

Good God but You Smart!
A Study of Language Legitimacy in Cajun Louisiana

by

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Abstract

**Good God but You Smart!
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Good God but You Smart! is the first dissertation-length examination of the educational/linguistic assimilation of Cajuns, a minority ethnic group in Southwest Louisiana. The Louisiana constitution of 1921 banned Cajun French in schools, bringing the language to near-extinction today. Like other internally colonized groups, such as Mexican Americans and Hawaiian Americans, many Cajuns have been “Americanized” but still speak a mixed English that makes it possible for them to both participate in the U.S. economy and maintain a linguistic cultural identity. This newly emergent Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) has been the subject of much recent linguistics research, but studies show that Cajuns abandon CVE in relation to their attempts at upward mobility. In this study, I ask and seek to answer the question, “Why do upwardly mobile Cajuns comply with the disappearance of CVE?”

Similar to Geneva Smitherman’s explanation of Black English in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*, I present CVE to the field of Composition and Rhetoric through the lenses of linguistics, sociolinguistics, history, current pedagogical theories on vernaculars, and cultural memoir. Though I chart pedagogical movements within the field, I use Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language to focus on the forces *outside* classrooms that have compelled Cajuns to self-censor. The first two chapters provide a background for understanding the status of Cajuns at the time of their forced assimilation beginning in 1921. Chapter one examines current stereotypes and representations of Cajuns in U.S. pop culture, and chapter two

backs up to explain the British ethnic cleansing of Acadians from present-day Canada and their subsequent class status when they regrouped under the name “Cajuns” in Louisiana. The next two chapters describe pedagogical responses to Cajun languages: chapter three reports from previously unpublished historical archives the physical and psychological punishments that children endured for speaking Cajun French, and chapter four reports new data from my own pedagogical survey of English teachers across four Louisiana colleges to explain and critique the strategy of code switching. Finally, in chapter five I hone in on the hegemonic pressures for Cajuns to self-censor coming from language myths and family normalizing practices.

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I am indebted to Shane Bernard for many reasons. Not only did I rely hugely on his research in *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* and other publications, but I have also happily drawn data from dozens of his interviews with elderly Cajuns and a fat packet of letters from Cajuns who went through the French ban that he volunteered to send me when he found out about my area of research. He has also answered random questions and given me lots of leads in ongoing email conversations. As I am no historian but needed lots of history for this dissertation,

I'm thankful for his love of history, which overflows his books and permeates his emails and conversations.

Loving thanks to my husband Francesco Crocco for volunteering to be ignored for a few semesters so that I could finish this tome. So hard to be a full-time academic, full-time mom, and full-time partner. Meanwhile, thanks for letting me prey on your mind when I needed inspiration; I value your perspectives and our conversations. Now that I'm done being married to this thing, though, I look forward to resuming my place in your arms and heart. No thanks at all to our bébés who constantly seduced me away from my studies (the little tracas who loves Dr. Seuss and the one on the way). Those darlings have been eminently more interesting than language inequalities. I'm so happy to belong to y'all again.

Also, thanks to my sister Gracie and my mother-in-law Rosina, Emma's third and fourth parents, for being the best childcare in the world. I've never heard of a mother who has succeeded academically without outsourcing a huge portion of the mothering, and that makes me really angry at the systemic problems in this career, but I'm so glad my dissertation was a good excuse for Emma to get to know her amazing family. This time it was GiGi and Nonna; maybe I can write my next project from Louisiana, where the kids can get to know their GrandMom and YaYa.

Good God but You Smart! is dedicated to my three departed Cajun and Creole grandparents, two of whom died during the writing of this dissertation—I wish I could have spoken your language and known your histories long before my graduate studies. To my remaining GrandmaMona, now that I'm done with this thing, we can get back to our loooooong conversations over your perfectly dark pots of coffee. Love you big-big.

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Introduction

Our culture of literacy functions as though it were a plot against the spoken voice, the human body, vernacular language, and those without privilege. That is, our pervasive cultural assumptions about speech, writing, and literacy—especially as they are communicated through schooling—seem as though they were designed to make it harder than necessary for people to become comfortably and powerfully literate. – Peter Elbow¹

The President is taking aggressive steps to put Americans back to work and create an economy where hard work pays and responsibility is rewarded. – President Obama’s official 2012 campaign web page

In this dissertation I investigate the hegemonic language exchanges that reproduce inequalities in U.S. educational sorting practices, particularly the factors that lead to individual consent. Sometimes the most ardent supporters of monolingual and monodialectal language policies are the people against whom the policies most discriminate. I use the history of the linguistic assimilation of the Cajuns of Southwest Louisiana as a case study, presenting new data from archival records, previously unpublished interviews, and my own survey of Louisiana teachers across four colleges. The lens I use to discuss the role of individual consent is Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language in *Language and Symbolic Power*. He describes a legitimate/illegitimate contradiction that is based on an imposed hierarchy of usages. Following his structure, I report the language hierarchy that was established during U.S. nation building, the socio-historical background of Cajuns that predicted their low linguistic status even before their U.S. assimilation, the English-only educational policies that all but eradicated Cajun French, and current educational practices aimed at relegating the newly emergent Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) to the status of a slang. I argue that the current policy of “code switching” is just another form of what Bourdieu calls normalization: requiring students to approximate the dominant

¹ *Vernacular Eloquence* 7.

language or be blocked from higher paying jobs. After examining the reproductive function of language hegemony among Cajuns, I conclude by discussing alternative forms of organization for normalizing counterhegemonic ideas about language equality, specifically in working class family social structures. Since hegemony is based on mass consent, it can change as a result of mass dissent.

This dissertation relates to other scholarship in Composition and Rhetoric (Comp/Rhet) by filling what I think is an important gap: the hegemonic values about language that reproduce inequalities *outside* of classrooms. Other well-known works of Comp/Rhet scholarship have addressed the topic of language inequalities by proposing new policies and pedagogies. For instance, in order to implement the 1974 CCCC resolution “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL), Geneva Smitherman has argued to institutionalize multilingual policies in *Talkin and Testifyin* (1977), as well as in publications like “Toward a National Public Policy on Language” (1987). Bruce Horner and John Trimbur wrote in support of Smitherman’s proposals with ideas for implementing multilingualism in “English Only and U.S. College Composition” (2002). The focus of other education theorists regarding language policies has been pedagogical in nature. Suresh Canagarajah, Vershawn Ashanti Young, Min-Zhan Lu, and Bruce Horner are a few theorists supporting an emerging “translingual” pedagogical approach. One example of this approach is what Young calls “code meshing,” the practice of interweaving home and academic discourses to represent multiple linguistic identities while maintaining rigor and clarity. I support these efforts and in fact practice code meshing myself in this dissertation (Cajun Vernacular English and Standardized English), in the tradition of Victor Villanueva, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Geneva Smitherman.

Though these are important areas of concern, a major reason that policies and pedagogies haven't been entirely effective in creating language equality, as Bourdieu's theory explains, is that it's not only teachers and administrators reinforcing these unequal standards, but also just about everyone else. Students from working class backgrounds (and their families) often resist "liberal" educational policies designed to create an equal playing field, striving instead to gain the same educo-linguistic capital as people from the middle and upper-middle classes (what Bourdieu calls usage of "high distinction," already controlled by the affluent as a class-based privilege). The parents of the children and their communities whom these policies are intended to make equal in education are often the most vehement detractors. In *Your Average Nigga: Performing Race, Literacy, and Masculinity*, Vershawn Ashanti Young cites, for example, the work of Mary Rhodes Hoover on this contradiction among African American parents, who are resistant to teaching African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in schools (2). In my personal communications with Young, he has acknowledged that the lack of support and often outright resistance of minority and working class people is one of the greatest impediments to institutionalizing more egalitarian pedagogies and policies.

It's important to acknowledge that not everyone conforms to the legitimate language voluntarily or without resistance, but this dissertation is concerned in particular with the hegemonic idea that connects language correctness with the "hard work" and "responsibility" that earn the American dream, an idea that still has enough currency to be part of the 2012 presidential campaigns, as the epigraph above shows. Many people actually reject the language practices of the dominant, but these people, who are linguistically resistant to conformity, are often also politically resistant to race and class inequalities in the U.S. As I show in the dissertation, Cajuns did assimilate to capitalism in important ways (while retaining some pre-

capitalist structures) and the accompanying language hierarchies, and they have largely complied with the loss of their languages. I speak from experience. Growing up Cajun, I strove to remove all Cajun linguistic markers from my speech and writing. My linguistic work was praised by family members. My grandmother complimented me by telling me I didn't sound at all Cajun, and my grandfather, who did his best to hide the fact that his first language was Cajun French, was proud of every English degree I earned. What has changed my mind and the minds of the Cajuns I surveyed during my research is learning about how language works in general, exploding the myths that circulate about language. I conclude by discussing these myths and ways to debunk them.

What this dissertation is not about

Because there has already been a great deal of groundbreaking literature (and controversy) on the topic of language rights in the U.S. educational system, it's easy to make wrong assumptions about what I argue in this dissertation. So, in the spirit of Peter Elbow's caveats in the introduction to his new book, *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*, let me be clear about what I'm *not* writing:

I'm not going to argue that we should teach Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) in classrooms—for several reasons. I think most Cajuns learn it better outside school, as schools are not the only institutions that normalize language. Moreover, once language is standardized, there can be a right and wrong way to use it, whereas CVE (like other vernaculars) varies by region, audience, and context—in accents, phrases, register, even vocabulary. That's normal behavior for a language. Similarly, I'm against trying to standardize and teach CVE, because it's difficult for languages to remain fluid and living once they've been codified. There's museum culture, and then there's living culture. But that puts me in a mess, because I need to be able to explain it

and give examples for the sake of this dissertation. So I'm "defining" it from the research of sociolinguists, but not all other Cajuns will be able to relate to everything, and that's fine. In fact, in my research of CVE literature, I found that some of what has been documented as CVE in general was actually specific to just certain regions of Louisiana (not mine), but that's an inevitable problem with trying to codify a living language. There's no way to represent all parishes (Louisiana is organized by parishes instead of counties), neighborhoods, and families here. Not all Cajuns will relate to my personal Cajun experience either. I grew up in Opelousas, LA, which is 80 percent African American and one of the larger rural Cajun towns. In my language studies, I've sometimes had a hard time discerning AAVE from CVE because of the language mixing in my town. That's also normal behavior for a language.

Another reason I'm not interested in codifying and/or standardizing CVE for classrooms is that standards can be used to measure people's Cajunness—whether or not someone is truly Cajun. Young has explored the problem of conflating ethnicity and language; he writes that he isn't "ghetto enough for the ghetto," but he's also not "white enough for white folks," leaving him in some "liminal" space he has to figure out (*Your* xvi). This fallacy is happening with Cajun French currently; one strand of Cajun activists argues that one is not really Cajun if one doesn't speak Cajun French. Me, I don't speak the Cajun French—je comprends just un tit peu—mais I can tell you true I'm Cajun. What makes a Cajun and what constitutes Cajun talk are things that are ever-evolving due to context and experiences. I think it's all right to be Cajun and speak a little Spanish or AAVE in there too—or even a little Academese. After all, this linguistic and cultural integration is what produced Cajuns in the first place, as I'll discuss in chapter two. There is no such thing as "pure Cajun." Our culture and language have been mixing for centuries; might as well keep going with it, eh?

I also don't want to love on CVE too-too much, because, as I'll demonstrate in chapter two, languages are usually defined for the sake of nationalism. I'm critical of the U.S.'s (and other empires') use of nationalism to persuade the poor within the nation's borders to work and die for the rich's causes and wars, and, while I understand that smaller groups and ethnicities want to protect their languages and cultures, I disagree with trying to compete with the bully by imitating the bully.² There is currently a movement among members of the Acadian diaspora to create an Acadian nation, so there have been multiple attempts to codify Acadian and Cajun French in service to this movement. I support the efforts of minorities and disempowered folks to preserve their language and culture in the face of forced assimilation (though I'm cautious of the word *preserve* because of my concerns above about what happens when culture is put in a museum), but not at the expense of keeping their languages and cultures from continuing to evolve in contact with other languages and cultures. That said, though, I do support native language movements that push against colonial and nationalist impositions of legitimate languages, such as the Louisiana organization CODOFIL's efforts to keep French public in Louisiana (I explain this in detail in chapter three).

The fact that I don't teach CVE, however, doesn't mean I espouse English only in classrooms. I think there are very effective ways to include multiple Englishes (and languages) in the classroom that will teach our students to be great communicators with an eye toward their audience's needs and meanwhile teach our students the competencies they're paying to learn. We don't need to be monolingual or monocultural, as Geneva Smitherman has insisted over the years. We have big mouths in the U.S.; we can fit a lot of ways of talking. Pedagogies have

² Ira Shor points out that the enforcement of an elite standard in schools on children who can't or won't normalize is a means of producing a "structured failure" that supports other unacknowledged functions of the state, such as supplying recruits for the military. For this reason, Paulo Freire advocated teaching standard usage to low-income students as one measure against this structured failure (personal communication).

already moved substantially in this direction and are even being supported by elite business people who recognize the value of a “lingua franca” in a transnational economy. As I caution in chapter four, though, even pedagogies that seem very progressive can still wind up reinforcing language inequalities. Along the same lines, I don’t espouse code switching as a solution to language inequalities. Code switching isn’t even a pedagogy, as I’ll argue in chapter four; it’s just a pleasant-sounding justification to continue the same policies under eradication. While I do discuss briefly some pedagogical alternatives to traditional code switching practices, my focus is mainly *outside* the classroom.

Finally, because I believe that marginalized people should be consulted and respected in policy decisions regarding their own communities, I have attempted to create a conversational bridge between language experts and non-experts in this dissertation by writing at a level appropriate for both academics and non-academics. Academic conversations often exclude non-experts, and the result is the creation of policies and pedagogies that ignore non-experts’ needs and preferences. This dynamic is similar to past forms of ideological domination in which the dominant make decisions for the subordinated, based on the idea that the subordinated are incapable of ruling themselves. For that reason, I wrote this dissertation with both my advisers and my home Cajun community in mind. I hope to inform a non-academic audience of the conversations surrounding language policies and inequalities by making my writing accessible to readers with about a high-school-level education (by avoiding jargon and designing the anecdotes in my chapters to convey the same principles as my theoretical discussions). I also strive to make non-experts heard by the people making policy decisions by bringing their voices and opinions into these academic conversations; I quote them and represent their perspectives alongside experts throughout the dissertation.

Chapter Thumbnails

Chapter one introduces my methodology, a case study, and my framework, Bourdieu's theory of the legitimate language. To illustrate the linguistic "market pressures" he describes, I explain the stereotypes surrounding Cajuns and consequently Cajun ways of speaking, especially in pop culture references, which represent hegemonic values. I summarize Cajun French and Cajun Vernacular English (CVE), and I discuss language attitudes inside and outside Acadiana that bring down the "market value" of CVE and increase the value of "standard English."

In keeping with Bourdieu's framework, chapter two explains national codification of the legitimate language, which occurs during periods of actual nation building. During and after codification, the status of languages, dialects, and other linguistic markers in the hierarchy of languages is determined by the sociopolitical status of the speaker. I recount a few of the efforts to create a national language during the establishment of the U.S. and explain the history and position of Cajuns in the U.S. socioeconomy.

Bourdieu writes that after the legitimate language is codified, it must be normalized by state institutions (the most important one is the educational system) so that individuals learn to self-censor and reproduce linguistic inequalities. In this chapter, I describe the shaming and punishments from the 1920s to the 1960s of Cajun children who were forced to quit speaking Cajun French and normalize to Legitimate English. I include the transcripts from previously unpublished interviews and letters from Cajuns who underwent the often harsh punishments.

