-traveled concept. And as you might expect, given

its affiliations with myriad and distinct ideologies and organizations ranging from anti-slavery

societies to phrenological publishers to educational reformers to anti-carpetbagger/scalawag

southern reconstructionists, though the "term" of self-culture was well-traveled, its conceptual

makeup was not. That is, as the term "self-culture" moved into and out of favor in different

regions and with different social sets, the concept behind the term changed and shifted. There did

remain a general sense that "self-culture" had something to do with, as Blackie's definition

indicates, culturing, training, or educating one's self without the aid of teachers by one's own

efforts. That said, depending on who was using the term (and why) the purposes or goals of self-

culture often shifted and changed, occasionally limiting its practicability to a certain set of folks

(often white men), or even serving as a sort of insult of different set of folks (often white

Northerners).[69] Moreover, perceived lack of self-culture among some folks (often white

---

[69] This tracks in some ways with Raymond Williams' distinction between the "ideal" and "social" definitions of culture. Idealized "self-culture," as imagined by Channing and others, represented a perfect and absolute process of human perfection and perfectibility. Social "self-culture," as practiced within the various social groups surveyed in this chapter," was inflected by those distinct social groups' particular ways of life.

Southerners, or black folks) was conceived of as not just an educational deficiency, but sometimes a moral one as well. And in many cases, the capacity to engage in self-culture was linked with a burgeoning understanding of human biology and psychology.

Given the disparity between page numbers for each state within the *Chronicling America* archive, it's hard to get a fair gauge on the in/frequency of references to "self-culture" over the course of the nineteenth century, particularly when comparing the in/frequency of references as they occur in different states in different years. As such, just as one interested in comparing crime statistics between two disparately populated cities should look at the *per capita*, or "per citizen" rates (as opposed to the raw numbers), so too is it necessary for me to calculate and compare the *per paginas*, or "per page" rate of references to "self-culture" as they exist in different states. And just as cities use a fairly standard "per 100,000 citizens" *per capita* rate to calculate various crime statistics (i.e. murders, robberies per 100,000 citizens, and so on), a "per 100,000 pages" *per paginas* rate to visualize the amount of references to "self-culture" on digitized newspaper pages between 1800 and 1900 also makes sense.[70] Similarly to the contribution numbers featured in Cordell-qua-Mullen's map (Figure 2), the per paginas rate of self-culture references could be visually depicted via a map, ostensibly illustrating what regions

---

[70] Just as the "per 100,000 citizens" *per capita* rate recognizes there are cities of widely disparate population sizes, so too does a "per 100,000 pages" *per paginas* rate recognize that within the *Chronicling America* archive, different states have a widely different number of digitized pages. The arithmetic mean or average number of digitized pages between 1800 and 1900 for the states which comprise my corpus is 113,978. This number takes into account those states with very few digitized pages in the archive such as Colorado for which there are only 106 pages, as well as New York for which there are 451,464. Moreover, the median of this range is 101,513. All this is a way of pointing out that my chosen "per 100,000 pages" *per paginas* rate wasn't chosen randomly, but rather to capture a rate that fairly represented the frequency with which "self-culture" was referenced in different states over the course of nineteenth century.

and/or states cited or referenced self-culture most often throughout the nineteenth century, as well as what regions and/or states cited or referenced self-culture least often.[71]

That said, one problem with using a cartographic representation of the United States as seen in Cordell-qua-Mullen's map is the visual elision of the northeastern United States, and the visual enlargement of the midwestern and southwestern United States. For example, in Figure 2 above Texas appears larger and perhaps more important than New England, even though more US citizens lived throughout New England during the nineteenth century, and a previous chapter suggests the region was a significant hotbed of self-culturist activity. And so, in an effort to eliminate this problem of visual emphasis, I'll visualize the per paginas self-culture references in a tile choropleth map, which only approximates the geographic structure of the United States by making each state the same size.

---

[71] This *per paginas* rate does not account for the size of circulation of the different periodicals within a state. It does not, for example, recognize that some newspapers may have had wider or smaller circulation areas within the same state, nor does it account for newspapers that might've had circulation areas that extended across state borders. The *per paginas* rate also does not account for the degree to which individual periodicals commissioned original pieces versus reprinting articles originally published elsewhere.

Instances of "Self-Culture" Per 100,00 pages, 1800-1900

AK

| | | | | | | | | ME |
| | | | | | | | VT | NH |
WA ID MT ND MN IL WI MI NY RI MA
OR NV WY SD IA IN OH PA NJ CT
CA UT CO NE MO KY WV VA MD DE
AZ NM KS AR TN NC SC DC
OK LA MS AL GA
HI TX FL

| No Data | 0 | 1-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-80 | 81-100 | 101-120 | 121-140 |

Figure 4. Instances of "Self-Culture" Per 100,000 pages, 1800-1900

Figure 4 hints at a handful of stories about how self-culture circulated throughout the United States. At different times, these stories can both confirm or challenge the assumptions I had about self-culture's spread, based both upon my review of self-culturist literature in the previous chapter, as well as my understanding of the development of the United States over the course of the nineteenth century. For example, I assumed self-culture would've traveled a sort of east-to-west path across the US, marking the northeast as a robust center of self-culturist activity, and the northwest and southwest as relatively inactive in comparison. Had this assumption been true, I would've expected states like Vermont, New York, and Connecticut to be dark green, midwestern states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois to be lighter green, and western states

144

like Washington and California and Arizona to be pale green. And while this apparently is the case when Vermont's per paginas rate of 99 references per 100,000 pages is compared to New Mexico's per paginas rate of 3 references per 100,000 pages, the assumption falls apart when comparing New York (19 per 100,000 pages) to Washington, (31 per 100,000), Oregon (65 per 100,000), or even the sparsely populated North and South Dakota (42 and 49 per 100,000, respectively).

Indeed, the absence of data for New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts makes it impossible — via the methodologies employed in *this* chapter — to determine if New England was as significant a hotbed of self-culturist activity as the previous chapter suggests. That said, Figure 4 does indicate another possible geographically situated pocket of self-culturist activity in the northern midwest (Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania), as well as (to a lesser extent) the west coast (California and Oregon). Moreover, while deep south states (Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi) have a relatively low per paginas rates compared to the rest of the US, east south central states (Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma) have slightly higher per paginas rates compared to the rest of the US, as do the midwestern states directly to the north of this region (Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska). The comparatively low per paginas rate of New York is puzzling, particularly given the fact that the state would become another key site from which self-culturist activity would emerge, as I will explore below. And Tennessee emerges as a strange island of self-culture activity floating directly south of self-culture desert that is Kentucky, and directly north of the aforementioned deserts of Georgia and Alabama, though the Volunteer State does share a border with the moderately active North Carolina, and a smaller border with the slightly more active Missouri.

There are few overlaps between Figure 3 and Figure 4: the relatively high per paginas rate of self-culture references in Ohio (110 per 100,000 pages) might simply be a result of the similarly high number of digitized contributions made by Ohio's libraries to the *Chronicling America* database. The same could be the case for Louisiana (86 per 100,000 pages) and Tennessee (71 per 100,000 pages). Similarly, the per paginas rates of zero for Delaware, Colorado, Georgia, and Alabama might be because these states make up four of the five states with the lowest contributions numbers for the archive. That said, if a state's contributions to the archive did indeed influence that state's per paginas self-culture reference rate, then I'd expect the per paginas rates of New York and New Mexico to be higher, and those of California and Nebraska to be lower. Indeed, California's highest per paginas rates (138 references per 100,000 pages) is fairly remarkable, considering the earliest digitized newspaper from the state was *Los Angeles Daily Herald* from 1873. Indeed, in just 27 years worth of digitized newspaper pages, California amassed the third highest raw references to self-culture (209) of all the states in the *Chronicling America* archive; only Ohio and DC (both 251) had more raw references, and the archive features 64 and 100 years worth of digitized newspaper pages for these states respectively.[72]

The stories Figure 4 hints at are incomplete, their veracity muddled by the fact that the data that makes up Figure 4 compresses the entire nineteenth century into a single spatial

---

[72] One possible explanation for this 27-year boom might relate to California's rapid population growth between 1870 and 1900: according to census data, the state's population tripled during those thirty years. Another possible explanation might pertain to the fact that because it represented a "new frontier" of Manifest Destiny-inspired expansion, California was without many of the more established institutions that were present in Eastern states. Among these institutions were schools and churches, institutions which provided citizens with some form of school-based education. In the absence of such institutions, Californians might've needed to engage in self-culture (or some other form of non-school-based education) if they hoped to gain any education whatsoever.

146

representation. In other words, Figure 4 imagines 100 years of newspaper data (really, 62 years) as a single snapshot representation, rather than an unfolding and a spreading of myriad representations that swirl and change, ebb and flow. Figure 4 condenses into space what more properly occurred across both space and time. When one starts to consider the circulation of self-culture across time within the *Chronicling America*, one of the first things to note is that even though the archive itself extends back to 1789, the first appearance of the term "self-culture" doesn't occur until 1839 in Vermont. Given my review of self-culturist promotional writing in a previous chapter, it is difficult to resist the urge to suggest that this first printing of the term "self-culture" in a US newspaper in 1839 in Vermont seems to temporally follow from William Ellery Channing's 1838 "Self Culture" introductory address in Franklin lecture series held in Boston, Massachusetts. In other words, it's hard to resist the urge to suggest that Channing's address marks a sort of origin point for the conceptual timeline of self-culture in the United States. Indeed, six of the first eight instances of "self-culture" in the *Chronicling America* archive either directly reprint a section of Channing's remarks, or reference those remarks specifically. As indicated in the description of the archive, however, only about fourteen thousand pages exist between the years 1789 and 1835, and these come entirely from New York, D.C., Philadelphia, and Richmond. As such, the fact that "self-culture" doesn't appear until 1839 could have more to do with the construction of the archive itself, rather than with the time period the archive hopes to represent. That said, in comparing the results from *Chronicling America* with results from Google Books Ngram Viewer, another large-scale digitized archives of printed material that allows users to chart frequencies of any set of comma-delimited search string (e.g.

"self culture"), the late 1830s does seem to mark one of the stronger "origin points" of the term

"self-culture" in English-speaking corpora from the 18th century onward.[73]
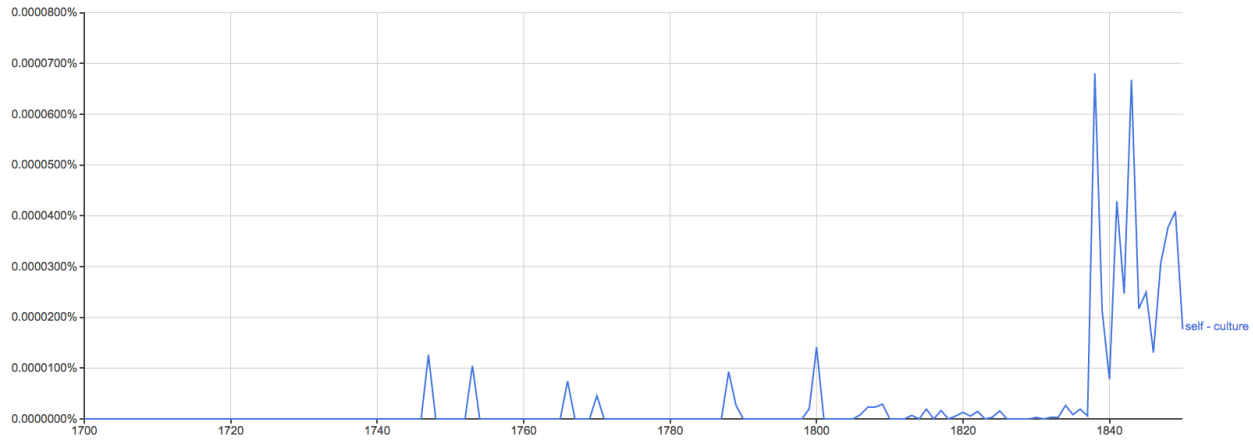
Figure 5. Google Ngram, "Self-Culture" 1700-1850[74]

Figure 5 shows several "blips" over the course of the entire 18th and early 19th centuries (1747,

1752, 1765, 1770, 1800), the usage of the term "self-culture" in English-speaking texts rose

dramatically in 1838/1839. This dramatic increase is more apparent when the frequency of the

term is charted between the years 1820 and 1850.

---

[73] As with the *Chronicling America* archive, the Google Books archive is riddled with myriad problems that makes using its Ngrams Viewer as a possible lens into the past highly problematic. These problems include, but are not limited to: faulty Optical character recognition (OCR) data that impedes the accuracy of search/Ngram results, an unavailable description of where/when the titles themselves come, errors in title metadata particularly metadata relating to the date of publication, and so on. All this is not to say that Google Ngrams or *Chronicling America* can't indicate something about the past they are attempting to archive. Rather, it is to say that whatever Google Ngrams or *Chronicling America* are able to indicate about the past must be highly qualified.

[74] Google Ngram performs keyword searches within the entirety of its archive of digitized, English-language pages. These include printed material that is publicly viewable via Google Books, as well as material that is stored in databases that are not accessible to a non-paying public. Every word on every digitized page in every Google archive represents the entirety of the corpus through which Ngram performs its search. Each "blip" in a Google Ngram chart represents the total percentage of the entire archive that the search term represents. So, in this chart, in 1838, "self-culture" constituted .000068% of the total corpus. This means, that in 1838, of all the words featured in the Google corpus, "self-culture" was used .000068% of the time. As a reference point: the word "the" constituted 6% of the total corpus.
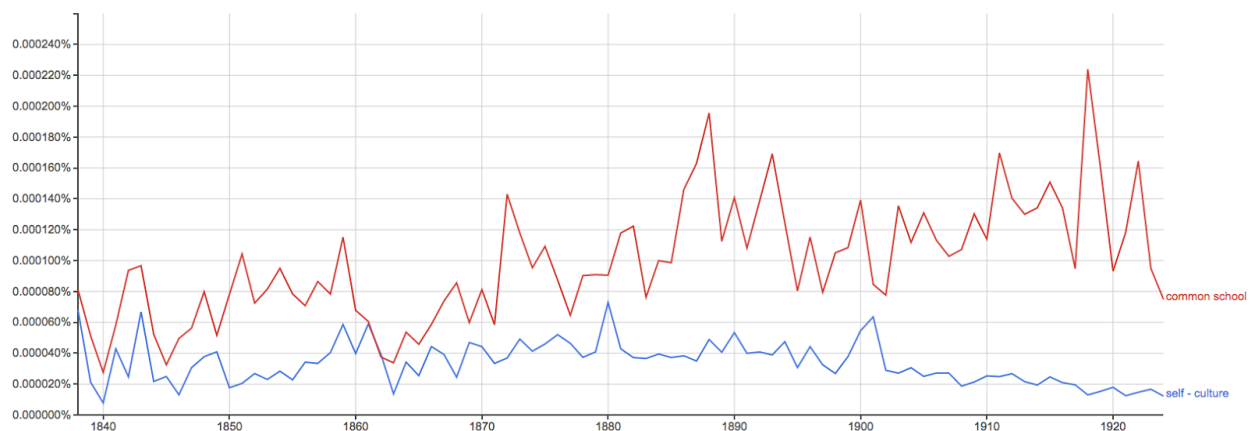
Figure 6. Google Ngram, "Self-Culture" 1820-1850

Understanding the "origin point" of self-culture as either specifically (a) Channing's 1838 Franklin lectures address of the same name, or more generally (b) the geopolitical/geocultural context of Channing address (i.e. Boston, Massachusetts), has significant implications not just for the concept itself, but for longer-sustaining US movements and the institutions they bore. More specifically, Massachusetts in the mid-to-late 1830s saw the advent of the country's first state board of education, as well as that board's first state Secretary of Education, Horace Mann. In his address, Channing speaks of this development, alluding to but not explicitly naming Mann:

> "The [Massachusetts] legislature has of late appointed a board of education, with a secretary, who is to devote his whole time to the improvement of public schools. An individual more fitted to this responsible office than the gentleman who now fills it cannot, I believe, be found in our community; and if his labors shall be crowned with success, he will earn a title to the gratitude of the good people of this State unsurpassed by that of any other living citizen. Let me also recall to your minds a munificent individual, who, by a generous donation, has encouraged the legislature to resolve on the establishment of one or more institutions called Normal Schools, the object of which is to prepare accomplished teachers of youth,—a work on which the progress of education depends more than on any other measure. The efficient friends of education are the true benefactors of their country, and their names deserve to be handed down to that posterity for whose highest wants they are generously providing." (para. 50)

Though the Massachusetts legislature didn't, as Channing erroneously states, *appoint* Mann to the position of Secretary of Education, they did *approve of* Mann's appointment. Mann's appointment was made by then-governor Edward Everett, and it is a small summary description of Everett's 1838 speech about Elihu Burritt, "the learned blacksmith," that make up the other two (of eight) first references of "self-culture" in American newspapers. While a previous chapter recognized the nationwide economic and social conditions during which the Common School Movement flourished, recognizing the "origin" of American self-culture in Channing's 1838 address seems to contextualize the theoretical and conceptual beginnings of both the Common School Movement and the self-culture movement among and between the same Massachusetts-based coterie of public intellectuals and state officials. In short, self-culture seems to have been a significant theoretical component of the conceptual DNA of public schooling in the United States, and it remained so throughout the duration of the nineteenth century.

The conceptual affiliation between the self-culture and common school movements is further evidenced when both terms are tracked using Google NGrams:


Figure 7. Google Ngram, "Self-Culture" and "Common School" 1838-1924

The near lock-step affiliation between these two terms in the late 1830s and through the 1840s suggests that though folks were talking about common schools more than self-culture (via print

media), both topics were being discussed with a relative and consistent relationship to one another. This suggests that public discourse about self-culture was perhaps part of a larger and ongoing discussion about public schooling, in much the same way that public discourse about topics such as "digital literacy," "state standards," and "standardized testing" are all part of a larger and ongoing contemporary discussion about schooling and education.

Figure 7 also suggests some other strangenesses about the public discourse on self-culture as that discourse stretched over the long nineteenth century. Two things to note: first, public discussions of self-culture seem to have dissipated after a brief "boom period" around 1900. And second, while the public discussions related to common schools generally trend up as the years advance, the public discussions of self-culture seems to plateau between 1865 and 1900. This, in and of itself, would simply seem to suggest that while "common schools" continued to be a compelling topic of public discourse throughout the nineteenth century, the public interest in "self-culture" leveled out, and eventually dissipated. Moreover, the increase in the number of direct references to "common schools" might simply correlate with the increasing preponderance of printed material as the nineteenth century wore on. Again, reading the trajectory marked by "common school" from the Google Ngram (figure 7) off of the growing number of newspaper pages archived in *Chronicling America* (figure 8, below) seems to indicate that as the sheer volume of printed material proliferated over the course of the nineteenth century, so too did the raw number of references to "common schools."
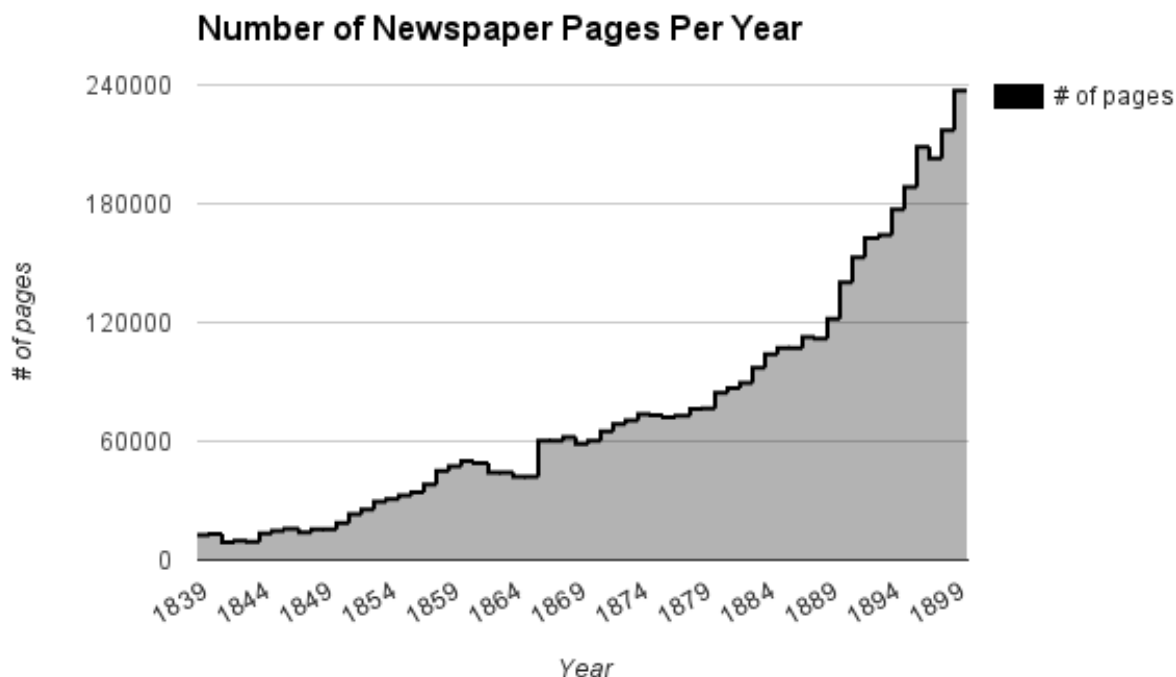
Figure 8. Number of Newspaper Pages in *Chronicling America* archive, 1839-1900

Other than the dip in the number of newspaper pages between 1860 and 1868 — a dip which is also seen in the raw number of references to "self-culture" and "common schools" in Figure 7, and which likely corresponds directly with the Civil War years — the number of newspaper pages and the number of references to "common school" track with each other fairly consistently. This is not the case with the number of references to "self-culture." While this is evident when reading Figure 7 in conjunction with Figure 8, the uneven tracking between number of newspaper pages and references to "self-culture" becomes more pronounced when the references to "self-culture" are tracked not through Google's Ngrams, but throughout the *Chronicling America* archive itself; that is, when the references to "self-culture" are limited to US newspapers, and not the various printed media that comprise the Google Books database.

Number of References to Self-Culture Per Year
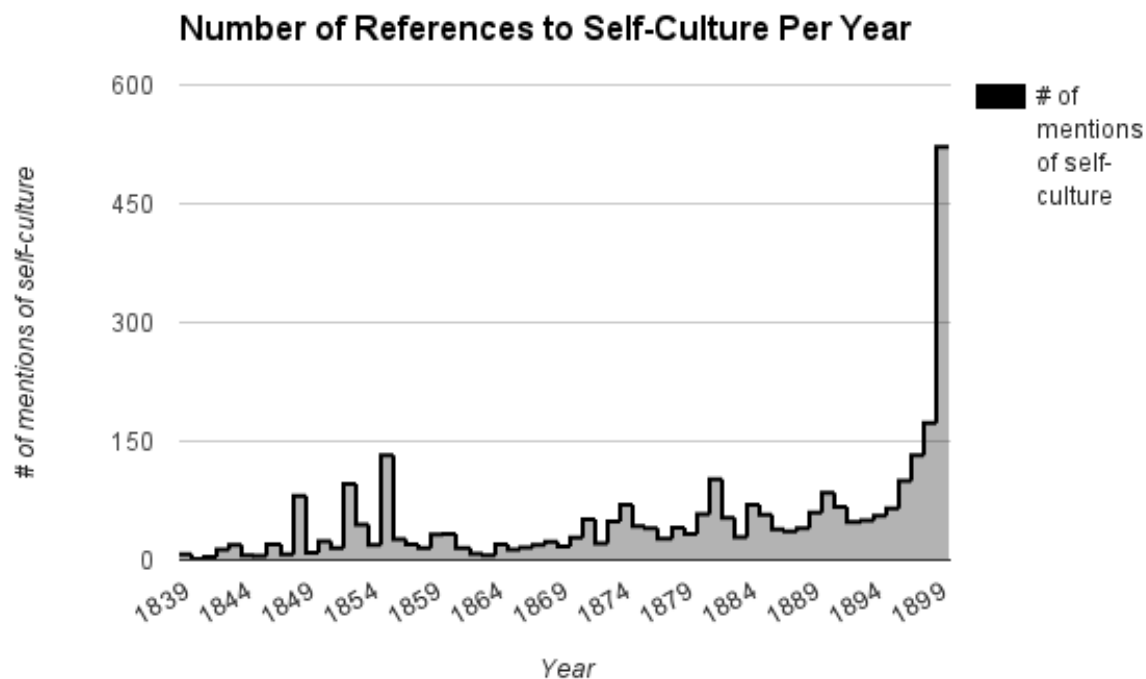
Figure 9. Number of references to "Self-Culture" in newspaper pages, 1839-1900

The plateau evident in Figure 7, is less pronounced in Figure 8, though both contain a number of pronounced "boom" years. Indeed, public discussion of self-culture between 1838 and 1924 appears to be marked five of these boom years/periods: 1843, 1859-1861, 1880, 1890, and 1900. While the precipitous increase in "self-culture" references in the late 1890s tracks consistently with the similarly precipitous increase of newspaper pages in the same era, there are no other truly consistent moments of tracking between Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 9 raises questions about how the term "self-culture" circulated in newspapers over the course of the nineteenth century. First and foremost, when did these references happen, where are they happening most and least frequently? What regions, states, cities, and newspapers most frequently print the phrase "self-culture," and who is reading these printings? Why? Further, why such a large number of raw references to "self-culture" in 1848, 1852, 1855, and (to a less significant degree) 1881 and 1890? Who or what was referencing "self-culture" so

much in these years compared to the surrounding years, and why were they referencing them? Though a decrease in references to "self-culture" makes sense during the Civil War years (1861-1865), how or why do references to "self-culture" pick up again during Reconstruction? Is this evidence simply of the fact that newspaper printing picked up again, or did increased references to "self-culture" during Reconstruction coincide with some sort of mounting sentiment toward individuality and self-sufficiency? Addressing these questions will, in turn, generate insights into how the concept/pedagogy of self-culture was nuanced and deployed by those who used the concept.

I can visualize these per paginas self-culture references with another tile choropleth map which will allow me to compare not just the reference rate between states (space), but also the reference rate of a given state in any given year between 1839 and 1900 (time), as well as the shifting and changing of rates over the course of the years represented in my corpus (space + time). For these maps, I'll use a "per 1,500 pages" rate to compare the per paginas self-culture references within distinct states throughout the nineteenth century.[75]

---

[75] The arithmetic mean or "average" number of pages per year across all states is 1,740. This average skews high, however, given the fact that the "median" of page numbers per year across all states is just 743, the mode is 0, and the range includes higher end page numbers over 15,000 per year (all in New York, and all in the 1890s). Fifteen-hundred, therefore, is a not a statistically sound number, but rather a heuristically sound number, as this chapter will explore. That is, the per paginas numbers themselves won't be especially revelatory, but they will direct me toward more revelatory investigations of the corpus from which the numbers are drawn.
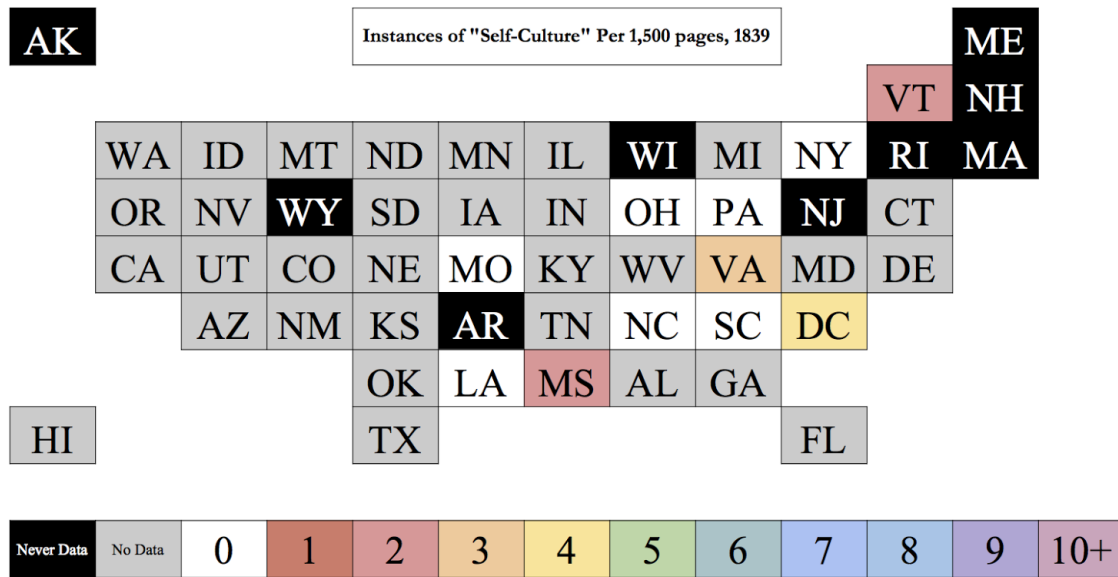
Figure 10. Instances of "Self-Culture" per 1,500 pages, 1839

Figure 10 visualizes the per paginas references to "self-culture" in newspapers contained within the *Chronicling America* archive in 1839. The black states — Alaska, Wyoming, Arkansas, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine — are states for which there are no digitized newspaper pages in the archive. These states will remain black for every subsequent choropleth visualization. The grey states are those for which there are no digitized newspaper pages in the archive from the year 1839. When digitized pages start to appear in the archive for the grey states, they will change color. The white states — Missouri, Louisiana, North and South Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York — are those states for

which there are digitized newspaper pages in the archive from 1839, but there are no references to "self-culture" in those pages.

Though it is not the case for 1839, in some subsequent years of my analysis, some states are colored white for years in which a handful of references to "self-culture" exist. In these cases, the state remains white because these choropleth maps visualize the number of references to "self-culture" per every 1,500 pages, and not the raw number of references to self-culture. As such, when there are relatively few references to "self-culture" on newspaper pages from states with an exceedingly high number of pages during a given year (most often states such as New York or Washington, DC), the calculated number of references to "self-culture" per 1,500 pages is low enough to be effectively zero. In terms of these visualized calculations, if the calculated per paginas rate was less than 0.5 I rounded down to the nearest whole number, and if it was greater than 0.5, I rounded up to the nearest whole number. For example, the *Chronicling America* archive contains 488 digitized pages for Virginia in the year 1839. Among those 488 pages, there is one raw reference to self-culture in the July 5, 1839 *Richmond Enquirer*: a scathing review of the "gross perversion" that is democracy in the north, attributable to "Fanny Wright, [William Lloyd] Garrison, [Abner] Kneeland, and Co." "Read Dr. Channing on Self-Culture," the review goes on,

> "and you will understand most clearly what true Democracy is. It trusts and respects the People, because it believes them capable of improvement, and destined to it. It discerns, latent in them, an amount of virtue and intellect, worthy of any efforts, and expense, to develop and bring into action. It has with them, strong and many sympathies, which make it pardon their shortcomings, and hope on, for their elevation of character, despite a thousand failures. I say again, read Dr. Channing on Self Culture." (4)

A single reference to self-culture in just 488 pages makes the per paginas self-culture reference rate 3.07 references for every 1,500 pages ((1/488) x 1,500). Because the decimal (0.07) is less than 0.5, I rounded down to three.

156

Upon calculating the per paginas rate for each state for each year in which the *Chronicling America* archive features digitized pages for that state, it's a simple matter of adding the corresponding color to that state's block according to this arbitrarily established color key. Once each map has been colored in, the entire string of maps can be viewed chronologically. Here is a link to view each year individually: [Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900](). These maps effectively expands upon the information presented in Figure 8 in at least three key ways: first, and most tenuously, while Figure 9 works with the raw number of references, "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" smooths out this data through its use of a per paginas rate of references per 1,500 pages. This better depicts patterns in references in years in which there is a wide disparity between page numbers in any given state. For example, in 1871 the page number totals range from 197 in Kentucky to 8,117 in New York. The state with the fewest total digitized pages that include at least one reference to "self-culture" is Nebraska, for which there are 206 total digitized pages that include two references to "self-culture." The state with the most total digitized pages that include at least one reference to "self-culture" is Tennessee, for which there are 7,345 pages that include 19 references to "self-culture." At face value, this would seem to suggest that self-culture was a more significant topic of public discourse in Tennessee in 1871 than it was in Nebraska. When translated into the references per 1,500 pages, however, Nebraska per paginas rate jumps to 15 per 1,500 pages, while Tennessee's drops to four per 1,500 pages; though there were fewer references to "self-culture" in Nebraska newspapers in 1871, there were also (at least insofar as they are featured in the *Chronicling America* archive) fewer newspaper pages. These means that the references to self-culture in those newspaper pages perhaps had more weight and impact,

157

than those references to self-culture spread out over Tennessee's 7,000 pages.[76] Secondly, while Figure 9 can show that there were "boom years" in terms of raw references to self-culture, "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" pinpoints the exact states in which those references took place. It is not the case, for example, that in 1852 the whole country was caught up "talking about" self-culture. Instead, the most intense "talk" — as represented by the states with the highest per paginas references to self-culture in that year — was primarily limited to Michigan and Washington DC, with a smattering of smaller "conversations" happening in Vermont, Ohio, and West Virginia. Finally, in pinpointing the exact states, "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" adds further clarification to the questions asked above: Who or what was referencing "self-culture" so much in these years *in these states*, as compared to the surrounding states, as compared to the surrounding years? Why were they referencing them?

