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Writing for Social Action: Affect, Activism, and the Composition Classroom

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Writing for Social Action: Affect, Activism, and the Composition Classroom

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARAH FINN

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Writing for Social Action: Affect, Activism, and the Composition Classroom

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of Diana Joy Colbert.

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ABSTRACT

WRITING FOR SOCIAL ACTION: AFFECT, ACTIVISM, AND THE COMPOSITION
CLASSROOM

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Due to the public turn in Composition and Rhetoric, many teachers look beyond the space of the academy in order to give students a “real” writing experience for social change purposes. However, as Bruce Horner notes, this denigrates the real work that is done in the classroom. In this dissertation, then, I argue that we can find ingredients for writing for social action in our courses, and we can do so by studying activist students who are already writing for just change. In using a case study methodology, I learn from activist students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I find that these students’ activist positionalities are co-constructed by their work as students and as activists. Rather than a political space as opposed to an academic space, these students combine the two. We can reconceptualize a reductive “student writer” position to an “activist student writer position” where students have agency to make rhetorical decisions to support their activism and use activist practices to strengthen their academic work. With this finding, we can re-conceive of academic space as political and open to “real” writing for social action.

My major finding is that of an affective writing process as necessary for social action writing. I find that affect fuels the writing process as activist students write for social justice. This complex textual production takes material life experience and affective investments into account as they interact with students' writing choices to construct a rhetorical situation where change is possible. It is the writing process itself that allows students to make the necessary decisions to reconstitute their emotions to form a socially active text that they take satisfaction in and would want to circulate. I suggest that students writing outside of the classroom can engage in this process, and arrive at a sense of affective agency. However, students inside the classroom do not have access to the full affective writing process due to their sense of being more limited in the academic rhetorical situation, and their social action writing is stymied. This contrast indicates that teachers may support students' social action writing by creating conditions for students to craft their own rhetorical situations in order to engage with the full affective process that gives rise to social action.

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CHAPTER 1

STUDENT ACTIVISM AND WRITING FOR SOCIAL ACTION

In *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, Paula Mathieu analyzes the roots of composition and rhetoric's expansion of interest and commitment to teachers' and students' democratic citizenship in the world. The most recent public turn in composition and rhetoric occurred during the sixties and seventies, where professors began to examine the social and political contexts beyond the walls of the classroom. For example, Christopher Weisser suggests public writing helps "students transform themselves into active, critical participants in a democratic society" who engage in "meaningful and productive discourse about political and social issues that affect our lives" (39, 90). These new emphases have created space for students to "connect with real world texts, events, and exigencies" and use writing to examine their involvement in a politicized world (Mathieu 2). In the eighties, composition and rhetoric scholars turned their attention further to issues of identity, such as race, class, and gender and the sociopolitical contexts that affected and constructed such identities. Mathieu also notes that in a more competitive economic market, universities and colleges supported the public turn "as a way to attract students through a commitment to the community and the public" (12). In this context, composition and rhetoric scholars engaged with social and political issues that they often conceptualized as occurring off-campus, where teachers and students brought (and continue to bring) relevant issues to the classroom "from the streets" by "redrawing the geographic boundaries that define sites for composition teaching and research" (Mathieu 14). Projects such as community service learning, community publishing, public writing, and activist oriented teacher-research arise from

this public turn. But as the public turn has shifted our attention outward, we should be thoughtful about what we can learn about social change writing in campus contexts; for example, through the writing practices of activist students who already produce social action texts.

Composition and Rhetoric's Public Turn: Erasures and Promises

Mathieu discusses the roots of this public turn, and attributes influence to foundational frameworks such as John Dewey's theory of progressive education; Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy; and Antonio Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual, but nowhere does she mention the impact of student activism. In another history of the field, James Berlin does give a quick nod towards student activism:

all of the rhetorics considered in this chapter [objective, subjective, and transactional rhetoric] were inevitably a part of the political activism on college campuses during the sixties and seventies. They were in fact involved in a dialectical relationship with these uprisings, both shaped by them and in turn affecting their development. The demand for 'relevance' in the college curriculum was commonplace, and these rhetorics – particularly the classical, expressionistic, and epistemic varieties – were attempting to respond. (177-178)

However, Berlin's comments are quite brief, and he does not offer much further analysis. And, Mathieu, Weisser, and Berlin are not alone: few theorists have investigated the ways in which such activism has affected the public turn and composition and rhetoric in general.

The fact that the public turn of the sixties and seventies occurred during a high water mark of student activism, where vital organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the National Organization of Women (NOW), and the Black Panthers and others were most active, should give Mathieu, Weisser, Berlin, and

other theorists pause. At the time of the public turn and its current, ongoing influence, student activists have been engaged with social movements aimed towards equality on campus and beyond; student activist groups have been working to change the academy and the larger world; and they have made issues of justice more central to education (Downs and Manion). I argue that the common erasure of student activism may prevent scholars from 1) looking inward at the socio-political climate of the university itself, 2) conceiving of students as activists, 3) considering the impact of student activism on the history and current context of the field, and 4) inquiring into activist students' written and rhetorical practices in multiple spheres. I take up these critiques to highlight that many students are political and can write for social action in ways that we can learn from. Although many argue that political or public writing outside of the classroom may be the best academic rhetorical situation we have to offer students because it is considered "real," we should not give up on such potentials in the classroom that can create the same kind of satisfying and potentially empowering writing experience for students. I argue that this conception of the "real" can be challenged to open up social action writing in a classroom where students are agents. We can re-think both the public and the political in order to create the rhetorical situations for students that support their affective agency in writing for change. The goal is not to move political writing outside of the classroom, but to re-conceive of the classroom as a site for writing for social justice. We may learn how to do so in a study of political students in the politicized space of the campus that can suggest ingredients for social action. Paying close attention to student activists may also point us to an understanding of writing for social action in the classroom that we may not have conceptualized before.

Student Activism and Writing for Social Action: Sites of Inquiry

With the public turn and the more recent public writing turn, composition and rhetoric has also turned towards student writing for social action, through such areas as community service learning and theoretical paradigms such as critical pedagogy. These areas often focus on “real world” exigencies for writing, and writing to foster social change -- both for individual students’ attitudes, beliefs, and actions, as well as writing to challenge and potentially change inequality. To write for social action, Paul Heilker calls for students to “use language to recreate the worlds they live in and the people they are;” and more specifically, students must work at a place outside of the classroom and “complete essential writing tasks for the nonprofit agencies in which they are placed” (72, 74). Heilker suggests such forms as newsletters, press releases, lobbying materials, and more (72). This general conception of writing for social action represents much service learning theory and compositionist attitudes in general. Theorists generally refer to “real world” writing to benefit the students’ intellectual growth; civic and democratic responsibility that students exercise through service work and writing; and teaching students about systemic inequality to enable students to write for social action. Overall, theorists often highlight “student transformation” through their experiences with service-learning courses, and the prior two pedagogical areas represent what many compositionists want to “give” students – a meaningful learning and writing experience. Types of writing for social action in this context take multiple forms: for example, Thomas Dean’s groups service-learning courses within categories of writing “about,” “for,” and “with” communities (18). A student might write an article *about* her organization, she may write fliers or brochures or posters *for* her organization, or she

might research particular campus needs *with* her organization. Here, writing for social action rests on the construction of the “real” outside the campus walls by service learning teachers. Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters support a perspective that highlights the pedagogical force of “the real” in writing exigencies and potentials to write for social action. They write, “service-learning thus offers students *real* rhetorical situations in which to work, *real* tasks, *real* audiences, *real* purposes for writing” (my emphasis 7).

Many service learning theorists build on critical pedagogy in their work with students and in their scholarship, and critical pedagogy represents a foundational framework for writing for social action. Composition and rhetoric’s attention to critical pedagogy also reflects a turn towards socio-political issues, and offers more avenues for writing for social action. Critical pedagogy plays an important role in social justice work in composition and rhetoric, as it interrogates and challenges oppressive racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, and ageism produced and reproduced through social, political, capitalist, institutional, mass media, and ideological forces (Adams; Bell; Freire; hooks; Shor; Giroux; McLaren). While critical pedagogies are diverse, they share a lens that positions teachers and students as whole people inside and outside of the classroom, shaped by oppressive societal, political, and ideological forces, but with the potential for agency to transform and liberate themselves and the world (Adams; Bell; hooks; Freire; Giroux; Shor; McLaren). For Giroux, “it makes a connection between schooling and emancipation, suggesting that schools have a responsibility to equip students with the knowledge and skills they will need to develop a critical understanding of themselves as well as what it means to live in a democratic society” (114). And according to seminal

theorists such as Freire, such agency arises through praxis – reflection and action that exist in a dialectical relationship.

Following Freire in terms of social action through writing, simply writing for reflection is not social action, and simply writing for action is not enough either – people must engage in both aspects of writing in order to liberate themselves from oppression and foster concrete change. Henry Giroux adds another perspective on the necessities for social action: education should “combine historical critique, critical reflection, and social action” (Giroux 193). In this model, critique, reflection, and social action are equally important, but neither critique nor reflection *are* social action. For Giroux, it seems that writing can lead to social action, but action itself involves “the [material] transformation of specific social practices in concrete institutions such as schools” (132). And schools have taken up this project of transformation: for example, social justice education (in the discipline of Education) involves historical critique, critical reflection of the student’s part in systems of oppression, and writing to foster just, concrete change in multiple spheres (Adams and Bell). In composition and rhetoric, reflection and action can be seen in many scholarly articles where authors reflect on their own positionality and suggest changes for a more just classroom (Lindquist). Many of the aforementioned service learning courses also employ Freirian concepts of critical reflection and writing for social action (Hertzberg). Traditional composition classes also try to offer avenues for student reflection and assignments for students to write for social action, such as the “Adding to the Conversation” component of the College Writing course at UMass, where students have the potential to reflect and write for change to a particular audience.

However, compositionists note that such assignments rarely “make it” to an audience – a problem in many courses. While one strategy has been the turn towards service learning, traditional composition classrooms seem to be more limited (and service learning does not always lead to writing for social action). If a measure of writing for social action is to reflectively move an audience, composition teachers often lament the disconnect between student writing and audiences for such writing. In this situation, their gaze may be limited to a “letter to the editor” of a newspaper, for example (Wiesser 107). They may not see other audiences on campus and beyond. Further, compositionists may see writing for social action as writing for “progressive, societal change” (Wiesser 90), but I have found that there are many more “micro” forms of writing for social action that lead to larger change, that even service learning theorists might miss.¹ Compositionists may need to further investigate the many “ingredients” that shape student writing for social action. In offering a “definitive” definition or recipe for “writing for social action,” we need to look at *why* writing for social action happens, *how* writing for social action happens, and *what* it can involve. In this context, compositionists can learn from student activists’ groups practices in these areas: diverse audiences; diverse texts for action and types of action called for; and foundational exigencies/ingredients.

I suggest that we can start by examining student activist experience and its interactions with academic writing in order to learn more about teaching writing for social action. In examining the interplay of student activism and academic writing, we

¹ For example, writing for social action may move an audience to attend a rally or call a politician or knock on dormitory doors to get out the student vote; it may further inform an audience of the issues it cares about or is working on (such as genocide in Darfur); it may inform an audience of its legal rights (such as the rights of the GLBTQ community), it may foster audience interest in and action towards an issue (such as sweatshop injustice); it may create allies and coalitions; it may outline a plan of activist action, etc., not to mention the many forms of such writing.

can study how students negotiate diverse audiences, how they speak and write for social action, and how they engage with fundamental exigencies for social action writing. We can uncover why activist students write for and take part in social action, how such writing and participation takes place, and what writing and work for social action involves. More specifically, the interplay of activism and academic writing thus helps us to discover new ingredients for writing for social action, such as what motivates students to both act for social action and to write for social action for academic and nonacademic purposes. In asking activist students about the connections they see between their activism and their different kinds of writing, we can learn about how students see their own activism shape, enhance, or limit their classroom writing, and vice versa. In this context, we can ask: what do students themselves see as meaningful in both their activist work and writing and academic studies and writing, and how and why do they bridge the two spheres or feel limited in such bridging? The student answers to these questions and others gives us insights into ingredients for writing for social action and how we might foster particular exigencies and writing practices for students to write for social action in a variety of classroom settings. However, most compositionists have not pursued this area of inquiry on student activism and writing due to conceptual barriers against conceiving of on-campus activism and activist students. These same blind spots may lead to a limited conception of writing for social action as well.

Academia as “The Real World”

Because service learning theorists tend to turn their attention outward, to agencies that students can work for in the community, many theorists have developed a blind spot to the socio-political structures of the university itself – structures that both students and

faculty are part of. For example, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles points out that universities have structured walls to isolate students from the “real world,” and argues that students should rejoin society through service learning (27). Further, Wade Dorman and Susana Fox Dorman focus specifically on “bridging the gap between the composition classroom and the real world” (131). Heilker goes so far as to claim, “In order for students to experience writing as social action, we need to move the *where* of writing instruction to some place outside the...schools they attend” (72). Other compositionists conceive of the university in this manner as well, with political change occurring “beyond the walls of the ivory tower;” however, students *do* engage in political action on the campus as well. In the clamor for “real world” learning, growing out of the public turn, a rich potential is lost. Vital work is being done on our very campuses, and student activists are part of such work.

I argue that an emphasis on the classroom as a neutral, apolitical, or even artificial space also has the potential to denigrate student writing within the classroom. As Bruce Horner notes, “using service learning to traverse the boundaries separating the academic from the public or the “community” can reinforce the academic/real world binary, leading again to the derogation of student writing as somehow less “real” than work more recognizably “public” in its forms, effect, or mode of distribution” (70). Student writing is real and important, and the classroom writing that student activists do is real and important as well. As Weisser notes, the classroom itself is a political space, along with the rest of the university (116). This also opens student writing in composition classrooms to more diverse audiences that “count,” such as the micro-public sphere of the classroom, *and* the many “alternate” and “subaltern” publics that can be found on campus

– such as student activist groups, clubs, cultural organizations, mentorship programs, student publications, the radio station, athletic teams, living areas, etc. (Weisser 106).

Reconceiving the campus as a political space can also allow compositionists to learn from students in new ways, such as studying student activist groups' writing and rhetoric on campus.

Students as Political Agents

On the other hand, critical pedagogy does cast the classroom and the university as political spaces that often reinforce dominance. Theorists such as bell hooks, Freire, Giroux, McLaren, and Ira Shor examine justice in education and encourage both teachers and students to challenge the oppressive tendencies of education in various ways. For example, Shor, influenced by Freire, suggests multiple approaches, such as a “dialogical” and problem-posing pedagogy, for students to engage in political, institutional, and ideological critiques: when students complain about garbage on the floor, Shor launches a critical investigation of the problem with the students that includes a study of multiple forms of inequality at the college. At the same time, critical scholars tend to position teachers as the arbiters of Truth, as critical educators peel back false ideologies and expose the students to the “reality” that the teachers already know. Further, critical pedagogy, service learning, and social justice educators in general bandy about the term “transformation” in reference to what students should experience in their courses (Bell; Hertzberg; Shor; Weisser). But who says that students need to transform in the first place? Students may already be political, they may already be “active citizens” in a democracy, they may already care about social justice issues, they may already be informed and reflective, and they may already be engaged in different forms of activist

work. A teacher's demand for transformation is paternalistic and may ignore what students already know and feel. While they claim to be working with students, available subject positions often cast students as "blank slates" – as apolitical beings that must be shaped by the critical pedagogy of teachers and/or as students in positions of deficit.

While Shor celebrates an "empowering" critical pedagogy, his work is also a strong example of positioning students as political "blank slates" (or ignorant states), many of whom have been molded by education to "play dumb" and "get by." Shor describes the student emotions which arise from traditional teaching, again positioning students as apolitical and with little agency

Self-doubt, hostility, resentment, boredom, indignation, cynicism, disrespect, frustration, the desire to escape. These student affects are commonly generated when an official culture and language are *imposed* from the top down, ignoring the students' themes, languages, conditions, and diverse cultures. Their consequent negative feelings interfere with learning and lead to *strong anti-intellectualism in countless students as well as alienation from civic life.*" [emphasis added 23]

While this positionality may be true for some students, Shor over-generalizes and places students in a subject position of lack and helplessness at the hands of institutions. He claims that students often "fear" a critical classroom and questioning the "way things are" (Shor 17). In this context, *teachers* must "desocialize" students to be active participants in the classroom and to think critically about the world. Only through the teacher's methods can students come to "critical consciousness" and examine and reflect upon problems in their lives in the context of our larger society and institutions that generate inequality or injustice (Shor 261). It is up to teachers to "connect students individually to larger historical and social issues; to encourage students to examine how their experience relates to academic knowledge, to power, and to inequality in society; and to approach

received wisdom and the status quo with questions” (Shor 17). This positioning of the teacher and students seems to create the very same power relations that critical pedagogy is said to challenge. Students must rely on the teacher to understand oppressive structures, as they are denied such understanding in Shor’s analysis; rather, students are apolitical, have negative attitudes and emotions towards education, and are threatened by the teacher’s questioning of the status quo. Shor does not discuss students as already politically savvy or involved in activism of any kind. This represents one attitude in composition and rhetoric that draws from critical and progressive pedagogy, where teachers feel they must empower and teach apolitical students to think critically about power relations and injustice – to become “democratic citizens.” As David Seitz notes, critical pedagogy doesn’t make room for students’ political understandings of the world, in part because it creates a disempowering ideology that particularly limits immigrant students, students of color, and working class students (141, 72).

In this context, student activist experience can be erased in the classroom; student activist experience may be denied a place in writing; teachers may become condescending, when they can actually learn from students; and in this way, teachers may fail to engage students in meaningful writing for social action that arises through student activist experience, and/or their political experience in general.

Of course, not all compositionists take on the prior attitudes. I have found that many scholars do position students as political agents in the classroom, and challenge the power relations that critical pedagogy ironically creates. For example, Seitz argues that we should reassess critical pedagogy that works on principles of challenging US hegemonies and valuing difference over unity and consensus. He discusses three

students, Diana, Mike, and Lilia, and how they conceive of issues that their critical-pedagogy course raised. He finds that students have quite different things to say and ways of saying it, inside and outside of the classroom. For example, Diana seemed diplomatic and even understanding in her discussions of race and homosexuality in class, but outside of the class she was much more condemning. This demonstrates student agency and political savvy because students are able to “read” the professor and say what they know is expected of them, while at the same time maintaining the political outlooks that they brought with them to class – from outside the classroom. Students do not lack agency but have the ability to negotiate the classroom and the power relations between teacher and student in order to “talk the talk” that critical discourse demands, while simultaneously reflecting on and critiquing it silently. Students are not apolitical; they can both recognize the politics of the teacher and recognize their own politics outside of the classroom. They have the power and agency to understand, evaluate, critique, and perform political identity in multiple spheres, for multiple audiences.

Although some compositionists strive to support student activism through pedagogy within the classroom, the current context of student activism may make it semi-invisible to those who hearken back to the sixties and seventies. Haivan Hoang writes, “teaching writing is about preparing students to critically express themselves within public forums, including universities [and] college writing and, in this sense, requires engagement with academic disciplines *as well as* the politicized sites of college campuses” (386). But what is student activism today? While many bemoan the apathy of students, student activism is actually more diverse and widespread than ever before, as students engage in action through certain community service learning courses; volunteer

and intern on their own; continue to form more traditional activist groups on campus; and utilize new forms of technology (Tanene). In the nineties and twenty-first century, students are actually getting more done than in the sixties, with thousands of student groups fostering more change, but this current wave of activism is often opaque due to the lack of media coverage and the more compartmentalized nature of current activist efforts (Boren 248; Rhoads 8).

While student activism is more diverse, it can still be measured by the degree of agency and autonomy of the students. Service learning courses may produce on-site student activism, but the power relations may be skewed because the teacher has control over the curriculum and grades the student, and others note that the power relations between the university/student and the service learning site can also be problematic (Mathieu). In contrast, student campus activist groups often represent the most agency and autonomy for student activists as they are created, organized, and run by students. I do not want to discount other avenues of student activism, but rather highlight the work that students are doing together as a group, of their own volition, and based on their own decisions. For the purposes of this study then, the term “student activism” refers mainly to student groups on campus that are working for social justice because they represent a community of students who chart their own course towards positive change and may also represent broader social movements. These can be defined as “collective enterprises to establish a new order of life” that shifts power relations on campus and beyond (Rhoads 225).

In a composition pedagogy that encourages students to write for social action, we can first re-conceptualize the campus, students, and the variety of writing that students

engage in. In studying student activism and writing, we can break these conceptual barriers in a concrete way and learn even more. The campus can be understood as a political space that presents a number of audiences for writing for change. This conception represents one necessary ingredient for writing for social action as it creates a political, university space, where injustice can be challenged by student activists and their writing. Compositionists' understanding of students as political and/or activist actors will also support student agency, as they are re-positioned from "blank slates" into potential actors and writers for social action. This can also give students the respect and support from teachers to open the potential for activist writing in the classroom. Further, compositionists can understand that activist students are part of groups and movements that can support their writing in a multitude of ways – they are not individuals who write in isolation. In examining the interplay of student activist experience and writing, we may find ingredients for writing for social action as we better understand how activist students negotiate academic writing, potentially link it to their activist work, and their degrees of reflection and agency in this process. While compositionists endeavor to teach writing for social action, they should also ask questions about the ingredients that construct the very possibilities of such writing. Studying student activism and writing holistically has the potential to answer questions about the roots of writing for social action and justice.

Composition and Rhetoric's Attention to Student Activism

While there is a gap in student activism's impact on composition and rhetoric, as well as a gap in studying student activism and writing, some compositionists do address issues of student activism in composition. Their positioning of past and present students

as political actors demonstrates how students can be inspired by academic writing and reading, and can utilize classroom curricula to create and build current student activist groups. Compositionists such as Stephen Parks, June Jordan, Gwendolyn Pough, Haivan Hoang, and Zan Goncalves present compelling studies of student activism and composition pedagogy that supports these students. In these studies, compositionists tend to explore activist writing pedagogies through the perspectives of teachers and seldom ask students about their experience with classroom writing as they discuss pedagogical strategies. That is, they do not ask students about how they may *already* connect their activist writing to academic writing. I hope to add to these theorists' conversations by studying students' own experiences, thoughts, and affect towards *both* activism and academic writing, and how the two spheres may inform one another. This strategy is important because it represents how students themselves negotiate activism and the classroom. Therefore, this dissertation will build on the prior theorists to show the interplay of activist experience and writing in a way that has received less attention in the literature. This type of study seems key to examining the ingredients for writing for social action because we can look through a new, student-centered lens. Previous work on social action writing, however, does provide useful directions for such work by bringing to light a focus on both the agency of student writers and the political campus sites that are useful for activist work.

In *Class Politics: the Movement for the Students' Right to Their Own Language*, Stephen Parks positions the university and students as political agents writing and working for social action in the field of composition and rhetoric, as well as compositionists who seek to learn from student activists. He overtly links student activist

movements to the eventual CCCC's creation and adoption of the "the Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) document and policy. In this time period, compositionists were more likely to see students as political because of the very public (media-reported), political student movements. Conceptions of "the student" and "students' rights" were changing due to student political organizations such as SNCC, SDS, and Black Power movements, such as the Black Panthers (whose organizations also included many students). In this context, student activism gave rise and momentum to the SRTOL. Student Power and Black Power worked to form the New University Conference (NUC), which was made up of academics² who had ties to student movements and were extremely influenced by such movements. NUC formulated a resolution on SRTOL for CCCC that sought to initiate a radical, "interracial class movement" in the composition classroom (Parks 121). However, as the document made its way through the institutional process to become CCCC's SRTOL, it became watered down and depoliticized. Student activist writing for social action became limited due to institutional power relations and more conservative theorists' concerns. Parks critiques the end result, which he feels does not meet the call to action and image of a student that the Student Power and Black Power movements called for. In this way, Parks traces the interplay of student activism, faculty activism, and more conservative institutional constraints or backlashes, which represent common power relations between student activist movements and institutions such as universities (Yamane).

Parks also delves further into changing attitudes towards students as activists who can inspire new practices in composition. He notes, "For composition scholars, the

² It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that many compositionists and academic scholars were, and still are, involved in activism themselves.

question became, ‘How did these new student politics interact with the goals of writing instruction? How did such politics fit into discussions over a student’s language?’” (Parks 69). This illustrates the interconnections between student activism and composition scholars’ concerns, and also the force of student activism in constructing new understandings of language and literacy in composition. Parks goes on to suggest that “elements within the process movement attempted to provide answers to these questions,” and they sought to increase “attention to the knowledge and language that students brought into the classroom” (Parks 69). The changing image of “the student” and the impact of student activism in the creation of SRTOL illustrate how politicized and activist students fought for “racial and economic justice,” and were seen as having power and voice by many professors in academia at the time (Parks 120). However, the image of the activist student receded in the late seventies and eighties due to multiple factors, such as the general erasure of student activism in the media, different (and less public) strategies for action, and students’ moving into work with nonprofits and other agencies, rather than the types of action of the sixties and early seventies.

While many composition teachers may fail to acknowledge activist students in the classroom, some do position students as political agents who can write for social action. The classroom can become a site or a foundation for student activism on campus that is student organized and led. Jordan, Pough, Goncalves, and Hoang all analyze the complex interplay of student activism and writing courses. Here, students engage in student activism that is already acknowledged, respected, and supported by the writing teacher, although these theorists do not tend to interview students’ attitudes towards writing and negotiating academic writing in general. June Jordan, for example, decides

to teach a course in Black English because her students from a previous class ask her to – these students are not “blank slates,” but political actors who call for a new curriculum (Black English had never been taught in a college classroom in 1984). She sees Black English as a language that constitutes “our own proud, and singular identity,” but is in danger of being extinguished (Jordan 130). Soon, her class becomes further politicized because a student’s, Willie’s, brother was killed by a policeman. Jordan takes the lead from her students to identify a course of activist action, and they decide to write a letter to the police in Black English. They use writing for social action, and their choice of Black English is a political choice, as is their decision to write to the police to demand justice and change. Jordan and her students work together, through discussion and writing, to fight back against racist, police brutality. The thread of student activism runs through Jordan’s decision to teach the course, to the letter to the police. She is working together with her students and conceives and respects students as political actors – a togetherness that positions students as activists writing for social action.

Like Jordan, Gwendolyn Pough’s composition course acts as a foundation and inspiration for students’ *decisions* to work and write for anti-racist change – this time on their own campus. She uses the student activism of the past, specifically the Black Panther Party, to connect students with their activist histories and inspire them today. Her curriculum itself is based on autobiographies from the Black Panthers, as well as their writings for social action, such as their ten point program and other materials. In this way, Pough brings lived, activist experience into the classroom, and teaches students about the *lives* of past Black Panther leaders, as well as their use of writing for social change. In using Black Panther documents, Pough’s goal is to “help [students] to take up

their civic responsibilities and think about the ways they can evoke change not only in their lives but also in the lives of others inside and outside of their respective communities” (468). While this represents a critical goal of many compositionists, Pough’s use of student activist writing positions her current students as political agents who have the potential to take up the legacy of student activist work on campus. In this way, Pough models past activism to help supply students with tools for current activism. She assigns students to write proposals for change and social action, and this process leads to students’ decisions to take up many activist projects on campus and beyond.

For example, one student decided to write an article, published in the Women’s Center Newsletter, “Does Miami Have Diversity?” which challenged the lack of diversity on campus. This letter led to fierce debates on campus, and the ensuing formation of a student activist group, the Black Action Movement (BAM). Students from Pough’s course were “key players” in BAM, who created a list of demands, and organized walkouts, building takeovers, marches, and protests (Pough 480). These students wrote for social action through many venues, including writing the “Black Action Movement Demands for a More Diverse Academic and Social Climate at Miami University,” based on the Black Panther’s ten point plan as a model. They also employed many rhetorical acts of the Black Panther party, as they wrote to the school newspaper and other publications on their positions (Pough 482). Pough illustrates what teachers and students can learn from past student movements, and how this can aid student activists today. She also shows a striking and spontaneous example of the interplay of student activism and composition, as well as ways to teach in support of students’ writing for, and working for, social action. For many students, their writing in the classroom – for example, writing a

proposal for just change in the community – acted as a springboard to writing for social action for the university community (Pough). This represents one example of the complex process and trajectory of students choosing to write for social action on campus – a teacher did not direct them to do so, but provided crucial education and inspiration.

Hoang also studies student activist groups on campus in order to learn from their activities and suggest composition pedagogy that can aid student activists, in a recursive model. She looks closely at the activist experience of the Vietnamese American Coalition (VAC) students who challenged the Student Government when its board decided to halt funding for their mentorship program for Vietnamese high school students. She challenges the “rhetoric of injury” that individualizes racial and ethnic discrimination, and suggests a different strategy that takes socio-historical legacies into account in shaping present racial conflicts. Hoang writes, “we live in a privatized system that scrutinizes so very closely the wounds of individuals that it deflects attention from the material conditions, cultural systems, and histories that produced racial injustice in the first place” (387). Hoang’s case study of VAC activists and other cultural groups’ interactions with the student government puts the prior analysis in high relief, as the student government repeatedly turned to a rhetoric of injury that impeded constructive dialogue and cast VAC members in untenable subject positions (399). In learning from student activism and the rhetorical and discursive barriers that students face, compositionists can support both student activists and other students to challenge racial and other forms of injustice by turning to a rhetoric of social responsibility (405). Further, compositionists’ pedagogies might “take a cue from the VAC students and their peers [in analyzing history]...[and interrogate] the history of racialization [that] enables

students to explore how speaking positions are differently authorized and to question how historically unequal access to mainstream universities shaped their system of student government representation, fraternities and sororities, and minority student organizations and coalitions” (Hoang 402, 405). With this case study, Hoang emphasizes activist students as political actors and composition’s role in supporting them – a recursive model where student activists and compositionists learn from each other and foster the growth/offer crucial tools for both activism and the writing classroom.

Goncalves also studies student activism in order to explore its writing and rhetoric and design composition pedagogies to further support student activists in the classroom. For example, Goncalves studies the Stonewall Speaker’s Bureau at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Like the prior theorists, she conceives of the university as a political space, and she also focuses on student activists in her study – students are not “blank slates” but vital political players on campus that compositionists can learn from. Goncalves studies how gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students speak to audiences at the university in order to challenge heterosexism and homophobia, and create allies in the community. She highlights the role of ethos, as students create “personas that appear to possess and are regarded as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character – in order to persuade their audiences” (Goncalves 8). With the guidance of the Stonewall Speaker’s Bureau, GLBT students write about their lives, identities, and feelings, and shape more personal writing into speeches for the campus audience.

Here, we see a layered approach to writing for social action, as activist students begin with reflective writing and then pull from such writing to construct an ethos that

will engage and move audiences. “Student speakers use the rhetorical training they receive from the Bureau to tell vignettes in which they perform specific insider and outsider identities...[to] invite their audiences to identify with them by creating an ethos based in specificity; show how heterosexist discourse positions them as “other;” explain the strategies they used to cope...; describe how they finally found an alternative community, a sponsoring institution; and again invite the audience members to identify with them and become allies” (Goncalves 37). While the student speeches are somewhat structured by the Stonewall organization, student activists are able to exercise their passion and agency to work for social justice through writing and rhetorical action. And again, Goncalves is careful to note the important process of writing for social action; for example, one student began her journey to become an educator and activist through personal writing and critical reflection on her identity and experiences, which then led to her later work (84). Finally, Goncalves uses her research on student activists to inform and suggest pedagogy in the composition classroom through attention to identity and ethos. She writes, “using identity-based or personal writing in the classroom need not become an exercise in solipsistic confession. Students in first-year required classes I taught were able to use their lived experiences to think critically about social justice and to participate in social action” (Goncalves 130). In this way, Goncalves illustrates the richness of student activism’s rhetoric and writing for social action on campus, as well as how a composition classroom can learn from such groups to support both student activists and potential student activists.

Centrality of Affect in Student Activism

In their articles, these theorists also point to student activists' subjective emotions, such as anger, inspiration, passion, compassion, and a sense of powerlessness. The constructed nature of these emotions represents "affect," which is a conception of feelings that are constructed both politically and relationally between people, ideas, and interactions in the world. The prior theorists leave discussions of affect somewhat underdeveloped. However, we should examine affect further because it is an important part of activist work and writing – both currently and throughout history. For example, Jordan writes about the anger that arose in her classroom and how it motivated students' decision to write for social action in a letter to the police. Plough's article describes how the rhetoric of past activists gave rise to students' inspiration and passion to form BAM and work to change institutional practices in the university. Hoang describes the affective results of a "rhetoric of injury" that casts students in a disempowering victim position, and suggests a shift to the "rhetoric of social responsibility" that can give activists more power. These two rhetorics engage affect in different ways: the first seems to provoke anger and blame, while the second seems to suggest a more balanced analysis of history and its legacy. Goncalves most closely points to the production and circulation of affect that arises through a GLBT speaker's speeches to the community that employ pathos. These speeches are carefully designed to "invite audiences to identify with" the speakers, and it seems as though the affect of compassion and empathy are strategically produced and circulated through pathos in order to move the audience. Affect is embedded in the analyses of the prior theorists, and it seems vital to social action and writing for social action. But these compositionists could develop the nature and role of

affect further in their work: affect is critical to activist projects and writing, and this is demonstrated in student activism throughout history. In examining historical student activism, we can see the crucial role that education and affect have played in a variety of social movements.

The rhetor's use of pathos and pathos (emotions) in general is key to student activism, as students seek to "awaken" emotion in their audience as one important way to motivate the audience to engage in some form of social action. This appeal to emotion can be further developed through the framework of affect, and the circulation of affect, that can offer a more complex understanding of *why* audiences are moved to act for social justice through rhetoric and other factors. Affect is continually present in student movements, and is crucial to making rhetoric for change possible at societal levels. Affect represents a process through which feelings are constructed both politically and relationally between people, ideas, institutions, and interactions in the world (Ahmed; Elbow; Kelly; Micciche; Ryden; Lindquist). Like "social justice," which can be thought of as a noun and a verb, the term "affect" can be used in multiple ways: affect is the process by which emotions are constructed, and affect also represents constructed feelings that can be circulated through rhetoric and other modes. Therefore, affect can be seen as a process where feelings are constructed, reconstructed, and interpreted through bodily, socio-political positioning (including one's gender, race, and class positions), historical context, institutional context, and the power relations that circulate within these and other areas. One can turn to Sarah Ahmed's theory as she writes that affect "isn't inside the person or outside the person, but generated through contact" with signs and bodies, as well as constructed through relations of identity, community, and power (7).

Affect itself can construct emotion, but emotion represents a person's subjective feeling, such as anger, that she experiences as real in relation to something. However, a person may not have conscious or immediate access to the complex construction of affect; instead, she may *feel* anger as an emotion. That is, while anger is constructed from factors such as socio-political identity, community, institutional positioning, or material experience, people feel anger as real and generally transparent or linked to a single trigger, such as anger at increased student fees from a public university. A rhetor's use of pathos can appeal to and/or fuel such anger in order to motivate students to speak out and/or form a movement against the policy. However, "anger" is constructed from a complex circulation of affect at work in the prior situation.

Activist students' rhetoric and social action can be examined through a lens that takes the interconnections of affect, emotion, pathos, motivation, and affective investments into account in order to shed light on important processes of activist engagement. Affect represents the process by which the prior terms interact to move an audience or audience members to action and to form a movement. For example, at an individual level, my socio-political identity as a Jewish woman, my interactions with the Jewish community and my Jewish education construct strong affective investments in relation to issues such as genocide. These affective investments in turn shape my strong feelings about human rights and fighting against current genocides. When an anti-genocide activist speaks and educates on the genocide in Darfur, for example, an educational speech has appealed to my deep affective investments and has sparked my emotions about genocide, such as distress, sadness, and anger that these horrific abuses continue. However, the rhetor also sparks hope. These emotions have motivated me to

get involved with the anti-genocide movement and take social action with the group. As we can begin to see from my example, the affective investments of the rhetor and audience are also crucial – these represent people’s attachments to beliefs, values, judgment, ethics, and modes of meaning making (Micciche). Affective investments are always being constructed and revised, even as they are deeply “felt.”

The circulation of affect through appeals to pathos can construct, reconstruct, conflict, or resonate with the audience’s deep affective investments to move audience emotions. For example, students’ beliefs in the necessity of affordable education in a just society are affective investments that a rhetor can awaken, address or fuel through pathos (or education that combines logos with pathos). The rhetor can “awaken” the emotion of anger in audience members that arises in part from affective investments of the audience. In terms of social action through rhetoric, a student’s anger can translate into motivation to take action and speak out against the university – that is, a student’s subjective emotions are important factors that can drive her to speak out for change and recruit others. This motivation represents reasons for action, which can include emotions and affective investments that are awakened by a rhetor’s appeals to pathos, or use of education as persuasion.³ In summary, in building movements, affect is an engine for the following process/cycle of *successful* rhetoric for social change that deliberately circulates affect through pathos: rhetoric interacts with affective investments to give rise to the subjective experience of emotion in the audience, which can then give rise to

³ I define education as a form of persuasion that combines logos and pathos; I will use the term education to signal persuasion that combines both logos and pathos in informing and moving an audience. I will use the term ‘pathos’ to signal an emphasis on awakening emotions in particular – to emphasize the affect and emotions that are circulated and constructed through pathos. Pathos in general is also broader than pathos as a part of education and so I use both terms at times to signal education as persuasion that includes pathos, but to also include other forms of persuasion or activist action/rhetoric that also employ pathos.

motivation for audience members to become activists; they then use rhetoric to repeat this process by re-circulating affect through pathos and/or education. While the process is one of many models of rhetoric and social action, it is an important one: McLaren notes that our affective investments work at a deeper level than our intellect, and because of this, affect seems key to social change movements. The following specific, activist examples show the ways in which affect is crucial to student movements and social action work. In highlighting these instances, I will also show the variety of overlapping ways that affect can structure activist experience: for example, the circulation of affect can shift affective structures of an audience to change their beliefs, while ideologies are “enfleshed” in people in ways that activists can both encourage and challenge for social justice purposes.

As the most recent public turn occurred during the civil rights era, compositionists may look to the writing and rhetoric of multiple student activist groups, and how they utilized education to circulate affect as a source of change. Affect plays a vital role in student movements for social action in political, campus contexts. But while the circulation of affect can be a source of change, it can also spread hate; in order to understand activist practices, we can first look at what makes social justice so difficult. According to Ahmed, economies of hate circulate and “skin becomes the border” and “hate constructs the surface of bodies;” in this way, Ahmed explains emotion’s⁴ role through its circulation and its construction of racism and hate in general (53). It is the circulation of hate and its construction of the way our bodies are read that perpetuates discrimination and oppression, and change is also difficult due to how we are “invested in

⁴ I use the term “affect” in place of Ahmed’s “emotion;” the terms are synonymous and show the constructed nature of emotion.

social norms [and] emotions [that] attach us to conditions of subordination” (Ahmed 12). In this context, activist work for social change is both difficult and crucial to forming a just society. While hate and fear are constructed and circulated, liberatory affect may be circulated as well. The circulation of affect is thus crucial for activist groups to combat the “stickiness” of hateful affect. One such fight for change is represented by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) that fought racial injustice through tactics such as education and sit-ins. Their use of pathos in particular to circulate affect as a political vehicle for change is illustrated by the success of four African American students who organized a sit-in in Greensboro. By highlighting injustice through the body in a visceral way, they gained followers and media attention to challenge Jim Crow laws, in part through the construction or reinforcement of affective investments against segregation (Boren 114). The circulation of affect through pathos has been used by many activist student movements in the sixties and beyond. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) also used such tactics, as well as voter drives, protests, demonstrations, “freedom rides,” and boycotts to integrate colleges (Borren 138). These methods represent the use of both speaking out and writing speeches to combat injustice and call communities to social action, while the “freedom rides” put diverse bodies together to enact change by example. As Shari Stenberg writes, bodies represent “a material, LIVED site of political struggle” and activists politicized bodies even further to construct a vision of a just society (45). Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were also at work, and wrote seminal speeches and manifestos, such as the Port Huron Statement by Tom Hayden that challenged racism and militarism as it defined the platform of the SDS. Later, in 1966, the Black Panthers wrote and released their Ten

Point Program to elucidate their goals, to educate the community, and to call Black communities and society to action. Here, I suggest that rhetorics of education (employing both logos and pathos) circulated affect that helped give rise to the motivation of people to join movements and fight injustice. Through texts and activist action, these groups circulated affect that inspired many people to envision a more just community and to take social action.

Beliefs in constructing a just community are also affective investments that can give rise to social action to represent marginalized groups in the academy. Student and faculty fights for a just curriculum were fueled by deep seated beliefs in equality. Both in the past and present, activists are working for inclusion in academia and academic discourse – understanding the power of education within the academy and working to challenge power structures that deny a just education. As Rhoads notes, students were (and are) fighting for “freedom – the right of all people to share in the construction of meaning in their lives, including educational lives” (23). Issues of identity, community, and power may have helped to construct affect and affective investments in this context, and give rise to people’s deeply felt and overlapping emotions that can fuel action, such as hope, anger, and commitment. Specifically, affective investments about the importance of freedom and representation may have motivated people to fight many, many battles for the creation of a just university that includes African and African American Studies, Asian and Asian American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, American Indian Studies, and Latino studies to name a few areas (Boren; Downs and Manion; Rhoads; Yamane). Activists have fought for these areas of study across the country, and as Becky Thompson points out, “the struggle over what is to be considered

valid knowledge goes much deeper than issues of educational curricula – this struggle represents the battleground for the soul and character of American Society” (Thompson qtd. in Yamane 6).

While students have fought educational battles because of deep affective investments and emotions, the role of the activist rhetor is also important in shaping student affect for just purposes (in this case, educational justice). A rhetor can have a strong effect on the members of the community. Feelings of the audience are not independent, but can be constructed by the rhetor’s circulation of affect to shift the *structure* of affect of the audience in significant ways. For example, instead of casting the audience as hostile to just educational practices, a rhetor(s) can shift the structure of affect of the audience to ignorant, opening the potential for change through education. This could also occur on an individual level: a student who is at first apathetic towards this cause can be shifted into a different relation to the issue that leads to support for the cause. By listening to the rhetor(s) and understanding the values that shape the issue, such as community and equality, the student can experience a shift in his or her general worldview that now supports curricular change. Raymond Williams’s “structure of feelings”⁵ is central here: such a structure is “concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systemic beliefs are in practice variable...over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences” (132). These structures of feelings arise from a set of lived, material experiences, and interactions with meanings, values, and beliefs that can shift over time. This concept is crucial, because activists can shift an audience’s structure of

⁵ “structure of feeling” is equivalent to my use of “structure of affect”

affect to accomplish social change at an individual or even group level. Affect circulates, and a successful circulation may change the structures of affect of audience members who begin by being apathetic or even hostile to a cause: this affective shift represents a larger change in a person or audience to a position that they had not inhabited before.

Just curricular change may also be a struggle for other affective reasons, such as unjust ideologies that are “enfleshed” in people. For example, Asian American studies was not formed at UMass Amherst until 1997. This movement arose in the context of student and faculty multicultural movements that called for “inclusion [and] representation within a social institution...not just for rights, but for participation and transformation of power relations to a democratic and collective identity” (Rhoads 225). But many resisted this cause, and one must wonder why: as McLaren writes, enfleshment in the body shapes students’, faculty’s, and administrators’ desires, beliefs, and ways of understanding the world because it “enfolds social structures and dominant discourses that give rise to oppressive forms of desire and belief,” albeit in different ways (67). Enfleshment may represent one reason why students and faculty alike have clung to the discriminatory “status quo” in fighting against Asian American studies and other programs that are not conceived of as part of a “Western canon.”⁶ However, an understanding of enfleshment gives us a few ways to combat it: first we can foster self-consciousness of unjust ideologies, and second, we can call upon enfleshed ideologies that support justice and interact with affective investments,⁷ which I will take up. For example, audience enfleshment of their own socio-political identities can be illuminated

⁶ Enfleshment is insidious because, as an ideology, it can run deeper than affective investments and are more opaque to people, but do give rise to belief and action.

⁷ Here, I argue that multiple and contradictory ideologies may be enfleshed, including those that support justice.

by the rhetor to lead to affective investments in representation and inclusion in the university curriculum and concerns. Those with marginalized identities may feel this type of affective investment based on their erasure from both the curriculum and power structures of the university, but students who represent “the norm” may also develop similar affective investments based on a sense of unjust privilege, for example. Affective investments in community may also be constructed or reinforced through activist efforts, as activists can offer a vision of a “utopian” society that may resonate with the potential enmeshment of ideologies of democracy, representation, and equality in the community and beyond (Rhoads 225). Further, the audience’s potential enmeshment in democracy may be enhanced by the rhetor to challenge hierarchical and oppressive power structures on campus, and shift the power to all students, including students of color, women, and working-class students. While students will have different investments, a rhetor can help the audience to become cognizant of their own enmeshment, and thus help members to be self-conscious of why and how to work for justice; the audience can also become self-conscious of dominant beliefs or tendencies and change those through “a praxis of self and social empowerment” to act in new ways (74).

Activist students also challenge unjust academic policies, and I will highlight just a few to sketch the diverse nature of this activism and its use of affect. In the mid-nineties, activist students fought against Michigan State’s decision to eliminate the state’s tuition program for American Indians. Student activists fought back through personal stories in speeches, showing treaties, historicizing the issue, working with others to form coalitions, demonstrating, and calling on legal and moral obligations of the university (Rhoads). Here, students used a variety of texts and education to support their call for

justice and worked to construct the students' and the public's feelings of outrage by employing pathos in particular -- using personal stories and explaining a history of racist practices, which are common, activist tactics to engage people on an affective level (CEPA). Through persuasive education designed to move the audience's emotions as it informed them of injustice, activist students sought to recruit members for their movement, and prevent the university from denying their rights. Also, in 1992, activist students at Penn State protested for the inclusion of an anti-discrimination clause for the GLBT community. These students rallied and organized actions that were educational and designed to interact with people's affective investments through pathos, whether giving rise to positive or negative emotions in their audiences. They organized "coming out" days, facilitated teach-ins, spoke out at all times, organized "kiss-ins," flooded the malls, talked to professors, and "camped it up" through clothes and fashion (Rhoads). While there were violence and taunts, the activist students kept up the movement through multiple modes of social action by combining writing, rhetoric, body, and affect. Eve Sedgwick highlights the performative power of bodies to engage in activism: "with the force of our bodies, however, and in that sense performatively, our object was not merely to demand representation, representation elsewhere, but ourselves to give, to BE representation: somehow to smuggle onto the prohibitive airwaves some version of the apparently unrepresentably dangerous and endangered conjunction, queer and black" (31). Beyond representing to an audience, the sheer force of representing bodies proved liberating.

