

IDEOLOGY AND THE MAP

Toward a Postmodern Visual Design Practice

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We were doctoral students at the University of Michigan where the Bartons worked for many years (Ben retired in 1993; Lisa retired in 2002). As we progress in our academic and professional careers, we have relied on their work to form our own approaches to the visual field. Here we present the united theoretical and practical influences that this article has had on our own work and, we hope, on the field in general.

For me, this article crystallizes the Bartons' work. Having begun with "Toward a Rhetoric of Visuals for the Computer Era" and continued on through their other articles, I find "Ideology and the Map" a theoretical culmination of their work. Foremost in my mind is the way in which the Bartons interweave postmodern theorists like de Certeau and Foucault into their work, a move that implicitly makes connections to the broader English field. I am greatly influenced by their focus on ideology and have progressed in my own research from a standpoint that accepts visuals as they are to one that explicitly espouses the ideologies that impact a visual's design and reception.

When the Bartons argue for the need to create a unity in a visual that eschews the grand synthesis and instead allows for "the difficult unity of inclusion" (249), I find comfort in my own confusion. Like the Bartons, I now make the choice to destabilize meanings in a visual to find out why one works and another does not. They help me to understand the ways in which a visual is not a stand-alone communication device; it is a product resulting from a complex set of standpoints, situations, and receptions.

Lee Brasseur

I see the Bartons' work pushing the tenets of context, purpose, composer, audience, and medium to their logical (I dare not say natural!) conclusion. This conclusion is to strip the "objective" veneer from graphic displays of information and politicize the map and the territory. The Bartons critique the subtexts of visual communications and call for change. As a first step, they offer alternate ways to represent maps—as "collages" and "palimpsests."

Today, having researched and designed interactive data visualizations for the past five years, I am struck by the Bartons' prescience in their proposed alternatives. Many of the changes the Bartons call for are now afforded by hypermedia, dynamically linked diverse graphics, interactive visual querying, adaptable perceptual encoding, and user-configured plots (e.g., enabling

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juxtaposed differing views, layering, and role-based perspectives). Yet we have not realized the Bartons' vision. As Johndan Johnson-Eilola often comments, people tend to rearticulate the old in the new, despite the "political" promise of the new.

To me, these unmet promises suggest a need to expand our focus from the one the Bartons laid out in 1993. They focused on alternate graphic representations; today we should focus equally on interactivity—on giving users the right control over visual displays of information. Different specialties in visualization development groups vie for a prime say in deciding how interactivity is designed. These choices involve a politics of designing, not just design. Technical communicators must assume roles as major players in defining criteria for interactivity design choices and base them on observations of users in-context. Conducting the politics of visual design on many fronts still centers on Lisa and Ben Barton's goal of visual rhetoric enhancing democratic practices, inclusionary meanings, and strategic consultative communications.

Barbara Mirel

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INTRODUCTION

In their multidisciplinary review of trends in visual representation, Barton and Barton (1989) document a shift in the literature from a positivistic view of visuals as autonomous structures to a view of visuals as embodiments of cultural and disciplinary conventions. Attacks on positivism in the literature on visual representation are, in fact, now endoxal. It is clearly time for the theoretical science of the visual signifier to move on. But move on to what? Information designer Sless (1986) offers an attractive suggestion: He issues a call to go beyond the study of visuals as embodiments of cultural conventions to the study of the ideologies that, in turn, inevitably underlie those conventions. This chapter attempts to answer that call. It elects, moreover, to look at ideology in a *critical* sense, adopting the rationale of social theorist Giddens (1987):

We can only develop a viable notion of ideology if we either treat the notion as a "neutral" concept; or alternatively if we link it specifically with exploitative domination. The first tactic seems to me

essentially uninteresting, because then "ideology" is no different from general descriptive terms such as "idea-system" or "symbolic system." I therefore prefer to adopt the second sense. According to such a standpoint, modes of signification are ideological when they are pressed in the service of sectional interests via the use of power. (p. 270)

Thus a critical study of the ideology of visuals focuses on the ways in which visual signification serves to sustain relations of domination. Moreover, as Giddens notes, ideology performs such service with a Janus face—it privileges or legitimates certain meaning systems but at the same time dissimulates the fact of such privileging. This double nature of ideology provides the impetus for many of those interested in cultural criticism. For Marxist critic S. Hall (1982), for example, the ideological model of power entails

a way of representing the order of things which endow[s] its limiting perspectives with that natural or divine inevitability which makes them appear universal, natural and coterminous with "reality" itself. This movement—towards the

winning of a universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world which are partial and particular, and towards the grounding of these particular constructions in the taken-for-grantedness of "the real"—is indeed the characteristic and defining mechanism of "the ideological." (p. 65)

THE MAP AS QUINTESENTIALLY IDEOLOGICAL

The double nature of ideology in the advertising image has been widely recognized, but the very recognition of its dissimulative nature is its own undoing. For to do its work, ideology depends on its dissimulative nature not being recognized. In this sense, advertising is *not* ideological, for the interpretive tradition is not on its side in its claims of innocence (W. Mitchell, 1987, p. 4). What form is quintessentially ideological in this sense? What form, in other words, is traditionally viewed as realistically presenting a "neutral" view of reality, as innocent of a productive, meaning-creative practice? Huck Finn makes a persuasive case for the *map*:

"If we was going so fast we ought to be past Illinois, oughtn't we?"

"Certainly."

"Well, we ain't."

"What's the reason we ain't?"

"I know by the color. We're right over Illinois yet. And you can see for yourself that Indiana ain't in sight."

"I wonder what's the matter with you, Huck. You know by the *color*?"

"Yes, of course I do."

"What's the color got to do with it?"

"It's got everything to do with it. Illinois is green, Indiana is pink. You show me any pink down here, if you can. No, sir; it's green."

"Indiana *pink*? Why, what a lie!"

"It ain't no lie; I've seen it on the map, and it's pink." (Twain, 1924, p. 23)

Huck clearly reads the map as a factual rather than a semiological system: that Indiana is pink "ain't no lie." For Huck, the color of the state as represented in the map and the color of the state itself must coin-

cide, for the signifier and the signified have a *natural* rather than a *conventional* relationship.

In Borgès's (1972) justly celebrated parable of mapping practice in a mythical empire, *scale* rather than *color* discrepancy between signifier (a map of the empire) and signified (the empire itself) is perceived intolerantly by the College of Cartographers:

In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point. (p. 141)

The Imperial Cartographers clearly share Huck's innocent notion of the map as a factual rather than a semiological system. But the map, as Borgès's continuation of the parable dramatizes, is not coterminous with the reality, and attempts to make or conceive it so are doomed to failure. Unfortunately for the professional cartographers, it remained for succeeding, lay generations to "deconstruct" the innocence of such maps—and on other than a conceptual level at that:

Less attentive to the Study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to judge a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigors of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar; in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography. (Borgès, 1972, p. 141)

In short, "the map is *not* the territory" (Hayakawa, 1941, p. 31); yet because it is perceived as such so readily, it is for Borgès the paradigm of the sign. And although we don't believe that Indiana is pink, and would expect cartographic representations of the empire to be radically scaled, our everyday discourse nevertheless reflects our acceptance of Twain's and Borgès's fictional recognitions of the map as the paradigm of the sign. Semiotician Marin (1980) frames the point like this: "The map . . . is exemplarily the

sign and the idea one has of it: thus one says spontaneously and unhesitatingly . . . of a map of Italy "That's Italy'" (p. 47; authors' translation). Or, one might add, of a map of Indiana "That's Indiana" and of a map of the empire "That's the empire." Most signs are treated less paradigmatically: Thus we spontaneously say "That's a diagram of the circuit" and not "That's the circuit."

Still, to establish the map as a quintessentially ideological genre does not necessarily validate its centrality in an article written by and targeted to information designers. That is, our institutional and intellectual affiliations are not with departments of geography, and we probably do not feel threatened by the fact that the failure of Borgès's College of Cartographers to deconstruct the map led to the demise of their discipline. We may, then, find warrant in the perceived general importance of the map to contemporary information designers, however unconcerned they may be with ideological issues. Bertin (1983), for example, focuses on the map in his seminal work *Semiology of Graphics*. Note also Tufte's (1990) privileging of the map as an exemplary genre for those interested in the visual display of information: "Standards of excellence for information design are set by *high quality maps*" (p. 35). And elsewhere: "The most extensive data maps, such as the cancer atlas and the count of the galaxies, place millions of bits of information on a single page before our eyes. No other method for the display of statistical information is so powerful" (Tufte, 1983, p. 26).

Let us turn to an analysis of the relation between ideology and power in mapping practices—specifically to an analysis of a discursive mode that, in Barthes's (1970) term, *naturalizes* and universalizes a set of practices so that the phenomenon represented appears to be described rather than constructed (p. 129). We first denaturalize the natural by foregrounding the occulted or naturalized ideological component of map discourse; in other words, we access the *doxa*, which theorist Bourdieu (1977) refers to as "the universe of the undiscussed" (p. 168). We then propose a new visual design practice exploiting avant-garde representational devices for denaturalizing the represented phenomenon, e.g., the collage with its emphasis on the heterogeneity and discontinuity of representational format. Although we take

the map as paradigmatic, our discussion of a post-modern visual design practice systematically includes noncartographic examples to suggest more fully the relevance of our analysis to other visual genres. Ultimately, the map in particular and, by implication, visual representations in general are seen as complicit with social-control mechanisms inextricably linked to power and authority.

DENATURALIZATION OF THE NATURAL

How do we, as critics, denaturalize the natural? The notion of *hegemony*, derived from the Italian Marxist Gramsci (1971), suggests a promising methodology. According to Marxist literary critic Williams (1973), hegemony—a process by which certain definitions of reality attain dominance in a society, rather than a conspiracy on the part of the ruling group and a passive compliance by the dominated ones—operates in a dual mode: Thus in the hegemonic process "certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded, . . . reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture" (p. 9). Hence we look first at what is emphasized and then at what is excluded or repressed, at what we will term the *rules of inclusion* and then at the *rules of exclusion* underlying the dual mode in which ideology operates.

RULES OF INCLUSION

Rules of inclusion determine whether something is mapped, what aspects of a thing are mapped, and what representational strategies and devices are used to map those aspects. These rules amount to either explicit or implicit, overt or covert, claims to power. An explicit or overt link between power and ideology in mapping can be seen in the indispensability of maps for the conduct of war. According to Emerson (1984): "Making war meant making maps. The National Geographic Society made them in unprecedented numbers, nearly twenty million in 1941–1942" (p. 7). We are not surprised, therefore, to learn from the president of the American Cartographic So-

ty that the circulation of maps increased ten-fold in the United States after the wholesale movement of American troops into the region (National Broadcasting Company, 1990). The Americans were not alone in map-making endeavors: shortly after the Iraqis invaded Kuwait in 1990, their Ministry of Information reportedly published a flurry of Middle East maps (Colvin, 1990, p. 32).

Such overt linkages of maps to power require literal denaturalization and, therefore, are of only passing concern in this chapter. Of more interest here is the fact that the Iraqi maps feature Kuwait as the 19th province of Iraq, as it was before the British split it off after World War I (Colvin, 1990, p. 32). For the explicit agenda, the "real uses of most maps," as Wood and Fels (1986) point out, are "to possess and to claim, to legitimate and to name" (p. 72) or, as in the case of the Iraqi maps, to repossess and to reclaim. Giddens (1979) would agree: For him, the legitimization of dominant interests is one of the primary modes in which ideology operates and, therefore, one of the chief concerns of the student of ideology (p. 18). The conclusion of Helgerson's (1986) study of the mapping practices of English Renaissance cartographers reflects this perspective: "The choice they made, the choice of what to study and describe, was, however little sense they may have had of its broader applications, a choice of one system of authority, one source of legitimacy, over another" (p. 58). Such choices, moreover, are not confined to inclusions that legitimate or empower the dominant interests; they may also entail inclusions that *disempower* "the other." In her study of 17th-century Dutch mapping practice, Alpers (1983) notes the claim by Dutch cartographers Braun and Hogenberg that human "figures were included in their city views to prevent the Turks—whose religion forbade them to use an image with human figures—from using them for their own military ends" (p. 133).

Rules of inclusion determine, moreover, not only what phenomena are mapped but also which aspects of the included phenomena are represented. Barthes (1970) notes, for example, that the *Hachette World Guide*, dubbed the "*Guide bleu*" by the French, hardly knows the existence of scenery except under the guise of the picturesque, . . . found any time the ground is uneven" (p. 74). In Barthes's *AAA*—

festation of the desire to legitimate "Helvetic-Protestant morality"—a morality linked to difficulty and solitude (p. 74). Consider, too, the issue of inclusionary rules informing the city feature map. The map must isolate key iconic features to symbolize the city, but which ones? A cursory survey of such maps reveals a focus on icons representing cultural, recreational, civic, and commercial sites. For graphic designer Trieb (1980), the rules of inclusion are clear: The feature map focuses only on what is "positive and desirable"; it manifests an "optimist world view" in its attempt to create "a 'booster' image so positive and intriguing that it will draw visitors" (p. 19). One strongly suspects that the bourgeois morality legitimated by the feature map is not the Helvetic-Protestantism legitimated by the *Guide bleu—la difficulté vaincue en solitude*—but rather the more self-indulgent morality of capitalist consumerism. Note, however, that the fundamental ideological mechanism—the legitimization of hegemonic interests—remains the same, although the particular Marxist mediating code linking the formal elements of a map and its "social ground" may differ (Jameson's term, 1981, p. 39).

Rules of inclusion also determine the strategies and formal devices used to symbolize the aspects of phenomena chosen for representation. Of particular interest here are the representational strategies used to legitimate dominant interests. The primary legitimating strategy is based on the hierarchization of space, for space is not perceived isotropically, i.e., as everywhere having equal value (Arnheim, 1974, p. 30). Because space is perceived anisotropically, the placement of visual elements becomes a way of imparting privilege. Positioning to privilege may be effected in various ways. Privileging through *centering* has not escaped notice in the cartographic literature. Thus Mercator's 15th-century mapping system, still a standard, placed the designer's homeland, Germany, at the center of the map—a Eurocentric strategy quickly adopted across the Continent. Harley's (1988a) generalization of this phenomenon is worth citing in full:

A universal feature of early world maps, for ex-

ceived as a "handicapped syndrome" [Edgerton, 1987, p. 26], where a people believe themselves to be divinely appointed to the centre of the universe, can be traced in maps widely separated in time and space, such as those from Mesopotamia with Babylon at its centre, maps of the Chinese universe centred on China, Greek maps centred on Delphi, Islamic maps centred on Mecca, and those Christian world maps in which Jerusalem is placed as the "true" centre of the world. (p. 290)

Privileging can also be effected through placement on *top*, as seen in the hierarchical representation of organizational structure in charts, whereby administratively higher echelons of personnel are located above the rest. According to Mumby (1988), "the concept of hierarchy has been reified to the point where the structuring of organizations is perceived as 'naturally' occurring from the top down" (p. 88). In fact, given the degree of naturalization of this particular mode of positional enhancement, our readers may be surprised to learn that Australian children often place their continent in the top half of their world maps, i.e., the maps are upside-down for residents of the Northern Hemisphere (Simon, 1987, p. 15).

Finally, privileging is also effected in a series through *ordering*, where the first, and to a lesser extent the last, elements gain distinction. Wood (1987) writes, for example, of the effect of map ordering in *Goode's World Atlas* when nation-states are given "the ontogenetically privileged position of coming first—out in front of a long sequence of maps of the physical environment" (p. 31). Wood obligingly appraises the consequences of this privileging in terms of *naturalization*: "It [privileged positioning] imposes the impression that these nation-states have the same developmental status as landforms and climate, as though the nation-states were just as natural and hence *not* implicatable in any different way from the rains and the winds in the fate of man. It naturalizes the state" (p. 31).