The maps of "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" provide occasion to return to some of the lingering stories hinted at by Figure 4 above; "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" allows me to move from the Procrustean snapshot of Figure 4 into the more granular data of not just state-by-state references to self-culture, but state-by-state references to self-culture as they occur year-by-year over the course of the nineteenth century. This shift in focus from the macro-image of self-culture in the nineteenth-century in Figure 4 to an assemblage of micro-images in "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" foments a similar shift in the concept of self-

---

[76] This first point assumes a correspondence between the number of pages featured in the *Chronicling America* archive of pages from 1871 and the number of pages actually present in 1871, a correspondence which I've already acknowledged may or may not be the case. This is why I refer to this first expansion as "tenuous."

culture, from a macro-level theory or set of principles, to an assemblage of micro-level enactments of those principles.

4.3   PHRENOLOGY AND SELF-CULTURE

A further examination of the "boom years" (1848, 1852, 1855) revealed by Figure 9 reveal that this transition in self-culture as a disinterested pedagogical principle to a pointedly interested pedagogical practice was prompted by the mounting affiliation between the concept and the popular "science" of the time: phrenology. While self-culture qua Channing optimistically promised than an individual could and should improve herself, self-culture qua phrenology suggested that one's capacity for improvement could be limited by their physiognomy; all individuals could still improve themselves, surely, but the extent of their improvement was governed by their biology. One of phrenology's core principles was that the physical brain was the organ of the mind, and that as one improved upon or developed one's mental capabilities, these changes resulted in physical changes in one's brain, which in turn resulted in physical changes in the brain's casing, the skull. A trained phrenologist, so it was thought, could map one's skull and thereby "measure" the various bulges and valleys in one's brain. To the trained phrenologist, these bulges and valleys of the brain signified the type and degree of development in various mental faculties that were possessed by the individual.

Moreover, while Channing was unconcerned with conceiving of any mechanism for measuring one's improvement via self-culture, phrenology claimed to be able to not only measure the results of an individual's self-culture (via cranioscopy), but also allow individuals to engage in more targeted and directed self-culture based on a base-line cranioscopic analysis.

Though the link between self-culture and phrenology predated both Charles Darwin's 1859 *Origin of Species*, as well as Herbert Spencer's 1864 *Principles of Biology*, the link anticipated the latter's application of the former's biological principles to social relationships. In a sense, in targeting it via phrenological theory and analysis, self-culture became a mechanism by which individuals could fortify, in Spencer's words, the fitness required to survive and thrive.

In the "boom years" revealed by Figure 9 (1848, 1852, 1855), and geographically situated by "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900", references to "self-culture" were almost always linked directly with the phrenological publishing and lecturing of the Fowlers and Wells publishing house and phrenological cabinet. In 1848, for example, of the seventeen states from which digitized pages exist in the archive, "self-culture" was only referenced in seven: Vermont, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, and Louisiana. Of these states, Ohio and Louisiana stand out because of the high per paginas rate, both of which were marked "10+" on the map in "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900": 17 in Ohio, and 65 in Louisiana.[77] All of the direct references to "self-culture" in Ohio in 1848 exist in two weeklies: *The Kalida Venture* from Kalida, and *The Spirit of Democracy* from Woodsfield, while all of the ads referencing "self-culture" in Louisiana appeared in *The Daily Crescent* from New Orleans. The references appear in advertisements for "Books on the Natural Sciences" published by Fowlers and Wells. The ads feature numerous titles by both Orson and Lorenzo Fowler, as well as Samuel Wells and Charlotte Fowler Wells. These titles focus on common and popular topics such as physiology, memory, education,

---

[77] There exist 1,324 total digitized pages from 1848 newspapers for Louisiana in the archive, and 1,376 total digitized pages from 1848 newspapers for Ohio. In those 1,324 1848 Louisiana pages, there are 57 raw references to "self-culture," while in the 1,376 1848 Ohio pages, there are 16 raw references to "self-culture.".

hereditary descent, religion, and matrimony. Prominently displayed in the ads of both *The Kalida Venture* and *The Spirit of Democracy* is Orson Squire Fowler's *Self-Culture, and the Perfection of Character, Including the Management of Youth*. This book was distributed at the Fowlers' lectures and phrenological "readings" primarily as a pamphlet until it was revised, expanded and "Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847." In the advertisements from *The Kalida Venture* — which occur earlier in 1848 than do those featured in *The Spirit of Democracy* — *Self Culture, and the Perfection of Character* is lower down on the list of displayed titles, appearing under titles dedicated to establishing the "science" and credibility of phrenology, including Orson Fowler's *Phrenology Proved, Illustrated, and Applied*, as well as *The Principles of Physiology* by Andrew Combe who, along with Johann Spurzheim and Franz Joseph Gall were three of the earliest and most prominent practitioners and promoters of phrenology in Europe and the United States.

Figure 11. Fowler and Wells Advertisement, August 12, 1848 *Spirit of Democracy*, page 4

Though the placement and duration of these advertisements appear random, they effectively trace a promotional path of the Fowlers and Wells firm. According to Madeleine

Stern's *Heads and Headlines: The Phrenological Fowlers*, the Fowler brothers, their wives, children, and in-laws, as well as other nonrelative representatives of their firm, traveled tirelessly throughout the mid-nineteenth century United States to promote phrenology generally and their phrenological practice, as well as the *American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* specifically. The *Journal*, edited by Orson, was also distributed via amateur agents who would purchase copies directly from Fowlers and Wells and then redistribute them on their own. While the ads in *The Spirit of Democracy* and *The Kalida Venture* both coincide with a Ohio-based lecture tour by Orson Fowler, the ads in *The Daily Crescent* were more likely placed by one of these amateur agents seeking to drum up local enthusiasm for Fowlers and Wells publications. These lecture-tours and amateur agent promotions paid off; as Sterns writes, "the subscription list [for the *Journal* rose] from less than six hundred in 1842 to more than twenty thousand in 1848" (68).

This same promotion of Fowlers' publishing house and phrenological firm accounts for the 1852 "boom year" of "self-culture" references. In that year, "self-culture" is referenced in even fewer states (5) than it was in 1848, and the vast majority of those references occur in the DC-based *Daily American Telegraph*. Between February 26 and May 27, the *Daily American Telegraph* ran advertisements for Fowlers and Wells which listed Orson Fowler's *Self-Culture, and the Perfection of Character* as one of seven "Works on Education" printed and promoted by the publishers. More prominent in these advertisements — many of which appeared on the front-page of the paper — were 20 titles focusing on phrenology, as well as 22 titles promoting the Fowlers' latest medical hobbyhorse: the water cure.

The Fowlers and Wells firm was, if nothing else, opportunistic when it came to creating conceptual links between phrenology and other trends within the reform movements that

163

pervaded the nineteenth century United States. Though phrenology (in the work of Spurzheim and Gall) certainly predated the self-culture movement ostensibly started by Channing and other Unitarians in Boston in the late 1830s, the affiliation generated by Orson Fowler's *Self-Culture, and the Perfection of Character* can be read as a strategic business move; a sort of conceptual linking of the phrenology brand, so to speak, with the up-and-coming self-culture brand.[78] The Fowlers formed many of these conceptual links throughout the firm's existence, framing them as an infusion of the most up-to-date scientific concepts and approaches offered via phrenology into fields or movements that were otherwise lacking in scientific rigor. Though phrenology remained their touchstone throughout the firm's long existence, the Fowlers and company would link this pseudoscience with other pseudoscientific, social, spiritual, and educational movements of the day, including, but not limited to: mesmerism (hypnosis), animal magnetism, the aforementioned hydropathy or water cure, abolitionism (though only marginally), women's suffrage, the kindergarten movement, sex education, the anti-lacing, anti-tobacco, and temperance movements, and, of course, spiritual self-culture.

Of course, phrenology is junk science; a science of bumps and cavities, as Mark Twain famously pilloried in his *Autobiography*. That said, as Sherrie Lynn Lyons writes in *Species, Serpents, Spirits, and Skulls: Science at the Margins in the Victorian Age*, "Although many of the ideas of phrenology seem patently ridiculous to us today, the basic underpinnings...remain the basis of our understanding of mental phenomena" (52). Lyons goes on the explain,

---

[78] Tracing "phrenology" throughout the *Chronicling America* archive in the same way that I am tracing "self-culture" throughout that same archive offers a glimpse not just into the development of how the pseudoscience represented itself, but also a glimpse into the ebbing and flowing of myriad social reform movements.

"Understanding the nature of the mind had been considered fundamentally a philosophical problem. Phrenology played a prominent role in psychology eventually breaking from philosophy and in its struggle to establish itself as a true experimental science." (57)

Fowler emphasizes this very point in the preface to *Self-Culture, and Perfection of Character*, writing "These important inquiries — How can I render myself, and how make my children BETTER? this work answers scientifically" (v). This scientific approach, as the Fowlers conceived of it, broke with some of the assumptions (mind-body dualism), as well as the methodology (introspective reflection) considered to be at the forefront of best practices in the philosophical-psychological tradition most obvious in the works of Rene Descartes (*Meditations*), John Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*), and David Hume (*A Treatise of Human Nature*). Channing also regarded the methodology of introspective reflection to be of paramount importance, not just for the principle of self-culture, but in distinguishing between humans and lesser animals. He writes,

"We have first the faculty of turning the mind on itself: of recalling its past, and watching its present operations; of learning its various capacities and susceptibilities, what it can do and bear, what it can enjoy and suffer; and of thus learning in general what our nature is, and what it was made for. It is worthy of observation, that we are able to discern not only what we already are, but what we may become, to see in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set, to dart beyond what we have actually gained to the idea of perfection as the end of our being. It is by this self-comprehending power that we are distinguished from the brutes, which give no signs of looking into themselves." (para. 6)

While phrenologists also acknowledged the importance of this type of self-examination, they challenged the idea that the ability to understand an individual's mind was an ability that only that individual could possess. More specifically, they argued that scientists — more specifically, trained phrenologists — could, through cranioscopic examination, also gain an understanding of the present operations and various capacities and susceptibilities of another individual's mind. Phrenologists practiced with the assumption that the physical brain was the

organ of the mind, and that this organ could be observed and analyzed by studying its physical effects on its most immediate environment, the skull that housed it.

In a sense, then, Orson Fowler's *Self-Culture, and the Perfection of Character*, as well as the book's promotion throughout the United States via lectures, the *American Phrenological Journal*, and newspaper articles and advertisements, is not only an opportunistic co-option of the concept of self-culture, it was also a concerted effort to supplement the popular understanding and practice of self-culture in terms of (what was considered at the time to be) empirical data, and not just introspection. Both Orson Fowler's and Channing's conception of self-culture is optimistic, though to different degrees; while Channing strongly believed if not in the absolute perfectibility of the individual, then certainly in the idea that an individual could always strive toward perfection. Fowler, on the other hand, argued that though the absolute perfectibility of an individual was possible, each individual's ceiling of perfection was different. That is, everyone had the capacity to perfect themselves, but my threshold for perfection might be higher or lower than your threshold for perfection. Moreover, for Channing, an individual's success at self-culture could only truly be witnessed by that individual as he or she reflected upon his or her self-culture. That is, it was a decidedly internal, and mostly personal affair. Perhaps as an individual's self-culture continued, others could witness it via its effects on the ways in which the individual comported himself or herself in his or her dealings with family, friends, or business, but these external behaviors could only be considered evidence of the *results* of self-culture, and not evidence of the *progress* of self-culture itself. For Orson Fowler, on the other hand, infusing self-culture with the cranicopic practices of phrenology marked a turn away from self-culture as a process propelled entirely by self-reflective analysis. Phrenology (via Fowler) sought to make self-culture not just measurable via empirical data, but guidable by that data.

Remember Benjamin Franklin's pursuit of perfection; imagine such a pursuit might've been aided had Franklin had access to up-the-minute craniscopic readings of how his brain (and therefore his skull) was changing because of those pursuits.

In a sense, while Channing's notion of self-culture offered an optimistic path for individual improvement, the brothers Fowler's infusion of self-culture with the "science" of phrenology generated a mechanism for evidencing that individual improvement. In doing so, the Fowler's notion of self-culture was a precursor to the social Darwinism theories that emerged and gain traction in the United States in the 1860s through to the end of the nineteenth century. These theories, which are more appropriately attributable to Erasmus Darwin (rather than his grandson Charles) and his contemporary Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, as well as Charles Darwin's contemporary Herbert Spencer, washed out the optimistic motivation of Channing's and the Fowlers' notion of self-culture, replacing it with insecurity. If the social world really was a place which calls for the survival of the fittest, as Spencer suggests, then the impetus for *anyone* to self-culture was not simply to unfold and perfect one's own nature, but rather to ensure social, cultural survival.[79] This prelude to social, cultural survival reflects a key distinction between the optimistic, spiritual self-culture advanced by Channing, and the scientifically imbued self-culture advanced by the Fowlers qua Spencer, Darwin, Lamarck, and so on. While Channing insists "we must make self-culture really and truly our end, or choose it for its own sake, and not merely as a

---

[79] In his *Education: Intellectual, Physical, and Moral*, Spencer presents what he names "the rational order of subordination" for the aims of education: "That education which prepares for direct self-preservation; that which prepares for indirect self-preservation; that which prepares for parenthood; that which prepares for citizenship; that which prepares for the miscellaneous refinements of life" (18-19). For Spencer, of paramount importance for any method of education, be it personal or school-based, is the ability to self-preserve. The ability to self-preserve is a key marker of "fitness," and the Spencer conceives of education as a process of "self-evolution."

means or instrument of something else," the Fowlers as "mean of science" seem to insist that self-culture is always already a means or instrument of social, cultural survival. Consider Spencer's formulation of education as a process of self-evolution:

> "But the making education a process of self-evolution has other advantages...In the first place, it guarantees a vividness and permanency of impression which the usual methods can never produce...The preliminary activity of mind which [a student's] success implies, the concentration of thought necessary to it, and the excitement consequent on his triumph, conspire to register all the facts in his memory in a way that no mere information heard from a teacher, or read in a school-book can be registered....Mark further, the importance of the moral culture which this constant self-help involves. Courage in attacking difficulties, patient concentration of the attention, perseverance through failures -- these are characteristics which after-life specially requires; and these are characteristics which this system of making the mind work for its food specially produces." (143-144)

While Channing regards self-culture as a moral obligation one owes to oneself, the Fowlers qua Spencer, Darwin, Lamarck, and so on, regard self-culture as a skill or habit or practice that will help an individual succeed by attacking difficulties, concentrating patiently, persevering through failures, and so on. In other words, one engages in Channing's self-culture because one should; one engages in the Fowlers' self-culture because one must.

4.4   LABOR AND SELF-CULTURE

Nowhere was the necessity of self-culture more pronounced than it was among the nineteenth-century labor class of the United States. We see this in the circulation of the term self-culture in newspapers throughout the industrial northern midwest. Figure 4 shows that over the course of the nineteenth century, newspapers from the northern midwest regularly referenced "self-culture" in their pages. "Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-

1900" shows these references remained consistently distributed from year-to-year *after* a certain year in each of these states. In Ohio, for example, consistent references to self-culture started in 1841 and continued through to the end of the nineteenth century; in Indiana, 1850; in Pennsylvania, 1855; in Illinois, 1871; in Minnesota, 1878; and in Michigan, 1883.[80] Each of these years roughly correlates with major industrial developments in each respective state. In Ohio, blast furnaces opened quickly throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, hastened along by the steady production of coal in the state; by 1850, Ohio was the third largest iron and steel producer in the country. In Indiana, construction of the Wabash and Erie canal was completed in 1848 as part of the Indiana Mammoth Internal Improvement Act of 1836. Similarly, a major rail line connecting Madison and Indianapolis was completed in 1847. The completion of both projects prompted a massive infrastructural development of canals and railroads throughout the state. The completion of similar infrastructural projects in Pennsylvania hastened the growing steel and iron industries throughout that state. The Ohio and Pennsylvania railroad was completed in 1851 and connected Pittsburgh to Cleveland. Shortly thereafter, the Pennsylvania Railroad connecting Pittsburgh to Philadelphia was completed in 1854. And in 1857, Pittsburgh was the third busiest steam port in the United States, even though it was 300 miles away from the nearest ocean. In 1871, George Pullman and Andrew Carnegie, among others, heavily invested in the Union Pacific Railroad company, installing themselves in board of director positions and establishing company headquarters in Chicago. This takeover launched a

---

[80] References to self-culture occurred *before* these years in each of these states, but these years mark a turning point of sorts in terms of year-to-year references. Whereas *before* these years, references were sporadic, popping up every five or six years at most, *after* these years, references started popping up every other year, or in some states such as Minnesota, nearly every year, and with increasing regularity.

massive, Illinois-based expansion of the country's only (at the time) transcontinental railroad. In the late 1870s and 1880s, Minnesota contributed greatly to both the development of these transcontinental railroads westward, but also sent massive amounts of iron ore, iron, and steel eastward as its mining industry expanded. Saint Anthony Falls in Minnesota was also the site of one of the first hydroelectric power plants in the United States in 1882. And finally, from the 1870s through to the end of the nineteenth century, Michigan's economy diversified and expanded along with its population. Lumber, farming, railroad development, and a wide variety of smaller goods made up the booming post-war economy of The Great Lakes State.

In the northern midwest (Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania), the preponderance of references to self-culture suggests an affiliation between the practice of self-culture and manual labor. More specifically, as the population of skilled and unskilled laborers increased in each of these states, so too did calls and advertisements for self-culture. Self-culture was promoted as an activity that these laborers should engage in; a way to keep their minds and their spirits strong, even as they spent the majority of their time and energy engaged in work. In Minnesota, for example, "self-culture" was consistently and steadily referenced in *St. Paul's The Daily Globe* from 1878 until the end of the century. Oftentimes, the reference to self-culture appeared in an advertisement, either for a lecture to be delivered on the subject, or for a book or pamphlet focusing on the practice of self-culture. These references were only rarely "front page" material, oftentimes appearing in later pages that focused on local news, sales, and work advertisements. This placement is significant; self-culture was local affair. This makes sense because self-culture is a kind of personal pedagogy and what could be more local than that which is personal. More specifically, though, self-culture was a local affair closely affiliated with the labor/working conditions and requirements of the local St. Paul population.

Self-culture references in the Daily Globe appeared next to news stories focusing on roadway improvement (April 3, 1878), bridge development (April 4, 1878), constructing a railroad extension (April 11, 1878), pine wood collection (September 2, 1878), expanding the local jail (February 4, 1883), as well as work advertisements for unskilled workers, craftsmen, engineers, and other forms of "contract work," both for the city and for large and private companies such as the Northern Pacific Railroad.

The consistent spatial association between manual labor and self-culture on these pages generates an affiliation between these two activities that extends back to Channing's address. As with other public lectures throughout the nineteenth century, Channing

> "understood that [his was] to be attended chiefly by those who are occupied by manual labor; and, hearing this, I did not feel myself at liberty to decline the service to which I had been invited." (para. 2)

For Channing, though self-culture was "a care which every man owes to himself," it was particularly important for "those who are occupied by manual labor," primarily because their work obligations often prevented them from attending school, and sometimes even religious services. Channing's argument was that even if individual workers lacked the time and the means to attend various institutions of learning, they could and should still devote their non-working time to self-culturing themselves with books. "I know how hard it is to some men," Channing states,

> "especially to those who spend much time in manual labor, to fix attention on books. Let them strive to overcome the difficulty by choosing subjects of deep interest, or by reading in company with those whom they love. Nothing can supply the place of books….Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this." (para. 31)

In this way, Channing imagined self-culture as a sort of at-home supplement, even replacement for common schooling. This effectively shifted the responsibility of being or becoming educated from institutions onto individuals. What's more, even though Channing insists that he "belong[s]

rightfully to the great fraternity of working men," (para. 2) his argument that such workers sacrifice luxuries to read books after working exceedingly long hours all week long smacks of out-of-touch righteousness. It was, in other words, easy for Channing — a Harvard-educated theologian and Boston-based Senior Minister of the enormous Federal Street Church — to tell workers to sacrifice luxuries (of which he had many and they likely had few) in order to read books (of which he had many and they likely had few).

Channing's out-of-touchness notwithstanding, the argument that laborers could and should self-culture in their free time was absorbed by various trade organizations and labor unions throughout the United States as these social classes lobbied for a federally-mandated eight-hour workday. The affiliation between local laboring conditions and opportunities and self-culture is evident on the third page of the April 23, 1886 edition of *The St. Paul Daily Globe*:

Figure 12. Page 3, *The St. Paul Daily Globe*, April 23, 1886

In addition to the three advertisements for contract work in the fifth column, the page also features advertisements for new building materials, a new union endowment, and (perhaps

tellingly) a liquor dealer.[81] In the left four columns, the page features reports and commentary regarding a Scottish Rite Masonic banquet, a recent civil service examination, and the installation of electric motor trams between Bridge square and Sixth street. Central on this page is a two-column report on meeting held by Minneapolis Workingmen focusing on the establishment of the eight-hour workday. The fourth speaker, WH Grimshaw, offers an argument that echoes both Channing's address, as well as the phrenological undertones of self-culture. The article reads:

> "Darwin believed in the survival of the fittest. [Grimshaw] believed, however, with [Minnesota Congressman] Ignatius Donnelly in the survival of the fightest, and advised a spirited and determined fight on the part of the workingmen to obtain a recognition of their right. Coming down to the eight-hour question he advanced as the three leading arguments in favor of the reduction: First — that all men will have more time for self culture, which is sadly needed. Second — It will give employment for the idle. Third — When universally adopted it will have a tendency to create better times." (3)

Tellingly, Grimshaw's argument *assumes* the value of self-culture. That is, in presenting his argument for an eight-hour workday, Grimshaw assumes that the opponents of such a proposal agree with him regarding the significance of self-culture "which is sadly needed." In other words, self-culture — unlike an eight-hour workday — was a generally agreed-upon good thing, in the same way that having less idle drifters and living in "better times" were generally agreed-upon good things. This seems to suggest that the need to argue for the positive benefits of self-culture (a la Channing) didn't exist anymore; self-culture was already culturally accepted.

---

[81] Also ominously included on this page is a story about an attempted suicide by Mrs. Dillon, the wife of George Dillon, "a laborer employed in the Milwaukee railroad." Though the story offers no explanation for Mrs. Dillon's attempted suicide, this story provides a stark contrast to the romanticized notion of a laborer's life incipient in Channing's insistence that workers "sacrifice luxuries" in order to self-culture.

Similar arguments exist on a variety of newspaper pages throughout the northern midwest states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. On the second page of the September 1, 1866 *Evening Argus* out of Rock Island, Illinois, a brief news article about a laborer delegation that met in Baltimore earlier that year is followed by a complete reprinting of the Illinois-based chairman's address. In this address, the chairman John Hinchcliffe calls for, among other things, an eight-hour workday, stating,

> "We do not desire to overturn the institutions of the country, or to interfere with the individual rights of any capitalists, but simply claim the privilege of eight hours for labor, eight for self-culture, and eight for repose." (2)

Similarly, in the January 3, 1872 edition of the *Juniata Sentinel* out of Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, a short editorial piece simultaneously praises and profiles the "few farmers that seem to be well-fenced" throughout the country, and implicitly criticizes those that are not so. Of the so-called "well-fenced" farmers, the editorial suggests,

> "They have no time to waste at the tavern or groceries. If they have spare time, it is devoted to reading and self-culture...They are their children are well-informed upon the topics of the day. Their children are educated, well clad, and well bred." (4)

These well-fenced farmers, in other words, are living up to the duty Channing imagines each person owes to himself or herself; they sacrifice luxury in order to do well in both their work and their self-culture.

"Per Paginas Self-Culture Reference Rate, Tile Choropleth, 1839-1900" shows that almost immediately upon its inclusion in the *Chronicling America* archive in 1873, California became another major "hotbed" of self-culturist activity. In the 26 years of archived pages[82],

---

[82] The archive features no pages from California in 1877.

there are references of "self-culture" in 19 of them; oftentimes, each year features a per paginas rate that is comparatively high to the rest of the country. Indeed the per paginas rate in California was as high or higher than any other state in the country in six years: 1873, 1874, 1881, 1885, 1887, and 1899. Pages from Oregon (and to a lesser extent Washington) also featured a steady amount of self-culturist activity starting in 1876 and extending through to the end of the nineteenth century, though not as robust as the yearly per paginas rates of California. Indeed there were only four years in which none of these three states included any such representations. Most years, there were references in at least one of these western coastal states, oftentimes in two, and there were six years between 1876 and 1900 in which all three states included references of self-culturist activity.

As with the midwest, these references oftentimes strengthened the affiliation between self-culture and manual labor. The development of the railroads in both California and Oregon (which included the Washington territory until 1889) accounted for much of the labor needs in this region, though related forms of industrial and agricultural developments contributed as well. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, local railroad lines linked cities and towns within the states of California and Oregon, and in the 1880s an increasing number of these local lines were linked up with both the first transcontinental railroad, as well as the second transcontinental railroad, the Southern Pacific. This access to transcontinental markets increased the supply of laborers and farmers heading west out of the southern and midwestern United States, while also increasing the demand for lumber, wheat, and other agricultural products of both California and the expansive Oregon territory. And though mining had died down significantly since the California Gold Rush of 1848-1855, a series of smaller rushes in California, as well as Washington, British Columbia,

and Alaska insured that mining remained a relatively stable component of the west coast's labor economy.

The arguments linking self-culture and manual labor were much the same on the west coast as they were throughout the northern midwest. In the May 24, 1876 edition of the *Los Angeles Daily Herald*, an editorial remarks on the benefits for farmers on reading agricultural journals:

> "It would consume too much space to endeavor here to enumerate in full the many important results accomplished by our order in advancing the true interests of agriculture. Suffice it to say that its influence has improved the cultivation of our soil, the economy and comfort of our homes, and has stimulated our farmers to more self-culture. It has secured us higher prices for our products, reduced prices for our supplies, lower rates of interests and insurance — thus, and other ways, making our farms more profitable financially." (3)

Indeed, the same story about "well-fenced farmers" that appeared in the January 3, 1872 Juniata Sentinel in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, was printed in the December 9, 1871 edition of the Albany Register in Albany, Oregon. As with Minnesota and other northern midwestern states, California and Oregon newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Daily Herald*, the *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, *The Albany Register* (Albany, Oregon), *The Daily Journal* (Salem, Oregon), among others ran ads promoting lectures or pamphlets or books about self-culture among other ads for clothing, dry goods, and other materials required to participate in various industrial and agricultural trades, as well as ads for lots of land that promised to be suitable for either agricultural development, mining, or timber. One of the more straightforward ads linked not only self-culture with manual labor, but self-culture with masculinity. In an ad for that appeared in myriad California newspapers, "a victim of early imprudence," J.H. Reeves encourages readers to contact him for a "simple means of self-culture." The title of the ad promises that "his fellow sufferers" are sure to find their "MANHOOD RESTORED."
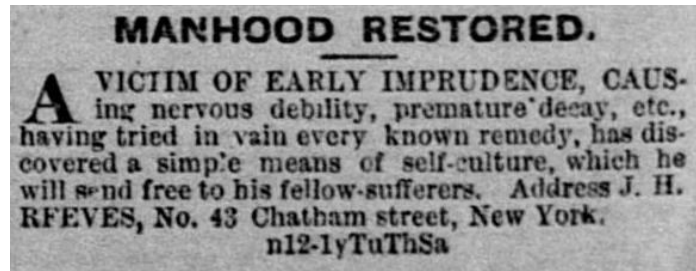
Figure 13. "Manhood Restored" ad from the *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, June 14, 1881, page 3

Reeves' ad consistently appears with other ads targeting laborers. These ads promote items and services such as work boots, odorless excavators, Buckeye Mowers and Reapers, and a "Common-Sense Stew Pan." They also include notices regarding the redemption of railroad bonds and the public sale of land lots, legal notices regarding working with creditors, and the location and pricing of liquor stores and saloons.

4.5   WOMEN AND SELF-CULTURE

In contradistinction to the "MANHOOD RESTORED" ad, many pages from the coastal western states envision "self-culture" as not just an obligation every *man* owes to himself, but indeed an obligation that every *woman* owes to herself as well. More specifically, pages from Oregon and California link self-culture with the establishment and operation of a variety of lyceums and clubs, the members of which were primarily women. In the November 17, 1876 edition of *The New Northwest* features a lengthy, and acerbic editorial extolling the virtues of these women's clubs. "Women's great need is opportunity for self-culture," the editorial concludes, "and if 'women's clubs' will be even one step in this vital direction, by all means let us have them" (2). These clubs such as the Unity Club, the Palace Circle of the King's

178

Daughters, and the Young Women's Self-Culture Club among others, flourished as a part of the Lyceum movement of the nineteenth century. They oftentimes featured guest speakers, as well as reading and writing circles, debates and symposiums, and other social events. As Angela Ray argues in *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century United States*, such clubs contributed to and participated in what was a widespread and semi-formalized system of adult education. One of the goals of this semi-formalized system of adult education seemed to follow those promoted by the common school movement: that is, lyceums and clubs contributed not just to the development of their individual members, but also contributed to the communities from which those individual members came.

This reflexive benefit loop between individuals and their home communities was a component of both lyceums and clubs — as well as the concept of self-culture — that was often misunderstood or overlooked. That is, a relatively common criticism of both social clubs, as well as self-culture, was that such endeavors were at their core self-centered and solipsistic. In the May 17,1898 Woman's edition of *The Dalles Times-Mountaineer* (Dalles, Oregon), a column considers "the age in which women are coming to the front as workers" (4). The letter, authored by Juliette Montague the wife of then-governor William P. Lord (identified as "Mrs. Wm. P. Lord"), states that "Hardly a day passes that I am not in receipt of letters from men and women...expressing interest in our work" (4). Some of the questions such letters ask, Montague goes on, target the ostensible selfishness of women's clubs. "Why not undertake something tangible — something that promises results that will benefit the community, instead of selfishly devoting all the time to clubs, to self-culture?" (4). Montague's stated response to this question points out that women's participation in such clubs — their ostensibly selfish self-culture — aids in the development of the various industries rigorously examined in and by that club. In

179

particular, Montague notes that it was Candace Wheeler's interactions and exchanges in self-culture clubs that led to the development and prosperity of the silk industry. Through knowledge gained and relationship established via these self-culture clubs, Wheeler "conferred with manufacturers, experimented with weavers, and established a school of applied design for each work. [In the US silk industry] There are now 584 factories, employing 55,000 hands." In short, Wheeler's "selfish devotion" of her time to clubs and self-culture significantly contributed to the development of a major industry within the United States.

For Montague and Wheeler, the goals of lyceums and clubs seemed to hold that the advancement and expansion of women's individual rights were foundational components of individual and community development. The same holds true of those clubs promoted and discussed in the newspaper pages from California and Oregon in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. In a letter written to the editors in the May 17, 1896 *Los Angeles Herald*, the notion that women deserved equal rights was framed as the logical conclusion of self-culture, regardless of whether it was men or women engaging in it:

> "When men are taught to regard their brains as of Infinitely more value than their pocketbooks and spend a little more time in self-culture, and remember that a woman Is his equal—his mother was a woman, and suffered for him—when he ceases his misstatements and misrepresentations, presumably sharp sayings on his port, he will then begin to be something of an American." (3)

As with those eastern patriots writing about self-culture fifty years (Thoreau) or even one-hundred years prior (Franklin and Paine), the process of engaging in self-culture was conceived of as being a necessary component of being an American. In this case, though, only when self-culture enabled the individual to "remember that a woman Is his equal" could that same individual "begin to be something of an American."