With these student movements, the circulation of affect often involves hope. As students also take part in more global movements, such as apartheid, sweatshop

exploitation, the war in Iraq, and anti-genocide work, the belief in the possibility of change may be what drives these groups (at least in part). Where issues are farther from home, it is especially important to circulate affect that supports hope to recruit members, because audiences are less likely to take action if they feel that little can be done. As Laura Micciche points out, the circulation of hope provides the potential for change (98). In student activist movements, hope seems essential.

Affect is thus crucial to multiple facets of student activism. In sum, activists circulate affect to move an audience and even shift an audience to a newer way of being in the world. Student activist groups can awaken us to injustice through pathos and provide a platform from which to effect change. These student groups and movements utilize affect in their rhetoric and activities in order to move their audiences in a variety of ways – from changing a sexist belief to becoming part of the activist group. The circulation of affect is versatile enough to help accomplish a diverse range of activist goals. Activism and affect are intimately linked.

While we can see the circulation of affect at a macro level with student movements, we can also look more closely at the micro level of activist student experience. A circulation of affect may also be key to an activist student's participation as a member of a group, but further as a potential writer of activist texts. As the Point Huron Statement and the Ten Point Plan circulated affect, individual activist texts may do the same on a more micro level. And as affect is utilized in activist group efforts, it may well be utilized by an individual activist in her writing. The circulation of affect may play an important role in how activist students produce texts for social action. In turning to study the way in which affect interacts with writing, I follow the work of other

compositionists including Laura Micciche and Susan McLeod. However, Micciche focuses on the rhetoric of emotion, while I plan to be grounded in the writing process itself. McLeod examines students' emotions and emotional states during the writing process; however, she does not examine how the circulation of affect may be affecting such processes. For example, she does not attend to student affective investments that may have bearing on their "excitement" or "boredom" in writing. In contrast to McLeod, I intend to study a circulation of affect that includes how and why students circulate particular affect in specific ways as they write that takes their affective investments – based on issues such as identity, community, and power -- into account. Studying an affective writing process can help us to understand ingredients in student writing for social action in our classrooms.

In studying affect in writing for social action, we can first turn our attention to the research process itself. My second Chapter, entitled "A Case Study Methodology: a Recursive Process" illustrates my data collection and data analysis. In looking at individual, activist material experience and rhetorical practices, we can examine how students utilize academic discourse in their activism and call upon activism in their academic endeavors. I will discuss this process in Chapter 3, "Breaking a Binary: Student Activist Writers." Activist movements suggest a close connection between rhetorical practices and affect, but an examination of activist case study students shows an affective writing process for social action. Chapter 4, "Writing for Social Action: Affective Agency" demonstrates how activist students engage in this process outside of the classroom, in ways they feel are successful. Students write for social action inside of the classroom as well. However, students writing within the classroom do not experience

the full, affective writing process that allows them to successfully write for social change. I will examine this situation in Chapter 5, “Writing for Social Action: Affective Limits.” The prior promises and limits have implications for the “ingredients” for social action writing in the composition classroom. In Chapter 6, “Can Students Write for Social Action in Our Classrooms?” I will conclude with implications for the writing classroom to create the academic, rhetorical space for students to write for social action.

CHAPTER 2

A CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY: A RECURSIVE PROCESS

A study of student activism and writing entails a few premises: students can be political, and the campus is also a political space. We can learn from the rhetorical practices of political, activist students on campus as they negotiate both activism and academia, and connect the two spheres in deep and sometimes surprising ways. As students oscillate between the two spheres on one hand, they may also try to write for social action in both contexts. We can also look to their feelings, motivations, and attitudes about the work that they do as activists. It is important to understand why these activists “do what they do” to set the context to look more closely at their attitudes and feelings in writing and making writing choices. In turning to student activist writing, we can also examine the crucial role of affect. In studying how student activists construct writing processes, one can find ingredients for writing for social action in the classroom – where students and teachers alike can work for just change.

Research Questions

In researching student activism and writing from the point of view of activist students, my specific goals are to answer the following questions: 1) What is activist experience and what are student motivations for joining an activist group and staying involved with activism? How are these motivations produced? How do activist experience and motivation include affect? 2) How does students’ work with activism affect their academic writing and their attitudes and feelings toward academic writing? Likewise, how does students’ experience with academic writing affect students’ attitudes and feelings towards activist writing and action? How can this interplay enhance or limit

their activist work and/or their academic writing? 3) How can students utilize their lived, activist experience and motivations in academic writing? Under what circumstances can they do so? If they cannot utilize their lived, activist experience and motivations, why not, and under what circumstances? How can students who want to *bridge* their lived, activist experience with academic writing do so? Or, why may students be satisfied in separating their activism from their writing? Why?

My first question on activist experience, motivation, and how motivation is produced sets the lens for the rest of the study. It is important to explore the experience of student activists in order to understand their rhetorical practices (reading, writing, and speaking) in relation to the educational and political work they may do, such as political lobbying, fundraising, coalition building, recruitment, and educating themselves and the larger community. I suggest that these types of activities represent important areas of lived, activist experience, and I want to develop a deeper understanding of such activities. With these initial questions, I also seek to discover why students are drawn to their particular activist group; how they arrive at participating in the group; how they feel about their work and the issues they address; and how their participation affects other aspects of their lives – such as future career aspirations. In this case, it seems important to inquire into the ways in which affect is constructed and circulated for individual students and the group as a whole. As I posit that affect arises relationally, based on a myriad of factors, I look to see the ways in which affect may be generated through students' identities, histories, socio-political positioning, membership in the group, and relationship to the larger university institution. This area of inquiry is important because it can contextualize student writing, as well as frame student lived, activist experience

and motivations, and the affective investments that may, in part, give rise to diverse activist actions. This question then represents attention to the “ingredients” for writing for social action.

My second question is designed to examine students’ relationships to their activist work and writing practices. The questions are crafted to inquire into students’ conceptions of academic writing in general, to get a sense of how they envision such writing, and how that vision shapes their writing. With this second question, I delve into students’ attitudes and feelings towards different kinds of writing. I study the subjective feelings, or emotions, that may motivate students to write. I also examine the affective investments students have in relation to the interplay of activism and academic writing. This aspect of the question is important because it sheds light on how students approach, understand, and implement academic writing, beyond the purely discursive. Along with concepts of affect, the focus is on how students perceive their activist work in relation to their academic writing in order to explore the promises and challenges of bridging their activist work with their experience of academic writing. Likewise, it is important to note whether any experiences with their academic writing have enhanced or inspired their activism. The interplay of lived, activist experience and motivation with their experience of academic writing is a rich area of inquiry as we can see the ways in which students construct writing relationally, in multiple spheres. From this question, compositionists can learn about activist positionality and how this may (or may not) translate into their classroom writing. We can learn more about what student activists might bring to writing by remedying the common blind spot that creates an apolitical campus and apolitical students.

My third goal is to examine how students may or may not bridge their lived, activist experience with academic writing. This question builds on the prior ones, but becomes more specific as it also applies to writing samples from the students (see “Writing Samples” section), an analysis of these samples, and interviews with students based on their samples. This interview and sample process is designed to learn how students may or may not want to use their lived, activist experience in producing various kinds of texts, including academic writing. I explore whether students feel that they can utilize their activist experience, and how they have done so or might do so. Further, this question points to students who write for social action outside of the classroom, which we may contrast with students who write within the classroom. Again, this question is designed to uncover ingredients for writing for social action that arise from both activist work and classroom writing: exploring the ways that students produce and interact with their own texts sheds light on the complex interactions of activist writing and academic writing. For example, it may show the strengths of their experiences with classroom writing that can enhance their activist work, as well as their experiences of barriers between academic writing in relation to their activism. In turn, activist writing and work may enhance or limit students’ academic writing. It may also bring to light other ingredients for writing for social action that do not depend on content, but rather context – for example, the way students feel about writing because of their activist positionality and how they feel based on their position in specific classrooms, interacting with specific teachers, students, and writing assignments. This line of inquiry can also develop and deepen the ways in which affect operates in student texts and student exigencies and understandings of their writing – for example, what affective investments do students

have in their own texts, and what affective investments might the texts reflect? As I have suggested, the circulation of affect may play key roles in activism, and this issue merits inquiry in specific student texts as well. For this third question, I then explore students' relations to their texts and how such interactions may relate to their activist experience.

Development of Research Site

I explored and networked with a number of student activist sites on campus during the fall of 2010, before my study began. I was seeking out student groups because I wanted to work with student activists on campus in order to look at the interplay of activism and writing. I felt that activist groups were a fertile place to start, as it might be difficult to track down individual, undergraduate activists outside of a group. I planned to start research in the spring, but I wanted to start participating with groups in the fall in order to learn about them. I took the following steps: 1) assess whether the group met my criteria as a “student activist group” as I defined it in Chapter 1, 2) if so, examine its potential to answer my research questions and goals to learn about student activist writing for social action outside and inside of the classroom; if #2 seemed likely, 3) become a part of the group, learn from the group, and contribute to the group and 4) assess logistical issues, such as the number of students I would be recruiting case study members from (I hoped for six activist students). First, I looked for an autonomous, student-run and organized group that charts its own course.⁸ This kind of group supported the conditions for students to have more agency in action and in writing as opposed to MassPirg, for example, which was run top-down by a directive parent

⁸ For the purposes of this study then, the term “student activism” refers mainly to student groups on campus that are working for social justice because they represent a community of students who chart their own course towards positive change and may also represent broader social movements.

organization and gave students pre-written texts to work with. I looked to different groups in the context of their meeting my definition of a student-led activist group for the purposes of the study, but such a group was unexpectedly difficult to find. Student Bridges tutored students, while UMass Buddies placed students with a younger otherly-abled person. While these are important groups, they were not working for social action in a more political sense. Another group, Phenom, was mostly run by professors. The Cannabis Coalition did not line up with my values, and I felt I could not work with them effectively. While I also researched the Labor Studies Center, the Everywoman's Center, and the Stonewall Center, I wanted to find a student-run and organized group that would serve my research purposes to look at student led and organized activism in relation to activist student writing. These Centers were not student-run.

In this context, I identified three sites that seemed more student-run and socially active, and worked with them for the duration of the school year: fall 2010-spring 2011. These sites included STAND (the student anti-genocide coalition), the Center for Educational Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO). I attended the prior groups' weekly meetings and events, and kept an unofficial journal of my experiences with the groups. While each group did important work, CEPA and the ISO also presented some drawbacks that were both logistical and unsatisfactory for my research focus and questions. First, in the fall, most of the CEPA activists were paid by the student government; as I was looking for student activist volunteers, they did not meet my criteria. I thought that professional activists would not represent students who are working for a cause on their own time (although the CEPA activists were inspirational). I wanted to work with activist student volunteers who had motivations that

did not include funding.⁹ Second, CEPA was quite small at the time and there were only five active members; I felt that this did not give me a large enough pool to recruit the six case study students I was hoping to work with. The ISO presented a few problems. The group met weekly, but did not organize their own events; in general, they took part in other group's events and meetings (which was not always a happy partnering). As I wanted to study an activist group that put on events and how members felt about activities and events, the ISO was not ideal. The ISO was also run from the top down, and were less autonomous than CEPA and STAND. I was concerned that I would not have a variety of responses to my research questions because the students' ideologies were so closely aligned. Like CEPA, there were not enough undergraduates to ask to be part of my study – the group was mostly composed of graduate students.

While all of the prior groups did important work, I decided to select STAND because the group strongly represented undergraduate student agency and autonomy for activist action. STAND was organized and run by undergraduate students who were diverse in areas of race and ethnicity, class, but less with gender (there were significantly more women than men). They were all unpaid volunteers and came from a variety of backgrounds and academic majors, and they represented a large enough pool for me to recruit six case study students. In working with STAND activist students, I felt I would be able to study their motivations, writing, and affect in relation to their group, their activities, and their diverse writing and rhetorical practices. STAND had a strong connection to campus and was rooted in the local, campus community, but also networked with other STAND chapters. These activist students were highly dedicated

⁹ I do not argue that funding detracts from CEPA's work, but that it represents a different kind of activist group from those that are voluntary.

and committed to ending genocide and working for human rights, in areas such as Darfur, Burma, and the Congo. UMass STAND was also run in a way that supports *members'* agency and autonomy: for events and actions outside of meetings, STAND did not pressure students to participate in all of their actions. Instead, STAND encouraged participation, but left such participation up to the decisions of individual members. In this way, STAND didn't dictate, but supported students' choices about which actions to take up. The group was also very active, meeting once a week and engaging in multiple activist acts, such as education for members and the community, showing documentaries, organizing panels, fundraising, and political lobbying. Every semester, STAND held a benefit concert to support a student activist group in Sudan (Girifna), and has lobbied successfully (in coalition with multiple STAND chapters) for Obama's appointment of Dane Smith as a special envoy for Darfur. This represented a third reason for my choice of STAND as a research site: it was part of a much larger student movement against genocide and for human rights.

In Chapter 1, I discussed education as persuasion and the circulation of affect in activist movements, and STAND was one such movement. The group started in 2005, is the fastest growing student movement in the US, and had over 850 high school and college chapters in the US and globally. Nationally, STAND has convinced colleges to divest from Sudan, has successfully lobbied for government action to stop the genocide in Sudan, and has raised over \$600,000 for humanitarian aid and grassroots programs in their areas of interest. These factors made STAND attractive because it is such a vital and active organization and it really "gets things done" – both at the national/international level and the local level at UMass. STAND's mission was also attractive, as it wanted to

help and support each country's move towards human rights, understanding that change must come from each country and the people in it, and rejecting paternalistic and imperialist interventions and actions. STAND represented an excellent example of a student movement to educate and spread awareness, and to circulate affect that encourages students to join and participate in the group, as well as move the public to care about issues of genocide and human rights. Because of these features, I felt STAND supported the legacy of historic and current student activism. The nature of UMass STAND as autonomous, active, and representative of a larger student movement made STAND a fertile site to study student activism on campus.

The work of STAND also represented my academic and personal interests throughout my years of education, and so I have some common interests with the students. As an undergraduate student at Tufts University, I took an intensive, year-long course on genocide and refugees, and co-organized an international symposium on the topic. I also took an intensive course with Julie Mertus, an international human rights lawyer who specializes in genocide, war crimes, refugees, and women. We studied gender, genocide, refugees, and international law. Therefore, I had a significant academic background in issues of genocide and human rights when I became a member of STAND. My own activist work has tended to be on the advocacy side of the activist spectrum. For example, I volunteered with the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, where I answered calls on their free legal information hotline and provided callers with information and referrals. STAND focused on education and awareness, and this resonated with my advocacy background. In order to take an ethical stance, I felt it was important for the reader to understand my background and that I am not working

with these issues for the first time, and may have more depth of understanding, but more assumptions about genocide.

Participant Selection

I studied STAND as my primary site, and six individual members for in-depth case studies. Case study participants were required to have worked with STAND for at least one semester, and to be eighteen. Working for STAND for at least one semester was a requirement because students would need to have worked with the group in order to describe their participation with the group for a significant amount of time (three or more months) and discuss their experience in the group, their activities, and how this has impacted their life and writing. STAND students volunteered for the position of a case study student. To recruit students, I explained the requirements of the case study position to them at a STAND meeting: three interviews, participation in a focus group, and their providing me with writing samples. I also explained the details of the informed consent form and that they would receive compensation. They received a ten dollar gift card to Target for each of the three interviews that I conducted with each of them. If they did all three interviews, this means that they received a total of thirty dollars. I gave the STAND members one week to think about it, and at the next STAND meeting I explained the position again and handed out the informed consent sheets to everyone. Students who wanted to volunteer signed the informed consent sheet, and those who were not interested left it blank. I then collected the informed consent sheets, and made contact with the volunteers over email. Five of the case study students volunteered and attended all of the interviews with me and provided the writing samples, and one student missed the third interview and did not provide writing samples.

The case study students are composed of five women and one man. This is representative of the group, as women outnumber men. There is a range of college years: Elizabeth and Lisa are sophomores, Sam is a freshman, Laura is a junior, Mary is a senior and Rachel is a “super-senior,” meaning she is in her fifth year. In terms of socio-political positioning, the students often linked their identities with motivation to work with STAND in particular (See Chapter 3). They also discuss their majors, which impact their activist lens. For example, Elizabeth identifies as a second generation Asian American and on “the very tip” of middle class. She is a sophomore who studies Sociology and is receiving an Asian American studies certificate. Lisa identifies as Armenian and working-class, and she majors in English and minors in Political Science. Mary identifies as working-class and white, and she majors in Social Thought and Political Economy. She is also getting a certificate in African studies. Laura feels that her religion as a Unitarian Universalist is important, as well as her position as middle class and white. She majors in English and minors in Psychology. Sam identifies as male and middle class, and studies English. Rachel describes her position as a white woman and middle class, with a family interested in Buddhism. She is a Wildlife Conservation major, with a certificate in Environmental Justice. Interestingly, all of the students discuss aspects of their privilege – whether white privilege, class privilege, and/or privilege in comparison to the people in the STAND areas that they worked with (Darfur, the Congo, and Burma). All of the female students also identify as women specifically, which they feel has bearing on the work they do with STAND, where victims of genocide and refugees are often women. The male student “feels good” about being a man who is part of the group.

Methodology

Because I choose to focus on student activist experience in particular, I use a qualitative methodology that allows researchers to “try to discover the participants’ point of view, thoughts, and feelings, and why they think, feel, and behave as they do” (Stotsky and Mall 136). Throughout this study, I try to meet that goal. As researchers point out, qualitative studies work at a deeper level than quantitative ones in many cases. Case studies are a main method and focus of my research because they provide a framework to get a nuanced and complex analysis of the beliefs, attitudes, and motivations of activist student writers, and a more holistic understanding of their writing and experiences of writing. The intertwining of activist experience, academic experience, and writing is complex, and as Dyson and Genishi write, “it is the messy complexity of human experience that leads researchers to case studies in the qualitative or interpretive tradition” (3). Therefore, I use case studies in order to help me to study the depth of experience with both activism and writing, and the interplay of the two spheres, of each case study student activist. I also use it to show the depth of each student’s emotions and how they construct these feelings in their writing for social action.

The case study method allows me to learn about individual student activists in more detail than only surveys or short interviews, for example. By exploring issues in activist and academic contexts with these case study students, I learn how student activism affects students’ attitudes and feelings towards writing in activist and academic spheres, and more specifically, the roles of affect in writing for social action inside and outside of the classroom. Case studies are designed to shed light on “the meaning people make of their lives in very particular contexts,” such as the situatedness of students as

members of STAND and college students at UMass Amherst (Dyson and Genishi 9). This also includes the affective meanings that students make as they construct emotions in their writing and in their activities. The strength of the case studies for the above purposes is that activist students each represent different data on activism and writing in multiple spheres. By studying each student activist closely, I am able to delve into their experience, feelings, and writing in a comprehensive manner. This case study method “identifies what is common and unique about a case” and I posit that each case study student values writing, but constructs emotion in writing in unique ways (Birnbaum, Emig, and Fisher 193).

Because I conducted three interviews with each case study student activist, a focus group, and collected writing samples, I was able to explore student activist work and writing in its complexity and depth. The case studies are fueled by the voices of the activist students and their own ideas, observations, and insights. This is crucial because they provided me with qualitative data based on their own activist work, and the data thus arose from them, rather than only my own observations of the group, for example. With the case study students, I was able to explore facets of activism and writing much more fully than with other methods, such as short interviews with all group members that would not adequately address my purpose. This method allowed me to focus on holistic, descriptive, and exploratory elements (Merriam 30).

Participant-Observer Position

I acted as a participant-observer and observed STAND meetings and events to continuously learn about lived, activist experience; the feelings, attitudes, and motivations of STAND students; the types of activities that they engage in; and any

writing they did for their meetings and events. The field of Composition often encourages this role of the participant-observer because of ethical principles that call for researcher participation, rather than a more distant relationship of “looking down from above.” A participant-observer is more connected to the group being studied, and is better able to study a group he or she is a part of, while making a contribution to the group as an active member as well. Since I had been a member of STAND since September 2010, I was able to share my own experiences with the co-coordinators and other members, such as my studies of genocide and my prior activist work. I also mentioned my interest in researching student activism to the co-leaders, along with my other reasons for joining the group based on my background and commitment to human rights. Ethically, I felt I should be honest with the co-leaders and members about my potential, future research interests, and explain that I did have multiple reasons for my participation. Because of my participation in the fall, the co-coordinators knew me fairly well before I asked permission to do this study in February 2011. They were in fact excited that I would be writing about STAND and that they could *help* me to do so. I reciprocated with STAND through a few avenues: I helped with their events, I researched and reported on Darfur, and I put STAND in touch with the future president of the Student Government (who I knew through working with CEPA). He has since worked with STAND to secure a room for them in the campus center, as we had been meeting at the cafeteria at the campus center and it was hard to hear everyone – a serious problem. He became committed to working with STAND and helping the group with any institutional problems. I also continue to work with STAND to this day; I have been a member for three years, and I have consistently gone to the weekly meetings and events.

While I am not an undergraduate student, my participation as a STAND member likely helped me in my research. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that I have affective investments in the goals and projects of STAND based on my socio-political identity, history of social justice work, and involvement in STAND's community over the academic years. In this context, I found it especially important to maintain a balance between participant and observer roles in order to "see the strange." I felt that I must be especially careful to look through a critical lens and focus on analysis instead of reporting. Further, I needed to "step back" from my involvement in the group and examine the group's practices, rather than take them for granted. Nevertheless, I did have biases because I enjoyed working with STAND and became very friendly with members of the group. I felt that STAND was a very welcoming and supportive community, and that I shared their general style of activism that has a specific focus on education, awareness, and advocacy. Throughout this study, though, I tried to critically assess myself, be reflective of my own positionality, and strive to keep a critical distance. Since I have also worked with the ISO and CEPA for the full academic year, I was able to compare the student activist groups at UMass and this helped me to "step back" and be critical of STAND as well (although I was not be comparing and contrasting as part of my study).

My involvement with STAND and my relationships with the activist students helped me with this study, but also limit me in some ways. My ongoing involvement with STAND inspires me and has motivated me to work on the dissertation. The friendships I developed are meaningful, and I hope that the students will read the dissertation and enjoy it. STAND gave me consistent support in my writing of the

dissertation, and because I know the students, this study has also been especially interesting and meaningful for me. At the same time, in synthesizing and writing my dissertation, I tended to report on each focal student, rather than analyze what the data suggests. I think that my knowledge of each student as a whole person in some ways prevented me from “telling each student’s story” because I had a hard time seeing “the story.” I tended to see the student, and forget that the audience does not “know” the student. I was so interested in the data that I tended to feel “reporting” was interesting, and also forgot that I was engaging in qualitative analysis. In these ways, my position as participant-observer and then participant shape the study.

Data Collection

The data collection is as follows: 1) I conducted one survey of STAND members, 2) I conducted three interviews with each case study student, 3) I performed textual analysis of case study student writing samples, and 4) I led a focus group discussion. This data is designed to answer my research questions about the interplay of student activism and academics, including student motivation, affect, and social action writing. The survey was crafted to create an overall picture of student activist practices. As I am using a case study methodology, the interviews are integral to examining student experiences with activism, academics, and writing. These interviews were created to go into depth with students’ feelings about both academic work and activist work, and to explore their multiple uses of writing. The interviews created a space where students could be thoughtful about their values, beliefs, and modes of meaning-making from a position of expertise – they have knowledge as activists, and I wanted to learn about their insights. I chose to organize a focus group because it expands on my second round of

interviews to encourage students to engage in discussion where they build on each other's ideas and ask each other questions to investigate activist and academic practices. This gave students the chance to discuss the interplay of activism and academics in different ways and through a different rhetorical situation than an interview, where they could joke around with each other and create a context of thoughtful fun. I chose to have students email me writing samples in particular because I would learn about their writing from the texts and study the rhetorical choices that they make. This aids my study of their writing for social action and whether they can bridge their lived, activist experience with academic writing.

Survey

I began my study with a more global survey to get a sense of the STAND members. I inquired into their activist experience and their potential writing that relates to their activist work. The survey provided more respondents than the six case study students, but a more cursory picture. Still, I found that examining student motivations for activist work, their feelings about the issues that they work with, their concrete activities as activists, their potential writing on activist issues, and the impact that their work has had on their lives to be very important. The survey questions were:

1. Why did you decide to become a member of STAND?
2. How do you feel about the issue of genocide? How do you feel about your work to stop it?
3. What activist activities have you engaged in as part of STAND and/or other activist groups? (Such as meetings, benefit concerts, lobbying politicians through email/calls, etc.)

4. What kinds of writing have you done (or do you do) for STAND, or writing that relates to STAND in any way? (This includes emails, Facebook, blogging, etc.)
5. What have you learned or realized by being a member of STAND? (This can include what you have learned about yourself.)

This survey helped me to find patterns of feelings and attitudes about both their lived, activist experiences and their writing in relation to their activism (or lack thereof). I identified both commonalities and differences between the surveys and to see a range of motivations, attitudes, and writing practices of students. In this way, I used the surveys to discover common themes and important differences between the students in STAND in the context of activist work and potential activist writing. While my focus is the case study method, the survey allowed me to identify general experiences of the STAND members and set a context for the case study research.

Interviews

With my case study focus, I conducted three interviews with each case study member over the Spring 2011 semester; each interview was approximately one hour long to one and a half hours long. I used in-depth interviews to construct case studies because “at the root of in depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people, and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman 9). This represents the underlying goal of this dissertation to understand the activist and writing experiences of each student. Each interview was designed to address one major component of my three research questions.

For the first interview, I hoped to learn about lived, activist experience and motivation, and how affect may relate to these factors. This “lived, activist experience and motivation” includes the feelings and attitudes of activist students, as well as their engagement in activist activities, such as lobbying politicians or attending activist meetings. Therefore, I studied the kinds of activities that activists engage in, and how and why they conducted their activist work. Interviewing was especially important because I wanted to learn from the students’ perspectives and the strength of in-depth interviews is that “through [them] we can come to understand the details of people’s experiences from their point of view...and we can discover interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context” (Seidman 130). In order to answer my first research question, I asked the students:

1. When did your interest in STAND issues, such as genocide and human rights, start?
2. What is your background in activism in general?
3. Why did you decide to become a member of STAND?
4. Does your identity influence your decision to join STAND and your ongoing work with STAND? For example, you may think of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, etc.
5. Do you work with additional activist groups or other extracurricular groups now?
6. What activist activities do you engage in as part of STAND (both in the past and in the present)? (meetings, events)
7. What was an event/activity that you think was most successful? Why? Can you walk me through the organizing process and/or your participation in this event?

8. How do you work to promote student interest and understanding of genocide and other human rights issues (for members and nonmembers)? What are your strategies? (How do you encourage people to join STAND and/or attend STAND events that make an impact on them? Membership and events)
9. Do the issues of genocide and human rights abuses affect your emotions? If so, how do you deal with the emotions that genocide and human rights abuses may provoke?
10. How do you feel about your work to stop genocide and human rights abuses?
11. Do your emotions influence your participation/activities you identify for the group (for leaders)? If so, how? If not, why not?
12. What have you learned from participating in STAND?
13. Do you have plans for the future? What are they? Do they relate to STAND in some way?
14. Why do you think that STAND is so popular with students (in high schools, colleges, and across the globe)?
15. What kinds of research and writing do you do for STAND, or writing that relates to STAND?

These questions helped me to begin my research by allowing me to study the activist experience of each case study student in depth. I hoped to learn about their reasons and motivations for their activist work, the nature of their activities, their attitudes and feelings about their activism, and how activism impacts their current lives and potential future plans. With these questions, I learned how and why activism became a part of their lives, and I learned how they qualitatively and holistically experience their past and

current activist work. Seidman writes, “at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth” (9). These student stories are valuable, period. But this interview helped me to lay the foundations for further studying activism and writing by helping me to learn what student activists do in the world, how they feel about their cause and activities, and why they engage in activism. One may synthesize the prior interview questions to inquire deeply into motivation and the areas that potentially contribute to it, such as identity, community, empowerment, and ethics. This line of inquiry shed light on the ingredients for writing for social action because students discussed the many facets and feelings about their participation and social action with the group – it answers many “whys” of exigencies for action.

My second case study interview was designed to explore case study students’ feelings and attitudes towards the relations between their activist work and potential activist writing, and their academic work and writing: what is the interplay between the two spheres? According to Merriam, a case study method is very good at answering “how” and “why” questions (32). This method works well to uncover how students negotiate the two spheres and why they make the choices that they do. Building on the data of their lived, activist experience and motivation from the first interview, this second interview was meant to elicit students’ thoughts and feelings on their ability to bridge, or connect, activism and academic writing, and/or the barriers to connecting activism with academic writing. This represents an ongoing process for students as they negotiate the two spheres, and case study methodology is a “particularly suitable design if you are interested in process [and] causal information” (Merriam 33). Questions I asked for my second interview were:

1. What is your major? Why did you choose this major?
2. What are some different writing assignments that you have done in the major?
3. How do you define a good paper? What does a good paper look like?
4. Has your activism affected your attitude towards what a good paper looks like?
5. What does academic writing mean to you?
6. How did you learn to write college papers?
7. When do you like to write? When do you dislike to write?
8. What has been your best experience in writing in college? Your worst experience?
9. Do you feel that writing will be important to you in the future?
10. Do you feel that your activist work relates to your academic studies and writing?
How or why not?
 - a. If you don't feel that academic work needs to relate to your activist work, why not?
11. Are there barriers you (sometimes) see between academic writing (and/or your studies) and your activist work and concerns? If so, what are the barriers or challenges to creating relations?
12. Does your academic writing ever limit you in terms of what you can say and how you can say it? (You can think of a particular course.)
13. What might you change in your courses to (further) include your activist experience and interests? What might you change about writing assignments?
14. Do you try to bridge, or connect, the two spheres of activism and academic writing? How?

15. Does your academic writing ever enhance your activist work in some way? (You can think of a particular course.)
16. Do you think academic writing can help your activist work? How or why not?
17. Do your emotions and emotional investments affect your writing in general?
18. What gets you passionate about an issue? Why? How does this passion relate to your writing?
19. When do you feel that you write the best?

Through this second interview, I explored case study students' conceptions of academic writing and how it relates to their activism in order to examine whether and how students can bring their activist work into classroom writing. I wanted to learn if student activists felt that their activist experience is relevant to their writing, and if they felt that academic writing allowed them to pursue their activist commitments in the classroom, through writing. In studying these writing attitudes and practices, I learned more about the interface of activist action and academic writing in order to examine how student activism shaped students' feelings, attitudes, motivations, and purposes for academic writing, and how academic writing might in turn shape students' feelings, attitudes, and motivations for activism. I continued to follow the thread of affect from the first interview, and examined how affect (for example, affective investments in particular) came into play in writing contexts. In doing so, I examined the promises and challenges of bridging and connecting activist and academic spheres through writing, and also studying the role of writing in students' future careers.

My first two interviews are integral in exploring how students may utilize activist experience in writing practices, and how they may bridge activist experience and

academic writing. However, the second interview does not include my actual reading of the texts that students discuss, and it is missing one crucial component to my study: the specificity of the students' actual texts (that I can read). Therefore, my third interview focused on the concrete writing of the students, in order to look more closely at their writing practices, attitudes about writing, and written work itself, both outside and inside the classroom. I not only looked at the content of each writing sample with the students, but also discussed issues of emotion and empowerment/agency as well through my questions. The writing samples were designed to cover a broad range of student texts in order to analyze students' attitudes towards a variety of their written work (See "Writing Samples" section). I interviewed the case study students about their writing samples. Case studies "can reveal knowledge that we would not otherwise have access to," and my interviews with students added to my understanding (Merriam 33). My interview questions for the third interview were:

1. How did you feel writing each text?
2. What are your personal investments in each text and why? What were your emotional investments and why? How much do you care about each text?
3. Does your activism inform your writing in any of these pieces? How?
4. Which text do you think represents your activism most and why?
5. When is your activist experience left out? How do you feel about this?
6. What might you wish to have added to sample #4?
7. How does sample #6 reflect your activist position?
8. Which do you think is your strongest (best) text and why?
9. Which text did you enjoy writing the most and why?

10. Where do you think you have the strongest:

- a) purpose,
- b) voice,
- c) agency/freedom?

With these questions, I explored the way classroom writing and writing outside of the classroom further interact with the case study students' lived, activist experience, feelings, and affect. In discussing specific texts with students, I was able to learn how they feel that their writing interacts with their activism at a concrete level. While the second interview explored student understanding of general relations between activism and writing, this third interview generated more specificity in terms of student writing itself and student attitudes and understandings of their own writing. Students were able to discuss the ways that they did bridge their activist work and academic writing, and/or the ways that they were unable to bridge the spheres, and how this process affected their feelings and attitudes about their texts.

In discussing the writing samples, I further perceived how students conceive of writing and their feelings towards writing. I aimed to discover more about what students do value in writing and why they resonate with certain texts more than others. It is important to note that meta themes may connect activism to academic writing. For example, a student who values the agency of activist work may also value the perceived freedom of a particular writing assignment or kind of writing, rather than value the content that most closely matches STAND issues. This third interview was designed to uncover more about the ways affect affects writing, and also meta issues that may weave through all of the interviews, such as the roots of motivation. Putting student feelings

and affective investments into conversation with the Writing Samples allowed me to examine affect and writing for social action from a newer perspective.

Writing Samples

The writing samples were designed to cover a broad range of student texts in order to analyze students' attitudes towards a variety of their written work. I asked the students to email me one text in each of the following categories: students should submit writing done for STAND or writing relating to STAND that is written for an audience. Writing "related to STAND" can include any writing on genocide and human rights issues. For example, writing on racism is STAND related. Examples of such documents include: press releases, agendas, information sheets, blogs, Facebook pages, articles, etc. Personal writing is the second category that designated, and this writing should relate to STAND issues. Examples can include creative writing, poetry, a journal entry, an email, or even a song. I requested a third sample of academic writing that does not relate to STAND issues. In contrast, the fourth sample queried writing where they wished they could say more about STAND issues or their activism. With the fifth sample, I asked students to give me academic writing that relates more closely to STAND issues of genocide and human rights. With the final sample, I asked students to provide an academic (or non-academic) writing influenced by their experiences and attitudes as activists (and the content does not have to be specific to STAND issues).

I asked for this variety of writing samples with the initial idea to examine how the student writing varies between the samples, and what implications this has for student writing in relation to activism in multiple contexts. The breadth of the writing samples can show different kinds of social action writing within and outside of the classroom: I

was able to learn how students approach this variety of texts and why, as well as how affect may be operating in the different texts, and importantly, in the students' production of these texts. I felt the breadth of the writing for social action shows different kinds or genres of social action writing within and outside of the classroom. I could explore how students approach this variety and how and why they made rhetorical decisions in each text. I also examined how affect may be operating in the texts or in constructing the texts. I did not want to assume affect would be strongest in a STAND text, or personal writing, so I selected other criteria as well. For example, I asked for an academic text that does not relate to STAND issues, and one where students felt the most affective investments in the text. I designed Sample four to discover if students feel that they wish they could say more about their activism in order to see what barriers to talking about activism in an academic assignment might be. In looking to academic writing that relates more closely to STAND, I could again see whether students feel they could bridge STAND with academic writing. I utilized Sample six to see how student conceptualized their activism in general, even if it did not relate directly to STAND and I could discover which students' samples were the most meaningful to students. Without this variety of samples, I could miss out on the richness and surprises that studying student affect and writing holds.

Focus Group

I also conducted a focus group with the case study students after they completed their second interviews. I drew from the second interviews to identify themes, issues, and topics that the case study students could discuss together. For example, an important theme was socio-political identity in writing, and what made students want to write (in

terms of both emotion and content). I also felt it was important to discuss how they felt about the circulation of their work to an audience. I posited that may signal investment and satisfaction for an activist student writer. An exploration of different emotions was important to examine in order to understand how students see emotion in their writing process. I also explored issues of power in the classroom among the students and the teacher, in order to see if these kinds of communities influenced writing. Another question that arose from the second interview was whether students felt they could take themes of activism into classroom writing in terms of picking topics, or in other ways that were less obvious. As Morgan writes, “the real strength of focus groups is not simply exploring what people have to say, but in providing insights into the sources of complex behaviors and motivations” (272). In this way, I was able to examine key issues from the interviews in more depth because students were able to talk together and build on one another’s ideas. The questions I asked are:

1. When do you enjoy academic writing?
2. Has your activism influenced your attitudes and feelings about academic writing or the writing process you go through?
3. Has your academic writing helped your activist work?
4. Does knowing about issues like genocide influence the kind of writing you do?
The content or style of your writing?
5. What emotions fuel writing? Why?
6. Does your identity affect your writing (race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, class)? Does your activist identity affect your writing?
7. Do you feel like you have power in your academic writing?

8. What motivates you to write?
9. Does the emphasis on education in STAND affect your writing?
10. Do you bridge your activism with your academic writing?
11. Do you feel a sense of community in your classrooms?
12. Would you like to share your academic writing with a larger audience?

This synthesis of the second interview and the follow-up focus group questions allowed me to get more data on student attitudes, feelings, and experiences in connecting their activism to academia and academic writing. With the focus group, I was able to learn more about whether students can utilize their lived, activist experience in their writing, and how they might do so, and further investigate the links between activism and writing specifically, with the focus group. Focus groups allow “participants [to] both query each other and explain themselves to each other, and such interaction offers valuable data on the extent of consensus and diversity among participants,” which represents “a unique strength of focus groups” (Morgan 272).

Data Analysis: Recursive Coding

In my data analysis, I noticed that I became attuned to small details in the coding for example, and then jumped to large ideas, before finding the middle ground with which to analyze. Therefore, my data interpretation is recursive, as parts of coding gave rise to significant findings, but not immediately. I kept what I found to be interesting points in mind, but I travelled with these points for quite a while before giving rise to the middle ground of my large and small themes. My discussion of my data analysis will illustrate this process. Constructing this middle ground was my main challenge with data analysis, but it was also an exciting process. As Anselm Strauss writes, “one can say that

coding varies in detail from the micro, meaning very detailed, to the more macro, or general, coding less for detail and more for the general essence” and I strove to balance the micro with the macro to oscillate between them, and find this middle space (59). I analyzed “multiple forms of data...to discover recurrent themes and thematic relations;” my first phase involved “analysis [in] segmenting and organizing one’s data into meaningful (yet preliminary) themes or categories from which more in-depth analysis can occur. As categories are generated, they are constantly compared, refined, deleted, added, merged, and so on until a relatively small, manageable, and maximally relevant set of categories are settled upon” (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 99). This theory represents the recursive nature of my coding and categories.

Before I began coding the interviews, I had been a member of STAND for a year and a participant observer for four months. I had attended weekly meetings and events such as their benefit concerts and a 5K walk for charity in early September. This event is where I first began to grow close with some STAND members, as I talked for hours with one member on the drive to the event, the walk, and the drive home. I also attended more casual events such as STAND socials. At the socials, I was able to chat with the members about topics related to STAND, and also about our lives in general. The group embraced me during the semester (as they embraced all new members) before the study began, and so as I moved into the official study I had learned a lot about the students already. At the same time, I was aware that my first semester experience was not covered by the IRB, so I could not use my experience officially, but it did give me some direction on the issues I thought I could explore, such as identity and community. I had also researched student activism in general, so I was attuned to such areas as motivation and

inspiration as well. While I had guiding questions and objectives, I made sure to keep an open mind as I began coding and let the data “speak to me.” As I began the analytical process, I engaged in and continued to employ

analysis [that] involves what is commonly termed coding, taking raw data and raising it to a conceptual level [that] involves interacting with data (analysis), using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between the data and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing these concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions. A researcher can think of coding as ‘mining’ the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasures contained within the data. (Strauss 66)

I began analyzing the first round of interviews by listening to each student’s transcript and taking detailed notes with the software. In taking these notes, I could keep up with the transcription and this was important because I could think about the interview in “real time,” without having to stop the transcript every few seconds. Importantly, I chose to start with detailed notes and not the full word-for-word transcript because I wanted to get an overall, general sense of each student’s interview before I went into full detail with each word. The detailed notes were more global in their scope, and this helped me to begin thinking about overall categories for coding and rework the coding through the full transcripts.

After I transcribed the notes for each interview, I read through them a number of times, writing my observations on general themes that I was seeing. I took notes on themes that I saw with each student, and then tried to synthesize those themes together. For example, the theme of education as a first step to social action recurred in all of the student interviews, so I identified that category as one to code for. More specifically, from Lisa’s interview, I noticed an attention to identity and the way in which her Armenian ethnicity and her connection to the Armenian genocide inspired her work with

STAND and activism. I noticed a similar theme in Elizabeth's interview as well, as the discrimination she had experienced as Asian American connected her with STAND. This theme of socio-political identity became apparent in all five interviews, and it eventually became an important part of my most significant ideas on activist positionality and affect, as affect arises from material experience and socio-political identity. At the time, I made these themes into coding categories. As I created and revised the coding categories, I numbered the transcripts so that each number corresponded to a coding category, and then revised the categories recursively. For example, if I found a note that did not seem to fit, I noted it, and it sometimes led to revising a category or creating a new category. In using a numbering system, I could be flexible in inserting quotes into my working categories as well. Once I had numbered all of the notes from the transcripts, I typed the notes into the corresponding categories that I had created inductively. As I worked through the coding, I thought about identity and motivation for example, and I synthesized the two categories based on my notes. I was also attuned to affect, the construction of emotion, because I had noticed the strong emotions of the students. Here is a sample of my notes under the "Identity" category (the page numbers are from their transcripts so I can easily go back to the material):

Identity (motivation for action): Socio-political roots of affect/motivation (motivation is an affect)

Socio-political identity and the motivation for activism (ethnicity, religion, class, gender)

- My family's Armenian so I grew up hearing about the Armenian genocide and going to services Lisa, 1

- Read about genocide from an early age. Lisa, 1
- Lisa, 4: Armenian grew up hearing about genocide and its impact on people
- when I was two and went to a comm ceremony, Lisa 4
- at ceremony -- not widely recognized; current work take away, but I don't believe that's true; it can only add to it, Lisa 4
- feel very connected with culture, Lisa 4
- Armenian orthodox Christian, end Lisa 4
- family interested in Tibet. My dad loves incense, tea collection, eastern life. Older brother made friends with a Tibetan student; we have been trying to help him to come to the US. He runs a school/orphanage for Tibetan refugees. Dad goes to demonstrations. Rachel 4
- Stand helped me to explore something that was more personal to me, this year Asian American class; got more involved with aa student here; editor for the journal of Asian American issues, a magazine; also student assistant for the Asian Pacific American program, with the five colleges, Elizabeth, 1 Stand influenced learning about own identity and racism and discrimination.
- Does being aa I experience discrimination; know part of a group that can be exploited, on a different scale; one of few Asian people there; wonder if Asians are involved with antigen or more concerned w/ community Elizabeth 4
- Gender: Yes -- tools that are used is rape; b/c I am a wm, wm more vulnerable; those communities if raped bigger social stigma -- cast out; women have so much to overcome, sympathize with women men get raped? me same scale? woman cast out more than one wife? Women are targeted, Elizabeth 4

- Class? Family as working class or on the tip of becoming middle; more member middle class; theory: I have to take care of myself first. Not that I don't want to help people, but if I don't get an education or a job, it's hard to help people; so I think it does a little bit, but not a lot, Elizabeth 4

These coded notes afforded me working categories and also a way to process the information in a preliminary way. Visually, I could see multiple students coded under a category, whereas they would become far apart after inserting quotes from the full transcripts. I could start to conceptualize how one student related to another within each category and better see these connections as a starting point. After the notes were coded, I revised the coded categories again to represent the students' thoughts and ideas better. I saw which categories were working, such as socio-political identity, and which were not working, such as religion as a stand-alone category (because few students saw its relevance, and students who did could still have their ideas listed under socio-political identity). I also saw places where new categories with subcategories could arise. Anne Haas Dyson and Celia Genishi write, "As pieces of data are organized and compared, as their variable natures are identified and named (or coded), as their interrelationships are examined, the research uncovers new space – new holes -- in the developing portrait of the case, which need to be at least tentatively filled in; thus, the researcher is driven by curiosity about the phenomenon" (81). For example, I came up with the category of the "circulation of affect in the STAND community" that was quite important to the members and "filled a hole" in my data. Using the notes and the coding, I deleted some categories, added others, and combined or synthesized more. As the detailed notes

represented main themes in smaller visual spaces, they were a flexible tool for this first, preliminary round of coding.

After I coded the detailed notes, I transcribed all of the interviews in full. Then, I put the coding categories from my detailed notes into a new document, with just the categories and no notes. I then put the full transcriptions of each interview into these categories. I put just about everything the students said into these categories, and made notes of rough fits and quotes that did not fit. Based on this process, I further honed my coding and made revisions. Here is the coding with the full transcription for Lisa (and after her coding in this category comes the rest of the students).

Identity (motivation for action): Socio-political roots of motivation (motivation is an affect)

Socio-political identity and the motivation for activism (ethnicity, religion, class, gender); thoughts on socio-political identity and diversity in the group (or lack thereof)

- **Lisa 1:** I was one of those horribly morbid children who read everything they found on genocide. Honestly, so a really really long time. Like, my family's Armenian so I grew up hearing about the Armenian genocide and going to services for it every year. And I just read everything I found in the library about the holocaust and then Cambodia. I think I freaked my mom out a bit, but. S: Why did it freak her out? Because a child was obsessed with mass death. Lisa 1
- **Lisa 1:** I read a ton of Armenian genocide accounts. Lisa 1, also read many other books (see tr)

- **Lisa 4:** Because like I said I'm an Armenian. I grew up hearing about genocide. I grew up seeing the impact that it had on people. So, I know a lot of stand members are just like "that defining moment when I was ten and read about the Holocaust." Or, "when I was fifteen and I read about the Congo." And I'm like, when I was two and went to a commemoration ceremony.

S: So you go, there's a commemoration ceremony every year?

Oh yeah. Every year at my church.

S: And how do you feel about that when you go?

It's just like. I feel like, especially because a lot of people at my church are like, I think that a lot of Armenians, especially because the Armenian genocide is not widely recognized, a lot of people worry that work on current genocides will take away from what happened to us. But I do not believe that's true. I believe that it can only add to it. But, so like, it just, it part of the way that I feel very connected with my culture, my issues, my connections with genocide and human rights.

[I am] Armenian orthodox Christian. It's like Greek orthodox it's just our own church.

- **Lisa 6:** And I...mm...mm it does frustrate me though that like a lot of things I would like to do to take activism further are not going to be possible without money. Like, studying abroad. It would be a huge stretch for me. Because even if I get scholarships, scholarships don't cover things like your flight.

S: Yeah. So that's a barrier.

And like last year I couldn't go to the Stand conference because I didn't have enough money.

After this process, I revised the categories based on the full student quotes. I had developed a category of “Personal Experience and Personal Growth” based on my notes, but there was very little in the category because the student experiences fit better into a variety of other categories and subcategories, such as “membership in STAND,” and the category was not precise enough. One can see the richer content of student quotes, and also see that the proximity between students is now significantly farther away.

