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PORTFOLIOS AND PEDAGOGY: AN EXAMINATION OF IDEOLOGY AND USE

By

Heather Lynn Hoffman Jordan

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Rhetoric and Technical Communication)

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

2011

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This dissertation, "Portfolios and Pedagogy: An Examination of Ideology and Use," is hereby approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in RHETORIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION.

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To Ethan, for your love, support, and motivation,
and to our little bit of sunshine, Emerson

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Abstract

Portfolios and Pedagogy: An Examination of Ideology and Use

Portfolio use in writing studies contexts is becoming ubiquitous and, as such, portfolios are in danger of being rendered meaningless and thus require that we more fully theorize and historicize portfolios. To this end, I examine portfolios: both the standardized portfolio used for assessment purposes and the personalized portfolio used for entering the job market. I take a critical look at portfolios as a form of technology and acknowledge some of the dangers of blindly using portfolios for gaining employment in the current economic structure of fast capitalism. As educators in the writing studies fields, it is paramount that instructors have a critical awareness of the consequences of portfolio creation on students as designers, lifelong learners, and citizens of a larger society. I argue that a better understanding of the pedagogical implications for portfolio use is imperative before implementing them in the classroom, and that a social-epistemic approach provides a valuable rethinking of portfolio use for assessment purposes.

Further, I argue for the notions of *meditation* and *transformation* to be added alongside collection, selection, and reflection because they enable portfolio designers and evaluators alike to thoughtfully consider new ways of meaning-making and innovation. Also important and included with meditation and transformation is the understanding that students are ideologically positioned in the educational system. For them to begin recognizing their situatedness is a step toward becoming designers of change. The portfolio can be a site for that change, and a way for them to document their own learning and ways of making meaning over a lifetime.

Chapter 1

Portfolios: Ideological and Technological Systems

Introduction

In a 2010 article in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, Robert R. Johnson explores in great detail the ubiquity paradox—where overuse of a term dangerously renders it almost meaningless—as it applies to user-centered design (UCD). Johnson's article posits that UCD has fallen victim to the theory-practice binary by becoming subsumed under practice, which then led to its key elements of knowledge production and theory development being lost and forgotten.

For this dissertation, I argue that portfolios are being (over)used much like the term UCD, and are in danger of becoming meaningless. To emphasize this ubiquity, I point to several examples from my own lived experience. First, my one-and-a-half-year-old son recently had a portfolio of his artwork compiled for us at his daycare to showcase his learning development. Second, as a third-grade teacher in the Florida public school system, my mom administers standardized tests each year under the No Child Left Behind legislation. Interestingly enough, however, if a child does not score as well on the standardized tests, a portfolio of work often allows that child to still move up to the next grade level. Finally, at every institution of higher education I have attended or taught at, I have been asked to either create (as part of the freshman composition course I took at the time) or assign and evaluate (as part of the composition courses I was teaching at the time) portfolios of students. And these limited examples from my own life are merely the tip of the iceberg. More and more

academic programs are requiring portfolios for graduation purposes, and more and more industry institutions are requesting them from their potential employees (see Cambridge).

Because it is a paradox, ubiquity has both positive and negative associations. To be sure, at least one positive connection of portfolio use is to provide an alternative to the dominant (and often oppressive) evaluation methods of standardized testing or timed writing assignments (see Belanoff and Elbow; Yancey, "Looking"; Hamp-Lyons and Condon). On the other hand, when something becomes ubiquitous, it also becomes dangerous because it often begins to be used uncritically. As Johnson points out in his article, this credulous use "of a concept or practice can render it hollow at best and meaningless at worst. We merely move from one new concept to another in a Promethean forward motion" (Johnson "Ubiquity" 337). Of course, all of this is not to say that portfolios have not been the focus of numerous scholarly articles and even book-length works, as indeed they have (see Black et. al.; Yancey and Weiser; Hamp-Lyons and Condon; Cambridge). What I am suggesting is that we need to continually pause to reflect on the use of portfolios to see not only their positive potential, but also the potential for problems as well. I argue that we need to move backward, in a way, and reflect on our current position along that trajectory in order to better understand that forward motion.

In order to help accomplish this task, I draw once again from Robert R. Johnson. In his article mentioned above, Johnson investigates the ubiquity paradox by drawing on Martin Heidegger's notion of meditative thinking:

> Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, not to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all. (Heidegger *Discourse* 55)

Meditative thinking takes time and practice, according to Heidegger. It is "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46). Meditative thinking is a focused and perhaps more difficult way of thinking than what Heidegger terms "calculative thinking," or thinking that "serves specific purposes," "counts on definite results," "races from one prospect to the next," and "never stops, never collects itself" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46). It is in these ways that meditative thinking differs because its aim is to allow for a fuller collection of itself through thought and patience. Grappling with the nuances of something and really thinking through the process, implications, and possibilities in order to identify purposes instead of just serving them is meditative thinking. Meditative thinking is all encompassing, and fruitful for my work with portfolios because by thinking meditatively about portfolios—some instances of their use and the ideology embedded within that use—we may come to a better understanding of how to move forward, or at least in what direction to next move.

It should come as no surprise, perhaps, that as we look back to the history of portfolios, we find that they first came into use by artists as a way to contain and transport their works. The earliest use of the term "portfolio", according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, dates back to the early 18th century in Italy. Maps, drawings, prints, and even letters were contained in "a case or stiff folder" that was

termed as a portfolio (*OED*). To be sure, artists still use portfolios as a way to transport and showcase their collections.

In the 19th century, portfolio use began to spread. In 1807, the first instance of use of the term for a government official and state department began in France. This then led to the term "without portfolio" which means having a high ranking position, but without the responsibility to a specific department (*OED*). In 1813, another instance of use occurred when winners of a raffle received a portfolio of Botanical Prints as a prize. Finally, in 1848 we find the first use of portfolios as a financial term (*OED*). Of course, the term has since flourished in finance as a way to compile investments and other monetary assets.

To be sure, it wasn't until 1933, however, that we read about the first mention of an advertiser trying to get work by using a portfolio (*OED*). This dissertation will address this particular type of portfolio—the job market portfolio. This more personalized portfolio is created for the primary purpose of gaining employment and has been largely unexamined in print portfolio scholarship, but has just recently begun to get some attention in ePortfolio (electronic portfolio) work. Given that students are being asked to create these personalized portfolios in their writing programs (especially in professional and technical writing disciplines), they certainly deserve our attention. Also, the new capitalist economic model—which is also known as fast capitalism and differs from the traditional fordist economic model (see New London Group)—creates some very high stakes for this type of portfolio's creators, and as such, requires further examination and inquiry.

Another point of inquiry for this dissertation is the type of portfolio that has been used in writing studies as an assessment tool since the mid-1980s. In an attempt to shift from the timed essay assessment to reflect more of the process oriented approach that has been inherent in writing studies, portfolios became an adopted form of assessment practice. In fact, it was a 1986 article by Pat Belanoff and Peter Elbow about their SUNY New York portfolio method that replaced a timed exit essay assessment of a first-year writing course that seemed to ignite the portfolio movement. This movement has been termed the third wave of assessment by Kathleen Blake Yancey since it follows first the standardized test and then the timed essay model. This portfolio method of assessment became a new assignment in writing courses that has been viewed as an opportunity to gauge learning. This dissertation will more closely examine specific components of that assessment process that has spread like wildfire, almost to the point of ubiquity.

In his 2010 book, *Eportfolios for Lifelong Learning and Assessment*, Darren Cambridge draws a useful distinction between these two types of portfolios I have mentioned above. Cambridge identifies the assessment portfolio used in writing programs as a *standardized* portfolio. What I have called up until this point the job market portfolio, Cambridge would refer to as the *personalized* portfolio, though it is important to note that for Cambridge's purposes, the personalized portfolio does more than market a person in the fast capitalist economy, but rather it provides a site of lifelong learning to occur and be documented (18-20).

Because both types of portfolios examined in this dissertation position students in particular ways—ways that are not value-neutral nor above critique—this

dissertation explores the idea that portfolios are a technology used to reify the ideological systems of power that are continually present, whether in an institution being assessed or at work in the larger economic structure. Because of the focus on instruction and the way students are being asked to create portfolios, this dissertation is pedagogical at its core, but it also seeks to encourage further reflection and thinking about portfolios and their use(s). In order to begin to better understand the implications and consequences of that uncritical portfolio use, this dissertation is composed of five different chapters.

To begin the exploration, this first chapter will be used to define portfolios and show how they are a technology—defined as more than a mere tool or device to include the notion of a complex ideological system made up of contributing human elements and purposeful ends as well. Though I will define portfolios as a technology more thoroughly later in this chapter, I first draw from Martin Heidegger to demonstrate the possible risks of such blind ubiquitous use. To be sure, portfolios have been used uncritically as tools for assessment or navigating the job market, which is a dangerous practice. As Heidegger posits:

> Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology. (Heidegger *TQCT* 4).

Technology is most dangerous to us when we regard it as a mere tool or device used for our purposes and under our control. This view of technology masks the social, political, and cultural perspectives that are a part of the technology and its use.

This idea of failing to acknowledge or recognize ideological situatedness of technology might be better understood in an example. One concept that comes to mind that isn't technological per se but certainly parallels the argument that I am making about portfolios, is the notion of literacy. As a term, literacy has a rich history of being viewed as a simple skill of the ability to read and write. But, literacy is so much more than that. An example of the neutrality view of literacy is provided in Brian Street's concept of an "autonomous model of literacy," which he defines as:

> The standard view in many fields, from schooling to development programs, works from the assumption that literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. Introducing literacy to poor, 'illiterate' people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their 'illiteracy' in the first place. (Street *What's 'new'* 77)

This definition sees literacy as a neutral skill that a person can or cannot acquire, but it fails to recognize other factors in regard to literacy development. Referring to what he calls the autonomous model of literacy, Street goes on to suggest that this model "disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will

have these benign effects" (Street *What's 'new'* 77). The ability to read and write does not translate to economic prosperity and a more advanced society. Literacy itself does not make more proactive citizens or a more advanced culture.

In contrast to the autonomous model of literacy is the ideological model: "This model starts from different premises than the autonomous model—it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles" (Street *What's 'new'* 77). By viewing literacy as ideological, and moving it out of the framework of a mere skill to be learned, Street begins to shift our perception of literacy in much the same way as I hope to do with portfolios in this dissertation.

Gee offers a similar perspective on literacy that will also enhance my discussion of portfolios:

> The traditional meaning of the word 'literacy'—the ability to read and write—appears innocent and obvious. But it is no such thing. Literacy as 'the ability to write and read' situates literacy in the individual person, rather than in society. As such it obscures the multiple ways in which literacy interrelates with the workings of power. (Gee *Social* 22)

For Gee, literacy is not a neutral skill set. Having the ability to read and write in particular ways comes from the culture in which the individual participates. The workings of power to which Gee refers in the above quote have to do with the notion that different ways of reading and writing are privileged over others in different cultures and social groups. The larger society determines which literacies are more valuable than others. Portfolios—what to include in them and what to leave out—are

embedded in society in a similar way as literacy and I hope to demonstrate how the view of portfolios as autonomous needs to shift to an ideological model. Because this dissertation seeks to show how portfolios are bound in ideology and are perpetuating the systems in which they are used, this first chapter will be used to further set up that premise.

Portfolios as Technology

Portfolios have been touted as the positive alternative to standardized testing and the timed essay assignment for assessment purposes in writing studies. To be sure, one general perspective on technology is that it is inherently good or will eventually lead to good. Portfolio use has been no different. This notion encompasses the ideal that technology is an equalizing entity that will remove barriers of race and class or economic oppression (Banks), a democratizing and liberating force that will lead to greater social justice and freedom (Winner *Whale* 20), and a way toward progress or continual growth (Johnson *User-centered* 19-20). Looking at technology through a historical lens, it is easy to see why people would want to believe that these perspectives would work. But as each new technological innovation emerges as a seemingly revolutionary agent for betterment, scholars interrogate these views and find that technology's saving power isn't always what it seems. By looking closely at technology, I draw parallels to the portfolio here and show that portfolios themselves are a technology as well.

One example of a scholarly critique on technology is done by Adam Banks. In *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Banks takes a critical

look at technological racial injustice. First, Banks discusses notions of access to technology for African Americans and interrogates the idealized notion that computers and digital media will be an equalizing technology within itself, as numerous politicians had suggested. In Banks' assessment, this technology has not had an equalizing effect for African American citizens—even having an opposite effect—by creating what has now been termed the Digital Divide. Solutions to this problem seem as complicated as the Divide itself, as Banks illustrates: "the problem with the Digital Divide as a concept for addressing systematic differences and access to digital technologies is that it came to signify mere material access to computers and the Internet" (Banks 41). This reduction in access to the mere material conditions is only one small part of larger issues of access for Banks, which also include *functional*, *experiential*, *critical* and *transformative access*. This is an argument that I will return to in the final chapter of this dissertation, where I provide further definitions and explanation. For now, it is important to note that clearly, for Banks, technology—bound in political, economic, and racial systems—is no ideal when the prevailing notion is that the material tools or instruments of technology are all that is needed to create equal ground. To be sure, for Banks technology cannot simply be defined in terms of instrumentality. And, in this example, technology certainly is no savior.

Another example of the idealism of technology is provided by Langdon Winner who cites historical examples of how technological advancements are seen as democratizing forces: "Scarcely a new invention comes along that someone doesn't proclaim it as the salvation of a free society" (Winner *Whale* 20). Among the inventions hailed historically to be the "next liberators" are: the factory system,

automobile, telephone, radio, television, space program, nuclear power, the computer, and I argue, the portfolio. Of course these technologies are not without their merits, but none have lived up to the promise of creating greater social justice. In fact, one could argue, and many have, that we are less free because of these technologies (see Sherry Turkle's latest book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* or Jaron Lanier's *You Are Not A Gadget: A Manifesto*). For instance, the entire transportation infrastructure of the United States is built around everyone owning his/her own car. Of course, this implies not only that everyone has the financial means to afford an automobile and the gas to make it go, but also that everyone would *want* to travel solely by car. This once hailed technology is actually serving to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots, making it an oppressive technology rather than liberatory. Also, cars require other components within the system of transportation in order to be most effective, i.e. road structures, bridges, and fuel, to name a few. Each of these parts serves to make up the whole system of independent transportation, but drivers are still bound by the system itself, a system which has its own limitations and controlling factors. To be sure, technology needs to be defined as more than a mere instrument or mere electronic device. There are political, social, and theoretical implications at play in defining technology.

Yet another example of the idealism of technology is provided by Robert R. Johnson. In *User-Centered Technology: A Rhetorical Theory for Computers and Other Mundane Artifacts*, Johnson recognizes that "technology often has been seen as a panacea, a solution to many of the problems humans must solve and the hardships they must endure" (19). He provides examples of Americans settling the West, South

and Central Americans taming the rain forest and vast river areas, and Europeans conquering their forests, all with the aid of technologies. But Johnson also critiques these examples by considering them romanticized notions of progress: "In other words, the *end* of technology has been to move constantly, consistently, toward what we might blatantly and plainly call the 'Good'" (Johnson 20). By referencing the "Good," Johnson is referring to Book I of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and recognizes that technology is derived from ancient Greek knowledge and seeks to convey that understanding to his readers. This "Good" provides a higher aim for technology beyond mere progress or efficiency. The "Good" always has an ethical element at its center. And for Johnson's purposes, it is important to be more critical of the *end* of technology to ensure that ethical element, so he calls for a fundamental rethinking that will be refigured in terms of the end users of technology. To be sure, Johnson criticizes the view of technology as inherently good and establishes a rhetorical theory for user-centered design that allows the users and audience to contribute significantly in invention. In this way, Johnson's theory allows the "Good" to always be re-considered based on the needs of all, which allows for a more critical examination of technology and its relationship to both the users and society as a whole. Certainly, an adequate definition of technology would recognize these relationships among the human components as well as the tools and instruments themselves.

As I stated above, portfolios have been in use in the writing studies disciplines for more than a quarter of a century. Most studies have defined the portfolio in terms of how it is used in a particular time and place and although context is paramount to portfolio use, few articles actually set out to define what one might consider the

universality of a portfolio (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 118). One such definition came out about a decade after that initial Elbow and Belanoff article. It was written by Kathleen Blake Yancey who labeled the portfolio as a metatext with seven defining features: (1) collection; (2) selection; (3) reflection; (4) development (to showcase in some manner how the creator has moved from one level of learning to another); (5) diversity (in a wide sample of work, but also showing the differences from one portfolio creator to another); (6) communicative (in revealing what is most important to the portfolio's creator); and (7) evaluative (in what the creators feel is representative of their best work) (Yancey "Portfolio" 130). For Yancey, each of these components represents a different layer to what makes up a portfolio and the knowledge it takes to create such a compilation of work.

In 2000, Liz Hamp-Lyons and William Condon sought to develop a theory of the portfolio as an assessment device. In this theory, they defined the portfolio as having nine distinct parts:

- collection, which is again the notion that more than one work would be included, and usually meant three or more;
- range, which echoes with Yancey's notion of diversity;
- context richness, which provides evidence of learning based on the assignments of the course being evaluated (this layer entangles instruction with assessment);
- delayed evaluation, which provides both the time and motivation to revise the work included in the portfolio;

- selection, or a sampling of the creator's work (but one that is often determined by assessors and not the always within the creator's control);
- student-centered control, which assumes a student has some choice of what to submit;
- reflection and self-assessment, or a discussion of the process that led to the written products and plan for further revision;
- growth along specific parameters, to indicate a way to track improvement in spelling, for example;
- development over time, which requires multiple drafts of the same work but serves to showcase creator learning (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 32).

Like Yancey, Hamp-Lyons and Condon recognize the multiple dimensions at work in portfolio creation.

Of these nine components, however, Hamp-Lyons and Condon later summarize these elements into what they consider to be the three most paramount: collection, selection, and reflection. (Notice that these were Yancey's first identifying markers of the portfolio as well.) A portfolio is not a portfolio if it is simply one essay. There must be more than one work submitted to constitute a portfolio. Already different than the timed essay assessment it has replaced, the collection that is contained in a portfolio varies from context to context. For example, one portfolio might have multiple drafts of a single essay, another portfolio used in a different context might have only what a creator would consider to be a finished product with

no drafts leading up to it. Also, different genres of writing might be included, or writing that was produced for a variety of audiences and purposes. The portfolio could also include some work such as the timed writing assignment to showcase writing composed in different parameters. The collection of work included in a portfolio may differ, but the important component to acknowledge here is that it is a collection of work. Of course, this collection of work would just be a pile of writing samples without the reflective component. The reflection is "an ordering mechanism" that makes the collection accessible to an audience (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 119). And this reflection leads logically to selection since the creator will be considering at great length what components to include and in what order to include them. Of course, the selection process is not always entirely up to the creator of the portfolio. Sometimes the selection is determined by the evaluators prior to the portfolio's creation, but the reflective component is just as important as the collection element.

Defining what makes up a portfolio by considering its elements, or considering the portfolio only in the particular local context it is used, seems to be missing a bigger role that portfolios play. Portfolios are devices that are used for assessment or job market purposes, but they are also much more than that. Portfolios are themselves a technology, with all the implications and ramifications that can be included with them as such.

Technology Defined

Whenever I use the term technology in the courses that I teach, students always initially imagine only those artifacts of technology, like the personal computer, the cell

phone, or some other—usually electronic—device. To be sure, I used to view technology in this manner as well. As a culture, we are predisposed to think of technology as mere instruments under our control, as a means to an end of our making. But a definition of technology *must* encompass more than mere material devices. According to Martin Heidegger in *The Question Concerning Technology*, an instrumental definition of technology must be composed of two parts:

> The two definitions of technology belong together. For to posit ends and procure and utilize the means to them is a human activity. The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is. The whole complex of these contrivances is technology. (4-5)

The whole complex is what makes up the system that is technology, rather than just devices. It does include the artifacts—the equipment, tools, and machines—but technology is no mere artifact or tool, rather it is regarded as an entire system that also includes the human act of making and creating, and the needs and the ends that they serve. Even within this instrumental definition, humans are bound to the technological artifacts and tools they create and use because that activity is part of technology itself. The entire complex system is contained within the definition of technology.

Consider portfolio creation as such a technology. Beyond just being a device for assessment or job market purposes, portfolios also embody the human activity of making. The human making of a portfolio—using whatever equipment necessary to achieve the end purpose of fulfilling an assessment requirement or acting as a device

for employability—is all bound up in a definition of portfolio as technology. When thinking of portfolios as a technology, one must include the whole system of portfolio creation—the making and the made.

Heidegger posits that "Technology itself is a contrivance, or, in Latin, an *instrumentum*" (Heidegger *TQCT* 5). This is important because the Latin term *instrumentum* "signifies that which functions to heap or build up or to arrange" (Heidegger *TQCT* 5). This provides even more depth to the instrumental definition of technology because it suggests that the system has an order and an arrangement that is also worth considering, which is a precursor to Heidegger's characterization of Enframing and standing-reserve, something I will address below. But this definition also parallels the elemental definition of a portfolio I detailed above (including selection, collection, and reflection), where arrangement and order play a vital role in its structure and creation.

Furthermore, and most predominantly, Heidegger moves from the purely instrumental view of technology and theorizes that technology really presents itself as a way of revealing, where "something concealed comes into unconcealment" (Heidegger *TQCT* 11). For Heidegger, this realm of revealing is truth: "Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alēthia*, truth, happens" (Heidegger *TQCT* 13). Getting at what is true is paramount for Heidegger because that is where the essence resides. This idea will come up again later in this dissertation, specifically in Chapter Four, but for now, it is important to focus on and set up the distinction between what Heidegger terms as ancient

technology (i.e. bringing-forth) and modern technology (i.e. challenging forth) for a more thorough and useful definition of technology.

