Chapter 4. Interrogating Hidden Frames as a Path to Change

> As I said, this moment does not mark some decisive victory in gay rights—but it does within *my* sphere. It is a victory that *I* helped create within the sphere in which *I* have power to make a change.
>
> – Justine

The Problem: Interpretative Frames at Work

Social engagement is a powerful teacher that broadens the scope of learning to the way ideas, contexts, other people with their differing traditions, values and goals, interact.[1] It creates that "expansive learning" Yrjö Engeström has described in which more elements of an entire activity system, as well as its conflicts and contradictions, are recognized (Introduction). However, insight needs to pierce the veil in two directions by recognizing not only what is "out there" but also our own silent interpretive process—the assumptions, constructions, omissions—which we bring to creating our own "knowing." And it is engagement with other realities that provides the pushback to let us see what our own internal voices are saying. So this chapter will look at a way writing conjoined with engagement can let us probe and respond to those hidden interpretive frames.

The agenda in education, one that is giving critical, social, and local engagement a visible place in our pedagogy, is calling for a demanding form of praxis as Paulo Freire sees it—a cycle of action and reflection in which theory and practice interact. It is also an intersectional agenda trying to recognize forces that are described so differently in rhetoric and composition, cultural studies, communication, policy, and social movement work. And in this broad interactive space, writing, as Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters put it, "is so much more, . . . [a] strategy that can be used for learning, a way of negotiating identities within and around specific contexts, a representation of ideas, a way of participating in ideologies, a strategy for movement" ("Service-Learning" 318). That may seem like a lot to ask, especially of assigned written work in a college course. The questions here are, "How might socially engaged courses support such a strategic rhetorical art?" and "How can (can?) writing, in particular, create that space in which identity, ideology, and social interaction actually shape one another?"

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Our interdisciplinary visions of engagement often vary in their focus, whether it is on ideology, partnerships, rhetorical agency, or social action. However, for writers, one of the critical forces to be reckoned with is the role (for good and for ill) of the interpretive frames we bring to our work. Interpretive frames (as they are described in communication, policy, and psychological studies) are rhetorical, presentational devices constructed to selectively emphasize or hide features of an issue.[2] They let us make quick sense of things, prompting us, for instance, to make snap judgments about the intelligence of students based on their linguistic fluency, or style of arguing, or simply their control of academic discourse (Hull). As social constructs, interpretive frames such as those circulating through our reading and writing can provide a logic that scripts the exercise of power and exclusion. Writing, as a tool for social engagement in education, is often used to critique and challenge the frames that exclude and silence the voices of others. This chapter is about just such interpretive frames—*when these frames are our own*. And how writing—in the form of theory-guided metacognitive analysis— can be an actionable force for change for our students (and ourselves). After exploring some of the options for dealing with these frames, I want to focus on how students in a publicly engaged course translated insight into actions.

Dealing with Cultural Frames

The interrogating gaze of critical discourse has taught us to recognize those whispered voices of culturally created "common sense" and how they shape the social messages buried in our texts, arguments, assumptions, and interpretations. Ideology, one name we give to this amorphous force, supplies us with its "invested patterns of ideas that explain and justify society as it is [which in turn] establishes belief" (Dana Cloud 57). In response, cultural criticism has given us new

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2.   In argument theory, the term "framing" typically refers to a context created to present the problem in a certain light (Benford and Snow). In policy studies, frames are even more action-oriented, providing a "normative-prescriptive story that sets out a problematic policy problem and a course of action to be taken" (Rein and Schoen, qtd. in Fischer 144). As a real workhorse in the face of conflicting frames that socially construct the problem situation, they provide "conceptual coherence, a direction for action, a basis for persuasion and a framework for the collections and analysis of data—order, action, rhetoric and analysis" (Rein and Schoen, qtd. in Fischer 144). In Erving Goffman's sociological account, they go even further to re/frame or rekey a situation to transform what people think is going on in a strip of discourse (8). In psychology, the related notion of schema describes an individual's partially shared mental network of ideas, images, etc., that are learned over time rather than preconstructed (Anderson). In rhetoric, "rhetorical archetypes" such as the Gay Warrior archetype Doug Cloud has documented in military controversies, work as "repetitive, prototypical representations of identity categories that circulate widely and are used to support arguments—the 'stock characters' of rhetorical discourse" ("The Rise" 29). These variations highlight the variety of ways frames can be created and/or used.

conceptual tools to uncover ideology's presence and oppressive effects enacted through interpretive frames.

But a new take on what is missing from such critique comes from Dana Cloud, a self-described socialist, critical rhetorical scholar of political discourse, and practicing working-class activist. She has been a card-carrying member of what she calls "the Culture of Critical Discourse," or CCD. However, her recent work in *Reality Bites* marks a re-orientation to wider public change that this critical discourse, she argues, has still *failed* to enact. One problem is that the tactics of CCD she describes simply can't compete with social doxa—received common sense—as a force for social change. Moreover, this rational, analytical "perspective from which to perform criticism in the service of demystifying power" is itself an elite discourse, addressed to the already-persuaded (5). And most importantly, she argues, it fails to recognize, much less draw upon or value, the perspectives of the people marginalized or oppressed by dominant paradigms. CCD fails to represent the knowledge and stories of marginalized voices as *voices* rather than the *topic* of its critical analysis. And secondly, its rationalized rhetoric of critique simply lacks the power to compel change.

Within rhetoric and composition, one strong response to this problem of representation has been to draw out, prize, and publish the unacknowledged knowledge created in the experience of community partnerships (Goldblatt), community publishing (Parks, "Strategic") , urban teenagers (Flower, "Community Lit"), neighborhood adults (Rousculp), streetwise news writers (Mathieu), nursing aids (Flower, "Negotiating"), Native American storytellers (Cushman), Chicago street gangs (Cintron), community "instructors" (Shah), gay high school teachers (Clifton), or refugees (Long), to name a few. For the college students embedded in such projects, their own intellectual, intercultural, and sociopolitical development is also extended by writing.

Within academic criticism, the related approach Dana Cloud proposes is to refocus that "Culture of Critical Discourse" less on the markers of oppressive ideology (as *we,* of course, perceive them) and more on what is missing, what we overlook: the voices and experience of those people most subjected to the operations of such ideology.