Representational hierarchies, however, need not originate in spatial anisotropy; they may also be traced to other bases of visual saliency—a saliency associated with . . .

by the king's engineer, Jacques Gamboust:

The knowledge and science of representation, to demonstrate the truth that its subject declares plainly, flow nonetheless in a social and political hierarchy. The proofs of its "theoretical" truth had to be given, they are the recognizable signs; but the economy of these signs in their disposition on the cartographic plane no longer obeys the rules of the order of geometry and reason but, rather, the norms and values of the order of social and religious tradition. Only the churches and important mansions benefit from natural signs and from the visible rapport they maintain with what they represent. Townhouses and private homes, precisely because they are private and not public, will have the right only to the general and common representation of an arbitrary and institutional sign, the poorest, the most elementary (but maybe, by virtue of this, principal) of geometric elements: the point identically reproduced in bulk. (p. 173)

Here, the saliency observed derives from the fact that bigger things (two-dimensional signs) are more impressive than smaller things (point signs), iconic structures more impressive than noniconic ones, different symbols more impressive than repeated identical ones (Gombrich, 1979, pp. 151–156).

Marin's (1988) analysis suggests, moreover, a second source of rules of inclusion, a source based not, as just discussed, on the norms and values of "the order of social and religious tradition," but rather on those of what he terms "the order of geometry and reason" (p. 173). For rules of inclusion based on the objective order of science may also be viewed as serving sectional—in this case, disciplinary—interests. Wood and Fels (1986) denaturalize the inclusion of conventional scientific visual forms and devices on the map: "It's not just pragmatism or objectivity that dresses the topographic map with reliability diagrams and magnetic error diagrams and multiple referencing grids, or the thematic map with the trappings of F-scaled symbols and psychometrically divided greys. It's the urge to claim the map as a scientific instrument and accrue to it all the mute credibility and faith that this demands" (p. 99). Furthermore, let us . . . just one representational device mentioned

turn our attention, in terms of Gestalt psychology, from the *figure*, already revealed as complicitous, to the *ground*, which may initially seem especially innocent. In fact, to the extent that the background of the map seems particularly innocent, it is an even worthier candidate for denaturalization—and, ultimately, for viewing as complicit with mechanisms linked to power and authority. In the case of the map, the culprits are the rules governing the transformation of a three-dimensional object (e.g., the world) into a two-dimensional representation (e.g., a map of the world). The primary transformational device is the projection scheme chosen—a formal device that inevitably introduces distortion and, as Harley (1988a) notes, “can magnify the political import of an image even when no conscious distortion is intended” (pp. 289–290). Reconsider, in this context, the case of the Mercator world map. The Eurocentric Mercator map manifests clear distortions: For example, Russia, with 22 million km² of area, looks twice the size of Africa, with 30 million km² (Figure 16.1). For Peters (1983), the most vocal critic of the Mercator map, such distortions serve the sectional interests of the white colonialist powers (p. 63).

In any event, whatever projection scheme is chosen for a mapping, the transformation is embodied in the cartographic space as a *grid*, e.g., as lines of equal latitude and longitude, and this too is complicit with mechanisms linked to power and authority. The over-



Figure 16.1. Sketch Illustrating the Distortions of the Mercator Map (Source: Kaiser [1987, p. 13].)

lay of this representational device on the mapping surface has been associated by researchers with diverse ideological notions. Edgerton (1987) observes, for example, that by the time of the Renaissance the Ptolemaic cartographic grid had become a talismanic symbol of Christian authority “expressing nothing less than the will of the Almighty to bring all human beings to the worship of Christ under European cultural domination” (p. 12). Similarly, Konvitz (1990) notes the significance of the regularization imposed by the grid in 18th-century French maps:

Just as national geodetic surveys bearing a minimum of local references lent themselves to an interpretation of space as a fluid medium for the diffusion of power, urban maps which described a street network at the expense of property lines and the architectonic volume of buildings lent themselves to an interpretation of space which emphasized movement and the economic potential of development and growth. (p. 11)

RULES OF EXCLUSION AND REPRESSION

Clearly, our discussion of rules of inclusion serving to legitimate dominant interests demands one of rules of exclusion and repression, for “ideology not only expresses but also represses” (J. Thompson, 1984, p. 85). An inclusionary rule such as “centering of the dominant interest,” for example, entails the marginal-

ization of nondominant interests. For some social critics, the study of exclusions rather than inclusions is, in fact, paramount. As Belsey (1980) notes:

Ideology obscures the real conditions of existence by presenting partial truths. It is a set of omissions, gaps rather than lies, smoothing over contradictions, appearing to provide answers to questions which in reality it evades, and masquerading as coherence in the interests of the social relations generated by and necessary to the reproduction of the existing mode of production. (pp. 57–58)

We turn our focus to that which is excluded, that which is repressed. Once again, we begin with explicit rules of exclusion in mapping practices, because “the map that is not made . . . warrants as much attention as the map that is made” (Monmonier, 1982, p. 99). Indeed, if the very decision to map is fraught with ideological implications, as we have already noted, the same can also be said of the decision *not* to map. In Wood and Fels’s (1986) formulation, if “to map a state is to assert its territorial expression, to leave it off [is] to deny its existence” (p. 64). While unmade maps have understandably received scant attention in the cartographic literature, restrictions on the publication and dissemination of maps have been widely recognized. Harley (1988b) discusses numerous cases: In Renaissance Portugal, for example, pilots faced the death penalty for giving or selling charts to foreigners (p. 61). Harley (1988a) also provides provocative examples of exclusionary practices at the level of cartographic aspects, including the omission of the locations of nuclear waste dumps from official topographical maps of the United States Geological Survey (p. 289; Monmonier, 1991, pp. 118–122).

Synchronic Perspective

As with the explicit inclusionary rules, explicit exclusionary rules require little denaturalization and, similarly, receive only passing attention here. We turn, then, to implicit exclusionary rules. Prime targets for exclusion are members of the nonhegemonic groups, what is commonly referred to in the critical literature as the Other. In organizational terms, this practice is exemplified in the exclusion of the lower echelons of personnel from organization charts; in

class terms, it is exemplified in the exclusion of the lower class from maps. In the latter instance, as Harley (1988b) observes in an analysis of 16th- and 17th-century mapping practices,

social taxonomy seems to have underlain the silence in European cartography about the majority social class. For map makers, their patrons, and their readers, the underclass did not exist and had no geography, still less was it composed of individuals. . . . The peasantry, the landless labourers, or the urban poor had no place in the social hierarchy and, equally, as a cartographically disenfranchised group, they had no right to representation on the map. (p. 68)

Others consider the exclusion of what may be termed *the otherness of the Other*. Trieb (1980), for example, writes of the exclusion of the *living conditions* of the Other: “Feature maps . . . do not show us what is undesirable. We never see slums, buildings in poor condition, suggestions of danger. The feature map is an optimistic world view, an image which focuses on only the positive aspects of urban, and in some instances, rural life” (p. 19). And Marin (1984), of the exclusion of the *production practices* of the Other: “All the productive and transforming activities have been concealed. The city [17th-century Paris] is not to be read as a workplace. It is, rather, the place of virtue and glory, commerce and exchange” (p. 214).

Moreover, strategies of containment may involve not only exclusions but also repressions (Jameson, 1981, p. 213), and frequently what are repressed are individual differences. Differences can be repressed, for instance, through the strategy of *typing*. Thus in the *Guide bleu*, “men exist only as ‘types’”—a strategy Barthes (1970) decries as a “disease of thinking in essences, which is at the bottom of every bourgeois mythology of man (which is why we come across it so often)” (p. 75). One is reminded, in this connection, of the observation by Marxist critic Williams (1960) that “there are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses” (p. 300).¹

Differences can also be repressed by naming practices, for naming—the use of a proper name in particular—is “the ultimate signifier of difference, of uniqueness” (Williamson, 1978, p. 51). Earlier, we viewed the labeling of Kuwait as the 19th province of

Iraq as an inclusionary act in the service of legitimation of the dominant interest; here we view it obversely as an act of repression of the otherness of the Other, for to label Kuwait as Iraqi Province 19 is to place it in a homogeneous series of Iraqi territories, thereby denying its national autonomy. Consider, too, mapping practices associated with the use of exonyms, that is, “the rendition of geographic names in a language not having official stature in the region in question and which differs from the local rendition” (Ormeling, 1980, p. 332; authors’ translation). Thus, for example, international maps designed in the past by French cartographers often designated Germany with the French word *Allemagne* rather than the German *Deutschland* (Figure 16.2). The supplantation of indigenous forms with foreign versions amounts to a repression, by linguistic appropriation, of the otherness of the Other. Recognizing this, the United Nations is committed to suppressing the practice of exonyms on international maps (Ormeling, 1980, p. 333).

Repression of the otherness of the Other also occurs when that Other is situated in a space ethnocentrically conceived to have homogeneous qualities. Consider that one of the first initiatives of the French Revolution “was to devise a rational system of administration through a highly rational and egalitarian division of the French national space into ‘departments’” (Harvey, 1989, p. 255; Figure 16.3). Above all, this reform sought in administrative boundaries “the best model to abolish privilege and eliminate precedent” and thereby to achieve “what had eluded

an absolute monarchy: the uniform application of law and administration throughout the nation” (Kovitz, 1990, p. 5). However, such changes are never arbitrary, natural, or innocent; rather, they imply a new structure of power (Raffestin, 1980, p. 153).

Diachronic Perspective

Strategies of repression operate, moreover, on more than the synchronic level considered so far. They can also operate on the diachronic level because, although the map as a concrete graphic text is an act of enunciation with ideological dimensions, such an act takes place in a social context and the map is thus also both an act of production and an act of reception. The map, in other words, may be considered as *process* rather than *product*, and strategies of repression take the form of the repression of process in map discourse.

Repression of the Act of Production. Consider first the map as act of production: In this case, strategies of repression can take the form of repression “in some stricter Hegelian sense of the persistence of the older repressed content beneath the later formalized surface” (Jameson, 1981, pp. 213–214). De Certeau (1984) analyzes the progressive repression of the act of production in the map:

In the course of the period marked by the birth of modern scientific discourse (i.e., from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century) the map has slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibilities. The first



Figure 16.2. French Map of the Channel Region That Employs Exonyms

medieval maps included only the rectilinear marking out of itineraries (performative indications chiefly concerning pilgrimages), along with the stops one was to make (cities which one was to pass through, spend the night in, pray at, etc.) and distances calculated in hours or in days, that is, in terms of the time it would take to cover them on foot. Each of these maps was a memorandum prescribing actions. . . . Between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the map became more autonomous. . . . it colonizes space; it eliminates little by little the pictorial figurations of the practices that produce it. (pp. 120–121)

Production practices are now inscribed only in highly sedimented, or vestigial, form.² De Certeau speaks of the presence of *narrative* figurations (ships, animals, human figures) that function to indicate the operations underlying the making of the given map. Thus, for example, “the sailing ship painted on the sea indicates the maritime expedition that made it possible to represent the coastlines” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 222). And while de Certeau would prefer a fuller representation of production practices on the map, he clearly appreciates the retention of vestigial forms. However, the presence of even these vestiges of the production act has engendered criticism from other

quarters. Information designer Tufte (1990), for example, who shows little appreciation for the ideological dimension of visual discourse, seemingly would remove all such traces of production practices:

Symbols of Scheiner’s patron and religious order decorate those areas without spots in a hundred such diagrams, a reminder of Jonathan Swift’s indictment of 17th-century cartographers who substituted embellishment for data:

*With savage pictures fill their gaps,
And o’er unhabitable downs,
Place elephants for want of towns*

These symbols, similar to a modern trademark or logotype, may have served as a seal of validation for the readers of 1630. Today they appear somewhat strident, contradicting nature’s rich pattern. (p. 21)

Not surprisingly, the trend toward suppression of the act of production is paralleled in a repression of the *agent* of production. Jacobi and Schiele (1989) note the suppression of the scientist in scientific journals:

Scientists are never portrayed in primary scientific journals, and it is out of the question to publish



Figure 16.3. Map Used by the National Assembly in Planning the Administration of the First French Republic (Source: Archives Nationales de France, Paris.)

photographic portraits. The reason for this is easy to understand: science is enunciated without reference to the enunciator. The author disappears behind an object that seems to speak for itself, or write itself out independently. (p. 750)

The enunciator is equally suppressed in the map. No longer, for example, do we encounter the patron portrait which figured so prominently in the cartographic cartouche of yore. Rarely do we even encounter on the map the name of the designer, much less its prominent placement in the manner of the Minard maps.

Repression of the Act of Reception. Turning from the map as act of production to the map as act of reception, we encounter equally repressive strategies at work. If earlier we viewed the map as the totalization of past itineraries, here we view it as the totalization of all potential itineraries or narrative journeys; the critical question becomes: How is the viewer inscribed in such discourse? or, in Althusserian terms, How is the concrete individual interpellated as subject? In answer, we consider the influential design of the critically acclaimed London Underground Diagram (LUD). There, as in routing diagrams generally, the viewer is interpellated not as a concrete individual with a specific potential itinerary in mind, but rather as a contemplative observer—the master of abstract possibilities—and while she might appear to be empowered through ascription of an Olympian perspective, such empowerment is illusory: As a specific user with concrete travel needs, she is relatively unempowered.

What goals are served by the ascription of such an Olympian perspective? To answer this question, we must consider the representational strategies of the LUD in more detail. These strategies are particularly clear when viewed from a historical perspective. The LUD has as a forebear the underground (subway) map in use in 1924, which faithfully presented geographic relations among the many stations (Figure 16.4). In consequence, the individual lines appear to meander and the portion of the diagram devoted to central London is seriously congested. This map is, moreover, in the nature of a palimpsest in that the origins of the underground as a multiplicity of independent, uncoordinated enterprises and facilities are

readily detected. In contrast, a recent LUD, based on a design by engineering draftsman Beck, is ostensibly a highly schematized representation of the system that sacrifices geographic accuracy in the interests of both readability and consonance with experience (Figure 16.5).

Thus the LUD distorts not only by representing the individual lines with graphical elements oriented either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally but also by comparatively outsizing the central region, with the overall impression of a rather homogeneous structure when judged from apparent separations between stations. Katz (1988) rationalizes this homogenization on the basis that “experientially, the distance between stops is the same: the rapid transit experience is measured in stops not time or distance. . . . The scale adjustment, or shift, in the [LUD] is 10 times—an inch in the country equals ten times the distance in the city” (p. 2). Moreover, in another homogenization, the use of standard symbols to represent stations masks the considerable physical differences among them.