This double process of starting with coding the notes to moving to code the full transcripts allowed me to first take a more global view, and then take a more specific view of the data. With the full quotes from the transcripts, I could now see the richness in the data. For example, I came up with the category of “ethics” through their interviews, and I had not considered that particular theme before (although perhaps I should have). With the full transcript, I could see the texture of student thought. For example, one student wrote, “Like, one of the things I'm going to talk about at the meeting tonight is a Sudanese activist who was raped as a way to prevent her from doing her work. And it's just like, like, if we were in Sudan, that could have been one of us.” I found their ethics interesting because they did not claim “I can imagine what it is like to be a genocide victim” – an empathic statement that is problematic for its objectification; rather, students said “it could be me” which involves them in responsibility. I developed a category of ethics with subcategories: “it could be me,” “obligation: why choose the issue of genocide for activism and why act at all,” and “hope for a better world.” This idea of ethics went on to shape one of my potential main categories, but when I began to expand and develop more depth, I found I did not have enough data. Still, this category was helpful in learning more about activist motivation: why did activist students choose

to participate in action, but also through writing? “Ethics” did turn out to be helpful in constructing my ideas on the issues of affect and writing for social action based on the data of ethical behavior. In learning about multiple facets of student ethics, I could also look at their feelings about activism and genocide, and the ways those feelings were constructed in relation to their social action writing. Further, my coding on sociopolitical identity helped me to focus on the reasons why students write and their affective investments based on identity -- moving towards reasons for writing. I also asked: does student socio-political identity construct their emotional responses? Does this connect to writing?

Other categories and sub-categories also caught my attention in this first coding, and these stayed with me throughout the data interpretation to writing process. For example, I learned that two of the students had the images of a “good” versus “bad” activist in mind. I thought this was interesting because the students wanted to be a calm resource and not “yell” and act “pushy” like some activists; this detail became an important part of a significant theme of ethos and affect, as both students transformed from a welcoming ethos to something different through their writing, and as such showed the trajectory of their writing for social action (and how it changed their conception of the ethos they wanted to inhabit). So this process of coding helped me to code in a way where I could first see some general themes, and then hone in on these themes very carefully through the fully transcribed interview material. The general categories that I arrived at are: Socio-political Identity; Community; Agency and Empowerment; Ethics, Affect, and Motivation; Education: Self and Others. Issues of both motivation and affect

were also embedded in these categories, as I found that each category gave rise to motivation and affect on the part of the student or students.

I used the same process for the students' second round of interviews. Because each interview round was designed to answer specific research questions, I felt that the second interview should be coded separately because this interview was designed to look at student attitudes towards activist writing and academic writing in particular. Like interview one, this coding was useful for my major categories because it mined student attitudes towards academic writing, activist writing, and if and how the two interacted with each other. I also included the transcript from the focus group into this coding because the focus group questions built from the second interview. However, "the researcher's purpose is not merely to organize data but to try to identify and gain analytic insights into the dimensions and the dynamics of the phenomenon being studied" (Dyson and Genishi 81). Again, I took detailed notes on the coding and then brainstormed from them, but I knew I needed to engage in more analysis to "gain analytical insights." Here, I took a very early set of notes based on the preliminary coding. Here are a few excerpts:

- "The Bigger Picture" = students connect: social justice issues and STAND issues represent a network of interests and writing (feminism, antiracism, class advocacy, issues like death penalty). Bridging involves seeing this "bigger picture" in their writing choices and classroom choices.
- Engaging the Audience: make audiences care, catch attention, reach a goal (Actv to ac writ) (focus group too)

- Academic Writing's effects on Activism: think critically, go deeper, back up point with evidence, different lens, see connections with STAND, apply skills to activism and reflect on activism, constructing an ethos
- Emotion and writing/Constructing affect in writing: (see focus group too)

I used these initial notes to delve again into the student notes and coding, and then to the full transcription coding. While I did not know how those initial notes would eventually help to shape my thoughts, they were helpful in continuing to think about writing and affect. For example, I learned that the students thought that interest and caring leads to better writing, and I found that students thought they wrote more successfully when they had a strong emotional contact that motivated them to write. I also was struck by the ways that students wrote to reflect on and negotiate their emotions –to “get across” how they were feeling and to deal with feelings through writing. Strauss writes, “the analytic process, like any thinking process, should be relaxed, flexible, and driven by insight gained through interaction with the data (and coding) rather than being overly structured and based on procedures” (12). After I went through the coding process, the categories that I created through this coding were still structured, but also more flexible because I could draw on the first round of coding for insights as well. The categories I created were: “Drawing Connections,” “Education in STAND and in Academic Writing;” “Activist Positionality and Identity in Writing;” “Affect/Emotion;” and Classroom Community.”

I was especially interested in “Drawing Connections” as I had begun to consider it with my initial notes, and then turned it into a category based on my data. Here are my initial notes:

Drawing connections: STAND and social justice issues: courses and writing decisions (“the bigger picture”)/agency/students as political agents students connect: social justice issues and STAND issues represent a network of interests and writing (feminism, antiracism, class advocacy, issues like death penalty). Bridging involves seeing this “bigger picture” in their writing choices and classroom choices.

1. Students as political agents in academia: Connecting activism and
 - a. Major, minor, certificate, focus
 - b. course selection
 - c. writing
2. Seeing the “bigger picture:” STAND and social justice issues in academia
3. Student engagement with course material
4. Agency: STAND/sj issues and in general in academia
5. Activism’s effects on writing practices (see also education)
6. Academic writing’s effects on activism: think critically, go deeper, back up point with evidence, different lens, see connections with STAND, apply skills to activism and reflect on activism, constructing an ethos

This outline of the category and sub-categories (with coding that is not shown here) from my second coding really struck me in terms of the interplay of the academic and activism, and how the two spheres may be negotiated and potentially connected in some ways by the students (or not connected). I worked with this category to understand how students conceptualize some links between their academic writing and their activism, and came to see how both constructed their activist position. While I referred to other coding categories, this category was important for me in thinking about co-construction of

students' activist positionality in Chapter 3, and I kept returning to this category. "Recurrence or repetition is often an indicator, as is the sense that we have seen a particular theme or category many times in varying contexts or with different participants," and I take this to mean that the repetition I was seeing in themes and specific student quotes helped me to identify their significance (Dyson and Genishi 110). As I worked recursively, such repetition was important to my thinking. I went on to transcribe notes for interview three, where I asked students about the writing samples that they had given me.

While I found instances of emotion or affect as embedded in my coding, I also created a discrete category based on my second interviews. The category is (without the transcript):

Affect/Emotion (as motivation in writing/writing decisions/negotiating through writing):

- interest and caring,
- anger,
- affective investments
- writing to reflect on and negotiate emotions,
- emotions and writing/constructing affect and ethos (too much emotion)

While my work with affect became much more comprehensive, this coding category helped me to start thinking about how students feel emotion in different contexts and for different reasons, and how they discuss emotion in an overt way. This category helped me to see how students felt and what they cared about, and also how they construct emotion through their writing. They also commented on the different types of emotions one can have in writing, depending on the context – whether activist or academic. This

category stayed with me, and became a foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of emotion, and I thought more about how affect may be circulated in writing choices in writing for social action specifically.

While I worked on the coding, I also began to analyze my student writing samples and would continue to analyze them in different ways as I worked through the data and discovered new ideas. I started with a list of key concepts to analyze:

1. How does the student position herself in the text?
2. What is the purpose of the text and who is the audience?
3. What is the genre of the text?
4. How does the text engage “voice,” “ethos,” and “affect?”
5. Are there emotional investments implied in the text?

These questions helped me to direct my attention to important aspects of the text in terms of affect and the rhetorical situation for each essay. When I began to analyze the students’ writing samples, I also looked to Ken Hyland’s “Stance and Engagement: a model of interaction in academic discourse” as a way to get started and think about how “written texts embody interactions between writers and readers.” His work illustrated how academic writers “situate themselves and their work to reflect and shape a valued disciplinary ethos,” but I was looking at how his specific hedges and stances could be modified to investigate student ethos and affect in writing in a preliminary manner (Hyland 176). For example, I looked at “attitude markers” that “indicate the writer’s affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement... [and] frustration” to get an initial sense of their implications for measuring affect in a text (180). Following this article and my questions, I worked to define key moves or features

in the students' writing samples. This allowed me to look at the ways in which the student positions herself in relation to her own texts through writing; for example, through the use or absence of "I," and the degree of use or absence of personal opinion to consider my initial category of "voice." I noticed that some student writing used "I" in what I considered forceful ways, while in other texts it was all but missing. This helped me think about emotion and affect in writing, and how I might analyze a student sample in this context. I also assessed the purpose and the audience of the text in order to understand the case study student's motivations for writing, and the ways in which she uses writing to accomplish a purpose and address an audience. I performed this analysis on a few student writing samples, and this method held some promise. I put this textual analysis to the side, though, as I knew I would come back to it after I had a firmer understanding of my findings. I re-analyzed my writing samples again later, once I began to focus on affect and social action as crucial to the study.

Data Analysis: Larger Trends and Themes

As I did the full transcription coding, I wrote research memos to my advisor, Dr. Donna LeCourt, who helped me to analyze and synthesize throughout my dissertation research and writing. I wrote one research memo on the full coding of interview 1. This memo contained the categories I coded, an explanation for each category, and a summary of what each student said in each category. I repeated the process for interview two. We discussed the coding and categories and explored interesting and important aspects of the data. While Donna helped me to talk through my findings and begin to analyze them, I eventually realized that I was not doing enough analysis. Rather, I was using my time

poorly to create memos that reported on my coding, rather than analyze the coding. I felt somewhat stuck, and I knew that I needed to find a better method of analysis.

Next I went back to my Prospectus to examine it in light of the data that I had collected and coded. I focused on brainstorming questions that related to the Prospectus *and* the data. I called this ongoing document “Prospectus Brainstorm: Assumptions, Questions, and Interesting Things.” For example, I questioned the nature of my project, research questions, and focus:

In my prospectus, I often said “activist work and academic writing” because STAND does not do traditional forms of activist writing one might think of from the sixties and seventies. What does “activist work” rather than “activist writing” buy us if we are comparing? What implications does the relation between activist work and academic writing entail, in contrast to activist writing and academic writing? Activist work seems to encompass more and how do we harness this flexibility to analyze academic writing in different ways? As I state in the prospectus, this diss will explore the experience and motivation of activist students in relation to their negotiation of academic discourse. (STAND does do: meeting minutes, emails, info session documents, fliers, small cards, Facebook, emails to professors to speak, emails to other stand groups at smith, etc., emails to lobby, emails for logistics w/ the university, short speeches for their benefit concerts, etc....)

Here, I am hashing out the implications of comparing activist “work” versus academic “writing.” This idea resurfaced later when I studied the ways in which activism and academics overlapped – it helped to provide me with a wider lens as to how the *activities* of activism apply to academic writing – not only activist writing. This is one small sample of my many questions and observations. At the same time, I also went back to my memos and my discussions with Donna. I kept a document on notes and questions from our discussions. For example,

From Donna pg. 9 Balancing emotions with STAND and with academic writing. How are emotions negotiated similarly and differently? Feel and shortstop (self-care)

This note kept me thinking about affect and helped me to frame the idea of affect in multiple spheres and contexts, based on rhetorical situations. Comments and suggestions like these helped me to continually analyze emotions in relation to STAND and to academic writing. This distinction of emotion between spaces helped me to eventually conceptualize how I looked at student affect in writing for social action outside of the classroom versus inside the classroom, and how STAND framed these different experiences.

After I brainstormed ideas, questions, and observations from my prospectus, memos, and detailed notes from my discussions with Donna, I clustered all of the material into different areas. I then kept looking at my coding in relation to these different areas, and came to see patterns and overlaps. I placed my coded categories within these different areas and revised the areas further. I used an inductive method to cluster my data and to also use it to give rise to main ideas and illustrate my ideas recursively. I even created a storyboard for how the larger dissertation categories might look. In drawing out these main ideas, I identified general topics that I synthesized from the data. For example, I identified: “Positionality and Motivation in STAND and in academic writing” because the data showed their multiple positions and motivations for STAND and other facets of their lives, such as their motivation with their academic work. I also came up with other potential analytical categories, for example, “Democratic Writing and “Cooperative Texts: Implications for Collaborate Learning.” Most importantly, I identified: “Negotiating Affect: STAND, Academic Writing, and Personal Writing to an Audience.” As I began to work with these larger categories, I pulled from my coding to construct “Positionality...” For my first macro analysis, I pulled from the

coding to identify important areas to examine, such as socio-political identity, power, and education in constructing motivation for STAND members. This significant finding became Chapter 3. However, at first, I did not delve into their writing or literacy practices enough. For my second version, I focused more on overlapping subject positions, and saw how my data supported breaking a binary between activism and academics. In working with Donna, I arrived at a chapter that told a story of each focal student and the way academic writing and activism co-construct their activist positionality in different ways.

I had repeatedly been struck by different case study students' passion for activist issues that was strongly expressed during many of our interviews: commitment, excitement, horror, compassion, and anger were all feelings that different case study students expressed in relation to activist issues, academic issues, and writing texts. Seeing these strong feelings made me want to learn more about them in general, and specifically related to writing for social action, as this writing had also been a key feature in my research questions and study. Affect held an important place in my coding in general, and was constructed through a multiplicity of ways – through socio-economic positioning, ethics, and writing, for example. I decided to go back to my data in order to ascertain what an “affective writing process” would mean in my study and how I would use this concept in relation to students writing for social action. While I had overt coding on emotion, I felt that I needed to do more research, and also “tease” affect out of my other coded categories.

Therefore, I returned to comb through all of my coding, and re-read the third interviews, my memos with Donna's comments, my notebooks with previous notes on

affect, my area on social justice and affect, my prospectus, and the students' writing samples. I created a memo with working definitions of emotion and affect in relation to students; types of affect found; questions; the spaces of affect; and observations based on my Prospectus. This memo was helpful in synthesizing my research. In talking with Donna about the memo, I identified both a definition of affect (from many), and some questions to start with. For example:

For each student: How can we see the circulation of affect through spaces and points of contact through how the student mediates and negotiates this affect in activism and in writing? *How do students negotiate and manage affect in activism and in writing? How does it connect, how is it revised, how is it re-constituted, and how is it utilized in writing? Why is affect in writing important to the activists? Why is mediating affect important to the activists? How and why does affect lead to action and reflection in activist space and writing space?*

These questions went on to shape my most significant findings, about students writing for social action outside of the classroom, and how their affective writing process is critical to such action, as well as how students try to write for social action within the classroom, but are stymied in their affective work. While these crucial findings grew over time, the foundations remain in the coding for the chapters, the memo for my more global ideas, and Donna's feedback to it. As I thought more and more about affect and writing during this research process, I also came to re-see my working definition of affect, in that it included more than I had originally thought: affect arises relationally, based on a myriad of factors such as students' identities, histories, socio-political positioning, membership in the activist group(s), and relationship to the larger university institution. This conception was important because it contextualized student writing, as well as framed student lived, activist experience and motivations, and the affective investments that gave rise to diverse activist actions. However, I had not yet moved to a full analysis of an

affective writing process, specifically for social action. I felt that affect in writing might give me “ingredients” for writing for social action, but I still needed to think through the affective writing *process*.

By going back to my prior research on affect, I came to realize that a vast number of factors could construct student affect and the affective writing process, not limited to my overt coding on emotion and on socio-political identity or the texts in the writing samples. For example, I traced the horror that one student felt about genocide by the spaces she occupied and the experiences she had as a test case, including but not limited to her writing. They included: STAND meetings, events, other activism, STAND activities, the writing classroom, academic papers, non-academic papers, as well as her life experiences in multiple spheres. I came to see writing as an affective process arising from different contexts.

I looked through the lens of affect to particular writings from the students. As I worked on ways to analyze their writing samples, I saw that certain papers were closely tied to emotion and the facets that constructed and fueled an affective writing process. For example, the test case student’s horror with genocide seemed linked to a paper she had written on Rwanda. With this realization, I shifted to a different student as a test, to see if I could analyze her emotions in the writing process – a process that I was still discovering/constructing – in relation to a particular paper that she had discussed in all three interviews, called her Open Letter. I knew she had “strong feelings” about this piece from our interviews. This initial test was also fruitful. I became very interested in particular writing samples that students had discussed over the three interviews because these were often samples of students’ attempts to write for social action and had strong

emotion in this interview context. However, not all social action texts represented strong emotion: I went farther to examine the samples in relation to the student's affective investments; for example, I could have used Mary's flier for sending candy grams as a STAND fundraiser, but she said very little about this text and did not have strong emotions about it. In contrast, she consistently brought up the horror of genocide in general, and her paper on preventing a future genocide; together, these indicated strong emotion and affective investments. Following strong affective investments, I turned to Elizabeth again, who had discussed her Open Letter to a racist student in all of our interviews, while Lisa discussed her Feminist Rant in all of the interviews as well. They both demonstrated strong emotion in writing their papers, but as I analyzed the data, I began to see how a more complex process of affect fuelled their writing, rather than emotion alone.

Therefore, I thought I could learn more through interviews such as these, and as I increased my focus on data that illuminated affect and writing for social action, I turned to these student essays of Elizabeth, Lisa, and Mary. For my emerging criteria, I first looked to texts that students chose to discuss in all three interviews, as it indicated that the texts were meaningful to them in some way; specifically, their affective investment in the text was strong in some way. Second, I also selected the texts based on whether they represented social action or the potential for social action (as some social action texts seemed successful and others less so). And third, as I developed my most significant categories, I chose to compare social action writing outside of the classroom to social action writing within the classroom in order to examine any differences that would lead to insights about the social action writing process and the affect that I felt fueled the

process. I reexamined Elizabeth's audience, purpose, and ethos in the writing sample, for example, but this time through a clearer lens of affect and the rhetorical situation. In relation to the data, I realized that a full affective writing process included a vast array of areas that are interconnected. I went on to examine more factors that could shape the affective writing process for social action. The following list of facets begins to show how I began to conceptualize this process. As I thought about Elizabeth and her Open Letter more, and in relation to the data, I found ingredients that could construct her affective writing process and I took preliminary notes on significant features. For example, I found important data on: a strong response to an emotional contact; membership in particular communities, such as STAND, the Asian and Asian American community, and her academic community; a motivation to write to feel better; a vision of specific goals for writing; an objective to hold those who engage in inequality responsible; a sense of power to take action through writing (with the support of STAND); a desire for education to promote social action; affective investments; material life experience; socio-political identity; an enjoyment of writing when angry; and political investments. As I continued to look at the data, I found that the affective writing process did include most of the prior factors and I worked on ways to synthesize the process. In this way, I began to conceptualize and write Chapters 4 and 5, analyzing the affective writing processes for social action, outside and inside the classroom.

Limitations

I decided to tell the story of the interplay between activism and academics because I was drawn to how activist students negotiate both. Further, I was drawn to study writing for social action as part of the public turn and part of social justice work in

general. I believe that we can learn from activist students in this study, who generally enjoy writing, write to deal with emotions, but also enter into a complex affective writing process in order to write for social action. While this was quite an endeavor, there are a few limitations to the process. First, the case study students self-selected in terms of their enjoyment of writing (even if not academic writing per se). In this way, they may have developed more affective investments in the writing process and in their work and writing. However, not all of the case study students enjoyed particular papers, so I was able to mine those feelings as well. Upon reflection, there are other aspects that I could have drawn on for this dissertation. For example, as I discussed education as persuasion and the circulation of affect for social movements in Chapter 1, I could have turned this lens towards STAND as a group, and the affect it circulates within the group and in their activist activities. Following this idea, I could also have pursued the thread of collaborative writing in the group, and cooperative writing and rhetorical choices. These two ideas may be taken up in the future. However, I feel that the conception of an affective writing process for social action contributes some important facets of writing to the composition classroom. I chose to focus on this process because it shows how we can support already politicized students and all students to open up new possibilities for writing for social change in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3

BREAKING A BINARY: STUDENT ACTIVIST WRITERS

In Chapter 1, I posited that this study would illustrate students' agency, or lack thereof, in negotiating the multiple spheres of activist and academic work and thus suggest "ingredients" for writing for social action in the composition classroom. In studying case study students' motivations, actions, and writings, I sought to uncover fundamental exigencies for both activism and academic writing – exigencies that would potentially be quite different. I wanted to learn what students themselves see as meaningful in both their activist work and academic studies and writing, and how and why they bridge, or refrain from bridging, the two spheres. However, in light of my data, these two spheres of academia and activism are not separate spheres after all for these student activists. Instead, they co-construct an activist positionality that moves students to engage in social justice issues across the spectrum of overlapping "worlds" or "spheres." Their stories challenge a reductive image of a student writer or an activist writer; instead, they are *student activist writers* in both the classroom and in their activism. Compositionists can see how students are not only politicized, but also co-construct their student activist positionality through the writing classroom as well. They are not apolitical, nor do they reject academic writing because it contradicts with their activism – a concern of many of us interested in teaching writing for social action.¹⁰ Activist students actually feel that activist writing and academic writing can be intimately connected, and both can help to construct a student activist writing subject position.

¹⁰ However, student writing processes for social action do differ between inside and outside of the classroom, due to the construction of emotion (affect) in the two spheres (see chapters four and five).

Student Activist Positionality: A Framework for Inquiry

When exploring student activism and academic writing, it is important to consider what I call the construction of an activist positionality for students because this positionality represents their concerns, commitments, and spaces for action as activists. Each student activist occupies an activist positionality that can be summarily defined as a way of understanding injustice in the world and the ability to work for concrete social action. Examining the factors that construct a student activist positionality highlights the ways in which activist work *and* academic work may *both* shape, strengthen, and develop an activist's critical vision, ability to act for social change, and sense of calling. There are three main components to this model of activist positionality: a lens, a platform, and a sense of responsibility or duty. These components represent an inductive model drawn from historic and current activism, as well as from this study's data.

For example, the formation of an activist lens is key for activism, as each activist student continuously constructs a lens that they can use to identify injustice and challenge it in multiple ways. In the field of composition, Goncalves studies how GLBTQ student activists give speeches to create a lens for audience members to become more empathic and supportive of GLBTQ rights. In this case, the newer lens is designed to position audience members to take further social action as they can better understand homophobia and the injustice it entails. Individual student activists also need a platform for social action; activist groups and movements are crucial platforms for individual student's activism, and the classroom can be a platform as well. Students can create a platform for social action through their academic courses and academic writing choices that lead to deeper understandings of activist issues. Even writing a particular academic paper can

serve as a platform for a student activist to take some new form of social action. This kind of platform is very similar to the “sponsoring discourse community” that Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis discuss in *Persons in Process* that represents a group where students can find support and develop the purpose and agency to speak: students “find discourses and groups with which to align themselves, ones that would offer them a sense of connection and seem to bring forth their potential” (370).¹¹ Student activists use academic discourse and “kindred” activist/community groups as platforms for social action. Current and historic student activists also illustrate a sense of responsibility or duty as a main motivation for their action. In firsthand reports, student activists describe this sense of commitment and duty as a main motivation for their social change work. For example, multi-generational white anti-racist activists describe these feelings in Becky Thompson’s *A Promise and a Way of Life*. Likewise, the student activists in my study also consistently describe a sense of responsibility.

So for a student activist, activist positionality requires a synthesis of a lens, a platform, and responsibility through which a student activist identifies injustice and ways to combat it. Activist students enhance positionality as they learn more about issues through their membership in activist groups, their personal scholarship, and their academic writing and research. Their position shifts as they become more engaged with activist issues – which they may now notice more, follow more, care about more, and write more on. However, there is more to this process: activist students can also construct a sense of responsibility and compassion through their values, their material experience, and their relations to others. While an activist positionality shapes how

¹¹ Eli Goldblatt also explores the concept of a “sponsoring institution” that students interact with to reach authority (154).

students perceive issues of social justice in the world, it is also continually constructed and changing based on each student's relation to both activism and academia. This multi-faceted process is important to students because an expansion, shift, or new addition to their lens can result in their agency to identify and reach ongoing and newer activist goals. Activist positionality also entails a platform from which students can act and write for social action – for example in their utilization of academic writing and/or membership in an activist-oriented group/movement. In relation to STAND activists specifically, these areas support a student's agency in reaching her activist goals through material action.

Student activists in STAND all share a particular lens, platform, and sense of responsibility that is constructed through their work with this activist group. This illustrates factors that each student shares as a function of group membership. The structural nature of the group is as follows: student activists at UMass take part in the STAND chapter at the university; this chapter is supported by STAND National (which unites all chapters), and the “parent” group, the Genocide Intervention Network. However, STAND at UMass is fairly autonomously run by the students at UMass who democratically decide on how meetings are run; how to implement recruitment and retention strategies; and how to identify types of social action to take.¹²

Each activist in STAND shares a lens that highlights the issues of genocide and other human rights abuses in a global way. Each student activist in STAND is also attuned to the main conflict areas that STAND deals with: Burma, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. STAND focuses on these three areas and provides informational sessions on them, as well as weekly news updates at meetings. In this way

¹² When I use “STAND,” this will refer to the UMass Chapter of STAND.

STAND constructs each member's lens to focus in on these conflict areas. Each student's lens is honed on the specifics of the three areas because of the genocide in Sudan (in Darfur), the ongoing atrocities in the Congo, and the denial of rights and democracy in Burma. In understanding these countries and identifying effective and responsible social action, STAND relies on the power of education and awareness. STAND as a group works to construct a lens that values education as persuasion and inspiration; individual STAND activists may be attracted to the group because of this value but may also construct this philosophy further as they develop an activist positionality over time. Developing a lens of education and persuasion in particular has been key to historic and current activism. STAND students take part in this process, and in doing so construct a wider lens that identifies methods for change and social action, including in academic settings such as the college campus and the classroom. STAND acts as a platform for students to organize a variety of social justice activities. In this way, they also share a vision that politicizes the academic community, a move that many academics miss in their belief of a depoliticized academia filled with apolitical students.

In constructing a lens that perceives the importance of education for self and public, and a politicization of the university space, STAND students understand education as one form of social action. They employ education as persuasion through their "Drop Beats Not Bombs" concert by educating the audience, while also holding an event that brings musical artists together from the campus community. Hundreds of students attend these concerts, and enjoy the music, dance, and poetry, while also learning about genocide and STAND as an organization – thus the concerts are an important recruiting tool as well. Events like these unite STAND activists under an

important umbrella that takes education and social action into account in the ways that they see activism: for example, Laura feels that the concert was an effective social action because “it sort of brought in a bunch of outside people to educate...education is the first step in combatting injustices. Obviously the more people who know about it, the more people to take action and educate other people and so I think that’s important.” Through her activist lens, Laura sees education as a vital part of activism, and here as an important “first step.” Her belief in the importance of education may have already existed before her STAND work, but her lens is further constructed as she sees how STAND specifically integrates education into the concert in new ways that she finds effective. Between different musical acts, STAND members speak to the audience in order to raise awareness of STAND issues. Laura notes that this method is a way to educate the audience without overwhelming them – that they can have fun while doing anti-genocide work, and that this strategy is effective. This newer understanding co-constructs Laura’s lens in seeing the different ways that education can be interwoven to promote social action.

Like Laura, Rachel’s activist lens also highlights education and represents the STAND student activist positionality that is shared

I definitely like the emphasis they [the co-leaders] place on spreading awareness. A lot of it, it’s not even like trying to get money for our club, it’s I really like the emphasis that STAND places on purely educating people. Like in our, in drop beats not bombs we have every, you know, between every few acts we have somebody get up and talk about a conflict, and I really like that aspect of STAND. It’s not just raising money for our club, it’s spreading awareness, it’s making people interested, getting people aware and wanting to join us.

Like Laura, Rachel’s lens is also attuned to the fundamental importance of education.

She may well have joined STAND with this lens in place, but she has further developed

this lens through her work with STAND over multiple years and her engagement in organizing panels, films, and writing petitions, installations, letters, information sheets, etc. She feels she has seen the power of education through her work with the group, and she shines this lens on her own academic studies – she loves learning and feels she is “like a sponge.” She is continually developing an awareness of “what education can do” in both activism and academics, and how the two areas might be connected through education.

As Laura illustrates, although the prior definition of an activist positionality seems quite structural, it is also dynamic and continuously constructed through each focal student’s material experiences and relations to their activist group(s) and the academy. While STAND activist students share an activist positionality that is constructed and/or reinforced through the group, they also occupy a student activist positionality that is specific to each student. They all perceive the ways that education can be used for persuasion, recruitment, and retention, and they all feel that STAND provides a platform, or an “outlet” to take meaningful action. While each student shares a similar lens that hones in on anti-genocide issues and a platform through STAND, their sense of responsibility is located in their particular material experiences. Further, their activist lenses continue to grow and change, impacting both their academic work and their work with STAND. At the same time, academic work and work with STAND changes their activist lenses as well, in a recursive process. Rather than a static “activist position” we can better envision this positionality as fluid and constantly under construction.

Thus in looking more closely at each student, we find a unique set of academic and activist interactions that co-construct their student activist positionality. In this

framework, we can examine particular student activist interactions with both activism and academia in more depth that shed light on these co-constructors of activist positionality, and we can examine how the two inform each other to create different student activist positions. In a context of academic writing and writing for social action, the discrete “academic writing subject” and the “activist writing subject” do not seem to bear out. Instead, we find a “student activist writing subject” where students co-construct their writing position through academic writing and activism. These students demonstrate that academic writing is not automatically closed off or separated from activism. In looking at each student’s experiences with the interplay of activism and academic writing in detail, we find varied ways that the two interact. This specificity is important to study in order to highlight the many roles that academic research and writing can play as a co-constructor in specific activist positionalities. Each student’s experience allows us a deeper understanding of the co-construction of his/her positionality, which we can use to understand each student’s social action. This in-depth analysis sheds light on the different potentials that academic writing has for each student’s social action, providing us with multiple ways to conceive of academic writing’s support for student activism.

Student Activist Writers

In this chapter, my main objective is to focus on the ways academic writing constructs each student’s activist positionality in different manners, in order to show the variety of student attitudes and experiences in constructing their activism through academic writing. Compositionists can learn how students translate academic writing into activism by multiple means and in many different contexts. In this chapter, each student represents a different interplay of academic writing and activism in their growth

as student activist writers who combine the two areas. It shows how students form political visions and practices through academic writing: from Lisa, who creates a political space in writing classrooms, to Elizabeth, who uses academic writing to branch out and become involved with more and more facets of activism, to Rachel, who synthesizes her Wildlife Conservation major with STAND issues in both her activist lens and in her academic writing. These three students each tell a story of the different and important ways in which academic writing can co-construct specific activist positionalities. For example, Lisa shows how students may bring activism to the writing classroom, and then use academic writing as a political vehicle. Elizabeth shows how activism can shape academic commitments and writing that then politicize her in new and important ways. Rachel shows how students can connect subjects that seem disparate and unrelated through calculated choices and reflection on both academics and activism. Throughout this study, the interplay of the academic and activist shaped the students' attitudes towards, and values of, academic writing in the context of their activism.

I chose these three focal students in particular because they represent a spectrum of relationships between academic writing and activism. Specifically, I looked at how close a relation students had between their academic writing and STAND activism in particular. These three students represent a spectrum of the ways academic writing can relate to both STAND activism and other forms of activism, and can show how academic writing can co-construct each student's activist positionality in a particular way. In this way, they are representative of my larger participant pool. For example, I chose Lisa because she represents a very direct connection between her academic writing and her activism, while Elizabeth writes on issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality that she

feels do not directly match up with genocide studies, but are relevant to STAND. Elizabeth also represents a student who branches out more and more over time, in contrast to Lisa who tends to remain in the realm of human rights and feminism that she entered college with. Rachel represents a student activist whose academics seem the most distant from STAND issues. As a Wildlife Conservation major, Rachel writes few papers and the major's curriculum does not relate to STAND. Although I chose these three focal students based on the closeness of their activist work to their academic work, I also presumed that the students would complicate any reductive categorization: the three focal students illustrate the agency and complexity activist students have in their lives. Still, each student's feelings and attitudes about the interplay of academic and activist writing can shed light on the different ways they use both areas for social action.

Lisa: Creating a Political Space in Writing Classrooms

Lisa is a sophomore English major with a focus on technical writing. She is minoring in political science "because it is fun," and she also works as a peer writing tutor and at a UMass Dining Hall. She is one of the co-leaders of STAND. Lisa first began to create political spaces in the classroom through her ability to see human rights and feminist issues through a political lens that helped her to identify, explore, and write on these issues. When Lisa entered college as a first year student, she had a social justice lens that included attunement to issues of genocide, human rights, and feminism because these issues had played an important role in her material, life experience and she had researched and read about these issues on her own initiative. Lisa had the material experience of being Armenian and having the Armenian genocide as a present and

constant issue throughout her life. In relation to both her self education and Armenian identity, Lisa states

I have always had an interest in human rights issues [and] read everything [I] found on genocide. Honestly, so a really, really long time. Like, my family is Armenian so I grew up hearing about the Armenian genocide and going to services for it every year. And I just read everything I found in the library about the Holocaust and then Cambodia...

Lisa's socio-political identity and wide reading and engagement with genocide issues constructed a political lens that she would use to pursue these issues as a member of STAND *and* in her academic writing choices. However, as an incoming first year student, she felt she lacked a platform to engage in social action on these issues, thus she began to create political spaces in her writing classrooms. Through her ongoing development of her activist lens that linked academic space with her growing sense of activist space, and the personal with the political, her experiences in both realms made her feel "very connected with my culture, my issues, my connections with genocide and human rights." These connections helped to guide Lisa in choosing academic topics for research and writing throughout her college career, as well as working as an activist with STAND. For example, her connections inspired her to research and write on the Armenian genocide during her first year.

She also entered with a lens attuned to feminism, which Lisa feels is "always, always present" in her writing and life. For example, Lisa defied the conventional wisdom of Shakespeare scholars to argue that Hamlet was immature and anti-feminist: "I knew when I was writing my Hamlet paper, I was like he's anti-feminist, he's a jerk to his mom, he's a jerk to Ophelia, we're lucky that there's no more women in the play. Cause he'd be jerks to them too." As a first year student, Lisa was already looking

through a feminist lens in her analyses. This writing example begins to illustrate how Lisa first began to create political spaces in the classroom through her initial ability to identify human rights and feminist issues through a political lens and then make writing choices in support of her political vision. Such choices helped her to explore and write on feminist and human rights issues more and more into her sophomore year, and to use classroom space for multiple kinds of activist purposes and goals. Lisa's membership with STAND during her first year and her co-leadership of STAND during her sophomore year shape an activist context for classroom writing as well.

How does Lisa create a political space in the classroom? Concretely, part of her ability to carve a political space arises through her agency in choosing research and writing that pertains to her activist commitments, *and* to be able to identify how classroom writing can co-construct her varied activist goals. Her ability also arises through a political, activist lens that denies the simplicity of complex injustices and always searches for more knowledge, more answers, and even more questions. Lisa represents an activist lens that translates knowledge into power; for example, she researches and writes on the Armenian genocide in order to learn and educate herself and others for political purposes and goals. Lisa creates a political space in part through research and writing to examine genocide in order to bring about just change in her home community. From Lisa's position as an activist with STAND, these are vital facts for her community to understand for two reasons: it is important to understand how and why genocide happened in order to understand one's history and context, and it is also important to understand in order to prevent genocide from happening again. As she researches and writes, she perceives the potential of her writing for social change in the

community through her activist lens. While she has grown up with the constant presence of this genocide, her activist lens was still missing the actual events and “lessons to be learned” until she wrote on the topic: Lisa explains,

and none of these people [in her Armenian community], and like when I was growing up, all we talked about was that this happened and Turkey says they didn't do it and that's bad. So and so like now that I've been reading and writing and researching a lot about it, I actually know what went into it, how it was planned, what were the factors leading up to it, and it's like, and I feel like I'm just in a much better position to teach people about it other than 'it happened and it was bad.'

Lisa's drive to expand her lens shifts to a platform as she can now realize that she can use this writing to teach her community. Through her academic choices, she learns more about the Armenian genocide – the expansion of her lens through academic knowledge then supports a platform for Lisa to take concrete social action in her community through speeches and even conversations. She can speak better to her Armenian community and work to inspire social action by convincing them of their connections with current atrocities.

I feel like, especially because a lot of people at my church are like, I think that a lot of Armenians, especially because the Armenian genocide is not widely recognized, a lot of people worry that work on current genocides will take away from what happened to us. But I do not believe that's true. I believe that it can only add to it.

By creating a political space in the writing classroom to write on her genocide concerns – by choosing and engaging in this research and writing through her activist lens – she can use this space as a platform from which to take social action. For Lisa, this academic writing co-constructs her ability to work for social action in her home community and to also engage in activist, critical inquiry. In carving political space, Lisa identifies issues to

write on through her activist lens, but she also grows to understand how classroom writing can be used as a platform – in this case with her Armenian community.

During Lisa’s sophomore year, academic writing also provoked her to turn a critical lens on herself by changing her vision of her own activist positionality. This “critical” lens is an ethical stance that Lisa applies to identifying injustice in the world and also gives her agency to create a political space that includes critical inquiry into her own activist positionality. With her paper on comparative genocide, she turns this lens on herself. Here, her lens changes as she develops a new awareness of her positionality in relation to her academic writing and activist commitments. In her work with STAND over the last year and a half, she did not question her own activist positionality very much, but with this academic paper her lens changed because she became aware that she might occupy the position of oppressor/prejudice instead of the unproblematic activist.

She states,

I’m really, really worried that like being an Armenian, it gives me an advantage and disadvantage. Like, the paper’s supposed to be about Armenia and Rwanda – I don’t want to make it all about Armenia and not about Rwanda at all. And I also, like, I’m always worried that I’m going to try and make it seem as if what happened in Armenia was worse for lack of a better term. Just cause it happened over a longer period of time and at a larger scale doesn’t mean it was worse.

Here, Lisa is seeing herself through her own critical lens and realizes that her activism does not mean that she is unbiased. Her material Armenian identity that first inspired her activism may also bias her activist lens, thus making her an ineffective activist (at best). That is, she questions her activist lens and realizes that her identity can also bias her rather than only inspire her. She realizes that she must question herself, as well as others, and consider her activist research and writing decisions in a more critical way.

Reflecting on her own material and ethical relations to the paper shifts her lens because she now knows that she is not always objective and that genocide should not be hierarchized. She also develops a stronger sense of responsibility as she realizes that she is accountable for her research and writing to provide “unbiased” arguments. With this writing experience, Lisa feels a newer sense of activist responsibility: a responsibility to look at her own subject position critically and make sure she is taking a just stance. This type of self-reflection is an important staple of social justice education and critical pedagogy, so Lisa’s shift represents the re-positioning that many activist scholars call for.

It is also important to understand the ingredients that supported Lisa’s agency to construct a political space in the first place. When Lisa began to carve political spaces in the classroom, her main exigency was her own struggle to understand the atrocity of genocide, but as she became more active with STAND and the campus community, her exigencies grow and overlap to become more complex, varied, and important to her. Because the STAND community provided her with a platform to take social action (which she lacked before), the possibilities of the classroom space opened up for Lisa over time. Lisa describes her introduction to STAND as almost immediately creating an activist community that gave her a platform to take social action: “And so I went to the activities expo and I met Rand and Liz who were the co-coordinators last year, and they were just so nice. And I’d always had an interest in genocide and human rights issues, but so many people thought I was just horribly morbid. And I was like, ‘oh, other people,’” who care about these issues and act for social change. In working with STAND, Lisa realized the potential for the classroom to aid in work for her social action because knowledge is an important vehicle for STAND’s activism in a variety of ways, and the

writing classroom can support many types of knowledge for Lisa. STAND also contributes to Lisa's creation of classroom political spaces because STAND legitimizes and values the study of genocide (which was considered strange and "morbid" by the people in Lisa's life), and this opens the space for Lisa to pursue her political commitments in the classroom; STAND provides a platform for her to pursue her intellectual and personal inquiry in a supportive context and also supplies her with new, activist exigencies for writing. This new understanding changed Lisa's activist lens as she learned that she could create a space in the classroom that could support concrete, social action, in tandem with intellectual concerns. Intellectual (why does genocide happen?), personal (how can I learn more about the Armenian genocide?), and activist (what are effective strategies?) exigencies combine to give Lisa reasons, motivations, *and* a platform for academic inquiry; this inquiry then co-constructs her activist lens and platform in a recursive manner, as she uses her academic research and writing to continually develop her activist positionality and work for social action.

In Lisa's writing, the academic and the activist overlap in many ways. Lisa continually identifies academic research and writing that help her to provide STAND with the necessary, scholarly tools to understand the vast context of genocide and make informed decisions as a democratic group. Activism and academic writing overlap for Lisa, and she both creates this overlap and utilizes the benefits that the overlap accrues. In seeing academic writing through the lens of activism and seeing activism through the lens of academic research and writing, Lisa is able to construct specific strategies and goals for her leadership of STAND. Lisa points to courses that have helped her to develop her activist lens: in her Comparative Genocide course she learned "a lot, a lot...I

learned more about comparative genocide techniques, and plus more definitions of genocide and what the implications down the road are to everyone.” She brings her STAND activist lens to her courses as she thinks about how the course content and writing relates to her work with STAND. In this capacity, academic writing continues to co-construct Lisa’s activist positionality because she is able to bring new knowledge to STAND that leads to strategies for social action for the group. Lisa states, “but [my STAND activism] definitely affects stuff in class, in stuff like my Genocide Studies class because I bring it up in my papers a lot.” These two quotes show the recursive quality of academics and activism. Lisa integrates her activism into her academic papers and synthesizes her activist work with academic writing; simultaneously, she takes what she learns from academic writing and uses it in her activist work with STAND. Both the academic and the activist co-construct her positionality, as the interplay of the two strengthens Lisa’s effectiveness in reaching her goals in both areas – an intellectual search for answers in one, and a way to identify activist strategies and concerns in another. In this way academic writing and activism can overlap for students like Lisa to build their agency in both areas.

Lisa’s creation of a political space therefore includes putting activism and academic writing in constant conversation. With an ear toward this conversation, Lisa describes the ways in which a course can give her a new, concrete perspective that will help her to lead STAND in very specific ways. For example, “there was one time when we were talking about the definition of genocide and we read this article...and [the author’s] definition of genocide was very narrow and she did not want it to be tossed around. And I was like yeah, I see this in STAND a lot, people [publics] have become so

desensitized to the word genocide.” Reading and writing reaction papers on scholarly articles helps Lisa reflect on issues of genocide, and apply her reflections to her leadership with STAND. As she writes academic reaction papers to reflect on each author’s main argument and its importance, Lisa is able to immerse herself in academic discourse and “hear” relevant information to her activist concerns. In her reaction paper, she writes,

In her [Fein’s] opinion, the word ‘genocide’ is being applied too lightly, without fully analyzing the situation that it is being applied to. Her argument is important to me in particular because I see that many people have become somewhat desensitized to the word genocide. This really comes across in my work with STAND, when I tell others that we are an anti-genocide coalition. People don’t seem overly shocked to hear that genocide occurs today, and I am not sure where that comes from...the term genocide should not be tossed around.

Lisa explains why the reading and definition are relevant and important to her work with STAND, and notes that people have become “desensitized” to the word, and seem overly accepting of current genocides. She puts her activist viewpoint in conversation with the course material to identify a seemingly small detail (one definition) that actually has vast implications for her work with STAND and “getting people to care.” Specifically, she agrees with the author based on her own activist experience and knowledge: the term “genocide” does lose power when applied too widely, and may gain power under a stricter definition. Lisa hones her activist lens as she sees the power of definitions through both her coursework and activism, and how they relate to the actions and attitudes of the campus and other publics. Changing a definition may seem small, but it is not -- it is vastly important in the world of genocide studies and genocide activism. Lisa’s creation of a political classroom space allows her to change, revise, and even transform her activist lens based her interaction with (her “dialogue” with) the course.

Concretely, changing a definition allows Lisa to explore how a stricter use of the term may in fact inspire STAND students and students in general to become more sensitized to the issue, take it more seriously, and be more inclined to social action – for example, in her paper, Lisa suggests that STAND be careful not to construct the conflicts in the Congo as genocide, because they do not meet the definition of genocide and the word should not be “tossed around.” Lisa’s construction of an ongoing academic and activist dialogue, and an interplay of academic writing and social action, allows her to create a political space that leads to more effective activism. In this case, the academic co-constructs Lisa’s ability to strategize about grabbing the audience’s attention and getting the audience to care.

In general, student activists are attuned to multiple aspects of social justice and it is important to widen our view in order to take overlapping positions into account. Attention to multiple lenses constructs a more complex, comprehensive, and accurate vision of student activist positionality. For Lisa, political space is in one sense everywhere, as she consistently views the world through a feminist lens. Through this lens, she identifies, understands, and takes social action in relation to the politicized interactions and ideologies that she sees in the world at large. This feminist, ethical lens first began to be constructed as she grew up: her father consistently denied the equality of women, which politicized Lisa as a feminist. Her feminist lens continually strengthens in relation to anti-feminists, as she states, “one of my big pet peeves with my generation is like people think feminism no longer has a place or people automatically think ‘oh angry bitch,’ and I’m like, no, feminism is still relevant in today’s society.” In this way, her activist positionality is actually enhanced by a society and peers that reject feminism

because she feels a sense of responsibility and duty to consistently educate others and challenge anti-feminists. Therefore, Lisa's activist lens, platform, and sense of responsibility do not stop with STAND issues of genocide and human rights abuses in distant conflict areas; instead, Lisa's feminist lens shapes her vision, academic writing, and activist understandings. This feminist lens does not so much change as position Lisa in a continuous ethical feminist stance.

In moving between the different spaces of the classroom, STAND, and daily interactions, Lisa constructs multiple goals for her social action to challenge sexism and misogyny. Lisa's stated goals for feminist social action include raising awareness of the injustices that women face through Lisa's interactions with her peers. In this case, Lisa feels she has an individual platform to take action where a large group is not necessary for her social action. Here is a quick peek into her daily life: in talking to a guy on her hall who challenged the relevance of feminism,

I was like, ok, when you go out do you have to contemplate on what to wear? Do you have to make sure you don't look provocative so if something happens, people don't say you were asking for it? Do you even understand that kind of pressure? Of course he doesn't. And he's like, no, no, no, no, no. And I'm like, no, no, no. The idea that if a woman is not actively preventing a man from sticking his penis into her is not the salt in the wound. It is the foundation of the problem.

While Lisa does not have the platform of a formal group, she does have a movement, and her feminist platform allows her to raise awareness through other venues, such as individual conversations, which meet her goals in this particular context. Her activist position shifts as well, as she takes a different kind of social action than she does with STAND issues: while she sees herself as a welcoming educator with STAND, she is more confrontational with feminist issues because she is actively living them. This

shows how an activist positionality can shift depending on a student's particular lens at a given moment and the concurrent, specific activist goals for social action. This conversation shows how Lisa constructs social, campus space as a political space where injustice should also be challenged, much like other spaces such as her home community.