To do so would mean first identifying the interpretive frames that are in play in, say, discussions of immigrants, welfare recipients, or first-generation students. These widely received ideological frames mediate our perception in the shape of "invisible naturalized common sense associated with a *dominant* group's interest" (Dana Cloud 63, emphasis added). Like the more specific constructs or mental schemas studied in psychological research, they are essentially "strategies for handling social truths through filtering for salience and emphasis" (61). That is, they tell us to hone in on what is both relevant (in the context *they* invoke) and important (from *their* perspective). Using interpretive frames is a normal psychological process. However, not all frames have the same ethical standing when they select for what matters, as when, for instance, they frame immigrants as a wave

or hoard of uneducated and illegal border crossers seeking to suck up our taxes and live off welfare (although, ironically, they are also assumed to be stealing our jobs). With the help of a corporately controlled media, such interpretive frames, which also tend to serve various political and financial interests, become turned into *doxa*—into common sense.

What Cloud calls for is not simply exposing or naming the pieces of such interpretive frames but, rather, asking: what is left out or covered up; whose voices are ignored or silenced; and what are the lived experiences, the values, the goals of those guest workers, asylum-seekers, and (daring or desperate) border crossers? In contrast to liberals' current obsession with the rhetoric of "fact-checking," Cloud calls for two alternative practices. The first is what she calls "frame-checking," which asks, *"Whose knowledge is it? Who is it by and who is it for? Who is left out*?"* (136). Secondly, the goal here is not just "to perform criticism in the service of demystifying power" but also to create "an oppositional 'reality-based' community that can 'bite back'" (8). She calls, that is, for a form of "rhetorical realism" that can direct and incite action.

Dana Cloud's explicit call for an altered stance to social justice would revise both the academic discourse of critique and the public, political rhetoric of "fact-checking" by drawing instead on the powerful rhetoric of what she calls the "Big Five" strategies: Narrative, Myth, Embodiment, Affect, and Spectacle. Although all these are often associated with effectively deceptive manipulation (as most any rhetorical strategy can be), the ethical test Cloud proposes is their "fidelity or faithfulness . . . to the interests and goals of the people being addressed by and constituted in them" (161). In other words, the Big Five strategies are ethical to the extent that *the voices/ concerns/interests of the marginalized are accurately represented*. Cloud, then, maps out an important path to social change based on stimulating mass social movement with tools that can scale up circulation in all sorts of mass media.

This publicly performative perspective, however, raises a real challenge for justice-oriented rhetoric and writing teachers: how do you translate the conceptual analysis of a problematic practice into action and change? Moreover, what do you do when a given practice may be marginalizing others without anyone's real intent to do so? In particular, what do we do *when that frame or practice is unconsciously our own*? Like Cloud, this chapter seeks ways to deal with these uninterrogated frames that mediate everyday interpretation. But it chooses to work at the other, individual end of the spectrum, where teachers not only probe our own frames but, in this case, help students do the same. To see what this individualized path does and doesn't offer, I want to put it briefly in context of other contemporary choices by asking: who or what is being diminished by these frames, to whom is this argument addressed, and what sort of rhetorical response, using what discourse, is being proposed?

Dana Cloud, for instance, has studied the way whistleblowers have been framed, to different effects, as heroes, traitors, or queer; or how Planned Parenthood providers are represented by the competing frames of feminism, medical

care, legalism, and religious dogmatism. Cloud is speaking to colleagues and activists in the language of cultural theory, but she is calling progressives to turn the Discourse of Cultural Critique and fact-checking into a much more persuasive rhetoric. Designed for the unpersuaded general public, her approach is working subversively, you might say, to draw them into thinking with a *new* interpretive frame. We are her allies, just in need of a better discourse tool.

A concrete instance of what this means turns up in disability studies, in which the frame of normalcy "marks disabled people as 'different' yet simultaneously demands conformity to social and material environments designed primarily for and by 'normal' bodies" (Glavin, Rhetoric). What Mary Glavan's grounded work with actual families goes on to show is that the normalcy frame conceals the rhetorical labor through which both "normal" and "difference" are constructed and perceived. That is, "the emergent, iterative, risk-ridden rhetorical labor of understanding and representing oneself in contested spaces…. where representing a "normal" self is also an agentive act, similarly shaped by networks of individual and structural relationships" (Reframing).

Dealing with Identity Frames

Uninterrogated frames may also be working closer to home. For instance, college can be a place where students can discover who they are or develop a fresh identity. It also opens its closet to a set of well-defined roles complete with all its defining garments you are asked to step into. Though once you don its hat and boots you will feel the pressure to keep them on. Identity frames that dictate choices and actions may be surprisingly insidious. A rural Appalachian student comes up to a high profile competitive urban university and the identity package (hillbilly, redneck, backwards (or underprepared, first generation in academic lingo)) is waiting at their dorm door. If you can't fit into a new costume (i.e., walk, talk, act like a prospective engineer, computer scientist, or even a historian or professional designer) your capabilities, intelligence and even value as a potential class team member will be devalued. And with this suddenly diminished sense of power, you might even buy into some of that assessment yourself.

Amanda Tennant's long-term study of this expectation showed, however, that some students place a high value on their Appalachian identity, with its deeply held values for family and loyalty in a working-class community—an identity they don't want to give up ("Rhetorical College Experience"). But holding onto that old identity frame would come at a cost. In the studies Tennant reviews, power among marginalized communities is often theorized as the ability to navigate the conflicting pressures to pass as members of the dominant, succeed academically, fit in and be accepted socially, while on the other hand, to maintain and honor connections to their backgrounds or group, and critique and resist their marginalization. Yet these pressures are frequently at odd with one another; when one type of power is gained, another is lost.

In this case the identity some students brought with them did not actually stay hidden. However, they crafted a remarkable alternative way to gain power with what Tennant calls *rhetorical (in)visibility.* That is, they undertook the first step of strategic self-reflection to discover which markers were "tellable" in public discourse ("mountaineer talk" is fine) and which (your firearms and "cricks"*)* were not. Taking the next step, to weigh the risk and rewards of these markers in terms of power, allowed them to turn (in)visibility into a strategic rhetorical choice. For instance, students found they could carefully distance themselves from the "untellable" even as they maintained connections to home. Or they would transform Appalachian identity into a marker of diversity. In their writing they learned to draw on the rhetorical power of experiential knowledge, but do so in ways that that readers would not recognize it as an "Appalachian" experience (681). Here is a case where self-reflection let students rise to a conscious awareness of the potential for power tied each of these identify frames. And by crafting an effective rhetorical strategy, to avoid being co-opted by either one.