Many critics have lauded the resulting clarity and intelligibility of the LUD (Arnheim, 1974, p. 159; Garland, 1969, p. 79; Katz, 1988, p. 2; Walker, 1979, p. 2). But the clarity is deceptive; it is attained, as we have shown, at the cost of considerable distortion. More important here, however, it is attained at the cost of considerable dissimulation. Dissimulation of what? And dissimulation to what end? In effect, Trieb (1980) answers the first question: “Due to the powerful effect of the underground map, many visitors sense the structure of urban London as the structure of the underground. . . . The diagrammatic structure of the underground map is clear, articulate, and legible—all the things that London as a city is not” (p. 15). For an answer to the second question—dissimulation to what end?—we recall Barthes’s (1970) association of visual discourse with the mythological discourses of the bourgeois class, especially those seen to foster nationalism and the fetishization of commodities (p. 127). Certainly Trieb’s comment would sustain a reinterpretation in terms of nationalism, i.e., the disparity between the clarity of the London of the LUD and the messiness of the actual city can be interpreted as a dissimulative attempt to engender chauvinism in the viewer. For an association

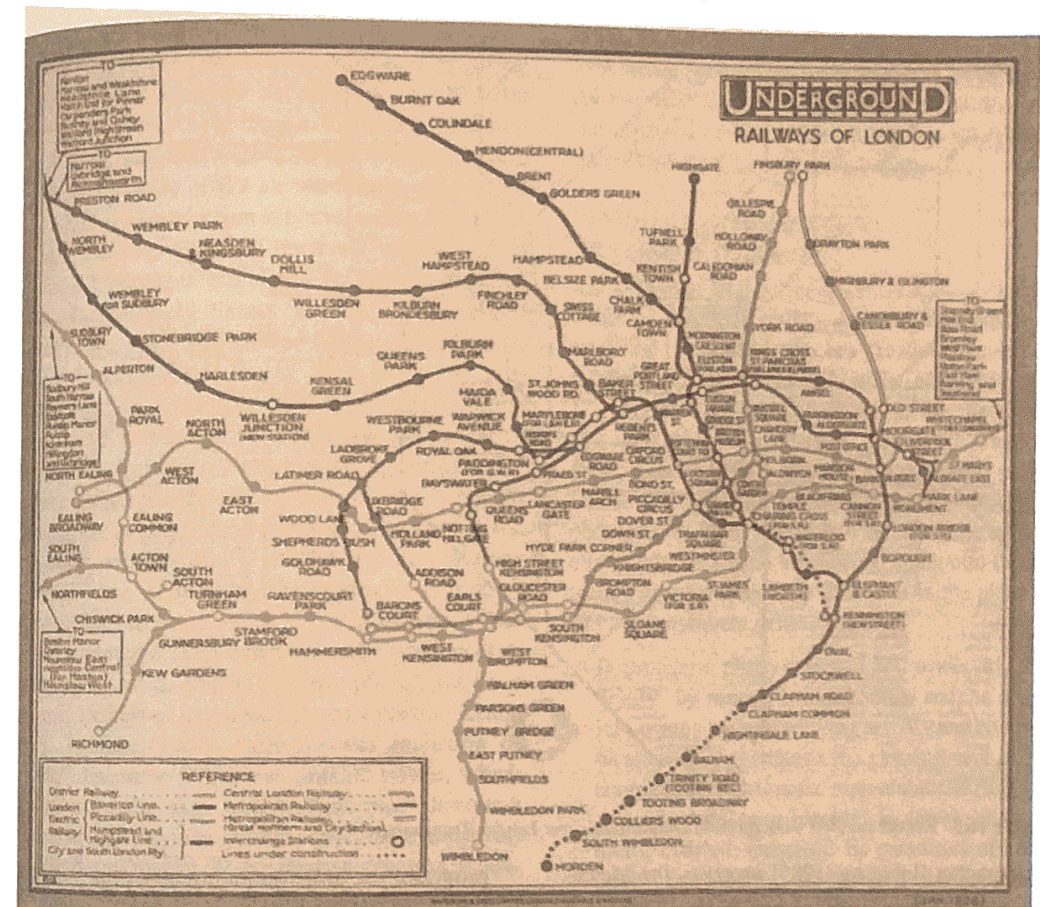


Figure 16.4. London Underground Map of 1924 Showing Stations in Geographically Correct Relations (Source: *London Transport*.)

of the LUD with the “fetishization of commodities,” we turn to Forty’s insightful account relating the act of LUD reception to capitalist consumerism: For Forty (1986), the purposive distortions of the LUD “induced people to undertake journeys they might otherwise have hesitated to make. . . . It is impossible to say to what extent London Transport’s design policies excited people’s appetite for travel, but there seems every reason to believe that by making travel seem easy, effortless and enjoyable, they contributed to the very substantial leisure traffic” (pp. 237–238). In short, claims Forty, the viewer of the LUD is confronted with an “object of desire,” not an “object of

use.” And that viewer, we might add, is correspondingly interpellated as consumer rather than as user.

DENATURALIZING MAPPING PRACTICES

Certainly the deconstructive cast of this chapter so far has served to reveal the complicity of map discourse with ideology, but simply to reveal the radical entanglement of ideology and maps may not be enough. Recall Peters’s (1983) deconstruction of the Mercator map as an expression of the superiority of Caucasians, an interpretation shared generally by the cartographic establishment (p. 63). Unfortunately, as

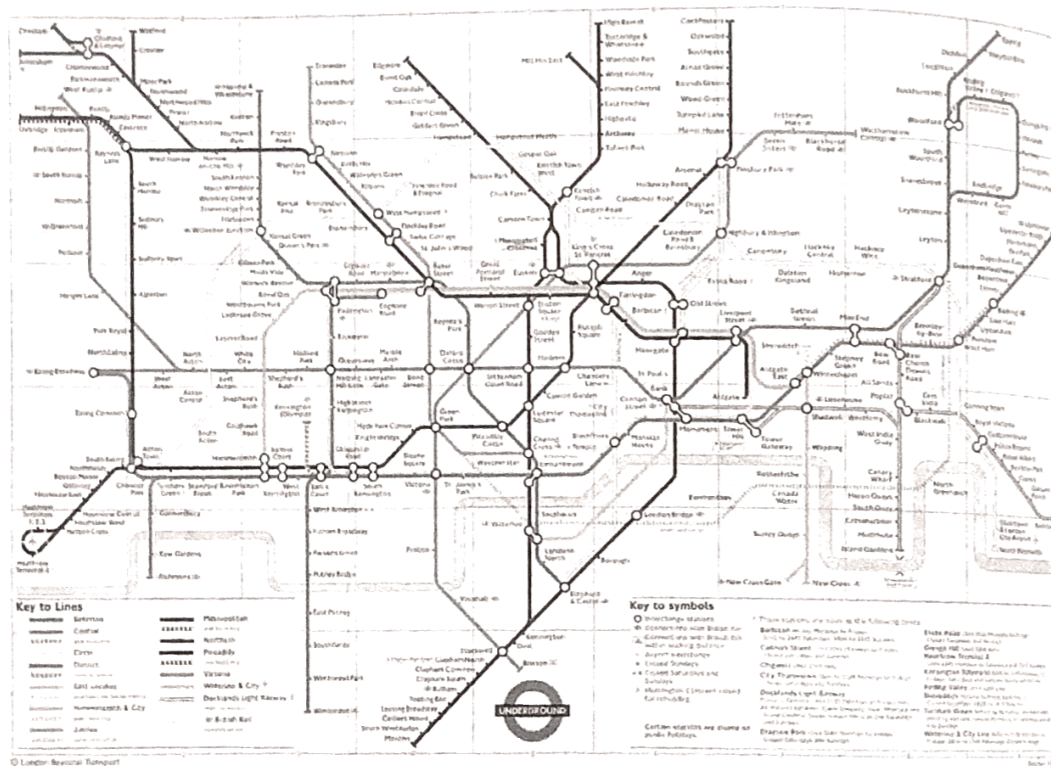


Figure 16.5. Recent London Underground Diagram (Source: London Transport.)

cartographer Robinson (1985) observes, the Mercator map is “still regularly displayed. Millions see it daily, since it forms the backdrop for the ABC and NBC evening television news programs, as well as others, and it is embarrassing to see it used similarly in the briefing rooms of both the Department of State and the Pentagon, which appear frequently on TV news presentations” (p. 109). Clearly, denaturalization of the Mercator map by the cartographic professionals has not sufficed. Rhetorical theorist Bizzell (1990) points out the limits of a purely deconstructive mode of analysis:

In their deconstructive mode, the anti-foundationalist critics do point out the effect of historical circumstances on notions of the true and good which their opponents claim are outside time. In other words, the critics show that these notions consist in ideologies. But once the ideological interest has been pointed out, the anti-foundationalists throw up their hands. And because they have no positive

program, the anti-foundationalist critics may end up tacitly supporting the political and cultural status quo. (p. 667)

We are thus prompted to go beyond establishing the ideological interest underlying mapping practice to projecting a positive program for new map design methodologies. What would such a program entail? Barthes’s (1985) indictment of naturalized sign systems provides a hint: “There is an evil, a social and ideological disorder, ingrained in sign systems which do not frankly proclaim themselves as sign systems” (p. 66). One solution, then, is to design maps that do frankly proclaim themselves as sign systems. What would be the *desiderata* in such maps? What, in other words, are some of the denaturalizing mapping techniques that might imbue a new design practice?

To some extent, the call is for a broader palette of mapped texts. In this spirit, Harley (1989) calls for a “new cartography” that would replace “the arid academic cartography”—a new cartography character-

ized by “a greater pluralism of cartographic expression” to “serve the breadth of social and historical problems that now engage our attention” (p. 88). But more is not necessarily different. Consider, for example, the proffered alternatives to the Mercator world map. Peters (1983) offers an alternative map based on an equal-area projection scheme, a map that, in his words, “is an expression of the basic equality of all peoples in this post-colonial era” (p. 145), a map that he also unfortunately claims “is entirely free of any ideology” (p. 148). The United Nations has, in fact, adopted Peters’s *Third World Map* for many purposes. However, according to Robinson (1985), the Peters map eliminates one set of biases only to introduce others. Robinson’s alternative, a compromise between geographic fidelity and aesthetics, has in its turn been the target of similar charges. And so it goes.

In short, what is really needed is a new politics of design, one authorizing heterodoxy—a politics where difference is not excluded or repressed, as before, but valorized. This ideal of encompassing contestatory as well as hegemonic discourses has been variously expressed in the literature of postmodernist theory. Barthes (1986) calls for the inclusion of “acritic” discourse (discourse outside power, which repudiates the doxa) as well as “encritic” discourse (discourse within power, which conforms to the doxa) (p. 120); Bourdieu (1977), for the construction of “extraordinary discourse” or counter discourses (p. 170); Venturi (1966), for the privileging of “elements which are hybrid rather than ‘pure,’” “both-and” over “either-or,” for “messy vitality over obvious unity” (p. 22); Foucault (1969/1972), for a view of discourse as a “space of multiple dissensions,” a space characterized by provisionality and heterogeneity rather than totalization and homogeneity (p. 155). Harvey (1989) sees such concern for *alterity*, or otherness, as the “most liberative and therefore the most appealing aspect of postmodern thought” (p. 47).

Such inclusion of the Other will necessitate, in turn, a new vision of the map. After all, when Huck Finn’s notion of the map as reality, or even that of the map as mirror, proved a disabling perspective, we were led in our deconstruction of the map to adopt the more enabling metaphor of map as text, more specifically, as “textually homogeneous site of ideological inscription.” Now, concerned with the proposal of denaturalizing practices, we suggest two new meta-

phors: For addressing the suppression of the spatial or synchronic perspective, we propose the metaphor of the *map as collage*; for addressing the suppression of the temporal or diachronic perspective, we propose the metaphor of the *map as palimpsest*.

SYNCHRONIC PERSPECTIVE: THE MAP AS COLLAGE

The denaturalizing power of the collage—an assemblage of diverse elements drawn from preexisting texts and integrated into a new creation manifesting ruptures of various sorts (Group *Mu*, 1978, pp. 13–14)—has not escaped notice in the theoretical and practical postmodernist discourses (Derrida, 1979; Hassan, 1987, p. 445; Kuspit, 1989, p. 46; Ulmer, 1983, p. 88). In an analysis of postmodern photography, Hutcheon (1989) describes the collage effect induced by the invasion of words into the semantic space traditionally dedicated to the pictorial and the consequent denaturalization:

Postmodern photography [*sic*] works to “detranscribe” by making both the visual and the verbal into overt sites of signifying activity and communication. It also contests the glossing over of the contradictions that make representations (linguistic or pictorial) serve ideology by seeming harmonious, ordered, universal. Its paradoxes of complicity and critique, of use and abuse of both verbal and visual conventions, point to contradiction and, thereby, to the possible workings of ideology. (pp. 138–139)

Unlike the photograph, visual genres such as the graph and the map are to some extent already collages, of course, because they are traditionally composed of both alphanumeric and figural signs, but we are advocating an even stronger melange of sign systems. A strong commitment to the collage technique is, incidentally, not without historical precedence in cartography; it was favored by Minard, a 19th-century French engineer and graphics innovator, whose demographic maps often bore tables, references, notes, and text (Figure 16.6). An admirer of Minard’s work, Tufte has exploited the collage technique to great effect in the design of his landmark work on information display (Barton & Barton, 1990). A theoretical commitment to the collage effect on various levels is also evident in his book: On the

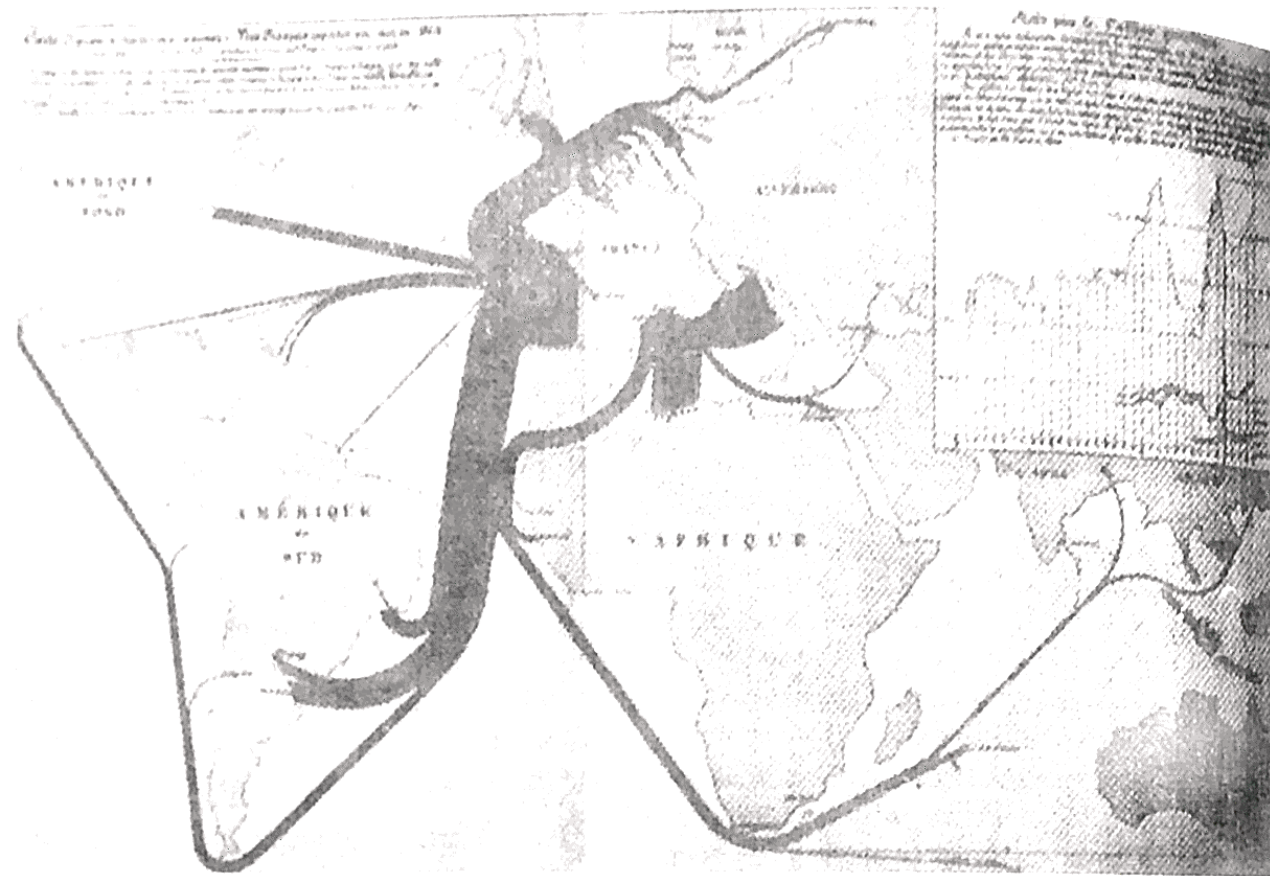


Figure 16.6. World Map by Charles Minard, Illustrating a Collage Effect (Source: *Collection de Documentation et de Communication, L'École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, Paris.*)

level of the individual graphic, he encourages us to “write little messages on the plotting field to explain the data, to label outliers and interesting data points, to write equations and sometimes tables on the graphic itself, and to integrate the caption and legend into the design” (Tufte, 1983, p. 180). On the level of the page, Tufte (1983) advocates a breakdown of the semantic spaces dedicated to text or graphic: “Tables and graphics should be run into the text whenever possible, avoiding the clumsy and diverting segregation of ‘See Fig. 2,’ (figures all too often located on the back of the adjacent page)” (p. 181).