This letter, authored by an "American Girl," is featured in a section of *The Herald* dedicated to letters to the editor, several others of which focus on issues pertaining to the

180

expansion of women's rights; of the four columns devoted to letters to the editor, three feature such letters. While American Girl's letter is the first, the longest and most prominent letter is entitled "Women's Suffrage Advances," authored by Matilde J. Berra. In this letter, Berra draws the same link between self-culture and citizenship as that originally drawn by the nation's founders: if, as it seemed to Berra, the country was advancing toward granting women the right to vote, then women voters must acquire a rigorous and thorough education so that they may participate in the franchise in a responsible and informed way. Berra would later extend this argument in *Twentieth Century Woman Toward the Reconstructive Movement*, arguing that an informed electorate that included women would pick up and finish the nation's failed postbellum reconstruction efforts.

Though *The Herald*'s editors point out that the paper, "under this heading [Editorials] prints communications, but does not assume responsibility for the sentiments expressed," many other newspapers from the west coast did assume responsibility before and promote sentiments in support of the advancement and expansion of women's rights. The aforementioned *New Northwest* from Portland, Oregon was founded and run by Abigail Scott Duniway, heralded as "Oregon's Mother of Equal Suffrage." In addition to letters linking self-culture and women's clubs, articles, editorials, and reviews from *The New Northwest* framed "self-culture" as a right to which women were frequently and unjustly denied access. Oftentimes, these editorials adopted a disdainful, incredulous tone when describing the various inconsistent attitudes and policies advanced by male politicians and their male supporters. In a April 12, 1878 review of "the numerous articles...that flood newspapers today" describing the "Duties of Wives," C.O. from Canyon City, Oregon writes,

> "So it seems that when a woman is married her individuality is gone, the duties to
> her self must be laid aside; no more thoughts of self-culture, for that might

interfere with her husband's dinner. Her chief duties and her chiefest attraction now must be to go smilingly into household drudgery, however repugnant to the taste, and practice small economies that she may retain his love." (2)

C.O. not only takes issue with the sentiments of these "numerous articles," but also with the fact that there is a dearth of similarly framed articles and letters describing the "Duties of Husbands." The author surmises that this lack of such articles might be because people simply aren't writing such screeds, or because newspapers in the region (the *New Northwest* being an exception) are too timorous to publish them. "And if you never hear from us again," the letter concludes, "you may conclude [that death] has knocked at our door and found us at home" (2).

Under Duniway's guidance, the *New Northwest* challenged many of the other Oregon-based newspapers regarding issues of women's rights. In a review of the *Albany Democrat's* eulogy for Eliza McCardle Johnson, Duniway pillories the eulogy's celebration of the subservient role Johnson took during the term of her "ex-tailor, ex-alderman, ex-magistrate, and erewhile accidental President of the United States" husband, Andrew Johnson (2). More specifically, Duniway criticizes the *Albany Democrat*'s suggestion that the primary reason Johnson was an uninvolved first lady was because she wished only to serve her husband, and not because she suffered from tuberculosis, which ultimately caused her death. Duniway is similarly critical of the wide-circulating story of how the better-educated Johnson had to teach her husband how to read, write, add, and subtract, noting,

> "We presume that Mrs. Johnson was an exemplary woman, and while we cannot think of her years of endeavor to make something out of nothing without a throb of pity, we think also that if she were possessed of even ordinary talents and ability she might have done more for the world by self-culture than by working for the advancement of Andrew Johnson." (2)

Duniway goes on, again echoing the connection between self-culture, education, and the franchise:

182

> "Teaching the illiterate Andrew how to read was, we will readily admit, a praiseworthy act; but inasmuch as hundreds of women throughout the nation spend the best years of their lives in the thankless employment of teaching voters how to read, we do not see that one should be lauded therefor more than another." (2)

Though the *New Northwest* did not last long enough to celebrate women's suffrage on its pages, Duniway herself did live long enough to be the first woman to register to vote in Multnomah County, Oregon after the state became the seventh state to pass a woman's suffrage amendment in 1912. Duniway was also the author and signer of the equal suffrage proclamation issued by then-governor Oswald Vest.

4.6   CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Shifting from the idealized theory of self-culture to idiosyncratic social practices of self-culture challenges what was one of Channing's foundational positions regarding self-culture: that the practice must be wholly disinterested. To Channing, self-culture was an end unto itself, not a means to some other kind of gain; an individual should seek to improve herself simply because improving oneself is worth doing. As practiced throughout the nineteenth-century, however, self-culture was almost always defined as a means to an end by those who engaged in it. Depending upon who took it up, and where and when it was taken up, self-culture oftentimes functioned with clear and definable objectives most of which centered around the individual practitioners gaining access to some aspect of society or culture to which they had previously been denied. This shift in conceiving of self-culture seems to have come about because of the Fowlers' co-option of the concept in their phrenological writings and lectures. This co-option resituated the impetus to self-culture. Self-culture shifted from a practice in which one ought to engage because

183

one "owed it" to oneself to try to constantly improved, to a practice in which one needed to engage in order to remain fit enough to survive. This resituation of the concept of self-culture is visible in the representations of its social practice among both laborers and women. For laborers, the need for self-culture transformed into a rallying cry connected to the 8-hour-workday movement; resistant to brutal and dehumanizing employer practices, laborers demanded "eight hours to self-culture" in an effort to preserve their bodily well-being, as well as ensure their humanity. The call for self-culture became a compelling argument against increasingly longer workdays and workweeks that only provided laborers with enough time to eat and sleep in preparation for the next day. Similarly, women — in lyceums and self-culture clubs, as well as through pro-suffrage newspapers — advocated for self-culture as a means toward the end of becoming fuller and more involved citizens of the United States. Echoing the early arguments in support of common schooling, women such as Candace Wheeler and Abigail Duniway argued that through self-culture women were capable of becoming a powerful force in election-based politics; that women's right to vote was dependent on women's access to education, and women's access to education was dependent upon their ability and willingness to self-culture. In short: if either laborers or women wanted to thrive and survive in the nineteenth-century United States, they needed to be able to self-culture.

5.0 FIRST INTERMEZZO: THE LIMITS OF SELF-CULTURE

The second page of the April 20, 1877 edition of *The New Northwest*, promotes a variety of news items and events relevant to women's rights. The page opens with a statement regarding a series of lectures to be delivered by Duniway herself which focus on the topic of "Constitutional Liberty," followed immediately by a recap of a social group, the Equal Rights Association, and its recent discussion of the question "Who is sovereign in this republic?" (2). Starting in the fourth column, there is a profile celebrating "women who come to the front in literature or in business and maintain the falling standard when other hands have failed" (2). This particular profile focuses on Charlotte Fowler Wells, renowned author and touring lecturer, and oldest sister of Lorenzo Niles and Orson Squire Fowler. As *The New Northwest*'s profile suggests,

> "Her brothers, O.S. and L.N. Fowler, established their Phrenological Cabinet in New York [in 1835]...and she joined them in 1837, and although they wrote the books and received all the credit, she gave valuable assistance in the solution of many a vexed and knotty problem." (2)

For decades starting around 1840, the Fowlers were celebrities among the large and nationwide social reform movements of the nineteenth century. Orson Fowler's illustrious career as a lecturer continued to draw large crowds across the country throughout his entire life; the January 27, 1887 edition of the *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* features an advertisement for a series of lectures by "O.S. Fowler, the well-known phrenologist" to be delivered at Sacramento's

Metropolitan Theater just seven months before he died at his home in Sharon, New York (4). And because the Fowlers retained widespread popularity, so too did the notion of self-culture.

The affiliation between self-culture and phrenology created an impetus to self-culture that extended beyond Channing's conception of self-culture as a moral obligation we have to ourselves. By linking the methods of self-culture, as well as the mechanisms for measuring self-culture, with what they reckoned was an accurate understanding of human biology, the Fowlers anticipated the slow leak between biological sciences and social sciences that would come to dominate the second half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. Essentially, the Fowlers co-option of self-culture transformed the practice from a good and beneficial individual endeavor into a necessary social pursuit. If one hoped to remain viable and competitive — if one hoped to survive among the fit — one had to self-culture. As you might expect, as the aims of self-culture shifted and changed between different social classes attempting to become, in Spencer's words, more fit, there was backlash. After all, if more and different social classes were successful in their efforts to self-culture, then the overall level of social fitness required to "survive" would also increase; a rising tide raises all boats, as it were. There would be, so went the logic, more competition. It would be harder for some folks to get by.

In this way, though they perhaps didn't intend for their infusion of "science" into self-culture, the Fowler's nonetheless participated in a corruption of the pedagogy which prompted many adherents and advocates of self-culture to start limiting who could and couldn't do it. In another of their works, *The Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology*, Lorenzo and Orson Fowler distinguish between the skulls (and therefore capabilities) of different races, sexes, occupations, and so on; of the many conclusions the brothers Fowler promote is that different social classes

tend to display different mental capacities, and these capacities were *biologically determined*. As you might expect from a pair of white men engaged in labors of the mind, the brothers Fowler thought highly of their own "biologically determined" capacities: white men engaged in labors of the mind, because of their higher and bolder foreheads, displayed superiority in "reasoning power and moral elevation" (41) to every other social class examined and considered by the Fowlers. These other social classes included laborers, women, Indians, slaves, and so on. Though these other social classes possessed other natural mental capabilities, sometimes in greater degrees to those possessed by white men, they were nonetheless (argued the Fowlers) not *naturally suited* for the types pursuits of mental development inherent in self-culture.

To be clear: the Fowlers never argued that non-white, non-male folks *shouldn't* engage in mental development pursuits, just that the ceilings of mental development was biologically higher for white males than it was for non-white non-male folks. Indeed, writing to "Every reader," Orson posits in *Self-Culture, and Perfection of Character*,

> "That the power of all the faculties can be astonishingly enhanced — that every species of memory, judgment, and all the moral virtues are capable of being improved, ILLIMITABLY — the main thing desired after all — is a matter of universal observation and experience; and that Phrenology proves the possibility of enlarging their organs, shows that it corresponds with nature, and is therefore true." (101)

But where the Fowlers saw mere differences in capacities to self-culture, others saw cause for differentiating between who could and couldn't self-culture. The basic premise of this argument invokes Plato's "Noble Lie": each individual is born with a certain "metallic worth" that limits what he or she can and cannot achieve in life. And the existence of these limits ought to dictate, according to those that misapprehended Fowlers' work on phrenology, the degree to which an individual can or cannot engage in various educational pursuits, be they school-based or individualized.

While this position certainly affected laborers' and women's ability to participate in various social institutions and practices such as schooling and voting, neither laborers' nor women's ability to self-culture was hindered in any legislatively sanctioned way. Certainly, laborers contended with the increasing concentration of corporate power just as women contended with various laws and social mores that denied them access to school-based education and the franchise. That said, both laborers and women were allowed to (a) practice self-culture, and (b) promote self-culture. Other social groups, however, were denied access to both school-based education, as well as the abilities to practice and promote self-culture. In the South, the "Noble Lie" argument was certainly common and applied liberally to social groups such as laborers, women, immigrants, and so on, but was most rigorously codified in law for black slaves. More specifically, the "Noble Lie" argument resulted in specific legislation prohibiting not just slaves' ability to attend schools, but also their ability to engage in self-culture. The next chapter, will investigate the ingenuous methods of self-culture slaves participated in to work around the laws that forbade them not just from developing literacy, but even from demonstrating literacy skills they might've already developed.

6.0   MUST WE GO ALONE?

"We must go alone" (para. 29).
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

"Properly speaking, there are in the world no such men as self-made men. That term implies an individual independence of the past and present which can never exist" (para. 9)
—Frederick Douglass, "Self-Made Men"

"How empty is theory in the presence of fact" (437).
—Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

6.1   GOING ALONE TOGETHER

Something troubles me about what Douglass labels a lingering "solecism" incipient in the very phrase "self-culture," as well as related phrases such as "self-reliance," "self-made men," and so on. Specifically, though there is a ruggedly individualistic bootstrapism to the idea of "going alone," of being "self-reliant" or a "self-made man," of engaging in self-culture, this individualism seems impossible. "Going alone," as Emerson seems to mean, "can never exist" according to Douglass, for we are always already deeply indebted to a wide variety of social systems and institutions, not to mention other people, before we even think to endeavor to "go alone," become a "self-made man" or engage in self-culture. Sure, my students and I had to "go alone" when confronting these new technologies absent much institutional training or support, but of course it was the institution itself, the school itself (via the Pennsylvania Department of

Education, and Governor Rendell's CFF initiative) that provided for us the new technologies, as well as the space that housed the new technologies, that we had to "go alone" to figure out. And we were, after all, going it alone...together. It is much the same as I "go alone" when attempting to teach myself various "distant reading" research methods without any direct institutional training or support: I'm doing all this going alone on a computer provided to me by my department through a Research and Development grant, and I'm marshaling together a wide variety of other experts and novices who are helping me (albeit in a mostly invisible way) to "teach myself" those methods.

The insistence that self-culture be an individualistic, go-it-alone affair makes sense, I suppose, considering the attitude many self-culturists had toward the alternative. Going-with-the-group — particularly being a dutiful pupil in a school — was derided as a sacrifice of individualism and imagination. In *Some Thoughts*, Locke acknowledges this tension between individual nature and social institutions, labeling it the Scylla and Charybdis of education. Schools-as-institutions (and teachers-as-agents-of-schools) have to steer very carefully between the monster that maintains order by consuming individuality, and the monster that maintains individuality by consuming order. As discussed in a previous chapter, Locke (as well as his admirers in the states) maintained that the security of any individual is dependent upon the stability of the state, which necessitates that one steer the educational ship toward the monster that transforms, rather than the one that maintains individuality. As a counterpoint (indeed, as a direct counterargument), Rousseau seems to favor Charybdis to Locke's Scylla. In Book 2 of *Emile*, just as his titular pupil transitions from being a "mature child" into a "mature man," he writes,

> "The hour sounds. What a change! Instantly [the child's] eyes cloud over; his gaiety is effaced. Goodbye, joy! Goodbye, frolicsome games! A severe and angry

man takes him by the hand, says to him gravely, 'Let us go, sir,' and takes him away. In the room into which they go I catch a glimpse of books. Books! What sad furnishings for his age! The poor child lets himself be pulled along, turns a regretful eye on all that surrounds him, becomes silent, and leaves, his eyes swollen with tears he does not dare to shed, and his heart great with sighs he does not dare to breathe." (159)

Rousseau's is a story of schools (here represented by both a stern teacher and a library of books) snatching up a child in order to transform that child. Significantly, Rousseau is not here criticizing the *what* that schools aim to transform children into, but just *that* schools (qua stern teachers and libraries of books) want to transform children at all, that transformation is their primary agenda. And he represents this transformation as not just antithetical to what he elsewhere calls the "natural development" of an individual, but indeed as the death of the individual; both the eyes and the individual's expressive face go blank, his voice silences, his heart and his breathing stop. This hearkens back to his earlier statement: "Forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time" (39).

Among American self-culturists, no one more strongly represented this resistance to institutionalized schooling than did Henry David Thoreau. In the "Economy" section of the first manuscript version of *Walden* (1846-1847), Thoreau outlined what Leonard Neufeldt describes as the author's "personal definition of self-culture" (242). Building on Rousseau, Thoreau argues that it is not just schooling, but indeed the whole of "civilized" living — schooling, working, farming, living in towns, and so on — that "enslaves" the individual, forcing them to "[do] penance in a thousand curious ways" (106). These include, but are not limited to, buying certain kinds of clothes and food, buying and maintaining a home that is unnecessarily large in size, affordances, and (most importantly) cost, as well as engaging in some kind of time-sucking job in order to pay for all of these needless extravagances. In this way, Thoreau's notion

191

of self-culture is antagonistic not just to schooling, but indeed to the entire social structure of which schooling is conceived to be an integral component.

Of course, living entirely "free" from the enslaving confines of society was as infeasible for Thoreau as it was for Rousseau. Such infeasibility stems less from the fact that each proposed that an individual's education take place after a temporary escape into the wilderness, but rather that an individual's education take place following a complete retreat away from society. In Rousseau's case, he recognizes such a complete retreat as being only conceptually, but not actually possible. *Emile* is not — as Locke's *Some Thoughts* was intended to be — a practical guide for the actual education of an individual. Instead, it is a theoretical criticism of those practical guides that, like Locke's, fail to attend closely to the interconnection between everyday practice and the theoretical principles that undergird that practice. Indeed, in his efforts to emphasize the theoretical principles of an ideal education, Rousseau casually and willingly sacrifices practicality. As he recognizes of his own work early on in Book I,

> "I know that in undertakings like this one, an author — always comfortable with systems that he is not responsible for putting into practice — may insouciantly offer many fine precepts which are impossible to follow. And in the absence of details and examples, even the feasible things he says, if he has not shown their application, remain ineffectual." (50)

Though part of Thoreau's intention in writing *Walden* was to provide some of the details and examples of an experiment in self-sufficiency conceptually similar to the one Rousseau proposes in Books III-V of *Emile*, he is only able to do so by eliding some of the "essential facts of life" (*Walden* "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"). Key among these facts was that Thoreau's experiment in "simple living" was only possible because he was allowed to build his cabin on some of Emerson's land, and the tax bill he accrued during his stay at Walden's pond was paid by his wealthy aunt, and he had spent four years at Harvard prior to embarking into the woods,

192

and so on. Thoreau — often praised for his attention to natural detail — seems to turn a blind eye toward those "unnatural" details that enabled him to engage in his experiment in self-culture.

Of course, neither Rousseau (as an influential precursor to the concepts of self-culture), nor Thoreau (as a practitioner and advocate of self-culture), speak for self-culturists writ large. Indeed, on the issue of whether self-culture was truly an individualistic affair, theirs may have been a minority position. Unlike both Rousseau and Thoreau, Channing recognizes the impracticality, indeed the impossibility, of engaging in self-culture on your own. In "Self-Culture," he insists,

> "Self-culture is social, or one of its great offices is to unfold and purify the affections which spring up instinctively in the human breast, which...*bind a man to friends and neighbors, to his country, and to the suffering who fall under his eye, wherever they belong.*" (para. 15) (emphasis added)

"Social" here has a double meaning, referring to both the process and the result of self-culture. Insofar as the process is concerned, Channing pragmatically recognizes that though one may be able to *guide* one's own self-culturing efforts, this does not mean one can do it alone. Instead, an individual must,

> "communicate himself to others: and that, by a spreading agency...improvements may spread through a nation...I attach myself to the multitude, not because they are voters and have political power: but because they are men, and have within their reach the most glorious prizes of humanity." (para. 4)

That is, the individual must marshall together resources, both in the form of materials and of people, that might assist in her self-culture. And in doing so, she must also make herself available as a resource to others. For this reason, it is not likely that Channing would've considered Thoreau's experiment at Walden's pond to be true efforts of self-culture. Channing would've insisted Thoreau be aware of the material and intellectual benefactors that enabled his "simple living" efforts. Moreover, he would've insisted that in refusing to acknowledge these benefactors (and also in refusing to pay the taxes he owed during this trip), Thoreau was

eschewing half of one's responsibilities when engaging in self-culture: one's responsibility to contribute to others' efforts at self-culture just as you seek to have them contribute to one's own efforts at self-culture. In short, Thoreau was emphasizing self over culture, while in Channing's notion of the pedagogical concept, self and culture must be complementary, each receiving a balanced share of attentive cultivation. This "do unto others" aspect of Channing's notion of self-culture is connected to the second meaning of "social," indicating that the result of self-culture is not just the cultivation of one's self, but also the interweaving of one's self into a social fabric of others as they also engage in self-culture. It is in the process of guiding of one's own self-culture efforts, the recognition and appreciation of those who assist those efforts, and the contribution to their own efforts, that results not just in one's own self-culture, but also the self-culture of others, and the attachment of one's self to others.

Yet the "solecism" Douglass recognizes in terms like "self-culture" remains, as well as the tension it produces between those self-culturists that think self-culture is a truly solitary affair, and those who do not. This tension is more than a mere grammatical deterrent to those who might want to promote the term, it is also a potential conceptual barrier to those that take it upon themselves to engage in the practice. That is, it might dissuade someone from engaging in self-culture if she thinks she has to "go alone," or it might convince somebody who has engaged in self-culture that they have "gone alone," when really they haven't. This was a common dilemma my students and I faced as we sought to "teach ourselves" these digital devices; on the one hand, we often felt overwhelmed by the idea that we were on our own, to the point that we felt the task impossible. We were defeated before we started. On the other hand, as we worked toward completing this impossible task, we often took more pride in our individual accomplishments than maybe we should have. We were certainly making good headway, and it

was an admirable accomplishment, but we were only able to do so because we were asking more tech-savvy teachers and friends for help, we were reading manuals, we were working together, and so on. Yet all of this assistance seemed to evaporate as soon as we moved past it. "Taught myself how to set-up an in-class discussion board," I wrote in one entry, never acknowledging that I had had a lengthy chat with a former college friend and software engineer, Eric Pennington, about the ins and outs of what, in retrospect, seems a profoundly simple task. As Douglass writes elsewhere in "Self-Made Men,"

> "It was said of Horace Greeley, that he was a self-made man and worshipped his maker….. That a man has been able to make his own way in the world, is an humble fact as well as an honorable one. It is, however, possible to state a very humble fact in a very haughty manner, and self-made men are, as a class, much addicted to this habit."

Importantly, Douglass is not denying the existence of such a thing as self-made people. Indeed, he is not even criticizing the great efforts such individuals go to to "make [their] own way in the world." Rather, he is criticizing the haughtiness such individuals "as a class" seem to exhibit when reflecting on and acknowledging all that enabled them to make their accomplishments; a haughtiness that is as solipsistic as it is off-putting. Was I being or had I been too much a Horace Greeley?

Douglass' criticism of this bombast is fair, considering his own remarkable self-culturing accomplishments (and the challenges he overcame in making those accomplishments), as well as the modesty he demonstrated when describing those accomplishments. If the title of his own 1872 address applies to anyone, it applies to Douglass himself. Of course he did not, as we might imagine Greeley would have, ever make this application himself. Rather, he relied upon those around him to publicly admire and champion his incredible efforts at self-sufficiency and self-

culture.[83] As Douglass' colleague in the American Anti-Slavery Society and co-founder of the National Council of Colored People James McCune Smith writes in his introduction to Douglass *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass' "labor of self-culture" started while he was enslaved and continued until the day of his unexpected death in 1895 (*xxii*). At every step, Smith insists, Douglass sought out, relied upon, and went to great lengths to acknowledge the "assistance and counsel" of others (*xxii*).

Those who regarded self-culture as a truly individual endeavor seem to not only gloss over the assistance and counsel they received from others, they also seem to ignore their own material and social privileges that grant them access to such assistance and counsel. As James Read accuses Emerson in "The Limits of Self-Reliance: Emerson, Slavery, and Abolition," Emerson "presupposes a democratic society of free and equal individuals – an idealized America with a veil drawn over racial slavery" (0) and other social barriers that inhibit one's ability to self-culture.[84] Douglass, on the other hand, develops his notion of self-culture within a social

---

[83] Indeed, as Tyrone Tillery argues in "The Inevitability of the Douglass-Garrison Conflict," this was often Douglass' primary role during his early years with the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society: a living example of how a slave could self-emancipate and self-culture. According to Tillery, Douglass was "the prize exhibit" on the Society's abolitionist tour (138). These early public events promoted both abolitionism and self-sufficiency with equal fervor, as evidenced by the fact that Douglass frequently shared the dais with freeman entrepreneur Charles Remond and "the Hutchinsons, a musically self-trained [white] family that sang anti-slavery songs" (139).

[84] Though Read indicates that Emerson's notion of self-reliance evolved between "Self-Reliance" and his 1860 essay "Fate" to better account for these social barriers, Read's criticism of Emerson's earlier essay is not entirely fair. Indeed, Emerson seems to be more closely aligned with Channing and Douglass, than with Thoreau and Rousseau. This stems from the fact that though Emerson, like Rousseau and Thoreau, emphasizes the centrality of Nature in an individual's self-culture, he does not believe (as Thoreau and Rousseau appear to) that Nature is antithetical to Culture or Society. Indeed, early in *Nature*, Emerson defines this concept as "all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body" ("Introduction"). In short, Emerson distinguishes between Nature-as-NOT-ME and nature-as-outside-of-society, whereas Rousseau and Thoreau (at least insofar as their conceptions of education are concerned) seem to conflate these two notions of N/nature. The consequence is that when Emerson says we must "go alone," he doesn't mean it in the same way as does Rousseau as does Thoreau. He recognizes, at least he seems to if you think (as I do, following both Cornel West in *The American Evasion of Philosophy* and John Lysaker in *Emerson & Self-Culture*) that his lectures and essays leading up to "Self-Reliance" are much more systematic than he is often given credit for, one's interconnectedness with others and with society as being part and parcel to one's interconnectedness with Nature.

context in which these barriers — particularly a lack of freedom, equality, and access for all individuals — is omnipresent. That is, while Thoreau and Rousseau (and arguably Emerson) "offer many fine precepts" about engaging in individualized self-culture "which are impossible to follow" because they are conceived from a position of relative security and privilege, Douglass constructs his pedagogy of self-culture with an immediate eye towards its practicality. Or simply, the former present theories of self-culture divorced from the reality in which self-culture must be practiced, while the latter develops a theory of self-culture from the very reality of self-culture being practiced. And, as the final epigraph suggests: the emptiness of a theory of self-culture is quickly revealed when that theory confronts pesky facts that get in the way of someone practicing it.

What follows in this chapter, then, is an engagement of self-culture not just as its ideals were represented in promotional lectures, treatises, and essays, but as its practice was represented in autobiographical and reflective accounts. More specifically, this chapter engages the practice of self-culture as it was *represented* in slave narratives.[85] Why slave narratives? Two reasons: first, while lectures, treatises, essays, and so on emphasize or promote self-culture in an idealized state — comfortable methods unpracticed, to parrot Rousseau — narratives that describe an individual's efforts to engage in self-culture promote those method in a messier and probably

---

That said, because Emerson is most often *remembered* for the pithiness of the aphorisms from "Self-Reliance," rather than the complicated systematicity and interconnectedness of those aphorisms with his earlier work, "Self-Reliance" is an unfortunate and probably incorrect exemplar for the "ruggedly individualistic" and "bootstrapism" camp of self-culturists.

[85] More specifically still, 184 autobiographical slave narratives published separately between the years 1760 and 1929 within the *Documenting the American South* "North American Slave Narratives" archive, sponsored by the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and overseen by William L. Andrews.

truer-to-life state. Uncomfortable methods disturbed and reconstituted by practice. In short, narratives emphasize self-culture as a method enacted, rather than a method promoted.

But then why not other accounts of the methods of self-culture enacted? Why not, for example, the journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which would simultaneously show, ostensibly, not just the development of Emerson's notion of self-culture, but also the things he did as he developed that notion; the books he read, the people he interacted with, the interrelated endeavors he engaged in, and so on. Or what about the collected papers of William Ellery Channing, or the journals of Henry David Thoreau? While these sources would be, of course, a fair place to examine an individual's method of self-culture enacted, I have two reasons for not doing so. First, in some cases and to certain extents, this work has already been done.[86] Secondly, and more significantly, the efforts taken toward self-culture by the likes of Emerson, Channing, and Thoreau were supported by conditions that would be hard to replicate. In short, they had what many folks who may wish to engage in self-culture probably do not: access to a seemingly endless means to leverage toward self-culture.

Moreover, as a previous chapter used fairly traditional close, comparative reading methods to explicate the concept of self-culture as it was developed across a fairly small and interconnected network of *theorists* (most of whom shared common traits such as being white, being a man, being a Unitarian, being an abolitionist, and being from Boston), this chapter uses social network analysis and statistical sampling to track representations of the practice of self-

---

[86] See, for example, John Lysaker's *Emerson and Self-Culture*, LN Neufeldt's "Thoreau's Enterprise of Self-Culture" and David Robinson's *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* and Madeleine Rice's *Federal Street Pastor: The Life of William Ellery Channing*.

culture[87] as they appeared across a much larger, and much more diffuse and diverse network of *practitioners* (i.e. slave narrative authors). Ultimately, these methods of analysis suggest that the idea of these narrative authors individually teaching themselves own by their own efforts is a myth. This conclusion is not meant to devalue the incredible ingenuity and bravery slaves displayed when learning how to read and write. Instead, it is meant to emphasize the fact that this ingenuity and bravery was a widespread behavior in slave communities, that no slave learned to read or write on his or her own, but always by cooperating and collaborating with others. Regardless of the percentage of the slave population that could read and write, a significantly higher percentage of that same population at its peak was involved in some form of reading and writing instruction. This conclusion is not meant to suggest that slaves' participation in reading and writing instruction was the result of there being a greater opportunity than previously acknowledged, but that such participation was a result of slaves making more opportunities than either their masters or (later) historians could have ever hoped to recognize; one of the results of not being legally allowed to read and write or teach reading and writing is that the day-to-day goings-on of huge portions of the slave populations was done secretly, and so went unrecorded, and so, unrecognized. In short, slave narratives represent slaves' efforts to self-culture as a dynamic and social process; it did not take place in isolation, but rather in diffuse, robust, overlapping, and hidden networks.

---

[87] As I will discuss below, teaching themselves how to read and write was a central component of slaves' efforts at self-culture, and it is on this process that my analysis will focus.

## 6.2   A HISTORY OF SLAVE NARRATIVES AS HISTORY

As such, the method for analyzing independently published autobiographical slave narratives should not expressly focus on the specific details of just one document; this would be like focusing on the answers of just one survey respondent. Nor should the approach be simply to *compare* the details of a number of documents, even a relatively large number; this would merely highlight, as it does for James Olney in "I Was Born: Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," the overwhelming sameness of the documents, their lack of literariness. Rather, if independently published autobiographical slave narratives are to have any historical value, they must be read closely as individual documents disaggregated from the corpus *and* collectively as a corpus aggregated together. And, most importantly, these dual readings must inform each other. That is, close readings must happen in contexts generated by aggregated readings, just as aggregated readings must be inspired by close readings. These concurrently conducted readings would identify similarities between individual narratives as trends in experience and expression, rather than inartful plagiarism, and simultaneously recognize dissimilarities as important nuances of those trends. Such a dual reading of slave narratives does not balance quantitative against qualitative; it meshes them together, a hybrid of counting and reading.