Nine years later when Tenant returned to interview these graduates, she found they were still quite aware of their strategies for *rhetorical (in)visibility* and even critical of some of their older ones. However, two who had already achieved well-paying jobs on the West Coast, had moved back home to Appalachia, by choice! Ben has translated what is called the Appalachian black hole (escape) narrative into a new frame: the pressure to return home driven by family and values. Their old college friends, who couldn't understand why, kept pressuring them to "get the heck out of there" and go where the money was. But these graduates' reasons speak to the direct rejection of a frame they knew so well: the objective of a college education is to gain wealth and status, that is, get out of Appalachia, abandon that identity, and make money. As Tennant puts it, "Ben resists the assumption that he has failed to live up the expectations for exceptional Appalachians who escape their home region to achieve success and wealth on the West Coast." Instead, Ben and April have come to "frame a narrative of success in terms of place" and its ability to foster "experiential knowledge, [defined as] exposure to the natural world and strong family connections" (*Rhetorical Cultural Experience*). This has become an inspiring study of "reframing."

Unfortunately, some identity frames, such as the role of being a social advocate, come with an almost obligatory script: taking an assertive, even aggressive personal and rhetorical stance may seem a given. People become advocates for a cause because they care or are even passionate about making change. And when the issue involves race or sex or cultural identity they may do so because their own personhood is at stake. As a frame, advocacy dictates both one's role and rhetorical stance—and writers typically expect or demand that readers take their trademark stance.

But in *Arguing Identity and Human Rights,* Doug Cloud opens a new and powerful path as he explores the presence, benefits, and limitations that alternative often competing models of argument and advocacy can give us. What are

the tradeoffs of downplaying versus asserting difference or agency, of responding to clichés or asserting a theoretical stance? Building on his subtitle, *Among Rival Options,* this scholarly exploration is uniquely engaging because it is about *choice,* including his own history. For example, in the 1980s Larry Kramer (founder of ACT UP) went after not only the homophobes and government institutions ignoring AIDS, but gay college students themselves ("queer kids") like Cloud. Stridently arguing they weren't "angry enough" Kramer told them that a cool, calm, rational tone (that universal standard of good communication) was no more than a capitulation to white supremacy. Advocacy was attack, and writers should use their own discomfort in order to forcibly create it in others. Looking back, Cloud sees that rival options were not in this identity guide.

> It's easy to see how a young person could read his words and, without a competing narrative, come to think that good activists are angry activists. But I don't want to be an angry activist. I've already done that, and although it was completely appropriate to my situation at the time, it took a terrible toll on me. Today, I choose to go a different way, though the actual choice has unfolded over years. (142)

The issue here is *choice* and how identity frames not only silently interpret your appropriate role, but close down some powerful options.

> For me, a problem-solving state is much more effective. I do my best work when I focus on the options at hand and their probable outcomes, rather than dwell on the moral urgency of combatting White supremacy, of which I am already convinced. This mindset pushes me beyond discomfort, and helps me ask action-oriented questions like these. . . . (144)

This inquiry into *choice* can be one of the most powerful strategies a rhetorician has.

Dealing with Educational Frames

By contrast, a recent statement from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) issues a proclamation, explicitly focused on racism, addressed to academics not as fellow activists but as the locus of the problem. Its very title, "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a <u>DEMAND</u> for Black Linguistic Justice," challenges the assumption that the white, socially constructed norms of "academic language" and "standard English" are desirable standard and demands "widespread systemic change" in our curricula, our discourse, and our commitments as teachers (2020). A direct descendent of the rhetoric of Black Lives Matter and the anti-Black violence movement, it takes its forcefully assertive style into the quiescent space of our classrooms and journals. Disinterested

in our good intentions or history of merely principled, supportive "statements," it demands a change in practice. Positioning white readers as the outsiders, speaking, you might say, more "at" than "to" a white us, it jars us into consciousness. The effect of this shift from Doug Cloud's collegial, doable argument to one clearly implicating the reader in the problem has a parallel described in James Cone's classic *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*. As he sees it, the shockingly radical demands of Malcolm X made previously resistant people turn to Martin Luther King as a welcome model of moderation.

As part of the contemporary academic discussion of racism, this DEMAND is an institutionally embedded statement. In choosing to take an adversarial rhetorical style with its own National Council of Teachers of English constituency, it throws some of the other options in this conversation into relief. One could, for instance, choose to *theorize* anti-racism in broad generalities, urging us to critique our own "humanist" assumptions (Boyle). Other approaches *describe* ways it turns up in language (Bosmajian; Villanueva) or *uncover* forms of microaggression or color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva). Whether the focus is on our own or public frames, what unites these approaches is their focus on race.

Another set of discourses, more clearly focused on educational frames, speak directly to teachers and theorists, addressing them as colleagues and people of good will—who are often trapped in the doxa of education and its unexamined, marginalizing frames. These contemporary voices may draw on Paulo Freire or Antonio Gramsci, but they locate the problem right in our own classroom practice. In *AntiRacist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, Asao Inoue argues that we are "missing important opportunities to interrogate the dominant discourse as normative or interrogating the hegemonic ways of evaluating texts in classrooms" (19). If we talk about the rhetorical demands of a text with the stock phrases of evaluation (e.g., unity, details, development, and organization), "how will [students] negotiate the ways that any 'text is evaluated' against a dominant white discourse?" (19). However, in place of direct classroom interrogation of that form of hegemony, he asserts that the problem is *assessment itself*.

Inoue sees his larger social/political purpose as challenging "White habitus reinforced," as he says, "by other discourses of empiricism: objectivity, neutrality, hyper individualism, unsentimental, detached discussion, and a Cartesian *Cogito*" (112). But in his own highly diverse classes of students who have had those dominant (racist) criteria used to dismiss and devalue them as writers, his response is to replace the standard processes of evaluating writing with student dialogues in which the class itself negotiates and develops the criteria for an effectual text. Individual grades, then, are based primarily on measurements of the "labor" the writer puts into developing, discussing, and creating that text. This response is designed to make those (often internalized) frames that define one's identity as a writer simply irrelevant. And the measure of success is seeing students reflect on the remarkable discovery that they had choice within rubrics, such as organization, and that disagreement was acceptable (e.g., did the thesis

really *have* to be up front, and apparently you *could* use "I"). And in some cases, this new confidence even translated into the motivation to learn some of those "standard" features.

Like Inoue, I wanted the students in my publicly engaged courses described in previous chapters to question the interpretative frames they use to evaluate their writing and to engage with others. In Inoue's case, the competing frames students needed to recognize were those of upper level "theme writing" and a formally "well-developed essay." However, in my community-engaged courses, success was more likely to depend on rhetorical invention, demanding both discovery and change. And the assessment frame in the headlights here was application: are you able to apply your learning to a new rhetorical situation, to take it beyond theory or generalized concepts into situated practice?