Ancient Technology

With regard to revealing, Heidegger makes a clear distinction between revealing versus manufacturing. By recognizing that instrumentality is based on causality—as in the philosophical four causes of the material, form, end, and agent—Heidegger encourages his readers to view these "modes of occasioning" (i.e. the four causes) as a "bringing-forth" (i.e. ancient technology) that results in revealing, i.e., where "something concealed comes into unconcealment" (Heidegger *TQCT* 11). And, it is this revealing that is paramount for Heidegger when questioning concerning technology because "The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing [and …] technology is a way of revealing" (Heidegger *TQCT* 12).To do so, he draws a line from our modern term of technology back to the Greek "*Technikon*, or that which belongs to *technē*" (Heidegger *TQCT* 12). To be sure, there are many differences between what the ancient Greeks referred to as *technē* and our modern definition. For example, Heidegger states that "*technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsmen, but also for the arts and the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poietic" (Heidegger *TQCT* 13). Given our modern understanding of the term technology, clearly *technē* and technology have differences. For one, as I stated earlier, a common (though misappropriated) definition of technology is an instrumental one. *Technē*'s definition at once contains within it the notion of the craftsmen's activities and skills *and* also for something beyond that

craftsmen's production, the arts. In this definition there is no mention of the materials and the product created. There is simply a reference to *poiēsis*, which encompasses a notion of making and revealing of "that which shines forth most purely" (Heidegger *TQCT* 34). Put more simply, there is a beauty in *technē* that is not included in our current definition of technology.

Also noteworthy in the distinction between the two terms is the inclusion of the idea of expert knowledge in *technē* that is simply absent when thinking about technology. In fact, many current users of technology would claim to be far from experts. Consider that "[f]rom earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words are names for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it" (Heidegger *TQCT* 13). For the craftsmen, the making is central to themselves and their identity *as* craftsmen. Because *technē* encompasses the four causes of matter, form, end, and agent, the craftsmen are literally a part of the making in this sense.

But defining *technē* proves even more complex when considering the term as Heidegger does, as a bringing-forth. To provide a more concrete understanding of the varied levels encompassed in the definition of *technē* and Heidegger's specific definition of "ancient technology," an example or two might be useful:

> *Technē* […] reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another. Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the perspectives of the four modes of occasioning. This revealing gathers

> together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house, with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. Thus what is decisive in *technē* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *technē* is bringing-forth. (Heidegger *TQCT* 13)

Heidegger here uses the example of the house builder, ship builder, or chalice maker to provide further explanation of his view. For example, when building a ship, one must have the idea of a completed ship firmly in mind. This expert knowledge of "ship" then determines how the ship is made. The creation of the ship is revealed through the knowledge of ship building, not in the wood or hammer that might be used to create it (although those elements and the knowledge of how those material parts make up the whole is always firmly in the mind of the craftsman). It is *the knowledge* that is paramount in ancient technology, not the means to the end.

Modern Technology

Heidegger views ancient technology as a bringing-forth type of revealing. Modern technology, on the other hand, is a challenging forth "which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such" (Heidegger *TQCT* 14). To be sure for Heidegger, nature is an inclusive component in the definition of technology. From an ancient technology perspective, nature is left alone to be as it is. If humans choose to harness the power of the wind via a windmill,

that is not changing the wind in any way. In comparison, challenging forth is a way "toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense" (*TQCT* 15) but also of creating a "standing-reserve" (*TQCT* 17) – or storing up energy and material for use at a later time. In this definition, the maximum yield for minimum expense is envisioned from the perspective of human agents, and not from the perspective of nature. This is an important element to recognize because, from a natural perspective, any demand required could be viewed as catastrophic. An example of this is coal mined from the earth to be stored for later heat energy use. Tearing through the earth to scrape the carbon rock from her belly to be used to later warm humans would perhaps be considered horrific in Mother Nature's view. So, perspective plays an important role when considering the creation of standing-reserve. To provide another example of standing-reserve so that the definition is made clearer, Heidegger posits that an airliner standing on a runway is revealed to be "standing-reserve, inasmuch as it is ordered to ensure the possibility of transportation" (*TQCT* 17). The notion of standing-reserve almost conjures up, for me at least, a person who has hoarder's syndrome in that they collect and keep everything because of its potential for use at a later time. This analogy may not be complete, but what is important to note is that the idea of standing-reserve is not about the current use of artifacts or ideas, but rather it is about *potential* for later use. Again, notice how bound by time and space this definition of modern technology truly is.

Moving beyond mere potential for use, Heidegger's notion of modern technology has other layers as well. To begin, Heidegger recognizes nature's power and the energy stored within. The "challenging forth" must first tap into and somehow

harness that power of nature. Once that energy is retrieved and made useful for humans' purposes, it must be safely stored in order to be called upon when needed. When stored, it is considered to be standing-reserve until it is distributed to those who need the energy and power. Once distributed, the system is "switched about anew" (Heidegger *TQCT* 16).The whole of this complex system is what becomes the revealing in modern technology, but the revealing in this system of unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching is never ending and can never really get at the truth because it is hiding itself in the never ending system. In modern technology the "revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing" (Heidegger *TQCT* 16). In modern technology, the paths and course are what get reified and revealed. The system's functioning and ordering is what becomes privileged and preserved.

If this reification of the system occurs without regard to a human's role in it, one must question the possibility of a human becoming standing-reserve. Given that nature can be called forth in a challenging forth way, Heidegger posits that "[i]f man is challenged ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve? The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this" (*TQCT* 18). Simply defining a human as a resource would give credence to the belief that a human has too become, like nature, simply potential as a stored energy source waiting in the larger system of modern technology. However, Heidegger also claims that "precisely

because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e., into the process of ordering, he never is transformed into mere standing-reserve" (*TQCT* 18). In this way, humans always have the possibility to re-order, the possibility to resist and to change. It is this possibility for change that keeps humans from becoming standing-reserve; however, I would argue that if humans do not recognize or have the ability to navigate the modern technological system, then they truly have become mere standing-reserve. This is a point to which I will return in Chapter Three of this dissertation, but I believe that even Heidegger lends credence to this idea because he states that humans must be careful and continue to question concerning the larger system that is included in notions of technology.

Of course, Heidegger pushes on his own definition of modern technology even further, and the idea of ordering really takes hold. Consider the call that "we must take that challenging that sets upon man to order the real as standing-reserve in accordance with the way in which it shows itself" (*TQCT* 19). As participants in modern technology, we are set upon to order that which we encounter. Heidegger provides the example of naming a mountain and then including that mountain with others in order to order the mountain range. It is this "calling-forth" that assembles and orders that Heidegger has termed Enframing. To be Enframed means that we human beings are seen merely as instruments for ourselves in a challenging forth of modern technology, that we are set to order everything as a standing-reserve. Because we are Enframed by modern technology (i.e. ordered as a part of the larger system), the true meaning of technology cannot reveal itself to us and we are unable to see the essence of technology. Heidegger's primary concern is getting at the essence of truth and

"Enframing challenges forth into the frenziedness of ordering that blocks every view into the coming-to-pass of revealing and so radically endangers the relation to the essence of truth" (*TQCT* 33). For Heidegger, the truth is where the essence of technology lies, but it must be revealed. To be sure, it is the truth not of the self, but rather, the truth of the system, of which the self is a part. According to Heidegger, the only way out is through human reflection and further questioning.

For Langdon Winner, this idea of standing-reserve manifests itself in the sense of the changes human beings must make to adapt ourselves to our new technological systems. Noticing a similar conundrum to Heidegger with regard to modern versus ancient technology, Winner states, "Patterns of perceptive thinking that were entirely reliable in the past now lead us systematically astray. Many of our standard conceptions of technology reveal a disorientation that borders on dissociation from reality" (Winner *Autonomous* 8). In an attempt to reorient ourselves with regard to technology, Winner suggests that scholars need to continue the discussion about technology and to further his own contribution to this larger discussion, Winner explores new ways of viewing technology in connection with human relationships:

> The construction of a technical system that involves human beings as operating parts brings a reconstruction of social roles and relationships. Often this is a result of a new system's own operating requirements: it simply will not work unless human behavior changes to suit its form and process. (Winner *Whale* 11)

Here, Winner notes that humans must change our behavior in order to become part of the system of modern technology, which I would consider another way of showing

how we are Enframed, thus enslaved, by modern technology. It also shows how we bend and shift to help replicate and re-replicate the larger system in which we are operating and are a part. We humans adapt and transform ourselves accordingly to attempt to navigate the system, a system that we are perhaps unconsciously reproducing.

Ideology defined

This system of replication is present in much the same way in ideology. As I stated earlier, technology is certainly more than mere artifacts. Technology encompasses both the means and the ends, and the human activity involved in the whole. To be sure, technology is a system that is shaped by humans, but also serves to shape human behavior as well. Ideology acts in a similar manner. Because of its connectedness to time and space within the human life world, technology is itself inherently ideological.

The term *ideology* first appeared in France in the late 18th century. Used then to indicate the study of how sense perceptions form all general concepts, a more contemporary definition might be more akin to a study of "common" sense, or at least what a person or group of people perceive to be commonsensical. More specifically in the mid-19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels defined ideology to be "the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and by recourse to which they explain, what they take to be reality" (Abrams 148). Though Marx and Engels equated this definition specifically with economic and social class interests, this definition has in more recent years been applied to race, sex,

education, and/or ethnic groups. To claim today that everything is ideological harkens back to Marx and Engels, but without the same resonance of economic distinction between the dominant "bourgeoisie" business owners and the "proletariat" working-class wager-earners, though class is still one component that is considered.

This shift in definition of ideology is perhaps due in part to the work of Louis Althusser in the 1960s. A French Marxist, Althusser reshaped the definition by declaring instead that:

> ideologies vary according to the form and practices of each mode of state apparatus, and that the ideology of each mode operates by means of a type of discourse which interpellates (calls upon) the individual to take up a pre-established "subject-position"—that is, a position as a person with certain views and values which, in every instance, serve the ultimate interests of the ruling class. (Abrams 151)

The variance depending on the mode of state apparatus shifts the definition from solely an economic lens to any number of possibilities. This shift is paramount and more inclusive of other perspectives of the world, but Althusser still holds to that notion of a ruling class (what Antonio Gramsci would refer to as hegemony). Further still, Althusser's definition includes what I would call "the reification factor," where discourse is used to get the individual to act, behave, speak, and live in a manner that serves to maintain the dominant hegemony.

James Paul Gee echoes Althusser's assessment that language is "bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it" but defines the term in much more contemporary terms (Gee *Social* ix). For Gee, ideology is "a usually taken

for granted and tacit 'theory' of what counts to be a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think, feel, and behave" (Gee *Social* ix). Notice that ideology is not explicit here. In fact, ideology is most powerful when invisible. Gee also highlights words like *normal* and *right* because he recognizes the subjectivity inherent within them. But that's not all that Gee uses to define ideology. To be sure, his definition further posits that these theories involve who gets to have (and not have) the social and material goods. For Gee, there is another somewhat economic layer to his definition as well, but it goes beyond financial wealth and includes social and cultural benefits like status and worth.

James Berlin in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," also posits that "ideology provides the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all these to each other. Ideology is thus inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience" (Berlin 479). For Berlin, language is not only defined by ideology, but ideology is determining the very language one chooses to use. Berlin further explains—by drawing from Göran Therborn's definition of ideology in *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*—that ideology shapes our real and imagined experience, sets standards for decision making, normalizes our goals and desires, and defines our expectations and limitations (Berlin 479). For Berlin, "this last mode of interpellation is especially implicated in power relationships in a group or society, in deciding who has power and in determining what power can be expected to achieve" (Berlin 479). To help clarify this idea, Berlin provides the example that simply recognizing that there is poverty means there is nothing we can do about it "if ideology indicates that a change is

simply not possible (the poor we have always with us)" (Berlin 479). To complete his definition of ideology, Berlin concludes that even though ideology is pluralistic, the hegemony of the dominant class will tend to be supported over other competing ideologies (Berlin 479). In this way, ideology—like technology—is a system that continually attempts to replicate itself.

Portfolio Creation as Literacy Practice

In order to better frame this portfolio system for the purposes of this dissertation, I will also apply the notion that portfolio creation is a literacy practice. Initially tempted to name portfolio design as a literacy event, or an "occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath 445), I had reservations about using the term because of the different uses of portfolios. Either way, relating portfolio creation to literacy practices seems a simple leap to make, given the current research in literacy studies to move from what Brian Street has defined as an autonomous model of literacy to an ideological one. A central theme in Street's work, the ideological model of literacy recognizes that the ability to read and write is embedded in social, political, and cultural beliefs. Significant for literacy scholars and researchers, Street's concept is slower to catch on in the general public. Often students still believe that it is the individual's lack of ability that keeps him/her from a job, rather than the lack of jobs as a whole, which is a powerful ideology that keeps being reproduced (I discuss this further in Chapter Five). Since claiming that portfolios are ideological themselves, using the ideological model from literacy studies as a frame seems to be a fruitful and

necessary next step to take in contextualizing and defining the portfolio for closer examination.

But before I can offer my critique of portfolio use in higher education and academic programs, I must first provide an adequate context and share how my thinking about these problems began—to write a bit of my own literacy narrative, as it is relevant to this inquiry. To begin, when I first read James Paul Gee's "New People in New Worlds," I was struck by the stories of the two teenage girls from different social classes whose language and identities, as is shown through linguistic analysis, have been shaped according to those social classes (Gee "New" 55). These examples affected me because I am the daughter of a retired steel-worker, who related most to the working-class girl—the girl who, according to Gee, would fail in school.

Of course, I write this now in a doctoral dissertation, which would suggest that I have done just the opposite in terms of schooling; however, there were many reasons for my success in school that allowed me to overcome my social class barriers. For one, I attended school in a suburb, not in an inner-city like the working-class girl in Gee's example. As such, my classmates were middle- and upper-class suburbanites, and exposure to their lifeworlds no doubt had its impact. Also, both my parents highly value education. In fact, my mother went back to school and earned her Bachelor of Arts in elementary education when I was young. Though she never found permanent employment until I was out of the home, I am certain that her accomplishments had their influence. My uncle, my grandparents—to list all my literacy sponsors, as Deborah Brandt has named them—would be a nearly impossible task as so many have played a role in shaping me thus far. But, I provide this snippet from my own literacy

narrative as an impetus for this dissertation research, because my own life narrative has been a large motivator for this work. And, it is not surprising that I would want to write about my own school experiences because, as Brandt claims, "Literacy is also a productive resource, a means of production and reproduction, including a means by which legacies of human experience move from past to future and by which, for many, identities are made and sustained" (Brandt "Literacy" 6). These ways in which literacy as a productive resource creates, shapes, and sustains identities through time are what I would like to explore further in this dissertation through the lens of portfolios, given my own initial identification with the working-class teen in Gee's analysis.

Undoubtedly, I feel strongly that instructors need to attempt to expose the ideologies that influence our educational practices. Recognizing that ideologies are often invisible, it is imperative that we attempt to reshape the educational community instead of just reifying the dominant belief that literacy is neutral and value-free, as in the autonomous model. One of the most dominant and powerful ideologies that exists even now in our culture is the "literacy myth," the idea that economic advancement occurs automatically through education. This concept is so strong (and not without some merit in our culture) that this is perhaps one of the reasons I sit here now composing this dissertation in the hope that I will eventually obtain my doctorate and secure stable employment. Admittedly, one of the other reasons I am sitting here now composing is that members of my family are huge believers in the literacy myth, and I feel their influence. Harvey Graff provides an historical account of how this idea gained momentum and influence in the American educational system (so it is not at all surprising that I believe as I do about obtaining the most education I possibly can). But

ultimately, Graff reiterates that literacy education is not neutral, that there are cultural forces that encourage and discourage literacy learning of all kinds, and implications that exist as a result of these beliefs. For example, obtaining a doctorate does not mean a job will be available for me (see Gee; Street; Freire) and yet I still pursue my education with the hope that it will provide more opportunities for future economic stability. Either way, specific ideologies about education and literacy still exist and educators need to be explicit with students about them in order for students to learn how to negotiate their own meanings within the systems.

Arguments by Chapter

This chapter has made several claims about portfolios in order to situate them for closer analysis in later chapters. First, I define two different types of portfolios and their distinction because of their different uses—the personalized portfolio for use on the job market and the standardized portfolio used to assess writing primarily in educational institutions. Then, I argue that both types of portfolios are themselves a technology, which embodies a definition of more than a mere device for assessment or job market purposes. Drawing from Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, I define portfolios as technology that is more of an inclusive system of human making and the made that includes all aspects of the human action of making. Within that larger definition of technology, I have also used Heidegger in order to show two different methods of perceiving technology, that of a bringing-forth revealing (i.e., ancient technology) and a challenging forth (i.e., modern technology). This all-inclusive definition of technology is not a neutral or autonomous

system, but rather is ideological. I then laid out definitions of ideology which I will draw from in future chapters in order to more accurately describe my meaning. Finally, I then frame the entire discussion of portfolios as an ideological technology within literacy studies in order to draw from studies that have already been done to reveal writing as ideological and help further my own argument here.

Chapter Two will take a closer look at the personalized portfolio as it is used on the job market. In that chapter, I argue that the job market type of portfolio can be used a form of both ancient technology and modern technology (to use Heidegger's terms), but that in doing so, this form has the potential to make us humans into standing reserve, thus becoming enslaved to the modern technological system of new capitalism. I will also explore the notion that a personalized portfolio can be considered a *technē*, and some of the dangers associated with a misunderstanding of the four causes. For example, I will look most closely at the idea of inversion that occurs when the end is not known exactly beforehand in portfolio creation.

Chapter Three will then shift its focus from the personalized portfolio to the standardized portfolio. I will use this chapter to focus more attention on reflection, which has been identified as one of the three main elements of portfolio creation, alongside collection and selection. By drawing attention to reflection and some of the problems that result with this practice in portfolio creation, I aim to reinforce the notion that portfolios are in fact ideological and that they seek to reproduce the systems in which they function. I also hope to show how dangerous it is to view, promote, and/or instruct this reflective practice for a portfolio as a neutral activity.

Chapter Four situates both types of portfolios pedagogically and ideologically. Because the very definition of portfolios includes a growth and development over time component, I argue that portfolios are really a technology that, when used for educational purposes, promotes a process pedagogical model and, by default, an expressivist perspective. I emphasize this because of Lad Tobin's claim in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* that "it was not unusual to hear 'process' and 'expressivism' used almost interchangeably, as if expressivism were the only kind of process" (Tobin 9). I also make the argument in Chapter Four that the personalized portfolio created for job market purposes is just an in-depth personal narrative of sorts. Of course, given that portfolio use for writing assessment purposes was first published during the height of the expressivist movement, it should come as no surprise that portfolios are process-oriented and expressivist, but I argue that perhaps a rethinking of portfolios that allows for a more culturally inclusive, Multiliteracies perspective (New London Group) would be better aligned with a social-epistemic approach (Berlin) to teaching and assessment.

Finally, Chapter Five identifies a way that we may envision a transformed practice of portfolios—as the New London Group defines it—that moves beyond consumption and toward innovation. Portfolio designers need a way to move from a position of just replicating the system of which they are a part, to successfully navigating and helping to rethink and reshape that system. I will point to moments of success in Asao Inoue's work with self-assessment, where portfolios already have the potential to be transformative, but also offer recommendations for the work that still needs to be done in writing studies in order to empower portfolio designers to

transform the systems of which they are a part. By doing so, I hope to add two more elements to the current tri-definition of portfolios as collection, selection, and reflection—the elements of meditation and transformation (see portfolio definitions above). These additional dimensions, I argue, are paramount to enable systematic resistance and change.

Chapter 2

The Personalized Portfolio and the Job Market

As chapter one has laid out, technology is never autonomous or neutral. Technology is always embedded in ideology; that is to say that technology is always operating within a system of cultural, social, and political beliefs. One such technology that is being used in writing studies is what Darren Cambridge has termed the personalized portfolio. This type of portfolio is used primarily to stand as a representation of someone's knowledge, learning, and skills. Different than a resume, the personalized portfolio contains work samples, photographs, certificates, and any other materials relevant to the type of work that the creator does in order to best exemplify his/her accomplishments, experience, knowledge, skills, and valuable personal characteristics (see Poore; Straub; Satterthwaite and D'Orsi). This type of portfolio is the one that is often used on the job market to gain employment. In this chapter, I argue that the personalized portfolio as it is used on the job market has the potential to make humans into "standing-reserve," thus becoming enslaved to the modern technological system of new capitalism, an economic system that I will define below. I will also explore the notion that a personalized portfolio might be more effective and persuasive if considered as a *technē*, which may help in better teaching portfolio creation as a genre, but I also point out some of the dangers associated with a misunderstanding of the four causes in *technē*. For example, I will look most closely at the idea of inversion—specifically in portfolio creation—that occurs when the end is not known exactly beforehand or the end changes due to different uses and contexts.

For more than a quarter of a century, writing studies programs—especially professional and technical writing programs—have encouraged students to design portfolios not only for assessment purposes, but also as a way to showcase their marketable skills during a job search via a career portfolio, or a personalized portfolio. Given the nature of the economy as it is now operating in a new capitalist model, the emphasis placed on the already high-stakes document like the personalized portfolio has only increased. It seems more important than ever to teach students how to effectively create a portfolio to navigate the job market.

Fast capitalism as Modern Technology

The new fast capitalist economic model has been the focus of scholarly critique and discussion for more than a decade. In 2000, the New London Group recognized this global economic change from the top-down mass production techniques epitomized by Henry Ford's assembly line to the more flattened hierarchical structure of fast capitalism in *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. Instead of the image of a "mindless, repetitive unskilled work on the production line," fast capitalism calls for "commitment, responsibility, and motivation [that] are won by developing a workplace culture in which the members of an organisation identify with its vision, mission, and corporate values" (New London Group 11). New capitalism pushes the ideology of the company so that workers take on the mission and values of the company, which results in workers who are valued members of a team. The flattened power hierarchy occurs in fast capitalism because of this new focus on teamwork. Certainly, this new team is comprised of

members who are adaptable and can perform complex and varied tasks, unlike the assembly line worker who performed one task over and over again. To be sure, the switch to fast capitalism from Fordism requires more flexible workers, which requires awareness from instructors. As the New London Group states, "This means that, as educators, we have a greater responsibility to consider the implications of what we do in relations to a productive working life" (11). There is no better example than the personalized portfolio that is created as an assignment in a writing class to embody the importance of instruction with regard to a student's working life.