In chapter four, I argue that changing pedagogies and policies alone will not resolve U.S. linguicism. Since schools exist to integrate youth into job markets, pedagogies generally follow the economy, so there is a contradiction between promoting language equality and equipping students for gatekeeping moments and the economy. I report (based on survey responses) the

pedagogical decisions of college English teachers in Acadiana, the Cajun region of Louisiana. All the teachers write that they mourn the loss of Cajun French and reject the eradication practices I describe in chapter three, yet almost all of them report that they teach code switching when it comes to CVE, a policy that I argue should be called “code censoring.” This is an example of what Bourdieu calls a strategy of dissimulation, in which the dominant allow the legitimate language and school policies to evolve, but only in favor of themselves. I conclude by arguing for more attention to what I call language “sociopedagogy,” situating the idea within newer conversations about “translingual pedagogies.”

Because schools exist to integrate students into what Bourdieu calls the “language markets” (which determine the worth of languages in job markets), it’s important to address the forces outside of classrooms that underlie the language markets themselves. To that end, I describe several language myths circulating in U.S. cultural hegemony that hide the inequalities programmed into the U.S. socioeconomy. I conclude by reporting the stories of Cajuns who came to value Cajun languages and, based on their experiences, I consider ways to introduce counterhegemonic ideas to people who are beyond the reach of classrooms. I suggest that one alternative to using classrooms for organizing efforts against linguisticism is working within the family social structure of minority and working-class groups.

Chapter One
Sexy Ass Cajuns
The Complicated Reasons We Comply

I have done accents before, and we did study American accents in drama school. But I had to hold back a little bit on the Cajun accent so people can understand me. It doesn't sound American at all. – Tom Payne, English actor portraying a Cajun character in HBO's *Luck*³

[T]he language of authority never governs without the collaboration of those it governs, without the help of the social mechanisms capable of producing this complicity. – Pierre Bourdieu⁴

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. – Eleanor Roosevelt

Introduction

Even when it came out that he was the killer, I found blog posts and comments all over the web saying that René the Cajun was the hottest, sexiest thing ever to hit HBO. These were conversations about the TV show “True Blood,” a series several of my friends insisted that I needed to watch. There was a character on there, one friend told me, who sounds just like me. This was the same friend who told me I should meet Frank, who is now my husband, so I took her advice and rented Season 1. True, René had the best fake Cajun accent I’ve ever heard on TV (the actor had hired his own dialect coach, a Cajun), but what surprised me was the sexualization and exoticization of Cajuns and Cajun Louisiana. “True Blood” is set in non-Cajun north Louisiana but consistently borrows images from Cajun South Louisiana to create an exotic setting—the moss and swamps, for example, alligators, and Cajun-style homes. There is also a fair share of displaced French names like Bons Temps (the town) and Lafayette (one of the characters), which may come from the Cajun area or from New Orleans (from whose legend

³ Qtd. in Kate O’Hare, “‘Luck’s’ Tom Payne sets the jockey record straight.”

⁴ *Language and Symbolic Power* 113.

vampires are also borrowed), but definitely not north Louisiana. Meanwhile, even though it turns out René was only faking his Cajun accent (he was really a Southern boy named Marshall, posing as a Cajun), you can hear a clip of his speech on YouTube; it's called "René's sexy ass cajun accent."⁵

Another recent surprise for Cajuns was Ray, the Cajun firefly in Disney's *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). Granted, he's probably the most lovable character in the whole movie, and it certainly was a moving moment when he—spoiler alert—died, but he was also the most illiterate, stupid, toothless, and backwards character in the movie. Disney made it seem endearing that Ray was hopelessly in love with a star, which he took to be a fellow firefly who didn't have much to say. And his accent, though entertaining, wasn't much better than Adam Sandler's Cajun Man, who francicized (inaccurately) any word ending in *-on*. Cajun Man enjoyed inebria-SHYONH ("inebriation") and onYONHs ("onions"). Speaking of Sandler, his 1998 film *The Waterboy* was yet another ridiculous representation of Cajuns. Bobby Boucher and his mother both sounded like film representations of plantation slaves, and the rest of the cast just came across as Southern and dim-witted (another unfortunately pervasive stereotype). The only character who seemed genuinely Cajun was the coach nobody could understand, but, since making fun of subcultures seems to be Sandler's forte, no offense taken here.

The stereotypes of Cajuns and their language habits in these movies and TV shows are the same as those of other postcolonial communities. Edward Said listed the characteristics attributed to colonials under the British orientalist perspective in *Orientalism*: criminal, sexual/exotic, mystical, illiterate or uneducated, sometimes feeble-minded—all the things that make it necessary to rule the people of the colonies since they're incapable of ruling themselves (12). Empires generously intervene in other countries' politics in order to save the inferior people

⁵ The link for "René's sexy ass cajun accent" is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KROX95_I2hM.

from themselves. They need education, religion, civilization, progress, and/or (the latest fad) democracy. Postcolonial depictions of Cajuns are due to Cajuns' status as, essentially, a colony of the U.S.—in this case, as a result of what Michael Hechter calls “internal colonialism.” In the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Cajuns, who had already undergone British exile from present-day Nova Scotia and ethnic cleansing during Le Grand Dérangement beginning in 1755, were transferred from one colonial power, France, to another upcoming one, the United States. Cajuns remained insular and uninterested in modernization or Southern capitalism (sometimes called the “plantocracy”), operating outside the U.S. economy until they were forced to assimilate educationally in the first half of the twentieth century (details in chapter three).

At this time, as Said argues about Indian colonies, Cajuns did not have the pleasure of representing themselves in the U.S.'s hegemony; instead the empire renamed them (*Acadians* became *Cajuns*) and created stereotypes of their inferiority. Illustrations in magazines during the 1930s depict licentious Cajun washerwomen—legs exposed to the thigh, tops sliding down suggestively—and lazy Cajun men, standing around smoking corn pipes (Brasseaux 88h). Long before that, travel journalist William Henry Sparks did not attempt to disguise his disdain for Cajuns in his 1882 memoirs: “A sallow-faced slatternly woman, bareheaded, with uncared-for hair, long, tangled, black, with her dress tucked up to her knees, bare-footed and bare-legged, is wading through the mud from the bayou with a dirty pail full of muddy Mississippi water” (qtd. in Istre 34). Current depictions, like the ones in *The Princess and the Frog* and *The Waterboy*, still render Cajuns as drunk, illiterate, dim-witted, poor, and low-class. These stereotypes and pop culture references regarding Cajuns are instrumental in understanding the status of Cajun ways of speaking and current language tensions.

Background

In Acadiana, the Cajun part of Louisiana sometimes called “south of the South” or “the northern tip of the Caribbean” (Gaudet vii), Cajuns are still struggling with issues of linguistic permission as a result of language policies and prejudices. Louisiana French was legally banned in 1921 during a wave of English Only policies (as I explain in detail in chapter three), and public schools were designated as the sites that would implement this prohibition (Ancelet, “A Perspective” 354). Children were physically punished for speaking French—even on the playground—and eventually French was almost completely shamed out of public spaces.⁶ My grandfather was one of those kids on the playground, and he must have learned his lesson really well, because he practiced oratory alone in his bedroom to learn nearly flawless English, then hitchhiked his way through an MBA and raised his own children in an English-only household. By the time I came along, the older folks in my family only spoke “Cajun” (as we called it) when they didn’t want us to understand them—to fuss about us, or to whoop and holler about whatever it was they whooped and hollered about.

Cajun French is the variety of French spoken by descendants of the Acadians who immigrated to Louisiana and people who assimilated into Cajun culture. It’s commonly described as seventeenth-century “folk French” with vocabulary influence from surrounding Native American, European, and African languages, as well as English. Several Frenches came to Louisiana in three waves of immigration, according to the *Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken by Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities*. The first wave consisted of colonists from Quebec and different parts of France (1699-1762), the second wave was the influx of Acadians from Nova Scotia during the *Grand Dérangement* (1764-1785), and the third wave were elite French speakers from St. Domingue (now Haiti) and France who were attracted to the

⁶ For a discussion of Cajuns’ “negative self-image,” see Ancelet’s “From Evangeline Hot Sauce to Cajun Ice: Signs of Ethnicity in South Louisiana.”

“flourishing plantation economy” (xi-xii). The Frenches meshed to different degrees to produce what is now called Louisiana French or Cajun French, which also absorbed a lot of vocabulary for things local to Louisiana—like fishes, plants, and mosquitos—from Native Americans. The language exists alongside Louisiana Creole, which is based on a different grammatical structure. Because Frenches local to Louisiana were separated from continental French, they evolved in different directions, so Cajuns still use older words like *char* (cart, carriage) for car instead of the Parisian *voiture*. A Cajun soldier in World War II said he encountered a French officer abroad who told him he spoke seventeenth-century French “that had been forgotten in France” (Bernard, *The Cajuns* 9). Speakers of Parisian French are often amused at some of the archaic vocabulary and constructions that Cajun French speakers use.

In the U.S., though, Cajun French has traditionally been viewed as a sign of low class position (in contrast to Parisian French and another Louisiana variety, Plantation Society French, which evolved from elite French speakers and has now all but disappeared). One *Chicago Times* reporter in 1880 wrote, “The educated people [in Louisiana] speak the bona fide Parisian, but the ‘Cagin’ patois is deemed good enough for the ‘low-down folks’” (qtd. in Bernard and Bernard, “French Language”). Barry Jean Ancelet writes in “A Perspective on Teaching the ‘Problem Language’ in Louisiana” that the language was stigmatized as “not the real French, just broken Cajun French” (346), because people didn’t understand basic linguistics principles. Critics of Cajun French argued that it had no grammar, and it was only an oral (thus, illiterate) language (347). Linguistic prejudice toward Cajuns was already well established when the ban took effect in 1921.

The French ban was enforced in schools well into the 1970s, when what came to be known as the “Cajun Renaissance” prompted resistance to the denigration of Cajuns and Cajun

French. According to Shane Bernard in *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People*, the Cajun Renaissance began as a result of several factors. First, during World War II, Cajuns who went off to fight discovered that knowing French was a valuable skill, and they returned with a new fondness for their culture. Second, when oil was discovered on their land in the 1950s, Cajuns began to interact with mainstream culture on a higher economic level, providing the option of a semi-self-sustaining community once again. Third, the economic stability enabled a wave of Cajun academics to work to preserve cultural literature and traditions, as well as to begin to correct false assumptions and stereotypes of Cajuns. As a result, universities began to codify and even teach Cajun French; Cajun authors began writing novels and children's folklore; and Festival International was established in Lafayette, LA, as an annual invitation to all francophone countries to share music, clothes, food, and other cultural aspects. The Cajun Renaissance also corresponded to a general interest in ethnic groups and multiculturalism at the time.

In spite of the Cajun Renaissance, however, Cajun French never fully recovered from state efforts to eradicate it. There were many attempts to preserve Cajun French. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was formed in 1968 to promote the public use of Cajun French—in advertisements and speeches, for example. Louisiana was declared a de-facto bilingual state (French and English), as a result of the efforts of CODOFIL and other activists in 1974. Later in 1980, Cajuns were deemed a minority group protected from discrimination by Title VII's ban on national origin discrimination (under the Civil Rights Act of 1964) in the lawsuit of James Roach vs. Dresser Industries. The Acadiana area also became host to multiple French immersion programs in elementary schools during the 1980s and 90s in an effort to reverse the English immersion of Cajun students during the first half of the twentieth century. These efforts, however, have not restored the use of Cajun French to its former

prevalence. Michael Krauss defines a “safe” language (not in danger of extinction) as one with a minimum of 100,000 speakers (Skutnabb-Kangas 24). Cajun French is spoken by about 17,000 people, most of whom are over the age of sixty (Omisore 1).

What has since emerged is a new linguistic way of expressing Cajunness. Sylvie Dubois and Deborah Horvath have identified and documented Cajun Vernacular English (or CVE)—English with Cajun linguistic markers. CVE is not a transitory phase between French and English, but a rooted vernacular prompted by a generation-wide resistance to cultural identity loss. Unlike border dialects that enable communication between speakers of two different languages, CVE emerged *after* most people had already pretty much mastered English. Dubois and Horvath, writing about CVE in “Verbal Morphology in Cajun Vernacular English,” identified what they call a “V-shaped pattern.” According to Dubois and Horvath, the first generation of Cajuns to switch to English spoke with a high level of typical ESL features, the next generation followed a common immigrant pattern in speaking virtually error-free English, but the English of the third generation returned to something more like that of the grandparents’ (53). The V-shaped pattern is the level of “errors” or influence from Cajun French that disappeared in the second generation and returned in my generation. As is arguably the case for most “involuntary” minority groups, Cajuns maintain their cultural identity by “represent[ing] their identities, values, and cultural practices through [the] rich semiotic system” of language (Canagarajah, *Reclaiming* xxvi).⁷ The result after three generations, according to Dubois and Horvath, is a vernacular of English, similar to, as Peter Elbow points out, what was once

⁷ John Ogbu is known for his work on “voluntary” and “involuntary” minorities. Involuntary minorities generally resist the mainstream because their minority status was not by choice (e.g., African Americans or Native Americans). On the other hand, voluntary minorities (i.e., immigrants) often choose to come to the U.S., so he writes that they are less likely to resist assimilation.

English's relationship to Latin as a lowbrow vernacular ("Vernacular Englishes" 127), and similar also to African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Linguists have documented the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon of CVE. In a 1992 special issue of the *Louisiana English Journal*, a group of linguists and linguistics students compiled eight papers on CVE after finding a lack of documentation of a variety of English that Cajuns and non-Cajuns alike were able to identify easily: "A preliminary review of available literature on the dialect we termed Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) revealed a complete absence of published work. Tracking down occasional references to *the Cajun language*, we found that in all cases *Cajun* turned out to be Cajun French" (i). Since their research, Sylvie Dubois has done considerable work on CVE, coauthoring dozens of publications with Deborah Horvath and Megan Melancon, among other linguists. I draw on their research to describe some of the linguistic and sociolinguistic features of CVE.

First, the Cajun accent and cadence is one of the most immediately recognizable aspects of CVE: Southern French with a mixture of most notably West African and Spanish, as well as the many surrounding cultures that influenced and combined with Cajuns over the years. Megan Melancon sums up the phonetic features of third generation English speakers in "American Varieties: Cajun English," part of a PBS series: "vowel pronunciation, stress changes [to the end of the word], the lack of the /th/ phonemes, non-aspiration of /p/, /t/, and /k/. [...] The use of these features has resulted in no Southern drawl at all in Cajun English. Cajuns talk extremely fast, [and] their vowels are clipped" (2). Words with aspirated consonants like *pollution* and *Cajun* can sound like *bollution* and *Gajun*. And, rather than the Parisian /r/ in the back of the throat, Cajuns use the tip of the tongue like West African French speakers or Spanish speakers with a slight trill. What Melancon calls "clipped" vowels is lack of diphthong, as Ann Martin

Scott writes in “Some Phonological and Syntactic Characteristics of Cajun Vernacular English,” so that English words *I* and *time* sound like /a/ as in *father* or *pot* (27). There is no /th/ sound in CVE; it is replaced by /d/ and /t/, as in *dis* for *this* and *tink* for *think* (Scott 29). The cadence of CVE, like its morphology, derives from Cajun French. Scott writes, “In French, all syllables are held for approximately the same length of time regardless of stress, and the last syllable of a word, phrase, or sentence is normally stressed” (28). The effect in English, she writes, lends a “musical quality” to CVE that is impossible to show on paper without convoluted symbols (or a musical staff).