Using the Lens of Frame Analysis

A final new educational alternative to consider would not just critique frames but change them. Rather than focus on a given problematic frame used by others, such as "Standard English," it would put the frame in context, in an expanded universe—in an ecological frame. The metaphor of rhetorical *ecologies*, as Nathaniel Rivers and Ryan Weber use it, replaces the tidy image of a communication triangle with an expanded rhetorical universe of social action through public rhetoric. Using the Montgomery Bus Boycott, they model an ecological analysis that translates this rhetorical situation into a dynamic, intensely networked rhetorical and material landscape. Their analysis turns a short story of Rosa Parks' courageous action and Martin Luther King's leadership into a fully staged drama sustained by a "diverse environment of mundane, concatenated texts and counter-rhetorics," which includes not only letters and speeches but "newsletters, internal memos, proposals, strategy documents, images of protests and the spaces . . . that shaped and were shaped by rhetorical activity" (196-97). Without the energy that circulated through this network, the Bus Boycott's 381-day joint effort would never have been sustained. When students take this ecological orientation in a public rhetoric class project, it becomes a tool that transforms their "background" research—giving it "an expanded scope that views rhetorical action as emergent and enacted through a complex ecology of texts, writers, readers, institutions, objects and history" (188). Like Dana Cloud's frame checking, it zooms out, embedding us in a larger cast of characters.

This brief review of approaches to the work and the danger of frames suggests the rich diversity of our field's own interpretative frames for dealing with *representations that marginalize* others. And because the success of substantive *social* change (i.e., not just political reorganization) is never complete and rarely stable, I believe we need to work on multiple fronts and down all the paths we can muster. This study of hidden frames will describe yet another way to instantiate change, though not only a public voice but also by supporting individual, self-conscious

action in everyday social interactions with family, colleagues, a classroom or community. The goal of this alternative rhetoric was to help students create a local path to action, starting with a theory-guided investigation of frames at work in their own, often-unquestioned practice. In doing so, students soon began to notice the previously undetected consequences of their actions at work within the ecology of a family, an institution, a class, within policy documents and class plans, in subsequent lectures, formal meetings, and uneasy conversations with peers, as well as in some unanticipated effects on a wide body of students.

Finally, frame analysis can be turned into a detailed yet coherent way to present what Alex Helberg calls a "contextually aware strategic communication plan." His study of two ideologically and locally competing food donating programs—one doing their civic duty to combat waste, the other with an anarchist agenda to combat poverty based on political capitalism. To help activists understand what they are facing, he created a brief guide for "How to Frame a Complex Systemic Issue." Designed as a table, it names three key moves we can make to develop a coherent set of *problem/solution framing* strategies, a set of *conceptual metaphors* to help simplify the complexity of the issue, and a coherent and discrete set of *identities* & roles for your prospective participants. In the Guide each frame is explored with Generative Questions and Examples, such as "Who has the ability to take action on behalf of this issue?" and What are their "identity markers?" The examples allow a close comparison of the stance of the (well-off) citizen "Food Rescue Heroes" to that of the Food Not Bombs anarchist group dedicated to "fighting the greed and power" of institutions and business. His use of a data-based frame analysis created an insightful guide to dealing with a complex, politically charged situation with a strategic community plan.

The Metacognitive Path: From Analysis to Reflection to Actionable Critical Consciousness

Like the critical and rhetorical approaches noted earlier, social movement studies map a road to action, with a difference. In Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow's extraordinary review of that research, what really matters is the *transformation* and *use* of interpretive frames. In this action-oriented context, frames are not merely the hidden perpetrators of exclusion scripted by interest and power; they are the rhetorical engine driving social action. Frames interpret the "world out there" (such as the detention of *illegal immigrants*, or alternatively, of *asylum seekers*) in order to "render events or occurrences meaningful" (614). More to the point, they are not given but must be constructed to work as what Benford and Snow call "collective action frames" (611). Here, "framing" is a verb that "denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (614). As Frank Fischer's useful work in *Reframing Public Policy* demonstrates, framing (and/or "reframing") some "reality" can not only challenge existing ways of making sense of things but do the cognitive work of

supplying us not only with a problem definition and diagnosis of the cause, but a map for action, and the grounds for persuasion (144).

I raise this positive perspective on how frames *can work* to put our metacognitive path in perspective. We could read Dana Cloud and Benford and Snow as each sketching two necessary but different paths to change. Cloud's *Culture of Critical Discourse* produces a language of critique designed to reveal power and promote awareness and critical consciousness. Her expansion of this discourse would enlarge its agenda to include marginalized voices and invent a more aggressive (and effective) rhetoric to put this critique into wide circulation. Benford and Snow's social movement agenda, on the other hand, comes to life in the highly interactive, constructive context of creating and transforming frames. Their desired outcome is a motivating "collective action" frame. The work of metacognitive inquiry described here lies somewhere between critique and collective action. Its path is routed through an analysis of the (typically unexamined) exclusionary interpretive frames operating within our own experience. The outcome, when initiated in an educational setting, can be a negotiated one that recognizes conflicted and missing knowledge, a probing discussion with others, or the foundation for a working theory that attempts to transform that frame into a more inclusive practice.

From my particular perspective, in problem-solving cognition and actionable rhetoric as well as community writing, the problem looks like this: how do we, each of us, open up a live circuit that leads from critique to the grounded, internal, cognitive work of interpretation that guides our sometimes-unconsidered responses to problematic situations? This is the site of *situated cognition*, the place where ideas are operationalized in *interactions* with others. It is at this dynamic intersection of experience and metacognitive inquiry that we can see a path, not just to changing others but also ourselves—and to helping students likewise carry out their own education for engagement.