In an effort to showcase some of the factors that instructors should consider with regard to personalized portfolio design in light of the economic shift to fast capitalism, I draw from James Paul Gee's, "New People in New Worlds," which appeared as chapter 2 of the New London Group's *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. In that chapter, Gee shares the stories of the two teenage girls from different social classes whose language and identities, as shown through linguistic analysis examples, have been shaped according to those social classes ("New" 55). As I mentioned in the first chapter, Gee's analysis leads him to interesting discoveries about these two teens, and also about how the girls' linguistic backgrounds operate within the distributed system of new capitalism. Class markers in language have a significant effect on one's future work possibilities within this new capitalism because membership and acceptance as part of a team is now paramount. For Gee, the new capitalist model is a system that can be navigated by recognizing that one has particular class markers in his/her language, thus enabling him/her to rethink, reflect, and even relearn words, phrases, etc. in order to perhaps change

certain language predispositions so that he/she could be more marketable for future work endeavors. But language acquisition is merely one aspect of a marketable self. Along these lines, Gee introduces readers to the metaphor of the portfolio person:

> What the new capitalism requires is that people see and define themselves as a flexibly rearrangeable portfolio of the skills, experiences, and achievements they have acquired through their trajectory through project space as team members of communities of practice operating as distributed networks to accomplish a set endeavor which then terminates the community. ("New" 61)

In this statement, there are a few points to take notice of. First, people are challenged to shape themselves to meet the needs of the new capitalist system. The people themselves are not valued, but rather their skill sets and previous experiences are seen as valuable. Second, this shaping and defining takes place over a period of time. It happens "through their trajectory" which suggests that people need to be compiling experiences and storing them up for later use as much as is possible. The new capitalism is literally requiring that we create our experiences into standing-reserve as Heidegger defined it and I reported in Chapter One. As Carrie Straub writes in *Creating Your Skills Portfolio*, "Any career move (employment change, job search or competition for promotion) is a marketing project, and the product is *you*" (Straub vi). As the products to be marketed in fast capitalism in this example, humans really are standing-reserve. Finally, the required skill set and work is only temporary. Once the task is accomplished, the community of workers that came together to complete the endeavor is then disbanded and switched over anew to find another goal/task that

requires their particular skill set and expertise. This echoes dangerously of Heidegger's version of modern technology where the revealing in this system of unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about anew is never ending. In the fast capitalist model, people are unlocking their prior experiences and knowledge, transforming them into something viable for future work possibilities, storing them up until possible employment can be found, distributing their knowledge and skills to the task at hand, and then switching about anew in an attempt to re-market themselves for the next project. Remember too that for Heidegger in modern technology "[t]he revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing" (*TQCT* 16). People are becoming subsumed in the system because they are willing participants in the re-securing and regulating. The new capitalism requires people to adapt, to be flexible, to become whatever the next endeavor requires them to be, as long as they continue to replicate the system.

The same is true of the knowledge economy in fast capitalism as it is forcing workers to become more adaptable and flexible than ever before. What is being compiled in a personalized portfolio is no longer a representation of the whole person who is seeking employment, but rather is a list of skills and attributes that the economic system may find valuable. And, what is valuable in fast capitalism is versatility. In *Building Your CareerPortfolio*™, Carol A. Poore recognizes this component of fast capitalism. "Why are steady and purposeful career investments important?" she asks (15). "Because, bottom line, you will need to be change oriented

throughout the rest of your life. You will need a way to cut through the clutter and noise of everyday life in order to decide which career-related activities are valuable" (Poore 15). For Poore, creating a portfolio to help market yourself is an ongoing negotiation of figuring out what is valuable in one's experience and what is less so for the job market. But, what Poore considers most valuable, as this quotation suggests, is the ability to adapt and change according to the needs of the economy and market. More importantly, this flexibility must be portrayed in a manner that sets the personalized portfolio creator apart from every other portfolio person. As Deborah Brandt suggests:

> The search for what is different, faster, smarter, and more effectively communicated and sold drives economic activity at an unprecedented pitch and introduces the potential for rapid and continuous change in the workplace. Indeed, that the quest for economic advantage in knowledge-producing fields relies so deeply on human ingenuity, skills, and effort can make the modern workplace a challenging, turbulent, and often unstable environment. ("Writing" 184-185)

The stability of the old Fordist, top-down, hierarchical, economic system model is gone and in its place are distributed systems of a new capitalist model, where "Employability security comes from the chance to accumulate human capital – skills and reputation – that can be invested in new opportunities as they arise" (Kanter 157). This means that according to Kanter's assessment, security only comes as a result of an opportunity gone right, where a new worker must accumulate skills and a positive reputation to transfer to the next task. For a person entering the job force, that first job

could make or break their entire career—a daunting endeavor in and of itself—since that first job gets added to the bankable portfolio. But in order to even be considered for the first position, students often must use the skills and experiences they obtain in college as a starting point, which places even more emphasis on the personalized portfolios they create in writing programs. And, to further complicate matters, very few writing studies textbooks (including scientific and technical communication) offer any kind of direct instruction on portfolio creation and its components.

Books do exist to help people create career and skills portfolios, but none offer a critique on the effect of doing so. Rather, these texts offer "Five Steps to an Excellent Portfolio" or "Three Basic Portfolio Layouts" (Straub cover). Many of these books use the first section to convince readers of the importance of creating a career or skills portfolio. And, indeed, creating a personalized portfolio is effective and important in today's fast capitalist economy. As Carol A. Poore points out:

- You're likely to change professions (fields of study) three times in your life.
- You can count on the fact that every two to five years, you're likely to make a change. You might find a different job, pursue a new field of work, reduce your work hours, or sell a business you own or have inherited. Few of us can realistically plan to stay within one organization for longer than five years.
- You'll probably be living longer and working more years than those in generations past. (The average life span has grown from 65 in 1935 to 75 today.)

- In today's knowledge-based society, you must be flexible to respond quickly to an opportunity in order to implement change. Competitive advantage is not simply innovation—it takes flexible people to implement the innovation. (15)

All of these reasons point to the necessity of teaching the portfolio as a context-specific and ideologically situated creation. Students need to recognize the stakes and ramifications involved in creating, and using, their personalized portfolios.

Because of the importance of the work created in writing studies classes, instructors need to be keenly aware of the possible effects of assignments, and the portfolio is no exception. As I explained previously, the personalized portfolio has the potential to turn its creators into standing-reserve. To help explain further what I am arguing here, I draw once again on the work of Martin Heidegger. In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Heidegger breaks down technology into two distinctions: ancient and modern technology. By examining this juxtaposition, I argue that the skill sets and diverse experiences that are included in a portfolio have become a standing-reserve—that humans have Enframed their literacy practices, technological savvy, and diverse experiences in such a way as to now be enslaved to such categorization. In this way, humans are shaping themselves to be slaves to the modern technology that is fast capitalism.

Indeed, fast capitalism *is* a modern technology, as Heidegger has defined it. This current economic system is structured to force people to identify and represent themselves as mere skill sets, diverse experiences, and savvy. Frank Satterthwaite and Gary D'Orsi's *The Career Portfolio Workbook: Using the Newest Tool in Your Job-*

Hunting Arsenal to Impress Employers and Land a Great Job even goes so far as to highlight personal characteristics as part of creating a career portfolio because:

> when we surveyed people who interview job candidates and asked them to rank the relative importance of job applicant's knowledge, skills, experience, accomplishments, and personal characteristics that add value, the majority of the employers surveyed ranked personal characteristics first. Our research has been quite consistent on this point. (9-10)

Clearly, a person's identity is what is being valued (or not) on the job market. Not only are portfolio creators expected to amass their skills and accomplishments, but they are tasked with representing themselves as having the right personal characteristics that fit with the potential employers. Certainly, ideology is embedded and masked in this system, and people are dangerously unaware of the effects of such representations.

These representations are making people into standing-reserve. The examples of aptitude in a portfolio are being challenged-forth in so far as skills and experiences have been calculated and compiled in a person's personalized portfolio as a supply of marketable 'energy' and material that can be stored until that person needs to call upon those experiences in order to get an initial or different job. To further this claim, consider Deborah Brandt's notion of the knowledge economy in terms of the human element:

> Although Witte (2005) separates mediational means (i.e., material and symbolic entities) from participants (i.e., human beings) and tends to

> emphasize the role of tools in achieving these transformations, he does recognize that from certain perspectives, writers themselves function as mediational means for others. This captures the process by which literacy serves the needs of knowledge economy, as writers function as tool-making tools. Indeed, from a production perspective, the mediational work of writing becomes quite pronounced. (Brandt "Writing" 178)

This is an example of literacy practices that have been put into standing-reserve, waiting to be challenged-forth when needed by the production of the knowledge economy, which operates in the new fast capitalist model. The human participation in writing makes that human a tool-making tool. Of course, I argue that any skill set or diverse experience could easily replace the literacy practices exemplified here. If we are working in a global market as the earlier Gee and Kanter quotes suggest, then the more diverse experiences a person can stock-pile, the better chance they have at being flexible and adaptable for the next endeavor because they will have that prior knowledge to draw upon in the next venture. The knowledge economy is all about adaptability on the market and being able to call upon your standing-reserve of experiences in order to get ahead.

To help explain this further, I once again use a Heideggerian frame. As explained in Chapter One, for Heidegger, getting at the essence of something is only possible through a revealing, or unconcealment. In regard to the revealing, how and what we reveal is determined by that which has already been revealed, determined by the system(s) of which we are a part. As I have established, the portfolio person is

trying to regulate and secure his/her continual employability by using his/her diverse set of experiences, literacy practices, and technological savvy in the changing and shifting communities of practice within the knowledge economy. If the system of fast capitalism is able to determine what set of experiences count and what set of experiences are useless to the marketability of a person, there has been a securing and a regulating of the ideological system that is modern technology. For example, a personalized portfolio creator would probably not include his ability to pass gas on command, unless of course he was trying to gain employment as a user tester of Gasex® or a similar product. Even then, I would suggest leaving that particular talent to the in-person interview, and definitely waiting until asked about it. This is of course because of another social practice or ideology that overrides the gas production talent, that of discretion when discussing bodily functions with others. This example is humorous, of course, but it once again speaks to the ideological situatedness of personalized portfolios, and instructors need to make these cultural, social, and political "norms" explicit when teaching students to create their personalized portfolios.

By failing to acknowledge the larger ideological systems of which portfolios are a part, students are forced to just reify the current systems that are in place. In doing so, students are continuing to perpetuate the notion that certain experiences are somehow better than others, and usually the experiences that are privileged are those of the dominant hegemony. By privileging these certain experiences over others, a regulation of the revealed has occurred, while at the same time, the concealed remains hidden and unknowable. The portfolio creators can only see the truth revealed as it

functions as a part of the systems in which they are creating. This is neither good nor bad, it simply is. However, it is in this regulating and revealing that Heidegger suggests that we are dangerously being made into standing-reserve:

> Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. … The name 'standing-reserve' … designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object. (*TQCT* 17)

Parts of our identity are being made into standing-reserve for the job market. This objectlessness of skill sets, technological savvy and diverse experiences becomes an object in the tangible artifact of a personalized portfolio. At this point in the knowledge economy, portfolios are Enframing people as skill sets and diverse experiences. "Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve" (Heidegger *TQCT* 20). Humans are willingly compiling experiences that culture and society deem valuable and then trying to call upon them when necessary in order to navigate the current economic system. Humans have become Enframed in this way. This definition is key for Heidegger because "the essence of modern technology lies in Enframing […and] through its so doing, the deceptive illusion arises that modern technology is an applied physical science" (Heidegger *TQCT* 23). But Enframing "is nothing technological, nothing on the order of a machine. It is the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve" (Heidegger

TQCT 23). In the example I am providing in this chapter, humans are revealed as Enframed to the fast capitalist economic system because we are being revealed as standing-reserve for that system.

In "Writing for a Living: Literacy and the Knowledge Economy," Deborah Brandt states that being a writer is a difficult profession because "People who write for a living must function under these conditions often as intense mediators of powerful ideological processes, mingling self and system as they transform abstract need into transactional texts" (Brandt "Writing" 194). As Brandt points out, there is great demand and support for writing in the knowledge economy, but great instability and turbulence as well. A writer needs to know not only how to read and write effectively for various multiple situations, but also how to negotiate meaning of powerful ideological processes as well. And this is most difficult since, once again, ideology is at its most powerful when it is invisible. This is not to say that someone who simply accepts tacit goals, values, and perceptions cannot be successful. Indeed, s/he can be, and often is, successful in an economic sense. I will delve further into this issue in Chapter Four, but for now the key to better understanding the role of the personalized portfolio in a writing classroom involves turning to the work of numerous literacy scholars and compositionists who call for us also to teach students how to be better citizens (see Brandt, Gee, Pieterse, Young). Of course this is not to say that instructors should not focus on students' career concerns, but rather that a balance must be enacted where students are given the opportunity to see themselves as part of these larger ideological systems and their role(s) within those systems.

Of course it is always important to remember that obtaining and maintaining a career is vital to students' well-being and the personalized portfolio is a possible focal point for such discussion. As Gee asks in "New People in New Worlds," if the work is distributed among many members of the organization, then what keeps an individual's job safe? How can we prepare students to contribute to society but also ensure that they won't just blindly reproduce the system? Again, I reiterate that because the relationship between self and system is so inextricably tied together, showing students how to negotiate meaning in and with their writing should be the central focus for writing instruction, and especially when it comes to the personalized portfolio assignment.

In order to further this claim, I draw once again from literacy studies scholarship. Recognizing the significant growth of the knowledge economy in recent years, Deborah Brandt explores the possible effects of this growth on writing and literacy studies as a whole in "Writing for a Living: Literacy and the Knowledge Economy." Brandt points out that:

> Knowledge-intensive companies account for more than 40% of new employment growth during the past 50 years (Stewart, 1997, p.41). Some analysts estimate that knowledge, most of it codified in writing, now composes about three fourths of the value added in the production of goods and services (Neef, 1998, p.4). (Brandt "Writing" 166)

These figures cement the importance of writing studies as a discipline. Seeing a close correlation between descriptions of the knowledge economy and descriptions of literacy (which both include notions of brain power and human skill closely associated

with learning, communication, social networking, and technology), Brandt suggests that greater demand and support for writing in the workplace brings not only the possibility for greater success, but also the danger of manipulation and possible negative consequences for the writers:

> The knowledge economy is associated heavily with brain power, creativity, and other so-called human capital. It is also associated with processes of learning, communication, and social networking, almost always technology enhanced. The close parallel between descriptions of the knowledge economy and descriptions of literacy (which is itself a form of brain power and human skill closely associated with learning, communication, social networking, and technology) is the intriguing connection pursued here. ("Writing" 167)

In her study, Brandt focuses on writing-intensive work positions, where writing includes "any activities that involve alphabetic inscription (from data entry to stenography to authoring of original, extended texts), preparations for writing (i.e., digesting information and planning), and the review and editing of the writing of others" ("Writing" 168). From a stratified sample of 75 job positions, Brandt chose 12 participants and conducted 1- to 2-hour interviews with each.

The analysis of these writers' experiences shows how interrelated the self is with the social systems in which the writers participate. Writers in the knowledge economy are asked to mediate their own values and concerns along with the value systems of the organizations where they work. The stakeholders in each communication vary and have competing interests, so it is a continual process of

knowing who and what to pay attention to, what to make explicit in the text, and what to leave out. As Brandt states: "Workplace writers can be likened to complex pieces of machinery that turn raw materials (both concrete and abstract) into functional, transactional, and valuable form, often with great expenditures of emotional, psychological, and technical effort" ("Writing" 176). Note once again the language Brandt is using. She is equating humans with pieces of machinery in order to make her point. This of course should be resonating with Heidegger's definition of modern technology here as well because writers are literally being portrayed as machines using raw materials to create valuable goods for use in the larger system. In this analogy, human thought itself has become Enframed by the knowledge economy.

Of course, there are many factors that contribute to the work of the writer in the knowledge economy. Collaboration, oversight, audience analysis, ghostwriting, brevity, translation, synthesis, and abstraction are involved in the process of mediation for the writer as well. The influence of the organizations in which these writers work (the processes, interests, histories, goals, needs, etc.) is always contributing to the texts the writers are creating:

> In the interviews, it came embedded in writers' accounts of having to translate one form of knowledge into another, write texts that would be embedded in a larger activity, ghostwrite or otherwise write (and read) on behalf of abstract or multisourced and sometimes competing interests, bring the significance of raw facts into a particular context, reduce text (often reported as being concise), and walk in other

> people's shoes either to gain experience needed to write or as a form of audience analysis. (Brandt "Writing" 176)

Writing in the knowledge economy is a balancing act where writers are continually mediating "powerful ideological processes, mingling self and system as they transform abstract need into transactional texts" (Brandt "Writing" 194). Creating a portfolio occurs in much the same way. There are competing interests that need to be negotiated by the writers on a regular basis and these interests and ways of production can become ingrained in the self, making it difficult to know how to balance the self within the system. Personalized portfolio creation is but one example of a site for showcasing how humans have become Enframed by modern technology.

Ancient Technology: The Personalized Portfolio as *Technē*

Forcing such diverse experiences into play in the knowledge economy for advancement or other gains is clearly a problem with modern technology, so it is important to examine the possibility of personalized portfolio creation as an ancient technology. For example, one might ask what would happen if we chose to self-consciously look at portfolios as a technē that "does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that technē is a bringing-forth" (Heidegger *TQCT* 13)? For Heidegger, the technē that is the bringing-forth was the ancient technology, which did not enable standing-reserve. But even when we examine portfolios through the lens of technē, we must be critical of the telos, or end use, of portfolios. If navigating the job market is itself the goal, then the telos of such a

practice would be to get a job. But what about the greater human endeavor of work? The rest of this chapter examines portfolio creation as a technē—simply defined as the art of making—and what happens when an inversion of technē occurs, where the final end use of the making—the telos—has become lost to the making itself.

Technē defined

In an attempt to recover and uncover *technē*, recent scholarship may provide a corrective to modern technology with regard to portfolio use. In spring of 2002, an entire issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* was devoted to this ancient concept. In their afterword for that special issue, Johnson and Ranney state: "The perception that *technē* is rigid and lacks creativity—in short, that it is *technology* in the contemporary sense—may be the result of modifications of the term that have evolved from nineteenth-century usage" (239). *Technē* is more than mere technology. It involves a level of mastery. According to Joseph Dunne: "*technē* is defined as [. . .] a 'reasoned state of a capacity to make.' It is thus quite straightforwardly linked to making (*poiesis*), i.e., the generation of 'things whose source (*archê*) is in the producer and not in the product'" (249). What matters here is the creator, not just the creation itself. And that creator must be an expert at the creation. My use of creator and creation here is intentional considering that "in the pre-Socratic scheme, making was not often presented as a human process but rather something that was owned and governed by the gods (see Rojcewicz, 2006)" (Johnson "Ubiquity" 345). And the definition of *technē* can be unpacked further still. Consider once again that "[f]rom earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words

are names for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it" (Heidegger *TQCT* 13). For this definition to be adequately applied to portfolios, the creators must know all aspects of the making of portfolios before even beginning to make their creations.

Technē encompasses an act of creation, but it is also more than that. *Technē* includes both the modern notion of craft, which some would consider a lower form of art, but also the higher order of art as well. An example of this is found in John Wild's "Plato's Theory of Texnh: A Phenomenological Interpretation." In this work, Wild discusses how Plato did not make the separation in *technē* between the high and the low, as he notes how *technē* "thus includes both art and craft of present day usage" (255). The low knowledge in our modern understanding would, of course, refer to "craft" (i.e., images of glue sticks, string and construction paper being fused together for some project at home), as it is certainly ranked lower than "art" (i.e., Picasso or Renoir) in our time, but for Plato, the distinction was not between the respective beauty of art or craft, but rather between "usefulness": "the useful is beautiful or fine, and the hurtful ugly or base" (Wild 255). Wild's definition is expanded even more and provides further depth when using it as a way to teach personalized portfolio creation when he notes, "true art or craft is always susceptible to such a degeneration into 'technique'" (256). In this manner, *technē* is described as higher or more useful than "technique." Of course to reduce this notion of *technē* to the concept of mere technique seems to play directly into the teaching of writing, especially when the lure of only giving students templates or rubrics for producing portfolios is often quite appealing. Our society tends to privilege that which can be numerically tabulated and

counted as it is harder to "objectively" measure that which is qualitative at its core. This is true especially in the humanities and English, where work is more qualitative, but Wild explains that Plato did not view the arts as somehow inferior: "It is a great mistake to suppose that these latter arts [based on qualitative measurement] are therefore less 'exact' than those with subject to quantitative measurement" (256). But *technē* was more paramount than science to Plato's thinking. According to Wild, for Plato "art, not science, is the primary, concrete mode of understanding. Hence art, not science, is the natural departure for any theory of knowledge" (Wild 255). Of course, Wild goes on to state boldly that according to Plato "Without the arts, man cannot exist" (255). Though the Wild article was published more than half a century ago, it is one of the most thorough examinations of the Greek concept of *technē*. In fact, Wild continues to further the definition even more by stating that the very definition of *technē* is a "pure knowledge of form or standard" (257), not a set group of steps or quantitative measurements.

There is a Heideggerian "meditative thinking" quality in *technē* that is always accounted for because of the epistemic element of *technē* in that this meditative quality is "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46). In this way, the "copyist" is not a true technite (or artist) because he or she lacks the "pure knowledge" which produces the art or, in this case, the personalized portfolio (257). As Dunne states:

> *Technē* provides the kind of knowledge possessed by an expert in one of the specialized crafts, a person who understands the principles (*logoi,*

> *aitiai*) underlying the production of an object or state of affairs, e.g., a house, a table, a safe journey, or a state of being healthy. (244)

Truly knowing the underlying principles is paramount to a true understanding of *technē*. For this to be applied to the personalized portfolio, the creators must have a deeper understanding of communication in contexts, to the point of expertise. In order to better grasp this expertise in terms of portfolio instruction as a *technē*, however, it is imperative to break down *technē* even further.

Technē: Four Causes and Five Factors

Although *technē* as a concept encompasses the four causes of making (i.e., form, matter, agent, and end), Wild seeks to come to a more meaningful understanding by dividing it one step further. The "five essential factors" Wild describes in his analysis of *technē* refer to (1) the "useful end," (2) the "work or concrete achievement," (3) the "general form or structure," (4) the "technical procedure by which this form is imposed on the matter," and (5) "the concrete matter" which is imposed. Wild has used five essential factors to serve as an explanation for the complex meaning of *technē* that resists reduction and flattening. One noticeable similarity between Heidegger's definition of the essence of technology and Wild's notion of *technē* is clear—both rely on the notion of the end, or *telos*. In Wild's five factors, the agent isn't directly mentioned, but is implied in the work itself. By focusing more concretely on the process by which the agent "makes," Wild is demonstrating that in the case of the true technite (or master of *technē*), "The aim of *technē* is the complete permeation of action by plan" (263). In the case of personalized

portfolio creation as a *technē*, the creator must have a plan prior to acting. One cannot just simply compile documents, write a letter of intent at the beginning, and call it a day for it to be a *technē*. There must be an idea of what the final personalized portfolio will do and what kind of argument it will make for its creator—which is known before creation can even begin—in order for this to be considered a *technē*.