For Lisa, issues of genocide, human rights, and feminism overlap through their interactions with each other in Lisa's activism and through the constant conversation she has between activist issues and academic research and writing. Feminism links multiple spaces as areas to challenge injustice – concrete spaces of the classroom and STAND overlap, as do activist concerns and the academic writing that arises from them. In her academic writing, she sees through the lens of feminism to pick topics, as she states feminism is often her “go to” subject. For example, she wrote on the issue of sexism and “madness” when she analyzed *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. She explains her literary analysis of *The Wide Sargasso Sea*: “I was like, by making her [the main female character] mad, Reese is also making comments on women's roles in society and he's showing that Rochester is a patriarchal figure, with more social status. So even though he is just as emotionally damaged as she is, she's the one who ends up mad because he has more power to do stuff about it.” Lisa points to sexist hierarchies and their effect on the ways women are portrayed and labeled as “mad” or damaged. She carves a political space with this paper because she interprets the book through a feminist lens that analyzes sexism – both in the novel and in our society. In her paper “Madness: Showcasing Anti-Feminism,” Lisa concludes, “Rhys demonstrates that in order to improve the status and fates of women, it is society and society's perceptions of women that must be improved.”

This observation arises from Lisa's feminist lens and her goal to engage in feminist writing and social action.

In this context, she turns her feminist lens on activism, as well as personal writing in her live journal. Feminism is also an integral part of genocide and human rights issues because "in any genocide or war, there is going to be a whole field of discussion on what happens to women and how rape is a problem, how sexual violence is a problem, and plus, most genocides are behind some kind of war and men are off fighting and women are the ones who stay at home and deal with the main repercussions of the actual genocide a lot of times." In this way, Lisa also closely links feminism to her activism and work with STAND issues. Lisa sees the relations between feminism and multiple contexts through her ethical, feminist, activist lens. This lens shapes the ways in which Lisa understands the world and the problems in it in an ongoing feminist context. The lens is also continually expanded by Lisa's interactions with the world because she is able to keep adding multiple perspectives to her view of feminism. She also uses her knowledge as a platform to meet her feminist goals: to identify and explain feminism and misogyny in all areas of life. To do this, she feels she should educate her peers, professors, STAND members, and elected officials. For example, Lisa states, "I remember when I heard about the no tax payer funding for abortion act, I wrote an angry letter to James McGovern." This is an activist act that illustrates Lisa's agency in writing for social action on feminist issues.

In many ways, Lisa represents the "classic activist" that one may think of – an activist leader with firm politics and clear writing choices. In this way, she does represent many activists on campus who integrate politics into writing and take different

courses on social justice because of their activist concerns and commitments. While there are many types of activists, Lisa represents the ways in which “classic,” activist students can carve out a political space through their writing. Lisa has also used STAND to carve a space for her own agency: “I tell people that I became who I am because of STAND. Cause like STAND provided such an outlet for me to be able to, like, I’ve always wanted to just like implement change, affect policy, help people. But like, and it wasn’t until STAND at UMass...that gave me that opportunity.”

For Lisa, the classroom is not an apolitical or neutral space, but represents the “real world” just as much as other spaces in her life, including her activism. While many theorists call for “real world” learning and writing that must be done outside of the classroom, Lisa politicizes academic writing by connecting it to her larger political concerns and by using it to further her vision and agency in multiple forms of activist action and writing. Lisa creates a political space in the classroom through her activist stance that includes feminism and anti-genocide activism, and she creates a political space because she sees the writing classroom as a place to foster just social action for her many activist concerns and goals. That is, Lisa looks through the lens of her activism to create a political space in writing classrooms that allow her to use her writing in the service of social action for multiple publics. For Lisa, these publics include her home community, the STAND coalition, the campus community, the communities in her daily life (such as her dorm community), *and* her classroom community.

Elizabeth: Branching and Inquiring

In contrast to Lisa, who brought an emerging activist lens to her college work

even as a first-year student, Elizabeth represents an activist student who discovers new lenses and branches out through the platform STAND supplies for her. Through her membership with STAND, she is able to better delve into her own politicized identity, and then use academic writing to develop her political lens and platform further. Over time, Elizabeth uses academic scholarship to develop and engage with her political commitments, to write for academic and activist purposes, and to become an anti-racist leader in the UMass community. Her STAND activism shapes her academic choices and some of the ways she interacts with academic writing assignments. These academic choices and interactions create a very specific activist lens and platform through which Elizabeth identifies injustice based on race, class, gender, and sexuality; this newer lens supports Elizabeth's activist work against racism on campus and beyond. While she is invested in the work of STAND, she also becomes more invested in anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-classist modes of activism, especially in social justice issues for Asians and Asian Americans. Elizabeth reads and writes her way into her activist positionality, as she develops the confidence to research issues of discrimination and injustice for herself; she combines her politicized identity with her academic studies; and she branches into multiple, activist forms of writing. Her work with STAND begins her political trajectory, and then academic research and writing support Elizabeth in branching off from STAND and shaping her activist lens and platform in new ways. Elizabeth represents a student who joins an activist group with little knowledge of activism, and is inspired to become committed to, and continually engaged in, social justice issues and many forms of activism.

In Elizabeth's first year and beyond, STAND helps her to construct a sense of political agency through educating herself on issues of injustice. Elizabeth joined STAND her first year, and she knew very little about issues of genocide and human rights. She lacked an activist lens on political issues in general, and she was acutely aware of this lack of knowledge and was concerned about how she would be treated by members of STAND. She felt barred from political issues because she was overwhelmed by how much she had to learn about them – a barrier that had been in place since high school. However, STAND broke this barrier and provided Elizabeth with both a lens and a platform for independent, activist inquiry:

Before college I was never really interested or I guess I was more apathetic towards politics and world issues in general because it was just so much to learn and all that, but joining STAND freshman year and being told it's totally fine if you don't know everything, just go at your own pace. I think that definitely helped me just have the idea that I don't need to know everything right now, so it's ok to learn things little by little and it's ok not to know every single thing about each conflict, it's like, just take what you know. It doesn't matter if you don't know a lot, if you're not an expert. So I think STAND definitely helped break down that barrier. It was more like, if I was interested in something, go look it up.

As Elizabeth explains, she was apathetic because she felt there was so much to learn about political issues that she did not feel comfortable even starting the learning process. She had an “all or nothing” belief about knowledge, but STAND showed her that she could accrue knowledge over time and not be seen as inferior because she knew less at first. STAND gave her a supportive platform to learn “at her own pace” and not have to start in the position of an “expert;” rather, STAND fostered her sense of agency in her ability to learn at her own speed, learn “little by little,” and be able to “go look things up” herself. This new platform opened up space for Elizabeth to pursue her political interests through her own research (and through conversations with the group). This

transformation in agency was and is vital to Elizabeth's work with STAND, but also crucial to her ongoing comfort and commitment to activist inquiry in general. STAND helped open a door for Elizabeth to pursue her social justice research in multiple contexts – including the academic. In “breaking the barrier,” Elizabeth becomes more and more politicized through her own research and through her confidence and pleasure in her activist inquiry. This transformation constructs Elizabeth's activist positionality through her newer sense of political agency through self-directed learning.

During Elizabeth's first year with STAND, she also first began to turn her lens of critical, activist inquiry on herself and her socio-political positions in the world. In this way, she begins to branch out into other political spaces. From the start, she understood the discrimination and exploitation that her parents faced as first generation immigrants from Korea and her own experiences with discrimination, but she had not placed these experiences in a larger, macro political context. She had not initially placed herself in a politicized context either:

[Her activism was with] just pretty much STAND at the beginning. But then, uh, you can't really go be in a club for like two years, especially something like STAND, and not like get involved with other political issues. And just learning about problems. I think...because I'm Asian American, I found myself gravitating towards Asian American awareness issues. Like, I would pretty much go on the internet and I would look up blogs about being Asian American, like racist issues, hate crimes, discrimination and stuff like that. It kind of helped, like STAND helped me kind of explore something that was more personal to me at the same time. Cause they were just a community of people, they were just, I just found it inspiring that everyone was so aware.

Elizabeth took it upon herself to learn more and more about Asian American issues that related to her more “directly” (and later pursued these issues in her academic courses). With her developing confidence in critical activist inquiry, she began researching issues of racism, discrimination, and hate crimes. Through her own research, she constructs an

activist lens where she finds patterns and ideologies of racism that give context to her own life experience with her family and herself. Through this activist lens, she begins to contextualize and politicize her material life experience. While her STAND work had been with far off places, she turned the critical activist lens that she developed on herself in relation to the injustices that affect her daily life, in tandem with society as a whole. Elizabeth's experience illustrates how one sort of activism can branch out into other areas: how a supportive activist community can act as a platform to identify and understand other, "more personal" social justice issues, and how student activists continually construct their specific activist lenses to enhance/deepen what they know and include newer areas or perspectives. Elizabeth's ongoing construction of a politicized identity also gives her the drive to choose and engage in specific types of academic research and writing on issues of identity and justice; these academics will in turn broaden her lens.

By supporting Elizabeth's agency in activist research and inspiring her to learn more about her socio-political positions, STAND also shapes Elizabeth's academic choices in a particular way; the prior changes set the foundation for Elizabeth's decision to become a Sociology major with a concentration in "Social Inequality and Diversity." At first, Elizabeth felt "really pressured" to choose a vocational major like accounting, but seeing so many non-vocational majors in STAND who "really care about what they're learning" helped Elizabeth to choose Sociology, and keep taking the classes she "loved." And with STAND breaking down barriers in her first year, Elizabeth develops a passion for reading on issues of inequality, and declared her major her sophomore year:

Umm, I chose sociology as my major just because I found myself reading books relating to sociology, just in general. I just read a wide variety of nonfiction books

that relate to people and their goals or just stuff like the economy or reading books about what happens in conflict areas. I just found it really interesting how people interact in all the different stuff like race, sex, class, gender, all that really just interests me and I also read stuff online in my free time. So sociology just seemed kind of like a nice fit. Cause my concentration is on social inequality and diversity, so I focus on that...If people aren't equal or they don't have the equal opportunities, so I guess that just kind of led me towards that.

Elizabeth's own activist, critical inquiry thus shaped her academic choices, as she wants to pursue issues of social justice that she is most interested in. Elizabeth represents an activist scholar who can use academics to further her interest in identifying, studying, and challenging inequality. In this way, academic inquiry overlaps with activist inquiry because Elizabeth finds connections between social justice issues in classroom writing and in her own activist research, which is often inspired by classroom material. Elizabeth points to multiple and overlapping reasons for her academic studies – her socio-political identity that STAND helped to politicize is also present in her decision. In studying Sociology, she links her value of the major with her experience with larger issues of unjust power in the world:

because of my background, you know, being Asian American. The race side definitely comes into play and then also I don't come from a very rich or wealthy background. So I just feel like in our society it seems obviously that the people who tend to have more, tend to have more power and influence and they don't really help those who aren't as fortunate. So.

In this way, Elizabeth links her own background to her commitment to understand and challenge injustice through her Diversity and Social Inequality concentration in her major. In this context, STAND acts as a springboard to Elizabeth's academic decisions: she finds other, non-vocational majors in STAND, she finds the political agency and passion to read widely, and she finds a politicized identity and commitment to justice. While STAND works to construct a foundation for Elizabeth's academic choices, her

academic work helps her to build on her ideas on social inequality that include race and class, the power relations they entail in U.S. society, and how these power relations show up in different facets of our lives.

Through Sociology, Elizabeth branches out further in an academic context where she can link her own material experiences with discrimination to scholarly research that elucidates larger patterns of injustice. She continues to construct her activist lens that connects micro and macro political issues, but this time in an academic context in addition to her own activist research. The connection between her material experience and larger issues of inequality is reflected in Elizabeth's academic writing assignments – her favorite piece is a paper she wrote on moments in her life that she connected to social justice, sociological scholarship

My best experience writing in college has to be the sociology paper.... For sociology, last semester I wrote a paper on just my experiences with race, class, and gender. So we would take three or four moments in our lives, and then we'd have to connect it with the readings in the course. So one of the things I did was, I wrote a memory of me watching a movie, I think it was called the Hot Chick, and I focused on how they portrayed the Asians in there which was realllly, really, really awful. And I just like connected to scholarly articles....*Because some of the things [in the scholarship] like, I never even noticed in real life...*The subject was interesting, like really interesting. It related to me so it was a lot easier writing, like half the paper was just me writing about my memories. And then, I got the freedom to write whatever, pretty much, whatever I wanted....

With this paper, Elizabeth continues to branch out in understanding the personal as political and using academic scholarship to make new connections that she had not seen before (for example, she learns about sexism in the elementary school classroom).

Elizabeth's academic writing co-constructs her activist lens because she can now see her positions within webs of inequality and identify these issues in an integrated way that is personal, political, and scholarly. Writing the paper gave rise to a deeper understanding –

for example, her friends did not know why Elizabeth was so upset about *The Hot Chick* at the time, but writing this paper gives Elizabeth the platform to explore and explain why the film was racist and represents our racist media. Not only did this paper change Elizabeth's outlook on writing because she did not know that personal experience could be combined with scholarship in this way, it helped her give voice to her experiences with inequality in an academic context that fostered her writing for social action down the road. This Moments paper shows how academic writing can co-construct an activist lens that combines the personal and the political. Elizabeth's writing helps her to further reflect on her position as a political agent through the power of linking the micro moments with the macro context of inequality. Academic writing and research support Elizabeth's ability to see these issues on campus, in the classroom, in the media, and in her own history.

Elizabeth also describes the effect of activism on her academic studies, where academic work becomes politicized through Elizabeth's engagement with critical activist inquiry. Activism inspires her to take her writing and coursework further, and to understand the deeper political issues associated with academic papers that she is working on. In this way, she creates an overlap between academics and activism that deepen her activist lens; academics set up a space for her to branch out into connected issues that address her social justice concerns.

I think part of, like when I'm involved in STAND and if I'm writing papers in Sociology I'm more likely to after I write the paper and hand it in, I'm probably more likely to actually go back on the issues. Like if I...had to write a paper on race in Sociology, I still like I'll look up more information on activism or just promoting Asian American issues. I guess it just, I guess I'm more just, connected, cause I think students usually when they write papers, it's just like you have one night to cram everything and just hand it in and then you forget about it until you get the grade back and then that's it. But for me being involved with

STAND and just activism in general, I think I stay with the issues longer. It's not like, ok, that's it, it's the end of the semester so I'm done thinking about it. It keeps popping up in my life and I just see the connections [for example, in the media].

For Elizabeth, activism and academics combine to form a space where she can build from a single paper to research a larger activist issue in the world. She learns from academic work, and she does not leave her papers behind in the way that she observes in others. Academic work acts as a platform to continue to consider activist issues and develop a deeper understanding of such issues. Now, Elizabeth pursues specific issues of race, gender, and class that arise from her social justice coursework.

Elizabeth takes academics a few steps further into activism through her own research and critical activist inquiry and through her ability to re-see the world through a lens that academics co-create. At the beginning of her sophomore year, she “stumbled onto” an Asian American studies class listed in Spire. In taking her first course, she realized that one way to “deal with racism” is to become aware and take social action through writing:

I think part of it is just being aware. Like even before, obviously before college I know about it and obviously encountered [racism]. But not till this year, I took a class, Asian American Studies: Bridging Asian America. I did a whole project on how Asians use the internet to spread awareness and that's how I discovered his [Angry Asian Man's] blog. And just from there, you just keep clicking and you just find other people so. That definitely helped me...[to deal with racism] I just read about it and then I respond in my blog, so. I just write about it.

Academic coursework and writing in her “Bridging Asian America” class opens up a new space for Elizabeth to engage in activist inquiry and inspires her to keep writing for social action on her blog. Again, we see the importance of critical research and writing for Elizabeth – this time in an academic context where she learns how Asian Americans spread awareness through the internet. Not only did her activist lens shift as she learned

about an online Asian-American activist community, she developed a platform to challenge discrimination in an important way: by reading about it, discovering other activists who challenge it, and writing about it on her own blog.

Academic writing opens the door for Elizabeth to become part of a larger, online activist community, and take part in this activism. She “deals with racism” by reading and writing in this new context, and branches out into the blogosphere and beyond. Through her scholarship, she learns about new issues, such as the racist portrayal of Asians and Asian Americans in the media. Through her initial Asian-American studies course, she meets the chairman of Asian-American studies (who teaches the class), and he supports her participation in the program and also supports new forms of activism for Elizabeth, such as attending a leadership conference. This academic experience provides Elizabeth with the inspiration and platform to become more involved as an anti-racist activist:

And I think this year, mainly at the beginning of this year I went to an Asian American class, I took that. And then I got more involved in the Asian American student community here. And I’m the editor for the journal of Asian American issues, it’s like a magazine kind of, a student run magazine. And then I’m also the student assistant for the Asian Pacific American program with the five colleges [a position that her professor asked her to accept].

This quote also shows how her experience with an academic course co-constructed a platform for Elizabeth to become more involved in both the Asian-American community and writing for social action as editor and writer for the journal of Asian-American Issues (RealizAsian). Academic writing and coursework allow Elizabeth to branch out to these newer, vital areas of activism. As part of this community, she writes for social action as well; for example, she writes on issues of inequality and justice for RealizAsian.

Elizabeth explains the three articles that she is writing:

One of the articles I'm writing about is like a, there's one article, the first one, it's called Fred Koromatzu. He was basically just one of the people who were interred during the Japanese internment, and I guess this is the first Asian American focused holiday that was signed into law. So that happens on Jan 31, that's like an actual holiday now. And I'll be writing a little blurb about that. Another one is just basically just about Asian stereotypes and why people discriminate. Or just like, pretty much talking about that. And the third one would probably be about my event [ECAASU].

Elizabeth's activism includes writing to inform others and also seeking out new activist communities as her allusion to "her event" demonstrates. Combining her scholarship with her activist positionality, Elizabeth arrives at a new position that includes STAND, but also includes a commitment to Asian-American issues and learning about possibilities for social action.

I actually went to an ECAASU [East Coast Asian American Union] which was this weekend, and it's just basically a bunch of Asian American college students getting together and going through workshops and learning about issues and how to become leaders and stuff.

In this way, Elizabeth branches from STAND to another activist-oriented organization. The Asian and Asian American Studies certificate program hosted this annual conference, and Elizabeth's participation with her Asian American course led to her attendance at this conference that 1,200 people attended. (ECAASU is the largest Asian American student organization in the country.) By participating in the conference, Elizabeth learned how to hone her activist skills, and she was able to meet some of the activists whose blogs she followed, such as Angry Asian Man, and discussed issues of race and racism with activists from all over the U.S. and beyond. In this way, Elizabeth continues to build an activist community for herself and to take part in activism.

In her writing, Elizabeth wants to educate the campus on Asian and Asian-American issues of historic and current discrimination, as well as the leadership

conference. She has moved from her initial position as a non-activist student to a position where she feels mastery in researching and writing about social justice issues in her academics and in her writing for social action (on her blog, for RealizAsian, and her anti-racist fiction). Her overlapping experiences with writing for Sociology, writing for Asian and Asian-American studies, writing for her blog, and writing for RealizAsian signals how academic writing is a crucial part of Elizabeth's work as a student activist writer because she writes from what she learns in academic courses, as well as from her activism. Elizabeth's academic research and writing continually constructs her activist lens as she learns more and more about inequality, and how it affects her life and the lives of others. Her experience with scholarly studies and writing politicizes her further – both inside and outside of the classroom. She brings this lens back to STAND and helps the co-leaders to examine issues of race, class, and gender in STAND's work through informal conversations. In sum, Elizabeth transcends a reductive position as a “student writer” or an “activist writer,” but rather she is both: a “student activist writer” who draws on her academic writing to write for social action on campus and beyond.

Rachel: Synthesizing

In contrast to Elizabeth who becomes an activist partially through her academic work or Lisa who uses her academic work to sustain her activism, Rachel needs to work harder to draw connections between the two. Unlike the other focal students, Rachel's Wildlife Conservation major does not give her much of a chance to write on human rights issues and she feels that the curriculum in her major is somewhat cut off from social justice issues. For Rachel, STAND and her academic coursework do seem to exist in separate spheres; however, in her academic studies themselves, Rachel has found a way

to begin to bridge the academic and the activist through a certificate program in public policy and a self-designed “environmental justice” concentration in her major. She has sought these academic opportunities out because of her activist lens that sees the potential for social justice work in a scientific context. As a Wildlife Conservation major, she does not do much academic writing in terms of papers (although she does some), but she does do scientific studies, exams, and critiques of scholarly articles that she generally dislikes and rarely involve people. However, she exerts her power to connect her work in the field towards the types of social justice issues that STAND fights for. She explains why she is getting a certificate in public policy and why her major concentration is “Environmental Justice, because I feel like that brings together wildlife, the environment itself in terms of like water quality, air quality, things like that. But it also takes into consideration human rights and social justice. Like right now I’m taking this indigenous rights movements course...” that will satisfy part of her environmental justice focus. These academic choices begin to show how Rachel builds an activist lens that combines wildlife, environmental justice, and human rights issues. Even though not all her coursework allows her to explicitly combine the two, Rachel illustrates how a student’s activist lens can help broaden the impact of her academic work. Rachel constructs a lens that continually synthesizes her academic choices with STAND issues in a scientific context.

Rachel joined STAND after she transferred to the University of Massachusetts at the start of her junior year. She came to UMass from Boston University because UMass offered a Wildlife Conservation major and BU did not have such an offering. Rachel joined STAND immediately. Her interest in STAND issues had started the year before,

when her human rights activist friend took her to see a documentary on the Congo. This film made a strong impact on Rachel and she began to learn about the interconnections of injustice later that evening when she talked with her activist friend: “[we went back to the dorm] room and we just talked the whole night. I learned everything about where she started out and what she does in the club, and just talked about the big picture of things. Of injustices and stuff like that.” This whole learning experience touched Rachel deeply and made her want to take action to combat the atrocities she saw and the injustices that she discussed with her friend. While she was already too busy to join an organization at BU, she entered STAND at the beginning of her next year at UMass, and has participated in the group for three years (she is now a “super senior”). She had taken part in activism before – such as in high school where she started an animal rights group -- but now her activist lens expanded to human rights issues as well. Learning about Wildlife Conservation and human rights were at the top of Rachel’s agenda when she entered UMass. (She also began work with Free Tibet, a group that also coordinated with STAND.) Over time, Rachel demonstrates an ability to connect and synthesize her academic studies and academic writing to her position as a STAND member and activist in multiple ways, and continually synthesizes the “big picture” of “injustices.” She illustrates a type of agency that may be vital to student activists: to use both academic research and writing and activist work to create a more effective activist lens and platform that combines the two. This practice can build a platform for social action through students’ deeper understanding of connections between their academics and their activism, even if they at first seem unrelated.

As Rachel moves between the separate spheres of her academic major in Wildlife Conservation and her activist concerns with STAND, she synthesizes the issues to explain the complexity of human interactions with the environment as a social justice issue that impacts all people. She links her positions as a student, a wildlife activist, and a STAND activist together in identifying injustice through a sophisticated activist lens that she has constructed to take multiple factors into account in understanding problems and taking social action. In synthesizing her knowledge of wildlife and human rights, she points out that the ways in which governments treat animals reflect or predict their treatment of people as well. Rachel states,

I don't know if I mentioned it before but, you know if you look at a government, you know if a government treats its people like crap, it's going to treat the environment like that too, you know. I feel like a government that abuses the environment is also going to abuse its people. And, yeah I just think they're inseparable. And, people and the environment, they affect each other so closely and so strongly that you can't really ignore one and pay attention to just the other. Cause one of them is going to lose out.

Importantly, she suggests social action that must take these multiple factors into account in order to be effective. Through a platform built on academic research on the environment and activism for human rights, she identifies issues of governmental abuse of the environment and the abuse of people as “inseparable” issues to challenge; in doing so, she also finds the power to draw connections between issues of genocide, social justice, wildlife, governments, the environment, and communities. This synthesis shows her agency in constructing her specific activist positionality by combining areas that seem separate, but are actually intimately related and necessary to understand for effective social change work.

At the same time, Rachel shows us that these academic and activist spheres do not *have* to be separate. Rachel emphasizes her own agency in making the prior connections between the two spheres – no one has taught her to do this, and she arrived at this place for herself.¹³ She feels proud of her own agency in connecting the different spheres of her life and she feels that the connections are vital to make.

Again with, if I'm just speaking from my major wildlife, it's kind of hard to connect the two. I mean I do. I connect the two. But a lot of my classes focus on people who, they tailor to people who go on to be park rangers or fish and wildlife service people, or yeah I guess I just feel like the wildlife major itself doesn't really connect to activist work in general, but I make it connect. I draw the connections myself. ..Yeah I think in general the two are pretty separate, but I think it's very easy to connect them. It's just the connection isn't made very often. Within the classroom. Just because I feel like again wildlife people don't know much or care much about human rights or social rights, and I don't really know how people who are interested in human rights and social rights feel about wildlife. But I see the connection.

This observation is important because it shows that construction of separate spheres is not inherent or intrinsic – it is a construction that can be challenged. In her overlapping positions as a student, a STAND activist, and an animal rights activist, Rachel is able to challenge that binary between the academic and the activist in her thinking and discussions. She notes that each sphere seems to have a blind spot towards the other, but the academic and activist spheres are actually critical to each other. For Rachel, the connections are “easy to make” because she has an activist lens; however, most people in each sphere are missing such a lens, so Rachel’s observations could be valuable to both academic and activist work. In Rachel’s activist vision, the Wildlife classroom can be a place that includes activist issues, just as STAND activism can have a place for environmental justice. STAND informs her ability to see the gaps in her major through

¹³ Although studies of human rights abuses and environmental abuses may have been done, Rachel has not been privy to this information.

an activist lens, while her major also informs her ability to see a gap in STAND through an academic lens. Rachel is cognizant and reflective of her own agency in “seeing connections,” and such agency arises from a platform that academic research and writing and her multiple forms of activism helped to construct. She illustrates a type of agency that may be vital to student activists: to use both academic and activist work to create an activist lens that combines the two. In this way, students can arrive at depth and complexity in their treatment of both academic and activist issues. This can build a platform for effective social action as students bring their academic understandings to the table in activist contexts – even if they seem exclusive at first.¹⁴

Rachel not only challenges the separation of the academic from the activist, but she feels that her writing in the two areas also inform each other. Rachel illustrates how they can overlap in significant ways that she feels support her writing in both spheres. Rachel describes how many aspects of academic writing and activist action and writing combine to create her approaches to both writing and social action. For example, Rachel feels that aspects of academic writing hold the power to make her a more effective activist and shape an activist positionality where academic writing co-constructs a platform from which to act. Rachel states that “persuasion is definitely something I’ve, having to craft papers that are either going to convince an audience or convey a point of view has definitely, I feel like that definitely comes across in my activism, and when I talk about conflicts. Just trying to get people to care.” Here, Rachel’s conception of practice with persuasive academic writing translates into persuasive activist work and

¹⁴ For example, another STAND student brings her Geology Major to the table in relation to conflict minerals.

writing. Both combine to form a place from which Rachel can act for change and ‘get people to care’ about the issues. Rachel notes that

I find a lot of times the trouble with activism is getting people to care, you know, there's a lot of death in the world, a lot of fighting, and you gotta catch somebody's attention to make them care, so. I find my activism a lot of times is a struggle, like how do we get other students engaged and involved? And we try to think of creative ways to catch people's attention so that's what I try to do with my writing. Is to kind of get a spark there. And also keep the focus on what the goal is, either the goal with our activities that we do or the goal in my paper. Keep that in mind and not lose that.

Although Rachel references her activism in this passage, we also see a clear interplay of the activist strategy of “grabbing attention” that translates into an academic paper that likewise grabs attention. Both in activism and in academic writing, she works to capture attention, persuade, and to provide a clear and concrete goal. For example, as a Wildlife Conservation major, Rachel tries to be engaging and clear about her goals and purposes in her scientific studies, exams, and critiques of scholarly articles. In her academic papers, she also seeks to capture the audience’s attention and engage the reader (although not for social action in particular). For example, in her “Alternate Dispute Resolution” course, she wrote an attention-grabbing opening and argument for a particular approach to mediation:

“Make Love Not War,” commands a faded bumper sticker on the rump of an old Volkswagen ahead of me in traffic. Born in an era when the freedom of expression spread its arms wide and the push for alternatives to war demanded attention, this catch phrase still captures the essence of modern efforts to dissolve conflict and maintain, if not create, positive relationships in the face of feuding. Such efforts have come together to form the field of alternative dispute resolution, and while this movement does not advocate love making to solve disagreements, it does strive to incorporate more than just the word of the law in problem solving. But how could a method that encourages stepping away from the court system possibly ensure justice for its participants?

Rachel's use of the bumper sticker slogan is likely to grab attention through its reference to love making and the way in which Rachel draws the connection to alternate ways to solve disputes and begin to persuade readers. By capturing the reader's attention, she is then able to try to "make the reader care" about the issue of compassionate mediation. Rachel's work with STAND has likewise been attention-grabbing; for example, she participated in placing (fake) body bags on the library lawn to represent victims of genocide. The motivator of "catching attention" thus gives rise to both Rachel's academic writing choices and approach, and activist approach (while for different audiences and reasons). As an activist, she has learned to engage audiences and keep her goals in mind, and she has learned similar lessons in tandem as an academic writer.

In these ways, Rachel writes from a student activist lens and values both spheres in strengthening her writing; first, she values the impact that STAND has had on her academic writing. Social action with STAND has led Rachel to implement writing practices based on this activism. Just as she synthesizes the academic and the activist topically, she synthesizes the writing she does in both spheres and uses social action itself to shape her writing. While academic writing has co-constructed Rachel's strategies to persuade and engage campus and classroom audiences, STAND has helped her to write with a clear focus and approach in mind:

Sarah: And, do you feel that your activist work relates to your academic studies and your writing for school?

Rachel: I haven't been able to connect them directly to class work, but again I've felt that my involvement in activism definitely adds to the whole keeping focus on what I'm trying to do and what I'm trying to say. So, like I mentioned earlier, a lot of times for activities we have a goal in mind and we try to get people interested in that goal and so with my writing I have the same kind of passion, like, here's what I want to say, how do I say it and how do I go about it? So again, I haven't been able to directly, for example, I haven't been able to write about the Congo or anything, but I've used the same kind of, like when I'm doing a research paper for

example, I go about my research the same way that I go about learning about the Congo for example. In that, there are specific problems I want to focus on, but I need to learn history behind it so, I guess, yeah, my activism has definitely helped me just keep focus and keep driving to figure out a problem. And to engage, be very engaging.

Drawing clear connections between writing in activist and academic spheres, Rachel is synthesizing both writing spaces to connect to each other. Here, Rachel discusses how her activist positionality with STAND helps her to focus her academic writing; plan for writing; and research in an in-depth manner. While she has not written directly on STAND topics, STAND and activism have deeply influenced the way she produces academic writing. Her work with STAND to identify what she (and the group) wants to say and how to go about it, and to research root causes are social actions that she accomplishes with STAND and synthesizes with her academic writing to identify similar strategies and practices in her academic writing and research.

For example, Rachel's Junior Year Writing paper on animal cognition begins to show how she keeps a focus, researches in-depth and with attention to root causes, and demonstrates a drive to "figure out a problem." Her third paragraph begins to illustrate these areas that Rachel feels she enhanced through activism:

While difficult to define and even harder to defend, there stands a divide between human and animal, something that places us far above all the rest of the creatures on this planet. And while a limit most definitely exists, it seems that no one can say exactly *what* this limit is; it was once thought that our opposable thumbs made us special, and when this was proven to be a shared trait, we jumped at mankind's use of tools. This too, however, was soon discarded once we discovered several other species crafting pieces of their environment to suit their needs. Today, the defining characteristic between man and animal seems to have settled on our level of intelligence and the question of the extent to which cognition exists within the animal kingdom.

With this paragraph, I suggest that Rachel keeps a focus on the problematic issue of raising humans above animals. She clarifies problems based on her research of the past:

almost as soon as humankind distinguished itself in one way, we found animals who could do the same, and we moved on to the next “distinguishing” feature. In this brief paragraph, Rachel then sets a clear goal to delve into the newer idea of animal cognition, and seek evidence that will support multiple perspectives. She sets up an exigency for her paper, which reflects her “drive to study the problem.” These features resonate with activist goals to elucidate a problem, to research past issues and root causes related to the problem, and to examine the current context – much like Rachel’s work with STAND to inform audiences of genocide, to explain the root causes of genocide, and to examine the current context in its depth and complexity.

She acts as a student activist writer because she is able to synthesize her activist and writing experience in multiple spheres, and use activist experience itself to shape her writing, even while Rachel does not always enjoy academic writing. But in this type of overlap that she describes, Rachel is not positioned as a reductive student writer or an activist writer, but as a student activist writer who combines her positions as a student and activist in her thinking and writing in both areas. One may not think of activist action as having an impact on academic writing because a) the two areas have been constructed as separate and even contradictory and b) people may not think of social action’s impact on writing practices. For example, “real world writing” is seen as a primary way to engage students in meaningful writing as they write “with,” “for,” and “about” their service learning site. But these suggestions miss the fact that activism can shape academic writing in general, and vice versa, for students like Rachel. Students do not have to write with a certain content in mind, but rather they can think about academic

writing, and their approach to it, through the lens of activist action and the strategies of activist action.

At the same time, Rachel feels that her academic writing has also constructed her organizational and research abilities, which helps her to write for social action with STAND. We can see her demonstrate the continuous interplay of academic and activist writing as she revisits her work with the Congo. Rachel discusses writing an information report to STAND on the Congo – a country with very complex human rights abuses. Rachel notes that she has “bridged the technical writing that I learned from my classes and brought that to my...writing I do for STAND,” including the report. In this way, academic research also co-constructs her platform to write for social action. Academic writing does not contradict her activist writing, and she oscillates between her academic writing approaches and her activist writing approaches to create a student activist writing position in the context of STAND. Of all the focal students, Rachel most clearly illustrates a student activist writing position in terms of the concrete writing practices and techniques that she describes, explains, and values.

Through her academic and activist work, Rachel synthesizes a complex picture of the interconnections between activist and academic spheres, and she plans to pursue these connections in her future career. At the end of our interview, she emphasizes why it is important to look to both people and wildlife in order to take effective social (and governmental) action:

I've always felt like you can try to save all the elephants you want but they're dying for a reason. They're being killed for a reason and the people who are killing them, so if you don't understand the people, and you don't understand why people do what they do, then you're not gonna do as good work as you can do with the elephants, for example. So I definitely think, that's why I'm pursuing this

policy thing is that I want to be able to relate to the people, the government policies, and the wildlife. Bring it all together.

Rachel plans to “bring it all together.” She envisions a future where writing across spheres and to multiple audiences will be important. Her future may involve work with creating and writing policy on the environment, human rights, and governments, and she also wants to pursue journalism and nature writing. Rachel’s analysis of her own writing shows how she has the agency to make connections between academic writing practices, social action, and writing for social action in multiple contexts. Students like Rachel illustrate how they can find ways to connect academic studies and writing with the kinds of activist actions that STAND is involved in, and deepen their commitment to, and understandings of, both.

Conclusion

An important issue is the conceptual one that began this chapter: that students bridge the two separate spheres of their academic writing and activist work. However, such a story leaves out the ways in which activist students overlap the two spheres. For example, Rachel synthesizes her major with her activism to arrive at a *deeper perspective* that combines the areas, and does not treat them as separate spheres. Lisa, Elizabeth, and Rachel each show how their activist positionality *exists in the overlaps of the academic and the activist spheres* (for example, they create positions that reside within the overlap in a ven diagram.) The three students combine academic and activist spaces in different ways, but academic research and writing is a necessary feature for each student. Without academics, Lisa would be missing important perspectives on both feminism and genocide that she developed in her writing and studies. Without academics, Elizabeth would not be the anti-racist activist that she is. And without academics, Rachel would have a more

simplistic view of the complexity of genocide and animal/human rights issues. Without academics co-constructing each student's activist lens, their lenses would be less expansive. And without academic writing co-constructing a platform, they would lack the ability to perform informed activist work and engage in strong writing for social action; importantly, they would lack practice with writing, as they all see effective writing as integral to activism, and value academic writing experiences in relation to their social action. Therefore, these activist students feel and show that academic writing is necessary for them to arrive at their different activist positionalities.

Their positions as writers likewise overlap. As a "student activist writer," each focal student combines her position as writer, activist, and writer for social action in different ways. Again, academic writing co-constructs the students' global positions as student activist writers. At the same time, each student transcends a reductive notion of "student writer" or "activist writer" to arrive at a flexible, overlapping position that synthesizes the two in a variety of ways. By inhabiting a "student activist writing position," Lisa, Elizabeth, and Rachel all point to the way that activist action, academic writing, and activist writing inform each other. Student agency arises from their ability to overlap academic space/academic writing with their activism on multiple fronts.¹⁵ Further, the focal students engage in writing practices that are recursive; for example, activism may lead to academic writing practices, which then lead back to activism in any number of ways, which can then affect academic writing. In this way, academic and activist work and writing continually inform one another for the focal students. In this model, drawn from the focal students, academic writing is a key feature of student

¹⁵ Although some case study students may lack the ability to write for social action in particular in some academic contexts, due to the truncation of their affect (see chapter 5).

activists' agency to write for activist purposes. Likewise, their specific activist positionalities inhabit a "middle space" that they form through both academics and activism.

These experiences of the three focal students indicate that academic writing and activism are not so separate. While many teachers who are interested in social justice may envision student writing for social action as writing a speech to persuade a large audience or writing for an outside agency in a service learning context, writing for social action can actually take many forms. Writing that leads to or accomplishes social action can occur in diverse genres in the classroom – from technical reports to analyses of genocide.¹⁶ The focal students show that different genres of classroom writing can be used for a variety of activist purposes and lead to activist education in a number of different ways. In many cases, this writing does not require an immediate public to persuade, but rather develops the lens and platform of student activists to work for social change and often to educate themselves in order to be more effective activists *and* writers. Students value the self education they receive from academic writing because this represents a vital part of their work for social change (through educating and persuading others, for example). In this context, personal writing, academic writing, and STAND writing can all be steps to or forms of social action writing that may or may not be seen by a public audience in its traditional sense. Therefore, academic writing can itself be activist from the point of view of these students, and not intrinsically separate from their activist work. Each focal student began her work with STAND from a different political position, and each student's political understanding of self in relation to

¹⁶ For example, Rachel reported using her technical writing skills to research the Congo and present her findings to STAND while Lisa deepened her understanding of genocide and certain activist strategies.

the interplay of academics and activism changed over time. Thus, there is no single route to social action nor one way of writing that may be socially active.

CHAPTER 4

WRITING FOR SOCIAL ACTION: AFFECTIVE AGENCY

Turning to student writing for social action provides us with insight into writing ingredients that we may miss in a traditional writing classroom (or may be absent from such a classroom). In studying activist student writing, we find multiple and layered affective reasons for each aspect of writing, which adds depth to an analysis of the social action writing process. In this context, we can identify overlapping student motivations, purposes, and rhetorical choices that make writing for social action possible. For example, motivation for writing for social action arises through students' intellects, but just as importantly through student affects. As Peter McLaren notes, affective investments run deeper than intellectual ones: he points out that one may understand the ideological workings of dominance, but still be manipulated by them at an affective level; one must transform affective investments to change intellectual beliefs and concrete behaviors (76). As affective investments are foundational, they are more likely to "move" activist students to write for social action in the first place, and also to strive to change the affective investments of their audience by reconstructing emotion in text to shift audience beliefs and actions. Further, in writing for social action, the writing itself helps the writer to negotiate the strong emotions and affective investments that tend to accompany activism and contact with injustice. That is, they write to "deal with" their "felt" emotions through the affective writing process. Here, students who write for social action are able to respond to emotion in a politicized way through their writing. Their rhetorical choices reflect their own anger in the text in both overt and subtle ways, and they feel a sense of affective agency through their rhetorical

decision-making process; specifically, they construct such agency through writing and targeting an audience. More than simply affording a venue for persuasion or action upon others, I found that writing serves to reconstruct emotion and *create* agency for the writer. For example, even if they do not have the agency to change the mind of a racist individual, they do have the affective agency to express their feelings in a political and public context and shift the rhetorical situation to open new possibilities as they write for social action. Wendy Hesford describes a similar process by tracing how affect is circulated at a college where complex issues of socio-political identity, authenticity, and history informed student activists' rights to speak, to interpret, and to be heard to create rhetorical situations that give rise to social action. Hesford points out how students' lived experience and emotions translated into political action where students challenged racism and institutional injustice on campus through rhetoric. While Hesford notes the importance of affect to political action, she does not trace how it affects the writing process, an understanding that is necessary if we are to create more effective pedagogies around these questions.

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which affect fuels activist students' intertwined emotions, motivations, and purposes for social action writing by attempting to trace the overlapping processes of affect and rhetorical construction and choice. Studying the affective writing process illuminates student activist attitudes towards writing, their writing practices, and their written texts in a holistic manner. Affect itself is a process where feelings are constructed, re-constructed, and interpreted through socio-political positioning, historical context, and power relations that circulate within these areas. The affective writing process accounts for the reasons why students feel

emotion; how students understand emotion in relation to their writing process and choices; and how students integrate emotion into their texts based on factors such as their politicized identities and experience with multiple contexts and ideologies. Put simply, affect constructs the feelings of activists and is the engine of the writing process – from a student’s first emotions to the decision of where to circulate a text for a particular audience.

The affective writing process for social action begins with an intense emotion on the part of the activist student writer. As Sarah Ahmed writes, emotion itself “isn’t inside the person or outside the person, but generated through contact” with signs and bodies, as well as constructed through relations of identity, community, and power (7). Student contact with a particular injustice, such as a racist act, can spark subjective, “felt,” emotion. At the same time, the particular quality and intensity of that emotion is constructed by the socio-political experience of an activist student. Through lived experience, activist students also develop affective investments that represent deep values, beliefs, and modes of meaning-making. For example, a student who has experienced racism develops an affective investment in justice because of her experience. Her subjective emotions, such as anger, arise when she then perceives a similar injustice in the world. This process is an integral part of the affective writing process: students feel particular emotions and draw from their material experience and affective investments to take action through writing and to interpret the rhetorical situation that they have come into contact with or to construct a situation that allows them to write. The entire affective writing process is layered and recursive, but we can look at

individual components in order to fully examine each aspect of the students' writing for social action.

This conception of affective textual production is somewhat different than other conceptions of affect because it is more inclusive than more cognitive-oriented theories and expressivist-oriented theories, as well as other affective theories that may be more narrow. For example, Susan McLeod studies affect during the student writing process, but draws a narrow line of vision that does not examine the construction of student affect, but rather the feelings in particular moments (such as frustration and excitement at the drafting stage). Other theorists suggest emphases on certain emotions, such as empathy, but also miss how such feelings are constructed to begin with. Theorists such as Eve Sedgwick and Kristie Fleckenstein offer more complex readings of both affect and the body, but they do not account for the ways that emotion and affect interact to construct the full writing process. Theorists may miss the breadth of the construction of affective structures – including the ingredients of activism and academics -- and the ways that they shape student writing at every stage of the process. In tending to see academics as a limiting factor, theorists may also miss the emotional value and affective investments that shape students' rhetorical choices.

Affect in Action

In this chapter, I will discuss Elizabeth and Lisa in particular as they provided me with the most telling examples of social action writing. While the other case study students also engage in this form of writing, their examples were not as detailed nor their memories as fresh. Both these focal students, Elizabeth and Lisa, seek to call upon the audience in order to change racist or sexist beliefs by increasing awareness of

injustice. Elizabeth's social action text is entitled, "An Open Letter to Alexandra Wallace in Response to her Video, *Asians in the Library* and she challenges this racist video that was released onto YouTube in the spring of 2012, during Elizabeth's sophomore year in college. In her Open Letter, Elizabeth responds to Alexandra Wallace, a white student at the University of California Los Angeles, who posted a video of herself on YouTube that gained national attention for its racist content. Thousands and thousands of students across the country watched Alexandra's hateful video as it went "viral," and internet audiences were appalled by its unabashedly racist speech against Asians and Asian Americans. Elizabeth identifies herself as Asian American, and was incensed and upset by this video. Elizabeth wrote her Open Letter by using a transcript of Alexandra's YouTube "rant;" she responded to each of Alexandra's statements as a way to try to "make Alexandra understand" her own racism and why she made so many people upset by the video, as well as to challenge racism in society and foster change.

Meanwhile, Lisa's "Feminist Rant" reflects her deep affective investments in feminism and social change. Like Elizabeth, her social action writing was also sparked by a peer, and in this case, a peer she knew very well. Because he rejected both her independence and the inequality in our society, vital affective investments for Lisa, she was deeply angry. She chose a "Rant" in particular to channel her rage and also explain patriarchy in our society to an audience of campus women. Her "Feminist Rant" represents a social action text that she feels will be most effective in her purpose to write for feminism. The two samples show a range of affective writing processes and audiences in the context of social action. They also represent ways of "getting feelings

out” and constructing rhetorical choices. Both students report that they see issues of racism and anti-feminism frequently, whether in media or daily life, and that these instances spark their emotions.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth’s “Open Letter” to Alexandra Wallace in Full

What follows is Elizabeth’s Open Letter to Alexandra Wallace (Alexandra’s transcript is in italics):

To [All the] Alexandra Wallace[s],

First of all, I want to make this very clear: THIS IS NOT AN A RANT. I’m sure you have had enough of the anger directed (rightly so) at you for your poor decision in recording and uploading such an offensive video. Since watching that video I read that you made an official apology. However, I feel as though you may not truly comprehend why so many people are upset. How do I know this? Well, the fact that you thought posting your video “Asians in the Library” on the internet shows a lack of judgment. Also, your statement: “I cannot explain what possessed me to approach the subject as I did” demonstrates that you still have trouble grasping why you offended so many people. And I want to make sure that you understand why someone like myself who doesn’t even attend UCLA is taking the time to write this letter.

Alexandra. You are not being targeted for complaining about loud Asians in the library. Every race has their obnoxious people who are unaware of their surroundings. I can relate. It sucks when people can’t even practice the simplest form of courtesy by being quiet in a library especially during finals week. And that is when you should have stopped your video.

“So we know that I’m not the most politically correct person so don’t take this offensively. I don’t mean it toward any of my friends I mean it toward random people that I don’t even know in the library. So, you guys are not the problem.”

Making judgments about random people that you do not know is never a good idea because you do not know who they are nor what they’ve been through or what they’re actually like. Also, by saying that you don’t mean it to any of your friends doesn’t cancel out the rest of your video where you proceeded to generalize a whole race with just a few personal observations. It’s like saying to your friend, “Ohmygod. You’re such a fatty! That dress looks awful on you. . . just kidding!” You still said some hurtful and offensive things.

“The problem is these hordes of Asian people that UCLA accepts into our school every single year, which is fine. But if you’re going to come to UCLA then use American manners.”