Nor is the collage effect confined to unexpected juxtapositions of linguistic and pictorial systems; juxtapositions may also occur *within* either the linguistic or pictorial systems. Russian formalist UsPENSKY (1973) points out the defamiliarization effect induced by the juxtaposition of different linguistic systems within a given textual space (pp. 20–32), e.g., by the insertion of French in (the Russian) *War and Peace*, whereby language loses its ostensible transparency as a universal signifying system and is

thereby seen as a culturally relative phenomenon. The United Nations’ policy of suppressing exonyms in favor of indigenous place names on world maps and the attendant juxtaposition of differing points of view—the hegemonic and the contestatory—is clearly relevant here.³ As an example of the juxtaposition of pictorial systems, we cite Bryson’s (1983) illustration of the way “paintings can violate the existing doxa by representing within the same frame discursive practices thought to be disparate” (p. 42; Shapiro, 1988, p. 150). Within the mapping tradition, one finds relevant examples in the indigenous scenes inserted long ago in cartographic space. Moreover, our taxonomy of collage strategies is far from complete, for it is not our intent here to present a comprehensive taxonomy, much less an analysis, of the myriad ways in which heterogeneity of representational orders can create a collage effect. Lynch and Woolgar (1988) suggest the scope of such an endeavor by mentioning the heterogeneities resulting from the juxtaposition of various representational devices, theoretical principles, or representational func-

tions, e.g., resemblance, symbolic reference, similitude, abstraction, exemplification, or expression (p. 100).

DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE: THE MAP AS PALIMPSEST

Reculons pour mieux sauter. Thus far in our discussion of denaturalization techniques for the map, we have advocated a paradigmatic shift to a heterogeneity of representational order induced by the juxtaposition of various representational systems—a juxtaposition metaphorically captured by the expression *map as collage*. Indeed, constructing the map as collage proved a useful heuristic for discovering a radical design practice that would juxtapose communication elements laterally in seemingly anarchistic fields and thereby accord representational status to hitherto excluded or repressed interests. Because it is a synchronic, or spatial, notion, however, the collage is ultimately limited, for, as we noted earlier, strategies of repression also operate in diachronic, or temporal, perspectives where corresponding counterstrategies of denaturalization are equally needed. In his discussion of the representation of place on maps, de Certeau (1984) recognizes the limited heuristic value of the collage metaphor: “The place, on its surface, seems to be a collage. In reality, in its depth it is ubiquitous. A piling up of heterogeneous places. Each one . . . refers to a different mode of territorial unity, of socioeconomic distribution, of political conflicts and of identifying symbolism” (p. 201). “The kind of difference that defines every place is not on the order of a juxtaposition but rather takes the form of imbricated strata” (p. 200). In short, de Certeau concludes, “the place is a palimpsest” (p. 202). The map as palimpsest metaphor enables us to address the kinds of repression that occur in a diachronic perspective, i.e., the repression of the acts of production and reception of the mapped text considered vertically rather than laterally, considered as process rather than as product, as speech act rather than as structure.

Denaturalizing the Act of Production

How does one denaturalize the act of production? For Harkin (1989), it means making “one’s discursive strands visible, like the plumbing and ductwork of a

postmodern building” (p. 56). In less figural terms, it means resisting strategies designed to reify one’s text by allowing a franker representation of the layers in which the text is historically and inevitably imbricated. In the field of document design, denaturalizing the act of production means challenging many tenets of current publication policy. It may mean, for example, resisting the increasingly popular policy of suppressing the set-off, extended quotation, which visually acknowledges the alterity of the Other, in favor of the seamless web of text produced by the paraphrase, which more fully but less overtly appropriates the Other. It may also mean resisting the equally popular publication policy of suppressing the footnotes and marginalia that contextualize one’s work and that visually establish the ongoing relation of one’s thought with past thought. Tufte’s practice of placing references and notes alongside the relevant text material is laudable in this respect and, given its ease of implementation in this era of desktop publishing, is certainly available to all. Harley’s (1989) praise of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* serves as a testimonial to the value of the palimpsest technique in mapping practice:

Part of the success of the acclaimed *Historical Atlas of Canada* [R. C. Harris, 1987] is that the Editors have broken the link with the narrow dogma of academic cartography. Bar graphs, flow lines and proportional circles survive but they are enriched by architectural and archeological drawings, by original maps and town views of the past, and by landscapes with people and artifacts. We begin to know what it might have felt like to have lived in old Canada. A narrative unfolds expanding rather than denying the rhetorical power of the map. Even the most austere maps can become a *pictura loquens* as other images help to trigger their meaning. (p. 88)

Denaturalizing the act of production also means not closing off the movement of contradictions by representing meaning as fixed and stable. The design tradition, of course, has been to *stabilize* meanings, but the designers of visuals can just as easily choose to *destabilize* meanings. In the field of medical illustration, cardiologist Wahr (1987) advocates the inclusion in journal articles of the *multiple radi-*

ographic views taken during a cardiac catheterization procedure to assess coronary artery disease, not just the *one* best supporting a given research thesis. For a cartographic example, we return to the issue of representing Kuwait. According to Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society, if the status of Kuwait remains in question when the first update to the sixth *Atlas of the World* is printed, the regional map will include a statement of who occupies the territory and the United Nations' position in the situation (cited in Christian, 1990). For Wood (1987), destabilizing meaning may entail more than the addition of an explanatory note to a map: Rejecting the conventional distinction between reference and narrative atlases, he praises the latter for the fact that in "committing themselves explicitly and narratively to a point of view, [they] become thereby full (not empty); and, in admitting what they were about, become, *through this gesture*, truthful in a way 'reference atlases'—hiding their messages behind the false front of 'objectivity'—never have" (p. 38). Wood presumably would favor the incorporation in reference atlases of the running text characteristic of narrative atlases, thereby denaturalizing the ostensible objectivity of the former's point of view.

Denaturalizing the Act of Reception

How, in turn, does one denaturalize the act of reception—the other occluded layer of the map considered as process? How, in other words, does one denaturalize the traditional view of visuals as objective artifacts that speak for themselves? Clearly, one can begin by more frankly acknowledging that looking is an interpretive act. Once again, Minard's maps offer an exemplary strategy: They bear notes telling the viewer how to interpret the map. Recall, also, Tufte's (1983) similar advice to "write little messages on the plotting field to explain the data" in quantitative graphs (p. 180). More generally, denaturalizing the act of reception means producing positions that enable subjects to occupy realistic rather than imaginary relations within the social totality. Earlier in our discussion of the LUD, we noted a relative disempowerment of the viewer as a specific user with concrete travel needs—a disempowerment masked by the illusory power accrued through ascription of an

Olympian perspective inscribed in the map. The viewer's relative disempowerment becomes immediately obvious when one considers an alternative, more enabling representation—the lighted board map in several Parisian Metro stations whereby the viewer can override the totalizing effect of the map by registering her destination and receiving an individualized, highlighted itinerary.⁴ "You are here" indications on maps provide a second, admittedly less powerful, example.

Denaturalizing the act of reception also means adopting the perspective of the traditionally disempowered. Earlier we noted the exclusion of lower echelons of personnel from organization charts; here we advocate not simply their inclusion but, rather, the adoption of their point of view. Technical-communication educators Mathes and Stevenson (1991/1976) propose, for example, replacing the conventional organization chart with an "egocentric organization chart" (Figure 16.7) as a way of enhancing the position of, or empowering, the writer: "The egocentric chart categorizes people in terms of their proximity to the report writer rather than in terms of their hierarchical relationship to the report writer. Readers are not identified as organizationally superior, inferior, or equal to the writer, but rather as near or distant from the writer" (p. 15). Reporting on the field of cartographic education, Minerbrook (1991) notes that the Texas Education Agency has recently required a comparison of different map projections in new textbooks for secondary schools (p. 60). Moreover, the Peters projection, favoring the Third World point of view, is now routinely included in the map presentations of Paramus, New Jersey, schools.

CONCLUSION

Our proposal of a more inclusionary visual design practice may conjure up visions of an ocular cacophony of juxtaposed and superimposed elements, devices, and practices. Clearly, the governing aesthetic of the visual as collage-palimpsest is not the modernist "less is more" but rather the postmodernist "less is a bore"—an aesthetic that privileges complexity over simplicity and eclecticism over homogeneity, an aesthetic that tends toward the fragmen-

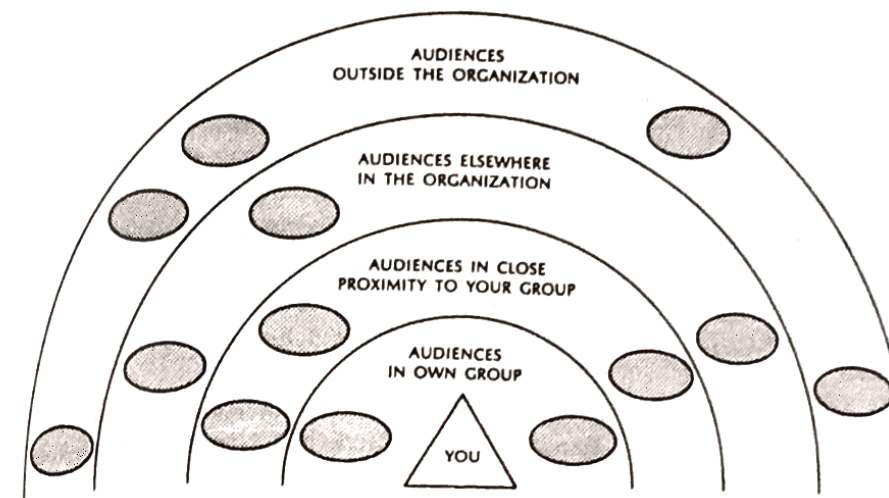


Figure 16.7. Egocentric Organization Chart (Source: Reprinted with the permission of Macmillan Publishing Company from *Designing Technical Reports* by J. C. Mathes and Dwight W. Stevenson. Copyright © 1976 by Macmillan Publishing Company.)

tary and the local, an aesthetic that renounces the driving ambition toward Unity with a capital "U" and "disperses itself among discreet claims and observations" (Bryson, 1989, p. 705). Unity may still be achieved, but it will be a hard-won unity—a unity es-

chewing the reassuring grand synthesis in favor of the uneasy collocation of competing and rival claims, the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion—perhaps, in fact, the only meaningful unity for our time (Barton & Barton, 1987).

NOTES

The authors gratefully acknowledge their debt to Brenda Sims, who suggested numerous improvements incorporated in the final draft of this chapter.

1. On the other hand, this is not to say that the alternative is to view people as obviously unique, autonomous, and totally self-determining individuals, for that would be to succumb to what Althusser (1971) has termed "the elementary ideological effect" (p. 161). Rather, in Althusser's famous phrase, "ideology interpellates concrete individuals as subjects" (p. 160).
2. Similarly, Bazerman (1988) notes a trend toward increased sedimentation of experimental physics procedures in journal articles. In a study of visuals in articles published early and late in the career of *Physics Review*, he notes the progressive exclusion of visuals more closely reflective of laboratory practice. His documentation of the decreasing use of "detailed apparatus drawings and extensive tables of raw experimental data" in favor of "extensive equations and schematized graphs" clearly reveals a trend toward suppression of the production act in scientific visuals (p. 172).
3. Note that the suppression of exonyms is neither new nor necessarily easy. According to Ormeling (1980),

"As early as the end of the nineteenth century, cartographers working on an international series of world maps . . . decided to adopt exclusively the naming system peculiar to each country. But there is a world of difference between good intentions and execution. Whether one likes it or not, each national cultural politic commits itself, in the name of the mother country, to preserving its own exonyms rather than sacrificing them to facilitate communication" (p. 333; authors' translation).

4. M. Burke and McLaren (1981) report the recent introduction of electronic displays by the London Transport at certain mainline rail stations. The displays "present a menu of approximately three hundred routes which may be taken from that point. The dialogue with the system is in three languages simultaneously (English, French, and German). The selected route is presented in isolation from the total network; points where the passenger is obliged to change train are stated clearly" (p. 109). Moreover, as M. Burke and McLaren note, "theoretically the system could be extended by being distributed to domestic television sets by means of a viewdata or teletext system" (p. 109).

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PART 5

RESEARCH METHODS

As the field has begun to understand the complexity of its organizational and cultural roles, researchers increasingly struggle with effective ways to conduct research in technical communication contexts. Teresa M. Harrison frames the issue of rhetorical context in terms of organizations in order to suggest two approaches to studying writing: systems of cognition and patterns of symbolic discourse. The former calls for methods centered around discovering organizationally based knowledge (such as decisions about writing strategies and tactics) while the latter requires methods that highlight the ways in which discourse constructs organizations. Working from the popular call for technical communication to address social issues, Nancy Blyler outlines several methods appropriate to understanding technical communication as a political activity. Blyler provides examples from feminist, radical pedagogical, and participatory action research to clarify the approaches of those interested in the connections between critical perspectives and research methods in technical communication. Davida Charney critically examines recent representations of empirical research in our published discourse, arguing that an overly simplified model of empirical research impairs the field's efforts toward improving social conditions. Charney calls for a disciplinary stance that both values and challenges methods rather than dismissing any. In other words, she makes an argument for methodological pluralism. Patricia Sullivan and James E. Porter note the crucial ways in which questions of method bridge the commonly cited split between theory and practice in technical communication. Sullivan and Porter call for a research model based on *praxis*, arising out of the active intersection of theory and specific situated practices. Their heuristic research methodology analyzes specific communication situations in order to determine appropriate research methods rather than simply applying a single, predetermined method to all situations. As the diversity of these approaches to method indicates, the field continues to engage critically with the problem of investigating technical communication at the intersection of theory and practice.

FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

TERESA M. HARRISON

What a humbling experience it is to reflect on a piece of thinking that is now nearly twenty years old. What once seemed like exciting and highly original assertions now seem to be very much in the fabric of accepted scholarly wisdom. What once took many hours of painful drafting and revision to spit out, make understandable, and ultimately render persuasive to reviewers, now seems so much like yesterday's news. The idea for this article first occurred to me one night driving down an interstate headed to West Virginia, but it took nearly a year after that for me to learn enough to actually make the argument. I now teach the theoretical and epistemological content related to this article in one and a half class sessions in my graduate survey course in communication theory.

But the exercise has been rewarding, if not entirely gratifying. Reflecting on this piece has helped clarify for me what a communication theorist actually does and what the product of such activity amounts to. Since I still aspire to produce theory, this has actually been quite helpful.

One thinks, of course, that producing theory requires making highly original contributions, so I have on various rereadings across the years been disappointed to appreciate how derivative this article is. In fact, the argument is pieced together from premises borrowed and synthesized from many fields in the humanities and social sciences. But with the benefit of advanced age and many subsequent attempts to theorize, I realize now that the primary activities of communication theorists are to derive and synthesize. There are very few big and wholly original discoveries in social theory. Instead there are reformulations, revisions, and recastings that stimulate communication researchers to view communicative phenomena differently and that help them to take another step forward in a new direction.

I also now know that there were other articles that said roughly what this article was saying at about the same time in other publications, so what, one might ask, is the big deal about this piece? The answer is that social thought is constructed in streams and currents and as scholars we fit ourselves into them when we attempt to speak to our disciplinary communities. No single piece is probably ever that much of a big deal. But we play an important role when we participate in an accumulating and burgeoning body of thought and help to articulate its direction, clarify its implications, tell fellow scholars what they should be doing, and thus legitimize new research endeavors.