Of course knowing what the portfolio will do is merely one aspect of the plan. Wild further states that:

> To know that such and such a procedure produces such and such a result is not to know why. The process is now guided not from ahead but from behind. Such routine procedure may often be successful and indistinguishable from true techne so far as its 'results' are concerned. (264)

The overall personalized portfolio plan must include within the knowledge of why the portfolio is being created. And, as I argued above, making "employability" or the potential to obtain a job the end is a dangerous practice in the fast capitalist economy. There must be a use beyond securing employment in order to avoid being turned into standing-reserve. For personalized portfolio creation to be a *technē*, Wild's five essential factors described above must all be included or devaluation occurs:

> Not only do the different arts exist *for the sake of* one another, but this aspect of "forness" penetrates into the minutest details of each particular art. Each minor act has its *appropriate* time and season. A man may know all of the rules of a certain art, but if he does not know when and where to apply them, the "effects" will be of no real use. He

> will then be a technician rather than a true artist, for he knows only the conditions required by the art, not the art itself. (Wild 259)

For this to apply to personalized portfolio creation, the creators must know more than just the templates of personalized portfolios. They must embody the knowledge of appropriate application of the "rules" of portfolio creation. For me, this notion speaks directly to those implicit cultural understandings that are often taken for granted that "everyone" knows or understands. Often it is only when you do not know the cultural "norm" and become embarrassed by your ignorance that the tacit understanding becomes known.

The Threat of Inversion

With the notion of *technē* again in mind, there existed a hierarchy of art that we must keep in mind here as well. The ultimate goals of our human efforts were, according to Wild, called the guiding arts. These guiding arts included religion, education, philosophy, and statesmanship. All other arts are subordinate to these guiding arts and need to serve to make the higher arts possible.

The concern is, of course, that personalized portfolio creation for the sake of obtaining employment takes the place of the greater endeavor of the fruitful work itself, we experience what Wild has termed an inversion. I will draw on an example from Wild to further explain this idea of inversion:

> After capturing the city, the general hands it over to the statesmen, who alone knows how to govern it. Conquest is never an end in itself. The raw materials, provided by the basic acquisitive arts of exploration,

> mining, woodcutting, and hunting, are utilized by the productive arts, which form the materials into implements, houses, ships, and food. These products then serve as materials for the higher arts, which use them for their purposes […] It is the art of statesmanship in some form which must direct these subordinate arts, distributing their various products, and regulating them for the best interests of the community, in accordance with the knowledge preserved by tradition, and rationally purified by higher education. (Wild 282)

If employment were considered as a higher art, then creating a personalized portfolio simply to get a job would not be considered an inversion of *technē*. But, one person's endeavor to land a job is not a guided art by any stretch. Instead, for personalized portfolio creation to be considered a *technē*, the must always have in mind how the higher arts are served (e.g., how is the creator representing him/herself as a citizen of the community, or as a lifelong learner?).

Currently, personalized portfolio creation runs the risk of being an inversion of *technē.* This has a crippling effect, as is evidenced in Wild's above example, but Wild further exemplifies the importance of resisting inversion with his final example of his article:

> When the guiding arts of philosophy and statesmanship become weakened and confused, the productive arts chafe at the leash, and set up the cry for autonomy and *laissez faire*. When this is achieved, the sheer production of various goods and articles no longer submits to the control of a distribution *planned* by the statesmen to meet the *real*

> needs of a community, but is regarded as an end in itself. […] Distribution and use, the true guiding factor or "cause" of the art, is viewed as a mere consequence of production and contemptuously dismissed as "consumption." Hence a situation arises analogous to that which would arise, for example, in a ship with powerful engines, if the engine-crew should take the position that the navigation of the ship was a mere "result" of their productive activity in making it go, and should refuse to take any orders from the captain, insisting that he must take what they give him. (292-293)

In this way, if a personalized portfolio creator chooses to include in his/her portfolio only that which s/he sees as potentially earning employment, is this not also an inversion of *technē*? If we choose to view employment as the end, and no longer as a means to a greater end of work, we are performing what Wild calls "inversion": "When an art 'frees' itself from its determining form, giving way rather to the matter which it should dominate, the natural order is reversed, and the various distortions […] at once arise" (285). The portfolio needs to serve a higher goal.

In *technē* the ultimate end of the craftsman's process is not in the creation of the tangible object or product. As Robert R. Johnson points out in his article on the ubiquity paradox:

> Instead, the use of the products was of equal importance. That is, the product's maker contemplated problems associated with the product's use from the outset of the making process, thus bringing the contexts of use and the ramifications of use to the forefront. ("Ubiquity" 344)

How students use the portfolios that are created in writing studies courses needs to be paramount when requiring such an assignment, especially when attempting to avoid the trap of modern technology and making students into standing-reserve. Students need to learn about the contexts and ramifications of their portfolio uses prior to their creation. And, in order to help avoid being turned into standing-reserve, students need to know a use beyond just gaining employment. Students need to view personalized portfolio creation as a higher end goal, like a site for lifelong learning or as contributing to their citizenship and sense of community.

A New Way of Thinking

As a scholar, I feel that I cannot help but engage in the larger debates about *technē* and its importance. I found *technē* to be a potential corrective approach to the modern technology of economy-driven education that seems so prevalent in parts of academia. Carolyn Miller is quoting Aristotle when she states: "As he defines it in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 'a productive state that is truly reasoned' (VI, iv), *technē* requires both particular and general knowledge, both knowing-how and knowing-that; *technē* is both applicable and conceptualized" (21). For portfolio instruction to truly dwell in the student creators, perhaps one effective method would be to teach them as a *technē.* Otherwise, students run the risk of becoming standing-reserve in the fast capitalist economy.

This chapter has framed writing studies pedagogy broadly, and personalized portfolio creation specifically, within the larger system of the fast capitalist economic structure. As such, it has raised some concerns with how educators understand the use

of the personalized portfolio as well as how to best instruct its creation. These concerns are primarily laid out here to engage the audience in a process of thinking about portfolios and their implications. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach or even a specific procedure for instruction. This is a new way to think about personalized portfolio creation so that we may better teach that practice to students in our writing studies classrooms.

Chapter 3

The Assessment Portfolio

Reducing students to skill sets and diverse experiences for assessment or marketability is a dangerous practice, but one that is reified with each semester's end when bound up in tangible portfolio form. Gee's analysis of the teens from different social classes leads him to interesting discoveries about the linguistic choices of these two girls, choices that led him to write the simile of people as portfolios in that same chapter. But, if we interrogate the simile in order to look at the ideology of portfolios themselves, we may be able to expose some of its powerful, yet often invisible, components. To be sure, the portfolio has just as many flaws as the standardized test or timed writing essay assignment when purporting to measure student abilities. Up until now, the portfolio has simply been better able to mask these flaws.

Because of this assertion, I will use this third chapter to focus more attention on portfolios as an assessment technology. This chapter seeks to more closely examine reflection, which has been identified as one of the three main elements of portfolio creation, alongside collection and selection. In order to accomplish this end, I will do a close reading of the following: James Paul Gee's example of the two teens who have very distinct linguistic class markers; two definitions of portfolios in the field of education; and finally Tony Scott's 2005 example of portfolios as they were used in the Kentucky school system. I use these three different selections as a way to continue my thinking on portfolios as assessment technology and to look more closely at the selection and reflection components that help to make a portfolio what it is. By

drawing attention to selection and reflection and some of the problems that result with this practice in portfolio creation, I hope to reinforce the notion that portfolios are in fact ideological and that they seek to reproduce the systems in which they function. I also hope to show how dangerous it is to view, promote, and/or instruct this as a neutral activity for standardized portfolio creation.

In their 2009 book *A Guide to College Writing Assessment*, Peggy O'Neill, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot define portfolio assessment as an assessment that:

> uses portfolios as the sampling method. The portfolio is created through the processes of collection, selection, and reflection (Yancey 1992). The specific contents of the portfolio are determined by the assessment's purpose. Writing programs have used student portfolios for placement, exemption, proficiency, and program assessments. Methods for evaluating or scoring the portfolios vary. Teacher portfolios or course portfolios can be used for program assessment and faculty evaluation. (202)

The portfolio has been a sampling method for assessment with multiple purposes and uses. In an effort to produce both reliability and validity in the field of writing assessment, portfolios have been used since the mid-1980s in what Kathleen Blake Yancey has referred to as the third wave of assessment (Yancey "Looking" 484). The first wave was the objective test and occurred from the 50s-70s and the second wave was the form of the holistically scored essay used from the 70s to mid-80s. The third wave, the portfolio, serves to assess student writing, but also often assesses writing programs as a whole. In a 1996 *Computers and Composition* article entitled

"Electronic Portfolios," Alan C. Purves boldly states that by refocusing the course from the teacher to centering it on the student, portfolios are no longer just an alternative to a test. For Purves, "Portfolios represent a different way of construing the nature of curriculum and instruction. […] They call for maturity and independence on the students' part, and they make any course become a matter of student learning rather than of teacher instruction" (Purves 146). In that same issue of *Computers and Composition*, Rebecca Moore Howard wrote "I like the portfolio, too, for the ways in which it prompts students to be reflective about what they've written. They not only rewrite their essays, but they also write ***about*** their essays" (emphasis hers, 155). And of course we have Kathleen Blake Yancey's and Irwin Weiser's 1997 collection where they state that "When teachers began developing portfolios over a decade ago, we knew that what we were about […] was pretty ambitious: it was, in fact, nothing short of changing the face of American education" (Yancey and Weiser 1). But has it really changed the face of American education, as Yancey and Weiser suggest here? Is the course really focused not on the teacher, but rather on the student as Purves suggests? And, are students truly being reflective about what they've written or is something else happening here? Is portfolio assessment merely performing the same gate-keeping function of those initial objective tests? These are all questions that deserve our thought and attention, and this chapter seeks to explore some possible answers.

Measuring success through a portfolio may seem like more of a democratic approach, as Yancey suggests, but in reality, I argue that the portfolio is just as flawed as the objective tests when it comes to "measuring" student abilities. The technology

of the portfolio is simply better able to mask its ideology, thus making its ideology even more powerful, and harder to see and critique.

The Reflection Element Examined

When using the lens of the views of The Multiliteracies Project that were developed and articulated in the early 21st century by the New London Group—of which James Paul Gee is a founding member—one can begin to glimpse the invisible ideology of the portfolio. In a Multiliteracies view, it is important to note that language gets its meaning from the context in which it is used—through shared experiences and shared information (Gee 63); that "learning to contextualise and contextualising are always 'social' and 'cultural' phenomena" (Gee 64); and that language is "heavily deictic"—always pointing to previous experiences, knowledge, and understanding (Gee 65). This view of language suggests that language itself is ideological because "A way of contextualising always belongs to some group or community of people with their own interests and practices, based on experiences they have had in the world" (Gee 64), and the context of the portfolio is no exception. Students are shaping themselves in particular ways when constructing portfolios for assessment and for the job market, and these ways are not value-neutral.

A pertinent example is Gee's linguistic analysis of the two teens of differing social class that I previously mentioned in chapters one and two. Though Gee used this example to argue that "through the mediation of families, communities, and schools two broad types of people are emerging for our new world" —one that is fit for new capitalism and one that is not (Gee 54), I will further this argument to say that there

are two types of people being assessed in the writing classroom, one that is pre-disposed to portfolio creation and use, and one that is not. And we evaluators certainly need to be keenly aware of these predispositions in order to adequately instruct and accurately evaluate these students.

To explain this argument, I will once again refer to Gee's analysis of the interviews with the teen girls from his work, "New People in New Worlds." Sandra—the working-class girl—used cognitive statements that "assume[d] a background of dialogue and interaction—for example, she makes clear elsewhere in her interview that others don't like her boyfriend and that there is a debate about who should move out of the house" (Gee "New" 56); whereas, Emily—the upper-middle-class teen—makes "cognitive statements [that] are explanatory claims within an explicit or assumed argumentative structure, rather than directly dialogic and interactional. They are, in fact, usually assessments or evaluations of things, events, state of affairs, or people" (Gee "New" 56-57). Given even this basic example of the linguistic relationship between the girls' speech and their different class positions, I argue that the upper-class Emily already seems better positioned to make critical arguments about her own writing that is done during the course of a semester and beyond; whereas, this analysis suggests that lower-class Sandra's language indicates that she perhaps has a more emotional view of her writing. This is not to say that we cannot teach students like Sandra how to make arguments about the writing they do over the course of a semester or even over the course of their academic careers, but we need to be explicit about their linguistic predispositions and the ideologies in place within the

frame of the portfolio technology itself in order to make these tacit understandings more explicit and navigable.

If language is any indicator as to how students position themselves within the larger ideological frame, Gee's analysis provides even more evidence for my argument about how using portfolios as an assessment tool and marketing technology privileges certain kinds of people—people who are predisposed to specific kinds of literacies—over others:

> Consider, for instance, when the girls talk about what actions they have done. When Sandra talks about things she has done, she is always talking about physical deeds and social interactions, things like getting up from bed, brushing and drying her hair, wearing a certain dress, listening to music, or fighting, pushing, helping, kissing, or working with various people. When Emily talks actions and interactions, she is almost always talking about achievements and specialized activities, things like 'challenging herself', 'trying harder', 'achieving' something, 'working hard' or 'spending time' at school, getting to and from activities like backpacking, rock climbing, music lessons, or trips in the USA or abroad. (Gee "New" 57)

At 14 years old, Emily's language in her interview already shapes her as having marketable "achievements and specialized activities" that are seemingly portfolio-ready. Emily self-identifies by using language that "is about the trajectory of self through space and time" (Gee "New" 58). This, of course, fits perfectly with that for which Peter Elbow has praised the portfolio, for providing a sense of *time* (Elbow 40).

And Emily is already speaking about herself in terms of this timeline trajectory. Sandra's language, on the other hand, constructs her life in terms of the mundane, daily happenings that lack any kind of cultural capital or marketability. Both of these girls have language markers that set them up for success and struggle with portfolio creation, depending upon their class background and instructors need to be aware of these language markers in order to help students recognize and then be able to transition (if they choose) from one linguistic practice to another. Of course, instructors do not have the ability to recognize these attributes without proper training, so I argue that it is imperative that assessment is a part of the core curriculum for writing instructor training. Of course, this leads me to examine my own experience as an instructor using portfolios.

Portfolios have been used as an assessment tool at both Midwestern institutions where I have done my graduate study. This is probably not surprising, given that portfolios have been widely used for writing assessment for more than a quarter of a century (Yancey). What might be surprising (or is perhaps not so surprising depending on your perspective), is that as a graduate student instructor at both institutions, I was required to have students submit portfolios without being told much about the process beyond "for assessment purposes."

At the end of each semester for one institution and at the end of the academic year for the other, a limited number of graduate student instructors were often invited to join in a portfolio assessment session. This day-long workshop was the only insight I ever gleaned experientially for why we have students collect their work during the course to submit at the end. At both institutions, we were also encouraged to make the

portfolio count toward the final grade a student would receive, but with minimal knowledge on the purpose of the creation beyond the required documents to be included and the way the documents were to be submitted (i.e., with no identifying information, reflective cover letter comes first, etc.). Even the requirements and submission process has been changed over the years and I still know very little about the particular institutional assessment processes on a larger scale. Of course, this has me thinking about the possibility for inversion, as I discussed in chapter two.

In 1994, Stuart A. Selber asked "Why Are We Incorporating Computers In Our Curricula?" in his article "Beyond Skill Building: Challenges Facing Technical Communication Teachers in the Computer Age:"

> In order to more fully examine our computer use in technical communication curricula, we might additionally consider the rationales provided by faculty for teaching computer-related courses. For some, the response to such a query is all too obvious, as illustrated by the short yet spirited reply of one writing teacher: 'Our good sense!' Although we may find that this sentiment reflects our current enthusiasm for using computers in our classrooms, it is also dangerously close to what Winner terms 'technological somnambulism,' or a reluctance to engage in a critical examination of our culture's technological foundation […]. (457-458)

Though talking about instruction with computers here, I argue that these statements can be applied to portfolio use as well. Though the push for portfolio use is often not

as heavy handed as the push for implementing computer technology in the classroom, portfolios are themselves a technology, a writing assessment technology.

Of course the writing program administrator knows what kind of assessment criteria will be used in evaluation once the portfolios have long since left the students' hands, but perhaps it's also important to also educate the instructors about the use of the portfolios as well. A similar argument is also made by Selber about computer use in educator's classrooms when he states that: "Such scant attention to teacher education is clearly shortsighted, particularly as we struggle to understand the increasing complexity of using computers in technical communication classrooms" (Selber 461). Again, I echo Selber's argument in light of portfolio use. As an assessment technology, portfolios are complex and merit our attention.

In the Spring 2010 *Writing Program Administration: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, Asao B. Inoue wrote, "Engaging with Assessment Technologies: Responding to Valuing Diversity as a WPA." In that article, Inoue uses a previous definition of writing assessment technology that he created for his article "The Technology of Writing Assessment and Racial Validity" to state:

> a writing assessment technology as '[a]n historically situated, hegemonic environment in which power is made, used, and, transformed, that consists of sets of artifacts and technical codes, manipulated by institutionally-sanctioned agents, constructed for particular purposes that have relations to abstract ideas and concepts, and whose effects or outcomes shape, and are shaped by, racial, class-based, gender, and other socio-political arrangements'. […] In effect,

> an 'assessment technology' points to the entire environment, including agents and processes that create an assessment, its decisions, and outcomes" (Inoue 135).

Portfolios are assessment technologies that are not immune to ideology. Inoue's definition shows the deeper complexity of portfolio use for assessment purposes. To blindly implement such technology without properly understanding why, we run the risk of having the technology get ahead of itself. Not educating the instructors on the reasons portfolios are used is a dangerous practice. But it also signals that institutions and programs that use portfolios have perhaps began to lean too far toward uncritical implementation on the technological determinism spectrum about the portfolio as an assessment technology, especially as that portfolio use is beginning to trend more and more toward an electronic portfolio method.

Technological Determinism and Portfolios

Technological determinism is difficult to define and, as such, many scholars have attempted to assign meaning to it in order to better understand its complexity. One such scholar, Langdon Winner, states that technological determinism is "the idea that technological innovation is the basic cause of changes in society and that human beings have little choice other than to sit back and watch this ineluctable process unfold" (*Whale* 9-10). The same can easily be said about portfolio creation as it is implemented ubiquitously. Of course I believe, like Winner, that sitting back and watching technology unfold doesn't get anyone closer to understanding how to best use this complex technology without it subsuming its creator to its purposes. To be

sure, the desire to better understand portfolio technology doesn't stop the drive for implementation. Whether it is pressure from administration or some other institution to obtain assessment data, the pressure to produce portfolios continues to build. There is a push for portfolio technology and one must ask how and why this pressure continues to build.

Portfolio technology has no inherent power in and of itself, as Winner points out: "what matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded" (*Whale* 20). Because the social and economic system in which we live seems to privilege technology and innovation, technology and its access also becomes privileged. Innovation drives us currently and that is ideological as well. Consider once again Deborah Brandt's study of people in writing-intensive work positions:

> Although technology is often seen as the principal engine of change and was an object of much comment and reflection on the part of the interviewees, it is important to appreciate that it is the insatiable need for innovation that has shaped the evolution of communication technology during the past 50 years" (Brandt "Writing" 184-185).

This also resonates with Inoue's definition of writing assessment technology in that it always points to the larger context of which it is a part, which would perhaps benefit from a closer look at a snapshot of sorts of a neighboring discipline's early use of portfolios.

Portfolios: A Closer Look at Early Use in Education

In order to get a better sense of where portfolio use began in writing studies and how we have come to be where we are now, it is useful to take a closer look at some of the writings done on portfolios as they were beginning to be used in educational settings. Two articles published in *Educational Leadership* emerged as interesting points of early portfolio use in education. These articles offer a glimpse at how portfolios were originally being implemented as assessment technology and deserve our attention now, as we run the risk of being uncritical about our own use of portfolios for writing assessment.

The first article for analysis was published in February 1991 by F. Leon Paulson, Pearl R. Paulson, and Carol A. Meyer and is titled "What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio?" This article begins with an example of student reflection in order for the authors to help illustrate the idea that "portfolios permit assessment and instruction to be woven together in a way that more traditional approaches do not" (Paulson et al. 60). Still trying to prove to their readers the value of portfolio use over standardized testing and even of timed writing tests, Paulson et al. recognize that as an assessment and learning tool, portfolios were relatively unused thus far in education. In order to establish common ground for discussion among educators, and to help with the promotion of portfolios, the authors lay out a working definition that grew out of discussions at an August 1990 conference on "Aggregating Portfolio Data" held at Union, Washington:

> a portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (Paulson et al. 60)

Close examination of this definition causes me to pause at a few key words that are perhaps overlooked in today's use of portfolios. For one, these scholars note the "*purposeful* collection of student work" that "must include student participation in selecting contents." In many assessment procedures in educational institutions today, this purposeful collection no longer seems to apply and students rarely, if ever, participate in choosing what contents to include in the assessed portfolio. At least this is the case at both institutions where I have been an instructor. Also, because students often lack the power to choose the work that is included in the writing assessment portfolio, the "criteria for selection" and even the "criteria for judging merit" far too often are never made explicit to the student participants. What seems like an inclusive definition that is aimed at gleaning student input and encouraging student learning (about themselves and their process of creation), seems to have, in more recent times, become distorted for program accountability in assessment. And, even though "evidence of student self-reflection" has been a paramount figure in current portfolios, that self-reflection is often more geared at a student's evaluation of the course or program, rather than a true self-reflection of the works included within his/her portfolio.