The archive on which this study focuses is entitled "North American Slave Narratives," a smaller collection within the *Documenting the American South* (DocSouth) digital publishing initiative sponsored by the University Library at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.[88]

---

[88] "Documenting the American South": http://docsouth.unc.edu/

Though "North American Slave Narratives," overseen by series editor William L. Andrews, includes 294 autobiographical, biographical, and fictionalized slave narratives includes, this study focuses specifically on the 184 autobiographical slave narratives published separately between the years 1760 and 1929 within that collection.[89]

Autobiographical Narratives Published By Year
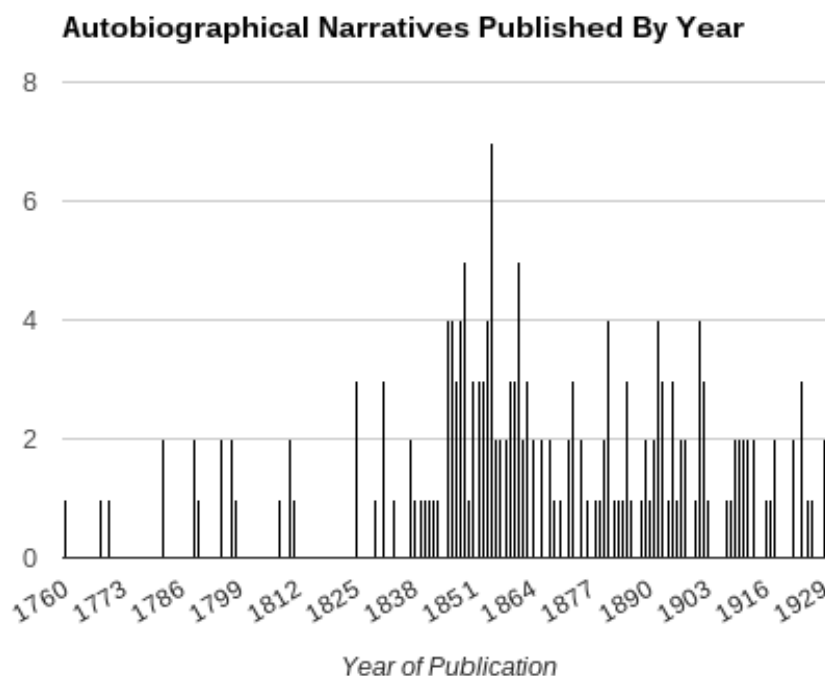
Figure 14. Autobiographical Narratives Published by Year

"Separately published" indicates narratives that were, at some point, published as an independent document, in addition to (or opposed to) published serially or as a part of a collection. The

---

[89] While this archive does include some narratives that purport to be dictated by the author to contributing author, it does not include include biographical narratives; that is, narratives written about slaves by other authors. Nor does it include fictionalized slave narratives. Finally, the archive does not include narratives amassed in collections of ex-slave interviews, as with the WPA collection *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writer's Project, 1936-1938*. A continuation of this study would not include either biographies or fictionalized narratives, though it would certainly include collections of ex-slave interviews.

heaviest years of publication picked up in the 1820s and continued through to the late 1850s before dropping significantly in the years during and immediately following the Civil War. This upward trend would seem to coincide with the contemporaneous activities of the abolitionist movement. There was another small uptick in publication numbers starting around 1870 and lasting until the late 1880s/early 1890s. This second upward trend would seem to coincide with the contemporaneous activities of Reconstruction.
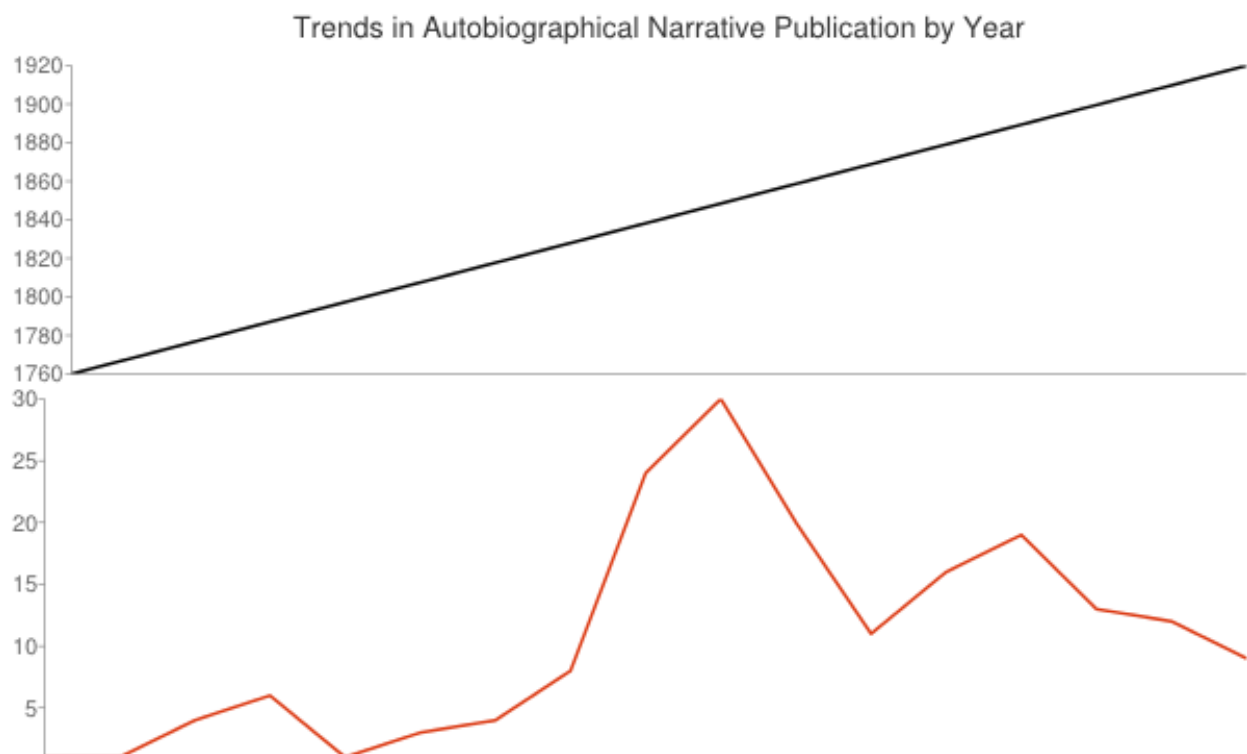
Figure 15. Trends in Autobiographical Narrative Publication by Year

Each author from the archive authored a single narrative, with the exception of 23 authors, who wrote a combined 56 of the 184 narratives. There are 151 unique authors or author groups in the entire DocSouth "North American Slave Narratives" archive.

Table 6. Narrative Authors who Wrote More than One Narrative

Author's Name	Number of Narratives Written
Robert Anderson	2

Charles Ball	2
Henry Box Brown	2
Lewis Garrard Clarke	2
Elizabeth	2
Oladah Equiano	2
William Grimes	2
Thomas Lewis Johnson	2
James Mars	2
Peter Randolph	2
Moses Roper	2
Ignatius Sancho	2
Venture Smith	2
Jacob Stroyer	2
Okah Tubbee	2
James Watkins	2
James Williams	2
Thomas H. Jones	3
Sojourner Truth	3
Booker T. Washington	3
Frederick Douglass	4
Josiah Henson	4
William Wells Brown	5
Total	**56**

These 184 narratives account for a little over 97% of all autobiographical narratives separately published between these years, and a little over 91% of all autobiographical narratives ever separately published.[90]

The archive includes documents originally published throughout the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and one in New Zealand, all of which were originally published exclusively in English.[91] Within the United States, most narratives were published in northeastern hotbeds of

---

[90] There are five narratives published between 1760 and 1929 and 13 narratives published between 1929 and 1998 that were not included in this study because none have yet been digitized.

[91] Though many translations of these narratives exist, none were included in this archive.

abolitionist activity such as Massachusetts and New York, and to a lesser extent Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

Figure 16. Regions of Narrative Publication

It makes sense that narratives were most often published in regions in which slavery had been abolished; a would-be narrative author would have a much easier time publishing his or her work in such a region. These were also regions in which anti-slavery activities were common, again suggesting a close affiliation between autobiographical narratives and anti-slavery movements.

Table 7. Number of Narrative Publications by State

State of Publication	Number of Narratives Published
California	1
Connecticut	9
Georgia	5

Illinois	6
Iowa	1
Kentucky	3
Maine	2
Maryland	4
Massachusetts	40
Michigan	7
Missouri	4
New Jersey	3
New York	20
N. Carolina	3
Ohio	7
Pennsylvania	10
Rhode Island	3
S. Carolina	1
Tennessee	4
Texas	1
Vermont	1
Virginia	3
D.C.	3
Wisconsin	2

The archive includes narratives set throughout the United States. Of those narratives that indicate

a setting, there is a greater concentration of narratives set in the upper South (Maryland,

Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina) than in the deep South (Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia,

South Carolina).
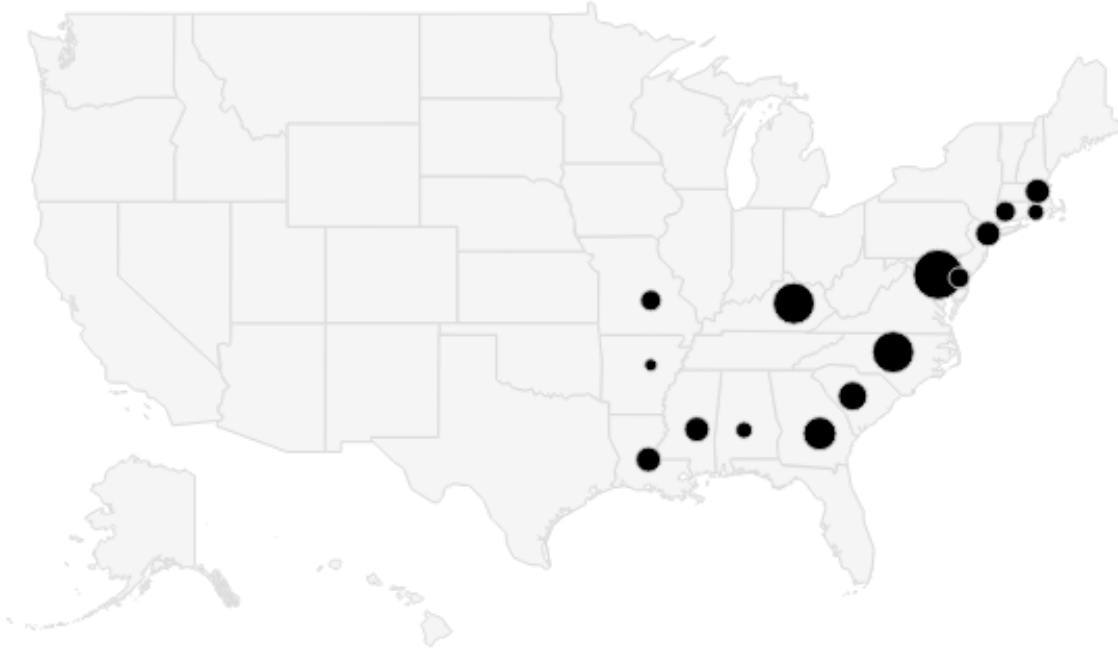
Figure 17. Regions of Narrative Setting

Table 8. Number of Narratives Set in Different States

State	Number of Narratives Set
Alabama	2
Arkansas	1
Connecticut	4
Delaware	4
Georgia	14
Kentucky	23
Louisiana	7
Maryland	32
Massachusetts	6
Mississippi	6
Missouri	5
New York	8
N. Carolina	20
Rhode Island	2
S. Carolina	9
Tennessee	8
D.C.	1

I present these details to introduce some, though not all, of the problems with making any inferences about the entire slave population based on this study of this archive. Three of the most readily apparent problems are as follows: (1) the authors of the narratives are *not* a fair sampling of the slave population in terms of gender; in 1860, for example, women made up just under 50% of the entire slave population, though only roughly 14% of the archive authors are women, (2) the authors of the narratives are not a fair sampling of the slave population in terms of where they were born, where they lived, or where they worked as slaves; peculiarly, there are as many narratives set in the second state to abolish slavery (Massachusetts) as there are narratives set in the last state to abolish slavery (Mississippi), and (3) the various "markets" for slave narratives may imply the possibility of regional publishing criteria for individual narratives; that Massachusetts was the city of publication for so many narratives could indicate certain conventions or criteria for narratives published in that state.

To identify accounts of reading and writing instruction within the archive of independently published autobiographical slave narratives, I built a customized search engine using Google's Custom Search Engine Tool.[92] I added the individual URL for each narrative's HTML version, all of which are publicly available in the DocSouth archive.[93] I used keyword phrasal searches to locate moments in the narrative in which authors used specific verb or infinitive phrases that could be used in describing reading and writing instruction. I started by simply searching the archive for the terms "read" and "write," which quickly produced far too

---

[92]   "Autobiographical   Slave   Narratives,   1760-1929":
https://www.google.com/cse/publicurl?cx=002005989350230813381:vz4r32wattq

[93]   "North   American   Slave   Narratives: Autobiographies   Listed   Chronologically":
http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/chronautobio.html

many results to warrant an effective reading; in addition to identifying results in which "read" and "write" were used in an instructional context, these searches also identified results in non-instructional contexts. Additionally, I inadvertently identified results in which "read" was not the term of focus, but rather a part of a word such as "dread," "ready," or "breadth." I then re-searched the archive, focusing on terms related to instruction: teach, learn, instruct, and so on. I reasoned that because most narratives would be composed about the author's past, he or she would be inclined to use verbs in the past tense: taught, learned, instructed. Using these terms did winnow results down to a much more manageable, much more germane result list, though these results included scenes of instruction outside and above reading and writing instruction, as well as results describing scenes in which folks who were not the author or even slaves were learning or teaching something. For example, the image below shows search results for the term "learned." The results do include a result related to reading and writing: Elizabeth Keckley mentioning a letter in which her father encourages her to be a good girl and "learn her book." The results also include, however, a brief description from Frederick Douglass' *Life and Times* of a "negro Doctor [who had] learned in the science of roots and herbs."

Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895. Life and Times of Frederick ...
docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglasslife/douglass.html
Here was the negro Doctor **learned** in the science of roots and herbs; also the black conjurer with his divination. Here was slave-breeding and slave-selling, ...
Labeled date_1878-1889 pub_new_en ...

William Henry Singleton. Recollections of My Slavery Days.
docsouth.unc.edu/neh/singleton/singleton.html
I did not **learn** this until some years later. It caused me much trouble. They were a high, proud family, the Singletons. My master's estate was one of the largest in ...
Labeled pub_northeast

Isaac Johnson, 1844-1905. Slavery Days in Old Kentucky. A True ...
docsouth.unc.edu/neh/johnson/johnson.html
I wondered if I should ever see my people again. I little dreamed then what I afterwards **learned**, that my own father had brought all this change to us, that we ...
Labeled pub_northeast

Keckley, Elizabeth, ca. 1818-1907. "Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty ...
docsouth.unc.edu/neh/keckley/keckley.html
"Tell my darling little Lizzie," he writes, "to be a good girl, and to **learn** her book. Kiss her for me, and tell her that I will come to see her some day." Thus he wrote ...
Labeled date_1866-1877 pub_northeast

Figure 18. Sample Google Custom Search Engine Search Results

To refocus on scenes of instruction related specifically to the author, I tried verb phrases such as "taught me," "taught myself," "learned me," "learnt me" (and so on). While these helped focus on the author's specific experiences with instruction, it did nothing to specify the topic of the instruction. It also did not help me see scenes in which authors described other slaves' experiences with reading and writing instruction. Finally, I searched the archive using the infinitive phrases "to read" and "to write." Ultimately, these final two phrases provided the richest results related to reading and writing instruction. Though the results did include scenes unrelated to reading and writing instruction, as well as scenes in which authors described non-slaves' experiences with reading and writing instruction, these extraneous results were manageable; a significant chunk of results (detailed below) focused on scenes of slaves — either the author himself or herself, or slaves close to the author — learning how *to read* or *to write*.[94]

Sixty-six individual narratives included the infinitive phrase "to write" at least once, and 96 included the infinitive phrase "to read" at least once. The vast majority (51) of the resulting narratives in which "to write" appeared did not use the infinitive phrase to describe learning how to write; instead, they used it in phrases in which authors describe "having cause" or "feeling compelled" or even simply being "asked" to write their autobiographical narrative. Sixty-six of the resulting narratives in which "to read" appeared, however, did include accounts in which authors describe learning how to read. Fifteen narratives overlapped, including accounts of

---

[94] Though these two phrases yielded rich results, they don't get at all of the instances of reading and writing instruction present in the archive, something the Keckley example above illustrates. This will become more apparent in the section in which I investigate the materials slaves used during moments of such instruction. A further investigation of this archive warrants a re-searching of the archive using search phrases such as "to examine," "to expound," "to cipher/cypher," "to sign," actions which, when associated with various materials of reading and writing instruction, imply reading and writing without using any variation of the words "read" or "write."

learning how to both read and write, while only one author — Rev. L.R. Ferebee — described learning how "to write" but not "to read." These 67 narratives comprised a new corpus, an archive within an archive of independently published autobiographical slave narratives that included specific accounts of instruction in which authors learned or taught others "to read" or "to write."[95]

6.3   CONTEXTS OF SLAVE SELF-CULTURE

When compared to the self-culture promoted by the likes Thoreau, Emerson, and Channing, et cetera, the self-culture represented in slave narratives was, at one and the same time, quite different, yet very much the same. Very much the same insofar as all of these self-culturists — i.e. promoters of self-culture — advocated for an educational process guided by the individual outside of a formally recognized educational institution. Yet, while Thoreau, Emerson, and Channing (as well as nearly all the rest surveyed in the previous chapter, save Douglass) counted on certain resources (books, libraries, a home) and privileges (access to lecture halls, not being enslaved) as they engaged in self-culture, the self-culture represented in slave narratives did not. As one might expect, therefore, the aims of self-culture — that is, what each group suggested self-culture was for — were fairly different for each group of self-

[95] Occasionally — as in the case of Mattie Jackson's narrative — authors included accounts of reading or writing instruction they received following Emancipation, but not accounts of reading or writing instruction they received while a slave. I would not discover this until the next step in which I performed a keyword phrase search of each narrative in the corpus. These accounts were removed from the corpus, which the final number of 67 reflects.

culturists. While Channing insists "we must make self-culture really and truly our end, or choose it for its own sake, and not merely as a means or instrument of something else," narrative authors were most assuredly engaged in self-culture for very specific, very practical, and very personal reasons, i.e. to gain freedom.[96] And as such, while there was a certain loftiness imagined into the goals of self-culture for the former group of self-culturists, slave narrative authors imagined a comparatively modest goal for self-culture: to learn how to read and write, something the former group of self-culturists also took for granted.

This was no simple task. Numerous statues of the various "slave codes," as they were known, were designed to restrict access to materials and methods of instruction. Local decrees and state-level laws made it illegal for anyone (white or black) to teach slaves how to read and write in addition to making it illegal for slaves to gather together in any efforts to learn how to read and write. Moreover, additional laws forbade slaves from possessing any reading or writing materials, and therefore "teaching themselves." Some elements of the anti-schooling slave codes went so far as to criminalize the mere ability to read and write for slaves, regardless of how a slave came by that ability, or if they were actually caught in the act of reading or writing. In *Self Taught*, Heather Andrea Williams argues such laws were passed largely in response to two significant events: David Walker's 1829 publication and distribution throughout the southern US of *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, and Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, which Turner organized through coded messages circulated

---

[96] See Heather Andrea Williams' "Introduction" in *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, Herbert Gutman's "Schools for Freedom: The Post-Emancipation Origins of Afro-American Education" in *Power & Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*, and James D. Anderson's "Ex-Slaves and the Rise of Universal Education in the South, 1860-1880" from *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*.

among literate slaves in the region. White citizens and lawmakers determined it was Turner's ability to read and write that both motivated and enabled his rebellion. In response to this determination, states such as Alabama and Virginia passed or strengthened laws in 1832 forbidding anybody from teaching slaves to read and write. Georgia followed suit in 1833, as did North and South Carolina in 1834. To stop the spread of reading and writing (and so squash the spread of insurrection), these laws not only made it illegal for slaves to teach one another or receive instruction from a white person, they also made it illegal for slaves to be in possession of materials that could aid in reading and writing instruction, or even for slaves to gather together in large groups for any reason other than plantation work. Clarifying this system in terms of access: local decrees and statewide laws were designed to deny slaves access to, (1) materials that could be used in reading and writing instruction, and (2) people that could facilitate reading and writing instruction. Denying slaves the right to learn how to read and write was used to mentally regulate slavery through maintaining a sort of slave mentality. In this sense, then, "freedom" did not just refer to physical liberation from bondage, but also mental liberation from this pervasive mentality intended to keep slaves docile and cooperative; in a sense, to keep slaves as slaves.

A clear example of this comes in Douglass' *Narrative of the Life* when Douglass recalls the words of his former owner, Hugh Auld. Chastising his wife Sophia for teaching a young Douglass how to read, Auld exclaims,

> "'If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now...if you teach that nigger...how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.'" (33)

Ironically, Auld's explanation is the very thing that ignites Douglass' strong desire to learn how to read and write. "What he most dreaded," Douglass reflects, "I most desired" (34). In short,

Douglass wanted learning to spoil him as a slave. "Spoiling" in this case is an unacceptable (for slaveholders) disruption of the status quo, a disintegration of the power dynamic that keeps Auld a master and Douglass a slave. But as Douglass admits upon learning how to read, the connection between knowing how to read and write and disrupting the status quo was complicated. Douglass writes,

> "As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out." (40)

As with the connection between reading, writing, and physical freedom, it's necessary to articulate why slaves such as Douglass, as well as their owners, believed learning how to read and write would spoil them, thus disintegrating the regulating slave mentality.

The clearest articulation of how knowing how to read and write would "spoil" a slave comes from one of Isaac Johnson's masters, John Madinglay (Mattingly), in Johnson's 1901 narrative *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*. Johnson quotes Madinglay's drawn-out warning to his wife, stating "If you teach [slaves] to pray and read they may think they are human beings and we will not be able to keep them as slaves; the more ignorant we keep them about such things the better slaves they are" (24-25). Implicit in Madinglay's close association of reading and prayer is his argument, which goes something like this: if you teach slaves how to read, they might read the Bible, and if they read the Bible, they might they might come to realize that they're more than mere chattel,[97] and if they realize they're more than mere chattel, they right resist

---

[97] As Blassingame writes, "As long as the slaves communed with whites, their religious instruction was circumscribed. The planters, in spite of their piety, insisted that their slaves not learn any of the potentially subversive tenets of Christianity (the brotherhood of all men, for instance)" (*The Slave Community*, 61).

slaveholders and reject the entire slave system. Madinglay's "logic" reveals that the security and

stability of the entire slave system relied upon slaves *believing* they were meant to be (and could

only be) slaves. And this Ignoble Lie was predicated upon slaveholders' ability to keep slaves

ignorant and unlettered. Madinglay's position emerged from his experience in the slave trade,

and it leaned on a perceived danger in slaves being able to read and write; these abilities might

give slaves access to a means for organizing against their masters. The laws of these states —

states in which Madinglay frequently conducted his sales of slaves — directly responded to both

Turner's uprising. As Madinglay stated, "The worst slaves we have are those who know the

most, they are the ones we have to punish to keep them down" (25).

Paradoxically, the laws against slaves learning how to read and write may have provided

a shield or a mask that disguised their efforts to learn how to read and write. These widespread

efforts could only become truly apparent upon emancipation when, instead of languishing in

despair and uncertainty, thousands upon thousands of ex-slaves got to work doing exactly what

they had been doing for decades before: teaching each other how to read and write. In what can

only be described as ironic understatement, John W. Alvord opened his 1866 *Report on Schools*

and Finances of Freedmen by insisting, "The desire of the freedmen for knowledge has not been

overstated" (1). Indeed as Alvord detailed in his first inspector's report to the Freedmen's

Bureau, tens of thousands of freedpersons throughout the American South participated in some

form of schooling three years after Emancipation, and just eight months following Appomattox.

Alvord's report recognized a range of schools, including formal institutions falling under the

direct supervision of the Bureau, evening and Sabbath schools, and even smaller, informal

---

gatherings he labeled "native schools" that assembled in folks' homes, at their workplaces, and even in the outdoors wherever space was available. Students ranged in age from the very young to the very old, with those "in middle life — the laboring classes — gladly avail[ing] themselves of the evening and Sabbath schools" (1). The range of both schools and students astonished Alvord, and his enthusiasm over his findings is far less masked as the report progresses. "This is a wonderful state of things," he writes:

> "We have just emerged from a terrific war; peace is not yet declared. There is scarcely the beginning of reorganized society at the south; and yet here is a people long imbruted by slavery, and the most despised of any on earth, whose chains are no sooner broken than they spring to their feet and start up an exceeding great army, clothing themselves with intelligence." (10)

Alvord's astonishment has a taste of patronizing condescension, to be sure. Yet Alvord's surprise had as much to do with what ex-slaves were doing, as it did with the fact that it was ex-slaves who were doing it: how was *anyone* — let alone folks systematically brutalized and dehumanized by slavery — able to establish and operate such a widespread educational system so quickly, let alone so soon after Emancipation and the Civil War? The answer lies in the vast networks of self-culture during slavery that sustained slaves' efforts to learn how to read and write.

6.4   NETWORKS OF SELF-CULTURE

"A network," Franco Moretti writes in "Network Theory, Plot Analysis," "is made of vertices and edges; a plot, of characters and actions" (3). In autobiographical slave narratives

such is the case with scenes of self-culture.[98] In such scenes, the characters or vertices are teachers, students, or co-learners, and the actions or edges are interactions related to learning how to read and write. Two teachers, students, or co-learners are linked if they engage in some sort of instructional activity together. These linkages can generate either a centralized or a distributed network. Centralized networks are top-down and rigid with a clear chain of command/interaction; for example, the US military's hierarchical, chain of command structure Distributed networks, on the other hand, are diffuse and malleable and can be broken apart and rejoined and maintain functionality; for example, Al Qaeda's network of "cells" that operate independently of one another. I'll first examine an example of a centralized network of reading and writing instruction, before focusing on the significance of distributed networks of reading and writing networks represented in slave narratives.

In many cases, the authors of autobiographical slave narratives clearly identify the "vertices" with which they are linked in a network of literacy instruction. For example, in Henry Clay Bruce's narrative, Bruce's describes learning how his mother taught he and his three siblings how to read and write. Represented visually, Bruce's network of reading instruction might look like this:

---

[98] In the following analysis, I'll focus specifically on scenes of self-culture devoted exclusively to literacy instruction. That is, scenes in which narrative authors describing teaching themselves how to read and write. There are a great many other scenes in which narrative authors describe teaching themselves various other skills and habits, and these scenes are certainly worth considering as a part of a enlarged examination of self-culture within autobiographical slave narratives.
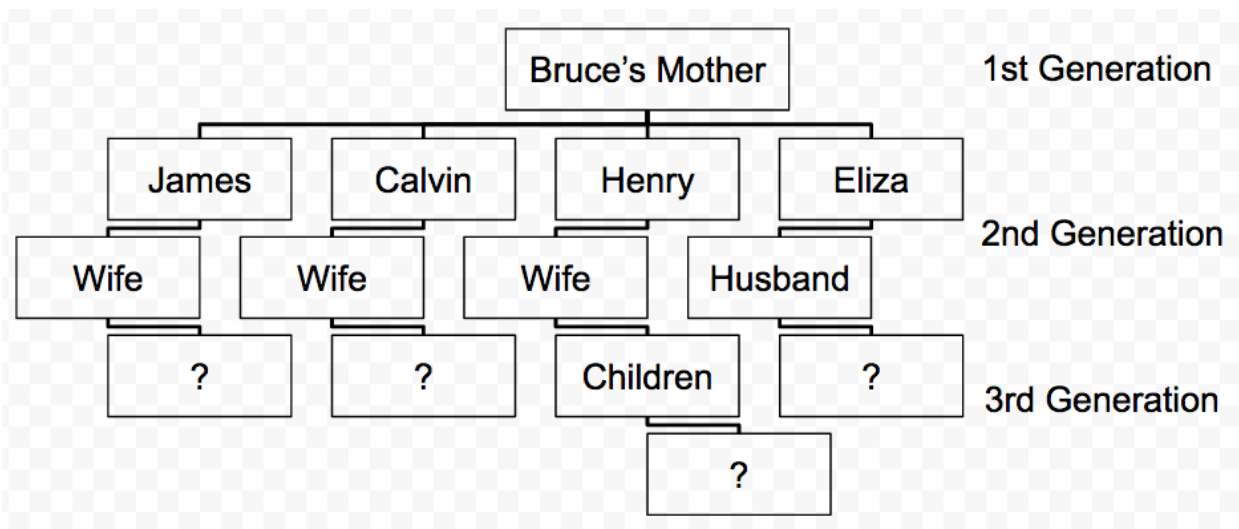
Figure 19. Henry Clay Bruce's Network of Reading Instruction

In his narrative, Bruce mentions being transferred from one owner to another with just his mother and three of his siblings (he has at least a second unnamed sister and a third brother, B.K., who would go on to become a US Senator). Further, his narrative mentions that his older brothers, James and Calvin, as well as his younger sister, Eliza, all married. Bruce also states that he and his wife had children. His narrative includes, therefore, at least three generations of enslaved learners, from his mother to his children. Significantly, Bruce's mother is evidently the origin of this lineage of instruction, seeing as "mother had no education at all" (67). Based on his narrative, the only sure members of the third generation of enslaved learners are Bruce's unnamed children; we might guess that Bruce's married siblings also had children with which they shared the familial "desire to learn," just as we might guess that Bruce's own children married, and thus continued the spread of this centralized network, but we cannot be sure.

There is pay-it-forward quality to these scenes of instruction; older parents, siblings, aunts or uncles teach younger sons, daughters, siblings, or nieces and nephews, who then teach wives or younger siblings, and perhaps children, and so on. This is a variation of the slave-era educational proverb Each One, Teach One. It reads more like Each *X* Teach *Y*. While either the

teachers or the students in these situations could have gone on to learn with or teach other slaves, this is an impossible assumption for us to make based upon the information these narratives provide. This type of instruction is very much a family affair, a network centralized around its top to bottom, past to present movement. The logic of a such a network suggests it could expand, but only as a family line might expand; as soon as a vertex (family member) ran out of other vertices (family members) to teach or learn from, the network would fizzle out, much the same way a family line would fizzle out if its last generation failed to have children.

This uncertainty is a consequence of both the specific details of how Bruce learned to read and write, as well as the dictating principles of a centralized "Each One Teach One" centralized learning network. At best, we can follow the "Each One Teach One" ethos and suppose that Bruce taught his children, who each taught one other person, and so on; this essentially maps Bruce's teaching and learning network onto his family tree. Yet this supposition takes this ethos as a hard-and-fast rule, which is odd. The proverb operates with a cartoonish notion of how learning transacts; there's a lot of time, energy, and (as I'll explore below) people obscured by the word "teach." There are also varying degrees of success in the practices of teaching and learning. When are the conditions of the "Each One Teach One" ethos satisfied? When the student can become a teacher as in the case of Bruce? Can't someone learn to read or write to varying degrees of proficiency? So too, can't folks with varying abilities to read or write — even an *inability* to read or write — turn around and teach others, just as Washington's and Bruce's mothers did? Second, there seems to be little motivation for turning a proverb into a formula for examining history.

The more common type of network described in slave narratives are diffuse networks. Such networks occur when authors identified an unspecified number of vertices and edges;

Booker T. Washington, for example, writes about joining "a group of men and women who were anxious to hear [a young man] read" (28). In this instance "group of men and women" refers to an indiscernible amount of people with whom Washington experienced the young man's public reading. In such cases, the network would need to fill in the gaps with an implicit assumption about how many folks "men and women" refers to. Conservatively, then, in cases in which the amount of vertices is ambiguous, I will include the bare minimum number of vertices that could count; Washington's "men and women" becomes, then, just two vertices. Here is a representation of Washington's reading and writing instructional experiences:
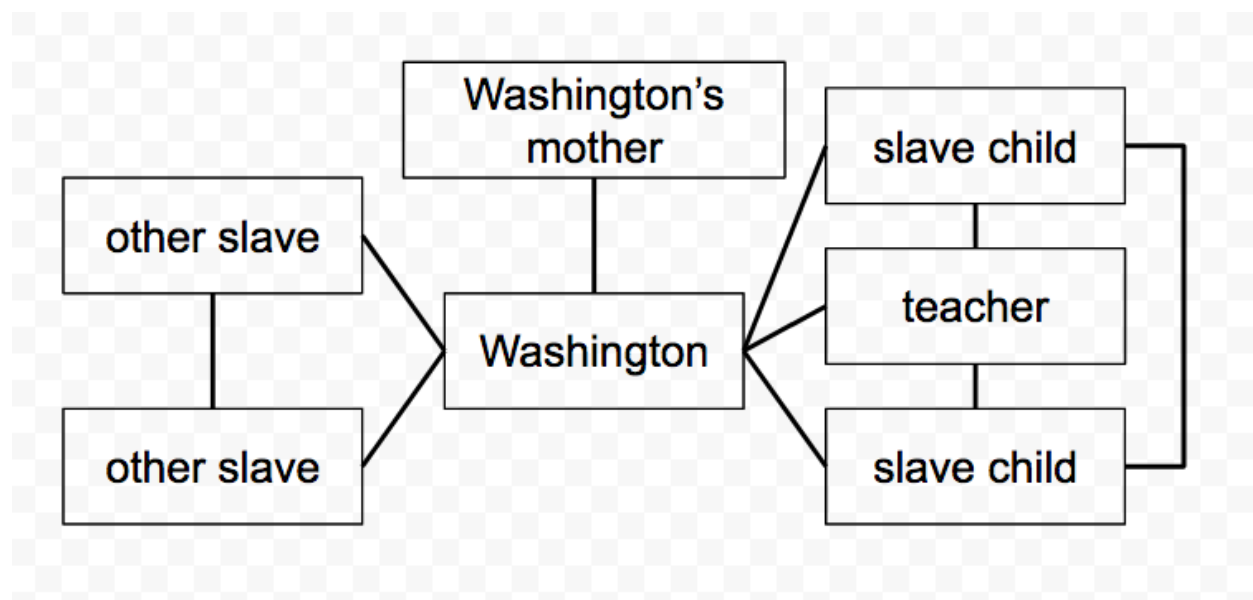
Figure 20. Booker T. Washington's Network of Reading Instruction

The "group of men and women" are represented by the two "other slave" vertices; an edge connects them with Washington, as well as with each other. Similarly, the indiscernible "children" with whom Washington attended "the first school for Negro children that had ever been opened in that part of Virginia" (29) are represented by the two "slave child" vertices; edges connect each vertices with Washington and each other, and all three are connected with the

teacher of that same school. Washington also reports that "In all my efforts to learn to read my mother shared full my ambition, and sympathized with me and aided me in every way that she could" (28). This connection — which, though it may have merely been encouragement — is represented by the edge connecting Washington to the vertex labeled "Washington's mother."