Next, CVE regularly mixes in French vocabulary and grammar. Some common French words are *lagniappe* (a little something extra), *coulee* (large ditch), *honte* (embarrassed), *canaille* (mischievous), *envie* (craving), *frisson* (a chill, goosebumps), *couillion* (roughly, an idiot), and many, many others. Specifically, many of the phrases that the second and third generations heard often as children are persistent: *do-do* (sleep), *touché pas!* (don’t touch!), *viens manger* (come eat), *cher* (dear), and so on. Many food items are still called by their French names as well, such as *sauce picante*, *étouffé*, and *boudin*.⁸ In addition to French vocabulary, Deany M. Cherie and Donald A. Gill write in “Lexical Choice in Cajun Vernacular English” that French calques (literal translations that are nonstandard in English) are common in CVE. Some French verbs that make their way into a lot of English constructions are *pass*, *make*, and *catch*. Speakers of CVE pass the broom (sweep), pass by someone’s house to say hey (visit someone’s house), pass a good time (have a good time), catch a headache (get a headache), catch a frisson (get a chill), ask someone to please catch them the salt (pass the salt). Additionally, they make a B+ (earn a

⁸ Additionally, *bayou* and *gumbo* are examples of words that were borrowed in Cajun French from surrounding cultures and passed on to CVE—*bayou* from the Choctaw Indian word *bayuk* and *gumbo* from “*gombo*, a Bantu word for ‘okra’; *colombo*, a West Indies word for a kind of chicken soup; and *kombo*, an Amerindian word for a soup-like dish thickened with file (ground, dried sassafrass leaves commonly used in gumbo)” (Cherie and Gill 44, 47).

B+), make the groceries and save them (buy groceries and put them away), get down from the car (get out), and ask their companions to come see (come here, from a meshing with the French *vien ici*) (39-41). CVE calques also include nonstandard usage of the article *the*—“speak the French” and “go to the Wal-Mart”—and the preposition *for*—“when I was pregnant for Marie” (with Marie) and “Who’s this jacket for?” (Whose jacket is this?), among others (42-43). CVE commonly Anglicizes French words like *bouder* (to whine) with constructions like “He boudé-ed all morning” or “Quit your boudé-ing” (45). Another syntactic calque is double-referencing a noun for stress: “I got the envie for some gumbo, me”; “That Pat, he’s a couillion”; and “Me, I don’t know,” similar to the French construction, “Moi, je ne sais pas.” Cheramie adds the usage of “went” as a form of past tense, as in “We went see the movie” (*Cajun* 113). Functionally, it’s the opposite of using “go” in the future tense, as in “We’re going to see the movie.” Scott writes that another nonstandard syntactic feature of CVE is interrogative constructions that follow the French by simply “tagging” declarative sentences with a *no* or *hein* (pronounced *ahn* or *eh*) at the end—for example, “Y’all not leaving, *hein*?”⁹

Finally, a very important feature embedded in the deep structure of CVE, and probably one of the most persistent crossovers from Cajun French to English, is the rhetorical strategy of story-telling as a means of passing on oral history. Important lessons and cultural identity are usually taught in stories by the community raconteurs at family gatherings and public venues like the Liberty Theater in Eunice, and the knowledge of elders is privileged, regardless of documentation. Story-telling is so embedded in Cajun culture that Sherri L. Condon and Pamela

⁹ It has also been pointed out to me that Cajuns Francicize their use of the word *the*. Rather than elongating the *e* before vowels, they drop it altogether and append the article to the next word, as in “th’apple” or “th’entire thing.” This is similar to French constructions like “l’ecole.” Another “Cajunism” that has been pointed out to me is doubling up on adjectives and adverbs like “not too-too much” or “love you big-big.” I haven’t found these examples in any of the linguistic literature, but I include them because they are so prevalent among Cajun speakers from my area.

T. Pittman report in “Language Attitudes in Acadiana” that one difficulty they have in comparing language samples of speakers of CVE with other speakers is the “colorful style that provide[s] much more detail and convey[s] much more enthusiasm than the other speakers” (71). The authors consider that the style of narration could skew the results of their survey of language attitudes, but they conclude that “the colorful quality of Cajun speech is an important, natural characteristic, and any attempt to eradicate it could lead to an underrepresentative sample of speech” (71). In contrast with the “bland” style of “the other two speakers [who] sounded like they were reading [the same anecdote],” Cajun story-telling is an engaging way of passing on cultural information.

As part of this tradition, joke telling is an important part of the culture, and Cajun jokes have almost always been long stories, rarely one-liners. Joke tellers using CVE usually relate stories about Cajun characters in the process of assimilation who seriously convolute—and simultaneously critique—dominant American customs. Here, Tommy Joe Breaux, a well-known story teller and the grandson of a Cajun Frenchman from Breaux Bridge, LA, illustrates many of the phonological features of CVE in a partially phonetic rendering as he introduces a story told by his grandfather:

De folks who have read my first book, *Cajun Humor from the Heart*, or listened to any of my six cassettes, or watched my videos, know de numba-one hungout in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, for granpa an’ his frans was T’Bub’s Barroom. It was a place where men could talk ’bout fishin’, huntin’, sports and women, an’ averybody was interested an’ agreed wit’ wat was say, ’specially ’bout women. Some of my favorite stories Granpa tole me as a kid came out of T’Bub’s an’ by far, de one ’bout old Amos Bordelon goin’ to one of dem nudist

camps is one of my favorites. Granpa tole me Amos got back from his nudist camp trip an' naturally he had averybody's full attention an' center stage to tell dem all 'bout de camp. Amos say, "Well, befo I got start tole y'all 'bout camp, I wanna got one tang clear—it ain't all it's crack up to be, I could garontee you dat."

Averybody say, "Wat you mean by dat, Amos?"

Amos say, "Well, to tole y'all de trueff, it's kinda' embarrasin'."

Averybody say, "Wat's de matter, Amos, you ashame of you birthday suit?"

Amos say, "No, I'm not ashame of my birthday suit at all, I'm jus' sayin' it's hard to look you bess wan you walkin' 'round wit' you pocket change an' you wallet in you mouth all de time." (qtd. in Dubois and Horvath, "Sounding Cajun" 279, bracketed insertions deleted)

This phonological transcription is an example of a third-generation speaker purposefully stressing his Cajun accent. Tommy Joe Breaux grew up outside Acadiana, but he still demonstrates the differences between a first-generation speaker (the text in quotations) and a third-generation speaker (the rest of the text).

The collision of Standardized English in classrooms with the CVE spoken in Acadiana can lead to interesting writing results. Our local pronunciations, combined with the standard phonics I learned at school, led me to spell *pecan* as *becan* and *Bataille* (a card game meaning "Battle") as *Bat-tie* in elementary school. I was positively stumped when I tried to write a thank-you note to my godfather, who I knew as *parrain* (French for godfather). I was pretty sure it began with *p-a-d*, but couldn't figure out the ending, the French nasalized /n/. We didn't have

any sounds like that at school. No one else in my family knew how to spell it either, so I think I just didn't include a greeting in the note. The mystery was finally solved for me one day when, as an adult, I drove past a bar in Broussard, LA, called "Parrain's" and realized it was our Cajun /r/ that had confounded me all these years. Even now, as I intentionally use more CVE in my writing, I'm often unsure of how to write what I say; I'm English literate, not CVE literate. A Canadian French grad student in my dissertation workshop pointed out to me that I was using feminine endings incorrectly, and I had to do a TON of work to find out how to spell *canaille* for a recent publication. It does not look like it sounds at all; almost all the Cajuns I asked thought it was just the first two syllables of *conniving* (it has an entirely different etymology). I still also have to fight the urge to francicize words like *futon* and *cabron* in speech and check myself on prepositions (which editors have changed or marked as "nonstandard").

Cheremie studies more of these linguistic intersections that are read as "errors" across college classrooms in Acadiana. In her dissertation *Cajun Vernacular English and the Influence of Vernacular on Student Writing in South Louisiana*, she studies 431 writing samples from students of all backgrounds in developmental classes at University of Southwestern Louisiana (which has since been renamed University of Louisiana at Lafayette), Louisiana State University at Eunice, and Nicholls State University, analyzing them "for spelling (as a likely reflection of phonology), morphosyntax, and lexical usage that differed from standard usage and could be traced to spoken dialect features" (104). She concludes that "characteristics of CVE do appear in the writing of CVE speakers. In fact, both CVE and AAVE speakers produced features in their writing that are dialectal" (22). The students who were identified as Cajun (as opposed to African American or Southern) "produced 89% of the CVE phonology features, 82% of the CVE morphosyntax features, and 84% of the CVE lexicon features" (142). Cheremie breaks it down

further: 51% of the features found were morphosyntactic, 32% were lexical, and 17% were phonological (143). She also found that African American students had a higher rate of AAVE features than Cajun students had CVE features. She recommends that both teachers and students be educated about dialect influence to change any negative attitudes toward nonstandard varieties and to raise awareness of rhetorical decisions. Cheramie's study demonstrates that, not only is dialect influence an important consideration in classrooms, but also that CVE is prevalent in Acadiana.

Statement of the Problem

Though CVE is prevalent in Acadiana, as Cheramie demonstrates, Dubois and Horvath have noted that, similar to Cajun French in the first half of the twentieth century, CVE features disappear according to level of education. Rather than becoming bi-dialectical, most upwardly mobile Cajuns lose CVE linguistic markers altogether ("Verbal Morphology" 40-41). The results of my own survey of English teachers across four colleges in Acadiana confirm their finding (I describe the survey in detail in chapter four). Eleven of the 40 respondents identified as Cajun, and 10 of those 11 Cajuns report that they censor their language, whereas only 70 percent of the non-Cajuns report that they self-censor.¹⁰ This finding seems to be at odds with the cultural pride that was resurrected in the Cajun Renaissance, resulting in multiple Cajun festivals, a new wave of Cajun music bands, and even efforts to create an Acadian nation. This trend is especially peculiar considering that schools have generally abandoned the harsher policy of linguistic eradication in favor of the more permissive policy of "code switching," in which students are required to use what has come to be known in Composition and Rhetoric as "academic discourse" in school settings, but they may use "home discourses" elsewhere.

¹⁰ One other participant identified as Cajun as well, but I switched him to "non-Cajun" because he reported that he wasn't raised Cajun, just married into it.

In fact, a substantial number of my survey respondents report that they weren't taught to censor the Cajunisms from their language in school at all but picked up the practice somewhere else. In creating the survey, I expected to hear more school stories, but only one report involved direct instruction from a teacher, something I discuss further in chapter five. The other responses to my questions about if and when my Cajun participants learned to censor their CVE involved noticing differences in language use in relation to class, privilege, and position.

When I entered college, my freshman year, I realized that most professionals (in this case, my professors) pronounced the "th" sound, and I often did not. I remember hearing myself say, "I'm going to da store," and thinking, "*My professors would never say 'da store.'*" That's when I really began to force myself to remove "Cajun-speak" from my writing and speaking. (emphasis mine, here and in the following quotations)

This respondent also reported self-censoring more in awareness of social position:

Since becoming a teacher of composition, I am more careful when writing.

Other participants reported similar experiences learning to censor themselves for the sake of academic success, but they don't connect it with their teachers:

Throughout school, engaging in extracurricular activities that often involved *public speaking made me acutely aware of how Cajun accents affected attitudes toward those speakers. Many people believe that the Cajun accent sounds unintelligent and uneducated*, so I fought to develop a more "Anglicized" accent, especially in professional and public matters.

As a child, I didn't realize that the accent was different; I was living within a society that consisted of nothing but Cajun accents. As I became a young adult, I did become a bit more ashamed of my accent and those of my family members, but only because *I was learning that people associated that accent with a lack of intelligence.*

All the respondents above report that their censoring is motivated by shame, the desire to be proper, or the desire to distance themselves from stigma. Only one Cajun in my survey reported learning to alter his or her language for the sake of being understood:

Times when I realized someone didn't know what I was talking about because they weren't from here.

A few other responses revealed a degree of ambivalence toward CVE. Though they are proud of their Cajun linguistic markers, they recognize the associated stigma and censor themselves as much as the first group. The following respondent, who reports self-censoring in another response, writes:

My personal attitude toward the accent and features of the Cajun language is still one of pride, *but I do recognize the stigma associated with those features.*

Another writes similarly that, despite a sense of cultural pride, he or she also self-censors in relation to job or economic considerations:

I was never embarrassed, really, about my Cajun accent. And as I grow older, I am more and more proud of it. *I'm just careful to keep some of the "Cajun slang" in check when I'm in a professional setting.*

If CVE is not being forcibly silenced by any educational or legal policies, why do upwardly mobile Cajuns stop using it? I propose that when people abandon languages, it isn't

always because of educational and legal policies, but because of a network of mechanics and ideologies that construct certain high-status dialects as national languages while dialects of low-status groups are marked as error-riddled vernaculars. Individuals comply with already existing language standards by self-censoring traces of vernacular from their speech and writing, as highly educated Cajuns do with features of CVE. In this way, though language inequalities may be determined by politics, they are reified by individuals in everyday situations. In this case study, I document the compliance of Cajuns with the disappearance of Cajun ways of speaking in order to better understand the dynamics behind individual compliance with unequal language standards and begin to think toward noncompliance.

Reviews of the Literature

This dissertation will bring CVE into the discussions of the field of Composition and Rhetoric (Comp/Rhet), which has a history of considering “students’ rights to their own language,” mostly attending to AAVE but with some advocacy for Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and poor white rhetorics.¹¹ There is a strong precedent in Comp/Rhet for discussing the non-privileged vernaculars of native English speaking minorities, but CVE is relatively unknown. Geneva Smitherman gave a groundbreaking analysis of African American Vernacular English in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* (1977), and Victor Villanueva introduced the idea of Puerto Rican rhetoric in English in *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* (1993). Malea Powell presented American Indian forms of written English in “Listening to ghosts: An alternative (non)argument” (2002), and Kathy Sohn brought Appalachian English to the attention of Comp/Rhet theorists in *Whistlin and Crowin Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices since College* (2006). Other theorists have written about the non-privileged Englishes of native English speakers from former colonies. For example, A. Suresh

¹¹ I’m referring to the 1974 CCCC resolution, Students’ Right to Their Own Language, which I discuss later.

Canagarajah introduces Sri Lankan English in “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued” (2006), Vaidehi Ramanathan discusses Indian Englishes in *The English-Vernacular Divide: Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice* (2005), and C. Macafee writes about Scottish English in “Scots and Scottish English” (2004). LuMing Mao discusses the influence of Chinese in English in “Re-Clustering Traditional Academic Discourse: Alternating with Confucian Discourse,” and Min-Zhan Lu contrasts the rhetorical traditions of Maoist Chinese essays with western English essays in “From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle.” There is little information available, however, to Comp/Rhet readers interested in CVE and Cajun language policies. Though CVE has been heavily documented in applied linguistics by Dubois and Horvath, to date, the only study in Comp/Rhet is Deany Marie Cheramie’s 1999 unpublished dissertation, *Cajun Vernacular English and the Influence of Vernacular on Student Writing in South Louisiana*, written prior to the bulk of Dubois and Horvath’s studies. Whereas Cheramie’s dissertation is a focused study of types of CVE errors in classrooms, my dissertation will offer a systematic look at educational policies and language attitudes since the official beginning of the forced English assimilation of Cajuns in 1921. This is the first comprehensive sociolinguistic study of Cajuns in Comp/Rhet.

I situate this study within broader conversations about language inequalities and the debates about English language teaching (ELT). Many scholars and critics of ELT agree that our educational standards regarding language are based on inequalities and also further these inequalities. Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo argues in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that ELT is one of the primary tools of imperialism, what he calls “the cultural bomb”: “The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and

ultimately in themselves” (3). In the wake of physical domination, he writes, imperialist schooling is the most effective way of subjugating colonies, and language is the most central way of ensuring submission: “The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” (16). Ngũgĩ sees no way of redeeming English from its imperialist past and has since made the decision to write in only his native Gikuyu, which he later translates for English readers.