Portfolio use for educational purposes was a collaboration of sorts as researchers in education poached ideas from neighboring disciplines. For example, the Paulson et al. article cites the Pacific Northwest College of Art's 1985 "Preparing your Application Portfolio" pamphlet in order to learn from the fine arts discipline and to further narrow their own definition of a portfolio. This pamphlet inclusion also seems relevant in order to support my previous claim that students should decide upon the contents of their own portfolio. Paulson et al. state:

> For example, the Pacific Northwest College of Art gives the following rationale for portfolios: 'An application portfolio is a visual representation of who you are as an artist, your history as well as what you are currently doing. It is representing you when you're not present. Part of the evaluation of a portfolio is based on the personal choices [you] make when picking pieces for the portfolio. It tells the school something about [your] current values; that's why you will rarely get a school to be very specific about what they look for in a portfolio. [You] should not be afraid to make choices.'(61)

By choosing to focus on what art students submit, education is repurposing portfolios for their own use. But, Paulson et al. use this example to point out again that it is the student who ultimately chooses what work best showcases their past talents and their present ways of creating as well. This way of creating portfolios places the responsibility in the hands of the students, which is another value of student portfolio creation that is encouraged in the early 1980s education articles on portfolios. Dennie Palmer Wolf, for example, wrote that one teacher "brings the conversation back to

what they notice, value, and worry over. She makes her students responsible for taking the lead in evaluating their work" (Wolf 38). This encouragement to continually look back so that students may more confidently move ahead in the knowledge that they are not only improving, but better able to articulate that improvement, is a vital component to our current writing studies instruction. Portfolios really are a useful way to bring that kind of discussion into the coursework, but, I argue, only if the idea of the portfolio is included from the beginning of the course or program. If portfolio use is merely tacked on at the completion of a course or just prior to graduation, I fear that students are missing out on valuable opportunities to learn better self-assessment procedures.

Instructors need to encourage continual meditative reflection and assessment, so that students actually learn that writing is a continual process of revision and improvement. Meditative thinking takes time and practice, according to Heidegger. It is "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46). I've often heard the argument that no work is ever really done, it's just due. Though this argument perhaps speaks more to notions of perfectionism, there is also the valid component that writers can always be revising to improve their work. In my experience, many students struggle with revision as part of the writing process. They have learned that first drafts are good enough, even though many have been written at the last minute and printed off just moments before being submitted. Even when incorporating revision and peer review sessions in the writing process in courses, instructors are often met with students who do not know how to be evaluative of the writing itself and who instead focus on surface-level errors of

grammar and correctness. Teaching students how to be self-reflective about their own work is a similar process to teaching them how to conduct peer review. Dennie Palmer Wolf provides the following example:

> With time, experience, and conversation, students' ability to read their own portfolios with depth and understanding also develops. Early on, students appraise their own work using only standard and flat-footed criteria: neatless, length, or the grade written at the top. As little as six months later, the notice and care about a widened range of characteristics: how effective a story is, how unusual the words in a poem are, whether the ideas and arguments in an essay are sharp. Moreover, their judgment is variegated; they know a piece can open with fireworks and fizzle in closing. They can point out moments where their writing sails and where it "got away." (38)

Instructors who have tried to incorporate peer review into their writing instruction will probably be able to relate to Wolf's statement. It has often been my experience that students default to the grade that the writing was awarded in order to enter into revisions, and even then, those revisions are often only of the surface errors. Being truly critical of their own writing is something we strive to do and maybe don't achieve as often as we like with our own students. Clearly, comments on papers and grading rubrics have their place, but do they help us to make students critically aware of their own writing practice? If we are going to use portfolio technology as the program/course final assessment tool, we need to enter into more conversations with

students about how to be self-critical of their own work. Lad Tobin, in his 1993 book *Writing Relationships: What Really Happens in the Composition Class*, writes:

> I am not just suggesting that establishing, monitoring, and maintaining productive relationships in the classroom would be *another* nice thing for us to accomplish if we could just find the time; I am suggesting that it is the *primary* thing we must do if we want to be successful writing teachers. (Tobin 15)

Of course this is perhaps an ideal that educators are continually striving to reach, at least at the university level. I won't even go into a discussion on adjuncts, who are teaching a bulk of first-year composition courses, and who are already overworked and way underpaid. And, "as little as six months later," as the above quote from Wolf suggests, is yet another obstacle given even the basic constraint that university instructors rarely have six months for just one course. But I argue that a program as a whole would benefit by adopting this method of encouraging continual, ongoing reflection discussion as an integral part of the instruction across the board.

Juxtaposing Definitions

By looking at Paulson et al.'s definition of a portfolio, I argue that we are better able to get back to the perhaps forgotten roots of this particular technology. Also important in this argument is a close examination of a portfolio definition developed by Kathleen Blake Yancey, one of the primary assessment scholars in composition. In order to more fully understand how portfolio technology is used, it is first important to understand precisely what is meant in the field of composition (and by extension

scientific, professional, and technical communication). For Yancey, the definition is as follows:

> [A] portfolio is a metatext with seven defining features:
>
> 1. It is a *collection* of work.
> 2. It is a *selection* of work, culled from the archival collection, usually supplemented by additional texts created specifically for the portfolio. Such texts include reflective letters, annotations on individual texts, and other contextualizing texts such as a table of contents.
> 3. It includes *reflection,* which typically allows the portfolio composer to guide the reader through the portfolio and assist in its evaluation.
> 4. It presumes *development,* although texts demonstrating development aren't always included in the portfolio. (And, as we shall see, including such development can be a particular problem with electronic portfolios.)
> 5. It documents *diversity*—both in its contents, which are various, and in its ability to show how different our students are, one to the next-individually, cognitively, culturally, institutionally.
> 6. It is *communicative* in the sense that a portfolio always shares what is important to the portfolio's composer, what is valued in the context in which that student works, and so on.

7. It is *evaluative,* as suggested before: The portfolio itself tells its observers what is valued by the participants who shaped it." (Yancey "Portfolio" 130)

Closer examination juxtaposed against the early education definitions reveals that, at least early on, portfolios were guided from very similar principles. By noting that a portfolio is a collection AND selection of work, Yancey's definition resonates with Paulson et al. and Wolf's definitions as well; however, Yancey's definition lacks explicit indicators as to who is doing the selection. If the selection is being done by writing program administrators and not the students, the portfolio changes, both by way of assessment and design. Also, if portfolios are hardly mentioned throughout the duration of a course, other than to remind students to keep separate print outs and documentation of their work, and then brought to focus only at the very end of the semester when students are asked to write a reflective cover letter that exposits what they learned from the course as a whole, then the students may resist reading through their previous work to point to specific moments of learning in the final reflective letter that opens the portfolio. As Yancey's definition of reflection suggests, the reflective component of the portfolio should allow "the portfolio composer to guide the reader through the portfolio and assist in its evaluation" (Yancey "Portfolio" 130). But sometimes this is not possible given the criteria of the assignment. For example, students might be asked to reflect on the course as a whole, rather than to guide evaluators through their submitted works.

The fourth point of Yancey's definition references development, though "texts demonstrating development aren't always included in the portfolio. (And, as we shall

see, including such development can be a particular problem with electronic portfolios.)" (Yancey "Portfolio" 130). In my own experience, drafts of work have been included in portfolio assessment; however, because it is often difficult for students to see large-scale revision as a component of writing, these drafts would look very similar to final products, with only minimal changes from one version to the next. I fear the best lesson that can be learned from this is that perhaps I need to better teach the importance of large-scale revision. Of course, the argument can be made that modern word processing technology encourages students to delete, revise, rewrite, and edit more of their writing before it is submitted than we can really ever know, much of that argument has been proven to be unfounded. Though early arguments about revision supported the notion that students would incorporate faster and easier revision, as Eyman and Reilly point out:

> subsequent work suggested that student writers (as opposed to experienced writers) performed fewer revision activities on-screen than they would have on paper (Collier; Harris; Hawisher; Lutz). It has been suggested that the differences are a function of access and experience with composing on the computer (Tone and Winston; Owston, Murphy, and Wideman)—thus studies done in the 1980s and 90s may not be as reliable as similar studies that have been published more recently, which reflect the current situation regarding student access and experience. (103)

Regardless of the effect that computer technology does (or does not) have on the revision process, it is still difficult to get students to see the benefits of large-scale

revisions and whole document re-writes, especially if the paper has already been submitted for a grade, which no doubt very clearly affects the work that is included in portfolios. Either way, students are asked to submit their work when it is due no matter how much (or little) revision has occurred. And, perhaps, as we have learned from their early use in education, allowing students the ability to select the contents of the portfolios may perhaps encourage more revision and motivation to present their best (and most revised) work(s). By juxtaposing early definitions of portfolio use in the neighboring field of education, we are better able to glean insight into the importance of the layers of portfolio creation and how they operate in conjunction with one another.

Interpellating Subject Positions in Reflection

Kathleen Blake Yancey has raised some significant questions about writing assessment as a whole – questions that educators still grapple with today. The one that I find particularly important when examining the ideology of portfolio creation and assessment is, "which self does any writing assessment permit? As important, given that 'tests create that which they purport to measure' (Hanson 294), which self does an assessment construct? (Yancey "Looking" 484). Though I understand Yancey's goal here of stating a potential problem with portfolio use as evaluative, this question is still pertinent today even as more and more programs, departments, and colleges as a whole are being called to rely upon portfolios as their evaluative technology. And, this question resonates in a 2005 *Written Communication* article by Tony Scott entitled

"Creating the Subject of Portfolios: Reflective Writing and the Conveyance of Institutional Prerogatives."

In that 2005 article, Tony Scott focused specifically on the reflective writing component of portfolio creation. Specifically, Scott's ethnographic work more closely examined the state writing portfolio curriculum in the Kentucky Public School System during the academic year of 2000-2001 in order to better examine the subject position that results from bureaucratic goals and procedures. Scott argues that understanding student writing that is done in the large-scale assessment systems requires "focusing not just on students, teachers, and classrooms but also on the larger practices and goals that subsume classrooms" (Scott 5). In order to exemplify this thinking, Scott's study situates and defines the practice of reflective writing as a genre that is contained and a part of the larger work of the portfolio:

> I will make the case that through the genre of reflective writing, the system encourages the construction of a generic reflective subject that reproduces the system's ideal of a portfolio student. In the classes I observed, the composition of the reflective letter is best described as bureaucratic practice—a socializing process that reproduces the values of the sponsoring institution. Because the goals of reflection in this instance appear more systemic than individual and dialogic, the study highlights some of the problems with using reflection as an aspect of writing assessment.

The result of Scott's work shows that these larger overarching practices and goals affect the students' reflective practices in particular and significant ways and reiterates

my claim that portfolios are in fact a technology, and one that seeks to replicate the assessment system of which it is a part.

Considering the historical fact that portfolios as an assessment sampling method were used to replace the oppressive and limited standardized tests and timed writing assignments, it seems as though, given Scott's work, they are also guilty of perpetuating the dominant hegemony, just perhaps in different ways. In "Will the Virtues of Portfolios Blind Us to Their Potential Dangers," Peter Elbow writes about the conflict between teaching and testing in order to show how portfolios are an alternative to standardized testing, which is often considered the first wave of assessment in writing studies (Yancey). Elbow states, "Teachers and school districts are often directly rewarded or punished on the basis of test scores, so this puts great pressure on 'teaching to the test.' Thus testing not only drives teaching, it often drives it down the wrong road" (Elbow 44). But portfolios are now being used to justify writing programs in American higher education and are therefore being put in the same position as the standardized test method. There is often a reward or punishment based on portfolio performance, as Scott's study shows:

> If the accountability score for a school exceeds the target set by the state, the school receives public recognition and its teachers can receive salary bonuses. If a school's score does not meet the target, it might get "assistance" from the state, which can mean that the school gets direct intervention from state-appointed educational consultants. On the school level, teachers are evaluated, in part, according to how well their students are scoring on their portfolios. A school's status within its

> community is also at issue, because each school's accountability scores are made public. (Scott 10)

Because of this intertwining of curriculum and assessment, portfolios have very high stakes for the teachers and school systems. In this way, portfolios have literally taken the place of tests, but without many even batting an eyelash or seeing their potential danger. And, although numerous articles have appeared about reflective writing in general (see for instance, Murphy; Sunstein; Seale Swain; Yancey), it wasn't until Scott's work appeared in 2005 that any real research had been conducted on reflective writing in a natural, school setting.

A closer look at Scott's study may perhaps better exemplify my argument and meaning here. In particular, I draw from two quotes that open the article. The first is the beginning of a student's reflective cover letter that introduces her portfolio of work for assessment purposes in the Kentucky school system:

> Dear Reviewer: I have worked arduously over the past 2 years on these pieces included in my portfolio. The particular products I have chosen each show a bit about me as an imaginative person and an aspiring writer. While some are very proficient, others are still at the point in which they could be improved. (Scott 3)

The following second quote comes from a later interview with the author, Tony Scott, where the student portfolio creator is discussing that reflective introduction letter:

> Even in the first sentence . . . "I have worked arduously over the past few years," I think it is BS. And that is what I try to avoid. But with these things, I don't know, I guess I didn't care enough to give them an

> honest voice or spend enough time to do so. It was just something that I wanted to get out of the way. (Scott 3-4)

These quotes are very telling for a number of reasons. First, they speak to the idea of "schmoozing" that Yancey and Weiser termed in 1997 where the portfolio creator recognizes the position of authority that the instructor holds and seeks to become the student that the particular instructor and evaluator wants to see. Secondly, the subject-position that the student takes on in the portfolio reflection seems more like a curriculum and portfolio assessment supporter than the interviewed student quote reveals. Honesty is not, in fact, valued in an assessment like the one in Kentucky. What is more privileged, and what most students no doubt recognize, is that interpellating the subject-position that is revered (if not required) by the portfolio assessment technology is what is expected and valued. Instructors give students ample time to revise these reflective letters and continue to view drafts until the final documents are due to the state. It is as if the assessment technology is shaping the students to take on the role of positively reinforcing the system of assessment. And although Yancey, in her 1998 article, views this interpellation of a particular subject position as a way to encourage effective socialization, Scott points out that:

> The goals that teachers, students, state assessors, and curriculum developers have for reflective texts are not easily congruent. A seemingly successful, insightful process of self-assessment for a student doesn't necessarily generate a reflective text that scores well in the holistically scored state assessment. (8)

Of course, this is yet another problem with using portfolios as an assessment technology, and one that evaluators need to be thinking about and aware of, particularly when asking students to take on these subject positions. Looking back at the definition of ideology established in chapter one, it should come as no surprise then that French Marxist Louis Althusser reshaped the definition in the 1960s by declaring:

> that ideologies vary according to the form and practices of each mode of state apparatus, and that the ideology of each mode operates by means of a type of discourse which interpellates (calls upon) the individual to take up a pre-established "subject-position"—that is, a position as a person with certain views and values which, in every instance, serve the ultimate interests of the ruling class. (Abrams 151)

The system of portfolio assessment that is in place in Kentucky would seem to be a glaring example of this form of ideology, given the results of Tony Scott's work. And even the state evaluators are blind to the non-neutral subject-positioning that the portfolio is forcing students to replicate. The portfolio is still touted as an empowering assignment in the curriculum. Consider Scott's statement that:

> There is a clear contrast between the bureaucratic and intended pedagogical functions of the portfolio in Kentucky. From a wide-angle, systemic view, the portfolio is characterized by requirements, annual measurements, curricular consistency, and accountability. As a pedagogical tool in particular classrooms, however, the same portfolio

> is intended to serve as a means through which students can gain agency and a sense of ownership of their work. (11)

There seems to be this theoretical (and perhaps mythical) belief that portfolio pedagogy as it is currently implemented is somehow transformative and empowering, that students are somehow using the reflective writing that is included in a portfolio to honestly and accurately assess their writing practices, for both better and worse. But, what this 2005 Scott article indicates is that students are simply taking on the subject-position required by the assessment technology in order to positively replicate the system of evaluation. They become the type of students that the assessment is asking them to be, whether they are in fact those students or not. It becomes a performance, a role that the student must embody in order to succeed and continue with the next step in the system of education, especially considering that (at least in this Kentucky instance) the students must complete the portfolio assignment in order to graduate (Scott 11).

Further Thinking About Portfolios

By drawing from very specific examples, I have shown in this chapter that blindly implementing portfolios as an assessment technology is not without consequence. I began this chapter with a specific definition of portfolio assessment as was outlined by Peggy O'Neill, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot in order to provide a common language for what a portfolio as an assessment technology could be. I then followed with a close reading of the example of the two teens who have very distinct linguistic class markers from James Paul Gee's "New People in New Worlds," the

chapter from the New London Group's 2000 book, *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. This close reading established that people are linguistically pre-disposed to success or struggle when it comes to the reflection component of portfolio creation, which is a key element in exposing the ideology of portfolios and the ways in which they perpetuate dominant hegemonic ideals. This analysis led to the discussion of the technological determinism spectrum and portfolios as they are being used for assessment purposes, where another form of inversion has the potential to occur if we are simply using portfolios to use them and not thinking about the possibilities and consequences of that use. It is through this example that I remind the field of writing studies of the importance of reflective practice in our assignments and assessments. Next, I did another close textual reading of two definitions of portfolios in the field of education in order to show the importance of keeping the selection component in the hands of the students, which has perhaps gotten out of their hands in writing studies assessment practices. Finally, I drew from Tony Scott's 2005 example of portfolios as they were used in the Kentucky school system in order to show that reflective writing is always ideological, and that it forces students to take on very particular subject-positions. In terms of writing studies as a field, it is paramount that we recognize and understand these reifying subject-positions in our instruction. I use these three different selections as a way to continue my own thinking about portfolios as assessment technology and to look more closely at the selection and reflection components that help to make a portfolio what it is. By drawing attention to selection and reflection and some of the problems that result with this practice in portfolio creation, I reinforce the larger argument of this dissertation,

that portfolios are in fact ideological and that they seek to reproduce the systems in which they function. I also show how dangerous it is to view, promote, and/or instruct portfolio creation as a neutral activity for standardized assessment purposes.

Chapter 4

Portfolios and Pedagogy

As I have established in the preceding three chapters, portfolios are not a neutral technology and their ideological nature is masked because their design *seemingly* makes the student more a part of the assessment process. Of course this brings me to a critical point in this argument, that portfolio use in writing classes makes its mark on the method and practice of teaching, even if the instructors do not have that intention at the outset. Large-scale assessments that are required by programs and institutions directly affect the pedagogical practices of the courses they are attempting to measure. Tony Scott even asserts that his study of the Kentucky-based portfolio practices "adds to existing research that examines how large-scale assessments influence everyday pedagogy" (Scott 5). Scott also contends that:

> A growing body of research discusses the relationship between large-scale "authentic" or "performance" systems of writing assessment, such as portfolio assessments and everyday classroom practices (see Camp, 1985; Freedman, 1993; Mitchell, 1992; Murphy, Bergami, & Rooney, 1997; Simmons & Resnick, 1993; Underwood, 1999; Wiggins, 1989). (5)

Clearly one of my aims is to add to this body of research. Specifically, this chapter serves to examine the pedagogical implications of portfolio use.

Portfolios were born during the process pedagogy movement in the writing studies disciplines. Even that first published article about portfolio use in writing

studies in 1986 was co-written by one of the primary champions of the process and expressivist pedagogy movements, Peter Elbow. To me, this is (and should be) very telling and worth examining further since the pedagogical approach of those initial advocates no doubt had its influence on portfolios as assessment technologies as well. In this chapter I argue that at their core, portfolios are products of process and expressivist pedagogies. As a consequence, when implementing alternative pedagogical practices in a classroom—such as social epistemic or a Multiliteracies perspective—portfolios as they currently exist may not be the best assessment technology to use. In the following chapter, I offer a more inclusive definition of portfolios that will better allow for alternative pedagogical practices.

However, given their situatedness and birth during the height of process and expressivist pedagogical movements, I advocate that if a portfolio is required as an assignment for class or for assessment purposes, then it is imperative that instructors be knowledgeable of the key elements and nuances of both process and expressivist pedagogical approaches. To be sure, there has been much criticism of both process and expressivist pedagogies, and I will more closely examine those critiques later in this chapter; therefore, I am not necessarily advocating for instructors' *use* of these pedagogies, but I do recognize that knowledge of these approaches is paramount for a more complete portfolio assessment. This is also not to say that a Multiliteracies approach or social-epistemic method cannot be represented in a portfolio, just that it is always important to fully understand the exigency of a technology's creation in order to best implement alternative uses.

Of course, I recognize that a much larger and longer debate has been ongoing in writing studies about each pedagogical stance. My intention here is not necessarily to take sides, as I find each pedagogical method has both value and consequence, but there can be no doubt that I have my own theoretical stance—a social-epistemic approach—and that I privilege it in my own writing and work. However, my aim is to place my larger argument—that portfolios are ideological—into the already ideological pedagogical frames that currently exist in writing studies. By doing so, I more fully contextualize portfolio use and offer yet another point of departure for even further scholarly thinking about portfolios.

I begin this argument with the simplest idea that creating a portfolio is, by its very definition, a process. The original intention for using portfolios for assessment purposes in writing studies was to evaluate a writer's growth as s/he moved through a very particular process. Pat Belanoff and Peter Elbow's 1986 article, "Using Portfolios to Increase Collaboration and Community in a Writing Program," explains their initial use of portfolios for assessment purposes as a process where every student develops:

> out of all the writing done over the course of the semester—a portfolio of three revised papers: the first, a narrative or descriptive or expressive piece; the second, an essay of any sort-so long as it is conceptually organized (in a sense, a "formal essay," as opposed to an exploratory, digressive, personal "essai" in the Montaigne tradition); and the third, an analysis of a prose text. With each of these papers students must submit a brief informal cover sheet which explores their writing process for that paper and acknowledges help. The portfolio must also

> contain one piece of in-class writing done without benefit of feedback or revising. (27)

In this article—that single-handedly spurred the portfolio as assessment movement—a reader can glean much wisdom and insight into the pedagogical stance that these portfolios promoted. One such highlight that appears is that although multiple drafts of a single paper are not included in these portfolios, revision is still a key element that is mentioned. Belanoff and Elbow are promoting writing as a process that goes through multiple stages of development, which is the very core and foundation of process pedagogy. And, although the portfolio promoted here by Belanoff and Elbow mixes modes and aims, another point of interest is the inclusion of an expressive or descriptive essay, which is very telling of the expressivist type of pedagogy espoused by these early portfolio advocates. Also noteworthy is the way the cover sheet (which might nowadays be referred to as a reflective letter component) is shaped to have the writer talk about his/her process, but also to indicate the how s/he was helped in the process. This inclusion of "acknowledging help" alone also has its ideological and pedagogical influence in simply emphasizing that writing is never solely an individual process where "the gods" bestow upon the lone writer a deliverable message, but rather that writing is always a contextually embedded social process. Finally, these earliest portfolios in the writing disciplines included an example of in-class writing as an example of unrevised work that could be used as sort of a control by which to measure the works that had undergone the revision process against.