And now that the content of this article is pretty completely old hat, it becomes that against which new theorists compare and argue. It becomes the status quo. Indeed, now that it has be-

come commonplace, for example, to say, in one way or another, that the world is socially constructed, I marvel at the ways in which we are rediscovering how the material (what we once thought of as having "objective" properties) can have force of its own in social relations.

When I was beginning my research career, it seemed as though nothing in the scholarly world ever really changed and that in writing this article I was helping to *finally* make new things happen. Having lived through several revolutions of thought in the scholarly world, I am now struck by the dizzying speed with which scholarship changes and join my colleagues in digging in our heels against the rapidity with which our precious few new ideas are rendered obsolete.

Teresa M. Harrison

Since most people who write in their professional lives do so in and for organizations, it is not surprising to find that composition researchers have begun to investigate the ways in which organizations present specialized contexts for writing. This research has produced some interesting results. We have learned, for example, that writing is a ubiquitous activity in organizations. For some time it has been apparent that certain types of professions were more generally oriented toward communication than others (e.g., management, as described by Mintzberg, 1973); however, a recent survey has found that nearly all college-educated people working in a variety of organizations write regularly as part of their jobs (Faigley & Miller, 1982). The amount of writing done on the job appears to vary by occupation and role; individuals in professional and technical occupations spend almost 30% of their work time writing (Faigley & Miller, 1982) while managers spend approximately 15%–20% of their time writing (Rader & Wunsch, 1980; Volard & Davies, 1982).

Furthermore, it appears that the process of writing in organizational contexts is quite different from what occurs in classroom contexts. Doheny-Farina (1984) has suggested that the rhetorical purposes of organizational documents are shaped by contingencies specific to the organization in question. Odell and his colleagues have demonstrated that writers in organizations have different senses of rhetorical context and appear to use analytic strategies somewhat different from those of students in classrooms. Writers in organizations make frequent references to aspects of organizational life to explain rhetorical choices they have made in their writing. Their

choices reflect detailed knowledge about the readers of specific documents, an awareness of how a document fits into a sequence of events in the organization, and an understanding of the writers' role in the organization with respect to the document (Odell, Goswami, Herrington, & Quick, 1983; Odell & Goswami, 1982). Debs (1985) has reported that technical writers are conscious of and accommodate the idiosyncratic constraints imposed by their organizations in the production of technical documents, as well as the expected constraints of subject matter.

The evidence accumulated to date, although limited, suggests that there is much to be gained in studying the process of writing as it occurs in organizational life. At the very least, such research might establish more precisely the nature of any interrelationships between organizational processes and composing. However, this effort might also contribute to the development of a broader theory of writing that treats social context as an important factor in a generalized cross-contextual model of the writing process. Furthermore, if it is true that organizations impose demands upon writers that are different from those of other social contexts (such as the classroom), then teachers of writing should equip their students with analytic capabilities that will guide them in this particular writing context.

Unfortunately, the study of writing in organizations poses a formidable research challenge. A full consideration of organizations as a type of social unit that influences systematically the performance of writing requires an interdisciplinary research effort. An understanding of both composition theory and organization theory is necessary to formulate research

questions that get at the interrelationships between organizational processes and writing processes. The purpose of this article is to introduce some approaches to organizational theory that bear upon the study and practice of writing in organizations.

This article begins by arguing that in a rhetorically based theory of composing, context plays an important role in the production and comprehension of discourse. The rather narrow interpretation of context offered in traditional rhetorical theory has been broadened in modern rhetorical theory so that it now encompasses the social communities that are formed through rhetorical activity and through which rhetorical activity becomes meaningful. Thus reformulated, this view of context invites an examination of organizations that centers upon the way they function as rhetorical contexts. To facilitate the beginning of such an examination, two approaches to organizational theory that help us to understand how organizations might function as rhetorical contexts are elaborated. The presentation assumes that rhetoric in organizations forms a figure-ground relationship: As social communities, organizations embody coherent systems of consensual meaning that, taken together, form the grounds for and hence impart significance and comprehensibility to rhetorical activity. The resulting analysis argues strongly for (1) a systematic consideration of organizational processes in the study of business, technical, and professional writing, and (2) the introduction of an "organizational analysis" into the practice of writing in organizations.

THE NATURE OF CONTEXT

Research interest in writing in organizations lags somewhat behind the developing interest in examining writing as a social activity that is grounded in social life yet simultaneously creates and shapes social life. The basis for interest in writing as a social activity stems from a recognition of the rhetorical character of writing. Once rhetorical (rather than only expressive or informative) functions of writing are acknowledged, then a central problem in composition theory and research becomes explaining the interrelationships between composing and the social world in which it takes place.

Considerable energy has already been devoted to exploring some of the possibilities that arise when writing is viewed as social activity. Much of this work has examined the social interaction between the writer and his or her audience and the impact of that relationship on rhetorical activity (see, for example, Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Kroll, 1984; Rubin, Piche, Michlen, & Johnson, 1984). Because the relationship between audience and writer can be seen as situated within a larger environment (historical, political, cultural, or disciplinary) of which it is a part, the adoption of a rhetorical approach to writing has also stimulated interest in investigating the nature of the context in which rhetorical activity takes place. Context is a somewhat problematic concept because its referent may change easily given the perspectives and assumptions of its various users. Whether or not organizations qualify as a form of rhetorical context thus depends upon the way rhetorical theorists think about contexts. There are two markedly different views of rhetorical contexts embodied in traditional and modern rhetorical theory.

CONTEXT AS SITUATION

The traditional approach to context in rhetorical theory is articulated by Bitzer (1968), who conceives of rhetorical context as a situation that constitutes an occasion for rhetoric. Rhetorical situations are composed of three elements—audience, exigence, and constraints—that together create an event calling for a rhetorical response that "fits" the demands of the situation. In this view, rhetorical situations are objective events that may be known objectively and the existence of which is assumed to be prior to the unfolding of rhetorical activity. Rhetors act within a framework of objective constraints; the success of their response is determined by their ability to assess accurately the demands of the situation.

When context is defined solely in terms of a rhetorical situation, an organizational level of analysis is precluded. The rhetorical situation places contextual boundaries around singular events and thus focuses our attention at an analytic level below that of "organization." Audiences, exigencies, and constraints forming rhetorical situations may arise *within* organizations, but the idea of organizations as social units

forming a broader context for rhetoric cannot be accommodated to this approach.

While an organization may not be construed properly as a rhetorical situation, it is worth noting that organizations do set some limits upon the kinds of rhetorical situations that may arise within them. As a unique social unit, each organization is characterized by audiences, exigencies, and constraints that are idiosyncratic to it. Although the number of potential rhetorical situations is vast, not just any can occur within a given organization. Indeed, to know which organizational members will count as audience, which events pose exigencies, and which factors constrain action within a particular rhetorical situation reflects detailed knowledge of the understandings that make up everyday life within a given organization that is essential to comprehending rhetorical activity. An expanded view of context, one that incorporates the idea of organizations as communities of meaning forming contexts for rhetoric, is needed to explain this kind of knowledge.

CONTEXT AS COMMUNITY

A second approach to defining rhetorical context is supplied by the emerging modern approach to rhetorical theory. Contemporary rhetorical theory—or the “New Rhetoric,” as Berlin (1982) calls it—is similar to classical rhetorical theory in many respects; however, the two differ significantly in their epistemological assumptions (Lunsford & Ede, 1984). Classical rhetorical theories are predicated upon a view of reality the objective existence of which is presumed. Knowledge about reality exists independently of the knower and can be acquired and verified through reason and observation.

In contrast, the New Rhetoric is a collection of individual approaches to rhetorical theory, each of which stresses, to different degrees and in different ways (see Gregg, 1984; Leff, 1978), that some forms of knowledge are created in rhetorical activity. One of these positions maintains that rhetorical activity creates “social” knowledge in the juxtaposition of publicly accepted standards with publicly evaluated objects (Farrell, 1976). For other theorists, knowledge of reality is socially constructed in interaction, a process made possible through the use of symbol

systems that are inherently rhetorical (Brummett, 1976; Brown, 1983). In the newest variation of the rhetoric-epistemic argument, Gregg (1984) locates rhetorical dimensions in the neurophysiological functions of mind-brain operation that are responsible for the development of elementary patterns of meaning. All human cognition, “from the initial act of perceiving and structuring ‘data’ to any subsequent, overt, physical action taken in light of perceptions,” is symbolic, functions as inducement, and is therefore rhetorical (Gregg, 1984, p. 133).

Despite the differences in these positions, each claims that some of what is designated as “knowledge” is produced through the interaction between the environment and a knower. Knowledge so acquired cannot be validated by assessing its correspondence with an independent, objective reality, and thus cannot be separated from its knower (Miller, 1979).

Knowers do not exist as selves in isolation from others or from their environment. “Knowledge,” the product of knowing, or truth, is always determined in reference to the context in which it arises (Brummett, 1976; Gregg, 1984). In this sense, context encompasses the elements that combine to form rhetorical situations, but, more important, it embodies a particular way of seeing those elements and the rest of the world—a set of assumptions that give meaning to stimuli and enable individuals to define experience.

Individuals share such assumptions about the world in communities of thought that establish standards for determining what counts as knowledge and thus define reality for their participants. According to Orr’s (1978, p. 264) exegesis of this position, “Reality and truth are rooted solely in human authority. As intersubjective creations, they are relative to the validating communities in which they are defined. Therefore, different communities respond to different realities.” Since such communities of thought are numerous and their standards different, knowledge is always contingent upon context. Gregg (1984, p. 136) writes that “context determines what we are willing to accept as knowledge. What stands as ‘knowledge’ in the sciences, and the criteria for determining such knowledge, differ from content and criteria of that which stands as ‘knowledge’ in ethics or aesthetics.”

Within the contexts provided by communities of thought, rhetoric becomes meaningful. The very act of communicating, as Miller (1979, p. 617) points out, implies one’s participation in a community and “to write well is to understand the conditions of one’s own participation—the concepts, values, traditions, and style which permit identification with that community and determine the success or failure of communication.” Rhetoric adds to the stock of knowledge possessed by a community when it offers representations that are internally consistent as well as consistent with the “rules and assumptions that govern that domain of discourse” (Brown, 1983, p. 140).

It is important to recognize that the relationship between rhetoric and the community in which it occurs is reciprocal. Communities of thought render rhetoric comprehensible and meaningful. Conversely, however, rhetorical activity builds communities that subsequently give meaning to rhetorical action. Farrell (1976) has argued that in rhetorical activity social collectivities are transformed into communities. The rhetor attributes social knowledge to an audience in the form of arguments and appeals based upon “conceptions of symbolic relationships among problems, persons, interests, and actions, which imply (when accepted) certain notions of preferable public behavior” (p. 4). In the attribution of social knowledge, the rhetor defines ambiguous social situations and thus invites participation in a particular way of seeing the world. The content of the social knowledge that is attributed carves out, in Farrell’s terms, a “zone of relevance” defining those aspects of experience pertinent to the group in question and, implicitly, those that are not. Moreover, inherent in attributed social knowledge are presumptions about the kinds of information that count as data. Social knowledge directs the perceptual processes so that individuals attend to bits of information that are meaningful and significant within a particular framework of knowing. Finally, the attribution of social knowledge encourages individuals to compare their personal knowledge with the convictions of others and, in so doing, to define their positions as members or outsiders with respect to the emerging community at large.

Gregg (1984, p. 119) suggests that the tendency to differentiate groups of individuals so that they “ap-

pear to be separate species” may be a universal human characteristic. However, this tendency toward “pseudospeciation” is also fundamentally rhetorical because it, like all other forms of symbolic activity, is based upon “principles of symbolic inducement.” These principles (e.g., forming boundaries, classification, hierarchy) originate in elementary cognitive activity that structures experience and frames choices, but they are also the tools by which we “move to structure and comprehend our interpersonal interactions and social relations” (p. 126). Thus innate cognitive processes that are fundamentally symbolic in character culminate eventually in the creation of “patterns of social association. We stabilize and repeat patterns of behavior that prove efficacious. In identifying ourselves with the interests and efforts of some, we inevitably divide ourselves from others. We commit to those interests and in turn further divide ourselves from others” (p. 127).

In recognizing that social communities frame contexts for knowing, rhetorical theory joins other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in which such communities have been called subuniverses of meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), epistemic communities (Holtzner & Marx, 1979), and interpretive communities (Fish, 1980). Context, viewed as community, has also been heavily applied as indicated by the proliferating treatments of organizations as cultures (Pettigrew, 1979), baseball teams as idiosyncrasies (Fine, 1979), and academic disciplines as fields of argument (Toulmin, 1969).

Rhetorical and composition theorists have shown the most interest in applying this new conception of rhetorical contexts to academic disciplines. Rhetorical scholars have taken a new look at the hard sciences perhaps because they have hitherto been thought to reside beyond the province of rhetorical analysis. For composition scholars, writing in the context of academic disciplines is a way of learning, because such writing requires students to engage in conceptual activities unique to the disciplinary context (Odell, 1980). Zappen (1983) has suggested that Toulmin’s discipline-based rhetorical theory might be applied as well to the organizational contexts in which scientists and technologists write. In suggesting that organizations may be characterized by their own goals, capacities, problems, and evaluative crite-

ria, Zappen is coming close to arguing for an examination of organizations as rhetorical contexts that exert their own demands upon the writing process.

ORGANIZATIONS AS RHETORICAL CONTEXTS

Organizational theorists do not generally think in terms of organizations as rhetorical context (see Huff, 1983, for an exception). However, they have not failed to realize the heuristic value of treating the organization as a social phenomenon constructed through the interaction of symbol-using organisms. The literature exploring this approach borrows heavily from the sociology of knowledge and anthropology. Its central metaphor is that organizations are cultures; they are in effect "culture-bearing milieux" (Louis, 1983), the treatment of which as such results in interesting implications for theory. Following this approach, concepts central to various theories of culture are used to probe the basic nature of organizations. Ethnographic methods of data collection (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982) and interpretive methods of data analysis (Deetz, 1982) are advocated as particularly appropriate to a cultural analysis of organizations.

Smircich (1983a) has traced the various strains of thought that have emerged in pursuit of a cultural analysis of organizations. Two of these are especially useful for our purposes because each emphasizes aspects of organizational nature that are relevant to the study and practice of writing. To understand the kind of rhetorical context posed by an organization and the way in which this context interacts with the writing process, it is useful to view organizations as (1) systems of knowledge and (2) patterns of symbolic discourse.

ORGANIZATIONS AS SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE

The first approach to the study of organizational culture emphasizes that culture is a "system of cognitions or a system of knowledge and cognitions" (Smircich, 1983a, p. 348). An organization is constituted in part because its members share in a potentially unique worldview embodied by the idiosyncratic content and structure of its knowledge system.

The content and structure of a knowledge or cognitive system is generated by individuals interacting with each other and with their environment, and thus may vary dramatically between and within organizations. The goal of organizational researchers following this approach is to create and test models that generalize the processes by which knowledge is constructed by organizational members and the forms in which knowledge appears to guide action.

Two complementary perspectives on knowledge construction are represented by the evolutionary model and the social information processing model. Weick (1979) argues that knowledge evolves in organizations through enactment, selection, and retention processes that are stimulated by equivocality in environmental cues. Confronted with an uncertain environment, individuals attend to or "bracket" certain elements for interpretation and response, thus "enacting" an environment that serves as the basis for sense making. In Weick's selection process, meaning and order are imposed retrospectively on the enacted environment in the form of "cognitive maps" (see also Johnson, 1977) that explain, interpret, and structure experience. Meanings that reduce uncertainty and enable the organization to achieve goals are likely to be retained by the organization and are stored in the organization's memory (i.e., in standard operating procedures, employee manuals, stories, and the like). Retained meanings serve as a basis for evaluating the appropriateness and utility of future enactments and selections.