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas similarly argues that English is a “killer language” in *Linguistic Genocide in Education—Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* Unlike Ngũgĩ, she does not advocate abandoning ELT, but she warns English language teachers not to privilege it over local languages: “If you are an ESL teacher and/if you teach minority children through the medium of a dominant language, at the cost of their mother tongue, you are participating in linguistic genocide. You are killing the necessary diversity and the prerequisites for life on our planet” (“Multilingualism and the Education of Minority Children” 25). In response to the idea of linguistic biodiversity embraced by Skutnabb-Kangas and others, Salikoko Mufwene in *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change* is more cautious about portraying all processes of language change and loss as negative, when these processes have been integral to all linguistic history. He further points out that “the rhetoric has been less about the rights of speakers than about the *rights of languages* to survive (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Crystal 2004) and, in much of the linguistics literature since Krauss (1992) and Hale (1992), about the benefits of *linguistic diversity* to linguistics (especially the extent to which the research on language universals and typology is negatively affected by the lost languages)” (226). Elsewhere, Skutnabb-Kangas focuses on the rights of language speakers in terms of postcolonial and class theory; she coined the term *linguicism* to describe language discrimination: “Linguicism is a

concept which describes more sophisticated forms of racism. [...] I have defined linguisticism as ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (40). In *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson builds on the work of Skutnabb-Kangas to argue, like Ngũgĩ, that ELT is a tool of imperialism. Phillipson’s expansion of the concept of linguisticism is similar to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language; nations have languages, but tribes are only able to have dialects and vernaculars. Phillipson lists three types of colonial power—“sticks (impositional force), carrots (bargaining), and ideas (persuasion)”—and categorizes ELT as a form of colonial control through ideas, which he later expands as part of cultural hegemony (53, 72).

A. Suresh Canagarajah in *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* criticizes Phillipson for focusing on the reproductive function of ELT without representing “the subtle forms of resistance to English and the productive processes of appropriation inspired by local needs” (3). Canagarajah writes that Phillipson is limited by his “center” position. He proposes instead a “resistance perspective” in which periphery communities neither unthinkingly conform to center values nor reject English but find ways to “reconstitute it in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms,” something he argues that many of his fellow Sri Lankans and others from former colonies already do (2). Periphery speakers and writers can appropriate the colonial language in creative ways for many uses, not just automatic reproduction of colonial power structures. He goes on to examine the ways periphery teachers and students negotiate intersections of the mainstream and the local in their daily classroom experiences. Vinay Dharwadkar similarly calls for the “decolonization” of English in “The historical formation of Indian-English literature” via intermixing Indian languages and English, instead of rejecting

English (262). This periphery perspective of English allows for language change, something Mufwene argues is a normal process, while still acknowledging the politics of language use and contesting inequalities in gatekeeping standards.

Though Canagarajah defines the U.S. as a “center” nation, these discussions of ELT, colonialism, and linguicism are also relevant within the U.S., since many native-born Americans also speak forms of what Canagarajah calls “periphery Englishes.” As Victor Villanueva has argued in *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, the process of internal colonialism (an idea developed by Michael Hechter in *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*) has created multiple groups of minorities within the U.S. whose languages are subject to domination by English. He describes, for example, a cultural erasure among Puerto Ricans living in the U.S., similar to Ngũgĩ’s “cultural bomb” among Kenyans. Building on the work of John Ogbu, he explains “the essential differences between immigrants and minorities” (24): “The immigrant enters; the minority is entered upon.... The difference between the immigrant and the minority amounts to the difference between immigration and colonization” (29).¹² Villanueva argues that English only policies are a form of language discrimination for these internally colonized communities, leading to the academic lag of minority children (who internalize their failure) and linguistic insecurity among academics of color. This insecurity can in turn prompt academics of color to, on the one hand, espouse patriotism and monolingualism and, on the other hand, resist progressive language policies and pedagogies even more ardently than their white peers. Other examples of internally colonized groups are Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, Hawaiian Americans, African Americans, and Cajuns.

¹² The difference between immigrants and minorities is not as clear-cut as Villanueva portrays. Immigrant groups also express resistance to assimilation, both culturally and linguistically.

In addition to other languages, U.S. discussions of linguistic inequality have featured other Englishes. Geneva Smitherman codifies AAVE in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*, arguing that it is equal and often superior to what she calls “White English.” She describes the morphology of AAVE, demonstrating that it is a rule-governed language with internal grammar and logic. She situates the codification of AAVE within a narration of the changing English language standards to show that language divergence and change is normal and even to be expected unless people in positions of power stifle it for political reasons. Bringing the discussion back to classrooms, Smitherman argues against the policy of “bi-dialectism” (which is generally called *code switching* now, something I discuss in chapter four), pushing instead for a policy of not only multilingualism but also multidialectalism. She also explores the social and psychological problems for users of AAVE, something Keith Gilyard expands on in *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competency*. He narrates his autobiography to illustrate what he calls the “psychic costs” of an educational system that requires students to represent their identities in vastly different linguistic ways than their home cultures in order to “succeed” academically, socially, and financially. He alternates chapters of narration with chapters of analysis, also alternating between AAVE and Standardized English, respectively.¹³ Like Smitherman, he rejects bi-dialectism and monoculturalism.

Other Englishes in the U.S. have been included in discussions of “home discourses” or “alternative discourses.” Though the scope of the book is larger than just the Englishes of U.S. subcultures, *ALTDIs: Alternative Discourses and the Academy* (edited by Christopher Schroeder, Helen Fox, and Patrica Bizzell) includes chapters on Native American English and AAVE. Discussions of colonial dynamics of language are necessarily limited in this volume, because

¹³ Gilyard’s rhetorical choice is an example of code mixing (including more than one code in the same text) but not code meshing (which I explain later).

“alternative discourses” are meant to represent all vernaculars, slangs, languages, rhetorics, hybrids, and even texting conventions, but most of these authors push for linguistic pluralism and integration. The editors critique assimilationist pedagogies and policies that require students born into unprivileged demographics to conform to the language habits of privileged demographics. They point out in the preface, “The label *alternative* is helpful because it gets at what is perhaps the key feature of the discourses we are discussing, namely that they [alternative discourses] do not follow all the conventions of traditional academic discourse and may therefore provoke disapproval in some academic readers” (ix). Paul Kei Matsuda concludes the volume by restating the problem of power dynamics related to language standards and asking Comp/Rhet scholars to continue thinking about how to implement alternative discourses in classrooms with an awareness of gatekeeping standards that require traditional academic discourses.

Language theorists from different disciplines have critiqued ways in which the genre of academic essays is not only politically restricting of minority groups, but also inappropriate for today’s academic audience in general. Feminist writers such as Hélène Cixous (“Sorties” with Catherine Clément) and Lynn Worsham (“Writing against Writing: The Predicament of *Écriture Féminine* in Composition Studies”) suggest that the linear structure of academic writing is essentially a male, hierarchal mode of “making a point” as opposed to lateral communication. In *écriture féminine*, an essay does not always need to prove or conclude something, they argue; it can simply dialogue. Composition scholars such as Sondra Perl (“Making a Place for the Personal”) and Marianna Torgovnick (“Experimental Critical Writing”) propose that first-person creative nonfiction can be a more effective rhetorical approach than the neutral observer persona of academic writing without compromising rigor. They argue that creative nonfiction is more engaging; it creates empathy in the reader, an important element for argument; and it is more

honest in that it admits biases without claiming the impossible human condition of “scientific objectivity.” Finally, academic writing standards will need to evolve, not only because of the new demographic in colleges and universities, but because technologies have radically altered the ways in which we communicate important information, raising the requirements for speed, sensory involvement, and multi-tasking. Since the majority of us are now accustomed to the rapid and (often) stimulating deluge of information from TV and the internet, traditional academic discourse is no longer the most effective form of conveying data. For an audience who is accustomed to internet genres (short bursts of information with hyperlinks and additional data in the side columns) or the visual layout of a channel like CNN (four or more information feeds at a time), a scholarly essay or book with one large block of text and a lot of white space can be unengaging, unfulfilled potential. The problem, according to Matsuda, is that academic genres have not adjusted sufficiently, because “it is assumed that the presence of the new population of students and scholars in no way affects the context of writing” (193). However, the population of scholars has indeed changed, and our primary media have changed in large ways as well, but the genres of academic Englishes have only begun to make significant changes in recent decades. There are many important critiques of academic discourse and the people who are excluded by its conventions. For this dissertation on Cajuns, though, I focus primarily on issues surrounding race or ethnicity, minority status, and class.

Based on these discussions of other Englishes and languages, Comp/Rhet scholars have written about policy changes for primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools—focusing mainly on necessary educational changes. Smitherman has lobbied to institutionalize multilingualism in schools, most notably in *Talkin and Testifyin* and “Toward a National Public Policy on Language.” She argues that standards are too narrow in U.S. education when they

deem only one version of English “correct,” and she envisions a multilingualism that includes non-privileged Englishes such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and other languages. Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, in “English Only and U.S. College Composition,” build on Smitherman’s vision by imagining ways to institutionalize multilingualism rather than monolingualism (for instance, making use of more diverse research to lobby for changing university policies). They argue that, just as English only has been institutionalized in schools over time with the reorganization of college departments (that territorialize other languages as “foreign”) and other factors, multilingualism can be re-institutionalized.

These proposals are geared toward creating policies to implement Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), a 1974 position statement about students’ rights by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), an annual meeting created to discuss composition pedagogies:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (Smitherman, “‘Students’ Right to Their Own Language’: A Retrospective” 21)

Since its acceptance, some of the resolution's tenets have come under criticism. The editors of *AltDIS* point out, for example, that SRTOL encourages ethnic inequality and the assimilation of less privileged groups: "'The Students' Right to Their Own Language,' whatever revolutionary sentiments may have animated its framers, turned out to espouse methods to make assimilation to the dominant culture easier, at least in theory, for students from politically marginalized social groups" (vii). And Canagarajah points out that some of its ideology is based on nationalism and unnatural language processes (which I explain in chapter four). SRTOL has also lacked institutional support since its acceptance, revealing the economic interests of the field in preserving the linguistic status quo.

In spite of its lack of institutional support and ideological problems, SRTOL has spurred more pedagogical responses. Min-Zhan Lu writes in "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" about "how to conceive and practice teaching methods which invite a multicultural approach to style, particularly those styles of student writing which appear to be riddled with 'errors'" (442). As Lu writes in "From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle," her perspective on multiple discourses is informed by her own background, having been raised with a tension between the home language and literacy practices of her family and the nationalist policies and pedagogies she encountered at school. At home, Lu's Chinese family favored a Western humanist discursive upbringing, featuring the power of the individual and economic success, while her teachers at school stressed the values of Maoist China, featuring the strength of the collective and the virtue of common labor. She long kept these discursive voices separate according to context but later decided to merge them. Lu concludes by encouraging educators to let students "see themselves as responsible for forming or transforming, as well as preserving the discourses they are learning" (175). Expanding on this idea of multicultural style later in

“Professing Multiculturalism,” Lu asks why students are not permitted the same stylistic deviations as “real” writers, and she poses the student construction *can able to* as a discussion piece in the contact zone of the classroom, urging her students to feel confident in making stylistic decisions in their own work and in assessing the decisions of others (446).

Canagarajah has similarly worked on creating practical pedagogical strategies that accommodate both multilingualism and college language standards. Building on his earlier work in *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism*, Canagarajah writes in “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued” that teachers can support multilingualism by teaching what Vershawn Young calls code meshing (713), the practice of interweaving linguistic contributions from home discourses and the conventions of academic discourses in writing done for school. In Canagarajah’s conception of code meshing, multilingual students write neither entirely in their home languages or vernaculars, nor entirely in Edited English (EE). Rather, he proposes appropriating “the high-brow activity [of] inserting Greek or Latin without translation into English texts” and practicing it with untranslated bits of non-privileged languages and Englishes (598) or merging rhetorical styles of home and academic discourses. He stresses that he encourages code meshing even for final products, in contrast to Peter Elbow’s allowance for multilingualism in rough drafts only, because, as he writes, “The editing of the other Englishes in the final product may also lump these varieties into the category of ‘errors’ to be avoided” (598). He proposes teaching code meshing to students as a substantial form of resistance to unequal language policies and also as a way to begin implementing equal policies: “the classroom is already a policy site; every time teachers insist on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingualist ideologies and linguistic hierarchies” (587). Canagarajah’s proposals on the use of code meshing are an important development for creating usable

pedagogies that address the very real pressures of language inequality while allowing for and even teaching student resistance.

A recently released collection of essays, *Code Meshing as World English: Policies, Pedagogy, and Performance* (edited by Vershawn Ashanti Young and Aja Martinez), builds on the idea of code meshing in the directions of pedagogy and policy. The volume, which includes chapters on Hawaiian Pidgin, CVE, AAVE, Appalachian English, and Spanglish, hosts important scholarly discussions of what are acknowledged to be language inequalities. In the introduction, the editors (with Julie Ann Naviaux) write, “We wonder why, in the forty-odd years since NCTE adopted the *Students’ Right to Their Own Language* resolution, something like code-meshing has not been instituted, remains a wish, and is still not a fact of practice” (xxii). They conclude with a “charge” to teachers of English to consider implementing code meshing. In his afterword, Canagarajah proposes that code meshing is valuable not only for its political function but also because it is a more normal state for languages than discreteness: code meshing “is the basic process by which language appropriation and localization has always taken place in English and other lingua franca” (276). Canagarajah writes that code meshing is not only a form of world English but a process of world Englishes.

These examples of attention to the Englishes of minority, immigrant, and working-class students in the U.S. illustrate the concern for language equality in the field of Comp/Rhet. Like most of the discourse surrounding language inequalities in Comp/Rhet, these authors’ arguments generally focus on changing pedagogies and policies. This focus makes sense, because the heart of the field is pedagogy. But there has also been some discussion of the hegemonic values in the U.S. that will push back against these progressive policies and pedagogies. In Canagarajah’s afterword to *Code-Meshing as World English*, he concludes by writing that, in order to change

pedagogies and policies, there must also be change in hegemonic values about language, particularly the ideas of language purity and change.

Peter Elbow also argues for the importance of publicly challenging inaccurate ideas about language correctness in his recently released non-academic volume *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*. Elbow's main argument is that writing will benefit from the directness and clarity of speech. Writing tends to get convoluted—specifically because there is an unspoken rule that the less likely we are to utter something, the more academic and proper it is (and this is because of class distinctions, as he points out)—whereas speech helps us get to the point more clearly. Like other writers in Comp/Rhet, he concludes with pedagogical suggestions—the same pedagogical stance, in fact, that Canagarajah previously criticizes him for in “The Place of World Englishes in Composition.” Elbow recommends having students edit multilingual or multicultural influence from their final products (unless it is “hidden” meshing, something I explain in chapter four) until language standards have changed to allow vernaculars in formal writing. But he doesn't leave it at that; he also makes a conscious effort to influence hegemonic beliefs about language inequality so that we can begin to move in the direction of accepting vernaculars in formal writing. He writes, “My main goal is to change how everyone *thinks* about writing and literacy” (8). He works toward this goal by making an effort to include non-academics in the conversation about language standards and change their minds about “correctness.” He explains the classed and raced origins of language inequalities; literacy standards that function more as gatekeepers than social mobilizers; and the hegemonic values that uphold these standards, through the lenses of pedagogy, theory, history, politics, and public opinion. As he addresses beliefs, he also encourages every English speaker, novice and expert, to take ownership of the English language and help it evolve to more closely reflect spoken

Englishes by “speaking onto the page” (though not in gatekeeping moments like final exams). In the end, he hopes that writing will not only benefit from speaking, but that the gap between improper speech and proper writing will disappear as the laws of language divergence kick in, as people follow his guidelines and get more comfortable with the idea of democratic language (and in the process actually democratize language), and as the internet increases our comfort with talkiness and decreases our need for formality. Parts of Elbow’s model are problematic, as I discuss later, but it’s a significant move in Comp/Rhet scholarship in that it addresses the hegemonic values that reinforce discriminatory pedagogies and policies concerning language.