Following Moretti, one immediate benefit of viewing Washington's experiences with reading and writing instruction in this way is that no single instance of instruction ever "disappears from our perception" (4). That is, we see Washington's experiences for what they were: a continuous and complicated affair that takes place at different times, in different places, and with different people. No individual vertex or edge is, in Moretti's language, "weighted" more strongly than any other. Certainly this deemphasizes the significant central role of certain instructional experiences; Washington goes on to state, "If I have done anything in life worth attention, I feel sure that I inherited the disposition from my mother" (28). But deemphasizing in this way eliminates the possibility of overemphasizing in other ways. While Washington might argue that his mother was certainly a necessary component of his reading instruction, she was not a sufficient component; his is not the story of a boy learning all he knows about reading and writing from his mother. Consequently, an unweighted network of reading and writing instruction seems to stymie the impulse to look at one particular scene as a sort of perspicuous representation of an author's entire instructional experience, let alone the experiences of the entire slave population.

To clarify and extend this point about perspicuous representation, here's another network representing the reading and writing instruction Frederick Douglass describes in *Narrative of the Life*:
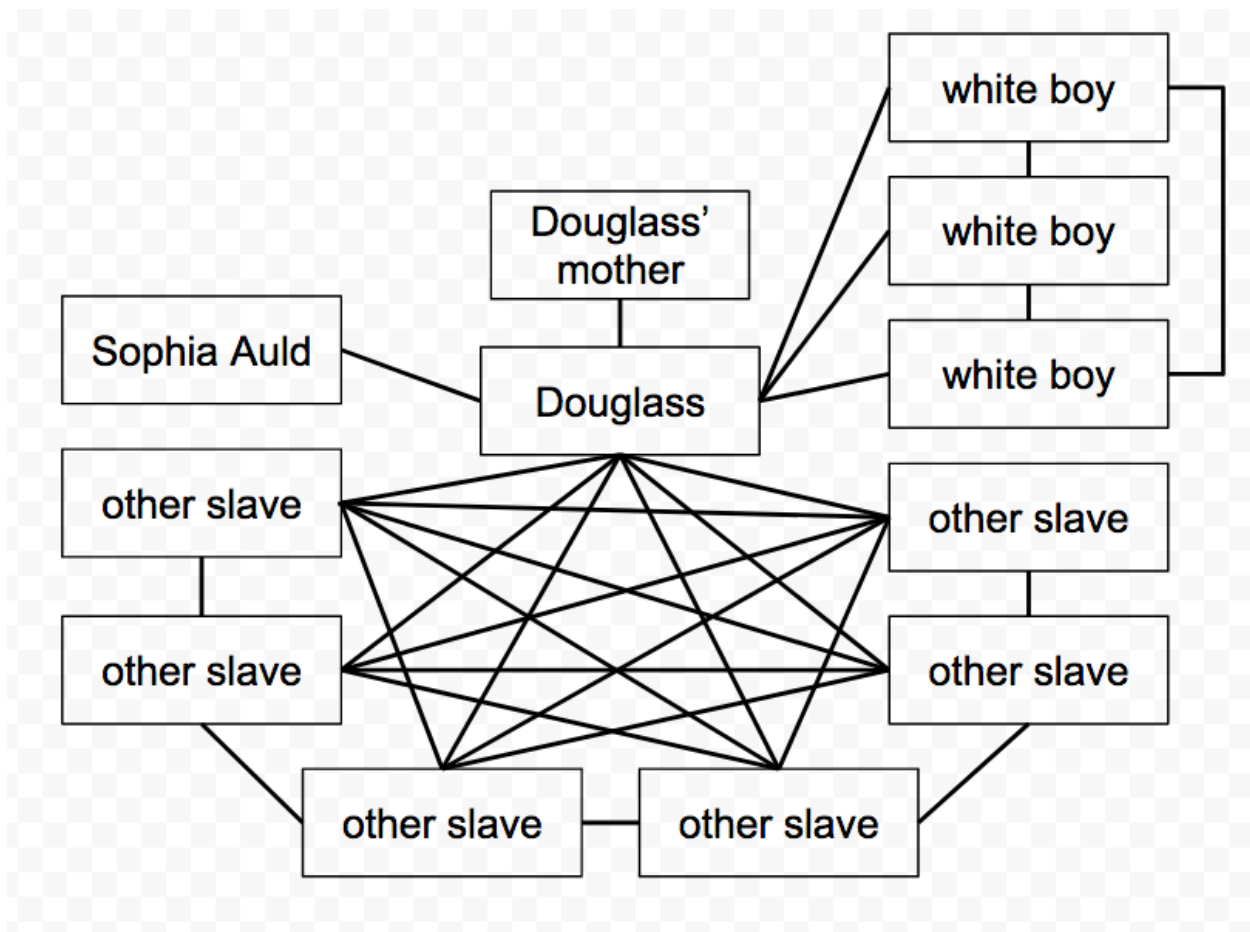
Figure 21. Frederick Douglass' Network of Reading Instruction[99]

Douglass' *Narrative of the Life* contains memorable scenes of reading and writing instruction: his early experiences with Sophia and Hugh Auld, his later discovery of *The Columbian Orator*, and his duping of white boys at a Maryland shipyard, all of which are obscured, yet still present in Figure 4. Yet, this obscuring is a good thing. Consider this: the famous scenes of Douglass'

---

[99] This network does not include several branches of Douglass' instructional network, including the "over forty scholars" (81) Douglass reports teaching at a Sabbath school. Such a network would be overwhelming in terms of the how many crisscrossing edges it would include, and such a complicated network representation is unnecessary for emphasizing the point I'm attempting to make about perspicuous representations of slave narratives.

reading and writing instruction emphasize his ingenuity and resourcefulness by highlighting what Douglass named various "stratagems" he used for learning how to read and write. In the 1840s and 1850s, abolitionists pointed to such scenes as evidence of Douglass' exceptionalism; in the preface to *Narrative of the Life*, William Lloyd Garrison identifies Douglass as "an intellectual and moral being—needing nothing but a comparatively small amount of cultivation to make him an ornament to society and a blessing to his race" (iv). The historical focus on these scenes in isolation from other scenes reveals Douglass to be a sort of hero in terms of reading and writing instruction. He actively seeks it out and when some legal or social barrier gets in his way, he invents a strategy to overcome that barrier and soldier on. He is the autodidact *par excellence*. This message stuck, and today *Narrative of the Life* is one of the most cited, most read, most anthologized slave narratives to emerge from the 19th century, often celebrated (or at least received) as a perspicuous representation of slave narratives generally.

By hiding scenes in which Douglass seems to learn as an autodidact, Figure 21 reveals the rich network in which Douglass *actually* learned how to read and write. Like Washington, this network includes maternal encouragement, as well as some co-learning moments with other slave men, women, and children. But then, Douglass did study some with Sophia Auld, and there is the matter of those three white boys he tricked at the Maryland dock. Douglass' network has more branches than does Washington's; his network is both bigger and more robust, and in terms of networks of instruction, size does matter. Via this representation, Douglass is anything but an autodidact; indeed, one wonders if the reason he displayed such tremendous literary talents was precisely because he learned how to read and write in such a rich, robust network of folks. Even as network branches were eliminated, his instructional network sustained; Douglass' removal from his mother at an early age, Hugh Auld's stoppage of his wife's lessons, Douglass' moving

away from the shipyard, none of these events got in the way of him eventually *mastering* how to read and later write. The truer representation of Douglass' reading and writing instruction, then, does not come from looking at a single scene in which such instruction happened. Instead, it emerges like a magic-eye poster that only becomes clear when you lose focus on the details.

We can find further evidence of the strength of Douglass' instructional network when we take him out of it. As Moretti does with the character Hamlet, when you remove Douglass from his own instructional network, two strong networks of reading and writing instruction remain:
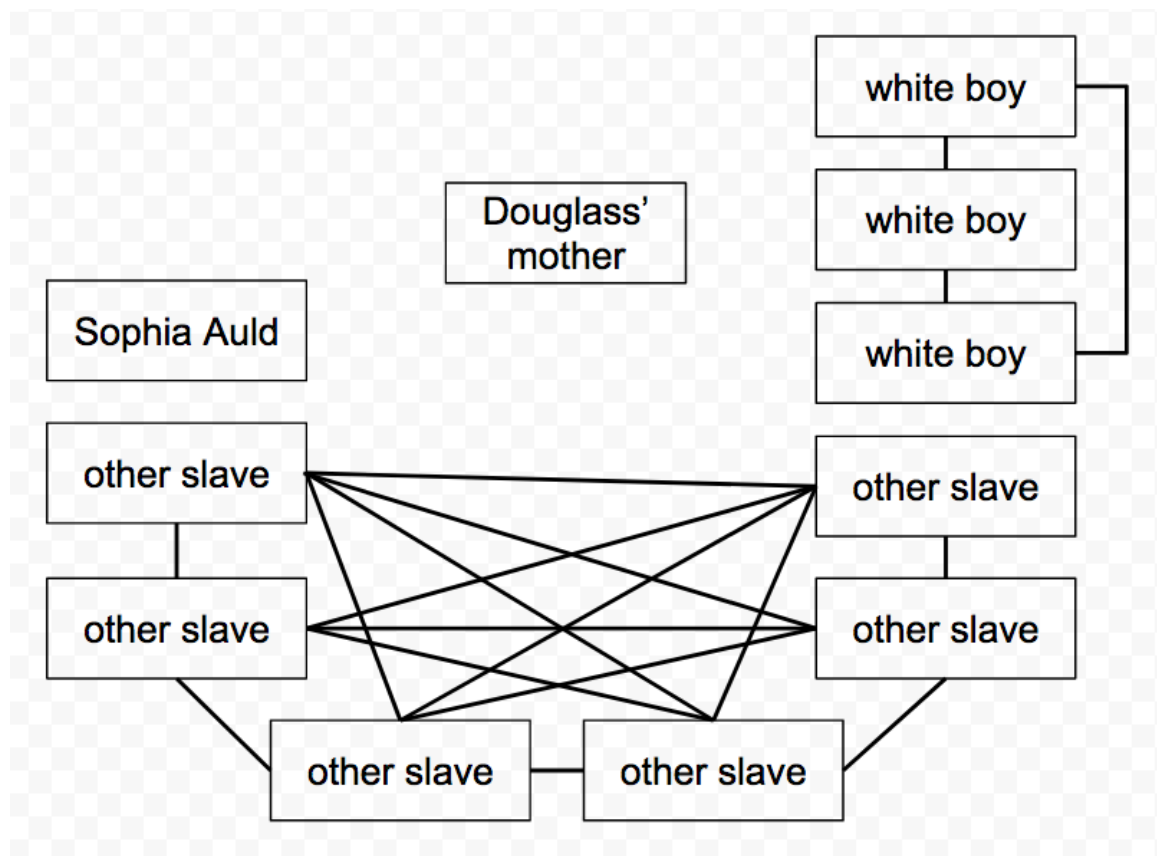
Figure 22. Frederick Douglass' Network of Reading Instruction without Douglass

Douglass' mother's and Sophia Auld's branches transform from vertices in a network of instruction to mere isolated points of literacy, mostly because we do not know how it is that either of them came to learn how to read and write or if either of them shared their knowledge

223

with anybody else. The three white boys' branch may sustain as a new, smaller network of reading and writing instruction, though Douglass offers no information about whether these these three boys ever *led* their own instruction, or if they were merely prompted by Douglass. The network of six other slaves with which Douglass learned, however, definitively sustains; each vertex in this new network simply loses one other vertex and the attending edge. The network of his own reading and writing instruction doesn't collapse when Douglass is removed from it; it simply re-centers. Again, this certainly seems to suggest that one reason Douglass became such a significant literary and historical figure is because he learned how to read and write with and within a strong group of folks. Significantly, though, the robustness of Douglass' network — that is, the strength it retains even when he is removed from it — also seems to imply the existence of strong instructional networks within the slave population of Maryland, if not throughout the entire slave population of the United States.

6.5   A CENTRAL TENDENCY?

While Moretti's network analysis provides some ideas about how instructional networks may have operated for some specific narrative authors, it does little to suggest how these networks may have operated in general, if they operated at all. To make the dramatic leap from Douglass or Washington networks I've presented above would be to make the same projection problem that troubled Herbert Gutman in his criticism of Robert Fogel and Stanley Engermann's cliometric analysis of slavery: *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. To return to the problem of perspicuous representation and Douglass, we would be starting with one perspicuous representation of how Douglass learned how to read and write. This

224

representation would then function as perspicuous representation of slave narratives generally which themselves function as perspicuous representations of all slaves' experiences.

What we would seem to need to do is locate a central tendency in terms of the number of slaves involved in an instructional network. This amounts to imagining some sort of "average" representation of self-culture within a collection of slave narratives; a representation on self-culture in which an "average" instructional network might be traced. This would be an attempt to replace Douglass with a more accurate perspicuous representation. Significantly, this would do nothing to solve the problem we would encounter if we then tried to suggest that the central tendency — this "average" slave narrative author — could function as a perspicuous representation of all slaves' experiences. That problem, it seems, is well beyond our abilities to yet "solve." Before we might even consider trying to solve that problem of representation, though, we must first consider Douglass' replacement. That is, we must first consider the possibility of a central tendency in terms of the number of slaves involved in an instructional network; an "average" slave narrative. And not just the possibility of a representationally average slave narrative; the possibility of a statistically average slave narrative.

I have to admit that this move does seem a little odd to me. It's the move that Fogel and Engerman want to make in *Time on the Cross*, a move that results in outlying accounts and the exclusion of those accounts. Any attempt to draw from the corpus an aggregated or "average" account would force me into the untenable position of either ignoring data points I've found or compromising conclusions (I think) I've already reached. It could be, as it often has been when historical questions about slavery have been asked, a source problem; autobiographical slave narratives are perhaps not the most appropriate or fitting documentation of reading and writing instruction as it happened during slavery. Or, the breakdown could be a case of hoping for too

much; the notion of a central tendency in regards to slave narratives still seems to have some explanatory power behind it. If such a central tendency existed in a discoverable place, it could provide a more accurate sense of roughly how many slaves knew how to read and write when slavery ended. All my talk of data sets, data points, skewing, tendencies, placeholder positions, outliers, and so on doesn't *read* like it's about slave narratives or narrative authors. It certainly wouldn't *feel* like I was writing about slave narratives or narrative authors. The analysis itself would seem to lose sight of that which it is striving to analyze; my consideration of reading and writing instruction in autobiographical slave narratives became a numbers game.[100] That said, this breakdown could simply be the result of user error, the incapacity of me, the researcher, to conduct in the appropriate manner the research necessary to answer the questions demanding to be answered.

At this point, I think I know that some efforts represented by some narrative authors (Bruce, Washington, Douglass) indicate that the efforts some slaves made to teach themselves to read and write happened with others. Though these representations may not provide enough data from which to draw exact average number of other people with whom all slaves learned how to read and write, they do provide enough data to challenge what narrative authors and subsequent historians frequently label as "self-teaching" was sometimes, in actuality, an interactive and collaborative affair. Oftentimes it is hard to properly identify the large instructional networks in which narrative authors learned how to read and write because these networks extend over time,

---

[100] Indeed, when I attempted such an analysis, it did seem to lose sight of its goal. I became caught up in trying to generate some way of representing a so-called "average narrative" through statistical analysis, it turned quickly into a numbers game, rather than efforts to reach a nuanced understanding of how slaves taught themselves how to read and write.

both in terms of the lives of the individual authors, as well as in terms of the event timeline established by the logic of their autobiographical narratives; that is, authors will describe receiving snippets of instruction at early points in their lives, and other snippets at a later points, and so on.[101] Reading such snippets closely and in isolation is akin to missing the forest for the trees (or more appropriately, the education for the individual lesson). Reading such snippets collectively, however, likely gives us a better sense of how slaves' reading and writing instruction actually happened; that is, over time, throughout one's life, with myriad instructors and lessons in myriad locations. Nobody anywhere learned everything they needed to know about reading and writing from one person at one time. More specifically in terms of slave narrative authors, reading and instruction tended to be supported by a handful of folks, some of whom were white and free, but most of whom were black and enslaved.

To get a clearer picture of who, exactly, constituted this "handful of folks," I started by identifying all the different people with whom narrative authors said they learned how to read and write. I counted and listed every person or group of people the authors mentioned as a part of this instructional context, either as teachers, fellow learners, or students. These included folks who knowingly or unknowingly taught the author[102], as well as folks who learned alongside the

---

[101] This may be a reason scholars tend to focus on individual scenes of reading and writing instruction when making claims about how such instruction happened; they might note common scenes in which an author's former mistress taught him or her how to read, for example, and conclude that such mistress-led instruction was common. Mistress-led instruction was fairly common; 17 different narrative authors describe gaining some instruction from their mistress, though only Henry Ossian Flipper's *The Colored Cadet at West Point* describes such instruction as the only kind of instruction he received. The other 16 narrative authors describe their mistress-led instruction as a component of the entire reading and writing education.

[102] For example, John Quincy Adams' master's children unknowingly helped him learn how to read; Adams would secretly listen to them as they took their reading lessons, memorizing the words they spoke aloud.

authors — oftentimes siblings, but occasionally other slaves from the plantation if the author learned in a Sabbath school or at secret gathering. I also included folks who would eventually be students of an author while he or she was still enslaved (as with Douglass, for example, or Fanny Jackson Coppin, both of whom taught fellow slaves while they were enslaved, in addition to going on to teach fellow freedpersons following emancipation). If these folks were black and enslaved, they tended to come from distinct groups: authors described learning from or with their mothers, fathers, children, other family members (including siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents), groups of non-related black children, black men, black women, or groups comprised of an unspecified amount of men, women, and children. If these folks were identified as white, they tended to come from other equally distinct groups: authors learned from or with their masters, mistresses, master's children, other white men, women, and children, and groups comprised of an unspecified amount of men, women, and children. Narrative authors also named their teachers or co-learners in other ways, though these additional titles did not necessarily preclude them from falling into one of the previously listed groups; for example, some authors learned from a sabbath or school teacher, who might have also been the author's friend or relative. Sabbath and school teachers could be either black or white, free or enslaved, and if a teacher had an identification beyond teacher — that is, if they were described as a black man or a white woman, as well as a Sabbath or school teacher — I would count them once in the appropriate prior category, and again as either a Sabbath or school teacher.[103]

---

[103] As I considered the Sabbath and school teacher categories separately from the black and white categories, this double tallying does not affect any of the data I generated or conclusions I drew from this data.

I then tallied each person or group of people involved in each individual author's reading and writing instruction. When the exact number of a group of "other blacks" or "other whites" was used, I tallied that number; for example, Douglass describes teaching a class of comprised of about 40 slaves, including men, women, and children. When a group was referred to, but no exact number was used, I tallied the bare minimum possible for the group; when authors wrote "men and women," I tallied this up as two (one man, one woman), when authors wrote "men, women, and children," I tallied this up as three (one man, one woman, one child), when authors wrote simply "others," I tallied this up as two. Upon grouping and tallying the people, I totaled the number of folks, both white and black, involved in each author's reading and writing instruction, as well as the number of black folks and white folks specifically involved in each author's instruction. I also totaled each category.

In the corpus, the total number of folks, white and black, free and enslaved who participated in a reading or writing instructional context described by the collected authors is 746, 660 blacks and 86 whites. These numbers change fairly significantly when the largest outlier is removed; James Watkins describes times when his master would read from the Bible to 400 slaves. Because it's unlikely that Watkins kept an entirely accurate tally of the total number of slaves to whom his master read, it's safe to assume that in Watkins' narrative "400" simply meant "a lot" or "too numerous to count." And this "Watkins number" is ten times larger than the next largest number of slaves with whom any author reported learning how to read or write, I'm comfortable recognizing the number as not just a numerical outlier, but also an experiential one. That is, I'm comfortable assuming that not many slaves gathered together in groups of

several hundred to hear their masters read to them. Without these 400 slaves, the total number of blacks involved in reading and writing instruction drops to 260.[104]

These numbers represent an overly conservative estimate of the total number of people involved in each author's reading and writing instruction. It is important for me to note I do not believe my own conservative estimate is an accurate, realistic, or even reasonable estimate of the *actual* number of people involved in each author's reading and writing instruction; I am convinced the *actual* number of people involved in each author's reading and writing instruction is higher than my estimate. I opted for a conservative estimate because I believe it is the only kind of estimate I could confidently make given the imprecision of the data available in narrative accounts. The imprecision of the data is entirely dependent on the imprecision of the language such accounts used. For example, "others" identifies an indeterminate amount of people, ranging from two upward. Similarly, "men and women" might indicate dozens of people in one author's narrative, or four or five in a second author's narrative. Additionally, when one writes "men and women," they usually mean three or more; if speaking or writing casually, I could reasonably use "men and women" to refer to a group of two women and one man, even though "man and women" would be more factually and grammatically correct. Yet, because both "men" and "women" are both plural, indicating that the phrase "men and women" could be reasonably tallied as four (two men, two women), and "men, women, and children" could reasonably tallied as six (two men, two women, two children).[105]

---

[104] All analyses from this point forward will be based upon tallies that do not include the "Watkins number."

[105] I could have estimate the exact amount for each usage of a numerically indeterminate grammatical phrase such as "group," "others," or "men and women," but doing so would prove to ultimately be needless, as even my

At first glance, here's what these numbers seem to indicate: 66 black slaves (the narrative authors) described learning how to read and write while being assisted by 346 other folks, 86 of whom were free whites and 260 of whom were black slaves. This means that the average (arithmetic mean) number of folks with whom that group of 66 folks learned how to read and write was about five, one of whom was a free white and four of whom were black slaves. This mean number doesn't hold out under scrutiny; only three authors of 66 describe learning how to read and write with exactly five other people: Levi Branham, Booker T. Washington, and Fanny Jackson-Coppin. And of these four, only Levi Branham describes learning how to read with one white person (his master's wife) and four black slaves (his mother, two slave children, and another slave man); Booker T. Washington and Fanny Jackson-Coppin both describe learning exclusively with and from their fellow slaves. That said, plenty of narrative authors described learning how to read and write with *more* than five folks.

Table 9. Number of People Involved in Narrative Authors' Reading and Writing Instruction (six and up)

Author	Number of People Involved in Reading and Writing Instruction
Robert Anderson	6
William Craft	6
Charles Thompson	6
Amanda Smith	6
Harriet Jacobs	7
Octavia V. Rogers Albert	7
William Webb	7
Sam Aleckson	7

unrealistically conservative estimates end up suggesting my main point: authors of slave narratives describe learning how to read and write *with other slaves.*

Elijah P. Marrs	8
William Henry Singleton	8
Thomas Lewis Johnson	9
Benjamin Drew	9
John Quincy Adams	11
Francis Fedic	16
Susie King Taylor	45
Frederick Douglass	51

And plenty more describe learning how to read and write with *less* than five:

Table 10. Number of People Involved in Narrative Authors' Reading and Writing Instruction (six and down)

Author	Number of People Involved in Reading and Writing Instruction
Nat Turner	0
John Jea	0
Elisha Winfield Green	1
Henry Ossian Flipper	1
George White	1
Peter Bruner	1
Peter Wheeler	1
William Parker	1
William J. Anderson	2
Moses Grandy	2
Allen Parker	2
Mary Button	2
Boyreau Brinch	2
Peter Randolph	2
Selma Aga	2
James Watkins	2
Isaac Lane	2
Elizabeth	2
Charles Ball	2
William Hayden	2
Samuel Ringgold Ward	2
Okah Tubbee	2
Mary Prince	3
Samuel Hall	3

GW Offley	3
Thomas Jones	3
Josiah Henson	3
Henry Bibb	3
Louisa Picquat	3
Isaac Johnson	3
Kate Drumgoold	3
Nat Love	3
Thomas Anderson	3
Madison Henderson	3
Leonard Black	4
William Wells Brown	4
Lucius Henry Holsey	4
William H. Heard	4
George M. Horton	4
Solomon Bayley	4
Emma J. Roy	4
Francis Frederick	4
Col. W. Mallory	4
John Thompson	4
Henry Clay Bruce	4
Lewis Garrard Clarke	4
Thomas James	4

More significantly, however, is the fact that even though far fewer authors described learning with and from groups of more than five people, the total number of folks with and from whom that group of authors learned was larger than the total number of folks with and from whom the other groups of authors learned. That is, for the 16 authors who described learning with and from larger groups, the total number of other folks they described learning with was 209, while for the 47 authors who described learning with and from smaller groups, the total number of other folks they described learning with was 122. The remaining three authors each learned with and from 15 other folks. If we conceive of authors as students or sponsees, and the folks they learned with and from as sponsors, this disparity means that in terms of slave narrative authors' experiences with learning how to read and write, about one-quarter of authors/sponsees worked with nearly two-thirds of the total number of sponsors, while nearly three-quarters of the authors/sponsees

worked with a just over one-third of the total number of sponsors. Or more simply, it seems to suggest authors such as Frederick Douglass, Susie King Taylor, and Francis Fedric had greater access to reading and writing instructors and instruction than did authors such as Nat Turner, John Jea, and George White.

But in the search of the refined, detailed, and probably chimerical number of other people with whom narrative authors learned how to read and write, a truth emerges: they did learn *with other people*, and more often than not these other people were black slaves as opposed to free whites. Only 11 narrative authors of 66 reported learning how to read and write with whites only, while 22 narrative authors reported learning how to learn with blacks only. Thirty-one of the remaining authors reported learning with some combination of free whites and black slaves, while only two authors (Nat Turner[106] and John Jea[107]) reported to be entirely self-taught.

This is significant, as it shows that regardless of how many black slaves *actually knew* how to read and write during slavery, many more black slaves were *trying to learn* how to read

---

[106] Two things to note regarding *The Confessions of Nat Turner*: first, though Turner reports "The manner in which...I acquired [the ability to read and write] with the most perfect ease, so much so, that I have no recollection whatever of learning the alphabet—but to the astonishment of the family, one day, when a book was shewn me to keep me from crying, I began spelling the names of different objects" (8), his interviewer (and ostensible recorder/author of the narrative) adds the parenthetical note "he can read and write (it was taught him by his parents)" (18). Turner does allude to as much in his actual confession, though he is careful not to name names. This leads directly to the second thing to note: as a confession, anyone Turner would have named as someone who helped him learn how to read and write would have been implicated as an accomplice seeing as he used coded messages he wrote himself to organize the rebellion. Consequently, the fact that Turner claims to be entirely and somewhat miraculously self-taught, it is more likely that his parents *did* teach him and his claims about divine instructional intervention were attempts to protect his parents from being punished for doing so.

[107] Technically, John Jea is not truly self-taught; in his narrative, he describes receiving his instruction from an angel of God. That said, given that *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea* was published in 1811, and Jea acknowledges early in his narrative that he was not allowed to be taught, it is also possible that his narrative (like Turner's) was simply careful not to name names, and the angel of God story was a cleverly wrought literary ruse.

and write during slavery. In the 1870 Census — the first census which considered the question of literacy as it pertained to black folks — the estimated literacy rate was 21.1% of the total population of "black and other" people. The estimated literacy rates during slavery are significantly lower. Carter Woodson estimated slave literacy rates were around 20% of the total slave population in 1825, but halved by 1860 as the aforementioned slew of anti-instructional laws were enacted in the late 1820s and 1830s. WEB DuBois' estimate is far more conservative; he suggests that just 5% of slaves could read immediately prior to the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Eugene Genovese balances Woodson against DuBois suggesting that between 5% and 15% of the entire slave population could read and write, and that nearly every plantation had at least one or two literate slaves living on it. Janet Cornelius places the literacy rate at about 10%. The problem with playing this kind of numbers game is that it does not account for *attempts* to learn how to read and write. If slave narratives demonstrate anything of historical value as it pertains to slaves' literacy, it is that whatever the rate of actual literacy was among slaves, the rate self-culturing reading and writing instruction was higher. That is, however many slaves could actually read and write, more slaves were trying to learn.

6.6   REPRESENTATIONS AND REALITIES OF SLAVES' SELF-CULTURE

There is a problem of representation versus reality insofar as claiming that slave narratives' *representations* of how slaves engaged in self-culture. The problem is between "interested representation" versus "accurate representation"; that is, are slave narratives interested representations of slaves' self-culture or are they accurate representations of slaves'

self-culture? This problem emerges because slave narratives were documents that were nearly always promoted as a part of a sort of literary supplement to the Abolitionist efforts.[108] More specifically, slaves' efforts at self-culture were often heralded — as it was in the case of Douglass — as models to be emulated, both by white abolitionists, as well as by slaves and freedpersons. As such, representations of self-culture within slave narratives, even autobiographical slave narratives, still insist upon the historiographical question: is this representation accurate or is it interested? The problem is a chicken and egg problem of sorts. Was it the case that slaves engaged in efforts of self-culture and then anti-slavery publishers, seeing this, promoted narratives as examples or proof of this ingenuity and resistance? Or was it the case that abolitionists, seeking to foment resistance to the system of slavery, spun the stories of slaves' efforts at self-culture to promote an abolitionist agenda?

This problem is exacerbated as the "genre" of slave narratives gained popularity in the 19th century, reaching a peak in terms of the number of narratives published in the 1850s, before tapering off as the century progressed. Popular and widely circulating narratives in the 1840s and 1850s — Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life*, for example, and William Wells Brown's *Narrative of*, for example — could have inadvertently produced generic features of slave narratives, features that would be later pilloried by historians such as UB Phillips and literary scholars such as James Olney. That is, just as narratives started to slip into common formal patterns (open with a story about not knowing your parents, follow with a story about how you learned to read and write, include a story about how you were or once witnessed a fellow slave

---

[108] Indeed, many narratives were sought out by abolitionist publishers such as Lewis Garrard Clarke's two narratives, commissioned and published by Joseph C. Lovejoy, while other biographical narratives were simply written and published by white abolitionists, such as as *The Story of Archer Alexander* by William Greenleaf Eliot.

being beaten, and so on), so too might you suggest that they slipped into common thematic examinations. And one of these common themes could have been an examination of how, in their efforts to teach themselves how to read and write, slaves engaged in an always already resistant and rebellious activity; a different kind of heroic myth less focused on the bravery of actively and forwardly fighting against a tyrant, than it was focused on the ingenuity of cleverly and subversively resisting the decrees of the tyrant.

This would seem to add to the long list of reasons why slave narratives don't make good historical sources. The suggestion that the majority of these narratives were actually authored by their white editors has haunted slave histories and historiography for nearly 100 years. Though largely debunked, the suggestion has seemed to slowly morph into the barely more palatable position that perhaps narrative authors were unduly influenced by both the market into which their narratives would enter, as well as the publishers who were facilitating these narratives' entrance into that market. Then there is widely recognized understanding that because many of these narratives were published *after* the author's individual emancipation, they are somehow too far removed from their subject to offer much by the way of historical value.[109] Adding to this is the previously articulated position that slave narratives *as a genre* seem to possess common formal and thematic patterns. If these patterns are in the genre itself, as opposed to the experience the genre aims to describe, then these narratives have, as Olney suggests, a paint-by-numbers feel to them; that is, their content follows the form more closely than the experiences. Whatever the case, this would suggest a degree of embellishment present in an individual slave

---

[109] This criticism seems to apply more to the WPA narratives collected in the 1930s than it does to the narratives considered here. This is particularly true given that the majority of independently published narratives were actually published *during* slavery, as opposed to after; 98 before, 86 after.

narrative. It would suggest that the spirit of resistance depicted in slave narratives was a result less of what was actually happening among slaves, than it was a result of the generic conventions of the narratives about slaves. This is to align slave narratives with ideological, rather than historical documents.