The evolutionary model stresses the organizational-level processes by which knowledge is constructed. The social information processing model emphasizes instead the social processes by which knowledge is established and shared. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) argue that the social environment structures organizational members' beliefs and attitudes toward the job and other salient features of organization life. In the process of interaction, individuals structure each other's perceptual and interpretational processes, giving rise to commonly held views of the organization's image, shared assumptions about causality in the organization, and convergence regarding appropriate technology for the accomplishment of organizational goals. Pfeffer (1981) calls this system of knowledge a "paradigm."

A fundamental assumption of the cognitive or knowledge-based approach to organizational culture is that thinking is linked to action (Smircich, 1983a). What organization members do is related to what and how organization members think. An analysis of what organization members think can be assessed by examining the content of the organizational cognitive map (Bougon, Weick, & Binkhorst, 1977), paradigm (Pfeffer, 1981), or "master contract" (Harris & Cronen, 1979). Organization researchers have begun to examine the relationships between cognition and a variety of behaviors performed by organizational members. Some of the initial work on this research agenda has suggested that the worldviews and belief systems of managers are related to their ability to notice and interpret problems posed by environmental change (Kiesler & Sproull, 1982; Meyer, 1982). Starbuck (1982) argues that organizations invent ideologies ("logically integrated clusters of beliefs, values, rituals, and symbols," p. 3) that encompass expectations about the organization, its environment, and the probable success of alternative actions and then use these ideologies to justify why certain courses of action are needed to solve a particular problem.

A major obstacle impeding further development along these lines has been the need to specify the way in which knowledge contained in the organization's unique representation of reality is translated into action at the level of the individual actor. Schall (1983) has suggested that this process may be mediated by the formation of rules—either explicit or taken for granted—that specify the conditions under which a particular interpretation gains or loses legitimacy and particular behaviors are deemed more or less appropriate.

ORGANIZATIONS AS PATTERNS OF SYMBOLIC DISCOURSE

An alternative direction in organizational culture (but one that is not necessarily incompatible with that described earlier) has focused upon symbol making and using within the organization. In this approach, organizations are conceived as patterns of symbolic discourse that can be interpreted to identify "thematic systems of meaning underlying activity" (Smircich, 1983a, p. 350). The symbolic perspective

assumes, as does the cognitive approach, that organizational cultures are constituted by shared systems of meaning and ways of knowing; its contribution lies in emphasizing the symbolic means through which knowledge and meaning are expressed. As with the cognitive approach, an important goal of this research is to specify the relationships between shared interpretation and understanding and action undertaken by organizational members. But here, symbol creating and using are the activities bridging the gap between meaning and action. The task of researchers following this approach is to articulate "recurrent themes that show how the symbols are linked into meaningful relationships and how they are related to the activities of the people in the setting" (Smircich, 1983b, p. 163).

Symbol systems in organizations may take many forms. Most easily recognized are specialized terminologies that may arise for objects, events, and behaviors that are particularly relevant to organizational life. These terminologies cue newcomers to notice those elements of the organization and its environment to which the organization itself attends and, after socialization, may continue to structure perceptual and attentional processes. Evered (1983) notes that the ability to understand and use the complex jargon of the Navy is a sign of group membership and an indication that one shares in the worldview of that group.

Images and metaphors used by organizations portray the character of organizational processes and activities. Hirsch and Andrews (1983) show that the images used to describe corporate takeovers represent frameworks (such as courtship, warfare, westerns) for interpreting the roles of participants in the process of acquisition and merger and for applying moral evaluations to such activities. Corporate takeovers are dramatic and relatively flamboyant organizational maneuvers, but such images can also reveal the character of more mundane organizational activities. Koch and Deetz (1981) have demonstrated that an analysis of metaphor in organizational discourse (both written and oral) reveals fundamental assumptions about the nature of the organization (e.g., as a machine, an organism, or a team) that underlie the ways its members typically interpret and make sense of organizational activities.

Ordinary language, such as that used in slogans, stories, and sagas, may function as more complex symbols when words are vested with specialized meaning understood by participants within a particular organization, but somewhat mysterious to outsiders. Peters (1978) and Deal and Kennedy (1982, 1983) have suggested that slogans such as "the Hewlett-Packard way" or "Everybody at Northrop is in marketing" capture and represent in a few words dominant institutional values and beliefs that explain the bases for organizational action. Similarly, organizational stories and myths maintain "logic frameworks" (Boje, Fedor, & Rowland, 1982) that justify given organizational practices and control decision making by revealing constraints upon the form and substance of reasoning that can be employed by decision makers (Wilkins, 1983). Clark (1972) has shown that the educational beliefs and values incorporated in sagas at Reed, Antioch, and Swarthmore acquired a self-fulfilling nature, perpetuated as they were transmitted from generation to generation.

The argument so far developed has made the following points: Context in the New Rhetoric transcends the boundaries of the rhetorical situation to encompass the communities of thought that frame and hence define the situation. The result has been renewed interest in examining the rhetorical nature of discourse in academic fields traditionally considered rhetorical. However, these revisions in the way we think about context also argue for new interest in the rhetorical dimensions of discourse in organizations. As rhetorical contexts, organizations may influence the production, comprehension, and evaluation of discourse. This is because organizations are "culture-like" phenomena constituted both by systems of knowledge and by patterns of symbolic discourse that are related to actions undertaken by organizational members. With this as a theoretical basis, we can begin to design research that explores the relationship between aspects of culture and writing and consider the implications of this position for the practice of writing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Cognitive approaches to the study of writing are not new; however, they rarely examine the influence of social context upon cognitive processes that are im-

portant to writing (see Collins & Williamson, 1984, for an exception). This is so despite the fact that cognitive psychologists have themselves argued that contextual factors bear heavily upon the content, form, and processes of cognition (see, for example, Luria, 1976; Rogoff, 1984). For example, Scribner (1984) has shown that industrial plant employees use specialized knowledge and problem-solving procedures resulting in superior performance over non-members on two kinds of organizational tasks. She suggests that "on-the-job experience" or, we might say, being a member of the organization "makes for different ways of solving problems or, to put it another way, that the problem solving process is restructured by the knowledge and strategy repertoire available to the expert in comparison to the novice" (p. 38). Cognitive systems in organizations may similarly make for different methods for problem solving in organizational writing.

Two recommendations for research come immediately to mind. The first is somewhat obvious: Research on writing in organizations should take seriously into account the cognitive systems constituting the culture of the organization in which the writing occurs. We have seen that such cognitive systems are organization specific and influence the performance of organizational activities. A profitable direction for writing research might be to examine systematically the relationship between elements in organizational cognitive systems and the performance of writing in context. The first task is to establish that there is in fact a discernible relationship between organizationally based cognition and rhetorical strategies in writing. Research procedures already exist for assessing knowledge within a content domain (see Bougon, 1983, and Ford & Hegarty, 1984, for discussions of cognitive mapping; see Smircich, 1983b, and Van Maanen, 1979, for discussions of organizational ethnography). Once assessed, organizationally based knowledge might become the foundation for discovering, analyzing, and criticizing rhetorical strategies revealed in organizational prose. Studies of writing in organizations could search for organizationally based reasons for writing decisions as well as those that are based upon the writer, reader, and subject. Miller and Selzer's (1985) analysis of arguments in engineering reports chosen on the basis of institutional, or organi-

zationally based, knowledge illustrates the feasibility and advantages of such an approach.

In addition to providing the grounds for rhetorical activity, cognitive systems in organizations may also regulate the meaning and form of writing. That is, they may contain information about how to write, what writing means, and the writer's role that bears directly or indirectly upon how writing gets accomplished in a specific organization. Schall's (1983) design for analyzing the communication rules in an organization might be extended easily to the study of rules that constitute and regulate the process of writing in organizations. Research toward this end might be based initially in large writing-oriented organizations and begin by establishing the empirical existence of socially derived rules for the generation, production, and evaluation of discourse within an organization or a work group. Assuming the success of this effort, it would then be important to demonstrate a relationship between rules-following and the specific rhetorical choices undertaken by writers in context. One outcome of this research program may be the creation of a theory that accounts for a great deal of the variation in organizational writing.

Research analyzing symbols in organizations can proceed in a direction similar to that of the cognitive approach by interpreting themes revealed in patterns of symbols and exploring their relationship to rhetorical choice making in written organizational discourse. Another application of the symbolic perspective to organizational writing reverses the direction of this relationship. In addition to investigating the influence of themes underlying organizational symbols upon writing, it is desirable to consider the possibility that writing in organizations may be a social process through which organizations are constructed. Smircich (1983a, p. 351) notes that in the symbolic perspective the "very concept of organization is problematic." Symbolic action is conceived as a process through which organizations are created and maintained. This view is quite consistent with Farrell's (1976) argument, discussed earlier, that rhetorical action creates social communities. This convergence between organizational and rhetorical theory suggests that writing in organizations is more than just an activity for accomplishing organizational tasks; it may additionally be seen as a discourse

process fundamental to the creation of organized activity. Doheny-Farina's (1984) case study of writing within a fledgling high-technology organization illustrates this reasoning. He has shown that through the collaborative writing of a business plan organization members created and defined the structure of the organization, the lines of authority, and product responsibilities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING IN ORGANIZATIONS

Writing in organizations differs from that done in classrooms in that, as initially experienced by the writer, the organizational context is unknown. The rhetorical choices made by the writer must be based upon knowledge about the nature and characteristics of the organization itself that does not already exist for the writer and must, in fact, be acquired. In an organization, the purposes of the text may be apparent only with an appreciation of organizational activities, motives, and goals. Audience members' attitudes and beliefs are likely to be well understood only as one comes to appreciate what it means to be a member of that particular organization. The information, arguments, and justifications that will be considered relevant and persuasive may not be logical or intuitive. Finally, the style of organizational documents may be idiosyncratic and may, in fact, be dictated by informal rules in the organization. What too frequently is not known by writers is how one goes about acquiring the organizational knowledge to use in analyzing a specific organization. The foregoing analysis suggests that it may be desirable to incorporate an "organizational analysis" into the writer's repertoire of analytic strategies.

When an organization is conceived as a culture, an analysis of its cognitive system and symbolic patterns can form the basis for acquiring knowledge about the organization that can be useful in rhetorical choice making. Consider the possibilities for audience analysis. If organizations are constituted by specialized systems of meaning, then members of organizations are characterized by their participation in a somewhat unique system of thought and expression. An audience analysis that considers what it means to be an organization member produces information useful in writing directed at members because it can

identify commonalities and divergences in thought and expression that can be integrated into the selection of arguments, language, and style of a document. However, such an analysis might also be useful in writing directed at nonmembers because it could expose for writers those beliefs, values, and symbolic systems that a nonmember audience may not share precisely because they are not organization members.

The knowledge yielded by an analysis of organizational culture can provide a foundation for the writer's rhetorical analysis. This knowledge is especially important to writers who are novice organizational members and must therefore actively acquire information about their cultural context to perform appropriately and effectively in their organizations. Over time, writers may come to acquire this knowledge; being an organization member means being socialized into an understanding, if not an endorsement, of its worldview. But this knowledge may or may not come eventually to play a role in the writer's rhetorical analysis. An explicit analysis of organizational context may provide the writer with familiar ground to stand on in approaching and understanding the unfamiliar world of the organizational environment. Writers who are already socialized organizational members may also profit from making explicit the tacit assumptions that guide organizational behavior and may gain insight regarding how these assumptions may be used to improve the effectiveness of their documents.

For both experienced and inexperienced writers, the analysis of organizational culture creates some capacity for examining social life within an organization as if it were a text. It was argued earlier that symbols can be analyzed for their informative value in rhetorical choice making. But it is also worth noting that when organizational symbols are seen as constituting a social document, methods of literary criticism may be valuable to the writer in explicating and evaluating the conscious and unconscious patterns of meaning that shape organizational life. It is interesting that organizational theorists are now beginning to realize the value of literary criticism to the social scientific study of organizations (Morgan, Frost, & Pondy, 1983).

CONCLUSION

It is too early to tell how productive writing research in organizations will be. However, this presentation has sketched a theoretical rationale incorporating both rhetorical and organizational theory that argues strongly for some exploratory efforts. Although their focuses and goals differ, rhetorical and organizational theorists agree that discourse processes are embedded in social contexts. For both sets of theorists, the relationship between discourse and context is mutually influential. Discourse is social interaction that creates communities of thought and expression. At the same time, these communities render discourse comprehensible and persuasive. If this theoretical position has validity, then we should be able to see these interrelationships at work in organizational writing.

The ultimate advantage of analyzing organizational culture as an approach to context is that it should reinforce for the writer the fact of immense variability in the constructed realities of organizations and other forms of social community. To take seriously the notion of context is to build in students an appreciation for the idiosyncratic nature of terminologies, semantic systems, beliefs and values, and reasoning processes that characterize any interdependent social grouping. It is this kind of appreciation that allows writers both to participate within and to stand outside the prevailing systems and structures for assigning meaning within a given context. Such an ability is not only important for technical writers who must regularly traverse the boundaries of organizational cultures, academic disciplines, and the culture at large; it is also important for other writers in organizations—those advocating proposals, those making decisions, and those evaluating policy. Out of a recognition of what is and what is not, what culture maintains and what it precludes, what is possible and what is impossible is born the potential for creative rhetorical activity in organizations that critiques tacit assumptions, recasts dysfunctional worldviews, and constructs new knowledge. These are activities that we traditionally associate with the "ideal rhetor" and that are founded upon an appreciation for the social boundedness of context.

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TAKING A POLITICAL TURN

The Critical Perspective and Research in Professional Communication

NANCY ROUNDY BLYLER

This article is one of a series I wrote because I wanted to bring my personal politics and my academic life closer together. For quite a long time, I had been bothered by a disjunction I sensed between my left-wing political views and the kind of researching and writing I was doing. In this series of articles, then, I was attempting to describe an alternate research perspective for myself and for others in professional communication—a perspective focused on empowerment, emancipation, and social change. Hence my interest in critical research.

In the years since this article was published, I have become even more convinced of the power of ideology to structure what we experience, thus enabling certain favored practices over others. In such an atmosphere, the potential for domination and control—for remaking people's lives according to another's image of what they should be—seems very real indeed.

Further, I have come to understand as never before the slippery nature of terms such as empowerment and emancipation, terms central to the critical perspective. Who, I ask, has the privilege of determining what empowerment and emancipation mean in a given situation, and who has the power to decide the nature and direction of social change? These, of course, are issues crucial to the critical perspective—ones I wrestled with as I wrote this article, and ones critical researchers cannot ignore. They are also issues confronting our times, when the rhetoric of empowerment seems far too easily co-opted, turned by the powerful to any number of favored ends.

I remain, then, more convinced than ever that the people themselves, as full participants in research, must be intimately involved in decision making—defining questions that matter to them, gathering necessary information, using any knowledge generated, and owning any results. Only in this way can social change that betters people's lives—from their vantage point and no one else's—be achieved.

Nancy Roundy Blyler

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As a parallel to the now-famous “interpretive turn” in the social sciences (Rabinow and Sullivan), I claim in this article that research in professional communication ought to take an increasingly political turn. In doing so, our research would follow in the footsteps of our pedagogy, which for some time has examined critically what we teach in professional communication and why, exploring the implications of more politically informed instruction.

Basic to this critical, politically informed—or, to use Paulo Freire's term, “radical” (see also Herndl, “Teaching” 349)—pedagogy has been a belief that instruction in professional communication ought to do more than enable students to acquire a “set of skills” useful to them in the workplace (Sullivan 384)—a form of instruction that Thomas Miller calls “teaching writing as a technique of information processing” (70). Such skills-oriented instruction, scholars in professional communication claim, ignores the political dimension—ignores, in other words, the roles students play as citizens and “responsible political agents” (Sullivan 380–81)—and reduces students' abilities to engage in social action (C. Miller 21; T. Miller 70; Sullivan 384). Without instruction that centers on social action, Susan Wells asserts, “the aim of the discipline is to become a more responsive tool” (247), and, Dale Sullivan claims, professional communication becomes “rhetoric appropriate for slaves—those barred from making decisions about the ends” (380).