The actionable critical consciousness in the cases sketched below can be triggered by ordinary experience when reality does indeed "bite," when it directly challenges a familiar interpretive frame and pushes us to a *meta*cognitive awareness of the friction between expectation and experience. That friction can push us to thinking about our own thinking when, for instance, we suddenly realize that what we perceived as a student's "natural" accidental "slip" into "ungrammatical" Black English was, in fact, not only intentional but was a precise and effective linguistic choice. (So where did *that* response come from? Why? How could it play out?) Admittedly, acknowledging internal conflicts and contradictions is not our mental strong suit as humans. From a psychological perspective, when familiar schemas are violated, our first response is to ignore the anomaly or simply "assimilate" it somehow into our schema-guided expectations. We can compartmentalize and hold competing interpretations, beliefs, and values quite comfortably, as it turns out. Actually altering, or what is called "accommodating," the schema itself is another matter. That may require a real "confrontation with difficulties of one's

current schema" (Anderson 429). Moreover, rising to metacognitive awareness of a conflict is a *choice*, a move from automatic or merely tacit interpretation to a more conscious level of reflective problem solving.[3] As we will see in the examples below, this choice is often affectively triggered, but actionable consciousness for change typically calls for more extended metacognitive work—in which writing can be a transformative force.[4]

Writing toward a more *actionable* critical consciousness will also need to take a student beyond many of our classroom practices for reflection on their writing.[5] In the following cases, we see how a class can ramp up the familiar process of reflection-prompted-by-experience into building a working theory with four moves. The process starts by using theoretically grounded *critical concepts* to then guide a *rhetorical analysis* of one's own interpretations and actions, in order to then create an even more sophisticated *metacognitive analysis* of those actions. The final, fourth move is the work of praxis: using the insights of this meta-analysis to develop a *working theory* for going forward.[6] As an educational practice, the path starts with students' study of rich theoretical concepts, such as (in the following cases) rhetoric's conception of frame analysis, psychology's

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3.   Extensively studied in educational psychology, the term "metacognition" can refer to a tacit control process (such as monitoring a failure in comprehension that prompts us to reread a phrase), or to a conscious access and control of one's own knowledge or reflective understanding—an awareness educational researchers Ann Brown and Annemarie Palincsar see as a flexible hallmark of higher intelligence. Others reserve the term for awareness of one's own action *and* the ability to *articulate* that awareness (Paris and Winograd). The data for this study comes from that final, more powerful level of articulated metaknowledge.

4.   In a study of college students' reflections on their thinking and discoveries in a traditional class, I found their series of written insights displayed strong three-way links between their affect or emotions, the context of writing, and their cognition, including goals, options, and strategies. Even more significant, rising to this level of awareness worked as a critical prompt to the construction of "negotiated meaning"—a sophisticated representation that engages with multiple voices as well as conflict (Flower, *Construction*).

5.   Reflection has myriad forms and purposes shaped by what is reflected upon: our own writing or a teacher's comments (in composition studies); formative memories (in therapy); perplexing experiences (in social interaction); and prior knowledge (in transfer). For a useful introduction to classroom research and practice, see Kathleen Yancy's *A Rhetoric of Reflection* and the review of research in Chapter 2.

6.   Here I use the phrase "metacognitive reflection and analysis" to recognize a level of metacognition that is a self-conscious, intentional attention to our own thinking and to articulating the work of cognition. Because the mind and its mental notebooks speak so rapidly in multiple languages (images, propositional representations, and prose) and are inseparable from affect, bringing this to conscious attention (much less in an articulate version) is no small task (Flower and Hayes, "Images"). But the metacognitive process of thinking about our thinking can let us bring to light and up for review how our often unanalyzed, and even unrecognized ways of knowing are at work in our minds.

mental models, or leadership's distinction between technical problems and adaptive challenges.

Drawing on complex concepts like these lets students map out a closely observed analysis of some unrecognized interpretive frames at work in their own experience. They are creating a guided, case-in-point analysis. Their end in view, however, is not merely a structured academic analysis but a working theory of actionable critical consciousness—a foundation for social engagement. In taking on this combination of intellectually complex rhetorical inquiry and an intentional, problem-oriented, personal metacognitive analysis, writers will probably have to construct a new negotiated meaning—one that recognizes and attempts to deal with some of the conflicts, contradictions, and alternatives they have exposed. It is this expanded construct that provides the basis for a *working theory*. By *theory*, I mean a critical, conceptual construct that remains open to evidence and reinterpretation and is at the same time a guide to choice and action: a theory that supports *work*.[7]

This chapter will explore two versions of this self-initiated, individual path. One is the familiar act of a *reflection* triggered by experience. The other is a more intentional effort designed to confront interpretive frames—a process I will describe as a *theory-guided metacognitive analysis*. In both cases, the process will be complicated by the fact that exclusionary frameworks are often embedded in good intentions.

Case 1: When Experience Bites Back

We can all relate to that uncomfortable moment when the resistant reality of experience forced us to confront one of our own (underexamined) interpretive frames. Liz, a white, first-time mentor at the Community Literacy Center was working hard in her literature courses to become an insider to the Culture of Critical Discourse. Her plan for mentoring 14-year-old, inner-city Chaz was, as she put it, "helping him to develop a consciousness that might not have been there. He wants to be a professional football player. I challenge that. He's a little guy, you know. I ask him to analyze this cultural thing—football, which I don't think is too

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7.   The concept of rising to negotiated meaning grows out of studies tracking the thinking of both experienced and inexperienced writers and the differences in how they respond to internal conflict as they are writing. While novices just roll on, ignoring tangled or competing voices, the experienced writers stop to listen, attempting to create a meaning (an idea, argument, a sentence) that responds to those voices (Flower, *Construction*). The notion of working theories, on the other hand, comes from observing the outcomes of intercultural Community Think Tanks. The actively negotiated, documented meaning these different groups produced was not simply a set of claims or conclusions. Rather it was a usable, action-oriented but tentative interpretation (a theory in the form of a revisable hypothesis) designed to address a real situation, that is, to work (Flower, "Difference-Driven Inquiry").

much to ask of someone at this age level" (Flower, *Community Literacy* 118). But Chaz wasn't the only skinny Black kid who talked this line. Did Liz understand what this sort of aspirational boast actually *meant* for him? Was it an identity assertion to her, just a part of teen talk, or . . . ? Did she think to find out?

Another mentor named Dianna, an elegant, West Coast, middle-class African American senior, seemed to be taking umbrage at our discussion about "Black English." I had been sharing with the teens the influential linguistic research of William Labov (arguing for Black English as a legitimate dialect in the face of the public schools' choice to penalize it) and Geneva Smitherman's examples in *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*. My "socially engaged teacher" interpretive frame prompted me first to describe/clarify some of the distinctions in grammar and diction between "standard written" and "Black" English. Secondly, in order to help these teenage writers consider the linguistic *choices* open to them, I intended to challenge the assumption many held that "this is just my *bad* English." Even if one option was expected in school, here they were writing from and about urban teenage life. Their texts would be published and circulated in a newsletter they titled *Risk and Respect,* and some would be translated into performance and dialogue with the audience at the project's closing Community Conversation. For many teenage writers, giving this formal standing to Black English had been a liberating new concept, letting them choose to use (and edit for) standard written English and switch to their own dialect for dramatic and rhetorical effect. But to my surprise, my educated college student was clearly resisting this solidly supported academic perspective, even angry that I was promoting it.