Yet another example of the privileged process pedagogy in these initial portfolio examples is that students even create drafts of their portfolios before final end-of-semester submission. Belanoff and Elbow explain that:

> Since students need a sense of portfolio standards—a warning, really, that this is for real-at mid-semester (or slightly later), they must submit one or two "dry-run" portfolio pieces for evaluation by portfolio groups. If a dry-run paper passes, that counts for one of the final portfolio pieces; if it fails, there is no penalty and the student can revise it and resubmit it with the final portfolio. (28)

Given my own experiences with portfolio use that often feels like a tacked on assignment at the end of the semester, including a draft session at the semester's mid-point to teach students (and instructors) the expectations of the portfolios could be useful and highly beneficial. Again, this is rooted in process pedagogy, which recognizes, emphasizes, and even privileges stages of development. Because portfolios can also be viewed as a site of lifelong learning, they may be considered to be a living document of sorts, where they are always undergoing some change or revision as the creator grows and learns. In this way, they are certainly grounded in process pedagogy in that they are then always a work in progress, where a creator reflects and grows as a result of that work. Of course, to require students to submit drafts of their portfolios as part of the course assignments places even more requirements on the part of the instructors since it demands that each instructor be part of a portfolio reading group throughout the course of the semester. It may also require more meetings with instructors in order to discuss sample papers or portfolios.

Belanoff and Elbow required two meetings with all teachers, one at mid-semester just before evaluating the drafts and then one again just before final evaluations (28).

Certainly, better implementation of portfolios in the instruction will improve students' awareness of the importance the institution and instructors are placing on these creations, but it really doesn't do much to help reveal their ideological and pedagogical underpinnings. Drawing from the pedagogy definitions in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* by Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick, it is easy to see how portfolios best fit within process pedagogy, primarily because they are a collection of work that is completed over time. According to Lad Tobin, who wrote the chapter on Process Pedagogy in the Tate et al. book, process pedagogy seeks to "demystify the [writing] process by talking about the craft, mechanics, rituals, logistics, atmospherics of the process" (Tobin 3). This is in stark contrast to other pedagogical stances like Aristotelian rhetoric or current traditionalism (as Berlin has defined them in "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories"), but also resonates with my previous argument of teaching the portfolio as a *technē* because of its focus on the craft and the knowledge-making that occurs in the process. Also included in this process pedagogical approach is Ken Macrorie's argument that writing should be "for telling truths, and for finding your authentic voice" (Tobin 3). Of course, this harkens back to Heidegger and his search for what is true and authentic, as well.

To be sure, this focus on truth and the process of finding an authentic voice found support, but also critics. Many instructors still clung to the reading of literature in an effort to have their students mimic and emulate those writers. It was in the late

1970s and early 1980s that a pedagogical split occurred in composition. As Lad Tobin illustrates:

> You were either one of the process-oriented teachers arguing for student choice of topics and forms; the necessity of authentic voice; writing as a messy, organic, recursive form of discovery, growth, and personal expression; or you were a teacher who believed that we needed to resist process' attack on rules, conventions, standards, quality, and rigor. (4)

Given the defining characteristics of a process pedagogue, it should come as no surprise that portfolios resulted from this movement as this form of assessment emphasizes that which the process-oriented approach holds most dear. First, student choice of topics and forms fits neatly into a *selection* process for portfolio creation. Next, what better way is there to represent the recursive, messy process of writing than with a *collection* of work in a portfolio format to showcase that process of growth and learning? Finally, *reflection* is best understood as an exercise in authentic voice. Of course, given my critiques of reflection in the previous chapter—specifically the alternate notions of "schmoozing" (Yancey and Weiser) and subject-position interpellation (Althusser, Scott)—I argue that portfolio reflection is still an *attempt* at authenticity because these alternatives occur when students recognize the ideological implications and power structures that are in place. As a result, the consequence is often to change or alter their true and authentic voices as necessary for success when still being asked to create an individual reflection to accommodate the institutional system requirements. And, it is important to note that these critiques of portfolios have

only begun emerging in recent years, but that this has been a criticism of expressivist pedagogy in the past—and becomes by default a critique of process pedagogy because of their seeming interchangeability. As Lad Tobin points out:

> It was the version of process that emphasized freewriting, voice, personal narrative, and writing as a form of discovery—that is, the version articulated by Murray, Elbow, Macrorie, Graves, and other so-called "expressivists"—that had the greatest influence on classroom practice and drew the most impassioned support and criticism. (9)

From a historical perspective, process pedagogy has been linked to expressivism, even though instructors do not necessarily have students write personal narratives as part of their process. This is certainly one of the reasons that explains why I have claimed that portfolios are an expressivist pedagogy.

I also make this claim, however, because of the ways that the personalized portfolios created for the job market can be argued to be one large personal narrative of sorts. As I have explained in previous chapters, the personalized portfolio is forcing creators to represent their identity in very specific ways. In this manner, the personalized portfolio can be seen as a medium for someone to express his/her marketable identity. As Christopher Burnham points out in his chapter on expressivism in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, "expressive writing exercises require students, in a sense, to write a phenomenology of self" (25). In a personalized portfolio, creators are trying to establish the phenomenology of a self-as-worker identity. By using works created over time, job-seeking portfolio creators can compose a narrative of their work histories, accomplishments, and abilities for potential

employers' consideration. Instructors who are teaching students to shape their portfolios in this way are certainly engaging in process-oriented and expressivist pedagogical methods whether they acknowledge it or not.

Portfolios and Expressivism: Furthering the Critique

As a point of departure for this section, and as a way to transition from the previous section, I will continue to focus initially on the personalized portfolio that is created in writing classes for the job market. Examining such an assignment recalls Berlin's assessment of cognitive rhetoric in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" when he states that for cognitivists the "purpose of writing is to create a commodified text (see Clines) that belongs to the individual and has exchange value—'problem solving turns composing into a goal-directed journey—writing my way to where I want to be' (4)—just as the end of corporate activity is to create a privately-owned profit" (Berlin 483). This view of writing undoubtedly parallels my earlier critique of portfolio creation for employability, rather than focusing on the larger, more meaningful contribution of the work itself or the portfolio as a site for lifetime learning. Also poignant in that section of Berlin's argument is the understanding that some writers are predisposed to be better at solving problems than others, but not necessarily because they are actually more cognitively developed. Of course, Berlin takes cognitive rhetoricians to task when he states that "the cognitive skills leading to success may be the product of the experiences of a particular social class rather than the perfecting of inherent mental structures, skills encouraged because they serve the interests of a ruling economic elite, is never considered in the 'scientific' investigation

of the mind" (483). In the cognitive approach, mental structure capabilities of the writer are what are paramount, not the ideological factors that influence the writers. Similarly to what Gee discovered in "New people in new worlds: networks, the new capitalism" concerning the linguistic predispositions of the two young girls from differing social classes, Berlin's criticism also resonates with portfolio creation as well. Factors outside of the individual are powerful indicators of success or failure in economic, social, political, and educational systems.

Like James Berlin in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," I too see everything, including rhetoric and pedagogy, as ideological. This is of course not to say that expressivists do not acknowledge ideology, but it does help to address some of the concerns with the process and expressivist pedagogical models. As Tobin points out, both of these methods were taken to task for ignoring "differences of race, class, and gender" and for being "ahistorical or arhetorical" because they did not provide "students with sufficiently significant and challenging content" ("Process"15). A fair critique of these theories that is even made by Tobin himself, this is still not to say that either pedagogical method is without merit. As Tobin stresses further:

> while positive notions of agency, authorship, voice, and self may be philosophically naïve, they can still be pedagogically powerful. In other words, it may be enormously useful for a student writer (or any writer for that matter) to believe at certain moments and stages of the process that she actually has agency, authority, an authentic voice, and a unified self. ("Process" 15)

Process and expressivist pedagogies cling to the writer's ability to have a powerful perception of self, which can indeed be a valid tool for the teaching of writing; however, I am arguing that larger considerations of ideological factors need to be addressed as well. As Berlin points out, the heart of expressive rhetoric (what Berlin has also termed expressionistic rhetoric) is the individual subject discovering his/her authentic nature ("Rhetoric" 484). According to Berlin, expressionistic rhetoric is a pedagogical approach that posits that "Discovering the true self in writing will simultaneously enable the individual to discover the truth of the situation which evoked the writing, a situation that, needless to say, must always be compatible with the development of the self," which, for Berlin, "leads to the ideological dimension of the scheme" ("Rhetoric" 485). Again, the truth is what is at the core of expressivist pedagogy, specifically the truth of the individual. And it is this individualism that Berlin critiques most in this pedagogical approach as he argues that "expressionistic rhetoric is easily co-opted by the very capitalist forces it opposes" (Berlin "Rhetoric" 487). He supports this claim by pointing to the emphasis on privatization, uniqueness and originality, and that the:

> ruling elites in business, industry, and government are those most likely to nod in assent to the ideology inscribed in expressionistic rhetoric. The members of this class see their lives as embodying the creative realization of the self, exploiting the material, social, and political conditions of the world in order to assert a private vision, a vision which, despite its uniqueness, finally represents humankind's best nature. (That this vision in fact represents the interests of a particular

> class, not all classes, is of course not acknowledged). (Berlin "Rhetoric" 487)

There is a dominant hegemonic belief that is being privileged in expressionist rhetoric. Ascribing to this idea of each individual's truth as a vision that represents the best nature of all of humankind is a key element to expressivism and is often a belief not only of the ruling elite, but of those who fall outside its privileging class structure. For expressivists, the goal is to write what is true and what needs saying, which will match up with the "privately determined truths of all others: my best and deepest vision supports the same universal and external laws as everyone else's best and deepest vision" (Berlin "Rhetoric" 486). This key element of expressionistic pedagogy makes clear how portfolios can be implemented as a large-scale assessment technology. If motivated by the belief that all portfolio developers will produce truths in their works that adhere to the same universal and external law, then there is a built-in standard and norming procedure that should be inherent in portfolio creation and its assessment as well.

Social-Epistemic Rhetoric and Multiliteracies: A More Ideologically Inclusive Pedagogical Approach

Because of these discrepancies among pedagogical approaches, I argue that instructors who enact social-epistemic rhetoric—which includes the Multiliteracies perspective—need to rethink portfolio instruction and assessment implementation as a whole. In this section, I will explore further these pedagogical approaches and point to conflicts and consequences that occur when implementing portfolios as they are

currently being defined. This will then set up my final chapter of this dissertation, where I call for a more inclusive definition of portfolios.

Social-epistemic rhetoric, as James Berlin has defined it, emphasizes the political nature of writing and composing, where the material conditions, social parameters, and writer herself are in ongoing and continual conversation. This dialogue is governed by the language used and is always considered within the larger historical and temporal context. The consideration of the element of time encourages revision and reflection, and acknowledges continually the ideological nature of the process. Berlin states that "since language is a social phenomenon that is a product of a particular historical moment, our notions of the observing self, the communities in which the self functions, and the very structures of the material world are social constructions—all specific to a particular time and culture" ("Rhetoric" 488). These interactions and moments are social constructions and are hence, ideological. Even the subject herself is a construct in social-epistemic rhetoric. Self understanding is an individual act, but that individual never has complete freedom in that understanding. "In other words, the ways in which the subject understands and is affected by the material conditions is circumscribed by socially-devised definitions, by the community in which the subject lives" (Berlin "Rhetoric" 489). Each component of the conversation has its own influences and shapes the conversation. Berlin asserts that we are "lodged within a hermeneutic circle, although not one that is impervious to change" ("Rhetoric" 489). The goal of the social-epistemic pedagogue, then, would be to challenge these socially constructed ideologies so that economic, political, and

social consequences may be revealed to the individuals, in this case the students in the writing classrooms.

One example of a social-epistemic approach is Multiliteracies pedagogy. According to Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, this method of teaching has four distinct components:

1. Situated Practice, which draws on the experience of meaning-making in lifeworlds, the public realm, and workplaces
2. Overt Instruction, through which students develop an explicit metalanguage of Design
3. Critical Framing, which interprets the social context and purpose of Designs of meaning
4. Transformed Practice, in which students, as meaning-makers, become designers of social futures. (7)

An example of a pedagogy that is situated and focused on the social nature of learning, Multiliteracies uses these four components simultaneously to better expose the ideological nature of literacy and learning itself. Even though I have listed these components into four different numbered sections, it is important to mention that these elements are not stages that an instructor steps through. They are not pedagogical scaffolding in the traditional sense, but rather work to inform one another in a reciprocal nature.

Each component works in harmony with the other components to empower students to be *designers* of change, not just passive learners. As Cope and Kalantzis explain, "In the context of these changes we must conceptualise the 'what' of literacy

pedagogy. The key concept we developed to do this is that of Design, in which we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning while at the same time active designers of meaning" (7). In the idea of Design, one relies on prior knowledge to further contribute to creating new knowledge. For the New London Group, "there are six design elements in the meaning making process: those of Linguistic Meaning, Visual Meaning, Audio Meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning, and the Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other" (Cope and Kalantzis 7). Different people learn in varied ways and the Multiliteracies pedagogy draws on the multiple ways of meaning making that the learner uses. And these Designs are embedded in a pedagogical approach with four inter-related components: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice.

For example, situated practice can be better defined as the "'hands-on', embodied experiences of authentic and meaningful social practices involving talk, texts, tools, and technologies of the sort that help one imagine contexts that render what is being taught meaningful" (Gee "New" 67). While placing students in meaningful social practices, like a classroom for example, the component of overt instruction is also initiated. This overt instruction includes "all forms of guidance and scaffolding, within and outside Situated Practice, that focus on the learner's attention, in a reflective and meta-aware way, on the important parts of the language and practice being taught" (Gee "New" 67). Most classroom practices already employ various forms of overt instruction. In fact, current-traditionalist pedagogues (Berlin) would argue that it is the most effective method; however, Multiliteracies pedagogues

recognize the three other components necessary to empower students to recognize ideologies and contribute to designing social change. This recognition comes in the form of critical framing, or the "ways of coming to know where in the overall system you stand" (Gee "New" 68). Given the technological nature of portfolios and the larger systems of which they are a part, it is easy to argue that we need more of this critical framing in the assessment and job search processes. And this argument about portfolios can be made even richer by layering the final component of transformed practice in the mix, which requires that students go beyond active learners of education to play an active role in transformation. Transformed practice argues that students should "master the standard 'genres' of many school-based, specialist, academic, and public-sphere forms of language and social practices, but they should also know how to transform them, break them, and innovate new ones for their own social, cultural, and political purposes" (Gee 68). Because of the large-scale nature of the current portfolio that is used for assessment purposes, it is difficult for students to transform the genre into something that would better suit their own purposes. This is where the portfolio's design, and even its use, comes into focus and breaks down when using multiliteracies pedagogy. Students do not really have any power to change the genre or to manipulate it in useful ways, ways that might make for better learning and for more teaching moments. However, it is imperative that instructors understand how social-epistemic rhetoric and Multiliteracies pedagogy works in an actual classroom.

An Example of Social-Epistemic Pedagogy In Practice: A Mini-Ethnography of the Career Fair

Integrating portfolio instruction in the classroom would be better served if instructors explore ways to make the tacit more explicit, and in doing so, explore alternative pedagogical approaches that are focused more on exposing ideology. I recognize, of course, that by making this argument here I am entering into a pedagogical war zone of sorts. On one side are the pragmatists who seek to primarily address students' career concerns and on the other side are the critical pedagogues who seek to empower students to fight the oppressive system. There has been a lengthy scholarly debate among the camps and it would be easy to get caught up in the battle. But, I agree with Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu as they state in their 2009 *College English* article "Composing in a Global-Local Context: Careers, Mobility, Skills," that "for teachers of composition to respond effectively to either [pedagogical approach], we must in fact find ways to respond to both" (114). One way to accomplish this is by engaging students in the larger question of why—more importantly—the "why" beyond getting a job (e.g., a way to represent one's accomplishments and document one's learning over his/her lifetime, or to showcase one's citizenship efforts). Of course, this stems from a very specific pedagogical stance. But in order to respond to students' practical need of getting work *and* challenge their thinking to even recognize possible moments of oppression, both for themselves and for others, then instructors must use a social-epistemic approach.

One such practice that could be implemented in the classroom involves ways to expose invisible, powerful ideologies to students. By showing students that every choice they make is contextual and that those choices are inscribed within a specific (often invisible) ideology that is often imposed upon them (see Gee, Street, Graff, Brandt, Young, Mao, Lu, Pieterse, Royster, Szwed), students will have a fuller understanding and expertise in crafting a portfolio for use on the job market *and beyond*. In order to accomplish this goal, instructors need to encourage student reflection and discussion about power and influence so that they will begin to see that writing is never neutral, including writing done in a portfolio. However, this, too, is an ideology as Horner and Lu point out:

> the nature of what teachers might imagine they will be working with students to resist, accommodate, oppose, or even pursue alternatives to is historically specific, and so cannot be determined in advance. Instead, it is a matter that requires both student and teacher investigation and articulation in and through writing. (115)

When considering personalized portfolio creation as a *technē*, it is impossible to know in advance all the ideologies imposed upon a creator. It is not that instructors need to reveal all the ideologies that a student may encounter in his/her life, as that would certainly be an impossible task. Rather, it is important to lead students to see the possibility that other perspectives exist, that some perspectives are privileged more than others in culture and society, and that this larger context is paramount to both types of portfolio creation in case the students do eventually want to advocate for change or even for some of the students to have a voice that can be heard.

One such way to help students "see" specific contexts is by having them participate in a mini-ethnography of the Career Fair. In this mini-ethnography, students will participate in a detailed, focused observation of the campus event. By instructing students on what to pay attention to prior to attending, students will then be able to generate detailed observations of their surroundings. Not only will the students be invested in the happenings of this day-long event because of its high stakes due to its connection with securing employment, but it is a fruitful site for much discussion. And, by taking students to the Career Fair, instructors are providing an "immersion in a community of learners engaged in authentic versions of such practice is necessary" (New London Group 31). This embodies the situated practice component of Multiliteracies pedagogy.

In order to provide a point of departure and a common discourse for students, one method might be to couch this mini-ethnography in terms of literacy events, as Shirley Brice Heath has termed them. In particular, a literacy event is defined as:

> any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" or "the literacy event [as] a conceptual tool useful in examining within particular communities of modern society the actual forms and functions of oral and literate traditions and co-existing relationships between spoken and written language. (Heath 445)

By teaching students to pay close attention to literacy events, and by suggesting examples of literacy events that could occur at the Career Fair, instructors can use this method of overt instruction to encourage students to pay closer attention to rhetorical

context as a whole. This larger rhetorical context also translates to naturally encompass the "why" of personalized portfolio creation beyond the act of obtaining employment. It helps students to better value the institutional situatedness of portfolios that are used for assessment purposes because they can see the institutional situatedness of the Career Fair itself. In order to encourage this exploration and provide some critical framing for the lesson, some questions instructors may pose for class discussion are: what reading or writing do you think will happen at the Career Fair; and what is expected of that writing? This discussion will help show students what to look for while they are conducting their observations. By helping students to focus their observations on literacy practices and then leading them to make connections in class discussion, instructors are encouraging students to begin to recognize ideological systems that influence writing and portfolio creation. They will learn what to look for and pay attention to in their own communities and roles because of this practice session.

When they actually perform their mini-ethnography, students should be told that they are expected to take lengthy notes and write detailed descriptions of their observations and participation, and that they should bring their findings back to class for discussion. Their notes should include examples of the following: information about the interactions between the company representatives and job seekers; the interactions among the company representatives and job seekers themselves; descriptions to tell the difference between a company rep and a job seeker; "required" behaviors of each participant; details about the setting of the event; details about the dress of people in each of the different groups; what types of writing were performed;

and the medium of the writing. Class discussion could then interrogate notions of power by more closely examining: who determines what is acceptable writing for the Career Fair; who is invested in the Career Fair; and other questions that encourage students to recognize the powerful systems at work. Discussion could also include why the Career Fair operates like it does and what the students learned about the job market as a result of attending the Career Fair. These observations could be explored so that students can recognize the powerful systems that are working in an event as seemingly small-scale as a college Career Fair.

This discussion should also bring in the transformed practice element of multiliteracies pedagogy where students discuss possible ways to break with conventions and still be successful. Given the context in the Career Fair, perhaps a discussion of the film *Legally Blonde* could be included since it is probably not likely that the students observed a pink-clad female bouncing from table to table in pursuit of future employment. This might encourage students to think outside of the box if they are a bit hesitant to consider alternatives to the standard conventions.

Analysis of the Career Fair could then lead to a broader discussion of context as students explore how they make different choices in behavior, dress, and *writing*, depending on the context. For example, they wouldn't dress for class the way they would if they were a job seeker at the Career Fair. They also wouldn't write a letter to a potential employer the same way that they would write to their parents or a friend. In this way, instructors are helping students to see that the collection of work that is included *and the self that is represented* in the portfolio requires important decisions to be made, decisions with real consequences. By engaging students in this way, I am

encouraging them to explore the *social meaning of literacy* as Szwed has termed it, which includes "the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts for their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities" (Szwed 422). This very definition parallels that of ideology, and I argue that it is important for students to at least think about these larger implications that are included within the context. The choices we make are bound in ideologies and power, and students need to recognize this.

Undoubtedly, instructors need to attempt to expose the ideologies that influence our educational practices as much as we possibly can. Recognizing that ideologies are often invisible, it is imperative that we provide the tools and necessary knowledge to help empower students if they should want to reshape the educational community instead of just reifying the dominant belief that literacy is neutral and value-free, as in the autonomous model. The primary reason I suggest having students conduct a mini-ethnography is because ethnography is rooted in culture (see Purcell-Gates, Szwed, Dyson). Having students explore and document the social "rules" of the Career Fair encourages them to study a particular cultural event to better understand the larger influences that society, culture, and institutions have over all behaviors and practices, including portfolio creation. It provides a common, real-life site of discussion for the students. Because a significant amount of the work done in literacy studies includes ethnographic research, instructors can certainly have students conduct their own versions of this method; however, I am reminded that "[e]thnography on its own is not a magic solution to the 'problem'' of investigating literacy: without

theoretical clarity the empirical investigation of literacy will only reproduce our own prejudices, whatever meaning we attach to 'ethnography'" (Street *Social* 52). Because ethnography needs to be considered within a theoretical framework, I argue that we need to choose to expose the students to the notion of literac*ies*, which encourages a less stigmatized dichotomy for literacy learning and allows students to embrace the multiple ways that they are literate (see New London Group, Scribner and Cole, Young, Mao, Matsuda, Royster).