I don't know about you but when I think of the word "hordes" I usually think of rats or vermin. Maybe it's just me but I don't have a positive connotation associated with that word and that implies that your video is much more than a rant about "loud Asians." Have you ever considered that all these "Asian people" might actually be **American** people as well? They could have very easily been born right in California and lived in the United States all their lives raised by Asian parents who also might have happened to be born in America making them **American** as well. Your use of the term "American manners" make me feel as though in your mind an American is represented by the face of a blonde Caucasian girl instead of a myriad of different faces that should represent the diversity in the United States.

"So it used to really bug me but it doesn't bother me anymore the fact that all the Asian people that live in all the apartments around me — their moms and their brothers and their sisters and their grandmas and their grandpas and their cousins and everybody that they know that they've brought along from Asia with them — comes here on the weekends to do their laundry, buy their groceries and cook their food for the week. It's seriously, without fail. You will always see old Asian people running around this apartment complex every weekend. That's what they do. They don't teach their kids to fend for themselves.

Do you honestly know if all these relatives are "from Asia"? Like I said before you don't know if even the grandparents were actually born in the States. Asians have been here for CENTURIES. Also, the way you state this sounds as though you would rather them NOT come from Asia and just stay where they are. And how is a family visit so wrong? Once again, you are generalizing since I highly doubt that EVERY SINGLE Asian/Asian American student you see has family over doing their chores. What if the student actually worked all week including keeping up with class and that she/he may be tired out to do anything else? What if the student is first generation and attending college is actually just validating all the hard work and sacrifices the family went through? That the family would be so willing to help out seems more of a matter of pride, community, and love than a spoiled child who is being coddled.

You know what they don't also teach them, is their manners. Which brings me to my next point. Hi, in America we do not talk on our cell phones in the library. I swear every five minutes I will be — okay, not five minutes, say like fifteen minutes — I'll be in like deep into my studying, into my political science theories and arguments and all that stuff, getting it all down, like typing away furiously, blah, blah, blah, and then all of a sudden when I'm about to like reach an epiphany... Over here from somewhere, "Ooooh Ching Chong Ling Long Ting Tong, Ooohhhhh."

Read that last line again. Say it out loud and use the same exact tone as you did in the video. Was that really how this person talked? I can assure you that no Asian language actually sounds like that and you took the easy way out using a racial slur instead of actually constructing the conversation accurately. Also, I need to add that if you need to rely on flashes of insight from the divine then you're probably in the wrong major. From one social behavioral science major to another, let me give you a tip. Read,

analyze, and then write in your own words. It's really not that hard. Your time might be better spent at office hours with your teacher instead of struggling at the library.

“Are you freaking kidding me? In the middle of finals week? So being the polite, nice American girl that my momma raised me to be, I kinda just gave him what anybody else would do that kinda like, [puts finger up to lips in a "shh" motion]. “You know it’s a library, like, we’re trying to study, thanks!” And then it’s the same thing five minutes later. But it’s somebody else, you know —

Again, bring up the whole “American manners” deal? You’re insinuating (intentionally or not) that your “American manners” are somehow superior to the “Asian manners” that your peers might have been raised on. Also, if you were really bothered then a simple finger gesture wasn’t going to cut it. You should have walked over and explained your situation or moved to a quieter area or even put some earbuds in and cranked up the music to help your epiphany along.

“I swear they’re going through their whole families, just checking on everybody from the tsunami thing. I mean I know, okay, that sounds horrible like I feel bad for all the people affected by the tsunami, but if you’re gonna go call your address book like you might as well go outside because if something is wrong you might really freak out if you’re in the library and everybody’s quiet like you seriously should go outside if you’re gonna do that.”

Finally. This “tsunami thing” isn’t something to be dismissive about and treating it as though you’re talking about some funny anecdote that occurred over the weekend is not the answer. It paints you as someone insensitive to the deaths of over 10,000 people and possibly many more. I can see how someone calling to make sure the safety of family/friends can be a disturbance to you but the last thing on these people’s minds is your study atmosphere especially when it means finding out someone is alive or dead.

Alexandra. I will be honest. When I watched your video I was angry. Upset. But that anger quickly faded because what really scares me the most is that you’re not the only person who thinks this way. That in the 21st century there are college-educated students who not only lack sound judgment but also understanding. I am embarrassed and ashamed that we are part of the same generation. I truly hope that this letter helps you even a little bit to see why what you did was wrong and has compromised your reputation.

Please try to learn from this and be more careful of what you put on the internet.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

Elizabeth's Emotional Contact and Motivation for Writing for Social Action

Following Sarah Ahmed, emotion does not reside inside or outside of a person in a static way, but rather is created through contact. Elizabeth experienced such a contact in her sophomore year of college when she watched a YouTube video by a racist white female student at UCLA. Elizabeth explains:

Her name is Alexandra Wallace and she's a UCLA student and...she posted a video that got uploaded onto YouTube and she basically did a rant because it was finals week and she was just complaining that there was, there were a lot of loud Asians in the library. She kind of went on and did the whole like 'ching chong' thing and then she, some of the quotes she said were 'all these hordes of Asian kids we let into our school' or she would say stuff like 'I was taught American manners and I was taught not to...' just stuff like that.

First, Elizabeth's contact with the video gives rise to intense emotions: "After watching that I was so upset for a week. Like, I was just really, really upset." Not only did Elizabeth view some racist student on the internet, but she also collided with racist ideologies that represent a deep, current and historical oppression of Asian and Asian Americans. Elizabeth also notes the connections with current racism in the repetition of the "ching chong" slur in the media, whose users also include Rosie O'Donnell and Rush Limbaugh. As Ahmed notes, emotions are shaped through "repetitive actions," and the slur and overarching racism represent Elizabeth's multiple interactions with hateful speech (4). As "emotions circulate between bodies," such as Elizabeth and Alexandra's politically embodied positions, Elizabeth comes into contact with "affective economies of hate" where people, such as Alexandra, "project all that is undesirable onto another" (Ahmed 46; 49). Similar to economic capital, hate circulates throughout society, and Alexandra's words added to this circulation for Elizabeth. In this context, Elizabeth describes her ongoing "frustration" that adults "should know better," as well as students.

Her response to an affective economy of hate is outrage on two levels: 1) people should know better than to be racist and 2) people should know better than to circulate racism in a public sphere.

The video also jolted Elizabeth through its unabashed racism even further because of the commonalities between her and Alexandra, and Elizabeth's desire to understand the strength of her own feelings. Elizabeth notes, "I could not believe someone who is considered my peer would speak that way and then have the gall to put it on the internet and think that would be just fine. Laugh." Alexandra is in many ways similar to Elizabeth in age and in membership in a college community, and these relations make the video all the more upsetting because no peer of hers should speak that way or believe that airing these ultra-racist sentiments would just be "funny." Elizabeth interprets the contact both cognitively and as felt; her subjectivity and socio-political position as a second generation Asian American shapes her impression of the contact. Elizabeth experiences her reaction to Alexandra in a visceral sense (through a video with image and sound), an emotional sense that includes upset, frustration, and disbelief, and a thoughtful sense as she explores why Alexandra holds racist sentiments that she publicizes in a way that circulates hate. However, Elizabeth is also able to laugh in retrospect, which challenges the power that Alexandra wields in the contact because Elizabeth can, for a moment, minimize the negative feelings that Alexandra provoked (which represents self-care on the part of activists to avoid feeling overwhelmed as well). At the same time, Elizabeth's emotions of upset and anger are not apolitical. As Ahmed notes, "the passion of anger is crucial to change – it is liberating" (175). In this context, Alexandra addresses

her open letter to everyone who discriminates and writes: “To [All the] Alexandra Wallace[s].”

Many of Elizabeth’s affective investments arise from her particular experiences with family, society, and power relations. When asked about “what makes her passionate about issues,” Elizabeth states:

I honestly, part of it has to do with just the way I grew up. Both my parents are, they didn’t graduate from college, they’re just high school, and they came from Korea and they work really hard. My mom is a waitress and she works part time at the laundry mat, which is like, compared to my other mom’s friends who work as secretaries and lawyers it’s like. I don’t want to say nothing cause she works twelve hours every day at both jobs. It’s just how people treat her and it just, it just bugs me. There was this one time where my dad was short changed, and the employee was white and he made a comment to my dad about him being Asian. I can’t remember what it was, but it was derogatory and he told me about that. And then we kind of went back and I explained it in my English, cause like both my parents can speak English, but it’s like really choppy and you can tell that it’s not their first language.

These experiences have made a fundamental impact on Elizabeth and inform her beliefs, values, and activist worldview. Elizabeth began college with a “practical consciousness” that represents “what is being lived, and not only what is thought is being lived...it is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulated” (Williams 131). Elizabeth was and is drawn to issues where “people aren’t equal or they don’t have the equal opportunities,” which represents her lived experience (both thinking and feeling). She chose sociology based on her practical consciousness, where she could study issues of inequality and diversity, which helped her to articulate her life experience in a more political context. She feels that her values arise “just because of my background, you know, being Asian American. The race side definitely comes into play and then also I don’t come from a very rich or wealthy background. So I just feel like in our society, it

seems obviously that the people who tend to have more, tend to have more power and influence and they don't really help those who are less fortunate, so." According to Williams, "relations with the already articulate and defined are then exceptionally more complex," and Elizabeth demonstrates this complexity in her observations of her politicized identity (133).

Elizabeth's ongoing material experience of the world gives rise to particular affective investments that construct "passion"-- a deep sense of caring and commitment -- in relation to issues of injustice. As Sedgwick points out, one may have affect about affect. Elizabeth illustrates this point as she is excited by anger in certain contexts: "like if I hear something about race, specifically Asian American or just Asian in general, I would probably be passionate about that. Or just issues where I hear people are being cheated out of their, their just natural right to have stuff...stuff like that really just makes me so upset." These examples illustrate a range of affective investments that span time and give rise to motivation to write and keep writing. Elizabeth's material life experience gives rise to ongoing anger, motivation, and purpose to write her letter because she has affective investments in equality and challenging racism and classism; anger provides the momentum for Elizabeth to challenge Alexandra and all that she stands for. When Alexandra Wallace performed her rant on YouTube, she circulated hate and violated Elizabeth's deeply held beliefs in justice, respect, anti-classism, and anti-racism. Because Alexandra represented an area that Elizabeth was passionate about through her experience and beliefs, her impact on Elizabeth was formidable and injurious. In watching the video, Elizabeth is "learning what she already knows" -- that racism is a

problem – but in a highly visceral way that demands her attention and action (Sedgwick 166).

At the same time, Elizabeth interprets the context in another way that complicates her feelings of upset. In interpreting the emotional contact (and rhetorical situation), Elizabeth also reflects on Alexandra’s official apology, the tenacity of racism, and what should have been done to educate Alexandra. Elizabeth points out that Alexandra “released a statement saying that she apologized. But she said stuff like, ‘I didn’t really understand, like I didn’t think that it would get this big of a reaction’ or I think she also said like ‘it was just supposed to be funny.’” For Elizabeth, such statements indicate that Alexandra continues to remain ignorant and does not form an understanding of the hateful racism that she circulated. In her statement, she does not say that she now understands, nor does she explain that she has realized why her video was *not* funny, nor does she present a conception of *why* so many people did get upset:

S: Yeah, because it seems in her apology [as you described it], she still doesn’t get it.

E: Yeah, she really didn’t. And she, that’s like, I don’t know. I wish she did stay at UCLA and she had to take, I don’t know, some Asian American courses. But I feel like she’s probably just going to transfer to a different school, and then, she’s probably going to still feel the same way. I don’t think she’s going to change. Honestly. So that’s kind of sad. I think she would just not, she’s probably smart enough now not to like put it on the internet anymore, but she probably still says stuff, like within her circle of friends, her family, so.

Elizabeth experiences feelings of sadness because she does not believe Alexandra will change, and it is implied that the “other Alexandras” (racist students) may not change either. It is a fatalistic feeling that may not be new to Elizabeth, as the STAND conflict areas tend not to change either. Her point of emotional despondency gives rise to sadness at the difficulty in challenging racism and changing racist beliefs. There is also pain at

the lost potential for Alexandra to learn from Asian-American studies courses, for example. As Elizabeth experiences different emotions and affective investments, Elizabeth's "structure of affect" is also accompanying her understanding and choices – not only particular affective investments, but an overall "structure of feeling" that combines the ongoing process of the personal, political, and institutional formations of her sense of being in the world (Williams 133). Following Williams, I use the term "structure of affect" to mean

meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systemic beliefs which are in practice variable...specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelated continuity. We are then defining these elements as a structure, as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension...a social experience in process [with] relations between formal systems of belief and meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt and the more nuanced beliefs and acted and justified experiences. (Williams 132)

Elizabeth's structure of affect is composed of her multiple identities (as daughter, student, activist, for example), as well as her experiences with various institutions and ideologies, as structuring factors for all of her emotions, affective investments, personal, and political decisions in the world – including rhetorical ones. This structure of affect is not fixed, however, but subject to change as Elizabeth moves through the writing process – she is able to shape this structure for herself and Alexandra as she constructs the rhetorical situation and her writing choices.

At the start of her writing process, Elizabeth has two beliefs based on her structure of affect: the necessity to educate and the idea that Alexandra will continue to be racist (and so will all the people like her). As the affective economy of hate is always circulating, she wants to educate to combat it. However, if Elizabeth also feels

the futility of social action writing to change Alexandra's attitudes and behavior, the question becomes: why does she write? What moves her from emotions to actions in the form of writing an Open Letter for social action?

Negotiating Affect Through Writing

Elizabeth's turn to the Open Letter represents aspects of the affective writing process that she shapes through her political organizing and academic writing. For example, her emotional response is in part constructed through the particular values she embraces in academic writing. Elizabeth contrasts her construction of her own affect in the letter: "like I would be like 'you're so stupid, you're a stupid bitch,' and just sort of written stuff that came to mind. [In contrast,] like the blog post that I wrote, I took the time to actually explain each point and just have a better way of expressing myself instead of just screaming at her, I went through and just calmly tried to do that." How Elizabeth moves from anger and the desire to shout to rhetorical action is central to understanding the role affect plays in social action writing: rhetorical action is more than action; it helps construct the affective agency that is necessary to take action in a reciprocal process. Elizabeth uses writing to negotiate her emotions and to make rhetorical decisions, and in doing so she envisions a particular rhetorical situation where she shifts the structures of affect for both herself and Alexandra. While she continues to be angry, she constructs Alexandra's hate as ignorance, which opens the very possibility to write for social action that can accomplish change through awareness. An ignorant Alexandra may learn, while a malicious one would not; in reconstructing Alexandra, Elizabeth also reconstructs her own affect that allows her to explain rather than "shout" and step into the ethos of an activist educator. Therefore, Elizabeth's layered affective

agency fulfills her emotional needs that are intimately tied to constructing a social action text that makes justice possible.

One reason why Elizabeth may be moved from emotion to writing for social action is her affective investments and agency that she developed in part through STAND. Through her work with the group, Elizabeth notes, “I think I’ve learned I really like to write, especially when I am angry...I definitely learned that writing is the one thing that helps me a lot to cope with all the stuff that happens.” Writing itself provides a kind of affective agency where Elizabeth can achieve a sense of power through her writing because she is “doing something.” Writing allows her to address why people should know better than to be racist and why people should know better than to circulate hate because her affective agency gives her the power to feel that she is “making people understand” and combating the circulation of hate by circulating her own text as a blog on the internet. She posts the Letter on her own anti-racist blog that some of her friends follow. Affective agency allows Elizabeth to “talk back” to Alexandra and gain power through this act, through getting her emotions out, through utilizing her emotions of anger to actually enjoy her writing process. Even if Elizabeth only reaches her second goal – to stop the public circulation of hate, she is somewhat satisfied. For example, Elizabeth’s last sentence of the letter states, “Please try to learn from this and be more careful of what you put on the internet.” If Alexandra doesn’t learn anything, then at least she should know not to broadcast her racist beliefs. One can still see a sense of fatalism in this sentence; at the same time, Elizabeth believes that Alexandra’s ignorance can be changed through education and explanation. This choice to write, despite (or perhaps because of) conflicting emotions, may be ultimately powered by Elizabeth’s

affective investments in promoting education to try to combat entrenched injustice, but it is through writing that she constructs the agency to maintain this possibility, and thus her affective investment that action is possible. She still wants to fill the gap of the lost potential for Alexandra to learn in order to change.

Rather than remain at a static space of upset and anger in her Open Letter, Elizabeth breaks the binary between intellect and emotion, and “enjoys” critical writing from a place of anger. As “thought is felt and feelings are thought,” Elizabeth combines her emotions with writing from a position of critique and judgment. Of all of her writing samples, Elizabeth took the most pleasure in writing this Open Letter because she was able to engage with her emotions through a critical lens:

that was the first time I’ve ever taken the time, I think it was the first time I had to actually calm myself down, apart from my journal writing, that was the first time I had to sit down and just relax and look at it logically before I wrote it. Because I don’t think I’ve had to do it with my other papers, I wasn’t as angry or upset. And then I went and actually went through and thought about each little statement she said and was really thorough about responding to it.

Writing helps her to construct a larger space for expressing multiple emotions and allows her to reflect upon her emotions, both intellectually and affectively. In her interview, Elizabeth contrasts her construction of her own affect without turning to a rhetorical situation to explain her response to the different affective relations she can create when composing for social action.

Writing is a crucial tool that Elizabeth uses to negotiate her emotions – the emotions that she feels, and the emotions that she does and does not want to project to any audience. Elizabeth’s internal move from watching the video to writing comes quickly: “when I watched the video I was really upset about it, so I wanted to write something that was somehow enlightening but at the same time kind of like, tongue in

cheek.” This decision to respond through writing represents the ways in which Elizabeth negotiates her emotions – from upset to seeing the humor -- through various forms of writing for social action and writing in general. Her desire to negotiate both happiness and pain through writing is a constant in her life because it puts her in control of her emotions; this is central because the key is not to negate the emotions or suppress them, but to control them by rearticulating the emotional contact in a way that allows action to be possible. And this is where writing seems to be most central. Rather than be overwhelmed by anger, for example, Elizabeth writes it out to deal with it. Even in her journal, a very different text from the Open Letter, Elizabeth uses writing when she is upset; for example, in order to “not blow up” at her roommate and instead write in the journal to “let those emotions out first and then think through it logically before I actually have to talk to her. So it helps me not to yell at her, because I don’t want that to happen.” Here Elizabeth writes out her feelings in order to have constructive dialogue with her roommate and avoid “being hurtful” or “yelling,” and this process resonates with her affective engagements with this very different text for social action. With the Open Letter, Elizabeth states, “I don’t know, like I knew no one was actually going to see it. I just wrote to get my feelings out. I didn’t think anyone would actually read it. A couple of my friends did, but that was it. There wasn’t really any like, it was just to get my emotions out, to cool off, from watching that obnoxious racist video.” In some ways, negotiating her subjective emotions is more important than having an audience for her social action writing. Here, “getting feelings out” trumps audience for Elizabeth; it is after she has finished the letter that she imagines other audiences, such as academic courses, campus newspapers, and blog audiences for the letter.

Elizabeth continues to develop affective agency through text as a way for her to channel her emotions, to reflect on her emotions, *and* to create dialogue with the person or issue that spark strong feelings. Elizabeth cannot talk to Alexandra Wallace about the way she made her feel or why she is racist, but she can write an Open Letter to hold Alexandra responsible and “make her understand.” This phrase is key: Elizabeth “wanted to really get it across to her that it’s not just something you say and it’s going to be laughed over and done. I just really wanted to make her understand.” In this way, negotiating these personal emotions is more than an outlet; they also guide her rhetorical choices as she composes the Letter. Through creating a rhetorical situation in which she can take action, Elizabeth achieves more than a release; she renegotiates her emotions in a way that allows her to alter the affective structures in which they exist for herself and Alexandra both. Although she suggests expressive purposes for writing above, the Letter goes much further than this and becomes a key part of how her own emotions become renegotiated. Elizabeth writes to create a form of affective agency for herself where she has the power to change Alexandra through her text (even if Alexandra never sees it in reality).

The construction of affective agency also explains why Elizabeth chooses to write the Open Letter even though she believes Alexandra will not actually change; it still shifts the power dynamic so that Elizabeth feels she has recourse as she writes. By analyzing the rhetorical situation, Elizabeth develops a purpose and sense of audience for her writing to Alexandra by shifting her relationship to Alexandra. Elizabeth makes the distinction between Alexandra being malicious versus being ignorant, and feels that “I think she was just being really ignorant. I don’t think she meant it maliciously, I think

she just had no idea that this would have that much of a backlash, which does make sense if her school is like half Asian and she lives in CA of all places. I think it was just more ignorant and stupid on her part.” Therefore, Elizabeth decides to place great weight on “clear communication” to combat ignorance. Elizabeth explains her choice to write an Open Letter that elucidates Alexandra’s racism. She says, “I think it’s just better to make sure both parties understand. Because the whole point of writing that was just me trying to explain not just to her, but people who are like that too, because I’m sure there are plenty of people who think that way, but just aren’t dumb enough to put that on the internet. So I think it’s just for like clear communication and just understanding, clarity.” For Elizabeth, Alexandra represents a population of students, and people in general, who harbor racist beliefs and act in racist ways. They represent an affective economy of hate, where racism circulates throughout society – whether intentional or not. In explaining “clearly,” Elizabeth is holding these people responsible – they cannot claim ignorance or misunderstanding – she takes away any excuse for racist beliefs or behaviors from them. And even though these “plenty of people” did not post on YouTube, Elizabeth notes that they are there and includes them in her Open Letter – it is not just one white girl, but Elizabeth’s response to a racist society and racist ideologies. This may fuel Elizabeth’s drive to “make Alexandra understand” what she had done, as the single racist act compounds with many racist acts that Elizabeth has had contact with and that circulate in our world. In this way, Elizabeth turns the source of her anger – racist people her own age – into a potential source of change. What first so angered her, that someone in college like her could feel this way and say these things, becomes instead the source of connection to get Alexandra to change: they could find common ground in

being college students, and thus Elizabeth could use this common ground to reposition Alexandra as someone willing to learn, and as someone who might “get it” if informed by someone who shared some of her life experiences.

Elizabeth’s genre and circulation choice are also central here; not only are they likely to appeal to her age group and reflect a response in the very public venue of the original video, she also believes writing in this venue can combat racism. Elizabeth analyzes the rhetorical situation and turns to writing on her blog because she says that she “deals with racism” by reading anti-racist blogs and by writing on her own blog – she discovered this process through her Asian American studies course where she studied Asian Americans on the internet (and in the media in general). Elizabeth is also able to analyze the rhetorical situation through her coursework. She says,

I feel like I can connect that [video] with the stuff I like understood. Part of one of the Asian American courses I took last semester was analyzing media and culture and how Asians are portrayed...I guess stuff like that definitely stays with me. When things like that happen, if that happened before I took some of these courses, I would just be like, oh she’s dumb and that’s it. But now I actually think about, yeah what she did was really stupid and makes me angry, but why would she think that way. And what contributed to that. So. I guess the issues just really stay with me and I try to like, I look at everything in a lot more in a different light now. After writing papers like that.

Elizabeth describes the way that her emotions became more informed through a lens that she developed in her academic courses, and also how possibilities for an emotional and evidence-based response opened up. Her “practical consciousness” became more politically articulated through her Asian American coursework and projects. She could connect the rhetorical situation with her Asian and Asian American academic studies to understand the rhetorical situation at both an emotional and academically analytical level, which provide ways to understand the larger media and historical context. She no longer

stops at anger like she would have in the past, but now asks questions about the emotional contact, and moves to a certain type of logical response that includes emotion, and also includes political questions and reflections as part of the rhetorical situation.

Elizabeth goes on to frame the Open Letter in the context of Alexandra's assumed ignorance and the uproar that she created in a larger context of the media. Alexandra's circulation of hate through the public YouTube video did not go unnoticed, and instead became a flashpoint for a myriad of responses to racism, including death threats to Alexandra. Elizabeth wanted to both explain Alexandra's racism, but also to explain why so many people were so upset with her, as she begins her text: "However, I feel as though you may not truly comprehend why so many people are upset." She shifts a frame from "you have done something wrong," to "you should understand why people reacted in this way," which is a strategy to keep Alexandra reading, but also an important purpose for Elizabeth. If Alexandra can understand the Open Letter and change her beliefs and attitudes, Elizabeth can accomplish her activist goal of writing for social action to construct a just society and reconstruct the fatalism that she feels. Constructing Alexandra as able to learn allows Elizabeth to challenge the circulation of hate and re-circulate a connection between herself and Alexandra instead – a circulation that allows for identification of material similarities as college students. Based on this shift in affective structure, Alexandra will keep reading the Open Letter by her peer and will understand why her words hurt so many. In this context, Elizabeth also avoids calling Alexandra racist. In fact, Elizabeth does not use the term "racist" or "racism" in her Open Letter. The reason may be two-fold based on Elizabeth's reconstruction of the emotional contact: first, she repositions Alexandra as ignorant and not malicious through

her reconstitution of Alexandra textually, and invokes her as a potentially educable audience. Second, she wants to explain Alexandra's racism in a way that she will understand and listen to, drawing on their commonalities as students. For example, Elizabeth chooses to use concrete and simple analogies: "...you proceed to generalize a whole race with just a few personal observations. It's like saying to your friend, 'Ohmygod. You're such a fatty! That dress looks awful on you...just kidding!' You still said some hurtful and offensive things." Even in her ignorance, Alexandra could understand the analogy with a dress insult. Elizabeth's letter was framed in part to remedy ignorance, and in this context Elizabeth made the rhetorical choice to "speak" directly to Alexandra in terms she felt Alexandra could understand.

Creating this connection, however, serves more than rhetorical ends; it helps renegotiate the affective structures in which Elizabeth locates her own anger and Alexandra's racism: the material experiences they share and where they diverge. This kind of strategic empathy for Alexandra (through occupying her position or trying to see through her eyes) is the enabling fantasy/reality that allows Elizabeth to write – to believe her action can have effect. In this way, the initial affective agency she creates through writing becomes full affective agency as she imagines a public and circulation routes that can recirculate a different affective structure where racism can be addressed, people can be made to understand, and a more just world can become a reality. In this context, she takes satisfaction in pursuing her writing goals for social action as well. Elizabeth implies that her vision of writing critically and in-depth has helped her to deal with "that awful video by that white girl." "Talking back" to Alexandra's very words (in using the transcript of the video) and envisioning social change affords Elizabeth a sense of power

that combines intellect with emotion. In doing so, she positions herself as more than just another student, but as an anti-racist educator who can foster social justice.

Elizabeth's Text

Elizabeth appeals to the audience of the Open Letter by fostering awareness designed to challenge racism. In doing so, she writes her own affect into the text to persuade the “Alexandras” of the world to listen and to learn. The complex nature of her rhetorical appeals seem directly related to how writing helped Elizabeth renegotiate affect by invoking Alexandra as an audience who needs education, not hate in response, and by creating an ethos for herself that helps her reimagine her position vis a vie Alexandra as someone with shared experiences from whom Alexandra can *understand*. In this way, Elizabeth employs a variety of appeals that allow her both to “take power back” in this racist context, while also engaging Alexandra with the purpose to change her beliefs and actions. Her text illustrates the complex rhetorical moves that she makes to achieve her goals.

In her text, Elizabeth negotiates her subjective feelings of upset and disempowerment through rhetorical choices that highlight her own power through strong orders to Alexandra. For example, some of Elizabeth's rhetorical choices illustrate affective agency, where she can not only explain, but “talk back” to Alexandra by *directing* her to take specific measures. In the video, Alexandra describes how her library studies are interrupted by, “Ooooh Ching Chong Ling Long Ting Tong, Oooohhhh.” In response, Elizabeth directs Alexandra to “Read that last line again. Say it out loud and use the same exact tone as you did in the video. Was that really how this person talked? I can assure you that no Asian language actually sounds like that and you took the easy

way out using a racial slur instead of actually constructing the conversation accurately.” Elizabeth’s use of the directive holds Alexandra responsible for her actions in a way that is designed to educate her very emphatically at the same time. Alexandra cannot remain ignorant of the “ching chong” slur if she follows Elizabeth’s directions. In this way, Elizabeth circulates her own power in the text as she makes the rhetorical choice to order Alexandra to understand her own slur. Further, in response to Alexandra’s complaints with noisy Asian people in the library, Elizabeth suggests: “You should have walked over [to a noisy student] and explained your situation, or moved to a quieter area, or even put some earbuds in and cranked up the music to help your epiphany along.” Here, she holds Alexandra even more accountable by suggesting common sense actions she should have taken.

In shifting affective structures, Elizabeth gains power in her position to reel Alexandra into the letter through commonalities; only then are Elizabeth’s own feelings of horror at such commonalities expressed through the text. First, Elizabeth positions herself as a student just like Alexandra who understands Alexandra’s problems. Elizabeth uses this newer relation to circulate pathos throughout the Open Letter, and to circulate pathos in a particular order. For example, Elizabeth first writes, “I can relate [to annoying people in the library]. It sucks when people can’t even practice the simplest form of courtesy by being quiet in a library especially during finals week. And that is when you should have stopped the video.” Elizabeth’s second moment of relation is qualitatively different and represents Elizabeth’s negotiation of anger through sarcasm: “from one social behavioral science major to another, let me give you a tip. Read, analyze, and then write in your own words. It’s really not that hard. Your time might be

better spent at office hours with your teacher instead of struggling at the library.” Again, Elizabeth draws a relation between herself and Alexandra, but couches this relation in a “tongue in cheek” directive that subtly pokes fun at Alexandra. However, the tone of the constructed relation shifts again at the end of the Letter. Elizabeth writes, “But [my] anger quickly faded because what really scares me the most is that you’re not the only person who thinks this way. That in the 21st century there are college-educated students who not only lack sound judgment but also understanding. *I am embarrassed and ashamed that we are part of the same generation.* I truly hope this letter helps you even a little bit to see why what you did was wrong and has compromised your reputation.” With this concluding paragraph, Elizabeth relates herself to Alexandra for the third time. However, the relation is not amicable or even sarcastic, but the stuff of embarrassment and shame. This third discussion of relation circulates pathos in relation to Elizabeth’s entire generation and implies a call for anti-racist change through understanding. These three scenarios represent Elizabeth’s negotiation of the first negative emotional contact with Alexandra that was compounded by their commonalities; but here, Elizabeth changes the rhetorical situation to write for social action that can change all of the Alexandras.

Thus, while Elizabeth may have first suggested that no one would ever read her Letter, she obviously has carefully crafted a rhetorical response that invokes Alexandra as a particular kind of audience, enabling both the writing itself and the potential action it might conduct. The complex ethos of shared experience as college students combined with the assertion of difference into this sameness allows Elizabeth to both attempt to persuade and express her own material experience and emotion. In constructing the

rhetorical situation, choosing the genre, and choosing where to circulate it, Elizabeth does more than write for social action; she actually creates the possibilities for social action through her construction of the rhetorical situation. This is a complex process that begins with negotiating one's own emotions, but that negotiation is not a private act. When it becomes public, through imagining readers and the possibilities, action also becomes possible, and that action, in the final result, involves attempting to restructure the affective relations between the writer and her addressed (and implied) readers. It is no surprise, then, that Elizabeth only imagines where and how she can share the letter after it is written: the act of writing is what made such action possible.

Lisa

Lisa's "Feminist Rant" to Campus Women in Full

Hey, all. It's time for another rant. This one's on feminism.

I am so sick of feminism being classified as a bad thing. It disgusts me when people say "feminist" like it's a dirty word. Because guess what? It's not. Being a feminist doesn't mean you hate men, and it doesn't mean you're a flaming bitch. It means you have faith in your gender. Being a feminist is nothing to apologize for.

And to anyone who says that feminism isn't relevant today? I call bullshit. Did you know that 99% of rapists are men, and 91% of rape victims are women? Did you know that the reason Republicans want to cut budgeting for preschools is because they believe women should not be working outside the home and sending their children to preschool, they should be taking care of them? Did you know that 25% of women experience domestic violence?

Take a look at two random girls, any girls, and just assume one of them is a virgin and the other one has been sexually active for years now, engaging in random "hookups" as well as committed relationships. Which one is which? Hard to say, isn't it? But you know what? IT DOESN'T MATTER, because no matter what, society and the media will work together to tell you that both girls are wrong. Have sex with even one person, and you're a slut. But don't have sex at all, and you're a prude.

The last time I went to a college party, I had to be very careful picking my outfit. Have any men had to do that? Contemplate on what to wear to not be too provocative. To not be a victim of assault or rape. To not have that constantly going through your head. *Don't*

put your hair in a ponytail. Don't wear that shirt. Don't wear that skirt, or else you're asking for it. Saying, "What did she expect, getting drunk like that?" is not the salt in the wound; it is THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROBLEM. The idea that if a woman isn't actively preventing a man from sticking his penis into her, he is doing nothing wrong and hey, who can blame him, IS THE PROBLEM.

On top of your schoolwork, your family, your friends, there are so many added pressures to being a woman. *Is my makeup right? Am I looking pretty? But not too pretty, or else no one will take me seriously?*

And let's not even stop with domestic issues! In Pakistan, there are women whose husbands threw acid in their faces because they sent their daughter to school, because they tried to find a job outside the home, or even because they spoke their opinion. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, virtually thousands of women are raped every month by soldiers who believe they are entitled to women's bodies. Even in Armenia, a country that means a lot to me, there is an excessively disturbing proverb: "A woman is like wool. The more you beat her, the softer she will be." And it's not just in developing countries, either! Just do a basic Google search on women's rights in Italy – or lack thereof – and let me know what you find.

Feminism, I believe, is about changing these things. Feminism, I believe, is the idea that women aren't just sex symbols, or the mother of the house. They are so much more than that.

It is 2011, and some things have not changed. Women are still second-class citizen in many cases. And if ANYONE tries to tell you that feminism is outdated, that there's no point in having an opinion, then speak up. Get educated.

If you're a feminist, then speak your mind and voice your opinion. You're not crazy and you deserve to be heard.

Lisa's Emotional Contact and Motivation for Writing for Social Action

Lisa's interaction with a fellow student sparked her particular Feminist Rant.

Like Elizabeth's Open Letter, Lisa's Feminist Rant was a response to a peer – this time, a peer she knew who deemed feminism irrelevant. When I asked Lisa about her "personal investment" in the Feminist Rant, she responded:

Well, that was after I had a discussion with this kid who I've probably mentioned before, who I kind of had a mini flirtation with last fall, and then he found out, and then when it became clear that I had intelligent, well informed opinions about things, that I had constructed for MYSELF -- I'm gonna pause so you can shock -- and then I didn't need him to teach me anything, he started to act like an asshole

to me. And then, so, I had a discussion with him: [he said] feminism is not relevant today, it is so equal...and I'm like, 'fuck you.'"

This altercation resulted in Lisa's decision to write her Feminist Rant and post it on the internet. She argued with the student for some time, which sparked her decision to write. His response to her highlighted a form of antifeminism as he could not date someone who occupied an equal position. Ironically, he believed that men and women were equal in society, even as he rejected her for being equal and forming independent ideas. Unlike Elizabeth who saw racism on YouTube, Lisa faced a situation that was quite "up close and personal," and represented a patriarchal society that she was so attuned to in both her personal life and other spheres. Their argument over feminism's relevance and the larger context of power that was circulating led Lisa to be "pissed off" enough to choose to write.

Lisa experienced a deeply personal jolt from "the student" due to the fact that she has worked hard over her life to become an independent thinker who understands the world and the issues of injustice within it. She has strong affective investments in her own identity and agency. With the argument, the student not only challenged Lisa's belief in feminism, but also her right to speak and be heard. Women are positioned to be irrational and even hysterical, and the student tried to construct her in these roles by denying her reality or at least her right to have particular views. He challenged Lisa's structure of affect in a way that positioned her as out of touch with the world, even as Lisa had a deep understanding of both the conversation, and the larger feminist context and issues at stake. As she is affectively invested in her own agency to construct her knowledge and is proud of her accomplishments, the student takes this away by rejecting a philosophy (feminism) that has supported her and defined her.

Lisa also has affective investments in the structural aspects of feminism and misogyny. Not only is feminism important, feminism is relevant everywhere, and all of the time: it is part of the structure of society. While the argument with the student illustrates the denial of both Lisa's voice and the power of feminism, it is also especially frustrating because Lisa sees feminism daily – from her academic work, to STAND, to campus life. She describes this omni-presence through her discussion of her academic work in English, to her STAND activism, to her family context:

L: [Feminism] just comes out. Like for my last English paper, like I said, I wrote about how it related to feminism. And, like I just think that it's an issue that's always, always present. Like even in a story with no women, you can talk about why there's no women. And even in a story, like *Little Women*, why were there four girls, why did they not have any brothers, why was their father gone and their mother was the one there?... I think that it's also the way that I read a book also has a lot to do with the way I read the world. Like I see things like societal structures and hierarchies and relationships with women versus men and how that hurts women. And like a big problem with the Congo is it's a patriarchal society.

S: And does your interest in feminism relate to your activism?

L: Yes, somewhat, mostly because in a place like the Congo, but I think that my interest in feminism more relates to the fact that my dad is crazy antifeminist and does not take women seriously at all.

Not only is feminism an issue that is ever-present in English, this quote begins to show how it also shapes Lisa's understanding of the Congo (which she later expands on) and her own material life experience. Her affective investment in her power to position herself as a feminist *writer* is crucial. Even in her academic writing, she chooses to analyze works through a feminist lens because it is important to her life. She has emotional attachments to a form of feminist inquiry in multiple spheres of her experience, and she continually sees the circulation of misogyny in the world: from local to global. Therefore, hearing that feminism is irrelevant is also deeply shocking and makes her

seem as though she is seeing inequality that is not there. This is also a common phenomenon with those who dismiss feminism to feminists, and further explains the strength of the emotional impact on Lisa. He is denying her reality and her ability to “read” the structures of society that have so impacted her. The student is dismissing Lisa’s independent, well-formulated understanding of the ways feminism is deeply relevant in multiple contexts, and denying that patriarchal hierarchy permeates society (even as he represents it).

In challenging Lisa’s intellectualism and the relevance of feminism, the intensity of the emotional contact and Lisa’s anger are also enhanced by Lisa’s upbringing. When I asked Lisa about the roots of her feminism, she stated, “I grew up in a very sexist family...” She describes a representative conversation:

And I'm like, 'you know dad, you should be so glad that I'm the way I am.' And he's like, 'what are you talking about?' I'm like, 'you should be so glad that I didn't play into your crap that women can't do anything and aren't capable of everything, because, where would I be right now?'

He's like, 'oh, so I should be glad that you are so openly defiant?' And I'm like, 'yeah, yup, yup you should.' And I'm like, 'you're my father, you should tell me that I can do whatever I want and be whatever I want.' He's like 'no, no, no. You can't do whatever you want and be whatever you want. I mean, I won't support you in that. Don't think you can. Just like, men are always going to be better, you do know that?'

This conversation and others like it sparked Lisa to engage in feminism and develop the deep-seated belief that women *should* be equal in society, but they are not equal.

A primary reason Lisa is moved to write the angry Feminist Rant for social action is that she values writing in response to unjust issues that make her angry – both in academia and outside of it. Lisa turns to writing because it is a constant in her life that allows her to “deal with” and explore “what makes [her] angry,” and she in part defines

herself through her talent as a writer. While the point of emotional contact with the student infuriates Lisa, she has strong feelings in relation to injustice in general. Like Elizabeth, inequality makes Lisa passionate about issues and makes her want to write about them – she writes about feminism and human rights abuses consistently and she connects issues in academic contexts, just as Elizabeth does. Again, like Elizabeth, Lisa is especially invested in writing about issues that trigger her anger:

S: Great, and what gets you passionate about an issue, and how does this passion relate to your writing?

L: I think it's like, writing is how I deal with the passion and the anger. And it just makes me, people denied basic rights makes me angry. Like little kids can't go to school because they're going to get raped on the road. How does that not piss you off?

S: Yeah. So you deal with passion by writing?

L: A lot of times, yeah

S: And why do you think that's an outlet for you?

L: I don't know. Just like, writing is, I write a lot and I always have so.

That is, Lisa writes in response to issues that spark her commitment to human rights and feminism. Through academic writing, she also connects human rights issues and wants others to see the connections that she does:

I mean mostly because I really like to relate writing to...larger issues. And I would see stuff for activism, like anti-genocide work, social justice, human rights, feminism. Like there are larger issues that come up so often in things that I write about for school...I mean, I think that it is good because it shows the connections are there if you see them and choose, that it's so relevant in the world that we live in just like it just has to be seen by people.

As Elizabeth is moved to write in the face of inequality and racism in particular, Lisa is also moved to write in relation to systemic sexism and the ways that it impacts anti-genocide work, human rights, and social justice. On one level, her Feminist Rant represents “talking back” to the altercation with the student about the relevance of feminism, and the sexism of her father and those like him, even if she does not define

them as her audience. While she is sparked to write her Rant because she is so “pissed off,” this type of anger changes as she composes the Rant. Unlike Elizabeth, who “talks back” to Alexandra Wallace as her audience, Lisa does not choose to target the student or those like him as her audience for the Feminist Rant. Instead, she moves to a systemic analysis and shifts her structure of affect in the process. She again calls for people to see these vital connections in academia and the larger society.

Negotiating Affect Through Writing

From the point of emotional contact with the student, Lisa makes rhetorical choices about her purpose, genre, and audience as she writes from a place of anger, but her types of anger and structure of affect shift as she writes. Through her affective writing process, Lisa reconstitutes her “pissed off” reaction to the student to rage at a misogynistic system, and anger on behalf of those oppressed (women). In doing so, she constructs a newer ethos of political anger¹⁷ that advocates for women in a forceful manner – in contrast to her longstanding ethos as a patient resource for information with STAND activism. Lisa’s purpose for her Feminist Rant harnesses the anger and frustration that she has in seeing the misogyny all around her. She identifies a purpose to convince the audience that feminism is relevant and that feminist change is necessary to combat our patriarchal society. This shifts her from a position of frustration in observing campus sexism to a more urgent, political purpose in addressing the sexism through writing to illustrate and change it.

¹⁷ This political anger can be defined as what it is and what it can do: for example, it is anger at systemic inequality rather than individuals; it is anger that arises with a sense of urgency and responsibility; it is anger on behalf of those oppressed; it is anger to change an oppressive system; and, it is directive and forceful.

In constructing a purpose to challenge misogyny, Lisa chooses to highlight systems of inequality to explain why feminism is so necessary. Because she is very angry, she chooses the genre of the Rant, which supports such rage. At the same time, Rants are often dismissed for their lack of evidence, and Lisa does not want to be dismissed; therefore, she adds evidence to her Rant to support and illustrate her points, creating a hybrid genre for her purpose to show systems of oppression and to develop a text that her audience will listen to. Defining a purpose and writing the Rant are generative and lead her to a particular audience of campus women, because they are most affected by the issues that she is writing on and they are able to take action. As Lisa writes to this concrete audience, she continues to move from anger at an individual to anger at the systems of oppression, and takes up anger on behalf of all women. Through her writing choices, she elucidates this hierarchy for women, and she calls for change. As she writes, she oscillates between purpose and audience that gives rise to her interrogation and elucidation of patriarchal systems and particular examples of misogyny that affect her audience of women on campus (as well as more global examples). Her “pissed off” affective structure transforms to an affective structure of political anger through a purpose to challenge a web of oppression, an engagement with a genre that allows for rage, and a call to be heard and *absorbed* by an audience that is most impacted by sexism. This leads Lisa to a different kind of ethos that she finds most effective. Instead of an activist who offers resources to those who ask, she shifts her affective structure to a directive activist who demands the audience’s attention to understand and care about systemic oppression and work for women’s rights. The prior rhetorical choices both allow for the possibility of social action to move an audience, and give Lisa

a new way of interacting as an activist: to employ an ethos of directive, political anger to actively advocate for women.

Lisa feels that there are many issues that people should be angry about, rather than accept as the norm. She notes that “one of my big pet peeves with my generation is like people think feminism no longer has a place or people automatically think ‘oh angry bitch’ and I’m like ‘no, feminism is still very relevant in today’s society...and I think people don’t realize. I mean stuff like rape and domestic violence is still going on.” Lisa argues for feminism precisely because of those who dismiss feminism, like the student she fought with. But already, her purpose moves beyond the student to challenge many people’s misconceptions. She believes that feminism is vital to a society where the abuse of women is so prevalent. As she continues to construct a purpose for her writing, she expresses both concern and frustration about gender on campus:

People don’t see all of the problems that are on college campuses because they are so common. Like, it’s like girls accept ‘yeah, gonna have to be careful when picking out an outfit when I go out tonight.’ And I’m like, ‘that’s a huge problem, do you realize how much of a problem that is?’

Lisa’s purpose arises from her position as an activist with a feminist lens that others lack, and feels an activist sense of responsibility and urgency to intervene – both in the moment and through her Feminist Rant. As she identifies her purpose for the Rant, she shifts from being a frustrated bystander in sexist college life to taking on a position that interrogates sexism in her communities. In this way, Lisa creates a rhetorical situation that she feels is vital to the lives of campus students and should not be dismissed, because issues of violence against women hang in the balance. With this understanding, Lisa shifts to a position of urgency and responsibility with her purpose to shed light on inequality – to protect and advocate for women. Rather than be simply “pissed off” at a

student, Lisa shapes her purpose into a rhetorical, political project that supports feminism and makes systems of inequality visible as she writes. Anger and frustration give rise to her initial reasons for deciding to write a Rant, but her purpose shifts feelings of frustration to a more political urgency that sparks her to write to combat what she sees.

Deciding to demonstrate a sexist system politicizes Lisa's purpose and moves from one incident with the student to the patriarchal system that produced his sexist beliefs. Lisa's goal in writing the Feminist Rant expands to capture the relevance of feminism, campus sexism, and the larger context of violence against women that frames college life and society in general. Lisa wants people to step back and understand these inequalities that so many dismiss. For example, Lisa notes that

L: And I think that people don't realize. I mean stuff like rape and domestic violence is still going on.

S: Yeah. Do you think people don't realize that?

L: I don't think that it's something that people don't not know, I just think it's something that people don't really absorb.

S: Because I know that UMass campus is dangerous for women.

L: Oh yeah, like one in four women get raped. I mean everybody knows that, everybody says it, but do people actually know what it means?

Lisa does not just want "people" to know the facts -- she wants them to "absorb" and understand the implications of rape culture on campus and beyond. She expresses frustration in the sense that the situations and facts are there, but people deny, dismiss, or ignore them. These feelings continue to create a purpose for Lisa in her Feminist Rant: she feels she must bring these issues to light so that people understand the severity of our current misogyny and to help people accomplish a more just world.