Perplexed, I asked to have lunch with Dianna (and her brother, who was in town) at a nearby café to talk it over. It was only then that I discovered, first, that she could not herself speak the "Black English" of our urban teenagers—something she did not wish to reveal to them. And secondly, in her interpretive frame (for what *I saw* as a liberating conception of the linguistic legitimacy and power of a dialect spoken by many African Americans), she saw a threat that questioned her own *Black* identity by equating the two. In short, there was a legitimate conflict that had never crossed my mind, even as I, the professor, was clearly marginalizing her in the way I presented "Black English" as an uncontextualized, normative aspect of race: as academic commonsense. "Of course she can speak Black English . . . she's Black."

In this case, it took a direct conversation to elicit this conflict with my interpretive frame and all that my well-intentioned philosophy had not dreamed of. However, that was hardly enough; then came the metacognitive work of figuring out how to acknowledge this more complex reality and still help other writers question why they asserted that their rich linguistic repertoire was simply "bad English." It is one thing to point out the marginalizing frames at work in the discourse of others. It is another, first, to recognize how your own liberal, progressive, often-academic frames are blinding you to the reality of other peoples'

lives; and secondly, to figure out how to act differently. Recognizing your own automatic interpretive processes is the first step in this metacognitive inquiry, but it is not enough merely to recognize the phenomenon. The challenge is figuring out the working theory—how to alter them.

So what follows consciousness? Growing up in Wichita, Kansas, where it seemed to my seven-year-old self that the Black people I rarely saw all lived in a rather forbidding territory across town. My stereotypes stayed intact upon moving to a small town in Iowa, which as far as I ever knew, included only two Black families and two Jewish families. In college, my sorority even had to fight the national organization to admit the one Black woman on campus at the time. That meant, beyond a religious commitment to justice and equality, that I had a limited experiential basis from which to directly challenge some of the negative images of Black people woven into the public imagination during this civil rights era.

So when, as an adult, I began to build strong intercultural connections in one of Pittsburgh's troubled and vibrant urban neighborhoods through the Community Literacy Center, all that implicitly learned ideological education and ignorance and baggage did not simply disappear. Walking down an urban street, my well-learned racial and class-based interpretive stereotypes could be automatically triggered by an approaching Black teenager in a hoodie, slowly crossing the street, conspicuously ignoring traffic, with his trousers apparently held up only by a miracle. That implicit racist ideological trigger is still there. Yet in the next nanosecond, a metacognitive awareness of that frame and its alternatives also kicks in. And I can draw on alternative interpretations learned from teens themselves in which hoodies, for example, signaled teen fashion on the Northside, not gang membership—and my awareness that police couldn't tell the difference. With that interpretation comes an alternative action learned in that culture: when you meet a Black person on the sidewalk, you smile or merely nod, a simple gesture merely meant to acknowledge presence. It's a move that is common in our Black community, whether you know the person or not. Black people give you a comfortable nod back. After all these years, that act is still a conscious, pleasurable metacognitive choice.

In these everyday examples, our experience, interactions, and face-to-face inquiry can draw us all into the reflective awareness that affects behavior. I use my own experience here to be clear that I (and I expect other educators) are not exempt. So we design our socially engaged courses with various action agendas that will take students beyond critical deconstruction of media and culture and into interpersonal encounters. The interaction itself is a teacher.

There are, however, less obvious forms of marginalization. Having drunk from the cup of our culture, we carry its internalized interpretive triggers with us. Their unbidden messages do not, however, *have* to dictate how we think or act when we can confront them with an articulated alternative—the kind of interpretation that is uniquely enabled by written inquiry. This account is motivated by what I learned observing students using writing to translate theory into

a personal frame analysis with practical consequences. Let me put this cycle of metacognitive inquiry in context.

Case 2: Intentional Metacognitive Analysis

This case will illustrate an alternative, self-conscious reflective practice rooted in a *theory-based* examination of interpretative frames. Its structured metacognitive analysis unpacks exclusionary assumptions as a guide to imagining a new working theory. Writers Josh and Justine were part of that socially engaged rhetoric course called Leadership, Dialogue, and Change (Chapter 2, Case 2). Beginning with extensive reading in intercultural theories of leadership and dialogue, it led to a Community Think Tank around the problem of learning about and using self-advocacy in which they documented different perspectives and the results of their cross-hierarchy, problem-focused series of roundtable dialogues.[8] The course's final individual paper was a four-page "personal inquiry" assignment that asked students to consider how they had applied their personal discoveries from the course in their own lives. Their writing suggests the distinctive kind of insight a theory-prompted, metacognitive analysis can create.

When Analysis Calls for Transformation

One of the most influential tools for rhetorical analysis we studied was a framework for leadership in public conflicts, developed by Ronald Heifetz at Harvard's Kennedy School for Government. In *Leadership without Easy Answers,* Heifetz develops his theory of adaptive leadership through a series of fascinating case studies, making a distinction between "technical problems" (ones we already know how to manage) and "adaptive problems" that demand a new understanding. Such a dilemma faced the Environmental Protection Agency in 1983. Should they enforce regulations and in effect force the closure of an aging, out-of-compliance, arsenic-spewing American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) plant outside Tacoma, WA—and in the process destroy a three-generation local economy? The pressure on EPA head William Ruckelshaus—from both labor and environmentalists—was to use his authority to treat it as a "technical problem" and to act decisively in "their" (differing) interests. Heifetz's model of leadership in such a case is a dramatic departure from the stereotype of the charismatic leader, whose acts of forceful decision-making and persuasion turn others into

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8.   This particular Think Tank was prompted by questions about students' problematic experiences in learning and using self-advocacy. Using the Think Tank's standard research and critical incident interviews with students, faculty, and staff, developing a Briefing Book designed for a diverse set of participants at roundtable, problem-solving discussions, they documented and published them as the Think Tank Findings on Self Advocacy (Bennett et al.; Flower, "Difference-Driven Inquiry").

followers. Heifetz describes an even more demanding rhetorical act in which leaders must work to draw a community (a family, an organization, and a public) to face an "adaptive" problem. Unlike the more comfortable "technical" ones, for which one already has expertise, standard tools, or practices in hand, adaptive problems come with a price. They are likely to require that members of a divided community not only learn new things but, in all probability, also reexamine and revise some of their own assumptions and values in the context of others.