Rather than encouraging instruction of this kind, politically oriented scholars believe that professional communication pedagogy ought to enable students to learn about the “network of social relations on the job” (Wells 262), thus giving students the means to “interpret the shared assumptions and values of a professional community and apply them to solve its practical problems in ways that serve public needs” (T. Miller 71). In doing so, this pedagogy should aim to increase students' awareness, enabling them to “identify the relations of power that block” communication and to “work within the structures of technical discourse” so that—in their academic lives and later in the workplace—they can “negotiate [these structures'] demands but also be aware of the limited but real possibility of moving beyond them” (Wells 264). Students may then be empowered, acquiring

“cultural self-consciousness in which they neither accommodate nor merely oppose the social order—both positions being still circumscribed by the structure—but can actively reposition themselves within it” (Herndl, “Teaching” 351; see also “Tactics” 456).

This political orientation in professional communication pedagogy has been useful in suggesting new directions for classroom instruction. Unlike pedagogy, however, research in professional communication has been slow to take a political turn. Rather, Carl Herndl claims, our research has been “dominated by a research strategy that is descriptive and explanatory, rarely critical” (“Teaching” 349; see also Blyler, “Research” 289–93 and “Narrative” 343–45; Herndl, “Tactics” 455; and C. Miller 16–17 for a discussion of research directed primarily toward description). Hence, Herndl asserts, our research “lends itself to a mode of reporting that reproduces the dominant discourse of the research site and spends relatively little energy analyzing the modes and possibilities for dissent, resistance, and revision—the very issues that lie at the heart of radical pedagogy” (Herndl, “Teaching” 349).

Of course, a number of factors may motivate this avoidance of politically oriented research—research that addresses, in a critical way, the possibilities Herndl mentions for dissent, resistance, and revision. From the tradition of the social sciences, for example, researchers in professional communication have inherited deeply ingrained notions of the appropriate means and ends of research (Herndl, “Teaching” 349)—notions that could be severely challenged by a more political orientation. In “Research as Ideology in Professional Communication,” for example, I claim that work in professional communication has been heavily influenced by a functionalist ideology, where the goals are the investigation, prediction, and control of a reality seen as existing external to the self (289–93). When such an ideology directs research, description and explanation are the logical results.

In addition, undertaking politically oriented work might make fulfilling such professional and personal needs as those for research access and funding considerably more difficult. Regarding access, for example, the current interest in ethnographic research (Debs 239; Doheny-Farina 253; Herndl, “Writing” 320) makes more urgent the demand for sites where

ethnographic observations can be conducted. Gaining access to these sites, however, can be hard even when researchers' only purposes are to describe, and thus better understand and explain, the settings they study (Cross 44; Rogers 42). Access becomes that much more difficult when the goal of the research involves critique (Herndl, "Tactics" 468) that can create the potential for social action and fundamental change.

Regarding funding, monetary support for research has frequently been tied to "sponsors" from organizational settings who underwrite the work in order to get "timely solutions" to their problems (Suchan 476). When solving what sponsors perceive to be their most pressing problems is no longer the focus of research, obtaining funding—like obtaining access—becomes a harder task (Blyler, "Research" 309).

Despite these very real complications, however, calls have gone out for an increasingly political focus to research in professional communication (Herndl, "Tactics" and "Teaching"; Blyler, "Research" and "Narrative"). Herndl's voice has been the strongest, calling for a mode of research that studies "the relation of discourse . . . to ideological and cultural production" and "the social, political, and economic sources of power which authorize" the production of meaning ("Teaching" 350, 351). Labeling research that does not include these dimensions "dangerously incomplete" ("Teaching" 351), Herndl recommends "new research to investigate the ideological work and the struggles that occur within professional discourse" ("Teaching" 361): what he terms the "ideologically coercive effects of institutional and professional discourse" ("Tactics" 455).

Although Herndl has been the strongest advocate for a political turn in our research, he has not been alone. In particular, several scholars have focused on the political implications of the research methods we use and the claims we make about what we can discover. Patricia Sullivan and James Porter, for example, assert that

if you see the study of nonacademic writing as the activity of going "out there" and bringing back to the curriculum, you run the risk of accepting uncritically the methodologies associated with the

social sciences. . . . Research in this scenario is simply "information collection." (236)

In the same vein, Mary Beth Debs urges us to be guided by "self-conscious reflection" concerning "the consequences" of our "research choices," "seek[ing] to understand the tensions [our methods] create" (252). And finally, Stephen Doheny-Farina suggests that, because "a methodology is largely a rhetorical enterprise," we ought to "expose the arguments that guide our research actions" (263). The more we expose these arguments, he claims, "the more ethical our research can be" (254).

Given these calls for reorienting our research to include a political dimension, I believe the time has come to consider alternatives to our traditional descriptive, explanatory approach. In this article, therefore, I suggest that a perspective found in other workplace- and education-oriented disciplines—the critical perspective—presents us with a viable and useful alternative.

THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

As an outgrowth of the interpretive turn (Mumby, "Critical" 18–19), the critical perspective is concerned not with describing and explaining a given aspect of reality, but rather with discovering what that aspect of reality means to social actors (Putnam 32) and how—through discursive acts—it came to be (Deetz and Kersten 154, 161; Mumby, "Critical" 18). Like all interpretive research, then, critical research is "meaning-centered" (Putnam 32).

Critical research, however, differs from other interpretive approaches (for example, the naturalistic [Putnam 47]) in a number of ways—most particularly, for my purposes, in its focus on social action (Deetz and Kersten 148; see Grossberg 88–97 for a discussion of other important aspects of critical research—notably, its self-conscious recognition of the "close, even necessary relationship between knowledge and politics" and hence its rejection of "the innocence and neutrality of knowledge" [88]). That is, in addition to "explicat[ing]" social reality, critical research aims to "[examine] the way the present conditions came about and are maintained for the purpose of understanding, critiquing, and changing

them" (Deetz and Kersten 154; see also Putnam 32). Critical research, therefore, aims at empowerment (Grossberg 95–96) and emancipation: By "introduc[ing] radical doubt into sedimented modes of thought," critical research "foster[s] the kind of self-reflection that enables us to recognize how it is that common sense understandings of the world arise" (Mumby, "Critical" 24; see also Putnam 48). In doing so, critical research attempts to "contribute to the establishment of free and open communication situations in which societal, organizational, and individual interests can be mutually accomplished" (Deetz and Kersten 148).

In order to foster empowerment and emancipation, critical researchers redefine a number of aspects of the research process, including—again, for my purposes—the relationship between researcher and participants and the goal of research.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS

In a descriptive, explanatory approach, researchers take "a standpoint outside—looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, 'reading' a given reality" (Clifford 11). By maintaining this standpoint outside—this separation—from participants, researchers try to affect the process as little as possible and thereby maintain objectivity. Dennis Mumby describes this objectifying relationship:

Ideally, the researcher plays the role of passive observer, serving only to manipulate the appropriate variables, and to describe the effects of such manipulations as dispassionately as possible, using a neutral observation language. If the researcher is deemed to have influenced his or her object of study in any way other than via the research instrument used, then any data collected are considered to be contaminated. (*Communication* 143)

Critical researchers, however, point to the potential for control and domination in this objective stance and the separation it engenders, asserting that "most research takes place 'behind the backs' of the social actors whose worlds we provide accounts of" (Mumby, "Critical" 20). Hence, this stance—which

organizational researcher William Whyte calls the "professional expert model" (8)—has been viewed in negative terms as "the universal calculus of putatively disinterested objective analysis" (McLaren, "Field" 158 and "Collision" 284).

Critical researchers, therefore, wish to recast this objective relationship, "[rejecting] the privileged status of the analyst" (Grossberg 94) and attempting to "break down the bifurcation" (Mumby, "Critical" 20) between researcher and participants: "If," says Mumby, "critical research wishes to remain true to its emancipatory impulse, we must find ways to overcome the continued marginalization of those whom we study" ("Critical" 21).

One of these ways is to view research, not as a process involving objectivity on the part of the researcher, but instead as a collaboration—as what Peter McLaren calls "a hermeneutical journey of self-discovery" ("Field" 158). In this journey, "the researcher is constantly challenged by events and by ideas, information, and arguments posed by the project participants" (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes 42), because researcher and participants are at once "partners" (McLaren, "Collision" 285) and co-learners engaged in their common research process ("Field" 158 and "Collision" 293).

In such a conception, the researcher is no longer dominant and in control—no longer the "sole arbiter of what counts as knowledge" (Mumby, "Critical" 20). Instead, knowledge is "generated via a dialectic" between researcher and participants (Mumby, *Communication* 146), where the participants—not the researcher—arrive at research questions that matter to them and search for the answers they require: "The other," McLaren asserts,

has a hermeneutical privilege in naming the issues before it and in developing an analysis of its situation appropriate to its context. . . . The marginalized have the first right to name reality, to articulate how social reality functions, and to decide how the issues are to be organized and defined. ("Field" 161)

Given this hermeneutical privilege accorded to participants, critical researchers believe that the way "research subjects name experience and place labels

on their sense of reality should be the primary elements" shaping the work (McLaren and Lankshear 406), as critical research is done "with and not on a group" (McLaren, "Field" 154; see also Anderson and Irvine 89; McLaren and Lankshear 406).

In order to do research with, and not on, a group, critical researchers feel they must in a self-conscious way attempt to understand and to articulate the values and interests they as researchers bring to their tasks: how, that is, they are positioned as investigators in a research process where personal and institutional forces influence their work (McLaren and Lankshear 383; see also McLaren, "Collision" 282) and where they inhabit a "paradoxical situation—existing in the heart of the beast, so to speak, in one of the most powerful and complex ideological institutions" (Grossberg 88). For example, McLaren—who terms this need for self-understanding and self-articulation the "politics of disclosure"—told the teachers he worked with in one study that he had been "ideologically shaped by discourses of critical theory" and that he wanted to use this theory "in order to build a more transformative agenda for schools to adopt." The teachers, thus, were "aware of the politics of [McLaren's] research" from the beginning of the study, just as he was aware of his own "socially determined position within the reality [he was] attempting to describe" ("Field" 156–57).

Self-understanding and self-articulation, however, are not the only initiatives critical researchers undertake—leading as they may to a form of self-congratulatory "elitism" that ignores the "complex and contradictory" connections between "knowledge and social power" and therefore "expresses the power" critical researchers "claim to oppose" (Grossberg 88). Critical researchers also believe that they must be proactive in attempting to "[transform] the various ways in which [their] subject formation" influences the research (McLaren, "Field" 160 and "Collision" 286). Hence, says McLaren, researchers must "engage in a form of theoretical decolonization, that is, in a critical way of unlearning accepted ways of thinking" ("Field" 152; see also "Collision" 276), with the intent of "seek[ing] out that which, for whatever reasons, is being kept off the agenda" (Grossberg 89) and hence altering their own research practices. As such, this proactive stance relates directly to

the primary goal critical researchers have for the work they do.

RESEARCH GOAL

The primary goal of descriptive, explanatory research is to better understand, in an objective fashion, the phenomena being studied, using either quantitative or qualitative means (Putnam 40–41, 53). The primary goal of critical research, however, is emancipatory: to "free individuals from sources of domination" (Putnam 47) and to effect social action (Deetz and Kersten 148). In doing so, critical researchers are deeply concerned about issues of ideology and power.

Critical researchers define ideology as "outside what is in one's head . . . the organizing force for theories, attitudes, values, and so forth" (Deetz and Mumby 23). As "the medium through which social reality, consciousness, and meaningfulness are created" (Deetz and Kersten 162), ideology serves to structure our experience. Ideology is, then, "the interpretive frame within which each social actor is able to make sense of the practices in which he or she and others engage in the process of social interaction" (Deetz and Mumby 43). "Through ideology," say Stanley Deetz and Astrid Kersten, "we not only come to see the world around us in a particular way, we also become a part of that world and come to define ourselves in terms of it" (162): By "ordering [social] practices into a coherent lived-world," Mumby claims, "ideology constitutes subjectivity" (*Communication* 88).

This constituting of subjectivity, assert critical researchers, does not occur in an innocent fashion. Rather, it is related to power, which they define as "the enablement of particular practices" (Grossberg 95). Power accrues to those who can "structure their interests" into the routines of day-to-day social life (Mumby, *Communication* 89; see also Deetz and Mumby 38). Hence, "power is embedded in the normal, taken-for-granted order" of things within "the routine practice of everyday life," exerting a subtle form of control over our subjectivity and "protect[ing] the taken-for-granted reality from critical examination" (Deetz and Kersten 164, 165; see also McLaren and Lankshear 404–05).

When the taken-for-granted is protected from examination, hegemony occurs (Mumby, *Communication* 73): "Dominant meaning formations" are reified "as the natural, sensible order of things," and "a view of reality which maintains and supports the interests of dominant groups" while "suppress[ing] those of subordinate groups" is articulated (Mumby, *Communication* 73).

Because critical researchers believe that examining ideological domination is essential if empowerment and emancipation are to occur, they focus on "ideological critique" (Anderson and Irvine 91). They study, therefore, inequalities of power and "forms of closure and domination" (Deetz and Kersten 167), both within the research process itself and within other aspects of social reality—inequalities and forms of domination, then, that they as researchers take for granted (McLaren, "Field" 150) and that their participants take for granted as well (Deetz and Kersten 167).

In doing so, critical researchers wish to "situate and analyze" their own research practices "within larger structures of power and privilege," asking "whose interests are being served by our research efforts?" (McLaren, "Field" 150). Critical researchers also wish to help participants "understand the literalness of their reality, the context in which such a reality is articulated, and how their experiences are imbricated in contradictory, complex, and changing vectors of power" (McLaren and Lankshear 407). Put another way, critical researchers help "identify" and "nurture" the "ongoing struggles of concrete people in concrete situations" (Grossberg 94). In doing so, critical researchers hope to foster empowerment and emancipation—to foster, that is, the development of "partial, contingent, but necessary historical truths that will enable the many public spheres that make up our social and institutional life to be emancipated" (McLaren and Lankshear 414).

To scholars in professional communication, critical research—with its redefinition of the relationship between researcher and participants and its emphasis on empowerment and emancipation—may appear to be too radical a departure from our more familiar descriptive, explanatory approach. In other fields, however, researchers have been interested in critical research for some time. In the next section, I discuss

examples of work being done in other fields that fits under the rubric of critical research.

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL RESEARCH

I should note, first of all, that critical research cuts across disciplines: Researchers in sociology, cultural anthropology, organizational and managerial communication, and education, to name just a few fields, are undertaking critical research. In addition, critical research is informed by a number of different theoretical perspectives—for example, poststructuralist, feminist, radical pedagogical, and neo-Marxist influences are clear. And finally, critical research encompasses a variety of methodologies, including both qualitative—for example open-ended interviews, surveys, and direct observations (Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 10)—and quantitative ones. It would be a mistake, then, to claim that critical researchers use only qualitative methodologies or that they are inherently biased against quantitative means for conducting research. Indeed, concerning methodologies, Lawrence Grossberg claims that

critical researchers can and should take advantage of the full range of sophisticated methodological tools available, rearticulating the practices of the so-called empirical tradition into their own theoretical and political projects. (87)

Regardless, however, of differences in discipline, theoretical perspective, or methodology, critical researchers have in common their interests in redefining the relationship between researcher and participants and achieving an emancipatory goal.

So that scholars in professional communication can better appreciate both the diversity of work informed by the critical perspective and its commonalities, I discuss three examples here: feminist, radical educational, and participatory action research. These examples should be of interest because, individually, they touch on initiatives (for example, feminism, radical pedagogy, and organizational and managerial communication) already underway in our field.