As David Blight states in "The Slave Narratives: A Genre and a Source,"

> "Autobiography is self-indulgent by definition; as the reconstruction of a personal story it often masks as much as it reveals. The best autobiographies are not merely factual summaries of a person's life; they are artistic creations, plotted narratives that serve the ends of the author and impose a story on the reader. The slave narratives were no exception to this trend." (para. 7)

Blight goes on to argue that for this reason, slave narratives "are both an original genre of American literature and a source for reconstructing historical experience" (7). While I agree with Blight, I've lost interest in the debate about these documents' historical veracity, mostly because I'm content to acknowledge slave narratives as ideological documents first and historical documents second. This is why slave narratives work in reconstructing the pedagogy of self-culture: because they are both historical and ideological. As it pertains to my project, slave-narratives-as-ideological-documents contain articulations of attitudes and philosophies pertaining to slaves teaching themselves how to read and write of particular importance to my efforts to examine self-culture. If slave narratives did embellish the facts, they still presented these embellished facts in such a way as to perpetuate the trend of embellishment. The generic features indicate that even if the presence of self-culture wasn't as widespread as the narratives suggested, the celebration of self-culture (i,e. the promotion of it) was. Slave narratives, even if they aren't accurate representations of how self-culture happened during slavery, are an accurate representation of how many authors thought self-culture could (or even should) happen, both during slavery and beyond. That is, maybe slave narratives are describing slave self-culture, but they're almost certainly making an argument for how self-culture should be done.

238

And this argument was convincing. In the immediate wake of Emancipation and the Civil War, newly emancipated blacks in communities far removed from each other wasted no time and waited for no outside assistance or encouragement, simultaneously, with great zeal, started teaching each other how to read and write in schools. This is what John Alvord noticed in his tour of the southern US following the end of the Civil War as the newly appointed Inspector for the Freedmen's Bureau. In his first report to the Bureau in 1866, Alvord noted that often when he arrived in rural communities across the South, newly freedpersons were already engaged in what he labeled "native teaching," but which were very obviously networks of interactive and collaborative self-culture. Alvord writes that this "native teaching" was

> "often rude and very imperfect but *there they are*, a group, perhaps, of all ages, *trying to learn*. Some young man, some woman, or old preacher, in cellar, or shed, or corner of a negro meeting-house, with the alphabet in hand, or a torn spelling-book, is their teacher. All are full of enthusiasm with the new knowledge THE BOOK is imparting to them." (9-10, emphasis in original)

Alvord makes no attempt to explain the presence of these groups, though his report very clearly indicates that white patronage often had nothing to do with their founding or operation. He does not speculate on how the alphabet found its way into the hands of a "young man, some woman, or old preacher," nor does he venture a guess as to where the "spelling-book" came from or how it came to be "torn" and tattered. Most significantly, he cannot account for the enthusiasm these teachers and learners possessed in their efforts to teach each other how to read and write. Alvord stops just short of referring to these schools and these enthusiastic efforts as miraculous. But these schools were not miracles that came to be immediately following Emancipation. Rather they were continuations of what had been happening in secret for decades prior to Emancipation. They were not new, but old efforts; not new, but old enthusiasms. There they were because there they had been. Emancipation merely marked the point at which these schools, efforts, and

enthusiasms transitioned from hidden project into visible projects of self-culture; when isolated

incidents of self-culture transformed into a collectivist and common educational tradition in the

American South.

7.0   SECOND INTERMEZZO: THE END OF SELF-CULTURE

Of course, the opposition to freed folks' newly visible postbellum projects of self-culture was just as intense as it had been to their formerly invisible antebellum projects of self-culture. And though, as James D. Anderson, Eric Foner, and Heather Andrea Williams all rightly argue, freed folks' efforts to establish a school system was foundational in the development of school-based education in the South, this development came in fits and starts. On June 4, 1886, a Supreme Court Justice of Brooklyn, New York, Augustus Van Wyck, delivered a commencement address at the North Carolina University in Chapel Hill (currently, UNC-Chapel Hill). As the June 10, 1886 edition of the *The Weekly Sentinel* quickly indicates, though Wyck was employed in Yankee territory, he was a graduate of the University, was born in South Carolina, and was married to a Virginia lady. The *Sentinel* continues, explaining that Wyck "seemed strongly opposed to National aid in Education. He believes the Blair Bill would injure the manly independence of Southern men and be only an entering wedge, whereby to introduce National supervision of State affairs" (1). The "Blair Bill" was an education bill composed, amended, and aggressively sponsored by Henry William Blair, a Republican congressman from New Hampshire. With the bill, Blair hoped to build upon the work of the Freedman's Bureau by creating a national common school system for all citizens. The bill hoped to do this by guaranteeing 10 years of federal funding to states so they could build schools, train and hire teachers, and invest in various infrastructural necessities required of any large scale system of

241

schooling. Because the distribution of these funds was based on the illiteracy rates of individual states, and because the Civil War and Reconstruction obliterated the already-measly southern school system, the vast majority of the funds went to Southern states. Not only did the South simply not have the money to invest in a large scale system of common schooling, over 75% of the 1880 Census-designated "illiterates" lived in the South.

Blair's bill never became law; it died a variety of deaths (by Committee, by inaction, by vote), both in the Senate and in the House. It was a bill that generated much ideological agreement, but even more practical opposition. Aside from Blair, the bill's strongest proponents were northern Republicans, newly freed blacks, and Southern agrarian Democrats. Their arguments in support of the creation of a common school system are familiar: a representative democracy could only survive with an educated electorate. For Blair, the lead up to and aftermath of the Civil War was evidence of this truth. In a report delivered before the 47th Congress is support of his bill, Blair argued that the Civil War was a war against the "forces of ignorance" which spurned uneducated citizens to support causes that went against their best interests. Had these citizens received a proper education, Blair argued, the United States' "second revolution" might not have been necessary.

While this argument was conceptually convincing, the practical necessities of putting this position into action generated widespread opposition from a variety of groups. Though they agreed with the position that education was necessary in order to establish a more perfect union, many Northern Republicans opposed the bill because it distributed funds unevenly between Northern and Southern states. These Republicans felt it was unfair for their constituents to pay for somebody else's (namely Southerner's, specifically Southern blacks') schooling. And because Blair's bill specified that funds should be spent equally on both black and white

students, as well as proposed the creation of federal supervisors to oversee the spending in each state, it met with opposition from Southern Democrats (like Wyck) who opposed federal intervention in states' affairs. Blair needed support from both Northern Republicans *and* Southern Democrats in order to pass the bill through the House (the bill passed through the Senate twice, though always stalled in the House). And though Blair made a variety of concessions to both groups, these concessions perpetuated the stalemate, as they tended to wither support in one group just as they generated support in the other. For example, in 1884 Senator John James Ingalls amended the appropriation by illiteracy approach of the original bill to an appropriation by school-aged children approach. While this pleased Northern Republicans whose constituents would've benefitted from the increase in funding, it angered Southern Democrats who represented much smaller per capita districts. Similarly, though proposals to eliminate the federal supervisor position appeased Southern Democrats, the lack of a federal oversight provision convinced Northern Republicans that Southern states would misspend their allocation. Ultimately, because of these objections, Blair's bill failed to establish the national system of school-based education he hoped it would. And though the Second Morrill Act of 1890 did increase federal spending for land-grant colleges and universities, it wouldn't be until the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act that federal funding would contribute significantly to common schooling and this funding was limited to vocational schooling.

Though Wyck was opposed to federally-funded school-based education, he was a strong proponent of self-culture. In his address, Wyck situates self-culture as a continuation of the school-based educational efforts with which the graduates recently finished.

> "Among his many advices to the class, he said, 'Graduation is only a milestone on the highway of development' and urged that earnest effort towards self-culture should go on after graduation with the same faithfulness as in college life." (1)

Obviously, as the previous chapters have indicated, Wyck was not alone in his advocacy of self-culture. Nor was Wyck alone in promoting self-culture in a commencement address. Indeed, throughout the *Chronicling America* archive, there is a smattering — not enough to constitute a trend, but certainly enough that I noticed them as I perused the corpus on which chapter three focuses — of announcements for high school and college commencement ceremonies that featured speeches the topic of which was "self-culture." Several of these announced speeches were to be delivered by special commencement ceremony speakers, folks who, like Wyck, were invited to speak to new graduates and offer them their best advice for moving forward. Others, however, were delivered by some of the graduates themselves, valedictorians and elected class speakers selected to address graduates in a similar capacity.

As the previous chapters attest, many folks engaged in self-culture when they either didn't have access to school-based education, or when they wanted to supplement or even challenge their school-based education; that is, self-culture was something folks did *to gain an education*. That these speeches were delivered as part of commencement ceremonies, however, suggests that self-culture, in addition to being a means of education, was also an end of education. More specifically, given the genre conventions of a commencement speech it would seem that for some folks, self-culture was also something folks did *after they gained an education*. The ability to self-culture was both the result and a goal of school-based education. Insofar as US education is concerned, this is an old idea. In his *Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine exclaims: "the learning that any person gains from school education...serves only, like a small capital, to put him in a way of beginning learning for himself afterward. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher" (Part 1, Section 11, para. 7). For Paine, and presumably for those commencement speakers speaking about self-culture, this feedback loop between self-learning

244

and self-teaching, in which the more you teach yourself, the more you learn, and the more you learn the more you can teach yourself, was thought to be the best way to produce a self-sufficient and independent citizenry. That is, a key function of schools was to teach students how to teach themselves. In terms of self-culture: to culture individuals to self-culture.

8.0 LITERACY, PEDAGOGY, AND CITIZENSHIP: FAMILY LIKENESSES AND HABITS OF MIND

"By acknowledging the stratifications of past practices, we are better able to see layered investments in present materials" (207).
—Steve Carr, Jean Carr, and Lucille Schultz, *Archives of Instruction*

"History properly so-called can be written only by those who find and accept a sense of direction in history itself. The belief that we have come from somewhere is closely linked with the belief that we are going somewhere. A society which has lost belief in its capacity to progress in the future will quickly cease to concern itself with its progress in the past" (176).
—E.H. Carr, *What is History?*

"There cannot fail to be a relationship between the successive systems of education, and the successive social states with which they have co-existed. Having a common origin in the national mind, the institutions of each epoch, whatever be their special functions, must have a family likeness" (61).
—Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Physical, and Moral*

8.1 THE END IS SELF-CULTURE

Conceiving of self-culture as an objective of school-based education is where what Herbert Spencer names the "family likeness" between self-culture in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries reveals itself: self-culture is always both a means and an end of education, something you learn how to do from others just as you do it on your own. As such, in this the concluding chapter of this study (a space sometimes reserved for a pedagogical intervention), the "target" of this intervention is not, given the nature of the pedagogy of self-culture, whom you

246

might expect. This is not another self-promoting treatise on self-culture, a tediously composed self-help pamphlet; I'm not overly concerned with the "do it on your own" aspect of self-culture, self-culture as a means of personally-driven education. Instead, I'm interested in the end of self-culture; self-culture, or more specifically the capability to self-culture, as a *result of* school-based education. I am interested, in other words, in the ways in which I can, as a teacher of students, help those students develop various "habits of mind" (as Dewey puts it) that are part and parcel to self-culture. My expectation is that if I can teach students how to develop such habits, then they can deploy them not just in my own class, but in any and all other classes they take, indeed in any experience they might deem educative. And if I'm being well and truly optimistic, as I am wont to do, then really my goal is the help students develop habits of mind that will help them self-culture, and that in self-culturing those students will be capable of forever building upon their "native propensities" (as Locke puts it). That is, it'd be great if I could teach myself out of a job.[110]

In twenty-first century lingo, I'm concerning myself with the transfer of learning, the idea that an individual can learn something in one subject or context that she can successfully apply in other related subjects or contexts, both inside and outside of schools. This is the goal I've always tilted at, first as a high school English teacher, then as a college writing teacher. Though not shared by all, it is shared by enough of school-based education's stakeholders — including those that look toward schools as a training/proving ground for citizens — that I'm quite comfortable operating with it as a sort of guiding principle. That students "get something" out of their

---

[110] I'm hyperbolizing, obviously; there will always be another generation in need of digital writing instruction that also aims at digital self-culture.

education has always been a longstanding and explicit goal that politicians, from Washington, Jefferson, and Hale to Clinton, Bush, and Rendell, envision for schools. Further, that schooling sets students up to succeed without requiring additional re-schooling or retraining later on in their lives is an equally longstanding and explicit goal of all stakeholders. After all, as Washington, Jefferson, Rush, Blair, Rendell, Clinton, et cetera all know, though educating a populace via schools is certainly a costly investment, educating a populace via schools more than once is (at least) twice as costly. Schooling, therefore, should be a wise investment; "the gift that keeps on giving." And while politicians might see this investment in purely monetary terms, I'm perfectly capable of understanding "investment" in broader, more humanistic terms: honor and sense over dollars and cents. That is, I think when conceiving of E.H. Carr's progressive future, it's possible to optimistically do so in terms of robustness, both of that future society's economy as well as its citizenry.

As I've alluded to an earlier chapter, this goal of educating students to "get something" out of their education and setting them up to succeed without reschooling or retraining is of particular importance to teachers of digital/multimodal writing. To recap: digital/multimodal writing is an integral part of communicating with folks around the world, and communicating with folks around the world is itself an integral part of being a responsible and contributing global citizen. New and different technologies develop and influence new and different forms of digital/multimodal writing, which in turn alters and expands global communication strategies which in turn influences what it means to be a responsible and contributing global citizen. As a teacher of digital/multimodal writing, if I hope to adequately prepare my students to navigate this ever-expanding, ever-shifting rhetorical landscape, I can't simply teach them how to compose discrete, isolated genres of digital/multimodal writing without running the risk that whatever it is

I'm teaching them now might soon be obsolete. Moreover, teaching students discrete, isolated genres of digital/multimodal writing may not adequately prepare students to tackle "whatever genre will emerge in the next ten minutes." Writing feels like it is in the midst of a sea change insofar as what writing is, and how teachers of writing should teach it. If this is true, and if writing is indeed a foundational component of global communication and global citizenship, this means being a writing teacher in the early twenty-first century feels like I'm teaching in the midst of a tension generated by an uncertainty about what writing is. Moreover, the stakes seem particularly high; if students don't know how to compose or don't know how to teach themselves how to compose "whatever genre that emerges in the next ten minutes," they'll fall woefully behind in their global communicative skills and, as such, their ability to be productive global citizens will be hampered.

It is likely that this feeling is all so much pearl clutching; a sort of manufactured educational FOMO (fear-of-missing-out). When the dust kicked up by digital composition technologies settles, writing will likely have changed, and writing's importance to both global communication and global citizenship will likely be different than it was; not necessarily greater, but different, and maybe not that much. Nothing about the future of writing or the teaching of writing may ever be truly as perilous as those in C&W tend to describe it. As such, in reflecting upon and drawing forth, in "acknowledging the stratifications" of nineteenth-century self-culture, I tend not to think about the disadvantages or perils of *not* paying attention to the finer pedagogical details. Instead, I tend to focus on the advantages or securities afforded of paying attention to those details; reward of doing as opposed to risk of not doing. What do our students gain when we, twenty-first century teachers of writing, layer strategies of self-culture into our pedagogical investments? As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, teachers of digital writing tend to

249

promote and deploy a hybrid pedagogy that certainly does "help students gain full and complete access to the digital technologies needed to develop multimodal/digital literacy." We teach "different types of writing in different types of ways in service of different types of interests of different kinds of stakeholders." A pedagogy of self-culture does not supplant any of these "different types of ways," but rather supplements it; it adds to the mix. Articulating the pedagogical "best practices" of how students might "teach themselves" how to compose multimodally and digitally, as well as the assumptions (epistemic, axiological, ontological) that undergird those practices *enriches* our emergent and hybrid digital writing pedagogy.

This is decidedly not a reinvention of the wheel; the "best practices" of the pedagogy of self-culture are things many of us, as teachers and scholars, already do. More specifically, the two features of self-culture on which this concluding chapter focus emerge from Channing's foundational address, what he names the "two powers of the human soul which make self-culture possible" (para. 7). These powers or faculties are: "turning the mind on itself," and "acting on, determining, and forming ourselves" (para. 7). A nuanced understanding of these "powers" and their application, coupled with a clarified understanding that the "self" in "self-culture" (or self-teaching, self-reliance, and so on) never means "individually or solitarily performed," enriches our understanding of what we mean when we tell our students to "teach themselves" as part of our digital writing hybrid pedagogy. Moreover, this enriched understanding of our "layered investments" in that hybrid pedagogy emphasizes both the learning transferability, as well as the likelihood for learning transfer of that which we do in our digital writing classes.

8.2   D.I.W.O. | COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

I think it's important to start by highlighting what, for me, is an oft-misunderstood, yet crucial feature of self-culture: it always requires working closely with other people. In looking at the various statements on self-culture in the nineteenth century, this feature is most noticeable not just in the explicit statements made by advocates such as Channing and Fowler, but also in representations of self-culture incipient in slave narratives as well as the personal journals of folks such as Ralph Waldo Emerson or Charlotte Forten Grimke, both of whom go to great lengths to list the many people and books from whom they derive support and inspiration. This, then, is one of the first practical actions one must take anytime you want to teach your students to self-culture: they have to pay attention to the folks that can help them compose digitally or multimodally. Again, not reinventing the wheel here, as working with others and, to a lesser extent, acknowledging their support is a widespread "best practice" when it comes to how we teach and learn. As the first chapter indicates, many of us already insist on collaborative efforts in our classes; we assign group projects, and we encourage students to lean on each other when attempting to figure out new digital and multimodal compositional methods. Of course, the networks of folks that can help students extend well beyond the small gathering of them that populate our classes, and encouraging students to look beyond that gathering is oftentimes challenging, just as it is challenging to identify one's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of others, and search for and work with others whose strengths supplement our weaknesses, and whose weaknesses are supplemented by our strengths.

That it can be challenging, I believe, stems from a longstanding, pervasive, and wrong assumption that subsists regarding teaching yourself, i.e. that such a thing is possible. Spoiler alert: it isn't. Contrary to the overstated wisdom emerging from the technological DIY

community, there is no such thing as pure autodidacticism, and it is impossible for you to "do it yourself."[111] These are, at best, misnomers that elide vast, hidden networks of folks that contribute to any individual's endeavors to self-culture. This elision might be accidental; a consequence of the simplification the semantics of "teach yourself" brings to bear on the concept of teaching yourself. Or, it could be the consequence of the aforementioned difficulty of acknowledgment. While it is quite easy (for most) to ask others folks for help in accomplishing some task, it requires more effort to keep track of these requests, let alone the reasons that motivated them. That this keeping track — a Deweyan "habit of mind" — requires some additional effort means that individuals might not do it unless prompted. Once prompted, though, most folks can provide a decent list of those people who helped them accomplish some goal, or people who could help them accomplish some goal, as well as describe and explain what that help will be, and why they need it.

At worst, though, notions such as "autodidacticism" and "do it yourself" are braggadocious overstatements of one's well-supported efforts to direct her own learning. That is, though folks likely *can* list and describe other people that can or did help them, they don't. They are, as Frederick Douglass said of Horace Greeley, self-made people who worship their makers. The consequence of this hyperbole is that self-culture, its advocates and its practitioners, are quickly dismissed for being solipsistic or out-of-touch because these advocates ostensibly

---

[111] For example, Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*, as well as comparable contemporary websites such as *Instructables* or *Lifehacker*. That the so-called "DIY ethic" can be promoted so thoroughly in community-based websites the purposes of which is to provide direct instruction to users on how to complete various tasks is a frustratingly obvious paradox. Ostensible DIYers are only able to "do it themselves" upon conferring with other ostensible DIYers and swapping methods and input. That is, ostensible DIYers are only able to "do it themselves" when working with others.

conceived of their endeavors as ruggedly individualistic pursuits, even though they were certainly not. Critics of self-culture, both historical and contemporary, point to figures like Greeley or Thoreau, or caricatures of figures such as Emerson and exclaim, "sure, you may talk a big game about being self-reliant, but look at how much access to other people and other material support you needed and had that supported you in your efforts at self-reliance. Such self-reliance is hardly self-reliant." While, as Douglass' criticisms in "Self-Made Men" suggest, there was a healthy amount of wrong-headed individualism-that-wasn't-really-individualism in the nineteenth-century, it's more accurate to say that this wrong-headed individualism was a contemporaneous attitude that existed alongside self-culture, and not a comparable, or even complementary attitude. That is, while there certainly folks who did (in the nineteenth century) and do (in the twenty-first) wrongly conceive of self-culture as a ruggedly individualistic pursuit, the more prominent advocates of self-culture (Channing, Emerson, Fowler, and so on) always conceived of self-culture as a communal effort.[112] And more importantly, self-culture wherever and whenever it's practiced was and is always already a communal effort. In both theory and practice, self-culture requires other folks.

One of the reasons why self-culture is frequently conflated with individualistic bootstrapism is because both attitudes have roughly the same aim: the improvement of the individual. The bootstrapism of, say, Thoreau or William Graham Sumner — whose 1883 paean to neoliberalism *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* can be quickly summarized with one

---

[112] Similarly, contemporary digital writing scholars such as Cynthia Selfe, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, Jody Shipka, Adeline Koh and so on, as well as scholars of digital pedagogy such as Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, Sean Michael Morris, Jesse Stommel, and so on, all acknowledge the embeddedness of individual action within digital, analog, and hybrid networks of other learners.

word: "nothing" — ignores the myriad networks of folks and benefits to which any individual always already has access. The inability or the refusal to acknowledge others in a theory of self-culture is not itself a failing of the pedagogy of self-culture, but rather a failing of the theorist and/or practitioner. And oftentimes, the failings of a theorists boil down to faulty or disingenuous observation, such as Thoreau's refusal to acknowledge the extensive network of folks who supported his little jaunt into the woods or Sumner's failure to disclose that he avoided fighting in the Civil War because his father paid $250 for a surrogate to fight for him so that Sumner could travel and study in Europe. Such "oversights" came about because these "rugged individualists" either simply didn't pay attention, or because they wanted to puff themselves up a bit. The former might be an honest mistake, while the latter reflects a contemptible ethical failing.

Another key reason why self-culture is frequently conflated with individiualistic bootstrapism is because self-culture happens outside of a school-based classroom, and it is supported by networks of folks that tend to be marshalled together in a fairly idiosyncratic fashion. From a school-based educator's perspective, then, when someone engages in self-culture, that individual is "schooling" herself *on her own*. That is, while schools provide for the learner myriad mostly prefabricated networks of educational professionals and materials whose occupational purpose is to help and support that learner (and other learners), it is up to the individual learner to assemble all the means that will support her efforts to self-culture. The only aspect of this manner of teaching and learning that is truly individually done is the idiosyncratic assembly of support for this manner of learning. This is why, of all the contemporary terms that have some affiliation with self-culture, the one with the closest family resemblance is "self-directed learning." Both self-culture and self-directed learning insist that the individual learner

gather together the resources necessary to engage in a learning activity, project, or pursuit. Importantly, for both self-culture and self-directed learning, those resources (be they other folks such as experts or learning "accomplices," or material support) can and often do come from the school environment itself, just not in an official capacity that is predetermined by the school.

The key distinction between self-directed learning and self-culture marks a third reason why self-culture is frequently conflated with individualistic bootstrapism. Whereas with self-directed learning, the individual learner directs his or her own learning activities in order to complete some kind of school-assigned or teacher-assigned project, with self-culture, the individual learner directs both the activity and the aim of that activity. In this way, the individual acts as his or her own teacher insofar as "teacher" here can be understood as the person who provides the prompting assignment. Of course, even when an individual engages in self-culture by acting as his or her own teacher qua prompter, that individual still works with and learns from myriad other folks, either directly or indirectly via didactic resources such as books. As with Douglass, who directed his own efforts to learn how to read and write by seeking out non-school-based direct instruction from Sophia Auld, collaborative instruction from the boys at the shipyard, and indirect instruction from *The Columbian Orator*, so too does anyone engaged in self-culture assemble together a veritable menagerie of instructional assistants. And again, the invisibility of this menagerie either emerges from an honest mistake or an unethical posturing.

This distinction between self-directed learning and self-culture is significant for contemporary educators. Properly speaking, as teachers working in schools, we can't "teach self-culture," though as Augustus Van Wyck's address suggests, we can teach how to self-culture; that is, we can teach methods of self-culture. If a digital writing teacher is to teach our students these methods of self-culture, the object of our instruction cannot simply be some predetermined

genre or digital project, but should also (or alternatively) be some method or methods of self-culture. That is, the *objective* of an assignment can't just be the completion of the task itself, it must also be (or even alternatively be) the development of transferrable methods of self-culture. For compositionists, this distinction between task and method should seem familiar; it bears a family resemblance to the distinction between product and process. Ultimately, I am advocating for a process-based pedagogy, though that process isn't the writing process, but rather the self-culture process. And yes, in advocating for a process-based pedagogy, I open the door to some of the more damning criticisms of process theory promoted by post-process theorists, namely that a process-based pedagogy of self-culture is rules-based and therefore might not have a sensitivity to individual student and writing contexts and subject positions influenced by factors such as race, class, or gender. As I'll explore in more detail below, the difference between a process-based writing pedagogy and a process-based self-culture pedagogy is that while the Writing Process invokes a Grand Theory of how writing happens regardless of individually inflected contexts, the Self-Culture Process invokes a Grand Theory of how the individual can encounter and writes within and through those individually inflected contexts. While the former presents an immutable cognitive process, the latter presents a mutable metacognitive process. Indeed, as so-called "Self-Culture Process" is merely a sort of pedagogical heuristic, the ladder that you throw away once you've ascended it. For as the individual encounters and then writes within and through individually inflected contexts, she reflects upon the distinguishing details of those contexts and amends her writing processes accordingly. And as she amends her writing processes, so too do the contexts in which she is writing shift and change, newly inflected by the presence of a writing and reflecting individual.

For example, consider two subtly different digital writing projects, the educational objectives of which include developing an ability to collaborate with other writers when completing some digital writing task. The first project (one that was commonly described in the syllabi featured in chapter one), presents a group with a digital writing task, say, "Make an Informational Website," and then requires that group to work together to figure out how, exactly, they can accomplish that task. As the group works together, they perform different behaviors, engage in different habits of mind that are important components of collaboration and cooperation; they ask questions of each other, encourage each other, provide feedback, troubleshoot problems, and so on. Importantly, the context in which this group interacts is unique to that group at that time in that class at that school. The assumption that connects these actions of collaboration with the educational objective of "students will develop the ability to collaborate" is the assumption that we learn by doing. But of course, learning by doing is another one of those tricky semantic elisions of more complicated process. To conceptually portmanteau two contemporary learning terms together, this project presents itself as a self-directed learning project, when in actuality it is (on its face) just a self-directed doing project. The gap between doing and learning, though it *might* be bridged by some or even most of the students engaged in this project, is not a requirement of this project *in and of itself*; that is, simply assigning a group a digital writing task may be a necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for reaching the stated outcome of of having students students develop an ability to collaborate with other writers when completing some digital writing task," unless, of course, you are not interested in students' ability to transfer that ability.

257

All that teaching self-culture requires, seemingly paradoxically, is the explicit bridging of doing and learning.[113] An imagined second project presents a group with the same digital writing task, "Make an Informational Website," and also requires the group works together to figure out how they can accomplish that task. Again, the context is idiosyncratic and unique. Additionally, however, the second project also requires that individuals in each group keep track of *who* they collaborate with, *how* they collaborate with them, *what* knowledge or skills those collaborators offered, and what knowledge or skills they offered to those collaborators, and so on. That is, the second project insists the collaborators track rigorously and closely all that makes the context of their collaboration idiosyncratic and unique. The second project requires individuals in a group to keep this tracking log throughout the entirety of the project; to not just look back on their collaborative actions after they've happened, but also to look forward to potential collaborative actions as they could or should happen. That is, the log is both reflective and predictive, analytical and anticipatory. How the students collaborate with their group (and others) is not merely an action they take in service of completing the digital writing task, it is an object of inquiry in and of itself. Just as they collaboratively consider new ways to develop and improve upon their digital writing task, so too do they individually consider new ways to develop and improve upon their abilities to collaborate with other writers when completing some digital writing task.

---

[113] I say "paradoxically" here because the idea of teaching self-culture seems counter to at least some of the motivating reasons why someone would want to engage in self-culture, i.e. independence, autonomy, the ability to dictate both the outcomes and approaches of one's own learning, and so on. Again, this chapter imagines "the ability to self-culture" as not only a possible, but a desirable learning outcome for school-based education.

Importantly, this manner of paying attention to the folks who help you is not merely the right thing to do axiologically, but also pedagogically; it's showing your work. Not only is the inability or refusal to acknowledge those that assist in your self-culture a mistake, it is also a surefire way to hamper the degree to which one can self-culture. Another way: not only is acknowledging those that assist you in self-culture the right thing to do, it also helps you self-culture better. This is because in systematically and rigorously tracing the various types of assistance one marshals together when engaging in self-culture, one identifies spaces or gaps both in terms of what assistance he or she might need, as well as who or what he or she might seek out for further assistance. To return to the imagined writing task: certainly, the first potential collaborators to which an individual working in a group would turn are the other people in that group. If, in rigorously tracking their efforts to collaborate, the group realizes that the writing task before them requires passing expertise regarding some facet of digital writing with which they are not familiar, then they will seek out that expertise from someone outside of the group. That is, if a group of students, upon tracking their efforts to collaborate with each other, discovers that nobody in the group knows how to write the basic HTML CSS necessary to create an informational website, then they will seek out further assistance, either from some other acquaintance, or via some web-based tutorial.

8.3   TURNING ONE'S MIND IN ON ITSELF | METACOGNITION

Of course, in order for someone to adequately track their collaborators, that individual will also need to be able to engage in another "habit of mind" crucial to self-culture: the ability to reflect. Consider again the case of Frederick Douglass. As demonstrated, his narrative is riddled

259

with acknowledgements of people who aided him in his efforts to teach himself to read and write. Some of these folks helped him willingly, while others were recruited via clever ruses, what Douglass himself dubbed instructional "stratagems." Such is the case with Douglass' deception of a group of white youths at a Maryland shipyard. The ingenuity of his ploy to trick these boys was only possible because Douglass recognized exactly what these boys could offer him by way of instruction, as well as how they might offer it to him. In this way, Douglass' ability to engage in instructional "stratagems" only existed because he had, in Channing's words, turned his mind in on itself; in contemporary terms, Douglass metacognitively monitored his learning goals and the contexts in which he might achieve them.

First, Douglass reflected on what he knew and what he wanted to know, as well as on what the boys knew and what they could teach him. Upon determining the boys could offer him some literacy instruction, Douglass then anticipated the boys' willingness to impart that instruction; this reflection is simultaneously ruminatory, as well as anticipatory. Upon determining they would be unwilling instructors, Douglass then determined how he might extract the instruction he sought. Upon reflecting on what he knew about literacy, what he wanted to learn, and how he might go about getting the white boys to help him learn it, Douglass acted on his reflective insights. Ultimately, he decided the boys would not be able to resist an opportunity to "show up" a foolish black man, and so he adopted a trickster-like role, preying upon the gullibility of the boys. He made a plan to adopt the mask of a fool himself and taunts the boys with what would seem them a clearly false claim that his knowledge of just four letters — S for Starboard, L for Larboard, F for Forward, and A for Aft — is greater than their knowledge of the

entire alphabet.[114] As the boys sought to "correct" Douglass, he made sure to hide his enthusiasm as they revealed to him more letters. That is, he monitored the success of his plan, and adjusted his implementation accordingly. When his "lessons" were over, Douglass would look back over his notes written on "the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk," evaluated his improvement, and "commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book" (*Narrative of the Life* 43-44).