Is the choice in Tacoma simply "to close or not to close?" Whose interests should be left out: a third-generation, breadwinning worker who loses a sustaining job; a resident of the surrounding area who receives no profit from this industry except its arsenic-laden, cancer-causing air currents; or the company and its stockholders? When Heifetz's model "gives the problem back" to the citizens, months of simply oppositional debate are morphed, with the help of Ruckelshaus's team, into long series of public discussions in which the different stakeholders begin to reframe the issue into how to both protect their air and children and also create a path to work. This was a problem they, in fact, eventually solved. The challenge here is not to "win" but to recognize the partiality of your own frame and the reasonable motives behind those of others—and to then create a new "adaptive" frame and a way to carry it out.

What We Observed

As a good illustration of the "public turn," this case illustrates a working theory in action. Josh entered the Leadership, Dialogue, and Change class with significant leadership experience. A junior in Information Systems, he was a member of the University Leadership Consultants, a student group which offers consultations with campus organizations "suffering [as he put it] from leadership related issues"—in this case, a squash club suffering from low member turnout at events. The consulting group had a well-developed frame for reading these "issues," tied to a very efficient two- to three-week process in which they would, "internally, decide on what was best for the organization and perform a training or (standard) workshop." Unfortunately, as Josh began to recognize, "the issue the organization was suffering with was rarely, if ever, solved." Though "an incredibly speedy process, it . . . resulted in unsatisfactory or meaningless results."

When it came time to write his final "applied theory" paper, Josh had already experienced an extended cycle of inquiry, documenting and dramatizing marginalized perspectives as part of a diverse Think Tank deliberation. Were he to write a standard "applied theory" paper, he could have made excellent use of Heifetz's leadership theory to analyze the problematic practices of the consultants. However, this paper was asking for a more direct application to one's own practices and the thinking behind them, in order to make personal use of what had been learned.

Starting with Heifetz's concept of engaging a community in dialogue, Josh describes beginning to see limitations in his own, quite self-conscious model of

"servant-leadership," which he says he had advocated "since high school . . . I fell into the trap of a technical leader who was more focused on solving tasks." This would matter when it turned out that the squash club's "low-turnout" problem wasn't with the no-shows or the organization's advertising at all, but instead with a dysfunctional leadership team, which never worked as a group to figure out what events new members might actually want to come to.

Josh's text goes on to articulate the outcome of changing his "perspective on leadership to an expanded value-based one." And perhaps more usefully, he begins to build an operational analysis of what this means. "Instead of asking myself the question 'what needs doing?' I now ask 'why does this need doing? What is the real problem here? How can I engage the community?'" This self-analysis then had a public outcome when his University Leadership Consultants changed their process. Sitting down with the squash club, the consultants replaced their "cookie cutter workshop" with probing questions about the club's operations and hinderances. They soon discovered that the club's actual barrier to growth was that it had no idea of how to get financial help to renovate the old courts—a problem which the consultants' "typical recruit, retrain, and grow presentation" could not have identified, much less addressed.

Some problems, however, are not so easily resolved by following a thoughtful, even persuasive, theory-guided revision of one's framework. Josh had also been a student member of the university committee that had just radically shortened the "add/drop" period for classes. But as it went into action, he now found himself the representative to his peers of a widely unpopular mandate. His account of this unresolved problem is an even better example of how a written, metacognitive analysis can pull out some of the assumptions the committee's interpretive frame brought with it—and whose needs it excluded. The committee's ostensible, well-intentioned policy was focused not merely on filling classes sooner (an institutional priority) but on relieving the very real stress caused by the increasing practice of students overloading their schedules and then only dropping a class when the damage to their learning or health had already been done. But then, as Josh writes, "With Heifetz in mind, I wonder if that [interpretation] was actually the case?"

In his new analysis, Josh considers how the decision he supported "reeks of an authority figure . . . attempting to 'protect' its community without allowing the community to fully engage and grapple with its issues." By focusing on a symptom (late drops) rather than the problem, the new policy forces students who can't drop to suffer through classes they should have quit. Moreover, the policy fails to deal with other, real sources of stress. But when you are in a leader's chair, you must often go beyond critique. Josh's analysis not only raised new voices but significantly shifted the frame to the broader issue of stress itself. Questioning whether the committee's solution had indeed located a real cause of stress led him to form an inventive working theory for a more inclusive dialogue. His analysis ends by sketching an intriguing plan for a campus-wide contest eliciting solutions

to stress, which would lead to a university-vetted proposal to be discussed in campus forums. Using the theoretical lens of leadership based on inclusive dialogue, Josh's metacognitive analysis let him unpack and evaluate the elements of his own interpretive frame, what he calls "the rhetorical moves I didn't even know I was making!" In taking the next step beyond retrospective reflection, he initiated a constructive act that translated understanding into everyday action and began to develop a working theory which, as he says, "I want to bring to the [university] committee."

It is important to recognize that in the messy and conflict-prone sites of community engagement, complete "success" is rarely the norm and our interpretive frames for dealing with failure can play a large role in what we do next. Amanda Tennant, Carolyn Commer, and Mary Glavan give us a provocative rhetorical analysis of "transformative failure" in community-based projects, where a failure frame can block our ability to see the trade-offs at work in what we did and didn't achieve. When the young Appalachian girls in Tennant's summer program failed to produce the polished but stereotypical "mountain girl" narratives the program's PR-focused director and donors expected, the failure frame cast its shadow on the girls and mentors but was felt most personally by Tennant, the leader of this particular project. However, the authors use their three cases of felt failure to demonstrate the power of a frame-probing "reflective heuristic." By using strategies such as seeking rival hypotheses to interrogate this dismissive interpretation they uncovered powerful tradeoffs; that is, to produce the director's "mountain-girl" stories would have meant overriding the self-image the girls themselves valued. Or, using the failure frame's focus on what didn't happen ignored the digital skills the girls did choose to learn. Once again, metacognitive reflection supported by a sophisticated conceptual frame generated and transformed knowledge.

When Analysis Becomes a Working Theory

We left Josh trying out his new consultant's listening frame in one case and figuring out what to do with the competing frames he heard—once he actually listened to different readings of a college policy. Justine, heading back into high school teaching after finishing her master of arts degree in rhetoric, is concerned more directly with how her interpretations translate into action in teaching and, in her first case, to the tricky arena of family relations. Her metacognitive analysis starts by putting her chosen influential concepts to work:

> Rethinking the purpose of deliberation will make a substantial difference in my teaching. But on the personal side of things, West's notions of agency, prophetic pragmatism, and cultural critique were eye-opening for me . . . I know my uncle is homophobic. I know he comes from a generation in which homophobia was the norm, so I usually end up writing him off as

a fossilized bigot—mean-spirited and bitter, but basically harmless. I now see that my "basically harmless" judgment of him was an oversight on my part. Now, if my uncle were discursively isolated, a voice crying out in the wilderness, he could indeed be harmless. But as West says, we all—as individuals—are "inseparable from" the "moral and political judgments and the workings of a . . . critical consciousness" (24). Our culture shapes our opinions, true, but we in turn influence our culture. My uncle's opinion isn't just a mental fabrication that he keeps inside himself. That opinion is a vote. That opinion is a rude remark. That opinion manifests itself in ways that keep homophobia a part of our culture.