FEMINIST RESEARCH

Though feminist researchers may not use the term "critical" in connection with their work—and indeed,

though they differ significantly in a variety of ways (Harding, "Introduction" 7)—a number of feminist researchers are clearly interested in what I would term a critical research agenda. In particular, these researchers wish to interrogate existing methods of inquiry (Behar and Gordon, "Preface" xi; Duelli Klein 90–93; Harding, "Introduction" and "Conclusion"; Stanley and Wise 165–68), examining questions other than those studied in traditional social science analyses—specifically, questions having to do with women's experiences (Du Bois 108; Duelli Klein 89; Harding, "Introduction" 6–8; Smith 91; Stanley and Wise 165)—and doing so in alternate ways (Behar 5–8; Du Bois 110–11; Duelli Klein 89, 91–93; Harding, "Introduction" 8–10; Mies 120; Smith). Indeed, Barbara Du Bois terms this feminist approach, with its interest in alternate means of study, "passionate scholarship" (105).

As the term "passionate scholarship" suggests, these feminist researchers are similar to other critical researchers in rejecting the concept of "scientific knowledge-seeking" as "value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth" (Harding, "Conclusion" 182; see also Du Bois 105–106; Duelli Klein 94; Smith 88, 91), while also rejecting the relationship between researcher and participants that this stance involves (Du Bois 111–12; Harding, "Conclusion" 181). Says Sandra Harding, "We need to avoid the 'objectivist' stance that attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects [*sic*] beliefs and practices to the display board" ("Introduction" 9). We need, says Renate Duelli Klein, to replace "the 'value-free objectivity' of traditional research" with "conscious subjectivity," where the researcher's and the participants' experiences are both viewed as valid within the research process (94; Mies 122 uses the term "conscious partiality" for this view).

These feminist researchers, moreover, have an emancipatory goal: They see feminism as "a movement for social change" (Harding, "Conclusion" 182; see also Mies 124–27), where the participants, rather than the researcher, identify the issues to be addressed. Hence, "the feminist researcher is led to design projects that . . . women want and need" (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 23; see also Hard-

ing, "Introduction" 8). Harding summarizes this emancipatory thrust:

The questions the oppressed group [in this case, women] wants answered are rarely requests for so-called pure truth. Instead, they are queries about how to change its conditions; how its world is shaped by forces beyond it; how to win over, defeat, or neutralize those forces arrayed against forth. ("Introduction" 8)

Ethnographic work informed by feminist theory is one example of feminist critical research. (See, however, Stacey on the impossibility of a "fully feminist ethnography" [26], because of "difficult contradictions between feminist principles and ethnographic method" [22].) As part of a "profoundly self-reflexive moment in anthropology" (7), feminist ethnographic research—Frances Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Cohen claim—addresses questions of domination and power arising during the ethnographic research process (11). Feminist ethnographers, therefore, do not maintain a separation from their participants, which would "deny and diffuse their claims to subjecthood" (12) and ensure the researcher's domination over the participants' experiences. Rather, feminist ethnographers attempt to counter domination and "overcome these power relations by framing research questions according to the desires of the oppressed group," by remaining "suspicious of relationships with 'others' that do not include a close and honest scrutiny of the motivations for research," and "by choosing to do work that 'others' want and need" (33). The goal of such work is emancipatory: to "merge our scholarship with a clear politics to work against the forces of oppression" (33).

As one instance of such feminist ethnography, Deborah Gordon describes critical literacy work in a "community-based program of action research initiated by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies . . . at Hunter College" (377). Termed "the El Barrio project," this program was begun in order to "study educational patterns in a community [the Puerto Rican community of East Harlem] with a high rate of high school dropouts" (377). The women who participated learned to read and write, thus acquiring skills

that enabled them both to "[challenge] power dynamics that structured family relations" and to "continue their education without risking the isolation that so often accompanies women's withdrawal from taking care of men and children" (378). Claims Gordon, "In the El Barrio project, literacy work became a lifestyle of resistance forged by the women participants, with researchers and tutors acting as guides and interpreters" (378).

Feminist sociological work is a second example of feminist critical research. Laurel Richardson, to name one such researcher, attempts to tell "the collective story of the disempowered"—in her case, "single women involved in long term relationships with married men." "By placing [these women's] lives within the context of larger social and historical forces, and by directing energy towards changing those social structures which perpetuate injustice," Richardson seeks to establish a "liberation narrative" and to empower those whom she studies (204; see also Mies 128–36 for another account of a feminist sociological project informed by what I would call critical principles).

RADICAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Radical educational research is influenced by Freirian pedagogy (Anderson and Irvine 82, 89–90; McLaren and Lankshear 380; McLaren and Leonard) and neo-Marxist theoretical formulations (Anderson and Irvine 85; McLaren, "Collision" 271 and "Critical" 230). In their work, radical educational researchers seek to confront issues of power and domination (McLaren, "Field" 150, 152), asking questions such as the following: "Under what conditions and to what ends do we, as educational researchers, enter into relations of cooperation, mutuality, and reciprocity with those whom we research?" (McLaren, "Collision" 273).

Rejecting the "epistemological closure of the so-called objectivity and scientificity" of traditional educational research (McLaren, "Collision" 282; see also Anderson and Irvine 85), these researchers redefine the relationship between researcher and participants as one of collaboration (McLaren, "Collision" 293), where participants "are always necessarily partners in the research and not inert referents abstracted from social history and practice" (McLaren, "Collision"

285). For example, calling the traditional research approach in education "vampirism" and "voyeurism" ("Collision" 287), McLaren calls on educational researchers to "[refuse] to analyze in the mode of the dominator" ("Field" 152). These researchers should instead understand how they are positioned, "develop[ing] the will and the competence to reposition their sites of enunciation and narrative authority and to make choices outside the comfort and danger of an a priori standard based on Western, monocultural, and universal constructions of identity and difference" ("Collision" 291). The goal of radical—or critical—educational research is thus liberatory and emancipatory: Say McLaren and Lankshear, to define the "research practices" that "must exist in order to restore the marginalized and disenfranchised to history" (401).

Ethnographic work in critical literacy is one example of critical educational research. In this work, "literacy practitioners and their students," as well as academic researchers, undertake research projects that originate in "generative" themes having to do with conflicts "in the lives of all project members" (Anderson and Irvine 83, 92). By arriving at a problem all wish to study and by "investigat[ing] how the problem is manifested locally" (Anderson and Irvine 92), these collaborators and co-learners seek "critical literacy praxis" that will "challenge social inequality" (Anderson and Irvine 96, 97). In this way, participants in critical literacy projects are empowered to change the circumstances of their educational lives.

One ethnographic project in critical literacy, for example, involved West Indian Creole students at the University of the Virgin Islands. Angered at being placed in a noncredit remedial English class, these students and their co-investigators researched how this problem had arisen—in part, because of deficiencies in the preparation in English available at local high schools—and what, in terms of curricular changes at the high school level, might be done (Anderson and Irvine 92, 98).

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

As an applied social scientific approach used in organizational behavior research (Whyte) and in grassroots social action movements in developing coun-

tries around the world (Fals-Borda and Rahman), participatory action research (PAR) "is not exclusively research oriented." Instead, PAR combines education and sociopolitical action with research to form "three stages, or emphases" (Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 3) in a research methodology where "research and action are closely linked" (Whyte 8). As such, PAR focuses on experiences, projects, and problems important to the participants in the research (Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 3-4) and is emancipatory, "reach[ing] social action groups, grassroots animators, intellectuals, and government officials with a constructive message adapted to present needs for social and economic change" (Fals-Borda and Rahman vii).

In work informed by PAR, researchers reject what Orlando Fals-Borda terms "the asymmetry implicit in the subject/object relationship that characterizes traditional academic research" ("Some Basic" 4). PAR researchers feel that this asymmetry "must be transformed into subject/subject" (Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 5; see also Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 152), as participants join "actively with the professional researcher throughout the research process from the initial design to the final presentation of results and discussion of their action implications" (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes 19; see also Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 6-7). The outcome is a "dialectical tension" occurring between researcher and participants—a tension that "can be resolved only through practical commitment, that is, through a form of praxis," where "academic knowledge combined with popular knowledge and wisdom may result in total scientific knowledge of a revolutionary nature" (Fals-Borda, "Some Basic" 4; see also Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 146, 151) and where social action is the final result (Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 151-52). In PAR, therefore, both researcher and participants "recognize that despite their otherness they seek the mutual goal of advancing knowledge in search of greater justice" (Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 152).

Although in PAR researcher and participants have this mutual goal, PAR researchers stress that the particular strategies used in one situation should not be replicated in others (Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 149), because action situations differ one from another. Hence, "freedom to explore and to recreate . . .

is . . . another essential characteristic" of PAR (Fals-Borda, "Remaking" 149).

As an example of PAR, one such project was undertaken at Xerox Corporation, where labor and management worked jointly with the researcher to solve their common problem: the need to realize savings of \$3.2 million in order to avoid closing a department, eliminating positions, and outsourcing the department's work. In this PAR project, the researcher did not provide answers to the participants' problem. Rather, as a consultant and facilitator, he "proposed a process leading to diagnosis and problem solution. . . . The labor and management teams did the research, digging out the facts and figures and organizing and writing the reports." As a result, PAR led to "a powerful process of organizational learning—a process whereby leaders of labor and management learned from each other and from the consultant/facilitator while he learned from them" (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes 30), as together researcher and participants more than achieved their target goal of \$3.2 million (28).

As the preceding discussion indicates, critical researchers in many fields have discovered that the critical perspective offers a viable and useful alternative to a descriptive, explanatory research approach. There are, however, profound implications for scholars in professional communication, should they decide to adopt this perspective.

IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTING THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Adopting the critical perspective would require that scholars in professional communication reconsider a number of strongly held, disciplinary convictions about the research process. Primary among these, of course, are convictions that concern the relationship between researcher and participants and the goal of research projects: No longer remaining objective and dispassionate, the critical researcher engages with participants in that hermeneutical journey of discovery, where the goal is emancipation. In addition, however, scholars in professional communication would have to rethink their choices of research questions and sites for research, their views of the owner-

ship of research results, and the types of funding they seek for research initiatives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SITES

As mentioned, much research in professional communication focuses on generating objective, verifiable knowledge of interest to business and organizational sponsors. Research questions, therefore, are often those that sponsors want answered, and research frequently takes place at sponsors' organizations.

While critical researchers understand that their perspective cannot be applied to all research questions and is not suited to all research sites (Mumby, *Communication* 155; Whyte 8), these researchers nonetheless argue that the preceding characterization of research is far too narrow (McLaren 149-50; Mumby, *Communication* 167). In particular, critical researchers wish to address questions that, first and foremost, their participants want to have answered—be those participants women (Harding, "Introduction" 7), students and teachers (McLaren, "Field" 156-57), or members of organizations (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes 40). Moreover, critical research must be undertaken in settings where participants have the freedom and motivation to influence the research and where critical research's emancipatory goal can be reached—where, says Mumby, "radical doubt" can be introduced into "sedimented modes of thought," thus fostering "the kind of self-reflection that enables us to recognize how it is that common sense understandings of the world arise" ("Critical" 24).

Some organizations, of course, would be reluctant to embrace this emancipatory thrust of critical research: reluctant to recognize—as Xerox was not—that critical research can result in a situation where management and labor alike benefit. Given this reluctance, scholars in professional communication might follow the lead of feminist, radical educational, and participatory action researchers in selecting questions and sites more amenable to the critical perspective—those that involve marginalized groups (for example, women, students, or grassroots community workers) or questions and sites that concern factions—for example, labor and management—that have chosen to collaborate in order to solve common problems. Alternatively, scholars in professional

communication might consider educating decision makers at the sites they wish to investigate concerning critical research and its potential for creating a "win-win" situation, so that their critical approach might be better understood. In doing so, scholars might find that they experience less resistance to their research than they expect—as was indeed the case with Herndl's research at a military base ("Tactics" 469).

By reflecting in these ways on the research questions they ask and the research sites they select, scholars in professional communication and their participants might, as Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes claim, be able to "think in new ways about old and new theoretical problems" (42), thus discovering knowledge that incorporates critical research's interest in emancipation and that advances social action.

OWNERSHIP OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Currently, research results are viewed as the property of research sponsors and researchers, who—in return for funding or work—have the privilege of using and/or publishing the results. Critical researchers, however, believe that this concept of ownership must change. As PAR researcher John Gaventa puts it, "fundamental questions must be raised about what knowledge is produced, by whom, for whose interests, and to what end" (131).

To critical researchers, therefore, research results belong first and foremost to the participants who—along with the researcher—shape the research questions and gather the knowledge needed to answer them (Gaventa 123-26). As Fals-Borda claims, "there is an obligation to return this knowledge systematically to the communities and workers' organizations because they continue to be its owners" ("Some Basic" 9).

This differing view of the ownership of research results also greatly affects scholars in professional communication, who must please editors and reviewers in order to publish and who must publish in order to remain in academe. How, we might ask, can these disciplinary and institutional mandates be satisfied if scholars in professional communication relinquish sole ownership of research results?

Again, however, feminist, radical educational, and participatory action researchers provide insights,

since these researchers have published—some indeed prolifically—and have advanced within academic structures, becoming known in their own and other fields. McLaren, for example, is the author of numerous books and articles, a full professor at University of California at Los Angeles, and a well-recognized scholar in critical pedagogy and cultural studies.

I do not mean, of course, to minimize the difficulties that may face academicians who attempt alternate types of research. (See Gordon 431–32 for a discussion of this complex issue in feminist ethnography.) Nonetheless, at a time when there is sound academic precedence for collaboration with research participants and different, or experimental, ways of writing research results (see Richardson 203), who owns these results should not be an insurmountable disciplinary problem or obstacle to professional advancement within academic institutions. (See, however, Gordon 431–32 for a discussion of the politics of experimental writing in feminist ethnography.) Indeed, as Beverly Sauer's study of women's experiential knowledge and technical documentation in the mining industry perhaps unwittingly suggests, returning knowledge systematically to its owners (in Sauer's case, the women) would seem to be a logical step, even within existing professional communication research.

FUNDING FOR RESEARCH INITIATIVES

When researchers seek to generate objective knowledge of interest to organizations, the sponsors of the work often represent the primary sources of funding. Adopting a critical perspective, however, may jeopardize such funding sources, "result[ing] in a withdrawal of funds and termination of the project—or else implementation of another study using researchers who are more sympathetic" (Mumby, *Communication* 153).

If, therefore, scholars in professional communication undertake critical research, they should explore sources of funding that are sympathetic to critical research's concept of participants as collaborators and co-researchers and to its emancipatory goal. Primary among these sources would be centers (Fals-Borda mentions the Participatory Research Center at the

University of Massachusetts-Amherst [158], while Gordon mentions the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter); foundations, such as the Kellogg Foundation or the Lilly Endowment, which recently issued a call for proposals designed to enhance racial and ethnic diversity at four-year independent colleges in the Midwest—a topic clearly suited to the aims of critical research; the federal government; and academic initiatives within specific institutions, such as programs in women's studies or in ethnic (for example, African-American, Native American, and Latino/Latina) studies. In considering such funding sources, however, scholars in professional communication should not neglect the possibility of educating organizations they might wish to study concerning the potential of critical research for uncovering mutually beneficial solutions to commonly held problems.

CONCLUSION

With far-reaching implications for research in professional communication, the critical perspective presents us with a significant challenge. Critical research, however, also provides us with a number of valuable opportunities—most notably, the opportunity to broaden our research horizons by redefining our relationship with research participants and achieving a different goal than that fueling descriptive, explanatory research. If we take up this challenge and seize this opportunity, we will be able to profit from initiatives already underway in other fields, thus increasing the range of research projects available to us, the scope of our understanding of the world, and the impact of our research in terms of social action. In addition, by bringing our research more in line with the political impulses of our pedagogy, we may hope with Gaventa that "the vision and view of the world that is produced by the many will be more humane, rational and liberating than the dominating knowledge of today that is generated by the few" (131). We may realize, that is, the same benefits in our research that accrue to us from our political turn in our pedagogy: the benefits of empowerment, emancipation, and social action.

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