Like Elbow and Canagarajah, I think it’s important to change societal definitions of correctness and proper language behavior. I hope that my dissertation contributes to the ideas of the above theorists by providing a comprehensive look at the language issues of Cajuns but also by addressing a few loose ends in the literature: the forces *outside* school that pressure individuals into complying with unequal language standards. These forces, as I explain later, are connected to what happens in school, but they can operate apart from school as well, so that people who don’t go to school or who have finished their schooling are constantly reminded and compelled to abide by the language hierarchy and even enforce it on others. Minority and working-class communities can internalize hegemonic beliefs about language legitimacy and wind up supporting unequal language policies to their own disadvantage. People’s learned beliefs about language standards may be one of the greatest impediments in the struggle for language equality. If language activists attempt to institute more progressive pedagogies and policies without addressing the network of forces outside classrooms at the same time, we risk seeing these pedagogies and policies fail (or never seeing them realized at all).

A stepping-off point for my dissertation is an unexamined thread in Comp/Rhet coming-to-literacy narratives, which relate the academic biographies of minority scholars who must negotiate home and academic discourses. These narratives provide a valuable look into the literacy experiences of periphery academics in the U.S., and the authors' observations about pedagogy and policy have been integral to the field's understanding of language inequalities. In these narratives, however, the authors also detail the non-academic pressures to censor their home discourses, pressures that aren't generally addressed in purely pedagogical texts. Authors narrate their experiences going through the U.S. school system, beginning in a working-class family and ending with a "successful" academic career. Each author recounts the pressures of teachers, parents, and society to learn Standardized English and debates the meaning of *successful* in light of his lost or compromised connection with home community. Like most of the literature in Comp/Rhet, however, the conclusions usually discuss only implications for improving policies and pedagogies, without engaging or analyzing the pressures the authors felt outside school to censor their home languages.

Richard Rodriguez describes in *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* the alienation he increasingly felt from his family as he mastered English and his academic identity. Unlike other writers who grew up bicultural, Rodriguez rejects Spanish and embraces English only. In an early chapter (Aria) he writes that the private should never be made public, that it would be dishonoring his family's closeness (40). At the end (Mr. Secrets), he writes that he is not close to his friends and that the private must be made public, even to the disgrace of his family (and against their requests). This is a story that progresses from familial closeness to familial alienation. He concludes by criticizing Affirmative Action, ethnic studies departments, and the practice of allowing other languages and Englishes in schools. He argues

that changes to college policies are too little, too late. A true left reform, he writes, would be concerned with early education, housing, nutrition, and other social factors: “The revolutionary demand would have called for a reform of primary and secondary schools” (162). He criticizes Affirmative Action for helping the least disadvantaged and neglecting the most disadvantaged, and also for creating “an elite society” of ethnic minorities. It is his attention to class differences that also led him to distance himself from his family and their language. He describes his desire to identify with middle- and upper-class people who speak English instead of what he calls “*los pobres*” (the poor) who speak Spanish. He writes that his life changed one summer in college when, after meeting and utterly failing to relate to a group of *los pobres*, he realizes that he has achieved middle-class status. After that, he celebrates the fact that, unlike his parents at his age, he is part of the middle class: “I wear double-breasted Italian suits and custom-made English shoes. [...] I register at the Hotel Carlyle in New York and the Plaza Athenée in Paris” (146-147). His drive to master the dominant literacy values of the U.S. and distance himself from his family is fueled by class interests, but he never discusses the economic pressures that he felt outside of school. Instead, he concludes with criticisms of Affirmative Action and efforts to revise policy to be more inclusive of minority students, limiting his discussions to policies and institutional organization.

In response to Rodriguez’s narrative, Gilyard explores the tension between his two identities and his two languages in *Voices of the Self*. He writes that he coveted the admiration and affirmation of his fellow students, letting himself be pressured into things he didn’t even believe in, like brokering a “silly” peace treaty between the boys and girls of the class and almost getting kicked out of school when it ended with his hitting a white girl (47-51). As part of his desire to win his classmates’ recognition, he writes that he also “scored highly on all [his] tests

and raised [his] hands as vigorously as anyone else” (45). This desire to be accepted and admired by peers conversely led him into crime, drugs, and multiple legal encounters later when he moved to a poorer community, where grades weren’t valued. He writes, “I was torn between institutions, between value systems. At times the tug of school was greater, therefore the 90.2 average. On other occasions the streets were a more powerful lure, thus the heroin and 40 in English and a brief visit to the Adolescent Remand Shelter” (160). Gilyard concludes by calling on educators “to successfully challenge current practices that justify eradicationist attempts aimed against African-American identity and the language variety in which that identity is most clearly realized” in schools (165). But as his story shows, it wasn’t eradicationist pedagogies that drove him to censor his language; it was the approval of his peers, which he sought through academic success. His recommendations apply to school practices only; he never addresses the class- and race-based pressures that he felt from his peers in the middle-class community to excel at Standardized English.

Mike Rose similarly traces his journey from a working-class, Italian-American neighborhood to a professorship at UCLA in *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America’s Educationally Underprepared*. He writes that what pushed him from being a mediocre, “just wanna be average” student to working his tail off to excel in literacy was not pedagogical or policy-related at all: he was trying to win the approval of his new father figure, the inspiring Mr. MacFarland. His biological father had slipped into a coma during his junior year, never to wake again, and the inspiring English teacher “couldn’t have come into [his] life at a better time” (32). Rose writes, “I must tell you that venal though it might have been, I loved getting good grades from MacFarland” (34). He immediately began striving for the best grades and eventually decided to go to college because his new father figure

pushed him to. As a result of his experiences as a minority student and educator, he urges other educators to reconceive the dynamics of language, failure, and poverty in their pedagogies by rethinking literacy crises, error, and the “canonical approach to education” (237). Striving to orient and assimilate working-class students like himself into the language protocols of the elite academy, he proposes close tutorial mentoring in academic usage and disciplinary canons for working-class students who are lost in a sea of academic expectations. Like the literacy narratives of other writers, Rose concludes by calling for teachers and policy-makers to make changes, though it was a form of family pressure that drove him to work hard and go to college, not policy or pedagogy.

Villanueva narrates his struggle to belong to both his family’s world and the academic world in *Bootstraps*, beginning with his working class Puerto Rican family and winding up with his position as chair of the English department at Northern Arizona University. He writes that his academic success has been motivated by his desire to be accepted racially and nationally in the U.S.: “I have never stopped trying to assimilate,” he writes (xiv). In spite of his family’s patriotism and his commitment to learning English, he is considered “foreign” at his new high school in East Compton and ultimately “the only portorican rhetorician he knows” (5, 13). He examines his own desire to assimilate and that of other internally colonized groups and argues that this is the reason members of minorities are often the most ardent defenders of English only and Standardized English policies. Hegemonic beliefs that link nationalism and language pressure people to excel in the nationally recognized language. He explores theories of changing the hegemony so that one need not be either/or but both/and, but he concludes with a pedagogical suggestion in which he describes a classroom exercise for teaching students to question hegemonic “common sense” in fairy tales.

The perspectives and suggestions that these theorists bring to the field of Comp/Rhet have been critical for furthering our understanding of U.S. language inequalities and influencing pedagogy and policy decisions.¹⁴ But they don't tell the whole story. To discuss their pedagogical and policy-related conclusions, the authors of the literacy narratives depart from the actual reasons they excelled in school, which rarely had anything to do with policies or pedagogies. They were motivated by the desires to get a good job, to be able eventually to provide for one's family, to feel a sense of belonging with one's community and peers, to win the approval of family members, and to earn political and racial legitimacy. I think these are valid motivations, but they are all extrinsic to school (though they are tied to and enforced by schools), and they cannot be addressed in pedagogy or policy changes alone. I want to pick up on this thread that has been left unattended. To that end, I look at the network of pressures involved in language inequalities to understand why upwardly mobile Cajuns self-censor cultural linguistic markers. Though I do address pedagogical issues in chapter four, the focus of this dissertation is simply to explore how this network of pressures leads people to comply with linguisticism by policing their own language and that of others.

Theoretical Framework

My project, a case study and analysis of the educational and linguistic assimilation of the Cajuns of Southwest Louisiana, will situate the language conflicts and practices of the Cajun community within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the emergence, circulation, and suppressive function of what he calls the "legitimate language" in *Language and Symbolic Power*. Bourdieu argues that language dynamics are determined by a network of unequal social forces, which create a "market" that determines the high worth of some dialects and languages, with the most

¹⁴ Like Elbow, Rose and Rodriguez pointedly wrote for nonacademic audiences, because they recognized the need to address hegemonic beliefs about literacy and minority scholars.

powerful group in society installing its own usage as “the standard.” These more prestigious codes or “legitimate languages” become national or official languages. The process of language legitimation also *illegitimizes* all other codes (the languages and dialects of subordinated groups), rendering them “vernaculars,” “slangs,” or “broken” Englishes. The example of the Cajuns will illustrate how power relations underlie language standardization and marginalization and are the basis of discussions of academic discourse and vernaculars.

Bourdieu’s conceptual framework of the “legitimate language” breaks down the different agents involved in creating and upholding unequal language policies. In brief, he blames three major agents for language inequalities: nation builders, institutions, and individuals. The legitimate language is selected as a function of nation building (by the “founding fathers”), then programmed into the nation’s educational and legal systems (institutions), and finally enforced by individuals who consent (though not always voluntarily) to it. Periodically, the legitimate language is refined through the financial and ideological efforts of wealthy capitalists who function as nation builders during periods of national reorganization. In the beginning, during the founding of the nation (and also during later periods of national reorganizing), a legitimate language is *codified*. This process of *codification* could mean creating an entirely new language, but it usually entails selecting a linguistic code already in use and elevating it from the status of dialect or vernacular to *language*. Codification of a legitimate language creates a unified market for language distinction just as a singular currency does for commerce.

After the founding of the nation and its corollary language selection, Bourdieu writes that this now “legitimate” language must be *normalized*. Normalization is the process of getting everyone else to learn and recognize the legitimate language, even if they can’t use it well. Within Bourdieu’s paradigm of the legitimate language, there are two kinds of forces that help

reproduce whatever linguistic structures were put in place at the founding of the nation: *coercive* forces and *intimidating* forces. The coercive forces are self-explanatory—physical and immediately punitive threats that lead to direct reproduction of the language hierarchy in place. Examples of coercive forces are legal and educational institutions, which can directly enforce use of the legitimate language or, conversely, enforce consequences for not using it. Physical punishments can directly penalize children’s language use, as in the case of Cajuns’ educational assimilation (much more on this in chapter three), and grades can protect class hierarchy, as I explain in chapter three. In the tradition of Louis Althusser’s theory of “ideological state-apparatuses” that protect the status quo, Bourdieu writes that schools are the primary institutions enforcing the legitimate language.

In addition to the ways in which educational policies and pedagogies lead to social reproduction, individual compliance is a major factor. Bourdieu categorizes individual compliance under *intimidating* forces. Though coercive forces can monitor language use in classrooms and other institutional settings, they can’t control what happens at home or in social settings. The institutions and mechanisms of coercive forces, he writes, “can at best impose the acquisition, but not the generalized use, and therefore the autonomous reproduction, of the legitimate language” (50). Intimidating forces take over where coercive forces leave off. They are things like jobs, social pressures, and myths about language that circulate among people and push them to censor their own language. This not-quite-voluntary consent to the legitimate language happens at the levels of teachers, students, and politicians, and the media, as well as random, uninvolved people sitting next to you on the subway. The network of legitimating forces pervades every area of life. Bourdieu describes this process in terms of markets. This idea is important for my analysis of Cajuns and CVE, since CVE is disappearing among the most

educated Cajuns in spite of the fact that code switching ostensibly allows them to speak in any way they wish outside the school context and in spite of the cultural resurgence of Cajunness since the Cajun Renaissance.

The idea of consent is also integral to Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, developed in his *Prison Notebooks*. Though he didn't use the term *hegemony*, Bourdieu's theory of the market is very similar to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. It is a pervasive cultural network of knowledge and practices that, even allowing for differences and disagreements, somehow always affirms the current order of things. Gramsci proposed cultural hegemony as the reason that workers cooperated with increasingly unequal conditions in nineteenth-century industrial Europe when they weren't being forced to; he argued that they complied because they came to hold the perspective of the ruling class and made decisions accordingly. Though Gramsci is sometimes criticized for portraying people as unthinking conformists, his theory of cultural hegemony actually allows for a great deal of resistance, something I explain further in chapter five. Under cultural hegemony, however, their efforts at resistance are subsumed and appropriated by the hegemony.

James C. Scott builds on this idea of effective and ineffective forms of resistance in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Though he is not writing specifically about cultural hegemony, Scott's analysis of different forms of resistance demonstrates how inequalities can be upheld in Gramsci's cultural hegemony in spite of individuals' and groups' efforts to resist it. The ruling class controls the public transcript, the official story, while the oppressed or the ruled go along with it—officially. All participants perform and endure the public transcript, until they get a chance to escape to private transcripts with no boss or other authority figures present and let it all hang out. Scott calls this use of the

private transcript “venting.” Think of the pressure safety valve on a machine; as long as that vent exists, the machine can keep going, but remove the valve and the machine will self-destruct. Scott writes that venting includes any practice that helps folks blow off steam—complaining, gossiping, spreading rumors, sneaking, stealing, even praying for divine retribution—and enables them to return to the public transcript, refreshed and renewed, ready to comply with the inequality. To change the public transcript, writes Scott, the dominated should use their private transcripts for organizing instead of venting, but any resistance occurring in the private transcript in the form of venting just winds up reifying the status quo. In cultural hegemony, people either take the perspective of the ruling class or perform as if they do, amounting to the same thing in the public transcript (conformity).

Bourdieu’s theory of market pressures operates like Gramsci’s cultural hegemony, but Bourdieu prefers economic terms to support his theorization of language as a form of capital. Using Marx’s analysis of capital and labor, Bourdieu theorizes language as a form of what he calls symbolic capital, which produces and determines the user’s status in a capitalist economy. Language use (that is, our recognition of other people’s grasp of the legitimate language) helps sort people into the class to which they belong. This function of language is particularly important for a capitalist economy, he writes, because capitalism operates on a “competitive struggle” in which there must be winners and losers (*Language* 64). The winners wield the legitimate language properly; the losers, who must serve as the working class, speak the legitimate language “incorrectly” and understand that they do not deserve to make national decisions as a result of their inadequacy. In Bourdieu’s theory, the language market was created during national codification as a result of coercive forces and then operates as an intimidating

force that persuades people to comply with unequal language standards even when no one is monitoring.