Given that the students I encounter in the courses I teach are often afraid to write or initially consider themselves to be poor writers, providing them with a frame that encourages them to view their own progress in academic settings as only one aspect of their writing often is empowering for students. It also encourages students to explore their other literacies, where they are already experts, as potential inclusions in the personalized portfolio, thus creating a more inclusive representation of themselves. Included in this discussion of multiple ways of being literate is Jacqueline Jones Royster's article "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own" because of the way in which Royster is positioned within the academy in terms of her African-American ethnicity and marginalized status. By examining her own subject position, Royster exposes how members of the academic community continue to perpetuate the dominant hegemony and suggests that we continually need to be monitoring our assumptions and talking with members of marginalized groups instead of just about them. This leads to one of the major challenges of an instructor: exposing ideologies to students in the dominant group.

Because some students certainly benefit as members of dominant ideological groups, they may resist acknowledging that "[…]one of the functions of privilege is to structure the world so that mechanisms of privilege are invisible – in the sense that they are unexamined – to those who benefit from them" (Bailey 309). This notion rings true in the negotiation between self and system, as members who are outside of the privileged system will undoubtedly recognize that they do not have the privileges but will be negotiating their own meanings with their experiences and the dominant hegemony (see Anzaldua, Villanueva, Lu, Mao). Those outsiders and non-members of the privileged groups will have the "wisdom of peripherality" that social learning theorist Etienne Wenger examines and is what Royster discusses in terms of subject position, where those individuals who occupy peripheral membership of a group or discourse community are those who are best positioned to "see" the ideologies embedded within the group. Because of this, a portfolio that is more inclusive of hybridity and alternative representations of identity and writing would be better aligned with a social-epistemic pedagogical method.

I make this claim because in portfolio assessment practices, it is common to go through a period of norming, where the group of portfolio evaluators attempts to read each portfolio and assign it a number that is similar to all other evaluators. According to Peggy O'Neill, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot, norming is:

> referred to as calibrating, [which] refers to groups of writing instructors reading, discussing, and evaluating student writing to establish shared evaluation criteria. The sessions may be guided by a rubric and anchor papers, which are sample texts that exemplify the score points, or they

> may be less structured with participants discussing the strengths, weaknesses, and evaluative decisions without a rubric. It can also refer to the training sessions used in large-scale writing assessments. (202)

A problem with this norming approach is that it goes against the very principles of a social-epistemic rhetoric that encourage students to create portfolios that, while showcasing their understanding of the genre as a whole, break convention and encourage change. When being normed against other more passive approaches to the assignment, these more creative texts can get lower scores simply for their lack of conformity. Also problematic in a norming session is the silencing that occurs of evaluators who have dissenting opinions, which again runs counter to a social-epistemic approach that would privilege multiple voices and perspectives. In this example, I think of "'This Wooden Shack Place': The Logic of an Unconventional Reading" by Glynda Hull and Mike Rose which demonstrates that different social experiences contribute to different—but still logical—readings of texts. But if readers are forced to be normed and to conform, then the very portfolios that would be created to enact social change potentially would be those that would be marked down in a norming session. This seems to be a direct problem with the portfolio as an assessment technology that resists change, one that I now address further.

Resistance and Change: A Shift Back to the Technological

For Adam Banks, this type of social change means a change in technologies as he states that the "redesign of a nation—especially this nation, in this moment—must begin with its technologies" (xxiii). Because of my previous argument that portfolios

are themselves also a technology, perhaps by redesigning portfolios we may offer resistance and change and prevent enslavement to the current forms that portfolios have taken.

Some concerns addressed by Winner to better show this enslavement to modern technology include the fear of the possibility of being dominated by technology: "as the rate of technological innovation quickens, it becomes increasingly important and increasingly difficult to predict the range of effects that a given innovation will have. […] technology looms as an oppressive force that poses a direct threat to human freedom" (Winner *Autonomous* 3). Because of these severe views of technology, it is no wonder that Heidegger considered modern technology to be "monstrous" (Heidegger *TQCT* 16) and Winner referred to it as "Frankenstein's problem" (Winner *Autonomous* 306-335). And, the current vision of portfolios could be viewed in much the same way by students who do not conform or who are predisposed to be less successful in a privileged system, like the working class girl in Gee's linguistic example that is referenced throughout this dissertation.

Because of examples such as these, scholars and instructors should look for possibilities for resistance and change. Both Heidegger and Winner encourage reflection and rethinking. And other scholars have contributed to this discussion of technology. By drawing on the works of other philosophers, scholars, and theorists (both past and present), I will now continue the discussion of technology in order to show that resistance and change are not only possible, but inevitable.

It is imperative that scholars don't get caught up solely in the dichotomy between a naively utopian view of technology and a negatively deterministic one.

Robert R. Johnson points out that even though this is a somewhat reductive and simplistic binary there is:

> a grain of truth in this fundamental schism, just as there tends to be in most paradoxes: We are enamored of the things that technology can promise, but we live in fear of the power that unchecked growth and dissemination of technology has over our lives. We want technology to help us get where we want to go, but we feel uncomfortable if we are unable to control the direction and speed of the journey. (*User-centered* 20)

Being able to find the balance between the promises and perils of technological innovation is a key to future possibilities. Resisting this dichotomy is necessary to enact the possibility of alternative views to emerge.

In one example of how to enact critical resistance, Foucault examines technologies of the self in a similarly titled work. His piece explores how the individual person submits to different systems of power, whether they be secular or religious, in order to positively constitute a new self (Foucault 249). Though this work does not explore resistance directly, it thoroughly documents the changes that have occurred historically with regard to the position the self has in connection with a larger systems that the self occupies, specifically in regard to religious doctrine and ideology. These changes that have occurred historically are examples that resistance and change are not only possible, but inevitable.

To continue this line of thinking further, Barbara Biesecker does an in-depth reading of Foucault and provides a foundation for a way to think about the larger

system of technology (what Winner would call a network). For Biesecker (and it can be argued, Foucault) "what is to be called 'resistance' finds its conditions of existence in those virtual breaks or structures of excess opened up by practices performed within the already established lines of making sense that constitute the social weave or social apparatus (*dispositif*)" (Biesecker 357). It follows then, that within the system (or social weave) there are already breaks existing as a part of that social weave and "resistance names the non-legible practices that are performed within the weave but are asymmetrical to it" (Biesecker 357). These non-legible practices that are performed asymmetrical to the weave are the moments for resistance that are contained within the system itself. Thus, it is not only possible that change and resistance will occur, it is inevitable. Biesecker offers even more support by suggesting that we always can use critical rhetoric "to 'make these virtualities visible' by the strategic and deliberate codification of those points of resistance" (Biesecker 361).

For a more concrete example of moments of resistance, I turn to Miles Kimball and his notion of tactical technical communication. Using de Certeau's notions of strategies and tactics and Johnson's concept of the user-as-producer as a frame for his analysis, Kimball analyzed John Muir's *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive! A Manual of Step by Step Procedures for the Compleat Idiot* and Ron Champion's *Build Your Own Sports Car for a s Little as £250*. Both of these books have been responsible for creating whole cultures of resistance because they "participate in a technological narrative of the self-sufficient technologist—a person who counters a feeling of helplessness in a dominant culture by living as an independent operator, a

technological scavenger on the periphery of industrial society" (Kimball 67). This idea runs counter to the dominant notion that technology is recognizable only in corporate, organizational or governmental institutions. Thus, there are greater possibilities for resistance thanks to theories in regard to everyday technologies such as those espoused by Johnson and de Certeau.

A closer look at Michel de Certeau's work reveals a difference between tactics (which is what Kimball suggests are used by Muir and Champion) and strategies, which is useful in terms of what Biesecker and Foucault have already contributed to this discussion of resistance. For de Certeau, a strategy is systematic and I argue does not represent the breaks in the system that Biesecker noted. Rather, the asymmetrical weave in the social fabric that Biesecker describes is what de Certeau would refer to as a tactic, because "it takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids" (de Certeau 37). And even though de Certeau considers tactics to be an art of the weak, the use of strategies and tactics still offers the inevitability for resistance and change.

To be sure, technology is itself a system that overlaps and includes other systems of economics, race, gender, etc. In this way, technology is already a part of the social fabric, the social weave. To that end, Barbara Biesecker's reading of Foucault offers a different way of viewing the system of technology that includes within it strategies (that move symmetrical with the social weave) and tactics (e.g. in the vein of de Certeau and Kimball), which I argue move in an asymmetrical direction to the social weave and create the inevitability for resistance and change. But it is

imperative that scholars and philosophers continually engage in critical thinking and debate about technology. And this thinking and debate needs to consider that technology is not just tools and artifacts, but rather a powerful system that will be "reproductive" without scholarly discussion and further action, at least according to feminist scholars Anne Balsamo and Judy Wajcman.

A Call for Transformation

This chapter has explored the differing pedagogical approaches that exist in writing studies and has place portfolios as they are currently being defined into the process and expressivist pedagogical camps. The writing studies field needs to recognize and rethink portfolio creation in terms of the pedagogical practices that each program is espousing. If an institution or program is using a process-oriented and expressivist approach, then portfolios as they are currently envisioned could potentially suffice as an assessment technology; however, if a program administrator is enacting a social-epistemic pedagogical model, then a rethinking of portfolios is paramount for a more inclusive and ideologically recognized approach to assessment. The following chapter will examine two fundamental changes that need to be implemented in order for portfolios to be successfully aligned with a social-epistemic pedagogical practice, meditation and transformation.

Chapter 5

Meditation and Transformation: Enhancing the Definition of the Portfolio

As I argue in the previous chapters, portfolio creation for assessment and job market purposes can be highly problematic. One example drawn primarily from the Chapter Four is that instructors and writing program administrators need to recognize the importance for implementation of portfolios for job market and assessment purposes into the overall curriculum because "portfolios permit assessment and instruction to be woven together in a way that more traditional [assessment] approaches do not" (Paulson et al. 60). Because of this, there is a reciprocal relationship between assessment and instruction. As a result, it is imperative that the portfolio assigned to assess writing programs is aligned with the pedagogy used in the class itself. To help reinforce this perspective, I argue that the practices used in the classroom and by the students creating the portfolios needs further thinking and awareness. By looking back at the previous definitions of portfolios, I argue that there is a gap in the definition from a social-epistemic perspective. By limiting the definition of portfolios primarily to collection, selection, and reflection, these technologies are missing the important future social design element. As such, a more inclusive definition of portfolios needs to be created, one that includes the social-epistemic layers of meditation and transformation, which I describe in detail below.

Current, simplified definitions of portfolios for assessment purposes in writing studies disciplines have primarily focused on the key elements of *collection*, *selection*,

and *reflection*, as Liz Hamp-Lyons and William Condon point out in *Assessing the Portfolio: Principles for Practice, Theory, and Research*. Of course, because I argue for more visibility of the pedagogical frame—in this instance, a social-epistemic frame—and am offering another layer to the definition of portfolios toward that end, it is imperative that I draw once again from the detailed portfolio definitions that have already been contributed to the field. First, I draw from Kathleen Blake Yancey who labeled the portfolio as a "metatext"—a text describing or explaining another text—with "seven defining features":

- It is a *collection* of work.
- It is a *selection* of work, culled from the archival collection, usually supplemented by additional texts created specifically for the portfolio. Such texts include reflective letters, annotations on individual texts, and other contextualizing texts such as a table of contents.
- It includes *reflection,* which typically allows the portfolio composer to guide the reader through the portfolio and assist in its evaluation.
- It presumes *development,* although texts demonstrating development aren't always included in the portfolio. (And, as we shall see, including such development can be a particular problem with electronic portfolios.)
- It documents *diversity—both* in its contents, which are various, and in its ability to show how different our students are, one to the next—individually, cognitively, culturally, institutionally.

- It is *communicative* in the sense that a portfolio always shares what is important to the portfolio's composer, what is valued in the context in which that student works, and so on.
- It is *evaluative,* as suggested before: The portfolio itself tells its observers what is valued by the participants who shaped it. (Yancey "Portfolio" 130)

For Yancey, each of these components represents a different layer to what makes up a portfolio and the knowledge it takes to create such a compilation of work. As I have unpacked in previous chapters, each component is an important layer of portfolio design and creation. Giving students the power to choose what works to include in their portfolios is paramount to the selection process and can be problematic when prescribed by administrators or instructors. The reflection element has multiple concerns that need to be addressed by instructors, like "schmoozing" or subject-position interpellation. Also an issue with reflection is the visibility of linguistic class markers for designers. But these are just the foundational components. Development and diversity are also components that Yancey has highlighted. Each of these plays a role, though Yancey herself points out the complication of being able to adequately demonstrate development. Diversity is yet another layer because, as I pointed out in Chapter Four, conformity is paramount in a norming process of evaluation, so portfolio designers need to be different, but not too different as to attract too much attention under the current vision of portfolios.

Just four years after the Yancey definition appeared, Liz Hamp-Lyons and William Condon also sought to develop a theory of the portfolio as an assessment device. In this theory, they defined the portfolio as having *nine* distinct parts:

- collection, which is again the notion that more than one work would be included, and usually meant three or more;
- range, which echoes with Yancey's notion of diversity;
- context richness, which provides evidence of learning based on the assignments of the course being evaluated (this layer entangles instruction with assessment);
- delayed evaluation, which provides both the time and motivation to revise the work included in the portfolio;
- selection, or a sampling of the creator's work (but one that is often determined by assessors and not the always within the creator's control);
- student-centered control, which assumes a student has some choice of what to submit;
- reflection and self-assessment, or a discussion of the process that led to the written products and plan for further revision;
- growth along specific parameters, to indicate a way to track improvement in spelling, for example;

- development over time, which requires multiple drafts of the same work but serves to showcase creator learning (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 32).

Like Yancey, Hamp-Lyons and Condon recognize the multiple dimensions at work in portfolio creation. In both definitions, there is a notion of range and diversity that is often lost when referring to portfolios simply as a collection that includes selection and reflection; however, neither definition, when used in an evaluation context, actually seems to privilege either of these components very highly. Plus, as Chapter Three examined, there are problems with selection and reflection that still need to be addressed. For example, the range of work students include in their portfolios is often limited to the course being evaluated rather than allowing students to include examples created outside of their particular writing course to showcase their growth and progress. The context-richness element of this particular definition is limiting in that it requires that students only submit work done in the writing course. That this writing is done for a particular instructor with a particular ideological stance is not the focus here, but it should be. The delayed evaluation and self-assessment notions in this specific definition are a step in the right direction, but both fail to encompass the power of the three most popular components: collection, selection, and reflection. The definition needs two other elements that embody diversity, self-assessment, and action, elements that can be viewed as equally important as the collection, selection, and reflection components. In an effort to refocus the definition to be more productive for social-epistemic pedagogues, I am offering the notions of *meditation* and *transformation*, terms that seek to encompass the notion of meditation rather than

calculative thinking (to borrow Heidegger's term) and transformation (drawn from both Adam Banks and the New London Group). These terms pull meaning from both words separately, but together remind instructors, administrators, and evaluators that the portfolio is a complex representation of its designer's thoughts, beliefs, and growth at a particular moment in time and in specific contexts. That these thoughts and beliefs are continually changing and being challenged to create new meanings for designers is paramount to *meditation* and *transformation*. I will use this chapter to not only explain in greater detail what I mean by and application of these new terms, but also to show their importance in how the writing studies field might use such a contribution for better integration of the portfolio in writing studies pedagogy and theory.

For instructors who use a Multiliteracies approach, for example, the portfolio needs to be integrated into the course and not just be added on as a final assignment at the semester's end. Social-epistemic pedagogues need to integrate the portfolio into class discussion, and provide a larger context and framework for its purposes and creation, thus making implicit power dynamics more overt. To be sure, as it is currently defined by just collection, selection, and reflection, the current conception of the portfolio can fail to include alternative representations of hybridity and boundary-crossing, important elements of the Multiliteracies pedagogy. Also, a re-imagined portfolio should encourage a view of that portfolio as useful beyond the course itself, to make it more meaningful for the student creators as they transition into other contexts. This could be accomplished by allowing students to include materials that represent the larger social contexts in which they are situated. Certainly, there may be some examples of portfolio use that have been modified to accommodate social

practices and ideological perspectives, but what I am calling for here is an addition to the current definition that *continually* reminds evaluators and assessors of the important elements of meditation and transformation that can sometimes be missed in the portfolio's current conception. What is paramount in a social-epistemic pedagogical model is the notion that every design, including portfolios, is a social construction "that must be constantly revised in the interests of the greater participation of all, for the greater good of all. And this of course implies an awareness of the ways in which rhetorics can privilege some at the expense of others, according the chosen few an unequal share of power, perquisites, and material benefits" (Berlin "Rhetoric" 490). Even the model of portfolio that I will lay out in this chapter must continually be questioned and rethought to make sure that others' interests are being acknowledged and this task of including others can be accomplished if we allow for meditation.

Meditation

As I first mentioned in Chapter One, meditation is a different way of thinking, a way that is not considered to be a common practice for today's students. I draw once again from Martin Heidegger's notion of meditative thinking that: "demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, not to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all" (Heidegger *Discourse* 55). Meditative thinking takes time and practice, according to Heidegger. To encourage new approaches and perspectives in the field, I argue that meditation should be an implemented and supported practice

among writing studies scholars. By considering ideas that might run counter to one's own conceptions of what works or what is valuable, one can begin to expand and explore alternative possibilities. Pondering and practicing the "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46), can lead to new discoveries and different, better approaches and ways of thinking. Meditative thinking is perhaps a more difficult way of thinking than what Heidegger terms "calculative thinking," because it does not "serve specific purposes," "count on definite results," "race from one prospect to the next," or "never stop, never collect itself" (Heidegger *Discourse* 46). It is in these ways that meditative thinking differs from calculative thinking because meditative thinking's aim is to allow for a fuller collection of itself through thought and patience. Grappling with the nuances of something and really thinking through the process, implications, and possibilities in order to identify purposes instead of just serving them embodies what is meant by meditative thinking. It is all-encompassing, and fruitful for my work with portfolios because by thinking meditatively about larger notions of assessment and the portfolios as technology—some instances of their use and the ideology embedded within that use—I argue that instructors, program administrators, and even portfolio creators themselves become more aware of the process and ideologically embeddedness of this particular technology.

By calling for continual meditation to be incorporated into the very definition of a portfolio, we may be better able to consider multiple issues that arise in portfolio assessment practices and to thoroughly think about those issues. By stepping back and just pondering about portfolios, by doing a *deeper* reflection that is meditation,

evaluators, instructors, and students may be able to understand better all parameters involved in portfolio design and use, which may then lead to a more inclusive understanding of the greater interests and good for all.

Meditation is imperative for discovery and evaluation of portfolios as a technology in use; however, a more powerful and inclusive definition of portfolios must also contain a thoughtful call for action on the part of the designers and assessors. Once a discovery or new idea is envisioned through meditation, enacting that vision to design new meanings is necessary. This is where transformation is needed to complete the fourth element of the new portfolio definition.

Transformation

Just as meditation is a term from Heidegger that I am making use of to further a more inclusive definition of portfolios, I am borrowing from Adam Banks and the New London Group in my use of the term transformation. For Banks, it is the notion of transformative access that I find most useful. The New London Group's multiliteracies pedagogical approach uses transformed practice as one component, which I draw from in order to create a more meaningful definition of the portfolio. Both of these uses of transformative access and transformed practice equally inform the added element of my proposed definition inclusion, *transformation*.

To begin, it is first imperative that I establish what Banks means by transformative access. To do so, I must provide some context for his meaning. In *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Banks takes a critical look at racial injustice as it has occurred in the vein of technology. Politically, this has been

termed the Digital Divide and has come to refer to the gap that has emerged between the privileged whites and minorities (most often referring to African Americans) in regard to technology access. To demonstrate his argument, Banks states:

> Imagine one [situation] where an entire group of people have been systematically denied the tools, the literacies, the experiences, the codes and assumptions behind design choices, the chance to influence future designs and uses, and make the stakes that people's educational success, employability and thus their incomes, roles in the society, and their political power, and tie all of that to longstanding lies about that people's educability through regular news stories about their violence and failing schools and connect that to a centuries old history of outright exclusion from any education involving any technology supported by violence, terror, politics, and the definitions encoded into our nation's founding documents, and then one might understand what is at stake for African Americans with the Digital Divide. (xxi)

Although he frames his argument in terms of technological access and the much politicized term the Digital Divide, Banks is touching on the racism in the current system that is continually reproduced and reified without people really considering the underlying causes and systematic oppression. For example, a recent article by Eve Tahmincioglu appeared on *Careers on MSNBC.com* where Tahmincioglu makes a poignant argument about the difficulty of African American men in finding work in the current economic recession. She even goes so far as to rename the recession the "Black Mancession" and calls attention to the inequality among differing racial groups.

Of course the problem with this article is in its reception as a comment from an online poster states:

> Sick and tire [sic] of hearing race as the leading cause of socio-economic problems. I've been in enough urban areas where "minorities" dwell and have seen the trash, crime, and overall careless attitude of the residents. Bottom line: these folks want handouts, not education, responsibility, and employment. Time to make the welfare recipients work at cleaning up their own neighborhoods, or do something to give back to those who pay their way.

This post signals that the commenter blames the individuals rather than the systems that have contributed to their lack of success. It is yet another example of systematic racism that is continually perpetuated. Whole groups of people are not choosing to be victimized, but are denied access. This is a focal point for Banks' argument. And the relationship between racism and technology is not neutral for Banks, and is included in the element of technological design as well; the choices made in creating a technology and using it are not innocent ones, which includes portfolios:

> Racism is enforced and maintained through our technologies and the assumptions we design and program into them—and into our uses of them. Without systematic study of our relationships with technologies and technological issues, we remain subject to those technologies and the larger patterns of racism and racial exclusion that still govern American society. (Banks 10)

As a technology, portfolios are also designed and maintained to replicate the dominant hegemonic system. Though talking specifically about race in this context, I argue that Banks's ideas can be applied to any alternative and oppressed way of thinking that is excluded from the dominant hegemonic group.