The specific instantiations of these "stratagems" does not constitute the "family resemblance" on which my proposed pedagogy of self-culture focuses; certainly, the circumstances in which Douglass and others taught themselves how to read and write are not at all comparable to the circumstances in which contemporary students must teach themselves how to compose digitally/multimodally. The throughline is the shared capacity that both Douglass

---

[114] Unlike the traditional African-American trickster, Douglass deception cannot be read as amoral. Douglass selects children specifically because they are unaware of the strict laws forbidding the instruction of black slaves. He reasons that even if these children were caught, they would not be severely punished because of the very naivete that makes them suitable marks in the first place. Douglass even goes so far as to explicitly protect the identities of his young teachers for fear that "it might embarrass them; for it is an almost unpardonable offense to teach black slaves to read in this Christian country" (38). Later, when the offensiveness of teaching black slaves diminished, Douglass acknowledges Gustavus Dorgan, Joseph Bailey, Charles Farity, and William Cosdry (102) as his teachers in *Life and Times*. Douglass' deception of these children was a highly moral tricksterism; not only was it righteous deception aimed at righting the immorality of his being denied reading and writing instruction, but it was a strategic deception that ensured his unwitting instructors would not be chastised or punished as so many other teachers of black slaves were at the time. Douglass' righteous and strategic deception of children in the name of reading and writing instruction was not an uncommon "stratagem" represented in slave narratives. As John Quincy Adams states in his *Narrative of the Life*, "That is the way many poor black slaves learned to read and write" (10). Adams tells a story about one of his teachers — his brother, Robert — learning how to read and write himself. Similarly to Douglass, Robert bribed schoolchildren with food to "hear me say my lesson" (10). By bribing these children to hear and correct his lessons, Robert offered not just apples, but also supplemental instruction; the children's own abilities to read and write improved alongside Robert's. In *Narrative of the Life and Labors*, Rev. GW Offley recounts a similar story about the old man who taught him how to read and write. According to Offley, his unnamed teacher learned to read and write from his master's children, whom he would walk to and from school. Whether intentionally or not, Offley's story of his teacher invokes an etymological root of the term "pedagogue" as a slave that walks children to and from school (Salvatori 24), suggesting that Offley's instructor, as with Adams' brother Robert, did as much to teach his master's children how to read and write as he did to teach Offley himself how to read and write.

and contemporary students have to reflect upon the contexts of their learning, and then develop methods for navigating those contexts. Again, in Channing's words, the throughline is any individual's capacity to turn her mind in on itself, to reflect upon what she knows and what she'd like to know, and then devise idiosyncratic, context-dependant strategies for building upon what she knows in order to learn what she doesn't know. Or, in Emerson's words, "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages" ("Self-Reliance," para. 1). But even absent the pressure of such outside influences, learning to detect the gleam of light which flashes across one's mind from within (i.e. discovering one's own "natural abilities," let alone determining how best to develop them) still remains easier said than done. Channing elaborates on this process, taxonomizing our capacities to turn our mind in on itself into two faculties:

> "We have first the faculty...of recalling [the mind's] past, and watching its present operations; of learning its various capacities and susceptibilities, what it can do and bear, what it can enjoy and suffer; and of thus learning in general what our nature is, and what it was made for." (para. 7)

That is, individuals have the ability to reflect upon not just their past actions, but also their internal motivations for taking those actions. We have the ability to notice trends in our behavior, our inclinations and habits. That is, individuals have the ability to do what Locke and Rousseau argue it is the teacher's responsibility to do, i.e. we have the ability to examine, identify, and analyze our own native propensities.[115] Indeed, for Locke, Rousseau, Rene Descartes, David

---

[115] In this idea, Channing is indirectly citing Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Man." Frederick Douglass is less subtle about his reference, indicating in the opening of his lecture "Self-Made Men," "The saying of the poet that 'The proper study of mankind is man,' and which has been the starting point of so many lectures, essays and speeches, holds its place, like all other great utterances, because it contains a great truth and a truth alike for every age and generation of men. It is always new and can never grow old. It is neither dimmed by time nor tarnished by repetition; for man, both in respect of himself and of his species, is now, and evermore will be, the center of unsatisfied human curiosity." (para. 3)

Hume and other Enlightenment-era philosophers/psychologists, this capacity to reflect was the very thing that enabled them to do philosophy/psychology. Significantly, Channing (and all other self-culturists) regards the ability to turn one's mind in on itself as a necessary condition for self-culture to take place. By implication, therefore, self-culturists maintain that what Channing identifies as our "first faculty" is a universal propensity native in all humans.

So too, do Channing and self-culturists believe in the universality of a second faculty (or, perhaps, a Lockean "native propensity") possessed by all humans. "We have a still nobler power," Channing writes,

> "that of acting on, determining, and forming ourselves. This is a fearful as well as glorious endowment, for it is the ground of human responsibility. We have the power not only of tracing our powers, but of guiding and impelling them; not only of watching our passions, but of controlling them; not only of seeing our faculties grow, but of applying to them means and influences to aid their growth. We can stay or change the current of thought. We can concentrate the intellect on objects which we wish to comprehend. We can fix our eyes on perfection, and make almost everything speed towards it. This is, indeed, a noble prerogative of our nature." (para. 8)

That is, it is not just the case that we can reflect upon our past actions and motivations — that we can think about our own thinking — but we can evaluate and critique, and even amend our future actions and motivations based on those evaluations and critiques. That is, we can learn from our past actions and motivations, to guide, even control our future actions and motivations. Channing connects these two "faculties," declaring they have their "foundations in our nature" and they are "two powers of the human soul which make self-culture possible."

John Flavell's "Metacognition and cognitive monitoring. A new area of cognitive-development inquiry," identifies and describes two comparable faculties or "noble powers," to which Flavell ascribes the names "metacognition" and "cognitive monitoring." Flavell defines metacognitive knowledge in much the same way that Channing describes our first faculty; metacognition is "knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what

263

ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises. There are three major categories of these factors or variables—person, task, and strategy" (907). And, just as Channing connects these two faculties, Flavell also connects metacognition and cognitive monitoring, believing that both abilities aid individuals "in oral communication of information, oral persuasion, oral comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, language acquisition, attention, memory, problem solving, social cognition, and, various types of self-control and self-instruction" (906). Cognitive psychologists Gregory Schraw and Rayne Dennison expanded upon Flavell's work, conceiving of the broader "metacognition" as being divided into two capacities an individual possesses that can be further developed: knowledge about cognition and regulation of cognition. Schraw and Dennison further taxonomized these capacities. They divided "knowledge of cognition" into three sub-domains: declarative knowledge, conditional knowledge, and procedural knowledge. They divided "regulation of cognition" into five sub-domains: planning, information management strategies, comprehension monitoring, debugging strategies, and evaluation.

To better witness these capacities in action, consider again Douglass' stratagems. Insofar as his knowledge of his own cognition: his capacity to reflect on what he knew and what he wanted to know can be described as declarative knowledge. His consideration of the boys' willingness to teach him and the context in which they might teach him could be described as conditional knowledge derived from declarative knowledge. And his formulation of a plan to dupe the white boys demonstrates procedural knowledge: the application of declarative and conditional knowledge toward an actionable process. And insofar as his regulation of cognition is concerned: Douglass planned the enactment of this process (planning), and he managed his deployment of it by timing his bold claim before his enunciation of the four letters he knew

264

(information management systems). He copied down new information (comprehension monitoring) and checked what he knew against what new information the boys shared with him (evaluation) against his purloined speller (both evaluation and debugging).

Consider again the aforementioned hypothetical group assignment in which students must create an informational website. In order to successfully "see" the knowledge gaps between what they know and what they must learn, students must be able to first list and describe the skills and knowledges to which they currently have access (declarative). In order to do this, these students must, like Douglass, also reflect upon how they gained those skills and knowledges, where they came from, and who (or what) might extend them (declarative and conditional). And though students will not likely need to resort to ingenuous tricksterism to extend their existing skills and knowledges, they will need to develop some sort of plan or strategy for extension (procedural built on declarative and conditional). As it was for me, this could be as simple as thinking about friends who have a bit more expertise than they do and then asking those friends for targeted, specific assistance, or locating web-based forum or resource that provides a tutorial for completing a comparable task. Upon devising a strategy, students would need to set a goal and marshall together resources (planning), and then sequence the steps they would take to reach that goal (information management). As they proceeded with their plan, they would need to assess both what they were learning and how their plan was functioning (comprehension monitoring), and develop strategies for dealing with unforeseen snags in the implementation of their plan (debugging). Upon enacting their plan, they would analyze both their individual performance, as well as their strategies effectiveness (evaluation). Ultimately, where the new knowledges come from is less important for the purposes of self-culture than is the capacity to search for assistance in developing those new knowledges among friends or other available resources.

Within the field of composition and C&W, though the most prominent acknowledgment of this type of metacognitive monitoring appears in the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies, the clearest articulation of how somebody might *do* this sort of metacognitive monitoring appears in Paul Lynch's description of what he calls, at different times in *After Pedagogy: The Experience of Teaching*, "teaching casuistrically" or "case-based teaching."[116] Significantly, though, *After Pedagogy* doesn't focus on what students can and should do while studenting, but rather on what teachers can and should do while teachering. That said, in thinking of Lynch's notion of "teaching casuistrically" as a blueprint for a habit of mind that could suffuse the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies, we can see a contemporary articulation of self-culture that draws from the rich tradition extending from Channing up through Dewey to Flavell, Schraw and Dennison. The NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies is, in a sense, a meta-process meant to guide the individual, discrete, and distinct processes of students. As such, it mirrors the arguments Lynch makes both through and against postprocess and postpedagogical theory in *After Pedagogy*; while the NLG proposes a meta-process meant to guide students' acts of studenting, Lynch proposes a meta-process meant to guide teachers' acts of teaching. Pedagogy, Lynch argues *against* postprocess/postpedagogical theory[117], does exist, but it isn't pre-formed prior to teaching, but rather assembled *after* teaching; that is, that our theories of teaching are what Charles Taylor described as bits of "inspired adhoccery," ideas formed primarily by our reflections on what happened in our classrooms as we teach, how it

---

[116] Lynch transitions between "teaching casuistrically" and "case-based teaching" because, as he admits, the notion of casuistry has a dirty reputation amongst rhetorical scholars.

[117] Represented in Lynch's work primarily by Thomas Rickert, Byron Hawk, Cynthia Haynes, Sid Dobrin, Thomas Kent, Raul Sanchez, and Victor Vitanza.

happened, who it happened with, and so on. Lynch suggests a method — teaching casuistrically, or case-based teaching — by which instructors use reflection to inform their approach the *next time* they step into a classroom.

Through case-based teaching, Lynch argues, teachers can simultaneously maintain some "guiding principles" when they teach, but can retain the flexibility to respond to so-called "teaching moments" when they arise. Such teaching, Lynch maintains, has three virtues: it allows teachers to be flexible when they need to be, rigid when they need to be, and it keeps them receptive to the inevitable shifts and change in classroom dynamics. Or, another way: teachers can have a plan as long as they are flexible enough to allow student input and the occurrence of so-called "teachable moments" to amend that plan. Essentially, Lynch is advocating for an attitudinal approach toward teaching, rather than a strict how-to methodology. Case-based teaching regards teaching as a constantly renewing project. That is, teaching is a tremendously conditional endeavor, and teaching well an exceedingly pragmatic process, one in which what is *true* (or good or effective) is simply a name for what *works*, and what *works* is always already contingent upon the people and things that contribute to the perpetual flux of teaching. Through case-based teaching — itself a way of inquiring about our own teaching experiences — we seek to gain a foothold in this flux, some stability in the chaos. As teachers, we cannot focus on our fleeting moments of stability, but must remain constantly open to the ongoing flux of experiences that resist that stability, that unsteady our footholds. That is, teachers must both do and undergo teaching.

Here's my clearest, personal example of how this works: as I mentioned in the first footnote of my introduction, one of the earliest activities I was tasked with as a "teacher" was to keep a daily reflective journal. This is something I continue to do. Both my first mentor teacher,

John Myers, and my graduate school faculty advisor, Joan Franklin, did not offer me a clear set of instructions or questions when they asked me to keep this journal. They simply said "write about your day," and so I did. Early entries included a lot of complaints that reflected my anxieties and insecurities about being a new teacher. These entries helpful insofar as they were somewhat cathartic; the journal became a place where I could complain about cantankerous students, unreasonable expectations placed on me by John or Joan or my evening classes, even the banging, clanking radiators of the room. Eventually, though, the same "meta" lens this journal offered me for my mood turned away from what I was feeling about teaching, to what I was doing while I was teaching. This happened mostly because I realized little good was coming from bitching about everything that made me feel anxious. "Today I tried a courtroom drama activity for *12 Angry Men* in third period," I opened one entry. "Though we started out strong, the kids lost interest when my instructions got too confusing. I came up with too many juror roles and too many transitions. I don't think every student needs to be his or her own role. Groups of students can occupy the same role. Next time: less roles." This entry tilts at a "best practices" answer to a Monday Morning Question: what should I do the next time I do a drama activity. The entry reflects upon both the flux of teaching (in this case, as in many cases, the students and their attention) just as it attempts to create footholds in that flux (the assumption that there would be a "next time" for a drama activity even though it failed "this time"). In looking back on how the 3rd period lesson went (it's *undergoing*) I looked forward to a way of *doing* it better (less complicated instructions, less roles). Certainly, these suggestions for next time don't come close to account for all the possible things that could "go wrong," and indeed they even lent themselves to a sort of overcompensating problem; the next entry about a drama activity included the line "A handful of kids were all-stars, but most were goofing off because they didn't

have much to contribute" which suggests that this activity had too *few* roles, rather than too *many* (or, maybe, that I should quit it with all the drama activities). That said, the journal allowed me to reconceive of the day's lesson as a step in an ongoing and renewing project (in this case, "How do I incorporate a drama activity into my lesson plans") rather than a one-off failure.

In its conception of teaching as a constantly renewing project, Lynch's case-based teaching mirrors the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies, making the recursive cycle something through which teachers can and do work through just as their students do. To recap details from the first chapter, in *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*, the NLG articulates what they call "The 'how' of a pedagogy of Multiliteracies." Theirs is a hybrid and recursive pedagogy in which students/learners constantly circulate through four modes or ways of instruction/learning: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice. Visually, this circulation might look like this:
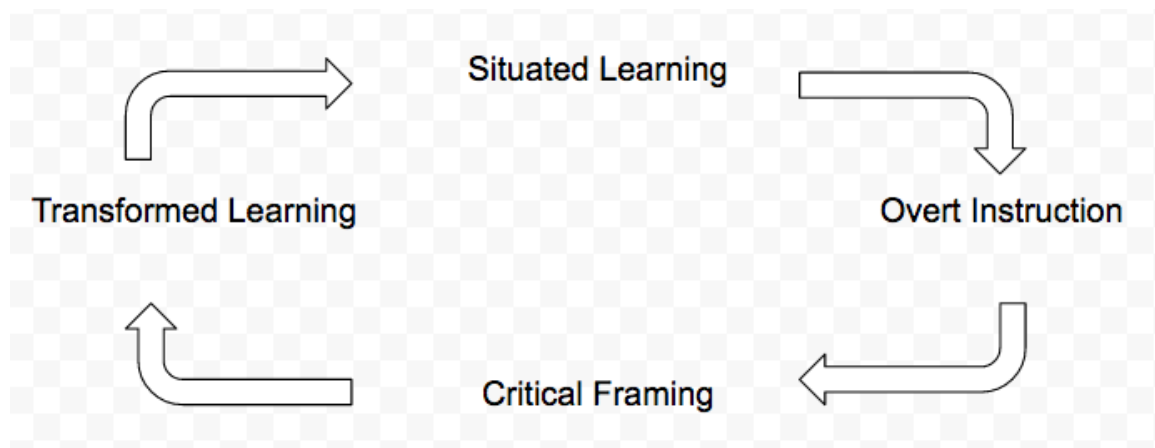
Figure 23. NLG's Recursive Pedagogy, First Loop

In practice, after the originally presented situated learning experience, every subsequent situated learning experience would, in fact, be a transformed or resituated learning experience.
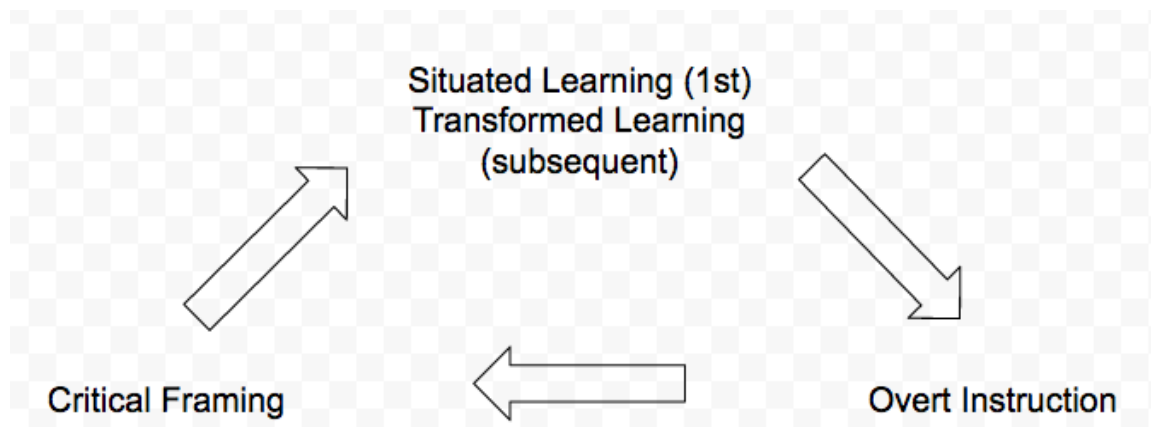
Figure 24. NLG's Recursive Pedagogy, Second & Subsequent Loops

Though they make up the NLG's recursive, circulating pedagogy of multiliteracies, each of these individual modes of learning — situated learning, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed learning — are distinct and separable. That is, they are each discrete "hows" of pedagogy, each with their own attending features, habits, processes, and so on. If we think of "teaching a digital writing class" as a Situated Practice project for a C&W instructor, then Lynch's book itself, *After Pedagogy*, represents Overt Instruction to that instructor, and his notion of case-based teaching (casuistry) is the Critical Framing through which that instructor transitions from Situated to Transformed Practice.

Yet, Lynch's focus on teachers and what teachers can and should do, frames his theory not as a pedagogy, but more as a theory of teaching. Teaching, obviously, is an integral part of pedagogy, as are teachers and what teachers do. But so are students, and studenting, and what students do. And while I think students would benefit just as much from case-based studenting as teachers would from case-based teaching, Lynch does not advocate for case-based teaching *as a general subject* or *process* (i.e. something students can and should also learn about), but rather case-based teaching *as a specific method*. Further, while he lists and describes key virtues of this

method — its morphological, and it allows for teachers to rely upon pre-determined systems while keeping them open to classroom changes — he purposely underdetermines the processes of this method because he assumes and expects any instructors reading *After Pedagogy* already know how to reflect on an amend their teaching practices. Lynch's pedagogical intervention, therefore, amounts to the descriptive claim that teaching happens best when it's done on a case-by-case basis, and if instructors want to do a good job at teaching, they ought to teach on a case-by-case basis, i.e. they should be able to plan, remain flexible as they monitor their progress, reflect on their performance, and re-plan for the next lesson. And *these* activities — planning, remaining flexible, monitoring progress, reflecting on performance, and re-planning for the next lesson — are competencies to which instructors have access, mostly because they were probably trained (like I was) on how to do them.

Lynch's proposed pedagogy — case-based teaching — represents his attempt to answer what he calls the "Monday Morning Question," the question new and experienced teachers often ask in the lead-up to a new teaching week: "What do I do on Monday morning?" Case-based teaching, following Lynch's model, responds to the Monday Morning Question by suggesting: "The specific details of what you do matter less than the approach you take toward doing it; remain flexible, always reflect, and apply what you learned Monday morning to how you teach Tuesday morning." One's teaching habits and skills are accretive. That is, you get better the more you do it, not just day to day, but moment to moment. In fact, the recursive process of cycling from performance to reflection to adaptation to theory to performance and so on often happens much faster and in much smaller units than single class sessions. A good teacher, argues Mariolina Salvatori in *Disturbing Pedagogy*, often engages in "reflective praxis" even as she teaches. In this way, Lynch's case-based teaching or Salvatori's reflective praxis mirrors the

271

NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies, though while the former applies to the methods of teaching, the latter applies to methods of studenting.[118] This is because recursive cycle between performance to reflection to adaptation to theory to performance is a theory for how learning happens, regardless of what is being learned and who is doing the learning. In the case of a digital writing student, the recursive cycle may apply to how she learns how to create a website or compose a multimodal essay. In the case of a digital writing teacher, the recursive cycle may apply to how he (how I) learns how to help students learn digital technologies or how to learn different distant reading techniques in order to compose a multimodal dissertation focused on methods of self-teaching. Ultimately, the specific details of what the digital writing student or the digital writing teacher do matters less than the approach they take toward doing it; all of us, it seems, should remain flexible, always reflect, and apply what we learn Monday morning to how we teach and learn Tuesday morning.

8.4   ACCESS PROBLEMS & DOING IT YOURSELF

To return to the digital writing syllabi considered in the first chapter: the vast majority of this set of course syllabi do not explicitly encourage student reflection. This certainly does not mean that the vast majority of C&W instructors do not explicitly encourage student reflection in their courses. At most, what it truly means is that the vast majority of *this set* of syllabi do not

---

[118] If we think of "teaching a digital writing class" as a Situated Practice project for a C&W instructor, then Lynch's book itself, *After Pedagogy*, represents Overt Instruction to that instructor, and his notion of casuistry is the Critical Framing through which that instructor transitions from Situated to Transformed Practice.

represent explicitly required reflection as a significant component of how the course will "teach" students digital writing. And from this, I do not mean to reach a conclusion about how *all* C&W instructors teach digital writing (exception fallacy), nor do I wish to castigate any individual C&W instructor based on how this set of C&W syllabi represent the teaching of digital literacy (ecological fallacy). That said, though this set of syllabi may not provide an accurate *sampling* of how digital literacy is taught, it still provides a problematic *representation* of digital literacy *at large*, even if that representation is not accurate of how the teaching of digital writing *actually happens* at large, or how the teaching of digital writing happens in any individual's classroom that is not represented by a syllabus in the set. This is because this set of syllabi are, by virtue of their instructors' generosity in sharing and promoting them beyond a firewall, some of the most visible digital literacy syllabi available to anyone who cares to find them. Though simplistic, my search methods mirror how many folks who might decide to casually look for a digital literacy syllabus would find it; that is, they'd use a handful of related terms to do a casual search using a popular search engine such as Google. And depending on how specific those terms they used to find a syllabus, chances are quite likely that the syllabus they'd find would be member of this set. As such, if a person was looking for a syllabus for a course focusing on digital literacy for whatever reason — perhaps a student trying to figure out whether to take a digital writing class, or an inexperienced instructor looking for how other instructors would teach a digital writing class, or even an experienced instructor looking to compare her methods with the methods of others — the syllabus they'd likely find would, at the present moment, probably be a member of this set.

Moreover, even if the relative dearth of reflection (and therefore, the complete recursive cycle of the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies), is *only* a matter of syllabi authors choosing not

to explicitly represent reflection as a significant component of their pedagogy — that is, even if instructors do require student reflection, but don't list such a requirement on their sylalbi — it still begs the question: why not? Why isn't the type of reflection that is part and parcel to self-culture — turning your mind in on itself and then acting on, determining, and forming yourself as a writer — as explicitly listed as an instructional method as critical analysis? Or experimentation? Or collaboration? Or direct instruction? Why is reflection — specifically, reflection as a way of looking back on past processes in order to improve upon future processes — a component of a sort of hidden curriculum? That is, why do these syllabi tend to represent DIY, Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, and Critical Framing pedagogies far more frequently than they do pedagogies that facilitated Transformed Practice, or variations of the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies? And for those syllabi that do explicitly reference reflection as an instructional method in their class, why is that reflection presented as a standalone component of a one-off assignment, rather than a mechanism through the use of which students are able to return to earlier work and refashion it? That is, why is reflection rarely represented as leading from Situated to Transformed Practice?

I am confident it's the case that many instructors who teach courses focusing on digital literacy imagine their students capable of engaging in Transformed Practice even if that Transformed Practice is not a part of their course. That is, I think it's safe to say most teachers of digital literacy expect their classes to make their students more digitally literate, and the evidence of such a development, perhaps, can be seen in how students comport themselves *after* the course is over. It may simply be the case that, when faced with a 15 or 16 week semester, there is only so much an individual instructor can hope to accomplish in terms of help students develop digital literacy, and helping students develop digital literacy and then seeing the immediate

274

evidence of the development of digital literacy is, I guess, too much to do. The focus of the course, the objectives, the practices, the projects, the critical analysis, these are the emphasized elements of the instruction, and because there is so much good content with which the fill these curricular buckets, the pressure mounts to use every moment of instruction time for the pouring out of these buckets. There may be simply no time for repeating activities in which students have already engaged because there is always more and different activities worth doing. Moreover, the thinking may continue, students can be rightfully be expected to repeat activities in which they have already engaged *after* the class is over. That is, Transformed Practice can and should happen once the class is over. Some of the learning process is on the students; instructors can't control everything.

I'm curious, though, why instructors who would spend so much time and effort representing their goals in helping students bridge the access gap through Situated Practice exercises, Overt Instruction, and Critical Framing techniques as they all relate to digital literacies, but would not spend an equal amount of time and effort representing their goals to help students bridge the gap between Situated and Transformed Practice. That is, why was it so hard for me to find a digital writing syllabus featuring a detailed description and explanation of a reflective and/or metacognitive assignment? These metacognitive techniques would be, after all, the way students would transition from Situated to Transformed Practice once a class was over. That is, if instructors assume students can and expect students to transfer the skills they learn in a digital writing class to all future digital writing situations, are they not also assuming students have the requisite transfer of learning skills to do that successfully? And what convinces digital writing instructors they can make such an assumption?

One possible explanation for why digital writing instructors assume students will be able to transfer skills and knowledges to future problems or challenges is that the instructors themselves were able to make such a transfer. That is, there may be a bit of expert blindness on the part of digital writing instructors not as it pertains to the explicit subject-at-hand, i.e. digital writing, but as it pertains to the transfer of learning skills. To a teacher of digital writing (or even a teacher of writing), these actions *should* (and likely do) seem obvious. We imagine that if we were working in a group and that group was assigned some task that required technical expertise that nobody in the group possessed, that we would probably reach out to someone (a friend or colleague) who did have that expertise. This has certainly been the case for me as I write this dissertation, specifically insofar as it pertains to my use of so-called "distant reading" methods in chapters one, three, and four. My understanding of these methods[119] was primarily developed outside of a classroom. I read both procedural and conceptual analyses of these strategies, as well as web-based and physical tutorials. I performed web searches, oftentimes reading over other folks' descriptions of their frustrated experiences trying to do something comparable to that which I was trying to do. I reached out to friends and colleagues who had a greater degree of expertise, as well as to online communities of professional and casual experts such as Stack Overflow and Reddit's r/programming. In some cases, the folks I reached out to were immensely helpful, notably, a former college friend Eric Pennington, now a Research Software Engineer at MIT's Laboratory for Social Machines, and Matt Lavin, the Director of the Digital Media Lab at Pitt. With other experts, such as Rick Costa at the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center, though I

---

[119] More appropriately named sampling (chapter one), metadata and corpus linguistic analysis (chapter three), and network analysis (chapter four).

benefitted from my conversations on a personal level, the offered support didn't end up influencing my dissertation research in any substantive way.

This is a longstanding practice among scholars within C&W. As Hawisher et al. write of the early practitioners in the field of C&W, *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History*,

> "the earliest experimenters with computers and writing became involved in programming while designing and developing educational software. Many of these pioneers were self-taught programmers, whereas others acted as designers and content experts and worked with hired programmers." (42)

And one of the key ways that these instructors taught themselves — how they became "self-taught programmers" — was to refer to those handbooks, guides and tutorials that either directly accompanied certain programs, or were produced about certain programs (sometimes by the writing instructor herself). Indeed, in an early handbook for teachers entitled *Computer-Assisted Instruction in Composition: Create Your Own*, Selfe dedicates an entire chapter to "Working with a Design Team." These design teams, assembled and lead by the composition specialist, include a variety of other potential specialists whose skills and experiences complement the others, such as programmers, linguists, cognitive psychologists, and so on. In her description of the process of finding, recruiting, and working with specialists from other disciplines, Selfe acknowledges that her advice emerges from her own experiences finding, recruiting, and working with specialists from other disciplines. That is, her book is both a procedural manual, as well as a reflection upon *Computer-Assisted Instruction in Composition*.

In their more recent, student-focused textbook *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects*, Kristin Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, and Cheryl Ball include similar advice in a chapter entitled "Assembling Your Technologies and Your Team." While Selfe's book targeted writing teachers, Arola et al's targets writing students. As such, while Selfe explicitly states that

277

composition specialists will have to look outside of their discipline for other experts, the advice offered to students in *Writer/Designer* seems to assume that the "team" with which students might work will be assembled out of small group of peers in the same classroom.

Writer/Designer also includes a brief statement on "Going it Alone" when working on a digital/multimodal composition project. The statement offers a number of useful "best practices" for the student composer to keep in mind as they work independently and individually on a digital/multimodal project. The statement opens by acknowledging that not every successful digital/multimodal project was composed by a team or group of collaborators, and that a solitary student composer "can create a strong multimodal project on your own." While the first and second pieces of advice focus on prompting the student composer to remain diligent when planning and managing the project, the final piece of advice calls into question the degree to which anyone can ever truly "go it alone." "Since you'll be solely responsible for the composing," the statement reads,

> "seek out support for any technologies with which you're unfamiliar. We want to encourage you to try new genres, but if you run into trouble or have questions, consult with local resources, online tutorials, or friends. Just because you're working alone doesn't mean you can't get feedback or assistance from others." (82)

Such an approach makes further assumptions not about students' technological expertise, per se, but rather about their expertise as learners and "self-teachers." As James Kinneavy reportedly said to a group of visitors to his class in 1994, "if someone as old as me can learn computers, anyone can" (215).

Yet, to pick on the late Kinneavy as a representative of this "anyone can do it" attitude for just a moment: it was perhaps his age and experience *as a learner* that enabled him to so effectively "learn computers," and so the position that "anyone can" learn computers wouldn't be fair to folks who hadn't also written multiple books, taught in and chaired multiple and different

278

departments, and helped establish a booming sub-discipline. That is, maybe for Kinneavy — like most other *teachers* of digital writing — tracking who you collaborate with and how you collaborate with them seems obvious. Reflecting on our work, turning our minds in on themselves, and allowing our metacognitive analysis to determine our future actions is old hat. We are good at that. But assuming that those skills, when functioning at the levels they do in *teachers*, are native propensities is to mistake mere capacity with developed capacity. Yes, anyone can learn computers, but at the apex of his professional career as a teacher and learner, James Kinneavy was much better at it than most people, just as we are better at it than our students, not because we are better than our students, but because we are (at the tail end of at least twenty-one years of schooling) better trained than our students.

Another way: as it pertains to teaching yourself how to use digital technologies, we all likely suffer from a strong case of "expert blindness." Indeed, as it pertains to teaching yourself just about anything. Kinneavy was an expert teacher, both of others and presumably of himself; that is, in addition to being a pretty good teacher, he was also probably pretty good learner. For Kinneavy — indeed, for any teacher — to think his students should've been able to, *sans instruction*, learn like an teacher belittles the self-teaching/learning expertise of teachers as thoroughly as it makes unfair assumptions about the self-teaching/learning expertise of students. Like Kinneavy no doubt did, all instructors receive explicit encouragement (or overt training) in how to think about their teaching. This can come in the form of required seminars and evaluation programs for graduate students and new faculty, or through workshops or professional development seminars at your home institution. Frequently, this encouragement comes through pedagogical scholarship which, even if it isn't accepted and adopted wholesale, is *at minimum* a prompt for instructors to consider or reconsider what they've done and what they will do in a

279

classroom.[120] That is, instructors have received explicit training or encouragement to think about themselves and what they have done in a classroom, what they are doing in a classroom as they are doing it, and what they will do in a classroom the next time the set foot into one.

Kinneavy's confidence in the capacity of "anyone" to "learn computers" echoes the foundational assumption of Ranciére's emancipatory pedagogy. As he insists, his "was not a method for instructing the people; it was a benefit to be announced to the poor: they could do everything any man could. It sufficed only to *announce* it" (18). For Ranciére, this announcement operated as a sort of axiom for his emancipatory pedagogy: it was not necessarily a verifiably true statement about the world, but rather a sort of Noble Lie in reverse, a supposition about the way the world *might be* that promoted or prompted a certain attitude or approach in those that believed it to be the case. "Our problem isn't proving that all intelligence is equal," Ranciére states. "It's seeing what can be done under that supposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible — that is, that no opposing truth be proved" (46). Like Kinneavy (as well as those syllabi that seem to agree with his axiom regarding individual's capacity to "learn computers"), Ranciére leaves his supposition unexplored insofar as *how* someone does it. He refers to his notion of emancipatory pedagogy as "not a method," preferring to describe it through mostly optimistic, somewhat vacuous statements about an individual's capacity to "know oneself to be a voyager of the mind" (33) or one's "becoming conscious of his nature as an intellectual subject" (35). All well and good, and certainly provocative, but also

---

[120] For example, Alexander and Rhodes write, "Ultimately, our book is a hopeful one, even as it critiques our field. Our hope is that with greater and more substantive attention to the media we teach, we cannot only enrich and enliven the field but also transform our curricula in ways that engage student learning and student writing all the more powerfully. *We hope you will read it in that spirit.*" (27)

mostly unhelpful come Monday morning. What do I do with my students? Simply announce they are free and capable to learn on their own; the great Pedagogical Emancipation Proclamation.