Within this market, Bourdieu portrays language as symbolic capital, a commodity that can be bought, exchanged, measured, and sold. The price of this language capital, like the prices of gold and oil, is subject to fluctuate according to supply, demand and artificial inflation: “Utterances receive their value (and their sense) only in their relation to a market” (67). The linguistic standard of this market determines what jobs and social standing people can qualify for, so people, aware of what “sells” in the market, comply in order to “buy” the lifestyle they want. They self-censor and even censor one another for the sake of marketability, or acceptability: “It is this sense of acceptability... which, by encouraging one to take account of the probable value of discourse during the process of production, determines corrections and all forms of self-censorship—the concessions one makes to a social world by accepting to make oneself acceptable in it” (77). One may not like money, but one probably likes what money can buy. Likewise, one may not like the legitimate language, but one probably likes what it can buy. Thus, as in hegemony, we individually uphold unequal language standards that we may not like but that we *want* for the sake of what the legitimate language can get us.

Bourdieu’s use of financial terms also makes it easier to understand the difference between people who comply and people who resist. His theories of individual compliance generally apply only to people who are upwardly mobile, who are trying to accumulate more wealth and linguistic-cultural capital. These pressures don’t necessarily apply to those who are unconcerned with the “American dream,” many of whom are already politically aware enough to consciously resist language conformity, along with other forms of conformity. Though there are rich forms of language resistance, Bourdieu’s model is limited to language compliance in

connection with attempts to rise in class status, and therefore appropriate for the terms of my study. According to Bourdieu's theory, Cajuns who choose upward mobility also commonly choose to censor linguistic traces of their ethnicity—usually not because anyone forces them to, but because they find that Cajun ways of speaking simply aren't worth much in most markets. In fact, I explain later that there are few economically viable options that require Cajun linguistic capital.

As he describes intimidating forces, Bourdieu writes that individuals consent to language inequality but, as I noted earlier, it's never quite voluntary: "All symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values" (50-51). For one, the threat of losing one's livelihood or being ostracized from one's community hardly leaves space for objective or aesthetic decisions about language. Even worse, we often don't recognize the language inequalities we are complying with and upholding. In addition to the market that pressures individuals to censor themselves and one another, there are pervasive ideas that reinforce the illegitimacy of other dialects and vernaculars. Individuals often comply with unequal language standards, because they have been persuaded that the standards are equal.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus explains why postcolonial and other marginalized groups sometimes unknowingly comply with language inequalities. He writes that "*intimidation*, a symbolic violence [...] can only be exerted on a person predisposed (in his habitus) to feel it, whereas others will ignore it" (51). The habitus is the environment that shapes our tastes and values, which in turn lead us to reproduce our environment. He sums up his model as "the relation between linguistic habitus and the markets on which they offer their products" (37-38).

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu describes habitus as something based on and reinforcing class hierarchy:

The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of (figure 8) differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference. (170-172)

Having been normalized to an unequal set of conditions, one may actually feel more comfortable with inequality than with equality. Going against one's habitus is like swimming upstream. The speaker of an illegitimate language might comply with language inequalities simply because one can't imagine any other way. The theory of habitus may explain why both Rodriguez's and Villanueva's Spanish-speaking parents accepted their working-class positions but encouraged their children to speak English, even at home.

Further, the "structuring" of the habitus can lead people to judge themselves and others according to an unfair standard (which they don't recognize as unfair). Bourdieu writes, "The 'choices' of the habitus [...] are accomplished without consciousness or constraint, by virtue of the dispositions which, although they are unquestionably the product of social determinisms, are also constituted outside the spheres of consciousness and constraint" (*Language* 51). He cites

William Labov's research with the working class 'r' in the New York City area. When listening to recordings of speech, even the dominated discriminated against their own 'r.' They identified the upper-class 'r' as "correct" (52). They still regularly use the working-class 'r,' and maybe they prefer the company of other people who also use the working-class 'r' and even ridicule the upper-class 'r' when not in earshot of elite speakers. But because of their habitus-formed "tastes" in language, Bourdieu writes, working class speakers are willing to accept their lower class position; they don't deserve to be equal.¹⁵

Bourdieu's "market pressures" are comprised of a number of factors that intimidate individuals into complying with the legitimate language, as well as condoning the illegitimation of all other codes. Inaccurate "common sense" ideas about language combined with the pull of the habitus result in something similar to Gramsci's cultural hegemony, in which the dominated take on the perspective of the dominant and help maintain the status quo, even to the point of judging their own speech and that of their peers to be "low-class," as Labov demonstrated in his experiments with the "working class 'r.'" Finally, even if individuals don't take on the perspective of the dominant regarding language, the worth of an utterance in what Bourdieu calls the market is a great factor in determining when and where it will be spoken. When speakers restrict a code to Scott's private transcript—not quite voluntarily but because they recognize its socio-linguistic worth—they reinforce its position as an illegitimate language. The market value of languages, dialects, and other linguistic markers is determined by the sociopolitical status of the speakers—that is, the market value of the speakers. If the code represents an unprivileged group, the code will not win any privileges in the language market. According to Bourdieu's market theory, then, Cajun ways of speaking will have the same status as Cajuns.

¹⁵ Judging the elite 'r' as "correct" is also an example of something Bourdieu calls *misrecognition*, insofar as the usage of distinction is perceived as superior because of normalization, while it is actually only *different* from non-elite usage. As I stress elsewhere, compliance to the dominant language standard is never completely voluntary.

The Market Value of Cajuns

The language's status is intertwined with the status of the speakers due to the codification process during nation building, which privileged the linguistic codes of the dominant over the codes of the dominated and colonized. Cajuns' postcolonial status as an internally colonized group is compounded by the postcolonial relationship between the state of Louisiana and the rest of the U.S. Two hundred years after achieving statehood in 1812, Louisiana still operates much like a colony. Louisiana supplies 80% of U.S. offshore oil (and offshore oil accounts for one-third of all national oil), ranking first among states in crude oil production and second in natural gas (Sasser 1). Louisiana's gross state product for 2010 was \$218.9 billion, 24th in the nation, according to usgovernmentrevenue.com, yet Louisiana has the seventh highest poverty rate in the U.S. (Louisiana Budget Project 1). Like a colony rich with resources and cheap labor, we mine and send the raw materials to the empire, which sells it back to us at an inflated cost. Unlike every other oil producing state, which takes a 50% share of the revenues, Louisiana gets an unsubstantial 0%. State representative Mary Landrieu successfully lobbied in 2006 to divert 37.5% of the royalties from the federal to Louisiana state treasury, but this won't take effect until 2017 (and it is still being contested by representatives from other states, particularly Arizona, which takes 50% revenues from its gas and oil production, as well as 40% revenues from land-based oil exploration set aside for western states' water projects). Meanwhile, offshore laborers—often locals—are underpaid, overworked (sometimes without sleep for days), and aggressively prohibited from collective bargaining.¹⁶

In addition to the cheap labor and commodities we supply, Louisiana's land has been exploited. South Louisiana is recognized as the fastest eroding ecosystem in the world according to Mike Tidwell in *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun*

¹⁶ I know this from personal communication with several relatives and acquaintances who have worked offshore.

Coast. The coastal delta is disappearing for the sake of corporate profit as the silt deposits in the lower Mississippi are regularly dredged out into the Gulf to accommodate commercial transport, and canals are forged in the wetlands for transport to the Gulf oilrigs. According to Landrieu, “Every 30 seconds we lose a football field of land; we are in a desperate race against time to save our coast” (Alpert 1). As the delta disappears, so does Louisiana’s shield from major hurricanes. Tidwell warned economic planners in 2002 that the loss of these lands would exponentially multiply any weather or industrial catastrophes, and his predictions proved devastatingly true. Today, Louisiana is still staggering from the 2005 ravages of Katrina (combined with the Army Corps of Engineers’ neglected and failed levees), which resulted in 1,836 deaths and an estimated \$108 billion in total damages (Knabb et al. 13), and the 2010 BP oil spill, which federal officials estimate at 200 million gallons and whose impact on the fishing industry and local ecosystems is yet to be determined (Vergano et al. 1). Early evidence of mutations in Gulf harvests, which supply more than 40 percent of the continental U.S.’s consumption, includes “shrimp with tumors on their heads; fish that lack eyes or are missing flaps over their gills; fish with oozing sores; crabs with holes in their shells; crabs that are missing claws and spikes, or are encased in soft shells instead of hard ones,” as well as second-generation shrimp with no eyes (“BP Oil Spill” 1). Scientists attribute these abnormalities to exposure to oil, as well as the two million gallons of chemical dispersants used by BP. These chemicals were known in advance to have “mutagenic” properties and used in spite of local Louisiana lobbying efforts to use straw, an eco-friendly alternative that would float on the surface of the water, where it could be harvested after being saturated with oil, as opposed to the chemical dispersants that bind oil in great bubbles that sink to the bottom of the Gulf (and are later “popped” by bottom-dwelling fish and oil pipeline workers). The Katrina and BP catastrophes were awful enough on their own, but

federal neglect has been impressive. Louisiana has received just enough aid to get corporations back on their feet and mining the raw materials again; the inhabitants and their livelihoods, not so much.

An interesting aside—this corporate exploitation goes back to Henry Ford, who procured countless cypress trees for the dashboards and paneling of his cars from South Louisiana for free, according to a Vermilionville (a historically accurate recreation of a Cajun village, like Virginia's Williamsburg) exhibit on Louisiana's moss harvesting. Ford purchased moss from the bayous for the stuffing in the seat cushions of his cars. Back then, moss was more than abundant, and Cajuns often made a living by harvesting it, drying it, and selling it. At the time, Cajuns weren't aware of what a commodity cypress wood was. In fact, Cajuns often built their homes out of cypress, a close relative of redwood that can withstand extreme weather conditions (including underwater submersion), but they tried to disguise it as pine, like their neighbors to the west and the north. Ford stipulated that Cajuns were to send the moss to him in boxes built of cypress, yay long by yay wide. Cajuns were happy to oblige, especially since Ford was only asking for that cheap, common wood. Which he then had sanded and converted into luxury paneling for his cars.

Another chief export from Louisiana that profits big business but not Cajuns is "Cajunness." Cajun branding has taken off since the oil bust of 1984, when the state of Louisiana, finding it necessary to diversify its revenue, decided to sell Cajunness as part of its tourism industry. The very same year as the oil bust, the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce pushed for the creation of the Bayou Vermilion District to clean up the Vermilion River in Lafayette, LA, and to head the tourist center Vermilionville. They created a taxing district to finance the center, and voters approved it in 1985. Since then, the Cajun brand has helped Cajuns

to achieve a nationally recognized group identity, but it has relied on stereotypes and misunderstandings of actual Cajuns. As Barry Jean Ancelet, a local Cajun activist, put it in a 1990 *National Geographic* article, “The good news is that Cajun is hot. The bad news is that Cajun is hot” (qtd. in Istre 122). The four primary marketing terms—*Cajun*, *Creole*, *Louisiana*, and *New Orleans*—have since become so conflated that tourists often travel to New Orleans, two hours east of Acadiana, to find Cajun food.¹⁷ In fact, when new acquaintances find out I’m Cajun or that I’m from Louisiana, they almost inevitably ask if I’m from New Orleans. As if everyone in Louisiana probably mashes into that one city. Besides confusion, the state’s marketing plan has created an estimated \$5.2 billion tourism/cultural industry and 87,000 jobs (Louisiana.gov).

The state of Louisiana profits immensely from Cajuns in spite of historically treating them as an inconsequential, periphery group—a political dynamic that reemerged during the serial flooding of the Mississippi in the summer of 2011. Massive rains and snowmelts coming from northern Mississippi River states caused the Mississippi to rise to levels that endangered major cities downstream in Louisiana, like Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The areas settled by Cajuns weren’t endangered by the Mississippi but, to save the larger cities, the Army Corps of Engineers decided to open the gates of the Morganza Spillway and flood Cajun farming and residential areas to lower the river. In articles and blogs circulating around this time, Cajuns came under criticism for living knowingly in a floodplain, but what’s interesting is that when Cajuns settled that land 250 years ago, it was not a floodplain. Congress turned it into one with a 1928 decision to build the Morganza Spillway and several other structures to protect the more

¹⁷ Christophe Landry argues that there was no distinction between Cajuns and Creoles until two major events called for differentiation: one, the Reconstruction Era that economically assimilated Louisiana French peoples who were previously pre-capitalist and didn’t rely on race to determine job positions and, two, the launch of the Louisiana tourism industry, which stood to profit greatly from using the previously denigrating term “Cajun.” Landry proposes that Louisiana French should be divided not by race, as they are by the terms “Cajun” (white) and “Creole” (typically, black or of color), but according to region (which corresponds to language and food differences). I provide a fuller discussion of this in chapter two.

important downstream cities from flooding.¹⁸ Cajuns were notified that they now lived in a floodplain, and that they should move. Problem was, first of all, I don't even know if any of them spoke English at the time and could understand what was going on. Second, at that time, Cajuns existed almost entirely outside the U.S. capitalist economy. They used no money, but relied instead on an intricate pre-capitalist system of communal shares, something I describe in chapter two. There were communal labor pools (for harvests and home projects) and food shares (like cow and pig slaughters) that rotated by family. Cajuns had very limited possibilities in 1928: relocate to a safer location without the cash, labor training, or even language required for an entirely different kind of economy, where they were sure to encounter the same social and job discrimination articulated by travel journalists like the one I quoted in the introduction to this chapter; or remain with their families and take their chances with the consequences. Even last summer, many of the Cajuns who chose to stay in spite of flooding risks would have lost not only family ties but an entire local economy (jobs, local food sources, and in a lot of cases free childcare from extended family) if they tried to relocate. Lots of folks criticized them when the floodgates were opened—why don't those people move? It's their own fault if they get flooded. But how many rich folks are forced by national policy planning to choose between family/community cohesion and physical survival? Cajuns were disregarded in state and national decisions, because they have been essentially an internally colonized group. As in the cases of other postcolonial populations, the center made policy decisions for and *to* Cajuns, regardless of their preferences or rights.

¹⁸ Further, the flooding has increased in Louisiana as a result of development in northern Mississippi River states, according to a Rutgers University expert on U.S. flood policy, Karen O'Neill: "Every time someone builds a shopping mall in Illinois or Missouri, water drains to the river that would have formerly filtered into the groundwater locally" (qtd. in Miguel Llanos, "Cajuns to blame for flood misery? Not so fast").

Now that Cajunness sells, it's worth the most in markets that have traditionally used other postcolonial groups for marketing—cuisine, for instance. Following the success of Chef Paul Prudhomme, who made blackened redfish and popcorn crawfish famous at his New Orleans restaurant K-Paul's, and Tony Chachere, who created a popular Creole seasoning blend, there have been many spin-offs of Cajun restaurants and flavoring, including the Popeye's chain and the McDonald's spicy Cajun chicken sandwich (Bienvenu et al., *Stir the Pot* 33-47).¹⁹ Living away from Louisiana, I've taken a few gambles and tried my fair share of "Cajun" restaurants, which have turned out to be interesting—but not Cajun. Now that the Cajun label has market value, there are a great many things that are Cajun in name but unfortunately not reality. At one establishment, my gumbo was red (gumbo is brown) with chunks of sliced lunchmeat and raw celery, and it liked to burn my tongue off (I think it was made of pure Tabasco—this is a common error in faux Cajun cooking). At another, my gumbo (which was sufficiently brown) tasted uncannily like French onion soup. There are "Cajun" restaurants all over the U.S. with items on their menus that pass for Cajun like "crawfish macaroni and cheese," "Louisiana breakfast tacos," and "lamb sausage po-boys." These dishes sound tasty, but they are remarkably unrecognizable as Cajun food. And that's not even to mention those Cajun/Asian take-out places in mall food courts (I gave one a shot; I found myself looking for my chopsticks). These restaurants profit from the Cajun label, which has high market value in terms of cuisine.