Choosing to resee herself in West's terms as a "culture worker" prompts a re-interpretation of a family encounter in the form of a model, albeit a small one, of an effort to "influence our culture":

> Case in point: Three years ago, my family, including the above-mentioned uncle, was at my house on Christmas Eve [and something prompted] my uncle to launch into a story: "Oh yeah, I remember back in the 80s when those two faggots killed that kid—." Now, I didn't say anything to my uncle; the rule in my family is to avoid political discussions, which inevitably devolve into fights, at all costs. But I gave him a look—and soon realized that my three cousins (all in their early- to mid-20s) were also giving him the look. He must have noticed, as he cut himself off and tried to explain himself ("Well, that's what we called 'em back in the day," etc.) before fleeing to a different table with a homogenously older crowd.

> To be sure, this is not some crowning moment in LGBTQ equality. It was well within my power to call my uncle out on the slur, even if I did end up "starting a fight," and I opted not to. But my cousins and I did send him a message that he heard loud and clear: "Use that language around us, and we won't talk to you." I say he heard it loud and clear because he hasn't used any homosexual slurs in my presence since then (although I'm sure he says plenty of them when I'm not around). The agency of the individual, and the notion of the individual as a cultural worker, have shifted my perception of what happened here. As I said, this moment does not mark some decisive victory in gay rights—but it does within my sphere. It is a victory that I helped create within the sphere in which I have power to make a change.

Moments of éclaircissement revealing our own casual assumptions—about that unquestioned silence dictated by family rules or the insignificance of one's own inaction—can be a step toward having a voice, initiating a family dialogue (or perhaps just becoming a family troublemaker). Moreover, Justine's story resonated with others in the class, just back from Thanksgiving break with families of Trump voters, prompting a group discussion of rhetorical options. These extended discussions of everyone's inquiry mark a critical next phase in this cycle. Articulating one's thinking gives everyone an enlarged understanding. But in this case, it also names the hidden frame, in the sense Freire and Heifetz share, as a problem that calls for dialogue. Given that Justine was not alone in dealing with that frame, this discussion phase created a shared space for exploring the subtle directions this "how-to" guide is giving and the ways it can play out in different life-worlds.

Be the Change You Want to See

I want to conclude with Justine's second case in point because it takes us into a final (visible) phase of her cycle of inquiry, where an articulated metacognitive analysis is being translated into a working theory. For Justine, the biggest impact on her personal and future professional life came from a challenge to her well-developed (and teacherly) interpretive frame for the nature of argument. But her new working theory goes well beyond a theory of argument:

> While I learned a lot about both leadership and dialogue this semester, I think the knowledge I've gained about the latter will have the biggest impact on my personal and professional lives. This class has profoundly altered the way I think of argument and deliberation, and these alterations will show in my teaching. Firstly, I now realize that, even as a student of rhetoric, I didn't even have a firm idea of what "argument" or "deliberation" meant before taking this class. I'd always assumed both more or less entailed a group of at least two people trying to sell one another on a position.

Notice how this soon turns into a richly embodied recollection that locates these rhetorical concepts in the world of a classroom (where she expects to find herself shortly) in an inquiry-squelching interaction with teachers and peers, ordered by a rule-governed tradition of teaching:

> I also realize that much of what I learned about argument and deliberation in high school (and about teaching argument and deliberation in high school) is, simply put, bad pedagogy. The most egregious example is the "debate." Several times throughout my high school career, I had to engage in class-wide debates

about contentious topics (the ones I remember most clearly were on abortion, the Indian Removal Acts, and the ethics of dog breeding). In all these debates, my teachers arbitrarily divided the class into two teams, one "pro-issue" and one "anti-issue." We then had a week or so to confer with our teammates and conduct research with the goal of defending our position at all costs. During the debates, our goal was to push for our side as much as possible while discrediting our opposition's arguments. At the end of the debate, we would usually vote anonymously to determine which side had "won."

This critical analysis of a traditional evaluative frame soon becomes transformed into a probing, well-articulated analysis of the implications this interpretive frame has for thinking. Translating educational meanings into actions, she articulates her own teacherly frames, which include how to teach argument, how to evaluate students, and the significance of students' own thinking:

This model of debate (which seems to fall under neither "argument" nor "deliberation"), I now realize, propagates many harmful beliefs and habits of mind. It assumes there are only two sides to any given issue, thus severely limiting the range of possible positions, options, and outcomes that may emerge in the debate. It assumes students' authentic beliefs about an issue don't matter. It assumes that pushing a position one doesn't truly support is not only acceptable, but positive. It assumes that "good argument" means cutthroat, uncritical defense of one's position. It assumes that other positions exist only to be negated. It assumes that the goal of debate is to prove to the "other team" that they're wrong. It assumes that changing one's mind during the course of the debate is a sign of weakness. It assumes that in any discussion, there are necessarily "winners" and "losers." And it assumes that persuasion is ultimately impossible: If the goal is to "win" (i.e., persuade the other side), but changing one's mind means losing, then who would admit to being persuaded? Needless to say, I will not be employing this deliberative strategy in my classroom . . .

In this detailed unpacking of an interpretative frame, we can see critical consciousness emerging in which a theoretical concept such as "deliberation" becomes a tool for a metacognitive analysis of her own frame for "teaching argument" (not to mention the problematic little package of ideological common sense being unpacked). Secondly, this level of analysis translates a problematic frame into the dynamics of thinking, evaluating, and interacting with students. In doing so, it lets her articulate actionable implications and alternatives—a working

theory. Finally, it suggests the power of writing, prompted by conflict, to create actionable insight. As the paper ends, the working theory has begun to move into a statement of possibilities, a hypothesis about potential outcomes, and a sense of connection to an even larger educational controversy about difference. As Justine puts it:

> . . . and if the whole class is going to deliberate about a common topic, then it only makes sense that differences would have to be considered a resource. Were we to hold to the old assumption that differences are obstacles . . .