This sense of rage causes her to choose to write a "Feminist Rant" in particular. According to the case study students, rants represent the most angry form of communication. Because Lisa is so angry, she turns to the rant as a type of writing where

she feels she can express her feelings best. “Rants” are a staple for Lisa (and other activists) to get her feelings out as a form of self-care: Lisa “rants about [things that make her angry] all the time,” as she says, “I’m like guys, I’m going to rant to you about how no one takes feminism seriously. Guys I’m going to rant to you about how nobody cares that people are dying in the Congo. Guys, I’m going to rant to you about how much we hate Commonwealth College.” Lisa positions herself as a person and activist who cares about multiple political issues and can “talk back” to injustice. But, we can also see that rants seem to involve a topic for Lisa (such as the state of feminism, the Congo, and Commonwealth College) and not a person – they offer a way to “talk back” to political situations; thus, Lisa chooses the Rant to “talk back” to the systemic sexism that Lisa identifies with her purpose. Likewise, the Rant enables her to direct her anger at this system, and not at individuals. This Rant writing process fosters Lisa’s shift away from anger at single student to anger at an entire system of oppression. With that said, her anger continues to fuel her Rant and her Rant fuels her anger in a reciprocal process: she is angry as she writes, and the writing supports and focuses her anger. Lisa channels anger on her own terms by writing in this way. Like Elizabeth, she is not subduing, but controlling her anger as she composes. In being able to direct her anger at systemic injustice, Lisa takes control of it. Similar to Elizabeth, Lisa *enjoys* angry writing, and thereby turns a source of pain into a source of satisfaction through writing the Rant. This writing allows Lisa to argue for feminism in a way where she does not have to shift her anger to a form of writing with less affect. These features of writing the Feminist Rant combine to afford Lisa a sense of affective agency in gaining satisfaction by “talking back” to a misogynistic system that enrages her.

However, there are drawbacks to writing a Rant for social action purposes: according to the case study students, the affective agency afforded by a Rant is limited, because the audience are those who already agree with you, and a Rant will not change those who do not. A “Rant” usually implies anger with no evidence, like “Republicans are stupid.” However, Lisa adds evidence to her piece, and this positions it as more than a classic Rant: it becomes an activist text for social action rather than a simple stream of anger. As Lisa notes, “but if I’m actually going to write a paper on [“republicans are stupid”], and I’m actually trying to prove a point, then I’m not going to say things like that. I’m gonna bring in actual evidence and actual opinions.” This method is what Lisa does to construct a Rant with a purpose to convince an audience of feminism’s relevance within systems of oppression. As Lisa’s purpose and rage fuel the Rant, she is able to combine passion with evidence, and shift from personal anger without evidence (like “republicans are stupid”) to political anger with evidence (like “republicans are cutting funding”). In combining the anger of the Rant with the evidence of a scholar in social action writing, Lisa can generate a social action text that allows her to “hit” on the variety of topics that anger her. Composing the piece helps her understanding of what an activist text can be for her, as she feels that her Rant can work as a social action text (in addition to calmer speeches) and is her “best” writing sample. The genre allows for this change in thinking about activism and the activist’s role for Lisa because it veers away from the comparative calm of an Open Letter, for example. The evidence-based Rant, a creative use of the rant genre, specifically gives her the chance/agency to pursue her feminist purpose through angry writing, in contrast to an academic paper or other form of social action text. With this hybrid genre, Lisa reports that she feels the “freedom” to challenge

many angering injustices in multiple spheres – from UMass to the Congo -- rather than stick to a single area or to spend a lot of time “explaining connections,” as in an academic piece.

Lisa’s political urgency of purpose and controlling/channeling her anger through writing a Rant for feminism and against patriarchy creates her demand to be heard and understood. But who does Lisa want to listen and to *absorb* her Rant? She has multiple audiences to choose from – from “talking back” to the student and those like him, to “talking back” to the campus as a whole, or to shift to “talk to” a particular audience, such as campus women. Following her purpose to illustrate patriarchy, Lisa states that she chose campus women as her audience because “people don’t see all of the problems that are on college campuses like this because they are so common.” She notes that people – including some campus women -- have negative connotations to the word “feminism” all of the time, and so she begins the first paragraph of her Feminist Rant to address this issue:

I am so sick of feminism being classified as a bad thing. It disgusts me when people say “feminist” like it’s a dirty word. Because guess what? It’s not. Being a feminist doesn’t mean you hate men, and it doesn’t mean you’re a flaming bitch. It means you have faith in your gender. Being a feminist is nothing to apologize for.

Here, she is clarifying the meaning of feminism to campus women who have many attitudes towards the term – from rejection, to dismissal, to embracement. Lisa is aware of this varied audience as she rebuts bad attitudes, but also speaks to women under siege, as she writes, “feminism is nothing to apologize for.” Through writing this paragraph, Lisa in some ways “talks back” to the argument with the student (by taking up the role of feminism again), but already shifts her audience as she writes, “it means you have faith in

your gender” which implicates women. As she composes this first point, she moves away from her earlier response of “fuck you” to the student to construct other possibilities for a response that will help women rather than target men. As she writes, her intense, “pissed off” anger continues to shift to political anger as she identifies what to write to whom, to be most effective in fostering understanding and political change. With her first paragraph, Lisa demands that her audience of campus women (re)consider the true meaning of feminism and its implications because they are most impacted by sexism. While her audience could be broader, she identifies campus women based on her purpose to elucidate systems of power for those who are impacted; Lisa’s purpose and construction of audience become recursive as she writes and oscillates between the two.

Lisa could have targeted the sexist student and all those like him, as Elizabeth chose to do with her Open Letter to make a racist student (and those like her) understand why she upset so many people. But Lisa feels this student’s beliefs (and all men like him) are the result of a patriarchal structure, and not necessarily the cause of it. In the context of fostering feminist change, she is careful to explain the pitfalls feminists can run into if they gloss men as oppressors. In discussing misogyny on campus, Lisa states, “And especially since like, the fact that girls have to be careful with stuff like that is true, but you have to be really careful in addressing that problem so you don’t bring out a really negative view of men. Like, “oh like men can’t control themselves.”” Lisa does not want to say that men cannot prevent themselves from abusing women, because “most can” – to make the prior claim generalizes all men as perpetrators and does not hold hope for political change. Further, she emphasizes, “I mean feminism should not be about women being better than men [as her activist friend argues], it should both be equal.” As

she shifts frustration to political urgency in her purpose, she shifts from anger at the student to anger at the system in her Rant, and she shifts from “talking back” to the student to “talking to” women who are most impacted by the systems in place. She “talks to” women about how hierarchies oppress herself, the women she knows, and the women she does not know. She thus adds anger on behalf of women to anger at a system that perpetuates violence. Because she is not directing her anger at one male or all men, she can direct her anger to elucidate systems that women can absorb and change.

As Lisa engages with her purpose to help women actually absorb inequality, she chooses to direct her Feminist Rant to the dangerous, sexist situations that women *should* understand. The political anger she is developing becomes more layered, as Lisa demonstrates fury *on behalf* of women and writes to tell women that there is something very wrong in a context of angry advocacy. In her Rant, Lisa illustrates hierarchy in everyday life for many women students who do not seem to question it at all:

The last time I went to a college party, I had to be very careful picking my outfit. Have any men had to do that? Contemplate on what to wear to not be too provocative. To not be a victim of assault or rape. To not have that constantly going through your head. Don't put your hair in a ponytail. Don't wear that shirt. Don't wear that skirt, or else you're asking for it. Saying, “What did she expect, getting drunk like that?” is not the salt in the wound; it is THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROBLEM. The idea that if a woman isn't actively preventing a man from sticking his penis into her, he is doing nothing wrong and hey, who can blame him, IS THE PROBLEM.

Lisa directs her anger at a system in order for women to better understand their oppression. With this quote, we see the move Lisa makes to thus *speak to* those most impacted by misogyny on a daily basis, and those she is a part of: women students. In writing about this particular scene of dressing for a party, Lisa reaches out to her audience and changes them from thinking feminism is irrelevant to understanding that

there is inequality in their daily lives. Her construction of audience allows Lisa to speak to campus women like herself, who she believes she can educate and change.

Through identifying a purpose for her writing, choosing to write a Rant, and addressing an audience of campus women, Lisa reconstitutes her “pissed off” anger to a more political anger at systems of misogyny and political anger on behalf of those who are disenfranchised. Her structure of affect shifts from being angry at the student to being angry at the system, and it shifts a second time from being angry as an individual to being angry on behalf of women: both shifts help Lisa to write for social action to create the possibility of fundamental change. In writing to challenge a system, Lisa opens up many options for just change; whereas if Lisa were writing to vent at the student, those options would not be apparent. Likewise, if Lisa were writing from a position of individual anger, she could be dismissed as that “angry lady over there.” In writing on behalf of women, Lisa speaks up for her gender as a whole. Therefore, choosing to write an angry Feminist Rant that exposes patriarchy and calls upon women to listen in particular is significant because it also leads to a new type of ethos as Lisa constructs the text. Her affective writing processes give rise to a social action text that gives her the chance to occupy a different activist position from the one she would normally take (or take earlier in her life). For example, in our first interviews, she embraces the role of a friendly activist educator who provides information to those who want to learn more: “Like, people come to STAND meetings and I’ll tell them ‘this is what’s going on if you want to know.’” She criticizes “pushy” activists like her high school friend who want to “shove information down people’s throats” and who “would tell people what you’re

saying is wrong, this is wrong, you should think this.” Lisa was very averse to this “preachiness.”

However, Lisa reconsiders her dismissal of “pushy” activists as writing her Rant shifted her into an affective structure of anger at patriarchy on behalf of women, and she forms a new kind of ethos for herself in writing. As her pissed off anger is translated into an impassioned argument for the relevance of feminism, she finds herself in a new position: *a place of forceful political anger and a demand to be heard and understood*. For example, she continually directs the audience to learn and directs the audience’s attention to multiple inequalities. While in an earlier interview Lisa felt that activists should not be “preachy,” now Lisa rejects that sentiment.

Like, [people look at the bad side of activists] they [think that activists] look at issues so one sided, they’re so, activists are also seen as very pushy sometimes, very preachy, and I’m just like, ‘well you know what? They have to be preachy for a reason because this is a shit show.’

Through choosing to write an angry Rant, Lisa shifts her affective structure from her distaste of “pushy activists” to an understanding of why preaching – telling people what to think from a moral high ground -- is necessary. The affective writing process itself changes her conception about what activists can and should do to get their messages across. Specifically, Lisa’s shift to political anger, which can be pushy and preachy, allows her to show the full system of patriarchy and its interconnections, rather than allow people to dismiss them as isolated incidents to be taken for granted or ignored. The writing of the Rant repositions her into a more forceful advocate for women’s rights and an ethos that *does* tell campus women what to think from a political high ground. Writing this Feminist Rant has lasting implications for Lisa, as two years later she

continues to employ her directive, political ethos as she works with campus groups to challenge “rape culture” at UMass.

Conclusion

We can learn from the experiences of Elizabeth and Lisa in writing for social action in the composition classroom. First, their affective writing process challenges a common conception of “the floating intellect” in academia, based on the Western ideology of the primacy of the individual and of the mind as separate from emotions and bodies. That is, emotions are often dismissed in “serious” academic writing, or even looked upon as anti-intellectual. However, Micciche points out that “disembodied writing exacts too high a cost as it demands that [the student] leave behind her self, her body, her material conditions, and her personal connection to language and story” (5). Elizabeth and Lisa would not have accomplished social action writing without the affective process that encompasses material (bodily) experience that gives rise to affective investments that work to open the possibility for social action. A “floating intellect” would not be able to produce social action texts because the affective writing process would be stymied. Instead, we need a more holistic approach that does not just take intellect and emotion into account, but accounts for the overlap of intellect and emotion in writing for social action.

Second, we need to see our students as more than “students.” This involves honoring students’ material life experience and the many positions that they occupy. Without opening a space for students to draw from their life experiences, their writing options are much more limited. Compositionists may believe that such a space is already open to students, but we may need to be clearer about this aspect of their writing process

in order to engage in an affective writing process. Students in the classroom may not even think to bring their interactions with the world into the classroom. However, this detracts from a myriad of writing choices, construction of an ethos, and may also limit their ability to craft an audience that they can move. In bringing in life experience, they are able to examine the ways they would want to shape their essays given their affective investments that arise from such experiences. As Elizabeth and Lisa's texts were fuelled in part by their affective investments, compositionists should make sure that students have access to these as they write. Further, we can become more aware of the multiple positions that our students hold, and explore these positions outside of the classroom. For example, students may be activists, or athletes, or writers for campus publications, or feminists – it is important to bring each student's positionalities to bear in the classroom. As bell hooks writes, students are “whole human beings with complex lives and experiences” (15). When they are cut off from affective investments and positions they value, they are less able to write for social action in an affective process that offers them enough choice and affective agency to construct the text.

Compositionists should also not shy away from intense student emotion nor assume that writing will be worse if students are passionate – the worry may be that students may become too dogmatic and less reflective with strong emotions. However, Elizabeth and Lisa show that students do not remain in a static space of emotion as they write, and in fact shift their own and others' affective structures in order to make writing for social action possible. For example, Lisa may start writing because she is “pissed,” but she is able to reconstitute her emotions to that of a directive, political advocate for women. Teachers may foster this same process in the classroom, as students can

reconstitute their emotions as they interact with an affective writing process that allows for students to make shifts in affective structures – such as shift the audience, shift their ethos, and shift themselves. This process is vital because it challenges an emotionally static writing process, and in doing so represents an important part of supporting students’ affective agency through rhetorical choices and the reconstitution of emotion that gives rise to changing an audience. And the teacher can construct a classroom that makes room for such a process: Giroux notes the importance of paying attention to students’ mind, soul, spirit, emotions, affect, and life outside of the classroom. He argues that teachers should “stimulate [student] passions, imagination, and intellects so that they will be moved to challenge the social, political, and economic forces that weigh so heavily upon their lives” (201). While activist and political students may already have the agency to challenge oppression, Giroux’s call is important to consider because teachers may try to spark student passion in writing for social action through the circulation of affect.

It is only after producing their texts that Elizabeth and Lisa consider more circulation routes and audiences for their Open Letter and their Feminist Rant. First, it is important to note that both activists decided on their genre. This is something that compositionists can take into account. Oftentimes, classroom writing may be assigned in a particular genre (such as the research paper), but the two activists chose fairly different forms of communication. Teachers might open up classroom writing and explain different sorts of texts that students might write – such as an Open Letter or Rant. This may help students to write for social action if they can choose the genre that would best fit what they want to say and how they want to say it. After they have written a social

action text, they may then envision further circulation routes. While I have argued that the classroom itself is political, it can be seen as a grassroots audience, so students could start with this circulation route. However, teachers could also brainstorm multiple audiences with students, and open up audience further with the creation of websites, YouTube videos, etc. Students engage in a complex affective process, and both Elizabeth and Lisa felt successful in their ability to move an audience with the texts they produce; the process itself allows for social action to occur. In this context, teachers can consider how to implement the prior ingredients in classroom, and/or enhance these types of classroom practices.

CHAPTER 5

WRITING FOR SOCIAL ACTION: AFFECTIVE LIMITS

While Elizabeth and Lisa were able to write for social action outside of the classroom, we can turn to Mary and Rachel, who seek to write for social action within the classroom. Both students interact with academic rhetorical situations that contrast with the writing situations of Elizabeth and Lisa. In this context, one may ask whether Mary and Rachel can utilize their lived, activist experiences and motivations in academic writing. Can these students who *do* want to bridge their activism with academic writing do so? Mary and Rachel bridge the two spheres in the sense that their activist, affective investments give rise to their choice of writing topics, but they are unable to connect these feelings to the production of their texts and their rhetorical choices. In the academic rhetorical situation, they do not perceive the many writing options that are open to Elizabeth and Lisa, and instead understand academic writing to be intrinsically limiting. They cannot construct a viable rhetorical situation and reconstitute their emotions to accomplish social change goals. For example, instead of moving from “pissed” to “political” in writing for social action, the two are stuck in a position of “frustration” where they cannot shift affective structures to write for transformation.

And while Mary and Rachel have deep affective investments in their topics, they do not experience the same emotional points of contact that Elizabeth and Lisa did. With the first pair, they experienced a direct contact of racism and sexism, while Mary and Rachel are responding to essay prompts. As much as they invest in their topics, they may be missing a key component in the affective writing process: that spark that gets you going and keeps you going because it is affecting you at a visceral level. A second

contrast seems also to be the choice of genre for the two focal pairs. Elizabeth chose an Open Letter and Lisa chose a Feminist Rant, but Mary and Rachel only see “the traditional research paper” as they perceive it.¹⁸ They do not seem to question other genres for their assignments, even when Rachel’s teacher encouraged her to bring her creative writing throughout the entire paper. Because both activist students have a particular image in mind, they try to meet the demands that they feel the research paper requires. Finally, neither Mary nor Rachel envision circulation routes for their texts as they cannot conceive of how their texts might work for social action. These differences begin to explain why academic writing stymied these students’ affective writing processes to create social action texts. The academic rhetorical situation is key here, as students’ understanding of it creates barriers in particular ways in a particular space: their academic textual production for social action in the classroom.

In this chapter, I will discuss Mary and Rachel in particular as they provided me with the most compelling examples of academic writing for social action, but did not meet that goal. Mary is a senior in the Social Thought and Political Economy Major and Rachel is a super-senior (five years) in the Wildlife Conservation Major, with a certificate in Environmental Justice. I chose these focal students because they represent long-term activists with STAND. Mary is the co-leader of STAND, and Rachel has been with the group for four years, and helped it to grow. Both students have taken part in many STAND activities and functions, and have also organized such events over the years. Mary and Rachel are proud of being part of STAND and are also proud of their contributions. This context represents one reason why I identified the texts of these two

¹⁸ However, one exception stands out with Rachel, and represents a different rhetorical situation that is closer to that of Elizabeth and Lisa’s situation (although it is not related to a social action text).

activist students. I expected the texts to have close linkages to their activist experiences, and I thought that the texts would work for social action in an academic context.

However, I was surprised to find that the essays did not achieve social action, even as the topics were on issues of social justice. While each text had a general purpose, the essay itself did not meet the intended purpose and the affective writing process appeared truncated. I then chose these essays to examine for this very reason: for how the issues with the texts could lead us to further insights about activist student writing for social action and its ingredients. One can learn from what is missing and why it is absent.

Mary

In her affective, academic writing process, Mary cannot construct a rhetorical situation that allows for social action to be possible. Unlike Elizabeth and Lisa who can shift affective structures, Mary cannot craft an authoritative ethos or audience that can be moved or changed by her paper. The academic rhetorical situation limits Mary's vision of who she can be as a writer and what she can accomplish with her writing. Although she has affective investments in her text, she cannot envision her academic, research-oriented writing as a vehicle for change for any particular audience. While Elizabeth constructed Alexandra as an ignorant student who can learn and modify behaviors and beliefs, Mary cannot construct a coherent audience; rather, she seems to be speaking to multiple parties who will not change, calling upon a jury that does not exist, or even talking to herself in the final analysis. Her affective agency is forestalled because she does not gain emotional power through her work, in contrast to Lisa's power with her Feminist Rant. Instead, she feels worse as her paper does not challenge the dangerous conditions that she perceives in Rwanda, and she cannot change the situation through her

academic writing, or convince an audience to even pay attention to current events. Unlike the very personal contact between Elizabeth and Alexandra, and Lisa and the student, Mary begins writing on the basis of an academic assignment, and the entire current state of Rwanda and its history cannot be affectively shifted to hear Mary's concern (nor can the US, UN, nor international community). While Mary has emotional investments in anti-genocide activism, as well as leadership in STAND and a planned future career as a human rights lawyer, academic writing does not take these factors into account, also forestalling Mary's ethos and agency. Like Elizabeth and Lisa, Mary's commitment and care for the text and topic is significant. But in contrast to both focal students in Chapter 4, Mary is not able to reconstitute her emotions in the paper to achieve change and is thus unable to gain affective agency. Mary cannot speak from authority because the academic situation curtails her ability to connect her emotions to her paper in a way that leads to an ethos that is strong enough to "move" an audience to social change. In this context, Mary cannot achieve her goals as a student activist writer to foster social change because her understanding of the academic context disallows her ability to construct a text that has the potential for social action.

Affective Investments: Motivation and Finding Authority

In Mary's junior year, she decided to write a research paper on the historical and current state of Rwanda for her sociology course entitled "Introduction to Human Rights." From the start, Mary's affective investments for her paper on "The Rwandan Genocide and the State of Rwanda Today" motivate her to choose the topic, but also shift her outside of a student writing position for a research paper with her desire for legal advocacy. Mary develops affective investments in her paper because she sees herself as

someone who can work for just change, specifically in challenging genocide and working for human rights. Unlike Elizabeth and Lisa, she does not encounter one point of contact that sparks strong emotions to decide to write this particular essay, nor does she have direct experience with her topic of genocide in the same way that Elizabeth has experienced racism and Lisa has faced sexism. However, Mary has deeply “felt” and ethical investments in the topic through her material life experience, her activist work, and her vision of her future as a human rights lawyer. These areas combine in her discussion of her choice to write on Rwanda:

Uhhh, this [paper] is important to me because I think a lot of it's writing about the state of Rwanda post-genocide and like what it means now. For me, like, this paper was really important because I want to stop genocides from happening again, but I think that like looking at a case of Rwanda, it was such a short genocide. Like, how hard it is for them today, like that needs to be taken into account into other situations. And I think that's an important part, like, it's just as important to me as bringing the people to justice. If not, it's actually more important to me. I want to be in international human rights law because I want to enforce justice upon those people that have done those things in a way so that people will be discouraged from doing them. Like I would prefer that people put me out of a job because it's not happening any more than have a job because I'm doing something with international justice. Because I'd rather not be able to work in my field if it meant there wasn't genocide going on. But then again, like that's important, but also things that are happening in Rwanda now, like if they continue in certain aspects, they're going to like lead into a pre-genocidal society again.

Mary cites multiple and complex positionalities and affective investments in writing her paper, but they fail to give her authority in her text because they are centered on concrete change in the world, rather than the efficacy of writing a research paper. One can see that Mary's affective investments are not focused towards academic writing, but rather derive from her other positions as an activist and future human rights lawyer. Already, her affective investments are moving her away from an academic paper because they are focused on legal social action, and not simply reporting on the problem for a

class or even making an argument. For example, Mary writes the paper because she, personally, wants to help stop genocide in the world through her actions as a person, activist, and lawyer. She does not state that the paper will help her in this material purpose, but rather shifts to a concern about the future of Rwanda where genocide may happen again. She also explores different goals: 1) helping Rwanda today in the context of her paper and 2) bringing people to justice in the context of her future work. In doing so, she again shifts into her future career and desires in the quote, while supporting the idea of an ideal world, and finishing with a call to pay attention to a “pre-genocidal” society. If we fail to pay attention, Mary says that “we are screwed.” Mary’s statement exceeds the bounds of an academic paper as she invests social action within each facet of her explanation, material action that stems from her affective investments but may not be achieved through an academic research paper, as the writing positions open to her do not match up with her material/imagined/desired positions. In order to examine this limit, we can first look to the construction of Mary’s affective investments to begin to understand how Mary’s affective agency in the construction of a viable rhetorical situation for social action is limited. This limit arises from Mary’s perceptions of academic writing and the research paper in particular. For Mary, this type of writing restricts the ways that she can achieve authority, the ways that she can employ emotion, and the goals that she can achieve with her paper.

Affective Agency and an Imagined Future

What factors have constructed such deep affective investments in the state of Rwanda, genocide, and human rights law in general? As she has not been involved in genocide personally or historically, why does she care? While Elizabeth was directly

affected by Alexandra's racism and Lisa was angered by antifeminism, Mary does not seem to be impacted by human rights violations in the same way. However, while she is not directly affected, she is still deeply affected. Mary's socio-political identity has shaped her activist work because it has given rise to the compassion and responsibility that drives her activism, academic writing, and studies in academia. Mary believes that her material experience growing up working-class has constructed her deep, affective investments in helping others. At the same time, she cannot construct an academic ethos from this position because it does not have a direct connection to genocide, but rather represents complex relations of commitment and care that exceed Mary's position as a student writer of a research paper. When I asked, "how does your identity influence your decision to join STAND and be a part of STAND," she explains:

But, I think a lot of [my activism] has to do with the fact that when I was younger I grew up in a family where like my mom's a waitress, she doesn't have a lot of money and my dad is completely out of the picture -- he's a douchbag. And you know we always got like money from food pantries and you know we lived in like income based housing and that kind of thing and it never bothered me, like I was never one of those kids that is self-conscious to tell other people. It was just like, that was the way it was and to me I was like "well we need it so we're getting it." And, I think when I got older and I could work myself and pay for my own things and I was in school and there was options like financial aid, those kinds of things in high school pushed me to want to be helping other people because like, I got all this help and I wouldn't be where I was and it makes me think like if nobody bothered to stop and help people, like, where would the world be?... So, you know, I think it's just like partly because I always had help when I was younger. Like from outside sources other than my family that like I can't go through my life without doing a job that's helping other people.

Mary describes her duty to help as constructed by her material experience of class relations. She understands how her family may have suffered without assistance and how helping others is an essential activity in the world. Without it, "where would the world be?" She translates her experience into an ongoing drive to aid others and an

understanding of the importance of aid. Responsibility to others thus reflects a deep, affective investment for Mary that is coupled by her sense of compassion. She notes, with “the compassion that I have I can’t ignore these kind of things [injustice], and that’s a major reason why I want to work in human rights when I graduate, it’s because I can’t do a job that’s not working towards anything consistent...so...I think it’s just like partly because I always had help when I was younger, like from outside sources...that like I can’t go through my life without doing a job that’s helping others [as a human rights lawyer].”

Here, we see how Mary’s compassion motivates her to be involved as an activist and shapes her future, but we also see the limits of Mary’s position and authority. She repeats her material experience with class as one main reason that she cares about genocide, and she adds compassion to her subjective emotions that arise in relation to genocide and other issues of injustice. Mary’s material experience positions her as someone who wishes to work towards an ideal world where parties help one another. These two positions as an activist with a responsibility to help and a future human rights lawyer who will be in an even better position to help combine to form an affective structure where she feels a duty to intervene in a very concrete sense: help others and bring perpetrators to justice. However, her sense of compassion and responsibility are not easily translated to her academic research paper because she constructs these feelings from a place outside of the academic, rhetorical situation for her essay. Her material position does not easily connect to her Rwanda text in a way that gives her space to call upon her own affective experiences – she is not “directly” connected to her subject matter as she is not a survivor of genocide or a refugee or an actual human rights lawyer, for example, and thus lacks

authority. There is no clear way to use her material experience to form her ethos, and explaining the connections is out of the scope of her paper.

While Rwanda may seem far away and out of the breadth of Mary's life, Mary looks through the lens of both class relations and compassion to continually analyze issues of genocide in the world; however, there is no clear way to combine her complex concerns in a research paper on Rwanda alone. Genocide is not a far off issue for Mary, but rather an atrocity that she thinks about in the various spheres of her life – from the personal, to the campus, to the victims, to the international community – which are all interconnected. For example, as she describes class dynamics at UMass, she contextualizes her compassion towards victims of genocide who are also a part of class relations:

Sometimes like, growing up with that is like frustrating because some people who don't know the value of money kinda drive me a little insane. People who just spend... it's fine if you major in money and spend it. But like people that if they have a problem they just call their mom and are like can you shoot me some money. That to me that like bugs me but I definitely look at it as like, well, that's them and they're gonna live their life completely different and I grew up knowing the value of money and I appreciate all my time here at UMass. Y'know and like I appreciate that I'm here because you know not that many kids that were in my situation would have actually made it to college. S: yeah. M: So I'm really grateful that I'm doing that and that I am going on to law school and I have those opportunities that maybe kids don't have, and that's another driving thing. It makes you think 'look, what about these kids that are victims of genocide?' Like, what if they had great plans like I did to go off and do something amazing and they can't because of their having genocide acted upon them...Right, and sometimes it is frustrating to see kids that are here because their parents want them to be in college when there's kids that would much rather be here that can't get here.

For Mary, class relations are a lens through which she sees the world, and she connects privilege and injustice in a local and global way. She sees the privilege of many students at UMass, and describes how many don't even want to be in college, while so many others are denied a college education for reasons including genocide. She does not

“other” victims of genocide so much as relate to them on a very specific level – the desire for education and the dream to “do something amazing.” However, she received the help to enter UMass, while others are denied any such opportunity. Mary’s own sense of privilege is “a driving thing” for her compassion for child victims of genocide and her work to help. Her sentiments show how human rights, genocide, and issues of class and compassion construct her affective investments that she lives with daily; activism is not one sphere of her life, but runs through all of the spheres of her material experience and motivates her to write. However, the interconnections that Mary draws do not give her authority and power in the realm of the research paper, even as they motivate her to write it. Mary’s vision of the paper does not make room for the comparisons and connections that she observes in the multiple spheres of her life. Instead, she feels her paper should only address Rwanda’s history and current position (sanctioned by the professor). The other interconnections exceed the parameters of a research paper and are therefore silenced or placed outside of the academic situation. Her expertise with the complexity of genocide in multiple spheres is missing, and this detracts from Mary’s authority because she is limited to her research and linear connections.

Mary’s Rwanda paper is actually the second research paper that she chose to write on Rwanda and portrays the intensity of commitment that arises from Mary’s affective contact with different elements of genocide. As Mary develops a more direct relation to genocide through her visit to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Mary feels she cannot express the true, graphic horror of genocide in academic writing in particular, limiting what she can and cannot say. She observes alleged perpetrators in a quest to understand how atrocity happens (a project of many case study, activist students).

“How?” is a query that gets to the very heart of humanity itself and thus becomes an unanswerable yet ongoing question: how can people do this to others? As Mary observes an accused perpetrator of genocide at the International Criminal Court, she does not find ignorance that can be changed, but rather evil that does not change and must be brought to justice. In Mary’s mind, perpetrators fill her with disgust and horror, and should be punished to the full extent of international law.

Sarah: And what are things that “get you,” when you really care, what are things that trigger your emotions?

Mary: I guess just the things that I find to be morally wrong, like, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, those things I just can’t believe, some people do that and when I was sitting in the [International Criminal Court] this winter, and, it was just weird because you see the guy who was accused and he was accused and being charged with commander responsibility which means he wasn’t actually raping the people or pillaging them or murdering them, but he knew what was going on and he might have been ordering it. There’s no...he claims he didn’t know what was going on, but actually they’re trying to claim that it didn’t happen, but. I just sat there and I said how can you possibly, and like when the witnesses were crying on the stand he was just sitting there stone faced and I’m like, how can you possibly realize that you, your men killed this woman’s brother, and her husband, and then raped her and her and her child I believe one of them was. And it was like, I guess it’s what really bothers me is there’s no remorse there. Like people just do this kind of thing and they don’t care because it’s not happening to them. So that’s where my emotions really come into play because I can’t believe that someone could possibly do this to another human being. How could you possibly, first off, it’s not your life, you shouldn’t be taking it from somebody and how could you possibly think that it’s ok to force yourself on a woman or to, to steal people’s things. I don’t understand how you can for your own gain destroy someone’s entire life.

One can see the effect of this contact in Mary’s horror at not only his crimes, but also at the fact that he does not seem to care about what he has (allegedly) done. She is shocked by his lack of compassion or remorse – by his affect. This mixture of horror and bewilderment at another’s actions shapes Mary’s attitudes towards perpetrators of genocide in general – from individuals to governments (as well as the blame she assigns to institutions that have allowed genocide to occur) and fuels her desire to become a

human rights lawyer. Her “emotions come into play” because genocidal acts are, in a sense, an affront to her belief in humanity. This particular contact resonates with Elizabeth’s emotional contact with a racist individual/speech. However, while Elizabeth is able to use compassion to construct an audience who can change through social action, Mary’s compassion only uncovers a symbol of the worst of the worst, without any possible change in her mind. Mary feels that she cannot incorporate these affective experiences into her research paper, nor begin to describe the horror of genocide. In these ways, from Mary’s perspective, her academic writing will lack the authority of deeper and more graphic discussions.

In order to combat atrocity, Mary positions herself as a future human rights lawyer and is even more motivated by the horror she witnessed at the ICC. Here, Mary strives for agency in relation to what she has seen and felt, but such agency cannot be achieved through a research paper that cannot bring justice to a country; in contrast she could have worked with members of the ICC (perhaps as part of her trip) on legal briefs or other documents that could enact justice through the ICC, and perhaps written an academic paper in one of these genres. Nevertheless, the impact of the ICC and other emotional contacts fuels Mary’s construction of herself as a lawyer to hold parties responsible and to try to write for social action in academia. In this context, Mary claims authority as a future human rights lawyer who will handle the worst of the worst: crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide – to hold parties responsible and “enact justice.”

Mary’s future goals are enhanced by the affect she feels in a courtroom context of genocide at the ICC. Her imagination of a *perpetrator’s* position is one factor that sparks

her activist action and decision to write on issues of genocide. While a perpetrator may not be changed, the horror of such acts leads Mary to engage with a responsibility to stop them. Her particular form of empathy continues to play a role in her horror, but this motivates her to action. She notes

I guess it's really like, if I think, if I have trouble imagining myself ever being able to do something like that, I can't believe somebody else would do it. I guess, especially with the situations with genocide and things, it's like, what bothers me so much is, how could somebody not realize that killing children, how could they not, how does that not in their mind, resonate the same type of anxiety and disgust that it resonates in my head? That's the kind of thing that because it disgusts me that's where I'm like, ok, something needs to be done. Like, this should not be happening.

It's interesting that in the context of her commitment to stopping genocide and mass atrocities, Mary looks to the individual offender. Rather than imagining herself as a victim of genocide, she imagines herself as a participant. Because she can make no sense of that position, and such an imagining prompts "anxiety and disgust," Mary feels the need to take action. Here, her response to the contact with the genocidaire that she constructs in her mind actually leads her to feel compelled to act – whether in the form of choosing to write an academic paper on genocide, activist action with STAND, and a career. In imagining herself in the perpetrator's position, she feels horror, and that horror moves her to take social action.

In this way, Mary's experience with class and compassion, the court and horror, and human rights law and a sense of agency construct her affective structure, but do not provide her with much authority in her academic, rhetorical situation. Her position as student writer and her perceived parameters of the research paper do not allow her to craft a paper where social action is possible because Mary lacks the type of personal authority that this writing position accepts. In her understanding of the genre and its

expectations, she cannot find the ethos or affective agency she desires through her affective investments in the topic. While it is no surprise that she would choose Rwanda for a research paper, as her material life experience attunes her to such research, she cannot write from a position of power. That is, she cannot reconstitute her emotions in the text to work for social action, and instead turns towards anger at the rhetorical situation and the guilty parties that she addresses in the paper. She lacks affective agency in part because she cannot shift her position as student writer to a position as a student activist writer with clear and legitimate affective connections to her topic.

In contrast to “obligated writing,” constructed by the university, Mary sees her own decision to engage in social action on campus in an activist rhetorical situation that can change students’ minds and actions. She has a clear student audience and ethos of leadership to educate her peers. Her commitment to education and student agency combine to give her purpose for her activist work and to provide her with a sense of responsibility. She knows that she is working to shape the minds of students but looks to the future and understand that her peers will be leaders someday, and they should have an understanding of genocide and human rights issues in order to make good decisions.

Mary states,

The most important people [in our audience are students]. Sometimes it puts a lot of pressure on being the head of a club like STAND, is that being the head, being the co-coordinator of a student anti-genocide coalition you're through your awareness of events are shaping the minds of people that in ten years are going to be making the decisions that are most important. And in twenty years there are going to be elected officials that are even more making even more important decisions, and it's kind of nerve-wracking sometimes. [(S: yeah, that's a lot of responsibility) M: especially when you hear speaking around campus and some of the things they say, you're like 'whooooa, where did you hear that? Who told you that? Don't listen to that! You're young and impressionable. Please listen to real life things.'

Mary understands herself as a leader with the civic responsibility to educate students so that they will make just decisions in the future. Mary's affective investments in her leadership propel her to work for education and awareness, as well as support the power of other STAND members and "grow the group."

Her authority and ethos as a leader and an organizer are strong, and her position as an inspiration and friend to others is not lost upon her. She occupies a powerful position with STAND, and she feels responsible to both the group and the larger community. Mary takes this sense of responsibility to her academic writing; however, her audience, position, and ethos change as she becomes a part of an academic rhetorical situation that does not concede her prior positionalities. While I have argued for a vision of the student activist writer in Chapter 3, in this case, this vision is truncated by the limits that Mary encounters. She has stated purposes for her Rwanda paper, but these may be lost due to a lack of ability to construct a coherent audience and her limited ethos and agency in an academic, rhetorical situation; while she wants to educate for change, she cannot find an audience to listen and act, nor an ethos that allows her to speak and be heard. In contrast to her activist work, she struggles to create a text that makes social action possible.

Limits of the Rhetorical Situation

Mary's inability to craft a viable rhetorical situation is in part a function of her understanding of the overall academic writing situation where she has less affective agency. Her authority is "restricted" in her paper on Rwanda, but she is restricted in general by the "obligated writing" that represents academic writing. Her affective writing process incorporates her emotional relations to the Rwanda essay -- as the

situation in Rwanda makes her “nervous” due to her deep investments in preventing genocide -- but her meta-understanding of academic writing and her affective investments and disinvestments in this form of writing create an overall context of requirement. While Mary is emotionally engaged with her paper on Rwanda, she finds that overall, she dislikes academic writing because it comes from a rhetorical situation where she has little agency. She notes

It’s just sometimes I’m just writing papers and I feel like teachers are just grading them and they’re not... I mean obviously that is how the academic world works. But I wish that sometimes, I was writing more because I wanted to write about the topic, not because it was something that was assigned to me. I wish my writing came more from not an obligated place. It’s like, right now it’s an obligation, but later I think it won’t be because I will want to be reporting on this stuff and there’s a lot of things I want to write about, but I don’t have time to because I’m doing this obligated writing.

Mary attributes negative affect to academic writing itself as “obligated” in forceful, rather than encouraging, ways. She sees academic writing as part and parcel of her duty as a student, and a duty she honors in order to excel at her envisioned future work. But no assignment can escape this place of obligation because it is part of any academic rhetorical situation. She shies away from saying what teachers are “not,” doing, but the implications are that assignments fuel the academy, and in fact construct the academy. Even as Mary writes on activist issues, she feels confined and constricted by this world. She cannot craft a rhetorical situation in the way that she can as an activist who charts her own course and leads a group to effect change on campus and beyond. Instead, she responds to essay prompts that forestall both audience and ethos.

Based on her socio-political identity, contact with elements of genocide, work as a STAND leader, and vision of her future, Mary arrives at motivation for writing her paper on the historic and current state of Rwanda, but the prior positions fail to grant her

authority. At the same time, she cannot envision an audience that she can change through her writing that is linked to her purpose. We can revisit her purpose: “with the Rwanda genocide, kind of what I was just explaining, is to show that genocide isn’t something that happens and then it goes away. I mean, it can, but it just, it takes a lot more. It takes a lot longer than seventeen years.” This purpose resonates with the compassion and concern that she has developed for the cause as a person and activist leader. She wants to prevent a future genocide from happening, and brings this goal to the academic research paper. But already, her audience is missing: who is she explaining to? Perhaps she cannot imagine one with the constraints of the academic rhetorical situation that position her as a student rather than leader. With *STAND*, her particular audience is clear, whether UMass students or particular politicians. But Mary does not imagine a particular audience for her academic paper. Instead, she brings up multiple audiences when she explains that her paper’s goal is also to show that “activism isn’t something you can do and then walk away from. You kind of have to commit to it. It sucks because not a lot of people want to commit to it, but it is. So get used to it.” This second purpose includes an audience of traditional activists, and also points to other parties such as governments and NGOs in the context of our interview. Here, Mary is also imagining an audience to hold accountable – to “stay the course.” But again, as an activist, Mary would target each group individually; as a student writer of a research paper, she targets them all because her research includes them all. Her broad research of the historical and current state of Rwanda shifts her lens to multiple parties,¹⁹ making her address to the audience inconsistent at best.

¹⁹ Specifically, in the context of genocide not just “going away,” she was talking to me, but also *STAND* members, students, government officials, the UN, the US, and any number of possible audiences. Her

As Mary struggles against a student ethos where she feels she is positioned with less authority, she strives to engage with her audience, but even in doing so, the audience becomes even less clear. Mary combines directives with “we” to show that she cares and that “we” should care, but her appeals are stymied by the rhetorical situation. Following her emphasis on the future, we can conceive of a courtroom-like audience for this directive. She seems to involve an imagined jury in her appeal and calls on them to continue to watch Rwanda, but even here, the imagined jury begins to break down because the jury cannot implement the social action that she suggests. Here, towards the end of her seventeen page paper, Mary makes her purpose clearer, but it remains as one of a few paragraphs on the current state of Rwanda at the end of a lengthy research paper. She writes,

It is not enough to forget about Rwanda now that the genocide is over. Yes, many people can say that they have heard of the genocide and know that the country is no longer experiencing this tragedy. But we cannot stop there. We must remember that this genocide did not just come out of nowhere. It was a long amount of time with many events building up to the start of this massacre. We must remember that Rwanda is not going to just be fixed because the genocide ended. We need to be prepared, because we were not there in time to help during the genocide.

In this paragraph, Mary uses “we” as a rhetorical strategy to trigger people’s affective investments in peace and justice, and argue that our responsibility to Rwanda has not ended. However, those implicated by the “we” are not clear, especially in relation to the rest of her paper. Further, conditions in Rwanda indicate that more violence may arise in the future, and again, we have the responsibility to prevent it, but who are the responsible parties who can take action? Mary’s affective investments in holding people accountable to “stay the course” *are* reconstituted in this paragraph. Further, her investments in

second point of staying the course also has an enormous and ambiguous audience.

helping others are clear in her calls for just action. She tries to use her power as a student writer to move the audience to concern and potential action. However, the use of “we” also represents the problems Mary has with ethos and audience throughout her textual production and text. Her position as a student writer may not give her enough authority to make these claims for action, while her jury-like audience may not be able to do much to steer the course.

In the context of a broad research paper (sanctioned by the professor), Mary’s purposes give rise not just to too many audiences, but an incoherent audience. That is, there is no one to educate about Rwanda’s lengthy history (from pre-colonial Rwanda, to colonialism, to the independent governments, to the genocide) who will listen in terms of Rwandan and US governments, nor the international community; they cannot be changed by reading this paper because they already know the facts. For example, the US and UN know the history of the genocide and have officially apologized for their inaction, while Rwanda and the International Criminal Court are holding genocidaires responsible. Mary’s constituents in STAND already agree, for the most part, and Mary’s text does not target a campus audience in its lengthy history and lack of cohesion. When I asked Mary about an audience for her papers, she responded, “And then with the Rwanda piece, I would probably give out to show that just because a genocide has ended doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be paying attention to the country, and we should be helping them to come up with, like, they had the truth and reconciliation commissions and I feel like a lot of people just talk about oh thank God the Rwandan genocide is over, like yeah, that was in the past, and they don’t realize that could be a problem in the future if they don’t do something soon.” Mary’s explanation of her paper does become clearer and has more

depth when she describes why she would show it to an audience, but her use of “people” and “they” remains vague. This move towards the public shifts Mary a bit more into the driver’s seat with the true purpose of her paper, but the question of “what” audience remains. That is, who are “they” and are “they” listening?

Mary’s strongest directives arise at the very end of her piece, but they only illustrate the incoherence of her audience further. She does not seem to be talking to the international community here, but it is not clear who she is talking to. What audience can hold the international community responsible? Mary does not demonstrate a clear answer to this question, but rather states what should happen, without a clear mechanism for change. She writes

It needs to be a huge concern in the international community, that Rwanda is not a stable country as of now. Until there is reconciliation and peace between the Hutu and Tutsi the state is at risk. There are thousands of displaced people in surrounding countries, and these people should be able to return to their homes without concern of the countries falling in massacre again. The international community should keep a close eye on Rwanda, without intervening until necessary. But regardless of not intervening they need to be aware of what is going on, so that if another violent situation were to arise, they would be ready to take actions to stop it before it becomes another genocide. Rwanda needs to be given a fair chance to rebuild itself, but also needs the international support to be secure.

These directives are clear and forceful and represent issues of responsibility and justice. This is the paragraph with the clearest, most emphatic purpose. However, she calls upon an incoherent audience because she does not identify who should be carrying out this social action. She does address responsible parties – such as the international community’s responsibility to Rwanda, but fails to address who should make sure the community “stays the course.” In this paragraph, Mary exerts authority, in her call for social action, but she lacks an audience to inspire to take such action. Mary cannot shift

the affective structures of the multiple parties who come and go as audiences for her essay; the scope of an academic research paper is too broad for her to engage with an audience for social action and she cannot change the audiences that she has constructed through her text as she has written it.

Negative Affect in the Rhetorical Situation: Forestalling Affective Agency

In response to the inadequacy of other perceived possibilities, Mary does attempt to shift her position from student writer to student human rights lawyer in order to construct a coherent audience and the possibility for change. She turns towards her future as a human rights lawyer for three reasons: 1) given the incoherence of her audience, shifting it to a judge and jury is one way of making it coherent, 2) this writing position represents the future that she is so committed to, and 3) it creates an ethos that she wants to inhabit. Here, she has strong interests about how to construct affective agency, but this attempt also fails: ethos is predicated on an authority she does not yet have. Mary's position exceeds the rhetorical situation because she cannot carry her planned future as a human rights lawyer into her research paper, even as she tries. For example, her paper cannot bring the guilty to justice (and this is not the stated purpose of her paper). Within the confines of the academic, rhetorical situation, she cannot change the multiple audiences that she speaks to, and this leaves her with a second choice: to prosecute rather than convince everyone to help Rwanda. As she develops a purpose for change that she cannot meet in academic writing, she creates a model of prosecution and punishment that is carried out outside of an academic, rhetorical situation. Yet, Mary maintains this legal position in her paper on Rwanda and other essays quite consistently, and positions herself as more of a prosecutor for the International Criminal Court than a student writer:

When I am writing about something, like a genocide or something, I definitely always look for things that more support the fact that it was a genocide and more focus on the mass atrocities than focus like, like I definitely aim to put the blame on someone or shed light on what the terrible things were happening as opposed to writing about the issue and kind of looking at it the way the government will be like ‘oh well it wasn’t really that bad, like people were exaggerating,’ or ‘this was happening for this reason.’ I kind of give the sense that like, it doesn’t matter why they were doing this, they should never be doing this. There’s no reason that justifies mass killing and rape. I don’t care what it is. You know what I mean?

Mary’s paper on Rwanda is an exercise in blame: she puts colonialists, the US, the UN, and the former government of Rwanda on trial, explains their atrocities and failures, and convicts them for their crimes. Mary’s imagined rhetorical situation does construct herself as a writer/lawyer who participates in holding groups responsible.

We can see Mary’s desired and imagined ethos as a human rights lawyer in her text through her use of rhetorical questions that echo those used in a courtroom. Again, in terms of her content choices, she decides to repeat the divisive role of the colonists twice, hold the government responsible for “brainwashing,” and argue that the US and UN should have intervened and instead feigned ignorance. Here, she does not pick out individuals, but treats these institutions as individuals on trial. She interrogates each agency in order to assign blame through her evidence and her own knowledge.