In addition to food, Cajunness can sell music, tourism, cars, and a little onscreen comic relief—things that consumers in the U.S. are very comfortable buying with postcolonial labels. Americans eat Mexican food, listen to jazz music, vacation in Hawaii, drive Jeep Cherokees, and

¹⁹ Funny story. Prudhomme is from my hometown (Opelousas), where we pronounce his family's name something like "Prood'm," but he changed the pronunciation to "Proo-DOM" when he opened his restaurant. Chachere is also from Opelousas. In fact, he lived in my neighborhood and I grew up calling him, with his grandkids, "Paw-caw." Had no idea he was famous until late in high school.

laugh at Squanto. (And these are only cultural exports, not actual labor exports like clothes made in Vietnam and coffee from Indonesia or—more locally—tomatoes picked by immigrant labor and coal mined by Appalachians.) Cajun boucheries and cuisine are frequently featured on travel and food channels, while Cajun music and dancing have become increasingly popular in *New York Times* articles. Even Porsche is cashing in with their latest SUV, to be released in 2014: the Cajun. It's meant to be the little buddy to the larger Cayenne. In addition to the film industry's profit off postcolonial stereotypes of Cajuns that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the producers of "Jersey Shore," a reality series that raised concerns about the use of *guido* to refer to Italian Americans, are banking on the marketability of Cajuns. There will probably soon be discussions of the word *coonass*, a derogatory name for Cajuns, because the same producers recently issued a casting call in Louisiana to find the "loudest, proudest and want to party their asses off" Cajuns. From the Baton Rouge Craigslist posting:

Callin' all Ragin' Cajuns!

Doron Ofir Casting in association with 495 Productions is looking for 8 guys and gals who are keepin' it Southern, are the loudest, proudest and want to party their asses off on the sickest reality show during one big Crawfish peelin', Poboy eatin', Bourbon drinkin' Dixie lovin' Bayou summer!

If you call 'gators your neighbors, reckon Mardi Gras should be a national holiday, your daisy dukes fit just right and are ready to make your Maw Maw and Paw Paw proud, we are looking for you!

Kegs, muddin' and cook-outs, can only mean one thing. . . it's summertime y'all!

Now casting the hottest and proudest Gulf-Coast Southerners who are at least 21 years old who can prove that the party down South will rise again. . . Screw sippin' champagne, let's make it a six pack summer!

Oh Lawdy, it's time to Party! Apply now: www.partydownsouth.com

Apart from terribly confusing Cajun, New Orleans, and Southern cultures (crawfish, bourbon, and daisy dukes), the writers of this casting call demonstrate their awareness of what aspects of Cajunness sell. As in other markets in which Cajunness has high worth, the producers of "Party Down South" will capitalize off the postcolonial status of Cajuns. In this case, they will do so by selecting the individuals who most closely fit the best-selling stereotypes of Cajuns, which match the colonizer perspective Said describes (exotic, sexy, dim-witted, illiterate, infantile, and drunk).

And find those Cajuns they will, because, since the beginning of the Cajun marketing industry, Cajuns have learned that a small investment of mimicking the culturally perceived Cajun identity can yield some returns. Bernard writes that Cajuns have been willing to put on a show, behaving like "court jesters," in situations where cultural differences can make money or win other forms of positive reinforcement, such as media attention and tourist visits (*The Cajuns* 120). One researcher found similar results regarding Cajuns cashing in their language capital for social clout, including sex appeal: "Male college students have told me that they consciously exaggerate their accents when vacationing at resorts outside Acadiana, in order to attract the attention of non-Cajun women, who are allegedly fascinated by the Cajuns' unconventional style

of speech” (Gutierrez, qtd. in Walton 107). If those male college students received anything like the attention that René’s character on “True Blood” did, the exaggerated accent probably paid off. When it comes to jobs, though, Cajunness can buy notoriety in a few markets—as a chef, a musician, or maybe a character on “Party Down South”—but not a whole lot of the American dream.²⁰ Like the market value of other postcolonial and marginalized brands, Cajunness can’t buy upward mobility or a good paying job unless the job specifically calls for Cajunness (and that’s a very limited array, which is often satisfied by non-Cajun imitating Cajuns). To be “competitive in today’s job market,” Cajuns often find that it’s best to mimic something like mainstream America instead.

Sherry L. Condon and Pamela T. Pittman found something along these lines when they conducted a study of language attitudes about CVE in “Language Attitudes in Acadiana.” Their results confirm that Cajuns generally recognize the market value of CVE and have adjusted to it in their habitus. Condon and Pittman list as their precedents Labov’s study of working-class attitudes toward working-class speech and another study among French-Canadians, who rated English speakers as “better looking, taller, more intelligent, more dependable, more ambitious, and more respectable than the very same person speaking French” (Finegan and Besnier, qtd. in Condon and Pittman 56). Condon and Pittman asked 280 participants from 11 parishes in Louisiana to rate four different language samples according to knowledge, reliability, honesty, friendliness, attractiveness, and desirability as a friend. The four speaker samples were Standard English, Cajun French, Cajun Accented Standard English, and CVE. Overwhelmingly, all participants (46 percent of whom identified as Cajun) judged “the Standard English speaker as Caucasian (88%), better educated, and in a higher economic bracket than the other three

²⁰ Indeed, a number of local Cajun musicians (like Louis Michot) have opted to speak Cajun French only, even though some of them actually learned it as adults.

speakers” (60). The CVE speaker was ranked the lowest in terms of education and socioeconomic status, even lower than the speaker of Cajun French: “62% of the informants ranked him as having an elementary education and 54% ranked him as lower-class” (60). Meanwhile, the fact that the CVE speaker was ranked fairly high “in the areas of reliability, honesty, friendliness, and desirability as a friend” indicates that the survey respondents don’t dislike speakers of CVE; they just don’t think he makes much money (61).

One particular trend in the survey responses supports this interpretation: the 21-39 age group rated the Standard English speaker far higher in the categories of honesty, friendliness, and desirability as a friend than any other age group did. Condon and Pittman speculate, “One explanation for these facts might be the association of Standard English with upward mobility. 21-39 is the age group in which people are not only working, but working toward higher positions in their careers” (66). Because CVE doesn’t carry much cultural capital in language markets, Cajuns who strive for upward mobility must invest their time in ways of speaking that will yield a better return.

In my survey, I also asked about the stereotypes that accompany CVE. My findings were consistent with Condon and Pittman’s conclusion about the connection between upward mobility and language decisions. Cajuns and non-Cajuns alike responded, usually tactfully, that CVE does not have a lot of status associated with it. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “The Cajun accent sounds backwards and illiterate,” from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Their responses varied, but in most of the additional comments explaining the stigma of CVE, they acknowledge that CVE has low status when it comes to education and business. Some admitted that they see some elements of CVE as signs of illiteracy, as in this careful explanation:

In the same way that AAVE is often accused of sounding “backwards and illiterate,” so is CVE. I’ve grown up with SAE [Standard American English], and I’m a strong supporter of proper grammar and conjugation, so at times I feel myself resistant to CVE constructions and conjugations, but just because a culture speaks a certain way doesn’t make them stupid or illiterate.

And this succinct assessment:

But it does say “country” doesn’t it?

One respondent added that the media reproduce stereotypes of Cajun illiteracy:

The media has considerable influence on the way accents are perceived. For instance, the Disney Film *The Princess and the Frog* portrays those with Cajun accent as backwards and illiterate. However, this perception is not necessarily accurate, simply commonly reinforced.

Several respondents skirted the issue of prejudice by focusing on the cultural worth of CVE:

I enjoy regional dialects of all types and find them fascinating.

The Cajun accent is part of what makes this area of Louisiana distinct and interesting.

Others emphasized that they don’t think CVE is a low-status variety of English, but they are keenly aware that others think so, with comments like this one:

I personally enjoy the local color aspects of it, but I do know that many people would consider it backwards and illiterate (and when used in certain contexts, it could actually create an impression of illiteracy for more than just the individual speaker).

Other respondents similarly made it a point to say that they found nothing wrong with the Cajun accent, but they acknowledge that others are prejudiced towards it, as these simple responses show:

Maybe to the ignorant.

I think this is the perception of many.

How can an accent alone be backwards or illiterate? It seems that it would only be through mistaken association that this could occur.

None of the respondents, Cajun or non-Cajun, claimed that Cajun linguistic markers are helpful on the job market. Consistent with Condon and Pittman's conclusion, CVE is seen as a handicap at worst and a commonly misunderstood asset at best, neither of which is desirable in a job interview.

Because the market worth of Cajun ways of speaking corresponds to the market value of Cajunness, many upwardly mobile Cajuns—like the ones in Dubois and Horvath's study, Condon and Pittman's study, and my own study—choose to censor their CVE (though not quite voluntarily, as Bourdieu stresses). Aware of the market pressures, individuals aim for the highest linguistic capital they can approximate, even if it means they give up their mother tongue and comply with the disappearance of their own language. Bourdieu writes, “[A] discourse can only exist [...] so long as it is not simply grammatically correct but also, and above all, socially acceptable, i.e. heard, believed, and therefore effective within a given state of relations of production and circulation” (76). The “given state of relations” that Bourdieu discusses leaves Cajuns with a difficult linguistic choice. They can, on one hand, continue identifying

linguistically with their family and community or, on the other hand, depart from their Cajun traditions and identify more with Standardized English for academic success and upward mobility (or, as I argue later, just to avoid downward mobility). Like the national and state decision to build the Morganza Spillway that forced Cajuns to choose between family cohesion and survival, the relationships between the U.S. national economy and its internally colonized groups forces Cajuns, once again, to choose between family and survival—this time economic. This “given state of relations”—the decisions of colonial powers driving Cajuns apart from their families for the sake of survival—has been a recurring theme for Cajuns, as I discuss in the following chapters. Meanwhile, efforts to preserve Cajun languages have not been able to compete with the drive for national language standardization. Applying Bourdieu’s theory, if Cajuns continue to self-censor, CVE and Cajun French will continue to exist only in contexts that privilege and/or preserve cultural departures from the legitimate language like museums, musical performances, and TV shows, but not in mainstream use. These acts of linguistic preservation are actually a part of the process of the language illegitimation, because the languages no longer circulate in the market and change, as spoken languages do. Like car names and exotic foods, museums are places where the legacies of colonized and conquered peoples usually end up.

Conclusion

I want to hate “Swamp People,” a reality show on the History Channel, which begins with the announcement that this way of living goes back 300 years and some images may be disturbing, because it only portrays the pre-modern things about Cajuns. The show documents alligator hunters (some of which are Cajun and some not), and it’s completely complicit with the

usual postcolonial stereotypes of Cajuns.²¹ The most unnerving thing is the subtitles, even when they're speaking English. Like Kathy Sohn's reports of Appalachian reactions to a documentary of "hillbillies," subtitles raise questions about language ownership ("Language Awareness" 79). I also can't stand that the narrator sounds like he just time-traveled from his last gig on "The Dukes of Hazard," talking about the "good old boys." But I can't help it; I love it, along with 5.5 million other viewers, apparently.²² My favorite is Troy, the one from Pierre Part with the thickest accent of all: "Choot it, Lizbet! Choot it!" Around my place, we call him Nonc Troy, because he feels like family. And the show has boosted the Louisiana economy, according to reporter Don Ames: "The interest in swamp tours has increased, and the cost of alligator meat has gone up."²³ "Swamp People" is very popular especially among Cajuns, even the CODOFIL board:

After "Swamp People" premiered, the CODOFIL board decided not to take a position on the program. Although it may be argued that the show perpetuates the myth that Cajuns are a malevolent, "swamp-dwelling" people, it is also apparent that the show did have some very endearing—and real—characters and beneficial aspects, not only to the culture as a whole, but for Louisiana's efforts to promote cultural tourism—one of the CODOFIL's stated missions as prescribed by the legislation that created the state agency in 1968. (Perrin, "History Channel" 1)

But everything comes with a price. Though the show will boost the Louisiana economy, it will also create a more pronounced Othering of Cajuns, as well as further illegitimate CVE by

²¹ "Cajun Justice," a reality show on A&E following Terrebonne Parish sheriff's deputies will portray Cajuns in a typical postcolonial light; it will "investigate thousands of violent crimes every year in the creepy, eerie bayou. And with the personalities of the local Cajuns, no police call is routine" (Heisig, "Cajun Blue" 2). And "Cajun Pawn Stars"? Puh-lease. First of all, they're in Alexandria, LA, and everybody knows that anything north of Bunkie is not French, much less Cajun. Plus, my step-sister told me she knows that crew, and they're actually Italian. They're just buying into the Cajun craze because, as successful pawn businesspeople, they know Cajunness turns a profit.

²² <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/26/swamp-people-haul-in-big-ratings/>

²³ <http://www.wwl.com/Cajun-characters-swamp-casting-call/10553741>

connecting the code with a job (alligator hunting) that occupies a very low rung in capitalism. Within Bourdieu's model, upwardly mobile Cajuns, even the ones who enjoy the show, will make an even stronger effort not to sound like Nonc Troy.

Bourdieu's theory of market pressures accounts for the stereotypes of language circulating in what Gramsci would call the "cultural hegemony" that keeps the legitimate language "legitimate" and suppresses the rest as "illegitimate" vernaculars. This intimidating force of the market, as Bourdieu calls it, is just one form of pressure to recognize the legitimate language, in addition to the coercive forces during codification and ongoing normalization. While this chapter explains current stereotypes of Cajuns and their linguistic habits, the next chapter explains the origins of these stereotypes and the illegitimate status of their languages by detailing how the legitimate language was selected during codification and why Cajuns were destined to speak something illegitimate before Louisiana was even ratified as a U.S. state.

Chapter Two
Bas Class:
Cajuns and the U.S. Class System

You know I was raised in a community where we had black and white together at that time. It was bad to call a white person a Cajun, because if you wanted to fight with another boy, you'd just call him a Cajun. Cajun was a dirty word at one time in the South. That's why I admire them so much now because, the fact that, and even us, they came a long way from being a Cajun. Cajun was considered low class, dirty and that kind of stuff. And, you know, the same as black, Cajun was discriminated against, not like us, but, they was also discriminated against because they were, you know, they were Cajun. – an elderly Creole African American from Parks, Louisiana, 2000²⁴

And so we see that the universal [writing] standard is actually set by quite a small group, and a familiar group it is, too: 'men' living in 'civilized nations' who cultivate the arts and who read science and philosophy. In other words, people just like the people who wrote these textbooks. – Sharon Crowley²⁵

Introduction

GrandmaMona said it was love at first sight. “It was just like lights going on,” she said, her words crowding together happily. “We couldn't take our eyes off of each other. We were just so in love from the beginning.” Mona Ardoin and Jeff Vizinat met on a blind date at the Silver Slipper right outside Eunice, LA. (It was the place to be.) They were engaged and married in the summer of 1950, in the space of one month. Mona's German mother, Winifred—Winnie, as she was commonly called—had always wanted the best for her daughter, so she generously offered to pay for an annulment soon after the wedding.

My great-grandma Winnie had been born into the elite Wilferts, a German family that owned the first filling station in Eunice, LA, and half of the now famous Liberty Theater, but she never recovered from the scandal of her parents' divorce in her early teens. Her father was

²⁴ Qtd. in Dubois and Horvath, “Creoles and Cajuns” 1.

²⁵ *Composition in the University* 41.

“running around,” so her mother left him and moved to Monroe, LA. Back then, in the early 1920s, divorce was unheard of in Eunice, and the kids at school shunned her. Just a few years later, Winnie married a good-looking but poor Cajun man who worked at her father’s filling station—maybe to get out of a “situation,” speculates my grandmother. That good-looking Cajun was my great-grandfather Edovic Ardoin. The Wilfert side of Winnie’s family never approved of the low marriage, and Winnie’s own father—Papa Dutch, we called him—wouldn’t even visit after the birth of Winnie’s first child, my GrandmaMona. He was extremely wealthy as a result of his involvement with the flourishing oil industry and his stock ventures, but he refused to help out Winnie and her family during the Depression. She worked long hours as a seamstress for wealthy families, sewing exquisite clothes for their children as her teeth fell out from malnutrition, nearly all of them before she reached the age of 30.