As I stated in Chapter Three, portfolios are not an ideologically neutral technology. As a third wave in writing studies assessment, portfolios followed the controversial standardized tests and the timed writing essay assignment, both of which have been highly critiqued for their focus and measurement of conforming to a privileged, standardized discourse. That certain groups of people from specific social classes are predisposed to perform well in these types of assessment procedures has been debated for years in writing studies. What is just recently gaining attention, however, is the notion that the portfolio is also an assessment technology that privileges particular groups of people over others. That it attempts to shift the focus to the student is certainly a move toward a more inclusive approach, but one that clearly falls short when considering predispositions that students have, including the linguistic class markers of the Gee study in "New people in new worlds: networks, the new capitalism" that I've mentioned in previous chapters.

To frame his argument, Banks calls for a more complicated notion of the term *access*, which he breaks down into five parts: material, functional, experiential, critical and transformative access. What is often addressed in political realms is what has now been termed the Digital Divide. Solutions to this problem seem as complicated as the Divide itself, as Banks illustrates:

> The problem with the Digital Divide as a concept for addressing systematic differences in access to digital technologies is that it came to signify mere material access to computers and the Internet, and failed to hold anyone responsible for creating even the narrow material conditions it prescribed. Beyond the tools themselves, meaningful access requires users, individually and collectively, to be able to use, critique, resist, design, and change technologies in ways that are relevant to their lives and needs, rather than those of the corporations that hope to sell them. (41)

The focus here on meaningful access is what strikes me as most important when correlating this argument to the one I am making about portfolios. The current procedures that are in place with portfolio technology limits creators' "use, critique, resistance, design, and changes" in order to make them relevant and more meaningful. Necessary, systematic changes are required for better overall implementation.

Beyond material access, Banks draws our attention to the four other, equally important, components, the first of which is functional access, or "the knowledge and skills necessary to use those tools effectively" (Banks 41). In terms of the portfolio, better framing in a real-life context and implementation of the assignment into the course itself (instead of just tacking it on at the end for assessment purposes) might address these concerns.

Experiential access addresses the relevance of a portfolio assignment to students since it is "access that makes the tools a relevant part of their lives. In addition to discerning relevance in the technologies, people must have some

involvement in the spaces where technologies are created, designed, planned, and where policies and regulations are written" (Banks 42). By reconfiguring the portfolio assignment into an opportunity for lifelong learning or as a way to envision growth as productive citizens—which occurs beyond the writing classroom—students may be able to relate better to the assignment and find renewed meaning in the task.

Another element in Banks' comprehensive definition of access is the notion of critical access, where "Members of a particular community must also develop understandings of the benefits and problems of any technology well enough to be able to critique, resist, and avoid them when necessary as well as using them when necessary" (42). An example of this that has already been documented might be in Tony Scott's study of the Kentucky-based portfolio assessment program. In that study, Scott found that the students were able to reflect more honestly on their reflective components of their portfolios once they were removed from the reflection task itself. This was evident when Scott interviewed the students about their portfolio reflections and found numerous instances of criticism and resistance. Of course, this did not lead to any change in the portfolio reflections themselves, but it did point to a larger understanding of the system on the part of participators.

Finally, Banks arrives at transformative access which he defines as inclusive of the "African American struggle as reflected in its rhetorical traditions, [which] was always an attempt to *both* change the interfaces of that system *and* fundamentally change the codes that determine how the system works" (45). By empowering students to draw from their own experiences and knowledge, instructors can encourage them to change not only the technological tools, but also the larger technological system as

well. It is this focus on empowerment and change that the idea of transformative access embodies, which is one that is useful for a rethinking of portfolio technology.

To better prepare instructors and portfolio evaluators, students need to have complete and comprehensive access to portfolios as a whole. For Banks, this all culminates in the belief that:

> Access requires an individual or group of people having the material of any particular technology, along with the knowledge and experience and genuine inclusion in the networks in which decisions are made about their design and implementation that enable them to use—or refuse—them in ways that make sense in their lives. Combining those four levels of access (material, functional, experiential, critical) in some way that can represent transformation is similarly a multi-faceted task. People must think and act simultaneously along the axes of critique, use, and design. […] people must also be prepared to imagine, design, and build new systems, new documentation, new tools, new networks that assume and naturalize the epistemologies of those who (in this case, African Americans) have been left out. (135)

Banks calls for recognition of the oppressive system first and foremost, but then offers up a way to push against and reshape that system. Transformation involves criticism and design, imagination and use. It involves new, more inclusive pedagogical methods, which is where the Multiliteracies approach comes in.

Parallels can certainly be made between Banks' comprehensive definition of access and the four components of the Multiliteracies pedagogy—situated practice,

overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. To be sure, the argument could be made that experiential and material access could easily fall under the situated practice component of Multiliteracies pedagogy because of its definition as the "'hands-on', embodied experiences of authentic and meaningful social practices involving talk, texts, tools, and technologies of the sort that help one imagine contexts that render what is being taught meaningful" (Gee "New" 67). Functional access can be found in overt instruction because it is through that component that instructors provide knowledge and try to make the tacit more explicit in an attempt to expose ideologies. Critical access most obviously parallels critical framing as both components require a deeper understanding that produces possible criticism and analysis. This sentiment is echoed by the New London Group when they articulate that "our role as teachers is not simply to be technocrats. It is not our job to produce docile, compliant workers. Students need also to develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with conditions of their working lives" (13). A possible consequence of No Child Left Behind legislation or old Fordist ways of thinking, one problem with the current educational system is its focus on creating students who are only interested in learning what is necessary for the test. In a recent nytimes.com column, David Brooks brings into focus the disconnect between what education privileges and what is required upon graduation. As Brooks argues, "Today's graduates are also told to find their passion and then pursue their dreams. The implication is that they should find themselves first and then go off and live their quest. But, of course, very few people at age 22 or 24 can take an inward journey and come out having discovered a developed self" (Brooks). This sentiment is shared by

social-epistemic pedagogues who understand and value the contributions of the social on the self. As Brooks further states, "Most successful young people don't look inside and then plan a life. They look outside and find a problem, which summons their life" (Brooks). For these reasons, it is imperative that educators enact critical framing practices in their classrooms to encourage students' thinking in the context of the social. As the New London Group posits:

> The goal of Critical Framing is to help learners frame their growing mastery in practice (from Situated Practice) and conscious control and understanding (from Overt Instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centred relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice. Here, crucially, the teacher must help learners to denaturalise and make strange again what they have learned and mastered. (34)

If something has become second-nature, it becomes almost transparent. One example to better explain what is meant by this is when a person obtains his/her driver's license. When driving around on the temporary permit and even in those first years of driving solo, the act of driving a vehicle is wildly apparent. Each pressing on the accelerator or brake is a conscious effort. Flipping the turn signal to indicate a future direction change to other drivers is also done with a great deal of thought and consideration in those early days. However, when one is no longer a novice and has been driving a vehicle for numerous years, these basic acts of operation become almost invisible to the experienced driver, almost natural. An unconscious flick of the turn signal, the instinctual pressing of the brake, and the almost automatic pushing downward of the

accelerator to start moving all occur without a second thought for the veteran driver. It is during these moments of transparency where critical framing is its most important as instructors try to expose or re-expose that which has already been made innate.

Once obtaining the ability to speak up and critically engage the world around them, students can begin to enact transformative access and transformed practice, which both embody innovation, imagination, and empowered design. This demonstrates the notion that to "be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities, interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes that students bring to learning" (New London Group 18). Portfolios, as they are currently used, tend to ignore and silence those students with difference in an attempt to conform to a universal standard.

In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed issues of norming in portfolio assessment procedures, which is something that certainly needs to be addressed; however, more education is needed on the part of the evaluators as well to understand better the linguistic, social, and cultural predispositions of students of differing backgrounds and the ways to get them creating work for their portfolio that would embrace and celebrate their differences, rather than penalizing their efforts. A rethinking of a norming session is needed where dissent is celebrated and encouraged for better understanding the "wisdom of peripherality—a view of the community that can be lost to full participants" (Wenger 216). In this term and definition developed by social-learning theorist Etienne Wenger, the outside members of a community of practice have a better understanding of the ideologies of that community simply because the discourse and actions are still so new to them. This can be thought of like

the novice driver who is learning membership in the community of drivers and as such is hyperaware of his/her actions in the vehicle. Including in the evaluation process new instructors or new evaluators—even some from neighboring disciplines—could go a long way in bringing in the novice perspective. What is imperative in this instance, however, is that these new members feel grounded and confident enough to speak up and offer their opinions, rather than being silenced and criticized for their different perspectives. Also included in this wisdom is the reconsidering of *any* dissenting portfolio evaluators' opinions as one way to begin re-evaluating the portfolio process as a whole.

Reviewing and rearticulating the portfolio as an assessment technology would be better served by redefining portfolios for writing studies purposes. By defining transformation using both Banks and the New London Group and by using mediation as drawn from Heidegger's definition of meditative thinking, I am relying on already established meanings in the hopes that their connotations will be applied to portfolio technology as well. By rethinking portfolios not only as a *collection* with *selection* and *reflection* components, but also with the added elements of *meditation* and *transformation*, I am arguing that portfolios can be more inclusive and empowering for otherwise silenced students in writing studies.

Hybridity

Another way to reconsider the portfolio process as a whole is to focus on the idea of hybridity. Because I'm arguing for the inclusion of *meditation* and *transformation* as part of the portfolio's core definition, it is necessary to include the

notion of hybridity because "People create and innovate by hybridizing, that is by articulating in new ways, established practices and conventions within and between different modes of meaning" (New London Group 29-30). The New London Group recognizes that diversity is a key element to transformed practice and encourages inclusion and recognition of all literac*ies* practices. Because of the focus on a common standard, portfolios used for assessment purposes often tend to silence or ignore the outliers. In contrast, the New London Group calls for "'productive diversity'; the idea that what seems to be a problem – the multiplicity of cultures, experiences, ways of making meaning, and ways of thinking – can be harnessed as an asset" (13). Multiliteracies practitioners promote diversity and opportunities to learn from the varied experiences and backgrounds of their students and other outside examples that they bring in to expose ideologies. Recognizing that when "learners juxtapose different languages, discourses, styles, and approaches, they gain substantively in metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities and in their ability to reflect critically on complex systems and their interactions" (15), the New London Group's pedagogy promotes an environment of learning that is inclusive, rather than oppressive.

By focusing on hybridity, however, I must also note the reason for choosing this particular term over others such as multiculturalism or diversity. To do so, I draw from Jan Nederveen Pieterse's *Globalization & Culture: Global Mélange* where she states that:

> As a word [hybridity] came of age in the nineteenth century[…]. In French, *bricolage* has long been a common term. Mixing, blending, melding, and merging are other terms and nuances with longer lineages

> than the quasi-scientific term hybridity. Mixing plays a part in agriculture (mixing crops), cooking (ingredients), weaving (tissues, motifs), healing (herbs, methods), art (genres, materials), fashion (styles), and so forth. Amalgamation and fusion of different substances are fundamental processes in alchemy, producing transubstantiation or decay. This returns in chemistry, metallurgy (alloys), and the pharmaceutical industry. Osmosis plays a part in cell biology and chemistry. Why of all terms hybridity has stuck is probably because of the preoccupation with biological and "racial" differences and the intellectual imprint of genetics, which are essentially eighteenth- and nineteenth-century problematics. (109)

Pieterse's definition and use of the term hybridity here also exposes the ideologies that help perpetuate and create the definition and its use. When referring to the differences among people, the term hybridity definitely holds a very scientific and almost distancing tone. Her recognition of the racial component in the use of the term also resonates with an underlying ideology embedded within the language and naming systems. All of this is embodies a deeper understanding of the importance of naming, but also of the larger systems that one occupies.

Hybridity is important to portfolio use, both in definition and in concept. LuMing Mao pushes on this definition and use of the term hybridity when he states "the image of a hybrid severs the concrete link between different histories and experiences and their corresponding particularizing contexts, but it is precisely the intermingling of these two sides that produces and informs the particular

manifestations and distinctive experiences of Chinese American rhetoric" (Mao 26). This statement supports the need to expose the histories and other systems at work that create these moments of hybridity. These instances of melding/meshing/blending are where we can help to expose those invisible ideologies since it is at these moments that understanding will still be new and fresh.

Recognizing Gee's claim that "language is inextricably bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it" (Gee "Social" ix), these more focused definitions of hybridity are important to understand so that instructors may unpack the terminology effectively. To bring these concepts to the classroom and enable students the opportunity to see examples of invisible ideologies, instructors could provide examples from the work of LuMing Mao, Morris Young, and Min-Zhan Lu in an attempt to emphasize the ideological nature of language for students.

By sharing with the students the scholar's personal stories that are such a powerful part of their work to show how language itself is ideological, instructors can ask students to discuss the different systems that are influencing and affecting the writers in each of the examples. One of the reasons for choosing these specific writers is to focus on the international context since it is one way to make ideology a little more explicit for students because they are often less familiar with these contexts than other examples that an instructor could bring in to encourage thinking.

For example, in 2004 Morris Young wrote about how his Asian-American identity and language were bound within his American citizenship in *Minor Re/Visions: Asian American Literacy Narratives as a Rhetoric of Citizenship*. In this book, Young advocates writing literacy narratives and considers the personal and

public contexts that informs each (which I would argue could be an extension of the self and system dichotomy). One of the stories that that could expose students to a new way of thinking is the day when Morris Young realized that he was a member of the minority. He and his family were visiting a comic book store in New Orleans when the owner asked if he could read English simply because of his Asian physical features. In Hawaii, where he was from, the white students were in the minority so it wasn't until he was 12-years-old and approached by the store owner in the comic book store that he was made to feel racially other (Young 38-39). This othering occurred only because of his physical appearance, but it points to a larger issue that Asian Americans face on a regular basis: people continually asking where they are from, suggesting of course their heritage while at the same time ignoring and essentially erasing their primary identity with American citizenship.

Another example of an example that may help reveal the ideological nature of language comes from LuMing Mao's *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric*. In his eye-opening account of cultural differences, Mao offers considers the Western notion of individualism and juxtaposes it against the Chinese notion of *shu*. By providing context for individualism—that it is a relatively new concept spawned from Romanticism and the Enlightenment—Mao is able to illustrate the different way of thinking in Chinese culture. By quoting author Robert Oliver, Mao reveals that "'individuality was suppressed rather than encouraged' and the ancient Chinese guided their daily lives 'less by personal preference than by an intricate system of prescribed ritual'" (Mao 88). Because of the differences in history and ideology, the languages are also very different. The notion of *shu* promotes

harmony and reciprocity is antithetical to the Western concept of individualism. As Mao explains, the:

> self-as-subject ("I") comports well with individualism's persistent emphasis on a self-defining, self-initiating individual. Such an emphasis differs sharply from the discourse of [*shu*] that constructs self as irreducibly social, as forever intertwined with other selves and with an ever-expanding circle of relations, without at all committing to this binary bias. (91)

Individual agency and the particularized construct of the self is a Western concept that differs greatly from a Chinese view of the self, according to Mao. But these kinds of differences in language structure and thinking can be fruitful sites of class discussion. By bringing in Mao's example to show these two terms in dialogue with one another, instructors encourage students to first recognize and then critique their own perceptions and socially constructed ways of thinking in different situations. Then, students can begin to think about their own language practices—both in the ways they have been shaped, but also in the ways they contribute to language evolution as well.

Finally, Min-Zhan Lu offers another example from her own experience of language differences in culturally specific contexts that instructors can use to encourage thinking about ideology. Given the global situatedness of fast capitalism and the push for a lingua franca (i.e., English), Lu recognizes a practical use of English in Beijing when a sign read "Collecting Money Toilet," rather than reading it in a negative way, just for its grammatical errors. She argues that the debate in China about public versus private restroom facilities really comes down to whether or not a

patron would be responsible to pay or not pay. In this instance, the key distinction is "between 'collecting money' vs. 'not collecting money'" (Lu 22). Given this context, the Chinese sign seems an appropriate use for the language, though a native speaker of English would certainly question its meaning initially. Once again, language is bound in ideology and has meaning only in a context that is shared by others.

As is evident in the examples mentioned above, everyone is fluent in multiple literacies, which interact with one another through mediation to create hybrid literacies (see Pieterse; Mao; Lu; Young; Gee). Though they may not be as evident initially as Young's, Mao's, or Lu's examples, hybrid examples certainly exist for everyone and are not able to be adequately represented in the current conception of the portfolio. This argument stems from reading the work of social learning theorist, Etienne Wenger, who believes that as we move from one community of practice to another (this could be read as an ideological perspective or a "Discourse" for Gee), we are continually renegotiating our identities and thus creating new meanings. As we move from peripheral membership to central membership, we are reaffirming and reifying what it means to be a member of a particular community of practice. The dominant processes, interests, histories, goals, needs, etc. of the community of practice help to shape the individual members even as those same members are reshaping the communities of practice to which they belong (see Wenger; Gee). For Gee, this idea culminates in the notion of distributed intelligence within communities of practice, when he argues that the individual members of a community of practice (or, I would argue, members of an organization in the knowledge economy) need to be aware of all parts of the process and be able to see the larger system as a whole, not just their part

in it. But much of this information is tacit, distributed, and dispersed to make the knowledge available among "networks of relationships" (Gee "New" 53-54). The only way to gain more knowledge is to join more communities of practice, which will expose even more ideologies.

One other classroom activity to help to expose ideologies is to ask students to write their own literacy narratives (see Young; Mao; Brandt; Kirtley) to show the multiple ways (which may or may not be privileged by the academy) in which they are literate. Also, as Darren Cambridge points out, constructing narratives becomes a way for students "to craft a coherent understanding of their identities across private and public roles" (170). Given the numerous ways in which people are asked to represent fragments of their identities, whether on social networking sites or in a portfolio form, it is important instructors acknowledge and address the consequences of such action. Cambridge further posits that as "institutional templates for identity are transformed in the new capitalism in ways that diverge significantly from the narrative models offered by the traditions and relationships with which people identify; their ability to achieve both material success and psychological well-being is threatened" (Cambridge 171). In this statement, the new capitalist economic structure has a powerful ability to influence people to transform their identities. This harkens back to Chapter Two, where I looked critically at the system of new capitalism and its enslaving effects on personalized portfolio creators. For Cambridge, however, the corrective isn't *technē* or a social-epistemic pedagogical model that calls for a rethinking of the definition of portfolio, but rather it is narrative, which "is one powerful means for not just enumerating what one has experienced, achieved, and valued but also for synthesizing

these things in a way that shows how they add up to something more than the sum of the parts" (Cambridge 171). According to Cambridge, narrative is a way to maintain a cohesive sense of self even when asked to represent the self as skills, experiences, and technological savvy in a portfolio form. In terms of the portfolio, this narrative could be used in classroom instruction as a meta-level assignment that promotes self-assessment and recognition of the role of the self in the larger social context. This literacy narrative could also be included in the portfolio as an example of work that emphasizes a point of departure for the student or deeper thinking and growth.

By asking students to create literacy narratives, instructors are also asking students to do a form of self-assessment which is paramount to expert portfolio creation as well. As Asao B. Inoue illustrates in his pilot study of the first year writing program and its assessment at California State University, Fresno, self-assessment is paramount to the program and to literacy as well. As Inoue demonstrates, there are "two characteristics that define our program and students' learning: (1) reading and writing are joined practices; and (2) self-assessment practices ('interpretation' and 'rewriting' in Freire's conception) are equally important to reading-writing processes" (Inoue). These self-assessment practices correlate with the notion of meditation, which is the reason I call attention to this article from compositionforum.com. The work being done at CSU Fresno certainly recognizes larger social factors that contribute to learning and offers an alternative and useful approach to portfolios. By positioning all parties involved in portfolio creation for assessment purposes as active learners, Inoue posits that process is still at the heart of portfolio use, but that the process can and should include practice:

> If we (our students and writing programs themselves) are always *becoming* literate, always coming to understand our own practices, then we are always in the process of self-assessment, making the two processes, literacy and self-assessment, one and the same practice. As in our program, a centering on self-assessment asks that teachers and students turn their energies and time not to perfecting products but articulating reflexive, effective, and flexible reading and writing *practices*, rhetorical activities that are also self-assessment activities.

My own articulation of this process of self-assessing one's own reading and writing is included in *meditation* and *transformation*. Proper meditation requires reflexivity and questioning. Transformation calls for thoughtful innovation and rethinking. And, even with *meditation* and *transformation*, the end product is never perfect, but is always being meditated upon. As Horner and Lu explain:

> What students claim they want, need, and believe may be what they believe dominant culture requires that they claim, or what they believe their instructor will reward them for claiming, or only what they are fluent in articulating; it is unlikely to represent all that they may want, need, or believe. Even an individual student's desires, needs, and beliefs are, after all, always in flux, complex and often conflicted, never monolithic, uniform, and set. (116)

Recognizing and critiquing the larger society of which they are a part, students can begin to develop new approaches and skills that better prepare them to navigate the systems they will encounter upon graduation. By focusing on their own literacy

practices and learning new ways to articulate and situate their experiences, students will be better prepared to rethink their identities and engage in transformation. And as designers of portfolios in writing studies classrooms, students will be able to reflect that deeper understanding of the social embeddedness and create new ways of representing their growth and development.

A Call for Action

In this dissertation, I have examined portfolios, both the standardized portfolio used for assessment purposes and the personalized portfolio used for the job market. As such, I have examined some of the dangers of blindly using portfolios for gaining employment in the current economic structure of fast capitalism. As educators in the writing studies fields, it is paramount that instructors have a critical awareness of the consequences of portfolio creation, both on the students as designers and as lifelong learners and citizens of a larger society. I argue that a better understanding of the pedagogical implications for portfolio use is imperative before implementing them in the classroom, and that a social-epistemic approach provides a valuable rethinking of portfolio use for assessment purposes.

Another argument included here is that the current definition of portfolios which includes collection, selection, and reflection is missing two added elements that will enable thoughtful social change. Having critiqued selection and reflection extensively, I argue that even those elements of the definition need rethinking. Certainly, a more inclusive and enhanced definition might embody some of the arguments proposed in this dissertation, so I argue for the notions of *meditation* and

transformation to be added alongside collection, selection, and reflection because they enable portfolio designers and evaluators alike to thoughtfully consider new ways of meaning-making and innovation. Also important and included within this broader definition is the understanding that students are ideologically positioned in the educational system. For them to begin recognizing their situatedness is a step toward becoming prepared to become a designer of change. The portfolio can be a site for that change, and for a way for them to document their own learning and ways of making meaning over a lifetime.

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