Specifically, Mary uses accusatory questions that further implicate the parties involved, much as a prosecutor would do for a jury. For example,

Most onlookers from the national community believed in the [Tutsi] attack [on the government], however should they have? No, Habyarimana [the President] staged the whole event, and he did so in order to give him credible grounds to pass the blame on to the Tutsi for being supportive of the enemy.

Here, Mary clearly and forcefully holds the former president of Rwanda accountable for lying and laying the groundwork for the genocide. Second, she also tries and convicts the leaders of the US and UN, as she asks,

Was [nonintervention] because these two administrations were unaware of the nature and scale of these killings? No, they were well aware, both the US and the UN knew what was going on and still chose to take no action.

These questions represent one way that Mary takes up the ethos of a human rights lawyer, and reproduces the sort of imagined rhetoric of a prosecutor. While Mary is not an expert in the law, she has likely heard enough legal rhetoric to bring it into her paper in the ways she sees fit. She lays blame for the genocide and the international decisions to leave the country rather than stop the genocide, and she convicts all parties of their role in atrocity – this is the bulk of her paper. Her quotes also represent a way to “prosecute” that appeals to the audience’s sense of justice through circulating outrage as well: how could these parties do such things? At the same time, this ethos lacks true legal knowledge which Mary feels bars her from advocacy.

While Mary does derive satisfaction in writing on activist topics and writing when she is angry at an injustice, she is also aware of her limited affective agency in her lawyer-like position. Her attitudes toward writing “apply to all of the papers” that she writes on activist topics, and she continues to express her outrage over past and current events. Mary “love[s] to write when I am angry.” This may support her affective agency in translating anger into writing, but it forestalls such agency as she does not and cannot imagine her academic writing as a source of change in the world. Mary’s position as an activist and future human rights lawyer makes her aware of the limitations of an academic audience in terms of her goals for writing – she herself cannot sway the imagined judges and juries in the way that she wants because she does not yet know enough about human rights law to suggest social action and viable solutions. She inhabits an imagined ethos as a response to the academic research genre, but she knows

that she is not a lawyer yet – limiting her knowledge and agency that she strives for. While Elizabeth can step into the shoes of an activist educator, Mary cannot, as a writer, inhabit the position of a human rights lawyer performing for a judge and jury. Mary cannot make a shift in affective structures from her position because such a role is outside the scope of undergraduate academic writing. Mary cannot imagine bringing these parties to justice through her academic writing. She is often left with frustration at both the real situation and the academic writing process that forecloses her agency.

Mary struggles with an academic research paper that denies her ethos as an activist educator and scholar – as co-leader of STAND and in an activist-oriented major. For example, there are many academic scholars, but also journalists, non-governmental organization (NGO) writers, UN writers, and others who compose a network of writer/activists around issues of genocide. These authors may not agree with one another, but they share an ethos of professionalism, activism/aid, and knowledge. While Mary has read works by many such people, she herself is cast as student in the classroom, and not as a figure like the others. She is put in a rhetorical situation that in some ways mirrors the writings of an investigative journalist, for example, but she cannot occupy that position in her writing process and text. Because of her position as an activist leader, she imagines the rhetorical situation from an education and advocacy perspective, but she cannot write her way into that position any more than she could write her way into a human rights lawyer position. She feels frustrated by this situation. For example, “I had to find the backup even though I believe it was genocide. Sometimes I might actually have to find somewhere that it’s said it’s genocide for me to be able to say it and that’s where the problem comes in. It’s cause why do I need to find that if I know, if I know

myself that it's a genocide. Or I know myself that it's this one specific thing, why can't I just say it? And it's like I have to have the research to back it up. So... Yeah, that's really frustrating." At this point in her activist and scholarly career, Mary feels she should have license to make certain claims. Many writers now call Darfur a genocide all of the time – while there are naysayers, "Save Darfur" signs and posters are ubiquitous and "genocide" is in common currency, even in Washington. This may be one reason why Mary is so frustrated – in academic research, she seems to lack the credible ethos that a person with a "Save Darfur" sign receives, much less the famous journalists that she reads.

Mary's position as "student writer" in relation to published thinkers, and her need to back up her most basic knowledge with published writers, reflects what Bruce Horner notes as the "Author/student writer binary" that is created in the academy. As such, a student cannot be treated in the same way as an author who makes money and is considered autonomous, for example (507; 509). Mary cannot step into the shoes of the author in part because so much academic work is put into distinguishing the student from the author; the author is who the student can desire to be, and perhaps works as an institutionalized motivation and/or sense of lack. At the same time, authorship cleaves Mary from the published authors that she reads because their words carry more value and credibility; she is in service to these words rather than using them as a form of engagement in her writing. While it is Mary's perception of being held to a different standard than an "author" that frustrates her, Gail Stygall points out that labeling can construct a student's more limited position. Such positions can be different depending on the beliefs of those who are labeling, such as the "basic writing" label that can construct

students as having “cognitive problems” or they are learners of material they should “already have mastered” (320). While Stygall discusses the “basic” label, her words also carry weight for the “student” label in general. She argues that teachers’ “discursive practice is a master discourse and it assumes we have an unconstrained right to divide and stratify our students as writers, dividing authors from non-authors” (326). This discourse of division can work to create an intrinsic lack between Mary’s writing and the writing of published authors who have the authority. Mary feels that what she believes is well known in genocide literature and in common currency is under scrutiny in her writing.

Mary cannot craft a rhetorical situation that can lead to social action because she is positioned to continually lack credibility and authority, and is required to back up even common knowledge with the quotes of others. In this situation, Mary cannot effect change if she feels she lacks the trust of her actual audience – the professor. At the same time, Mary feels that she is butting heads with academic research constraints, rather than particular professors. She asks questions as she grapples with the genre and wonders about epistemological questions that construct her as a writer and as someone with a claim to truth.

Because like, and like, that’s another thing with research for me is I feel like some things I’ve read so many times that I couldn’t even pinpoint one person that said it. But then I have to, if I’m writing in a research paper, they’ll be like, teachers will be like, is that your original thought? And I mean ‘yeah, it is cause now I think this way, I don’t just think that way because I’ve read it now. I’ve read it so many times that I actually believe it. And I couldn’t even pinpoint who was the first person to make me believe it. And that kind of thing, it is my, those are my thoughts and I actually believe the genocide in Darfur is a genocide. And I’ve read things that say it isn’t and I’ve read things that say it are and they together have formed it. How am I supposed to remember that? That kind of thing really bothers me is like, it feels like common knowledge even though it’s not. It basically is common knowledge I think if you remember it long enough that you

don't need, you don't need to look it up. To know how you feel about it I think, but that's not how research works.

In this rhetorical situation, Mary is positioned as an average student writing an average research paper. However, what counts as knowledge is continually up for grabs, as Mary notes the complexity of even "common knowledge." Obviously, Mary as student writer can make few common knowledge claims that she would be able to make in other writing positions, such as that of an activist and lawyer. Stygall's notion of authorship in the academy sheds light on Mary's position of "negative status," where those with more power position those with less authority in ways that detract from agency -- through discourses they may not even be overtly aware of (339). Mary's research paper audience (here, the professor) continues to doubt her knowledge claims, perhaps automatically, thus dictating an ethos that has less agency. Constructing a rhetorical situation with less power than Mary has as an activist prevents her from constructing a rhetorical situation where she has control, including the type of emotional control that Elizabeth and Lisa had.

Conclusion

In the end, Mary's affective agency thus does not allow her to shift affective structures in an academic context: she cannot reconstitute her anger and compassion to construct a text that fosters change in an audience. While she convicts the genocidaires, the colonists, the US, the UN, and the international community, Mary winds up feeling frustrated with her paper. As she finds more evidence for her claim that Rwanda is in danger, she cannot shift affective structures to foster change and she feels disempowered: "I think I didn't enjoy that one [the Rwanda paper] so much because I didn't like reading about Rwanda like that. It was something that I kind of came up with, and then I was

like, wait this is actually true? And, shit. Like, oh no. So like that was kind of hard to write.” As Mary discusses the challenge of the paper at an affective level, her inability to write for social action likely compounded her feelings of distress as she uncovered evidence of a potential genocide but saw few ways to combat it through her academic writing.

Rachel

Rachel chooses to write on the historic and current environmental degradation of Latin America. She cares deeply for the topic, which represents her lifelong activist concerns for animal and human rights. Rachel writes a creative and vibrant introduction that connects her visit to the Smith Conservatory and the significance of a falling leaf to the rest of the paper on environmental injustice. However, the paper becomes an extended paraphrase of her sources – without a clear purpose, argument, or ethos. Because Rachel believes that the academic essay form hinges on facts, she concentrates on such facts in her environmental degradation paper; at the same time, Rachel feels that one must know enough facts to claim a voice in the paper. As Rachel cannot ever know as much as her professor/audience, she cannot take on an ethos of authority in her writing for him. Instead, she feels she plays to her strengths as a creative writer, a writing position that she has embraced since childhood. This position allows her to move her audience, the professor, in a different way: by entertaining him. Rachel turns to this ethos because she believes in the freedom it gives her to transcend the essay form and the “scrutiny” and “boredom” of her audience. However, this shift in affective structure from frustration to enjoyment does not give Rachel affective agency in changing her audience: she cannot write for social action because the academic, rhetorical situation

bars her from “teaching the teacher” anything of substance and from developing a strong ethos with which to analyze and argue for social change. She can shift her structure of affect from student writer to creative writer, but in the end Rachel is left with frustration at the writing process and the academic, rhetorical situation that she feels she cannot change.

Affective Investments

Rachel has deep affective investments in her essay based on her ongoing activism for human and environmental justice. Her decision to write a paper about the destruction of the Latin American environment represents her activist concerns from an early age. From childhood, Rachel has always had deep concern for wildlife and the environment that has led her to activist work. Growing up, she grew to love sitting in her backyard and observing the natural world, as well as writing about it as a child. In addition to observing wildlife, Rachel has always been concerned with protecting animals from cruelty. In fact, working for animal rights was Rachel’s start to activism in middle school and high school:

In high school I started an animal welfare club. So this is where I kind of got involved in community things. In eighth grade I volunteered at an animal shelter. That's not exactly activism, but that's where I got started, involved in animal rights and things like that. So then, yeah, my sophomore or my junior year of high school I started this club. And we held a couple, we held a protest in our town. It was just a little. We set up a table in our main street in town and handed out fliers about the shooting of wolves in Alaska from airplanes. Aerial shooting. And so I guess that was my first experience, like, me organizing it and getting involved and things like that, so. So that's sort of where my activism in general started, and then naturally spilled over to human rights and things like that.

Rachel’s work to protect animals and the environment represents a deep affective investment because she has built this commitment over the course of her life. Her material experiences with wildlife have shaped her as a person who cares about the

welfare of animals in multiple contexts, and the links between conservation, animal rights and human rights. She now pursues these issues in her Wildlife Conservation major and Environmental Justice certificate. These commitments lead to her paper on environmental justice in Latin America. Rachel's point of emotional contact arose with the academic assignment; however, the paper does not just represent a single prompt, but Rachel's deep values that she has developed over her life. Her structure of affect arises from material experiences and activism with animal rights, human rights, the environment, and combining these areas to work for comprehensive justice. (See also Chapter 3.)

Therefore, Rachel has strong affective investments in her essay because it represents her work as a scholar and activist, and the issues she most cares about, and she explains the topic with passion and strong emotions. Rachel notes

As a whole it's a topic for me that really, goes along with these conflicts that we deal with in *STAND*, that it's. Something that's very important to me is the environment and just to read about all these abuses that the environment and Latin America have suffered since centuries ago, all about like, globalization and the role the US plays in the degradation of the landscapes and the peasants' lives. It's just really, really angering and frustrating and saddening when you look at places like the amazon that were once so rich and full of biodiversity and these tribes, and now it's just reduced to the tiny space, I mean it's still huge but, compared to what it used to be, the amazon, it's really frustrating to read about. For example, with the amazon, to read about what's contributed to the devastation of it and why it's, what it is, why it is the way it is today. So I definitely had a lot of emotional connection to [the paper and the topic].

We can see Rachel's commitment to the environment, and her anger, frustration, and sadness in realizing the full devastation that has been enacted. Her paper in particular represents how people, animals, and the environment have been subject to exploitation and oppression. As Rachel describes the history of Latin America and the environment in her paper, she is also cognizant of issues with the indigenous peoples and its larger

relation to STAND issues. Just as people are now destroying the environment in the Congo for conflict minerals, people have historically exploited the environment for precious goods.

Rachel feels that this essay represents her activism the most, out of all her writing samples, precisely because it connects human rights and environmental justice – concepts that she has been working with for years. As a STAND activist, she has explained and written on issues of genocide and environmental injustice, and the lives that are damaged or lost; she feels she has had power in writing for STAND in this area – for writing for social action with the group. Rachel even connects this activist concern and social action writing with STAND to her academic paper:

It's something that I care about that is...as much as I care about conflicts in Congo, for example...it carries the same emotional weight for me, as a lot of my activist concerns...it's just how it plays into how people are treated, how people suffer, because the connection between people and their land, and a lot of indigenous people and locals and people who really rely on that land for their survival, they really just, the connection is very important to me.

Rachel actively combines her activist position with her student position here, as she discusses her knowledge and her feelings about her paper topic with me, in the context of an interview, where she is the authority. Rachel has passion for what has happened in Latin America and speaks eloquently and with a strong voice in explaining the topic and the loss of land and lives. However, Rachel loses this voice in the paper itself. In this context one would expect Rachel to have a strong ethos that is based on her ongoing synthesis of human rights and environmental justice. However, her ethos seems to disappear as she relies on the language and ideas of her sources in her paper. One may also expect to see a strong argument for equity and a stop to abuses. But, Rachel's ethos and potential argument are absent in her essay.

Excerpt from Rachel's Paper

This sample of Rachel's essay illustrates her creative introduction that stands in contrast to what becomes an extended review of her sources, with very few claims, points, or arguments from Rachel. The full essay continues for another page in the same vein.

(Untitled)

Bustling in from the chilling afternoon, a shiver left my body as I stepped into the lobby of Smith College's Lyman Conservatory. I smiled "hello" to the young woman behind the front desk as I made my way past her and through the doors that I hoped would lead me in the right direction. I was on a mission: in search of the Latin American exhibit, I was running on a tight schedule against the parking meter and had a handful of questions whose answers hid behind damp leaves.

I was dazzled by what I found behind the double doors. Beyond a narrow passage of sweet rose bushes, I found myself in the "cold temperate" room, and the contrast from the bleak world just beyond the windows made me catch my breath. Flowers tugged at my jacket as I made my way along the paths and rare trees reached for the glass ceiling above. Signs impaling the rich earth told of the origins of these plants, from their time of "discovery" and by whom, to their various uses for man and other points of interest. With my watch ticking, I took in the grand scheme of the exhibits with scanning eyes and a scrutinizing mind – with answers to find, I had to get in, get the goods, and get out before the meter flashed red.

Bending down to read a hidden sign in the "warm temperate" room, a sudden flutter by my ear startled me. Looking up, I saw a dead leaf had fallen from a tree above me and floated past me ear, mimicking an exotic butterfly or other jungle dweller that I wouldn't be surprised to encounter in this room. Examining the tree from which the leaf had departed, I realized that in my haste, I hadn't really noticed much of my surroundings at all. Had the leaf not startled me from my investigation, I probably would not have looked so closely at the tree right before my eyes. What else would I have missed had I been so solely focused on finding my answers? Would I only have noticed the fragrant flower petals because they were in my way?

In his examination of Latin America's environmental history, With Broadax and Firebrand, Warren **Dean** asks his audience what it takes for us to pay attention. Can we have development of the magnitude that Latin America experienced, can there be discoveries of resources and an economic boom, can we industrialize a land as ecologically rich as Latin America – can any of this happen without a sense of loss?

I feel that there will never be a sense of loss as long as there is some sort of gain in return. **Dean** states that the construction of Latin American landscapes "reflect[s] the prevailing ideologies of economic development" (9). As long as societies maintain these ideologies and nurture a system of "single-minded pursuit of profits," there will always be a gain for the society as a whole that will overshadow the losses accrued in the process of obtaining that gain (**McCook** 6). The gains in this region of the world are, as McCook

points out, the results of economic growth and development, and the resulting numerous losses are easily seen in the ravaged remains of the natural landscape. To understand how the pursuit of economic development has and still does influence the Latin American landscape, one should examine the key components of the system – a system that must, as **Dean** argues, undergo an entire change if there is to be an attempt to salvage what remains of the natural environment. By inspecting the views towards, and values placed upon, the land by the state, powerful corporations, and the people themselves, one can begin to understand how a nation's economic aspirations will always be a commanding force.

Resource-hungry corporations have undoubtedly been one of the most powerful and destructive forces present in Latin America. Backed by the state, their pursuit of increasing production fueled a narrow, radically simplified vision of the natural world that had unforeseen consequences (**Scott 2**). Efforts to increase profits required an intensive reconstruction of the landscape that involved beating the earth into submission and converting native inhabitants into slaves. Anything that stood outside of the brackets of what was required to maximize profits was to be done away with in the cheapest and fastest way possible; as **Tucker** notes in his book *Insatiable Appetite*, corporations made no attempts at increasing efficiency of growing and harvesting. Weed removal and prevention included the heavy use of pesticides, and attempts at thwarting pest and disease epidemics involved intense and ineffective pesticide application. Monocropping and other simplified agricultural methods were employed, and ultimately, land and crops were suited to machinery – plats were altered and chosen for characteristics that made harvesting and distribution easier (**Scott**). Several prominent authors such as **Marquardt and Tucker** discuss the effects of corporations' rapid acquisition of land: the extent and pace of land clearance became a corporate political war (**Tucker**). As soil quality degraded, pests and disease spread, and the overall condition of the land deteriorated, new property had to be snatched up, thus creating a race for more and more land. In examining the role of corporations in the early years of agricultural development in Latin America, **Dean** states that “the issue is the effectiveness and efficiency with which scarce resources are employed, the skill that goes into their transformation, and the validity of the uses to which they are put” (**116**). He goes on to discuss the rationality and irrationality of actions and decisions made during this time period, however, and argues that while in retrospect, corporations (and the state, as will be addressed later) may have acted irrationally, at the time, decisions were made to the best of people's abilities given their knowledge at the time. But ultimately, as McCook argues, “economic rationality trumped agricultural rationality” (**23**).

Instead of an argument that “there will never be a sense of loss as long as there's some sort of gain in return,” Rachel delivers an extended literature review. She does not reconstitute her emotions of care, concern, and upset in her essay. Rather, the essay is almost completely devoid of affect. Rachel does not have affective agency, in part

because the main emotion that accompanies her affective writing process is frustration at the academic, rhetorical situation as she perceives it. The question is: why does Rachel “erase” herself from her own writing, even when the topic is deeply important and relevant to her in both activist and academic spheres?

Limits Imposed by Academic Writing: Constructing a Binary of Lack and the Impossibility of Intervention

One reason that Rachel lacks affective agency is her general construction of the academic rhetorical situation itself as a reductive set of rules that form a research paper, and an audience of professors that she can address but cannot change; she cannot imagine moving a professor with “just her opinion” because the professor will always know more, factually. Instead, Rachel tends to see academic essays and reports as sets of dry facts that one must conjure up for an audience of the professor – much like Freire’s notion of the “banking system,” where students report information back to their teacher that is divorced from true, reflexive, and interactive learning. For Rachel, you can show the teacher that you have been reading and listening, but you cannot educate the teacher or change his or her views, attitudes, or actions.

Over the course of her academic career, Rachel has internalized ideas of the general nature of academic writing and its limits. This starts with her definition of academic writing itself as a set of rules, negative characteristics, and embedded judgments that she cannot change.

S: In general, when you hear the term academic writing, what does that mean to you?

R: It sounds boring. laughing. Academic writing to me just sounds boring and I just, like I mentioned earlier, I associate it with literary analysis a lot of times. I think of academic writing, just, very structured, I think of structure. And I think of guidelines and scrutiny. So, but to me what I enjoy is writing that's kind of open

ended. I like that. But when I hear academic writing, I think by the book, certain format, five paragraphs, you know, very structured introduction and conclusion. That's just what I think of.

Rachel's definition is completely devoid of positive characteristics and creates boundaries for Rachel's construction of an academic rhetorical situation. She herself, as an audience and student writer, is intrinsically bored with this sort of writing, and she sees it as a pre-existing structure that is not open to her intervention. The "academic" guidelines she imagines contrast with her enjoyment of "open ended" writing that seems to contrast to the rules; in making this particular distinction, she sets up a binary in her definition between the writing she likes versus academic writing – this binary carries through her assessment of academic writing in contrast to creative writing. Why does Rachel construct such a strong binary? One answer may lie with the "scrutiny" that she mentions in her quote. The scrutiny of her audience, the professor, is an important and telling part of her definition. Just the word conjures up a Foucaultian panopticon of teachers' surveillance of her written work, and Rachel's sense of being disciplined by the rules embedded in academic writing. In this rhetorical context, she cannot change the form of the essay or the conditions that construct "academic writing," leaving her with less power. She then creates a binary to allow her to take up the side that opposes the negative and constraining aspects she sees in academic writing. She can reside on the "open ended" side where she sees her strengths.

Rachel perceives academic writing as a collection of facts and rules, and finds no other way to construct her environmental degradation paper than by supplying such facts that follow the academic writing guidelines as she sees them. In this essay on environmental injustice and human rights abuses, she collects facts from her sources but

does not form an argument or analysis because she views the facts as the primary/fundamental form of an academic essay. When she does not have enough facts, she does not feel competent to write a paper and becomes frustrated by professors' demands for analysis, precisely because she feels one must know all of the facts first, before one can analyze them. As Rachel notes the concrete time limits that she has for her studies (from daily time to the space of one semester), she feels it is impossible for her to gain the expertise she feels her paper requires. In discussing her class and her paper on the environment, Rachel states

the thing that's frustrating about this class is that he's the kind of professor who constantly wants more and more, which is great because it makes me work harder and harder, but at one point *I'm like ok, I'm not the professor. I don't know anything about environmental history. All I can do, all I know is what I've read, these textbooks. Yes you can encourage me to take it further or analyze more, but I can only do so much given my other courses and the fact that I don't have any history in this, any experience, so. So he's a great professor in that he really pushes us to work harder and think deeper and look harder, but sometimes it's frustrating.*

As Rachel feels writing depends on an abundance of factual information, or even expertise, Rachel cannot perform her analysis because she cannot collect enough knowledge. As she states, “all I know is what I’ve read, these textbooks,” she demonstrates how she perceives her authority as a writer. She does not see different kinds of knowledge beyond the factual that she herself can take up – like doing a deep analysis of those facts. That position seems to be erased for Rachel because she limits herself to knowledge in textbooks. She is both appreciative and frustrated when the professor pushes her to “analyze more,” but she does not and her essay demonstrates her general vision of academic writing based on facts, and not her own argument. In this case, Rachel’s vision of academic writing confines her in a position of reporter, rather

than meaning-maker or activist. And within such confines, Rachel cannot reconstitute the pain she feels for the environment and indigenous people in her essay because her facts leave little room for affect in the textual production and text itself – instead, Rachel feels “frustration” in the writing process. And, this frustration is reconstituted as a litany of evidence from sources, without Rachel’s voice or overt analyses.

Following Carolyn Miller’s distinction of forms and genres, Rachel envisions her paper as a specific, inflexible form, rather than a genre that gives her more leeway. As Miller defines a genre through the “action it is used to accomplish,” one might imagine that Rachel sees a variety of ways to respond to the research paper assignment. Rachel has many rhetorical choices within the research paper genre, but only perceives a form that demands facts. This conception is not only Rachel’s, as Carmen Kynard points to the problem: when she asked to see multiple students’ “research papers,” she was inundated with what Davis and Shadle see as an “omnipresence of the research paper as a linear, contrived, and template collection of detached facts” (129). Kynard perceives a genre of the “research paper” that relies only on facts through students “churn[ing] out a standard, stagnant form” based on their education (128). While Rachel may have been instructed on how to write a “research paper,” Rachel currently sees a litany of sources as the way to respond to the action requested in the writing of a research paper. From a variety of choices, she constructs a specific “form” that is rule bound (although she does insert creative introductions as part of the form). As Miller notes, “form shapes the response of the reader...to substance by providing instruction, so to speak, about how to perceive and interpret; this guidance disposes the audience to anticipate, to be gratified, to respond in a certain way” (159). Rachel replicates her understanding of the research

paper as form, and constructs a paper that will shape the response of the reader in the ways she feels that she should in an academic, rhetorical context: she produces the requisite form of the text to please her audience and provide factual information. She does not see another way to interact with her audience through the research paper.

In this context, Rachel constructs a binary that casts creative writing as opposed to academic writing:

S: I see. Uh huh, uh huh. And you were saying you don't like the scientific papers that you write as much?

Rachel: Yeah, I just feel like I don't have as much freedom in them and because I don't feel like I have strong analytical skills and my strength is my creative writing, I feel like I can't show that in my papers. They tend to be very dry or what I would see as dry. But then again I read other scientific papers and that's what they are, they're dry. Laughing. And so since I feel like I can't really, I'm not good at analyzing things, I feel like, I always feel like my discussion section is kind of weak or not going far enough or deep enough. I'm kind of just saying what's obvious. So it's just I don't like writing papers where I feel frustrated. I like to do a paper and do it well. And if I can't do that it's really annoying.

Rachel may not be able to imagine different forms of academic writing because she has not encountered them, and positions herself in a space of lack because she cannot conceive of a student writing position that she could occupy successfully in relation to her paper, her scientific reports, and her analyses in general. Second, Rachel notes, "I haven't done a whole lot of, I really like creative writing. So that's one thing that I wish I had stuck with... But I never got the chance to keep up my writing once I got to college because, like I said, a lot of the stuff is just science based." This represents a significant reason for her to cleave her notion of "college writing" so sharply from all other forms. In her binary between academic writing and creative writing that represents freedom, Rachel places herself in the second camp, away from guidelines, boredom, and scrutiny.

As she cannot see how the academic form might be changed, she also does not perceive a strong role for herself within it.

Rachel resists (or even refuses) positioning herself in what she sees is the role of a student writer as she criticizes many types of papers she is called upon to produce. She does not engage with the scientific papers that she has been writing in her Wildlife Conservation major. She criticizes those “dry facts” that this kind of academic writing commands but returns to her sense of weakness with analysis and discussion. Rachel’s sense of lack in moving beyond the facts may be “frustrating” and difficult because she draws a binary with her writing strengths on the “wrong” side of the equation, and so her academic writing will never measure up to her creative writing. In attempting to write for social action in her paper, Rachel positions herself both as a lacking and resistant student writer, leading to low agency: she cannot imagine writing from a position that has enough factual knowledge to transcend the student position (as reporter of dry facts, for example) and to move to a position that allows for analysis and argument. In doing so, she could intervene in the academic, rhetorical situation and have the potential to reconstitute her emotions in writing for change. Instead, she resists scientific writing, academic writing in general, and her paper, by pointing to their shortcomings (such as “dry,” and “boring”).

As Rachel constructs an academic essay as a form that relies on facts, her writing continues to shift her structure of affect from a confident activist to a scrutinized student with little command of the writing process for her environmental essay (and most others). One reason she may not make a clear argument in her paper is this structural shift, where she is positioned in a space of deficit as a student writer who does not know enough to claim authority. While she feels more comfort with an academic writing sample on

animal cognition -- where she felt more command of the facts and the teacher had less knowledge of the area -- she feels very nervous about this essay on a topic that she is less familiar with and the teacher is an expert on.²⁰ This further limits Rachel to a sense of negotiating difficult terrain where one misstep is a significant stumble:

So I really like the introductions of five and six, but overall I enjoyed writing three the most.²¹ Again, just because of my level of comfort with it, and my level of interest and I feel like, with five, especially with six, about the environmental history, it's very easy to say things that are uh, like to make an argument, make a statement that is actually, not that is untrue, but I feel like sometimes I will say things that are not exactly supporting my argument or that. Cause a lot of these topics we cover in the environmental history class are to do with economics and politics and all that. *And I don't really understand politics and economics. I feel like sometimes I have to be very careful about what I say because I could say the completely wrong thing...*[in relation to another paper, Rachel says] I didn't really know a whole lot about how legal systems work, politics, stuff like that, so. There's some frustration, trying to, just trying to figure out what to say. That made sense, that was correct.

Her environmental history paper and others are not about writing to discover and reflect on ideas or make a particular argument; instead, it is about avoiding saying “the completely wrong thing.” Rachel is not constructing a rhetorical situation but rather trying to prevent any missteps. She does not have much control because she is not in a position to have the kind of mastery over the facts that she believes she needs; she feels she lacks the knowledge she needs to write a strong paper. This limits her potential for affective agency because she feels she cannot form opinions, much less arguments, in this research paper.

²⁰ Please see Chapter 6 for a discussion of Rachel's contrasting interaction with the rhetorical situation of her Animal Cognition paper.

²¹ These numbers refer to Rachel's writing samples, where each sample is numbered. Five represents her essay on mediation, six represents this paper on environmental history, and three refers to her paper on animal cognition.

In Chapter 3, I argued that Rachel represents a “student activist writer” based on our interviews. She lacks such agency in her academic text here, but this further points to the importance of positionality: in my interview with her, she was the expert who explained her thoughts on academic work and activism to me; in terms of her writing of the sample, she occupies a student position in her writing that places her in a space of lack. That lack did not take shape in our interview because she did have authority and mastery in that dynamic and could explain connections between her activism and academic writing. This is similar to Mary’s sense of leadership and power with STAND to mold the minds of the future, to her sense of less credibility and not enough knowledge in the academic rhetorical situation. While both activist students have limited affective agency in their academic writing and are not able to write for social action, they do try to bridge activism with academic writing; however, they are unable to do so because of the barriers they perceive in this space.

Rachel does not see academic writing, and her essay in particular, as a rhetorical situation, but as a set of rules and guidelines where she often feels she lacks the knowledge necessary to make arguments and analyses. Further, she feels evaluated by an audience of professors. As facts are central and are the key to academic writing, she cannot teach the teacher because she cannot add new facts (in general). This conception of audience is another factor that can explain Rachel’s lack of ethos and argument in her paper: she does not believe that she is capable or qualified for either in relation to her audience for her paper. During the focus group that I led, many students felt that they had the affective agency to move the professor in some way – whether for social action

purposes or analyses and arguments in general. However, Rachel had a very different response in relation to her audience, the professor:

I don't know, I feel kind of the opposite. I don't think I ever really teach my teachers anything besides what my opinion is. And in fact I tend to get nervous that I either have incorrect information or that I'm not developing my argument very well, so I don't really ever feel, I don't know I'd say sometimes I feel uncomfortable depending on the topic and how well I know it, and feel comfortable with it. Um, I think sometimes it's just a one way street with me, like, me trying to convey my opinion but not necessarily teach the teacher. Sometimes I lack a little bit of confidence in my writing.

Rachel positions herself as writing to an audience that cannot be moved, changed, or called to social action. Because the professors already have more knowledge than Rachel, she cannot move her professor with a call to stop environmental degradation, for example. While she could work with STAND on such a call, her vision of the academic, rhetorical situation disallows such a move without expertise. She does not envision an audience beyond the professor, and the audience is not particularly friendly in her construction. For example, this audience does not seem to care what Rachel's opinion is and will not learn from it in any event; as Rachel cannot "teach the teacher," her opinions hold very little academic weight in her own mind. This construction of audience interferes with her ability to create a strong ethos and argument because she has very little authority to change the professor. She can respond to an emotional point of contact – her concern over environmental justice – but she leaves that behind in her textual production because her focus shifts to pleasing the professor.

Engaging and Resisting: Creative Introductions, Ethos, Authority, and Affective Agency

Like Mary, Rachel steps outside of her perception of a student writer in order to try to gain affective agency in textual production and the text itself. Her creative writing

exceeds the bounds of her vision of an academic writer who constructs a paper through facts. She turns to the position of creative writer for three reasons: 1) she enjoys creative writing, 2) she wants to engage the professor in the only viable way that she can, and 3) she feels that she is very good at creative writing versus the analyses that reside on the other side of the binary she perceives. Mary speaks from the imagined position of a human rights lawyer, while Rachel finds a strong ethos as a creative writer. This position allows her to address her audience and challenge academic writing at the same time. First, Rachel enjoys creative writing for its perceived freedoms that are absent from the structure and guidelines of her conception of academic writing. In her binary, freedom and authority reside on the creative writing side rather than the academic. Because the academic is so based in facts, sources, and “saying the right thing,” Rachel finds immense value in her construction of writing where she feels she can say what she wants, as she wants:

I really enjoy. I don't know. I like descriptive writing. I really enjoy writing about kind of everyday things. So I get, when it comes to creative writing, I like writing about everyday kind of things -- what I see around me. I like being able to describe a scene in a very kind of, in my own way.

Here, Rachel describes the kind of writing that she enjoys, and as she writes about everyday things, she cannot be judged in the same way by an audience as with an academic paper. Her enjoyment is linked to describing a scene “in my own way,” which gives her ownership and authority in such writing. Rachel enjoys creative writing precisely because she considers it out of the scope of academic writing which limits her in so many ways. Because she separates creative writing from the academic, she has a space to take pleasure in writing that allows her a sense of mastery.

While the professor is part of a rigid and somewhat harsh rhetorical situation, Rachel does carve out a role for herself as a *writer*, which is to give professors a paper that they enjoy reading. Because she cannot change the professor, much less write for social action, Rachel chooses to entertain. In one way, her goal in writing is to please the professor/audience, and in doing so she also resists the academic genre that she rejects as dry, boring, and scrutinized, as it simultaneously positions her in a state of lack. Rachel's image of the professor/audience and her purpose to entertain him are embedded in what she considers "good" academic writing:

So, but I also think [a good academic paper] needs to engage the reader, makes the reader want to read the piece. Because I always think about it from the professor's point of view, they have so many papers to read, by the time they get to mine, I want to give them something interesting to read, something fun to read. So I usually try to start out my papers, aside from my scientific reports, like with my junior year writing or any kind of small essays I've done, no matter how technical it has to be, I try to start out with the introduction that is more descriptive and has a lot of imagery in it just to kind of break the monotony of things. Get a hook...I always think, I always hope that a teacher, like, I feel like my writing style, I write this way because I want to try to engage the professor.

Here, her structure of affect does shift because she draws an overall purpose that she can meet in her paper on the environment, and her academic papers in general. While the audience is rigid, she can feel some agency in writing something "fun to read," but not affective agency in responding to an emotional contact that can be reconstituted in a text for social action. At the same time, Rachel's attitude does connect to her activism in "grabbing the audience's attention," which she links with both activist and academic writing; however, with academic writing it goes no further, whereas in activism it is an important step in social action. And for Rachel, "good academic writing" seems to stand in contrast to "academic writing" in general, which is intrinsically dull. This "good academic writing" that Rachel employs is what she terms "creative writing," which

remains in a binary position with most academic essays and scientific reports. Rachel's agency in writing is thus outside of her student writer position in her environmental paper and others, in a space of enjoyment and confidence for her. Her contributions arise from the other side of the binary that she envisions, and she has confidence on this side of the binary, where facts do not have primacy.

And while she did not enjoy writing her environmental degradation essay, she very much enjoyed writing the introduction (as well as creative introductions to other papers) because it gave her a measure of power over the academic rhetorical situation. Rachel feels a certain amount of affective agency in relation to her audience through these introductions in particular, in a way that the rest of the paper lacks. It gives her satisfaction to create these introductory gems that will catch her professor/audience's attention, which is what she can hope for given her conception of the rhetorical situation. She describes her experience in the Smith Conservatory during our interview, and explains how the fallen leaf sparked her idea for a creative introduction to the paper. She again draws a binary, but explains how she negotiates the binary to gain power and a stronger ethos:

R: I've never been very good at analytical work at all actually. Critical, analytical work, not at all.

S: Not as much?

R: But, I do like creative writing a lot. And I feel like it's if you're good at creative writing it can be a good tool because it gets people interested, like a catchy first paragraph can bring somebody in. A catchy title...yeah, reel them in with a nice hook, and then you slam them with the facts.

Here, she employs creative writing as a writing strategy to exert some power over the audience. While she cannot "teach the teacher" she enjoys controlling her audience in a different way – through attention to her essay that she creates through writing with which

she feels prowess. Thus, in addition to a space of enjoyment, it is also a way for Rachel to take some control of the academic rhetorical situation by “reeling in” the audience. She really wants the professor to pay attention and “remember” her work, and this is how she constructs such admiration rather than scrutiny. Further, her idea of reeling the professors in to then “slam them with the facts” is telling, as these are the facts that both construct an essay and construct Rachel’s sense of lack. However, she does not have such a sense with creative writing because it does not seem to rest on facts, but rather facility with ideas, style, and synthesis.

Rachel writes her paper to please the professor, but also to resist the academic form that limits her and gain a measure of affective agency in her resistance, but it does not result in social action. She does use her creative introduction to speak to some sources of her frustration with writing a paper that she is uncomfortable with. In this way, Rachel resists this academic essay that continually positions her in a space of “lack” and little control as a student writer. She describes the satisfaction she gains in intervening in a dry and frustrating paper with the introduction that she constructs as a creative writer – that stands in opposition to the rhetorical situation that limits her.

Sometimes it's just the feeling I know that something is flowing well and I know that it sounds good. I like the challenge, like what I said before, like how do I make something that's kind of dry and kind of boring, and how do I make it interesting? How do I catch attention? So if I have enough time to sit down with a cup of coffee in a cafe, and relax and think about this, I really enjoy that kind of writing.

Rachel enjoys the “challenge” of changing the academic writing she dislikes into writing that is engaging and interesting to read. She transforms the negative attributes of academic writing into a different sort of text – to wield power over academic writing in general and her essay in particular, and to change it to something fascinating. In this

way, she does reconstitute her frustration into designing her introductions, which give her pleasure and power. With her introduction of the Smith Conservatory, her structure of affect shifts from a student caught in the banking system of education to a student who can bring fresh and fun material to her essays. In this way, she gains affective agency in combatting the frustrated and less confident feelings that this academic essay and her audience (the professor) provoke. However, this is not affective agency that can lead to social action because the goal is to entertain rather than change.

The prior process becomes very meaningful to Rachel because she can imagine herself as a writer with mastery rather than a student writer missing facts and authority. Rachel is also very “proud” of this writing sample on the environment because she feels she successfully combats the “dryness” of academic writing, and overcomes the negative characteristics that she sees in academic writing. She exceeds her student writer position, and in doing so she resists the demands of the essay form. She is not only writing to entertain the professor, but writing to challenge the primacy of analysis over creativity.

S: What sample are you most proud of?

R: ...Sample number six I am also proud of, again, I really like the introduction because I feel like...I did a pretty good job of tying together this very vivid afternoon with some kind of dry texts and dry history and facts and political and economic arguments. So I was proud of the fact that I was able to take this afternoon and tie that into the paper itself and the argument I was trying to make. So, yeah I'm proud of that one too.

Rachel is *proud* of her ability to recreate her experience at Smith in the context of this paper that her professor has “pushed” her to analyze more and more. She does not take pride in her analysis, though, but rather her agency to combine her creative writing with the rest of it. Here, she does not mention her professor as an audience to be entertained, but her own sense of merit in her abilities as a creative writer who can also deal with the

demands of the essay form. But while she challenges analysis as the measure of her paper, she does not gain full affective agency with the essay. Her introduction does not seem to influence her lack of confidence and frustration with the rest of her paper.

Like I feel like with number three, the animal cognition paper, I felt like, even though I didn't continue with the imagery of the introduction, I kept the same voice I felt like, stuck with it. And I was able to bring in evidence and support it without losing that kind of voice and that kind of flow, *whereas a lot of papers, like my environmental history one, I feel like I'll have a voice in the beginning and then I go into arguments and how to support them and then, and so a lot of times I feel like I lose that voice, that makes the paper strong and powerful.* So, in the future when and if I do writing that's. For example, if I, I've thought about doing travel journalism, things like that, I think keeping a creative style is definitely something that is effective in communicating your ideas. So I think, I definitely will try to keep that style in my future writing.

Rachel has trouble locating a voice in writing for social action in her environmental essay in an academic context because of the way she constructs the essay form, the audience, her ethos, and what she can and cannot do in academic writing. While she can entertain her professor, she cannot change him through this introduction. And while this paper shows Rachel's resistance, the paper does not accomplish social action. Her purpose to encourage attention to environmental injustice is lost, as is her argument that oppression will continue as long as people see gain and not loss.

Rachel is aware of a confining, student writing situation and looks to her future to truly challenge it – by leaving it behind. Rachel understands her creative voice as “strong and powerful,” but she generally loses this voice on the other side of the binary that she creates. Instead of trying to make her voice, or ethos, stronger in her academic papers in general, Rachel turns to her future. Just as Mary envisioned her future as a human rights lawyer outside of the student writer position, Rachel imagines a potential future as a creative writer in a variety of areas. Both students exceed their student positionality with

these visions and rhetorical decisions. Rachel's idea to do travel journalism and also nature writing stands in opposition to the academic writing she has done. She upholds creative writing as a strength with which one can communicate ideas, and she shifts it to a place of primacy rather than an attempt to mitigate her frustration with academic writing.

Conclusion

For Mary and Rachel, academic writing does not lead to social action because they are not able to engage in the full, affective writing process. They both have particular perceptions of what academic writing means and the processes that research papers entail that limits their abilities to make rhetorical choices and reconstitute their emotions of compassion and care in their papers to foster social action. Different aspects of their perceptions of the academic rhetorical situation limit them in a number of ways; their beliefs and assumptions prevent them from a sense of authority and choice, which in turn stymies affective agency. First, Rachel's understanding of creative writing and wild life journalism as outside of academic discourse is surprising, as the university offers courses in these areas. Mary's belief that a research paper must entail a lengthy history before accomplishing her purpose, and Rachel's belief in the primacy of facts are also not academic givens. It is a problem that both activists do not know the choices that are open to them in the academy and in academic writing; in this context, their attitudes forestall their ability to position themselves as writers for social action. Mary should have been able to stay with her specific purpose and craft a suitable audience, while Rachel may have benefitted from taking a creative writing course.

As compositionists, we should question where these understandings arose from in order to think more about opening up an affective writing process for social action in our classrooms. While teachers tend to reject the banking method of education, it seems that this method has rubbed off on student activists' attitudes. For example, there is the issue of expertise that limits rhetorical choices and agency. Rachel believes that professors intrinsically know more than she does, and her academic writing should reflect the fact that she has read and understood the material, and can "say back." While Mary does not believe that professors always know more, she does bristle at "obligated writing" to also demonstrate her engagement in the course. At the same time, she believes that professors do not find her as credible a writer as she believes she is. Therefore, Rachel questions her own ability to "say back" correctly, while Mary feels the academic system is designed to question her credibility. This may signal a problem with student activists' sense of authorship in the academy, where both students feel limited by their positions (Horner; Stygall). While they can change their structures of affect (to imagined human rights lawyer or entertainer), neither finds a suitable ethos that will allow her to write for social action.

Both Mary and Rachel also have particular images of academic writing that have negative connotations. Mary sees the academic textual production process as an "obligated form of writing" that she cannot fully enjoy because it comes from such a place, and she sees teachers and students exchanging papers as a way to keep the academy going, but perhaps not much more than that. Meanwhile, Rachel sees academic writing as structured, scrutinized, and boring. Those are terms she thinks of when she hears those two words. As compositionists, we should ask ourselves how and why these perceptions

come to pass. While we try to engage students with writing in a variety of ways, for a variety of purposes and audiences, and in a variety of genres that are meaningful to them, Mary and Rachel show that there is a gap in the academy for some students. If the student activists cannot imagine an academic rhetorical situation that grants them authority and agency, they will not get very far in an affective writing process if rhetorical choices are so limited by “academic writing” itself. This points to a question for teachers to consider: in encouraging students to write for social action, how can we make “academic writing” their own, and not an institution’s imposition?

In contrast to the rhetorical situations in Chapter 4, the academic rhetorical situation that Mary and Rachel perceive provides fewer choices that forestall affective agency. For example, they do not feel the authority to intervene in the rhetorical situation in a way that makes social action possible, in part because they *feel* they lack power and knowledge. Both students feel that they do not know enough for “real” advocacy work through academic writing. This places them in a position of lack, rather than ability to accomplish change goals. While Elizabeth and Lisa felt that they did indeed know enough to write for social action, it seems that Mary and Rachel’s positioning of themselves in academic writing contexts detracts from their sense of authority. Bruce Horner speaks to a notion of a binary within the academy that affects students in academic contexts. He notes that “Authorship” represents one half of the binary while “student writer” represents the other part (Horner 506). The pairs of focal students seem to bear this out, as those who write outside of the classroom demonstrate a much higher sense of mastery than those within it. It may be that as students are positioned in contrast to authors, they feel less authority, and thus less agency. The institutionalization of the

Author/student binary may also affect the choices that Mary and Rachel can make in their academic writing in terms of knowledge claims and the construction of ethos.

Further, Mary and Rachel do not see the choice to make the kinds of affective shifts that Elizabeth and Lisa engaged in during their affective writing process for social action. While Elizabeth was able to shift the affective structure of her audience (to ignorant) in order to write to change the audience, Rachel cannot see such an opening because her audience is always/already a static professor. Rachel cannot imagine shifting this image of the professor to someone who could really learn or take action based on her writing. Likewise, as Lisa was able to shift to a directive political agent, Mary could not shift to a position that she felt she could truly fill. Thus, Elizabeth and Lisa had many more choices open to them, while Mary and Rachel remain in a more static writing position. While this situation arises from the way the focal pair sees the academic rhetorical situation as limiting, it may also arise from their positions as students. Gail Stygall points out that teachers may position students in a space of lack through the effects of the “author function” even with their best efforts to prevent this from happening – for example, graduate students who exchanged letters with basic writing students still positioned them in an inferior space, even as they were trying to learn how to avoid it (335; 337). It may be that the academic rhetorical situation itself works to position students like Mary and Rachel, despite the best efforts of their teachers.

CHAPTER 6

CAN STUDENTS WRITE FOR SOCIAL ACTION IN OUR CLASSROOMS?

I began my study of student activism and writing for social action with very few assumptions in mind in terms of my research. However, I am struck by the deep insights of the focal students and their articulations of their overlapping positions as activists and students. As I spoke with these students, I discovered that their activism and writing for social action does not start and stop with STAND issues, but rather branches into a myriad of areas. This helps me to see that an activist positionality is more than membership in a single activist group, and it also aides my understanding of social action writing to challenge multiple forms of oppression, including campus racism and misogyny. I find that these activist students had varied exigencies for writing both inside and outside of the classroom, but what links their social action texts is an affective writing process. As Williams writes of the affective elements of practical consciousness, he points to “not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought” (132). This conception is vital to an affective writing process with the overlapping qualities of emotion and intellect that shape the writing process holistically. In addition to emotion, though, the focal students teach me that affect fuels their textual production from start to finish.