Oddly, though Ranciére argues his notion of an Emancipatory pedagogy is "not a method," he details a great many methods that "voyagers of the mind" do on their way to "becoming conscious of their natures as intellectual subjects." The methods of a "voyager of the mind" will be seen to have startling "family resemblance" to those of self-culture. First off, every student starts off having learned a Mother Tongue, and they way they are able to "teach themselves" is "the same they had used to learn their mother tongue: by observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done" (11). Such students were "propelled by one's own desire or by the constraint of the situation" (12) to "take the measure of his capacity" (16) by "say[ing] *what he sees, what he thinks about it, what he makes of it*" (20) (emphasis in original). They also "learn something and relate everything else to it" (20) and they

> "reflect on [their] abilities and on the manner in which [they] acquired them….In all cases, it is a question of observing, comparing, and combining, of making and noticing how one has done it. What is possible is reflection: that return to oneself that is not pure contemplation but rather an unconditional attention to one's intellectual acts, to the route they follow and to the possibility of always moving forward by bringing to bear the same intelligence on the conquest of new territories." (36-37)

Properly speaking, perhaps these methods aren't methods as such, but rather meta-methods. That is, the things Ranciére describes emancipated learners doing — probably some of the same things Kinneavy did when he was teaching himself computers late in his career — don't focus *explicitly* on the subject or process or product that those learners are attempting to teach themselves or learn on their own. Instead, they focus on the *processes* the learner is enacting in order to teach themselves or learn something on their own; they aren't methods for an individual to learn or teaches herself computers *as such*, but rather they are methods for an individual to

281

learn *how* she learns or teaches herself computers *as such*. They are, in a sense, another layer of access to be added to Banks' taxonomy. Or, perhaps more accurately, they are the meta-methods folks might employ so that they can develop full and complete access as represented in Banks' taxonomy. That is, in order for students to gain "first-level" material, functional, experiential, and critical access to digital technologies themselves, they must first rely upon and deploy "second-level" metacognitive access to the learning methods and processes they will use as they attempt to develop first-level access to digital technologies.

We might, therefore, add another type of access to Adam Banks' taxonomy; in addition to material, functional, experiential, and critical access, students must first develop second-level metacognitive access to their individualized learning methods and processes if they hope to become full and equitable global citizens. Think back to my first class. The influx of technology created material access. As Banks argues, material access is never enough. But how does one transition from material to functional and experiential access? And where does critical access come from? Over time my students and I slowly developed some functional access; we did this by trying things out, by failing, by stumbling and falling. The next step, though? We always also examined these failures, we looked at what we wanted to accomplish and how we went about trying to accomplish it. Sadly, though, I don't think many of my students ever applied this type of metacognitive thinking and cognitive monitoring — this looking back to look forward — when it came to making these digital technologies a relevant part of their daily lives. That is, I certainly didn't prompt students to develop experiential access, and I did not witness or discuss with students their own efforts to do so. It was much the same insofar as critical access; mostly, my students and I remained too enamored with playing these technologies to understand their benefits and problems enough to critique them, and we never once questioned whether we should

resist or even avoid them altogether. In short, we failed to develop first-level access to our digital technologies (as Banks understands it) because we didn't spend enough time developing second-level metacognitive access to the individualized learning methods and habits we were using to encounter and use those digital technologies.

And while many in C&W do just this — they think about issues of access and metacognition — they most often do it *on behalf* of other people: their students, different social groups, and so on. The key difference between what these scholars are doing and the processes of what might be called digital self-culture, is that for someone engaged in digital self-culture, the first-level access to technology one hopes to develop and explore is not someone else's, it is one's own. As such, it's important to understand first-level access to digital technologies as a problem that must be addressed, in part, via digital self-culture, primarily because those who may have been digitally literate yesterday may not be today, let alone tomorrow, and the only way to remain (or become) digitally literate tomorrow is by being able to think about and regulate one's digital literacy practices today. That is, in order to be digitally literate one must engage in renewing and perpetual digital self-culture.

The tricky thing about digital self-culture is you can't learn how to do it by simply being expected, or even prompted to do it. That is, you can't simply learn how to learn or teach yourself things by being expected or prompted to learn or teach yourself to do these things. Or, framing in terms of reading and writing, it's the equivalent to expecting someone to become literate simply by handing them a book. *You want to learn how to read? So read. You want to learn how to think about your own digital literacy practices? So think about your own digital literacy practices.* And while it might be alright to expect a student who engages in digital self-culture to gain further digital literacies on her own, it doesn't work in reverse: you can't expect a

student with only some digital literacies and to fully engage in digital self-culture on her own. As such, it may also be unfair (or unwise) to expect a student with some digital literacies to develop *more* digital literacies if that student does not *already* engage in digital self-culture. This is because it doesn't seem likely that one automatically develops and expands upon the methods of self-culture simply by being told how to use an already-invented digital technology to engage in an already-imagined kind of digital writing. Apples and oranges. As Selfe argues in "The Movement of Breath,"

> "Young people need to know that their role as rhetorical agents is open, not artificially foreclosed by the limits of their teachers' imaginations. They need a full quiver of semiotic modes from which to select, role models who can teach them to think critically about a range of communication tools, and multiple ways of reaching their audience. *They do not need teachers who insist on one tool or one way*." (645) (emphasis added)

Indeed, teaching a student with a limited set of digital tools — either through direct instruction or through teacher-designed projects — seems to foreclose the possibility of that student developing the ability to engage in digital self-culture, at least in some cases. A student may falsely surmise the new digital tool or process a teacher is teaching them represents the *best* or *only* way to engage in a discrete kind of multimodal, digital writing (itself also believed to be the *best* or *only* kind of multimodal, digital writing out there). Even if the student didn't believe that whatever tool or method she learned from her teacher was *the best way* or the *only way*, if she wanted to apply what she gained from the experience of learning a specific tool or method to other experiences outside of the class, she'd have to know how to do that. That is, she'd need to know how to transfer what she understood by engaging in already-imagined digital writing with already-invented digital technologies into future, as-of-yet-imagined writing situations. That is, she'd have to already know how to self-culture. Tricky stuff, indeed.

This isn't to say that students wouldn't have learned *something else* along the way as they learned how to engage in an already-imagined digital writing assignment, something about how to learn a new bit of technology or about how to determine what, exactly, a new bit of technology might be used for and when. It's just to say that focusing too much time or attention on learning how to use a discrete piece of technology in and of itself would be, in the grand scheme of things, wasted time and effort. Indeed, the *something else* — the added knowledge about learning new things and figuring out what they could be used for, this ability to self-culture — seems to be the where the money is in terms why it would've been beneficial to, back in my first classroom in 2006, learn how to use a SMARTboard. "How did we learn how to use this SMARTboard," my self-culturing ex-students might've asked. "Well, Hamilton taught us some of the functions, and we played around a little bit, and we referred to the handbook. So maybe, if we wanna learn some new thing in our future classroom, Hamilton or some other teacher could teach us some stuff, and we can play around a little bit, maybe refer to a handbook." And yet, focusing all that time and energy on learning how to use a SMARTboard — on the lessons I delivered, the playing everyone did, the handbooks we referred to, i.e. on learning how to use a specific piece of digital technology to to a specific type of multimodal digital writing — obfuscates self-culture; it's hard to pay attention to how it is that you're learning a new thing when you're learning that new thing, and it's hard to imagine possible uses for all the new things you're learning when you're being told what to use those new things for and when. And it's even harder when figuring out how to self-culture is not your out-and-out stated objective; when your stated objective is, instead, learn how to use a SMARTboard.

Now, it seems plain that there are levels or stages of development as it relates the ability to self-culture, just as there are levels or stages of development as it relates to digital literacy;

that an individual can more effectively self-culture now than they could five years ago, ten years ago, and so on. And it also seems plain that as one develops her methods of digital self-culture, one is likely to also become more digitally literate, though the inverse may not be true.[121] The biggest difference between me now and me 10 years ago isn't just that I now know how to use more digital technologies to do more kinds of digital writing, though (by shadows of degrees) I do. The biggest and most significant difference between me now and me 10 years ago is that I now know that if tasked to do so (and even if left to my own devices) I can probably figure out how to use new digital technologies to do new kinds of digital writing. Moreover, I'm not confronted by the fact that I have nothing close to a full quiver of semiotic modes from which to select as I engage in multimodal, digital, global communication, because though I haven't acquired many new arrows to put into that quiver, I have learned how to fletch. I have, in other words, developed some digital literacy, but more importantly for my prospective role as a global citizen, I've also developed methods to self-culture. And I did develop these methods as a student, but not from my classes that focused explicitly on literacy and digital literacy. Instead, I learned it in teacher school, in classes that focused explicitly on what teachers can and should do *as they prepare to teach* students. These classes insisted we do such wild things as compose a plan for our lessons, keep a journal, reflect on how our lessons were going, analyze how the lessons could or should be improved upon, re-plan our lessons based on our reflections, anticipate how the new lessons would be received, reflect again, and so on. If "teaching" was the

---

[121] I can imagine, for example, an individual having been taught a wide variety of different digital tools and platforms, but then being incapable of learning or teaching herself new tools or platforms as they are developed. I can also imagine — anticipate, even — the time when the newness of renewing technologies and compositional possibilities becomes too much for me, and I'll have to resign myself to the fact that what I've learned is all I can stand, and I can't stands no more. I'm not there yet.

literacy activity, this journaling and planning, reflecting and anticipating was the self-culturing activity; it was us thinking about our teaching, what we were doing, the choices we were making, our reasons for making them, and so on.

8.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

I see no problem in conceiving of teaching of digital literacy as a project aimed at developing our students into citizens of a global community. Nor do I see any problem with conceiving of that community's multimodal, digital communication strategies as always changing and developing. I don't even see a problem in holding both of these conceptions in your head at the same time, though it does mean that, as teachers, we are attempting to teach our always-developing students always-shifting strategies for using perpetually-renewing technologies so those students can compose indeterminable digital and multimodal texts as they develop ever-multiplying-and-expanding literacies which allows them to be always-changing and indeterminable citizens that contribute in as-of-yet-undetermined ways to global communities that changes as and because they contribute to it. If the teaching of digital literacy contributes to a twenty-first century global citizenship project because twenty-first century global citizenship requires an ability to communicate with other twenty-first century global citizens in a wide variety of digital/multimodal rhetorical situations, then a compositionist engaged in such teaching must attend with equal vim and vigor to both the compositional requirements of those situations, as well as to individual students' personal strategies for learning how to enter into and contribute to those situations. That is, we must attend — and more

importantly, we have to help our students attend — to both the *culture* around digital writing, as well as their *selves* as individual digital writers. Or simply: we have to engage in digital self-culture, and we have to help our students do the same.

Of course, we can't do this by expecting our students to do it on their own. Digital self-culture doesn't just happen; it is a learnable practice. It requires working with others and keeping close track of that work. Such close attention requires an ability to "think about one's thinking" or "turn one's mind in on itself." This ability to engage in metacognitive thinking and cognitive monitoring is the mechanism by which students can move past mere material, or even functional access to digital technologies to begin and continue developing experiential, and critical access to those technologies. Such full and complete access cannot happen via the teaching of some discrete piece of technology or multimodal, digital genre. Students have to know not just how to use different technologies, or how other people use different technologies to compose digital texts, they also need to know how they learned how to use different technologies and how other people learned how to use different technologies to compose digital texts. In other words, they need methods of self-culture.

None of us will ever "catch up" with digital technologies or the kinds of writing those technologies afford. What we can do, however, indeed what we must do, should we want to prime our students for success, is prepare not for what is here, but for what is coming. Our methods should be designed to handle the unknown rather than the known. We should continue to be cowed by the new and renewing digital technologies; we should continue to investigate possibilities and affordances, challenges and perils. We must remember, though, that our students should too, and if they want to confront the new and renewing with the same aplomb that we do, they'll need the methods to do so.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"About Chronicling America." *News about Chronicling America RSS*, Library of Congress: Chronicling America, 21 Apr. 2017, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/about/. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

Adams, John Quincy. *Narrative of the Life of John Quincy Adams, When in Slavery, and Now as a Freeman. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Alexander, Jonathan, and Jacqueline Rhodes. *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*. Urbana, Conference on College Composition and Communication/National Council of Teachers of English NCTE, 2014.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses(Notes towards an Investigation)." *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses by Louis Althusser 1969-70*, Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Alvord, John W. *US Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands: Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen.* New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980.

Ananny, Mike, and Matt Ratto. *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2014.

Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Andrews, William L., ed. "North American Slave Narratives." *Documenting the American South*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2004.

Ardis, Ann L. *Transatlantic Print Culture: 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Arola, Kristin L., et al. *Writer/Designer: a Guide to Making Multimodal Projects*. Boston, Bedford/St. Martins, 2014.

Ball, Cheryl. "English 239: Multimodal Composition." Illinois State University, Normal, Il, 2010.

Banks, Adam Joel. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. Urbana, Ill,
      National Council of Teachers of English, 2006.

Berlin, James. *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*. Carbondale:
Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.

---. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale and
Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

Berry, David M., ed. *Understanding Digital Humanities.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Blassingame, John Wesley. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*.
      Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972.

Blight, David. "The Slave Narratives: A Genre and a Source." *History Now: The Journal of the
      Gilder Lehrman Institute*. n.d. n.p.

Bogost, Ian. *Alien Phenomenology, or, What It's like to Be a Thing*. Minneapolis, University of
      Minnesota Press, 2012.

Bond, Horace Mann. *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*. New York:
      Octagon Books, 1966.

Brereton, John C., ed. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925*.
      Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

Bruford, Walter Horace. *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to
      Thomas Mann*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Bruce, Henry Clay. *The New Man. Twenty-Nine Years a Slave. Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man.
      Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North
      Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Calhoun, Daniel. *The Intelligence of a People*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Carr, E. H. (Edward Hallett). *What Is History?* Vintage, New York, 1961.

Carr, Jean Ferguson., et al. *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and
      Composition Books in the United States*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press,
      2005.

Channing, William Ellery. "Self-Culture, An Address Introductory to the Franklin Lectures."
      American Unitarian Conference, American Unitarian Conference, 2003,
      www.americanunitarian.org/selfculture.htm. Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

Clarke, John Freeman. *Self-Culture: Physical, Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual*. Boston, James
      R. Osgood & Company, 1880.

Claxton, Timothy. *Memoir of a Mechanic. Being a Sketch of the Life of Timothy Claxton, Written By Himself. Together with Miscellaneous Papers*. Boston: George W. Light, 1839.

Clinton, William J. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union - January 27, 2000." *The American Presidency Project*, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=58708. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Clinton-Gore Administration. "Digital Opportunity." *From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity*, The White House, 2 Feb. 2000, clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/digitaldivide/digital1.html. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

---. "The Importance of Bridging the Digital Divide." *From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity*, The White House, 2 Feb. 2000, clinton5.nara.gov/WH/New/digitaldivide/digital3.html. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Cohen, Daniel J. and Roy Rosenzweig. *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Collins, James L, and Cynthia L Selfe. "Computerized Text Analysis an the Teaching of Writing." *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*, edited by Gail E Hawisher, Teacher College Press, New York, 1989, pp. 30–43.

Commission on Composition. *Teaching Composition: A Position Statement*. National Council of Teachers of English, www.ncte.org/positions/statements/teachingcomposition. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Connors, Sean. "CIED 599V: Teaching Multimodal Composition." University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 2011.

Cordell, Ryan. "'Q i-Jtb the Raven': Taking Dirty OCR Seriously." *Ryan Cordell*, Wordpress, 29 July 2016, ryancordell.org/research/qijtb-the-raven/. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.

---. *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

Craik, George L., ed. *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties*. Vols I-III. London: Bell and Daldy, 1865.

Cremin, Lawrence A. *American Education, the National Experience, 1783-1876*. New York, Harper and Row, 1988.

Cushman, Ellen, Eugene R. Kintgen, Barry M. Kroll, and Mike Rose. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.

Daiute, Colette. *Writing and Computers*. Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1985.

"The Dalles Times Mountaineer." *The Dalles Times Mountaineer*, 17 May 1898.

Darwin, Charles. *Origin of Species*. New York, American Home Library Company, 1902.

Davidson, Cathy and David Goldberg. *The Future of Thinking: Learning Institutions in a Digital Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.

Descartes, Rene. "Meditations on First Philosophy by Rene Descartes." *Meditations on First Philosophy by Rene Descartes*, Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/descartes/1639/meditations.htm. Accessed 30 Apr. 2017.

Dewey, John. "Democracy and Education." *Democracy and Education, by John Dewey*, Project Gutenburg, 1 Aug. 2015, www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

---. *Ethical Principles Underlying Education*. Chicago, Il, University of Chicago Press, 1903. *Internet Archive*, Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

---. "Moral Principles in Education." *Moral Principles in Education, by John Dewey*, Project Gutenburg, 25 Apr. 2008, www.gutenberg.org/files/25172/25172-h/25172-h.htm. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

---. *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*. Ann Arbor, MI, Register Publishing Company, the Inland Press, 1891.

---. *The Public and Its Problems*. Athens, Swallow Press, 1991.

Dominguez, Patricia Buck, ed. "First Person Narratives of the American South." *Documenting the American South*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2004.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

---. *My Bondage and My Freedom. Part I. Life as a Slave. Part II. Life as a Freeman. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

---. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

---. "Self-Made Men." *Self-Made Men, by Frederick Douglass*, Monadnock Valley Press, monadnock.net/douglass/self-made-men.html.

Douglass, Steve. "New Media Production." Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest, Il, 2014.

Earhart, Amy E. and Andrew Jewell (Eds.). *The American Literature Scholar in the Digital Age*.

University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Edward, Gibbon. "Memoirs of My Life and Writing." *Memoirs of My Life and Writing, by Edward Gibbon*, Project Gutenberg, 15 Aug. 2012, www.gutenberg.org/files/6031/6031-h/6031-h.htm. Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

Emerson, George Barrell. *Moral Education. A Lecture Delivered at New Bedford ... before the American Institute of Instruction, Etc*. Boston, American Institute of Instruction, 1842.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." *Emerson Central*, Jone Johnson Lewis, 3 Sept. 2009, www.emersoncentral.com/amscholar.htm. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

---. "Self-Reliance." *Self-Reliance*, Emerson Central, 3 Sept. 2003, www.emersoncentral.com/selfreliance.htm. Accessed 30 Apr. 2017.

"ENC 1101: Digital Edition." University of South Florida, Tampa, Fl, 2013.

"The Evening Argus." *The Evening Argus*, 1 Sept. 1866.

Fishman, Stephen M. "Explicating Our Tacit Tradition: John Dewey and Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 44, no. 3, Oct. 1993, pp. 315–330.

Flavell, John H. "Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring: A New Area of Cognitive-Developmental Inquiry." *American Psychologist*, vol. 34, no. 10, 1979, pp. 906–911., doi:10.1037/0003-066x.34.10.906.

Flipper, Henry Ossian. *The Colored Cadet at West Point. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York, Perennial Classics, 1988.

Forten, Charlotte L., and Brenda Stevenson. *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Fowler, O. S. *Self-Culture, and Perfection of Character, Including the Management of Youth*. New York, Fowler & Wells, 1845.

Fowler, Orson Squire, and Lorenzo N. Fowler. *The Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology & Physiology, with One-Hundred Engravings and a Chart of the Character*. New York, Fowlers and Wells, 1855.

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Ben Franklin*. Edited by Frank Woodworth Pine, LaVergne, TN, Greenbook Publications, 2010.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, Bloomsbury, 2015.

Gerrard, Lisa, and Cynthia L. Selfe. "Computers and Basic Writers." *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*, edited by Gail E. Hawisher, Teachers College Press, New York, 1989, pp. 94–108.

Gibbon, Edward. "Memoirs of My Life and Writing." *Memoirs of My Life and Writing, by Edward Gibbon*, Project Gutenburg, 15 Aug. 2012, www.gutenberg.org/files/6031/6031-h/6031-h.htm. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

Gibbs, Fred and Dan Cohen. "A Conversation with Data: Prospecting Victorian Words and Ideas." *Victorian Studies.* 54.1. (Autumn 2011): 69-77.

Gibbs, Fred and Trevor Owen. "Building Better Digital Humanities Tools: Toward Broader Audiences and User-Centered Designs." *Digital Humanities Quarterly*. 6.2 (2012).

Glenn, Cheryl, Margaret M. Lyday, and Wendy By Sharer. *Rhetorical Education in America.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004.

Gold, David. *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.

Gossett, Kathie. "English 350: Digital Rhetoric." Iowa State University, Ames, Ia, 2014.

Graff, Harvey J. *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society.* Bloomington and Indianopolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Green, JA. *The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi*. London: WB Clive, University Tutorial Press, 1905.

Grey, Maria G. and Emily Shireff. *Thoughts on Self-Culture, Addressed to Women*. Boston: Wm. Crosby and HP Nichols, 1851.

Gries, Laurie. *Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetorics*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015.

Gutman, Herbert. *Power & Culture: Essays on the American Working Class.* New York, the New Press, 1992.

Hawisher, Gail E., and Cynthia L. Selfe (Eds.). *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*. New York, Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1989.

---. *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies: Questions for the 1990s*. Urbana, Il., NCTE, 1991.

Hawisher, Gail E., et al. *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: a History*. Edited by Sibylle Gruber and Margaret Faler Sweaney, Norwood, NJ, Ablex, 1996.

Hawisher, Gail E. "Research and Recommendations for Computers and Composition." *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*, edited by Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe, Teachers College Press, New York, 1989.

Hesse, Doug. "Response to Cynthia Selfe's 'The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing.'" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2010, pp. 602–605.

Hoechsmann, Michael. "Update Your Status: Identity and Learning in Viral Youth Networks." *Learning the Virtual Life: Public Pedagogy in a Digital World*, edited by Peter Pericles Trifonas, Routledge, New York, 2012, pp. 31–42.

Hume, David. "A Treatise of Human Nature." *A Treatise of Human Nature, by David Hume*, Project Gutenberg, 10 Nov. 2012, www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm. Accessed 30 Apr. 2017.

Hutchings, Paul. "Digital Natives: Wrong Label, Harmful Label." *Pbh Psych: The Unofficial Psychology Blog of Paul Hutchings*, Wordpress, 9 Apr. 2013, pbhpsych.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/digital-natives-wrong-label-harmful-label/. Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

Ilomaki, Liisa, et al. "Learning Environment and Digital Literacy: a Mismatch or a Possibility from Finnish Teachers' and Students' Perspectives." *Learning the Virtual Life: Public Pedagogy in a Digital World*, edited by Peter Pericles Trifonas, Routledge, New York, 2012, pp. 63–78.

Jacobs, Harriet Ann. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written By Herself. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. 2004.

Jea, John. *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher. Compiled and Written by Himself. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Johnson, Isaac. *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky. My Bondage and My Freedom. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Jones, John M. "ATEC 2322: Introduction to Electronic and Digital Communications." The University of Texas-Dallas, Dallas, TX, 2010.

---. "ENG 303: Multimedia Writing." West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV., 2013.

"Juniata Sentinel." *Juniata Sentinel*, 3 Jan. 1872.

Kaestle, Carl F., and Eric Foner. *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society*. New York, Hill and Wang, 1983.

---. *The Evolution of an Urban School System*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1973.

Kamin, Leon J. *The Science and Politics of IQ*. Potomac, Erlbaum, 1974.

Kaplan, Nancy. "Ideology, Technology, and the Future of Writing Instruction." *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies: Questions for the 1990s*, edited by Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Il, 1991.

Kett, Joseph F. *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Kirtley, Susan. "Students' Views on Technology and Writing: The Power of Personal History." *Computers and Composition*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2005, pp. 209–230.

Kyburz, Bonnie. "i'm Like ... Professional ." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2010, kairos.technorhetoric.net/14.2/topoi/kyburz/index.html.

Landrigan, Marissa. "Writing for Digital Media." University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown, Johnstown, PA, 2014.

Locke, John. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Penguin Press, 1997.

---. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education.* Cambridge: The University Press, 1902.

Logan, Shirley Wilson. *Liberating Language: Sites of Rhetorical Education in Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Carbondale, Il: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.

"Los Angeles Daily Herald." *Los Angeles Daily Herald*, 24 May 1876.

Lucas, Gerald. "NMAC 3108: Writing for Digital Media." Middle Georgia State University, Macon, Ga, 2015.

Lynch, Paul. *After Pedagogy: the Experience of Teaching*. Urbana, IL, Conference on College Composition and Communication, National Council of Teachers of English, 2013.

Lyons, Sherrie Lynne. *Species, Serpents, Spirits, and Skulls: Science at the Margins in the Victorian Age*. Albany, NY, SUNY Press, 2010.

Lysaker, John T. *Emerson and Self-Culture.* Bloomington and Indianopolis: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Mann, Horace, and Benjamin Franklin. *Helps to Self-Culture, Including in One Volume Thoughts for a Young Man*. Edited by CW Bardeen, Syracuse, NY, C.W. Bardeen, 1895.

May, Henry F. *The Enlightenment in America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Michel, Jean-Baptiste, et al. "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books." *Science*, vol. 331, no. 6014, Jan. 2011, pp. 176–182.

Moretti, Franco. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2007.

---. *Distant Reading*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2013.

Morley, Thomas. *The Mechanic, a Poem.* London: W. Nicholson, 1801.

Mott, Frank Luther. *A History of American Magazines*. Cambridge, Mass, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970.

Multimodal Literacies Issue Management Team of the NCTE Executive Committee. "Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies." *NCTE Comprehensive News*, National Council of Teachers of English, Nov. 2005, www.ncte.org/positions/statements/multimodalliteracies. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Nawrotski, Kristen and Jack Dougherty (Eds). *Writing History in the Digital Age.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

NCTE Executive Committee. "Summary Statement: Multimodal Literacies and Technology." *NCTE Comprehensive News*, The National Council of Teachers of English, 24 Aug. 2007, www.ncte.org/governance/MultimodalLiteracies. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Neufeldt, Leonard N. "Thoreau's Enterprise of Self-Culture in a Culture of Enterprise." *American Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2, Summer 1987, pp. 231-251.

New London Group. *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. Edited by Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, New York, Routledge, 1999.

"The New Northwest." *The New Northwest*, 12 Apr. 1878.

"The New Northwest." *The New Northwest*, 17 Nov. 1876.

"The New Northwest." *The New Northwest*, 20 Apr. 1877.

Nunley, Vorris. *Keepin' It Hushed: The Barbershop and African American Hush Harbor Rhetoric*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011.

Nye, Russel Blaine. *The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.

Offley, G.W. *Narrative of the Life and Labors of the Reverend GW Offley. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Ogilvie, John. *The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language*. Vol. 4, London, Blackie & Son, 1883. *Google Books*, Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

Ohmann, Richard M. *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. London, Verso, 1998.

Olney, James. "I Was Born: Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography and as Literature." *Callaloo*, no. 20, Winter 1984, pp. 46-73.

Paine, Thomas. "Age of Reason, Part First, Section 11." *Ushistory.org*, Independence Hall Association, 4 July 1995, www.ushistory.org/paine/reason/reason11.htm. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

Peabody, Elizabeth Palmer. *Lectures in the Training Schools for Kindergartners*. Boston, DC Heath & Company, 1893.

---. *Theory of Teaching, with a Few Practical Illustrations*. Boston, E.P. Peabody, 1841.

Pennsylvania Office of the Governer. "Pennsylvania Governor Rendell Awards $20 Million for 'Classrooms for the Future'." *PR Newswire: News Distribution, Targeting and Monitoring*, PR Newswire, 20 Sept. 2006, www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pennsylvania-governor-rendell-awards-20-million-for-classrooms-for-the-future-57077507.html. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Prensky, Marc. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants." *On the Horizon*, vol. 9, no. 5, Oct. 2001.

Ranciere, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1999.

Ray, Angela G. *The Lyceum and Public Culture*. Lansing, MI, Michigan State University Press, 2005.

Read, James. "The Limits of Self-Reliance: Emerson, Slavery, and Abolition." *Digital Commons @CSB/SJU*, pp. 0-49.

Rice, Madeleine. *Federal Street Pastor: The Life of William Ellery Channing*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1961.

"Richmond Enquirer." *Richmond Enquirer*, 5 July 1839.

Robinson, David. *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Emile, or On Education*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

Rudolph, Frederick, ed. *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965.

Rush, Benjamin. "A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania; to Which Are Added Thoughts upon the Mode of Eduction, Proper in a Republic. : Addressed to the Legislature and Citizens of the State." *Evan*

Early American Imprint Collection, University of Michigan, quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N15652.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1%3Bview. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

"Sacramento Daily Record-Union." *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, 14 June 1881.

"Sacramento Daily-Record Union." *Sacramento Daily-Record Union*, 2 Jan. 1887.

Salvatori, Mariolina. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819-1929.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996.

Schraw, Gregory, and Rayne Sperling Dennison. "Assessing Metacognitive Awareness." *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1994, pp. 460–475.

Schultz, Stanley K. *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860*. New York, 1973.

Selfe, Cynthia L. *Computer-Assisted Instruction in Composition: Create Your Own*. Urbana, IL, National Council of Teachers of English, 1986.

---. "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2009, pp. 616–663.

---. "Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1999, pp. 411–436., Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Shipka, Jody. *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

Sinclair, Stefan and Geoffrey Rockwell. *A Practical Guide to Text Analysis with Voyant Tools*. n.p. n.d.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct*. London, John Murray, 1859.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives.* 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Solomon, Joan (Ed). *The Passion to Learn: An Inquiry into Autodidactism*. London: Routledge Falmer, 2003.

Sorkin, David. "Wilhelm Von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (*Bildung*), 1791-1810." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 44.1 (Jan-Mar 1983): 55-73.

Spencer, Herbert. *Education, Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*. New York, Appleton, 1896.

---. *The Principles of Biology*. OsnabruÌ‚Ck, Otto Zeller, 1898.

"Spirit of Democracy." *Spirit of Democracy*, 12 Aug. 1848.

Spiro, Lisa. "Getting Started in Digital Humanities." *Journal of Digital Humanities*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2011, journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/getting-started-in-digital-humanities-by-lisa-spiro/. Accessed 21 Apr. 2017.

"St. Paul Daily Globe." *St. Paul Daily Globe*, 23 Apr. 1886.

Stedman, Kyle. "Rhetoric 351: Rhetoric of/in Digital Spaces." Rockford University, Rockford, Il, 2013.

Stern, Madeleine Bettina. *Heads & Headlines: the Phrenological Fowlers*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

Stern, Madeleine Bettina. *Heads & Headlines: the Phrenological Fowlers*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

Stine, Linda J. "Answers and More Questions: A Survey of Computer Use in Composition Instruction." *English Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1987, pp. 26–37.

Strantz, Adam. "English 419: Multimedia Writing." Miami University, Miami, Fl, 2011.

Sumner, William Graham. *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Edited by James L. Shanley, Princeton, NJ, Princeton Univ. Press, 1992.

Tillory, Tyrone. "The Inevitability of the Douglass-Garrison Conflict." *Phylon*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2nd Qtr. 1976, pp. 137-149.

Trifonas, Peter Pericles. *Living the Virtual Life: Public Pedagogy in a Digital World*. London, Routledge, 2012.

Turner, Frederick C. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: How Stewart Brand and the Whole Earth Catalog Brought Us Wired Magazine*. Chicago, Il, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Turner, Nat. *The Confessions of Nat Turner. Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Unsworth, William. *Self-Culture & Self-Reliance, under God the Means of Elevation*. London, Elliot Stock, 1869.

Vygotskij, Lev Semenovich, and Michael Cole. *Mind in Society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1981.

Wade, Bill. "Rendell Launches Program to Put Laptops in Classrooms." *Post-Gazette.com*, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 21 Sept. 2006, www.post-

gazette.com/news/education/2006/09/21/Rendell-launches-program-to-put-laptops-in-classrooms/stories/200609210341. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Washington, Booker T. *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography*. *Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives.* University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2004.

Webster, Noah. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. New York, NY, White & Sheffield, 1841. *Google Books*, Accessed 26 Apr. 2017.

"The Weekly Sentinel." *The Weekly Sentinel*, 10 June 1886.

West, Cornel. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: a Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

WIDE Research Collective. "Why Teach Digital Writing." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2005, technorhetoric.net/10.1/coverweb/wide/.

Williams, Heather Andrea. *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Williams, Raymond. "The Analysis of Culture." *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, edited by John Storey, 2nd ed., University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1998, pp. 48–56.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, and Greg Wickliff. "The Perils of Creating a Class Web Site: It Was the Best of Times, It Was the...." *Computers and Composition*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2001, pp. 177–186.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2004, pp. 297–328.