Summary of Findings

One key finding is the elasticity of student activist positionality in relation to academic studies that works to both break binaries and reinforce them in specific contexts. This finding highlights the importance of the specific, rhetorical situation as enhancing or limiting the agency of the student in writing for social action purposes *and*

envisioning such a process. First, one might assume that activist and academic spheres stay fairly separate for activist students in STAND due to the specificity of STAND work against genocide. One could also assume that majors such as Wildlife Conservation would have little to do with activism. However, the focal students show this binary to be false. The focal students use both academic writing and studies to enhance their activism, while they also use their activist work to make decisions about coursework and writing. Students feel they have a significant amount of agency: they are able to carve political spaces in the classroom, branch out into other activist areas, and connect different activist issues; they are also able to use their writing in one sphere to enhance their work in the other. This shows that activist students have a strong measure of agency to construct their activist positionalities in the academy; they are able to consider, reflect, and utilize their positions in different spheres to enhance their activism. They do not see academic coursework as limiting or contradicting their own work. Student activists may have more power in their work and writing than one might guess, and they represent political work in the classroom as a political space. According to the focal students, academic studies co-construct their activist lens and platforms for action; however, an academic/activist binary appears when students move into a student position in relation to writing specific texts for social action in classrooms. The false binary and the real binary indicate that positionality as constructed through specific rhetorical situations is key for students to occupy a space where they can feel success in writing for social action purposes. My finding, then, is the importance of the rhetorical situation that students both construct and are positioned within, leading to the difference between their sense of control at the macro level (of making choices about activism and academic studies) versus the micro

level of producing a particular essay for a particular class. The rhetorical situation of students' macro positions, then, seems to allow students more agency, while their micro positions with texts seem to indicate that this student position is more limiting. However, when students are able to craft a rhetorical situation, they again exhibit agency. When students can position themselves in a space to make choices in relation to their activism, it allows for a feeling of more control, authority, and affective agency where they are better able to accomplish their social action goals.

In Chapter 1, I describe the ways in which activist groups and movements circulate affect for social justice. I posit that we might see a similar process with student activist writers. My research bears this hypothesis out: activist students do circulate affect throughout their social action writing process. In fact, I find that an affective writing process makes writing for social action possible. First, writing for social action outside of the classroom is most successful because students can work through the entire affective process and in doing so, can control the rhetorical situation in response to the emotional spark that first motivates them to write. Based on the circulation of affect in the writing process, Elizabeth and Lisa make rhetorical choices in relation to topic, genre, ethos, and audience as they write for social action, and they have the agency to do so as they control the process of reconstituting emotion. Further, the two activists are able to shift the structures of affect both of themselves and their audiences in order to imagine their goal of social change. Their social action texts are not possible without the ability to shift affective structures and reconstitute emotions: for example, Elizabeth's audience would have remained malicious, and thus unable to be educated. If Lisa had written an angry diatribe against the student, she would not have arrived at a social action

text. These brief examples are meant to represent the importance of students having access to the entire affective process and to not be limited by the rhetorical situation. The complex and overlapping affective processes are what make social action possible because they open the rhetorical situation to affective agency in the belief that one's words can be made to work for justice.

In combination with my findings on how the students overlap activism and academics in the macro sense, and how students engage in an affective writing process in the micro sense, I turn back to the importance of the rhetorical situation in supplying or limiting both agency and affective agency in writing for social action. My third finding points to the limits of an affective writing process for social action in an academic classroom. Classroom writing seems to stymie students' ability to produce socially active texts, as I discuss in Chapter 5. Perceptions and attitudes towards the academic rhetorical situation disallow students the agency to make the necessary choices that can foster an affective reconstitution. For example, Rachel's sense of lack leads her away from making an argument against environmental degradation, and Mary does not feel that she knows enough to truly advocate. These activist students' sense of mastery is much more limited than Elizabeth and Lisa. It may be that because Elizabeth and Lisa control most aspects of their rhetorical situation, they feel mastery and are not put in a student/author binary position. They may feel less power in the academic rhetorical situation where they feel little control over genre, audience, ethos, and the ability to shift affective structures to write for social action. Here, their positioning within the academic situation seems to imply these limits are intrinsic to the classroom.

Thus, the different rhetorical positioning of these students seems to be a primary factor, but if so, does that mean that the classroom is fundamentally unable to support social action writing?

Implications: Ingredients for Social Action Writing

I argue that we can learn from both sets of focal students in encouraging our students to write for social action. The contrast between the activist student experience points us towards changes we can make in our classrooms, rather than an inability to support socially active texts. Because the interplay of affect and the rhetorical situation is so important for affective agency, we can look to the ingredients that move us closer to writing that affords a sense of such agency. While the focal students show that classroom writing represents a rhetorical situation where it is more difficult for them to intervene, the parameters of this context can be changed based on what we have learned from Elizabeth and Lisa, and how their affective experience contrasts with that of Mary and Rachel. In doing so, we can look to Rachel's experience with an academic assignment on Animal Cognition; while she is not writing for social action, her experience shows how an academic rhetorical situation can bring us closer to an affective writing process for social action in the classroom.

Rachel describes a particular exception to her attitudes and experience with academic writing that represents a different kind of rhetorical situation where she deeply enjoys the writing process. She feels that this is her best essay overall. The academic rhetorical situation for her "Animal Cognition" paper more closely resonates with that of Elizabeth and Lisa (see Chapter 4), who write successfully for social action. While Rachel is not writing for social action with her Animal Cognition piece, it is worth

examining how this academic rhetorical situation gives rise to feelings of fascination and satisfaction that do shift Rachel's affective structure to a sense of more mastery as a researcher and writer. First, the rhetorical situation offers freedom for Rachel: "I really liked the assignment in that we could really write about whatever we wanted," and she has "always been intrigued" by animal cognition and it is "a topic I cared about being an animal lover." This gives her a sense of excitement that is compounded by an emotional "spark" – she sees a show on elephant intelligence and she is deeply fascinated by it; this motivates her to pick animal cognition so that she can understand the elephants in a larger context. This "spark" also motivates Elizabeth and Lisa to write for social action. Third, she has a deep seated interest and passion for the topic that arises more directly from her experiences with animals over her life. She writes fifteen pages instead of ten because "it was just a topic I was REALLY interested in." She also feels more comfort because the teacher did not know as much as she did; in this case, she does not have to worry about "saying the wrong thing" to an expert and can focus on research and writing where she does not feel as much of a lack or deficit – she does not need expertise to write this paper. Similarly, Elizabeth and Lisa do not worry about mistaken knowledge claims or having to write in a particular style or genre – they pick them. Likewise, Rachel also picks her genre in contrast to the assigned genres in other academic rhetorical situations: "just the research I really found interesting and the fact that I was able to write it pretty much any way I wanted. It didn't have to be scientific or analytical; it just was whatever I wanted really." Also, she has ample time to conduct the research, so she is not under the same sort of pressure as other assignments with less time. These factors, such as picking a topic based on a spark, deep affective investments, a passionate interest in the topic, and

the agency to choose a genre all add to Rachel's sense of mastery, enjoyment, and pride in the end result. In this context, Rachel feels more control over her knowledge and voice, but still refrains from making her own argument because she tells me that she does not know enough. Like the environmental degradation paper, this animal cognition paper is in many ways an extended literature review; however, Rachel's voice is clearer and she does make a subtle argument about how we switch cognitive criteria once we find animals who meet it.

Rachel's experience indicates that we can modify the classroom to create rhetorical situations that allow for students to engage in an affective writing process. While Rachel does not write for social action, the contrast between her environmental degradation paper and her animal cognition paper is striking. What is also striking is her shift in the academic rhetorical situation that has many facets in common with the students who are able to write for social action. This contrast and commonality can lead us to identify ingredients for social change writing in the classroom because it seems we are able to shift the academic rhetorical situation to support this type of writing. Shifting the rhetorical situation to a place where students can feel mastery is one important step, and the focal students show that this is a complicated process, but a feasible one. The main goal of my research is to see how we might learn from the experiences of such activist students – who both write for social change outside the classroom and desire to do so within it, and I believe the affective writing experiences of the focal students point to a number of implications for the writing classroom. First, they illustrate how an affective writing process is vital to the construction of a rhetorical situation that makes social action possible. A key component to the affective writing process is the emotional

contact that inspires students to start writing and to invest in their writing and take time with it. As the case study students repeatedly say, emotional investment is crucial to writing a strong academic paper because it often keeps you focused and inspires working harder in the writing process. Thus, the first implication is the kind of work we do throughout the process and through topic selection to allow students to find topics in which they have such an investment as a first step.

Just as important, if not more, is the centrality of constructing a rhetorical situation that can position an audience capable to change. Social action writing without such a context both makes it impossible, as no change can be imagined, and forestalls the needed affective reconstitution that moves one from emotional reaction to affective agency. The second implication I take from the research, then, is the importance of helping students craft rhetorical situations, consider audiences, and provide circulation routes (if possible) to public audiences and/or campus audiences. Students will have a sense of affective agency in part if they know that they can appeal to an audience to enhance or change its feelings, beliefs, and/or behaviors.

Relatedly, crafting such rhetorical situations can help students construct a more complex ethos that arises from his or her position as a student, but also material life experience and roles outside of the classroom. Mary feels barred from a position as a STAND activist leader, scholar, and an empathic working-class student, but this does not have to be the case, as Elizabeth is able to use her multiple positions to construct a compelling ethos. Writing teachers can work with students to pull from their affective investments in the production of an ethos that represents the position they desire, including elements of imagined ones – such as human rights lawyer.

Compositionists can construct the conditions that allow for social action writing; from Rachel's experience, we can see that a teacher can encourage students to choose topics that they care deeply about, but also feel an emotional "spark" in relation to the topic. Teachers can also open up genres for students and discuss options like an Open Letter or Rant. In the classroom, students are part of the academic situation; however, such a situation does not need to be rigid, but can be flexible for students in a way that allows for affective agency. Students do not need to be stuck in a position that detracts from their mastery and authority; rather than try to convince students that they know more than they think (as teachers did with Mary and Rachel), teachers should design rhetorical situations that support student knowledge and affect.

While we can try to create rhetorical situations that allow for students to write for social action, we can also take a step back and reconceptualize the classroom as a site for students to craft rhetorical situations that suit their purposes. Writing for social action depends on affect and emotion, and we cannot force students to feel strongly about a topic or issue of their choice (although it may be that they will have strong feelings if they are able to choose a topic). One might even suggest that in assigning students to write a social action text we are styming their affective agency because they have to do the assignment ("obligated writing"). With that said, opening the classroom for students to choose to write for social action is one important step. Second, giving students control of crafting the rhetorical situation and making choices will put them in a position that mirrors Elizabeth and Lisa's situation more. If we reconceive of the classroom as a political space, we support many necessary ingredients for social action writing because we will not position students in a reductive space, but encourage them to take their many

positions and material experiences in the world into account. Rather than prescribing a particular situation to give rise to social action writing, it may be time for teachers to step back to support the conditions necessary for writing for social action: open the rhetorical situation and (somewhat) challenge “obligated writing” by also supporting students to write for social action *in the ways they see fit*.

In the context of my research, I try to construct rhetorical situations in my classroom that give students freedom in their rhetorical decisions. I will discuss a few concrete aspects of the affective writing process for social action that I have worked with in my teaching. Following my commitment to and research on writing for social action, I assign students an essay on writing for social change. The students have control over the rhetorical situation within the parameters of the theme (which is quite broad) and writing an essay. However, I believe this still represents “obligated writing” and may not automatically challenge the student/teacher binary. I try to mitigate these factors by encouraging students to write on a topic that they deeply care about, and open the rhetorical situation by supporting their material experience and affective investments in topic selection and in the writing process. In trying to deconstruct the student/teacher binary, I stress that we are all learning from each other in this process.

As student work on their essays, they construct aspects of the rhetorical situation, such as ethos that arises from life experience and affective investments. One preliminary way to help students conceptualize and construct ethos can start with brainstorming about the student’s connections to his or her topic (such as experience, affective investments, and positionality). For example, one student constructs a complex ethos that allows him to discuss police misconduct through his altercation with a police officer, his position as a

teenager, his sense of deep injustice, and his affective investment in holding the police force accountable. He works from his multiple positions and experiences to give rise to his writing choices and ethos. In this rhetorical context, he reconstitutes his emotion from anger to educator – his audience is the police force and he wants them to learn from their mistakes. This reconstitution, though, is not automatic, and I can think further about how to work with students to accomplish this change. I also ask students to create new rhetorical situations based on their finished social change papers, where they transform the paper into a new project where they control genre, ethos, and audience, for example (and can change these rhetorical aspects from their social change papers). With the new rhetorical situation, I hope students feel more agency to make more choices, especially in relation to genre and rhetorical decisions that interact with their chosen genre. For example, the prior student in particular chose to create a website, and crafted his own rhetorical situation with enthusiasm.

However, I have struggled more with “audience” in these students’ essays and projects. As part of the essay assignment for social change, I ask each student to identify a specific audience that they feel they can move or change in some way. This audience may change over the course of student writing, and we do activities to think about writing to the specific audience over the process as well. This parameter is intended to produce an audience that the student would like to change through his or her writing. However, I now find a few problems with this strategy. First, in general, many students resist a specific audience because they want to write to everyone. In light of my research, I may be styming the students if I make them choose to write to a *particular* audience – an important rhetorical decision that I dictate. I now feel I need to rethink my denial of a

“general audience,” because I believe that it may limit students’ social change goals and agency in crafting the rhetorical situation. Second, when students construct their own rhetorical situations for their projects and then present them to our class (the presentation is a requirement), they may not be circulating their projects to the audience they want to change. Often, I have found that students create a rhetorical situation that includes the campus as an audience, and in this way, our class acts as a part of such an audience. We do represent a politicized space in the classroom. However, I could work with students to circulate their essays or projects in a much more proactive way that could support their affective agency more fully.

Teachers can also step forward in working with students on an affective writing process that may be different than other writing processes expected in the academy. In addition to crafting a rhetorical situation that opens the classroom as a site for writing for social action, teachers can talk with students about an affective writing process for social action that would help students to consider and reflect upon their writing process along the way and in the finished text; for example, we could discuss ways to shift affective structures in writing for change, as well as moving through a process of reconstituting emotions to create social action texts. While Elizabeth and Rachel may not be cognizant of such terms, the prior areas can be discussed in the classroom as students write and/or reflect after their social action writing. Likewise, before, during, and after the affective writing process, teachers could work with students to examine their material life experience and affective investments, and how these aspects interact with their rhetorical choices.

Future Research

Examining writing for social action has been the cornerstone to this project. In studying activist students, I find that an affective writing process is key to this kind of writing. Looking to the future, I wonder if this type of textual production is limited to social change work, or whether an affective writing process of some kind is also a part of how students write in other areas. I question: do students ever write without feelings or affect? In my own classroom, I have observed some students writing with passion and achieving affective agency in writing social action texts, but have I seen something similar in texts of a different kind? For example, what process might students work through in a “personal essay?” While emotions are generally present, how does this genre relate to an affective writing process? Is the nature of the affective writing process I study very different than what happens when students write in other genres and rhetorical situations? These are questions I plan to pursue.

I am also interested in community based on my findings. STAND actively circulates affect in different ways to recruit new students and keep members. How affect is used to create community has implications for the writing classroom as well: how does a teacher circulate affect in a classroom and for what purposes? While many have written on this general theme, I would want to look more closely in light of my STAND findings. For example, these are categories that I coded and could be helpful to think about in relation to the construction of the classroom community. Student circulated affect to construct and reinforce the following areas

1. *Common Ground and camaraderie: Peers who also care: a place for the students on campus (“not alone” theme)*

2. *Inviting, nice, comfortable, accepting group*
3. *Forming friendships*
4. *An important and comfortable learning environment*

These features may have implications for pedagogy and classroom practices. Teachers can think about building community around issues that students care about. Students feel alienated when others don't seem to care about their ideas, and the classroom is a wonderful place for sharing ideas. Further, this sense of circulating affect to construct an inviting, comfortable, and accepting group can aid teachers in not only community, but attendance and student motivation, for example. These factors can shape pedagogy to create camaraderie that supports students' writing and sense of comfort in writing. STAND intentionally creates bonds in the group, which indicates that this circulation is not a "natural" process, but a controllable one. This highlights my question as to the implications of these findings for the teacher and classroom.

APPENDIX A

MARY'S PAPER IN FULL

Mary Sample #5

May 4, 2010

Professor Christin Glodek

Final Paper

The Rwanda Genocide and the State of Rwanda Today

The Rwandan genocide was a devastating, shocking, and eye opening catastrophe in central Africa. At the time it was occurring there were conflicting views of the causes and actual happenings. Those differing opinions still exist now in overviews of the genocide. Regardless of the various views, there was a genocide; it was devastating and no matter the truth, more should have been done to prevent it and then stop it during its early stages. Those facts at hand being the truth, the question is what was the cause and how did the genocide arise? More importantly one must wonder what condition is the state of Rwanda in today.

To understand the happenings of the genocide one must understand the history behind it all. The people of Rwanda lived peacefully before the colonialists came into the picture. The first explorers to reach Rwanda were surprised that the population was divided into three groups, the Hutu, the Tutsi, and the Twa. Even more surprising was that other than being divided by name there were linguistically and culturally the same, and have frequently been wrongly referred to as the tribes of Rwanda. "Initial commentary labeled Rwanda an extreme case of a common African problem, namely

“Tribalism”(Straus 17)” However they did not have any of the same characteristics as tribes, they lived side by side and even married within each other.

But on the other hand they were not the same and they were not equal each with their own physical look and role in the society. The Twa were very tiny and were either hunter and gathers, or they were there to serve the high-ranking personalities and the king. Hutu was the group that made up the majority of the population, with a standard Bantu physical look, these were the peasants that cultivated the soil. Then there were the Tutsi whom were something different altogether. They were extremely tall and thin who display sharp angular features in their face. The Tutsi were cattle herders and were of a different racial stock than the local peasants (Rwandan Crisis 5).

Overall these groups lived among one another calmly. There were no major conflicts and very little violence that was documented. Of course this was all before the colonialists came. The colonialist came into the picture and viewed the Rwandan society as they thought it was. While at this time there was people in power and different class levels, but there was less of a struggle between the different groups. “European rule did not invent the terms Hutu and Tutsi, colonial intervention changed what the categories meant and how they mattered (Straus 20).” Before the Europeans arrived there was some differentiation and there was a slow shift from Hutu power positions to having the Tutsi in those positions. Even though this was happening they were still living peacefully among one another. The society was not experiencing much conflict within its own country. The Rwandan people were okay with the different groups within the country, and respected the places each group held in society. It was the Europeans that saw issue with this.

When the Europeans came in and took control they were not quite as content with the different groups' roles in society. They decided whom they thought was superior. The Europeans picked a group in which they considered to be of higher class order and deserving of more respect. "The Europeans were quite smitten with the Tutsi, whom they saw as definitely too fine to be 'negroes'. Since they were not only physically different from the Hutu but also socially superior" (Rwandan Crisis 6).

The colonialist, Germans at first, came in and instituted their ideas of power and control. They pushed forward and directly instated "the pre-colonial transformation towards more centralization, annexation of the Hutu principalities and increase in Tutsi chiefly power (Rwandan Crisis 25)." The Germans saw the society as it needed a change. So they continued the work from before in a gradual sense of change. This was different from the changes later colonialist would implement.

As the Belgians came in a little later they were less on the gradual side of things. They had an even larger influence on the shift of power. They decided to completely shift the power from one group to another, not for lack of one groups ability to rule, but rather for preference to one group over another. They decided that nearly all the positions of power should be held primarily by the Tutsi and almost none of the positions to be held by the Hutu.

Already existing chiefly positions that Hutus held were being taken away and given to Tutsis. This led to an almost total dominance of power and chiefly positions being held by the Tutsi and by the end of the Belgian rule in Rwanda (1959) there were only 2 Hutu chiefs and 10 Hutu sub-chiefs to the Tutsi 43 and 549 (Rwandan Crisis 26-27). Regardless of the fact that the group got along and intermingled and intermarried

this was bound to cause conflict. If one man is fired to put another man in his place that has no more experience or ability to be in that position, tensions will flair.

Not only were the Tutsi put into power and had control, they were also strongly backed by the Belgian government. So with their power and the support of the Belgians they were able to slowly modify traditional contractual rights and land rights to the advantage of the Tutsi (Rwanda Crisis 28). This was pushing for the Hutu to be uncomfortable with their country. The Europeans set up the country that was previously lining together and coexisting, and turned it into a country where whether you are a Hutu or a Tutsi became extremely important.

As the Belgian rule left the country tensions began to rise to an unhealthy level. In 1959 the country experience the peasant class, mainly Hutu common people, started a revolt. What seemed to be an act of violence by the peasants that would soon disappear did not. It turned into an organized revolution aiming to overthrow the monarchy and put Hutu back into the positions of power. After communal elections in 1960 the Hutu were back in power, with Hutu in power at the local level as well as the higher authoritative figures. Basically we saw an all Hutu government by the time the republic was instated in 1962 and the revolution was basically over. The Hutu claimed their independence form colonial rule in the name of the previously oppressed Hutu majority. "Democracy meant Hutu rule (Straus 22)." This government was one that persecuted the Tutsi. Many Tutsi were killed or pushed into neighboring lands. (Rwanda Crisis 41-53) (Straus 21-22)

Now that the Hutu were in power the Tutsi were the ones feeling suppressed. With thousands who had to flee to bordering countries, and those still in the country the

Tutsi were not happy with the new establishment of power. “The categories “Hutu” and “Tutsi” are not stable. Colonialism changed their meaning (from status and economic activity to race), institutionalized and stabilized categories that had been more fluid (through identity cards and race measurements), and intensified the connection between race and power (Straus 22).” The Tutsi continued to be held back from advancement. This is an obvious problem; one can see that this will lead to another issue of violence later on. But the problem is that no one is willing to face that fact until it is too late. Did the Hutu government really believe that the Tutsi refugees would just sit back and take what was done to them? Definitely not. But that brings about the question of what really caused the genocide to happen.

There are various explanations that have been brought up about the reasons for the genocide. For example Allison Des Forges said “This genocide resulted from the deliberate choice of modern elite to foster hatred and fear to keep itself in power.” (Des Forges 1-3). Where both Des Forges and Rene’ Lemarchand stated that an important factor was that Rwanda is one of the most densely populated nations on the continent (Des Forges 31), (Lemarchand 11). That is only a few opinions with many more out there. It is difficult to say one is true and the other false. This leads one to believe the assumption that there were many factors contributing to the start and continuation of the genocide. As Rene’ Lemarchand said “the country’s geography and demographic profile and its culture and history are critical elements in any attempt to make sense of the brutality visited upon the people of Rwanda.”(Lemarchand 10). Through this reading and many others it is clear to see that there are many aspects to the start and persistence of the genocide.

Within these many suggestions of the causes there is belief that a major part was that to be blamed upon the European colonialists. But one cannot just pass the blame on to the colonialist, they did not inflict the genocide, however they did force all to identify with a particular class. Before colonial rule however there was an ancient tribal distinction that may or may not be a contributing factor to the rise of a genocide. On the other hand these were not hatreds and they were taken to a new level with the colonialists.

Before the colonialist it was a factor of life if someone was a Hutu, a Tutsi, or a Twa, however it was simply a minute ethnic distinction. Different people would be in power at different times and there was never a huge amount of hatred towards either group from one another. “It was the colonial state that insisted on each individual carrying an identity card specifying his or her ethnic background” and therefore made something that was just as simple as an American being Portuguese and the other being French, into something more complex (Lemarchand 14). The ethnic background in Rwanda was not a major issue it was as simple as the mixing nationalities here in the U.S., but the colonialist changed that all around. The colonialist changed a balance of power with chiefs and sub chiefs to their own way (Lemarchand 14).

The colonialists put the Tutsi in power. Be mindful that this decision was based off the fact that the Tutsi looked more like the Europeans, which in the European mindset put them closer to the European ability (Des Forges 31-47). They supported the Tutsi minority for decades, right up until the 1950s. That is when the colonial state when through a shift in which they increased and extended Hutu educational facilities. This was like newspaper to the fire of the Hutu Revolution (Lemarchand 14). Soon the Hutu

were in power after the states independence and freedom from colonial rule. Des Forges would agree in saying “By assuring a Tutsi monopoly of power, the Belgians set the stage for future conflict in Rwanda.” Lemarchand was right in stating that the colonialist played a major role in setting the stage for ethnic and class tension (Des Forges 31-47).

One question to ask ourselves is as follows; is the ancient tribal hatred an accurate portrayal of what happened? Personally the opinions from this side would be yes, but not on hatred just distinction. However one should be lenient with the word ancient. It was more recent that it became a major distinction, and that was due to the Europeans. So yes the tribal differences are an accurate description, and yes the Hutu did take out anger from previous colonial years. But before colonial intervention in the government there were minute problems among the groups. Before colonial rule there was no overlaying desire to exterminate an entire ethnic group. Tribal hatred is a good description for a good reason, especially since the hatred was instilled by the government. The ethnic groups as citizens alone were not the only factors in the genocide. As Porttier would say on page 5 of his book, the killings were systematic and they were planned out. They were not ancient tribal warfare. Which can be an agreeable statement, those who were doing the killing may believe that they were defending the Hutu way, but mostly it was the governments mindset brought about by the colonialist power. Which leads to wonder what involvement the government actually had within the whole genocide (Porttier 5).

The Rwandan state played a part in the genocide. Questions arise as to how much of a role they actually played and in what ways. Back in October of 1991 when the RPF (the Tutsi rebel group) was just becoming a major factor Habyarimana decided to make a potential attack from them work as an advantage for the Hutu. He knew he had an

“eroding base of power” and hoped that the fear and pressure coming from the RPF would help him to unite Rwanda under him again. It seemed to him to be the best way to find a common interest in most Rwandans, and to use it to his best advantaged to rebuild the country that’s support for him had collapsed (Des Forges 31-47).

With this idea in mind it was perfect when the RPF started to attack. Of course they were still a ways away from the capital after the advances they had made into the state of Rwanda. On the night of October 4, heavy fire shook the capital for a few hours and 13,000 people were imprisoned. Most onlookers from the national community believed the attack, however should they have? No, Habyarimana staged the whole event, and he did so in order to give him credible grounds to pass the blame on to the Tutsi for being supportive of the enemy. Soon allowing him to instate certain security measures, that may or may not have helped in the future of the genocide. “The government instituted a series of security measures, including requiring citizens to participate in patrols at night and to man barriers to monitor traffic on roads and paths (Des Forges 31-47). This of course was a tactic used during the height of the genocide as well to help with killings. The government involvement did not stop there.

In 1992 the Chief of staff, Colonel Deogratias Nsabimana sent a top secret memorandum to be distributed among his commanders and other military members. The document roughly said that the identification of the enemy was Tutsi inside and outside the country, and categorized them all as extremist and nostalgic for power (Des Forges 31-47). Basically the document gave the government and military a “good reason” to condemn the Tutsi and any Hutu who did not support him. Another memorandum was sent out specifically stating that the enemy could be found in certain characterizations.

These being Tutsi refugees, members of the Ugandan army, Tutsi in the country, Hutu dissatisfied with the regime in power, and other small groups which made it easy to pass the blame off (Des Forges 31-47). This involvement of course was before the leader was killed. Proving that the government was using Tutsi as a scapegoat for the reasons they had little support.

In the early part of Johan Pottier's book *Re-Imaging Rwanda* it is also stated that the government was setting the Tutsi up to take the blame for political falters back some years before the main slaughter (Porttier 30). The government kept pushing the idea that they needed to protect themselves from the RPF, and 150,000 guns were made available among the various cells. There was recruiting of unemployed youth to form death squads called the Interahamwe whom were exclusively Hutu. They were part of a master plan to exterminate all Tutsi opposition of Habyarimana (Porttier 4). "The killings were planned and systematic." (Porttier 5). This proves that the government put it in the mindset of other Hutu that the Tutsi were the enemy. It was something one could try and blame on tribal hatred, but tribal hatred was just a window of opportunity for the government.

From these various analyses it has become apparent that the genocide occurred because people were told one thing and believed it. The people originally doing the killing were the member of the FAR army. However they started to recruited all men young and old who could carry a weapon to participate (Sibomana 58). Through Sibomana's writing it leads one to believe that a large portion of the men carrying out the massacre were brain washed into doing so. For years the government said the Tutsi was the enemy and the Tutsi were going to attack. So when the leader Habyriamana was

killed it was a catalyst. The people felt as though they were defending their country and its honor. "The militiamen were laughing, drunk on beer or under the influence of narcotics. For them it was a celebration: they killed and looted without restraint." (Sibomana 63-64). This shows how right they thought it was to be killing off an entire ethnic group. It just proves that the genocide was a long time coming with brainwashing and planning leading to a devastating end.

Alongside the government's involvement, class relations and poverty played a role in rural areas such as Kirinda and Biguhu to bring about fighting. In Kirinda there was controversy between the peasants and the elites. This was due to the belief and somewhat truth behind the elites working to make a profit for themselves instead of helping the peasants with survival (Longman 18). So the elite decided to turn the public's eye off them and on to local Tutsi. It is not proven but has been said that just a week after the massacre started in Kigali the elite started a mass killing of the Tutsi in Kirinda (Longman 19). Also in Biguhu one can see how these factors changed the mindset of the people. There was more poverty in this area, but the distinction between the peasants and the elite was less defined. In this area the massacre started from the outside and they came in and killed not only Tutsi but all Hutu that had been working with them (Longman 20). In this area it was because Hutu and Tutsi were closely involved in governmental decision, and the attackers wanted the Hutu to retake control.

The Rwandan genocide is still a recent part of history. There is still more to be determined as to why, where, and how it all started and by whom. There are ideas out there and good ones. It turns out to be a buildup of various factors affecting a densely populated and newly independent state which led itself through conflict. The genocide

was devastating and the blame could be passed off many different ways. However the fact is, there was a genocide and there needs to be efforts to understand what happened in order to prevent any further tensions in the state of Rwanda.

It is not enough to forget about Rwanda now that the genocide is over. Yes many people can say that they have heard of the genocide and know that the country is no longer experiencing this tragedy. But we cannot stop there. We must remember that this genocide did not just come out of nowhere. It was a long amount of time with many event building up to the start of this massacre. We must remember that Rwanda is not going to just be fixed because the genocide ended. We need to be prepared, because we were not there in time to help during the genocide.

The genocide represents a time of need in Rwandan history, and it represents a time in which a cry for help was not answered. Neither the United States nor the United Nations intervened in an effort to stop the mass killings that were going on at the time. One wonders why two able, powerful, and wise administrations did nothing as civilians were murdered and a country fell apart from violence. Was it because these two administrations were unaware of the nature and scale of these killings? No, they were well aware, both the U.S. and the U.N. knew what was going on and still chose to take no action.

Not knowing is what the U.S. and the U.N. claims as their reason as to why they did not in fact take action in Rwanda. They claim that they were unaware of the actual condition of Rwanda. The problem being that there is so much confusion even now to the catalyst of the genocide and the true beginning and planning behind it. If there is confusion now and conflicting views one can just imagine how easy it was to stay away.

Not that one should it was just that these two administrations reliable excuses for what most would considered turning their backs on murders.

In terms of the U.N. their big excuse was what they called the crisis. At the time when help was needed to stop the massacres in Rwanda it was not being called Genocide. If it is not considered genocide then usually the U.N. won't take action. The crisis in Rwandan was never declared genocide until after the fact, when of course it was too late for action from the U.N. to mean anything. There are specific guidelines to classifying something as genocide. In order to fit those guidelines and call it genocide the U.N. would have had to admit to knowing more. So it broke down the fact that without them admitting that they knew more it was not genocide. Without it being genocide there could be no action from the U.N. Of course not being genocide was not the only thing stopping aid. They knew what was going on but used various excuses to get out of helping.

Another excuse commonly used was again involved in what they were calling the issue in Rwanda. The problem with the Rwandan genocide was that it was portrayed by the Hutu as a civil war, and people believed what they heard. While people believed that, it was easy for the U.N. to refuse aid considering it would not want to be involved what they were calling a violent civil war. Of course the Hutu wanted to convince people that it was just a civil war. It made it easy on everyone, the Hutu could continue massacring the Tutsi, and the foreign nations would not have to get involved. The only problem was that the foreign nations knew that it was not just a violent civil war, yet they continued to act naïve and continued to ignore the problems.

What it all boils down to is that there was no gain in helping the state of Rwanda. There was nothing the U.S. or the U.N. could gain from stepping in and or taking action. To the average person (at least to me) it seems like the fact that people were being murdered should be enough, but it was not for them. Since there was no obligation to help they did not. No one called it genocide, no one acted like they knew anything, so no one bothered to help. Since there was little to nothing for them to gain from helping they let another country fall apart and let thousands of people die.

Before and during the genocide Rwandans had a rough time to go through, and many Rwandans and members of the international community were glad to see the genocide end. Who would not be glad to see it end? However the end of the genocide was not “the end” of anything in terms of troubles.

Directly following and for many years afterward Rwanda and it surrounding areas would be at controversy. “The country had been crushed; it was in a state of shock. One million dead, two million displaced and as many refugees, a state of moral, psychological and material ruin,(Sibomana 138)” Suffering continued to occur for the people attempting to simply survive in Rwanda and the surrounding areas after the tragedy. These person’s lives will never be the same. Rwanda made a complete change, and only for the worse in setting itself up to fall apart. Refugee’s lived difficult, miserable lives in camps and on the run for many years. This was all due to the short genocide that only lasted a few months. The international community praises in the fact that the massacre is over. What these people do not realize is that the controversy, and the suffering are far from over in any way.

It seemed wonderful; the genocide was over, however Rwanda was not at peace. The RPF took control and started to rule without any input from the people of Rwanda. Sibomana makes a point in saying “Rwandans have been handed over from one administration to another without ever acquiring the right to think for themselves.” and he goes on to state “ This is extremely dangerous(Sibomana 139).” There needs to be a government instated in Rwanda for the survival of the country. The only problem is that doing so in such a quick manner sets the country up for trouble. It seems impossible to not have a government so there would need to be a quick change of power. No one is denying that fact, but the problem is that it is done so in a hasty manner. The control and government of Rwanda now came into power because the Hutu’s were pushed out of power, so the country is nowhere near finding peace.

Sibomana goes on to say how today the country is not moving towards any form of reconciliation. He makes it clear to see that the people of Rwanda need to learn to coexist. “If we don’t learn to live together now, we will never manage to do so when demographic pressure makes our economic situation even more difficult (Sibomana 139).” He goes on to tell how this is a large amount of distrust in terms of the RPF. The people still in Rwandan, not refugee camps, do not know what to think of the new leaders of their country. There are even some peasants that would rather side with the genocidaries because of past abuse from the RPF. Sibomana makes it clear to see that this is a dangerous development (Sibomana 141).

Of course distrust is not the only problem the current state of Rwanda has. Rwanda is currently one of the poorest countries. Survivors of the genocide have lost hope and their will to live (Sibomana 144). The country is riddled with injured survivors

and rape victims left from the genocide. There is AIDS and disease spread throughout the country and orphaned children as a result of the many rapes. The country is a disaster and it is only getting worse. Of course this is only the start of the problems the genocide has caused in Rwanda. There are millions upon millions of refugees in the surrounding areas of Rwanda.

Refugees were not treated well, and that is an understatement. There was already controversy with the refugee camps in April of 1995 because the RPF believed there was more money in terms of aid going to the camps rather than the government (Pottier 40). One major problem is with the refugees in Congo/Zaire. The problem on the ground were more troublesome than they seemed in Congo (Pottier 132). Due to the state of violence occurring with the war in Congo, there leaves little hope for the large numbers of refugees crammed into camps within the country.

Refugees fled to Zaire/Congo in order to lead a better life than they thought possible in Rwanda. For the Hutu the doubling back to Zaire was a confirmation to Hutu hardliners that the situation in Rwanda was still insecure (Pottier 133). First off some of the major problems were crammed camps and little food and water to go around. This caused parents to no longer be able to provide for their children. In turn pushing children to obtain their own identity cards and acquire food for themselves and be on their own at a very young age. Also in the camps children were learning about sex too early and young women were engaging in prostitution just to get by. With prostitution and sex at young ages there was the spread of disease and young mothers (Umatesi 83).

All of these problems of course were just internal to the camps, but there was other problems. One of the main problems with these camps were the refugees being pushed out and pillaged. There are various cases in which the refugees were pushed out. For example at one point Zairian soldiers were arresting refugees in the street and forcing them into trucks to bring them to the Rwandan border (Umatesi 89). While young thugs were robbing refugee that were hiding near the camps in the countryside (Umatesi 92). However the worst was when the refugees were forced to run out of the camps and from troops to stay alive.

From a personal account Umatesi tells how she faught for her life. "I left Bukavu at a run in a hail of bullets and shells. By good luck I had seventy American Dollars with me (Umatesi 108)." Through Umatesi's personal accounts one can see how truly awful the refugee camps were in Zaire/Congo. Refugees were forced to run for their lives from troops. Umatesi shares many instances of her personal struggle. In example there was no time to find food, and she accounts a time where they stopped to make a soup and were forced to pour it out in order to continue running from Zairian soldiers (Umatesi 164).

Through Pottier and Umatesi it is clear to see that the refugee camps were more trouble than they were worth. Not to say that they were not needed, but the way in which they were run, but these countries made them seem useless. Many of the people in these camps were there to try and make it after the genocide. The people that fled Rwanda and headed to these camps were looking for a place to feel safe and be able to live in peace. It turned out that some of them may have been better off staying in Rwanda. The conditions of the camps left no hope for refugees.

One can see with what has been previously mentioned in the above paragraphs proves to be problematic for the state of Rwanda. Looking back on the history of Rwanda, one can see more than a few similarities between the state of Rwanda before the genocide and the state Rwanda is moving towards now. It is almost unbelievably similar. In the history one group was in power and another group threw them out of power and pushed the radicals out of the country. We see that again, and we see people in surrounding areas struggling to survive. This is causing conflicts among the people.

It needs to be a huge concern in the international community, that Rwanda is not a stable country as of now. Until there is reconciliation and peace between the Hutu and Tutsi the state is at risk. There are thousands of displaced people in surrounding countries, and these people should be able to return to their homes without concern of the countries falling in massacre again. The international community should keep a close eye on Rwanda, without intervening until necessary. But regardless of not intervening they need to be aware of what is going on, so that if another violent situation were to arise, they would be ready to take actions to stop it before it becomes another genocide. Rwanda needs to be given a fair chance to rebuild itself, but also needs the international support to be secure.

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APPENDIX B

RACHEL'S PAPER IN FULL

(Untitled)

Bustling in from the chilling afternoon, a shiver left my body as I stepped into the lobby of Smith College's Lyman Conservatory. I smiled "hello" to the young woman behind the front desk as I made my way past her and through the doors that I hoped would lead me in the right direction. I was on a mission: in search of the Latin American exhibit, I was running on a tight schedule against the parking meter and had a handful of questions whose answers hid behind damp leaves.

I was dazzled by what I found behind the double doors. Beyond a narrow passage of sweet rose bushes, I found myself in the "cold temperate" room, and the contrast from the bleak world just beyond the windows made me catch my breath. Flowers tugged at my jacket as I made my way along the paths and rare trees reached for the glass ceiling above. Signs impaling the rich earth told of the origins of these plants, from their time of "discovery" and by whom, to their various uses for man and other points of interest. With my watch ticking, I took in the grand scheme of the exhibits with scanning eyes and a scrutinizing mind – with answers to find, I had to get in, get the goods, and get out before the my meter flashed red.

Bending down to read a hidden sign in the "warm temperate" room, a sudden flutter by my ear startled me. Looking up, I saw a dead leaf had fallen from a tree above me and floated past me ear, mimicking an exotic butterfly or other jungle dweller that I wouldn't be surprised to encounter in this room. Examining the tree from which the leaf had departed, I realized that in my haste, I hadn't really noticed much of my surroundings at

all. Had the leaf not startled me from my investigation, I probably would not have looked so closely at the tree right before my eyes. What else would I have missed had I been so solely focused on finding my answers? Would I only have noticed the fragrant flower petals because they were in my way?

In his examination of Latin America's environmental history, With Broadax and Firebrand, Warren **Dean** asks his audience what it takes for us to pay attention. Can we have development of the magnitude that Latin America experienced, can there be discoveries of resources and an economic boom, can we industrialize a land as ecologically rich as Latin America – can any of this happen without a sense of loss?

I feel that there will never be a sense of loss as long as there is some sort of gain in return. **Dean** states that the construction of Latin American landscapes “reflect[s] the prevailing ideologies of economic development” (9). As long as societies maintain these ideologies and nurture a system of “single-minded pursuit of profits,” there will always be a gain for the society as a whole that will overshadow the losses accrued in the process of obtaining that gain (**McCook** 6). The gains in this region of the world are, as **McCook** points out, the results of economic growth and development, and the resulting numerous losses are easily seen in the ravaged remains of the natural landscape. To understand how the pursuit of economic development has and still does influence the Latin American landscape, one should examine the key components of the system – a system that must, as **Dean** argues, undergo an entire change if there is to be an attempt to salvage what remains of the natural environment. By inspecting the views towards, and values placed upon, the land by the state, powerful corporations, and the people themselves, one can

begin to understand how a nation's economic aspirations will always be a commanding force.

Resource-hungry corporations have undoubtedly been one of the most powerful and destructive forces present in Latin America. Backed by the state, their pursuit of increasing production fueled a narrow, radically simplified vision of the natural world that had unforeseen consequences (**Scott 2**). Efforts to increase profits required an intensive reconstruction of the landscape that involved beating the earth into submission and converting native inhabitants into slaves. Anything that stood outside of the brackets of what was required to maximize profits was to be done away with in the cheapest and fastest way possible; as **Tucker** notes in his book *Insatiable Appetite*, corporations made no attempts at increasing efficiency of growing and harvesting. Weed removal and prevention included the heavy use of pesticides, and attempts at thwarting pest and disease epidemics involved intense and ineffective pesticide application. Monocropping and other simplified agricultural methods were employed, and ultimately, land and crops were suited to machinery – plots were altered and chosen for characteristics that made harvesting and distribution easier (**Scott**). Several prominent authors such as **Marquardt and Tucker** discuss the effects of corporations' rapid acquisition of land: the extent and pace of land clearance became a corporate political war (**Tucker**). As soil quality degraded, pests and disease spread, and the overall condition of the land deteriorated, new property had to be snatched up, thus creating a race for more and more land. In examining the role of corporations in the early years of agricultural development in Latin America, **Dean** states that “the issue is the effectiveness and efficiency with which scarce resources are employed, the skill that goes into their transformation, and the validity of

the uses to which they are put” (116). He goes on to discuss the rationality and irrationality of actions and decisions made during this time period, however, and argues that while in retrospect, corporations (and the state, as will be addressed later) may have acted irrationally, at the time, decisions were made to the best of people’s abilities given their knowledge at the time. But ultimately, as McCook argues, “economic rationality trumped agricultural rationality” (23).

“The exchange of state patrimony for the short term gain of private interests is a constantly repeated theme,” says **Dean** (276). The quest for a powerful export-led economy created a change in the functioning of the government: Brazil, for example, experienced a state led industrialization in which the state was out to help corporations by giving regulations of responsibilities to the companies. **Tucker** argues that the problems that developed were economic, government, and social policy issues. Policies of landscape organization and landownership, for example, were highly destructive to the environment. The use of cadastral maps allowed grids and lines to change how people related to the land, and that which seemed rational on paper was anything *but* rational on the ground. These maps prohibited the sharing of resources, and while they made things legible, they did so at the expense of everything that matters: the ecology of the land became invisible, as the maps ignored things like pitches in land, plant distributions, aquifers, and more (**Scott**). The state’s view of the environment being little more than an economic conquest was clearly illustrated in a symbolic committed upon the Portuguese’ lading in the New World: the first thing they did was cut down a tree (**Dean 41**). The Crown also quickly established a system heavily dependent upon slavery, illustrating the government’s view of this new land as nothing more that a basket of resources, human

and land alike. The establishment of slavery only furthered the devastation of the environment: “a society based on forced labor was heedless of its environment,” says Dean, commenting that strangers to the land are unattached to it and thus act carelessly (56). Similarly, the relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines demonstrates the effects of being removed from the land in question: the U.S. rarely managed the land so they remained one step removed from the ecological damage they made possible (**Tucker 28**). Similar to the major corporations present in Latin America, the governments benefited greatly from the commercial value of the natural environment, but they also greatly valued scientific research, botanical research in particular. The Crown had little to no interest in food production; what they were after was medicine. Bioprospectors combed the jungles of the New World in search of valuable plant extracts that could be brought back to Europe (**Lopez**). Botanical research helped contribute to the growth of scientific knowledge within the empire and greatly contributed to its prestige; it also contributed to nationalizing nature by emphasizing “useful” plants, such as export crops (**McCook 28**).

The values and attitudes of the people of Latin American towards the land have been yet another driving force in the destruction of the natural environment. As was mentioned earlier, foreigners had little care for the land upon which they worked – “the uprooted ex-Jamaican workers had no organic connection to the land,” says Tucker (**50**). Thus the environment suffered from a lack of care and attention, and in addition to feeling no personal ties to the land, slaves had no incentive to work efficiently, which resulted in the neglect of soil fertility (Tucker 85). Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, had strong relations with the land upon which they have always relied and which was

now being stolen and exploited. They also viewed the land with a utilitarian eye, as much of their survival depended on the availability and quality of the natural resources. Because of this, the relationship between indigenous peoples and conservationists was a strained one. Conservationists were often outsiders and foreigners whose lives were removed from the lands they aimed to protect, and more often than not they ignored the needs of the indigenous peoples who lived off the land (Dean, 335-37). Examining the roles of native people and those of non-native foreigners illustrates very similar but also very different relationships towards the natural landscape. While both groups relied on the land and its resources, indigenous peoples did not rape and plunder the earth like the Portuguese did. Additionally, as Dean points out, indigenous peoples were a storehouse of information about the natural world, and thus the loss of these peoples meant loss of valuable knowledge (66). The relationship between Latin Americans and the values they placed upon their land greatly affected the landscape we see today.

Economic development will always be a driving force within society, and when that society is one supported by an export economy, natural resources will remain under threat. Today, even areas that have been designated as protected reserves are constantly violated and exploited. Such environmental abuses are often unknown, however, as Dean illustrates in his conclusion of With Broadax and Firebrand – when interviewing college students, he reveals that many students don't even know what the Atlantic Forest is, let alone its history of destruction and the negative implications past actions and decisions have had on today's landscape. This, Dean argues, is why the forest is disappearing; "Brazilians feel oblivious to environmental destruction," (363). What it takes to put an end to the loss and destruction of the natural environment is for people to notice, first and

foremost. But even then, even when the deterioration of the landscape is undeniable, there must be a change in the key components of the system for any change to occur. As long as corporations, the state, and the people value the land only as a replenishing commodity, there will continue to be a widespread sense of loss.

The emphasis on economic and utilitarian value of the land extends beyond Latin America, however, suggesting that a change in values must be a global trend.

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