Winnie had hoped her daughter would grow up to marry a wealthy German instead of making the same mistakes she made, but Winnie came home from a visit with her ill mother in north Louisiana to find Mona engaged to a Cajun man with no money and a car that wasn’t paid for. “If I’d been here,” she said, as GrandmaMona recalls, “you’d have never, never gotten engaged.” Until the day she died in 2001, Winifred never approved of Paw-Paw, and we all knew it. “We were bas class,” Paw-Paw explained to me not long before he died in 2010, “the lowest of the low. The worst thing you could be was a Cajun.” I remember how he held out his hands like a hallway and touched my knees in the chair facing him to stress his point. His brother Lionel, nicknamed “Taxi,” agreed wholeheartedly. He rolled his eyes and worried his wisps of hair as he described the humiliation he felt as a teenager driving the family horse and buggy to town, automobiles whizzing by.

Cajuns, disdained and disregarded, operated almost entirely outside the U.S. capitalist economy at the time of their forced educational and linguistic assimilation in the early 1900s, and even as late as 1950, when my grandparents were married. Carl Brasseaux writes that their socioeconomy at that point “resembled that of modern Third World countries lining the Caribbean rim” (*Founding* 150). With no political clout or privilege, they were destined to be at the bottom of the U.S. socioeconomic hierarchy when they assimilated. According to Bourdieu’s model of the legitimate language, Cajuns were also destined to speak an illegitimate language because of their socioeconomic standing. This has been the case for both Cajun French and Cajun Vernacular English; neither language has been considered legitimate in academic settings. Bourdieu argues that low class position is the reason minorities always happen to speak “broken” languages or vernaculars instead of the legitimate language. Social prestige determines the authority or illegitimacy of various ways of speaking. In the last chapter I explained Bourdieu’s theory of language markets to demonstrate the current market value of Cajuns and, consequently, the market value of Cajun ways of speaking, which most Cajuns recognize and comply with by self-censoring Cajun linguistic markers. This chapter details the origins of the relationship between Cajuns and the current economy by showing the historical connection between language inequalities and national class organization and reorganization. I situate Cajuns within Bourdieu’s theory of the codification of the legitimate language, which stresses that language legitimacy parallels class position.

Reviews of the Literature

Several Composition and Rhetoric (Comp/Rhet) theorists have written about the connections between class, race/ethnicity, nationalism and the legitimate language in the United States. Lynn Z. Bloom writes in “Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise” that

freshman comp is the one required course because of its nationalist function: it teaches middle-class morality, national character, and the habits of good citizenship. Unlike freshman courses in other disciplines with measurable skills or a certain body of knowledge, the composition course doesn't introduce the discipline of English. Instead it inculcates in students middle-class, "Franklinesque virtues" (658). Bloom defines these virtues as self-reliance/responsibility, respectability, decorum/propriety, moderation and temperance, thrift, efficiency, order, cleanliness, punctuality, delayed gratification, and critical thinking; she explains the connections between classroom interpretations of each of the virtues and U.S. nationalism. These values, Bloom points out, are central to capitalism and Anglo culture, meaning they privilege already dominant groups in the U.S. From this kind of "cultural purity" perspective, all other groups must be "washed" before they can go on to complete their studies and be certified for upstanding jobs. She concludes by writing that literacy instruction does not have to "result in cultural deracination" for minority students, but, as Paulo Freire advocates, the structure can be changed to accommodate marginalized groups (669).

Catherine Prendergast writes similarly in "The Fighting Style: Reading the Unabomber's Strunk and White" that there has been a strong current in writing instruction supporting nationalism, founding fathers-type virtues, and linguistic purity, as she shows in the long-standing popularity of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, whose 50-year anniversary was celebrated in 2009. William Strunk, Jr., revised E. B. White's 1918 guide to style in 1959 to create what is commonly referred to as "Strunk and White," a guide to concise, "correct" writing. Prendergast points out that White's metaphors regarding language relativism are violent, militant ("commands [... to his] platoon"), and primitivist ("a gunner [...] roaming the countryside" in contrast with "automatic transmissions"), as he criticizes language changes that are immoral

(“permissive”), miscegenated (“crossbreeding”), and signs that modern civilization has lost its way. His language attitudes were consistent with his personal attitudes toward the new populations of students entering colleges after World War II and relativist grammarians who condoned their language impurities. White wrote and revised the guide in a tiny cabin in Maine (consciously imitating Thoreau), after fleeing his “materialistic,” privileged life in New York (in which he owned 117 chairs between his country and city houses). Alarming, one of Strunk and White’s greatest enthusiasts is the infamous Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, who also wrote from a tiny cabin in the woods (imitating Thoreau), arguing for a return to linguistic and national purity. Kaczynski’s extreme language purism and strict adherence to Strunk and White ultimately identified him as the author of the Unabomber letters, which Prendergast describes as “the stylistic equivalent of a police sketch” (he still compulsively edits letters he receives in prison and police reports about him) (17). The Unabomber is an extreme example of national and linguistic purism, and Prendergast acknowledges that Strunk and White is not popular in Comp/Rhet, but she urges compositionists to avoid the still pervasive attitudes about language change as signs of immorality, impurity, or impending doom, or anything else to fight about.

Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, in “English Only and U.S. College Composition,” explain the nationalist origin of ideas about language purity, particularly that the U.S. is a monolingual nation. In spite of a history of multilingualism and language hybridity in the U.S., the field of college composition operates as though English is a cultural institution with standard usage. Horner and Trimbur argue, based on Benedict Anderson’s theory of imagined communities, that the institution of monolingualism in the U.S. is the result of modernizing forces in the tradition of nationalism: “A unidirectional monolingual language policy that gives primacy of place to English in the modern curriculum is warranted as inevitable, not

because English was the only living language available in North America but because the use of spoken and written English forms what Benedict Anderson calls an ‘imagined community’ and a sense of nationhood” (607). They argue that multilingualism is feasible in the university setting, but it has been disallowed because of various nationalist efforts. They write that it has been important to establish the fiction of a monolingual, native speaker of English in the U.S. for the sake of nationalism, and they list moments when institutions in the U.S. have supported this fiction—decisions, for instance, to declare any language besides English “foreign” and thus the territory of English as a Second Language studies or foreign language literatures. These efforts have marginalized “nonnative speakers” (another concept they argue is a fiction), because minority groups don’t speak and write the legitimate language, and this monolingual nationalism has been upheld by composition courses. Though they don’t address other forms of English, especially the stigmatized Englishes of working-class and minority people, Horner and Trimbur argue that U.S. universities can easily manage multilingualism, and they suggest practical ways to move toward this kind of change, outlining the kind of research and funding required.

John Trimbur has gone on to write two more important articles about U.S. national and institutional policies regarding language: “Linguistic Memory and the Politics of U.S. English” and “The Dartmouth Conference and the Geohistory of the Native Speaker.” I rely heavily on the research in both these articles later when I flesh out Bourdieu’s theory of codification (and in chapter four when I discuss recodification), so I’ll just summarize them very quickly here. Trimbur writes in “Linguistic Memory and the Politics of U.S. English” that language policies in the U.S. are still based on ideas about language that were formed during nation building, particularly the “Anglo-American dyad [Benjamin] Franklin and [Noah] Webster installed in linguistic memory” (580). Trimbur argues that the founding fathers created a “covert”

monolingual English policy, under the guise of treating language with the same “laissez-faire” attitude as other market interests, during the process of decolonization and early nation building. This early covert language planning/prodding has stayed with us till today, along with some explicit attempts to control language in the U.S. Trimbur lays this foundation to argue that, not only is our linguistic memory (or history) inaccurate, but it suspiciously follows class interests.

In “The Dartmouth Conference and the Geohistory of the Native Speaker,” Trimbur goes on to write about how the field of Comp/Rhet has been complicit with the fiction of monolingualism. He describes the now famous Dartmouth Conference of 1966 as not only the beginning of the process movement in Comp/Rhet, but also an important moment in instituting “a monolithic, indigenized English that is based on upper-class norms” (161). The actual title of the Dartmouth Conference was the “Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English,” and it “fit into the pattern of postwar meetings, conferences, and seminars about the teaching of English abroad” (143). This conference, however, was focused on strategies for teaching *native* English speakers standard usage. Trimbur demonstrates ways that this conference supported efforts to maintain and update nationalism through language, a concept that is central to what Bourdieu calls a “process of dissimilation” in which those with the most privilege revise policies, laws, and cultural institutions to make sure that they go on having the most privilege. The idea of nativeness reifies class stratification, and it is also deeply connected to nationalism: “to talk about the nativeness of English calls up a territorialization of language that is based on deeply rooted associations between language, nationality, and geohistorical location” (156). Trimbur points to a paper by Joshua A. Fishman from the Dartmouth Conference that more accurately represents the linguistic diversity in the U.S., and he urges other theorists in Comp/Rhet to pursue the U.S.’s history of multilingualism. More on this later.

While Trimbur has covered a lot of territory on nationalism and language policies/practices in the U.S., other writers in Comp/Rhet have focused on the connections between class and the legitimate language. In *The Violence of Literacy*, J. Elspeth Stuckey stresses the class origins of language standards. She writes that the U.S. is extremely classed in spite of a “mythology” to the contrary and that these class distinctions serve the current economy: “Literacy itself can be understood only in its social and political context, and that context, once the mythology [of classlessness in the U.S.] has been stripped away, can be seen as one of entrenched class structure in which those who have power have a vested interest in keeping it” (vii). She argues that literacy is an artificial measure that both explains and reifies the status of criminals and the poor, as well as that of the dominant and affluent. National literacy is defined according to the literacy habits of those in power so that their demographic continues to be privileged, and everyone else continues to be poor and criminalized. “This is not pessimism,” she writes. “It is system” (126). She refutes models of literacy that propose educating the lower classes to bring them out of poverty and crime, criticizing, for example, Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz, who argue that changing social conditions will help poor students perform better in school (17). She writes that they are buying into the current definition of literacy, which privileges the legitimate language and its speakers.

Similar to Trimbur’s analysis of the reconceptualization of the “native speaker,” Deborah Brandt points out that not only do measures of error and literacy (or legitimacy) sort and control people’s access to different political and socioeconomic rights and privileges, but these definitions are defined and *redefined* according to national and class needs. In *Literacy in American Lives*, she writes, “sponsors organize and administer stratified systems of opportunity and access. They raise the stakes for literacy in rivalries for advantage. They certify and often

decertify literacy. Sponsors can be benefactors but also extortionists” (193). “Sponsors” of literacy are “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (*Literacy* 19). Brandt explains in “Drafting U.S. Literacy” that the military has been an influential sponsor of literacy in the U.S., responsible for changing national literacy standards multiple times. During the 1940s, for example, “in the space of five years, what counted as literacy—or enough literacy—changed six times” (486). These literacy fluctuations were prompted not by expert measures of intelligence but simply by the number of soldiers needed during World War II. Literacy standards were lowered every time the military needed more men and raised again when there were enough. The military has continued to exert great influence on U.S. education, from testing protocols to ESL programs, and more recently with games-based learning, as I write in chapter four. Job markets work similarly in a market economy, as some of the discussions of literacy crises below reveal. When the demand for labor is high and the supply is low, job (and literacy) requirements are lowered; when the demand for labor is low and the supply is high, employers practice “credentialism” or the artificial elevation of job requirements beyond what is needed for the work. “Standards” are a moving target manipulated by the dominant to meet the needs of the moment.

The constructed nature and mutability of the legitimate language has been an important subject in composition and literacy studies, particularly its corresponding definitions of “error” and “literacy.” Mina Shaughnessy famously challenged conventional conceptions of error in her 1977 book *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. Faced with understanding and responding to the writing of non-traditional populations of students as a result of Open Admissions in CUNY (beginning in 1970), she pointed out that “most college teachers

have little tolerance for the kinds of errors BW [basic writing] students make,” interpreting them as “indicators of ineducability” (8). Shaughnessy argued that error is not a signal of low student intelligence but simply a variant of elite “refinements of usage” (9). She wrote that teachers should strive to find “the intelligence of their [BW students’] mistakes” and help them develop the writing habits of the more privileged students.²⁶

In the tradition of Shaughnessy, Mike Rose has also sought to redefine error, arguing that it is a societal problem, not the result of individual student failure or inadequacy. He demonstrates in “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University” that error is a changing construction by citing vastly different standards of literacy: “During the last century this country’s Census Bureau defined as literate anyone who could write his or her name. These days the government requires that one be able to read and write at a sixth-grade level to be *functionally* literate: that is, to be able to meet—to a minimal degree—society’s reading and writing demands” (23). Rose criticizes the model of student error that portrays BW students as cognitively deficient, particularly with words like *remediation*, *deficits*, and *handicaps*. Rose also argues that these current conceptions of error serve as gatekeepers that parallel social privilege within the U.S., a form of institutionalized inequality (“The Language of Exclusion,” 26). He demonstrates that low test scores typically spark declarations of national literacy crises, lamentations about student laziness and ability, and accusations about teacher performance. Rose argues that error functions as more of a social marker than an impediment to communication in *Lives on the Boundary*, pointing out that the etymological origin of *grammar* is the same as the

²⁶ Even during this progressive time of increased access to higher education, there was plenty of talk about nationalism and error. Lu presents the discussions around Open Admissions as a battle over patriotism and the teaching of English in “Conflict and Struggle.” The opponents of Open Admissions (Lu calls them “gatekeepers”) used militant metaphors to describe what they perceived as an infiltration of un-American students (minorities) (891-892). Lu criticizes Shaughnessy and other educators who attempt to help students conform to standards of literacy and legitimacy. I include a full discussion of Lu’s argument in the context of pedagogical strategies regarding student vernaculars in chapter four.

root for *glamour*. He criticizes “democratic” attempts to teach all children the “canon,” arguing that these calls for higher literacy are actually the same old elitist story (234). As Rose points out, error and literacy crises are both social constructs.

Literacy crises historically correspond with the introduction of new populations into educational contexts, as Chris Schroeder writes in “From the Inside Out (or the Outside In, Depending)”: “literacy crises have been linked to dramatic increases in enrollment. From this perspective, each time literacies and institutions were challenged by the infusion of cultures, critics would declare a crisis in literacy rather than confront increasing discursive and institutional differences” (182). Discussions of language come to the fore when hegemony is being challenged or reorganized, according to Gramsci. As I discuss later, these periods of language and national renegotiation are also opportunities to struggle for more equal standards. Peter Elbow writes that there were similar responses to students’ “incorrect” usage after the Civil War, after World War II, and during Open Admissions, because these were all times of influxes of non-standard student populations (“Inviting the Mother Tongue,” 360). Schroeder argues that these aren’t crises of literacy but of *legitimacy*. People readily conform to the dictates of academic discourse, he writes, because they want to be considered “insiders.” If they can’t or don’t conform to the proper definitions of literacy, as Bruce Horner points out in “Relocating Basic Writing” (forthcoming), they are held indefinitely in “remedial” courses, where they are denied access to the kind of education that jobs with higher salaries and more clout require. This “restriction of literacy schooling to those presumed to have the right and ability to benefit from literacy—that is, those who are, in effect, to literacy born” is a form of denying education to subordinated populations.

Language theorists argue that definitions of error and literacy should indeed be constantly changing, but they should derive from the context, not a universally established standard. Sylvia Scribner argues in “Literacy in Three Metaphors” that there can be no literacy measure to cover all human beings, because everybody needs different levels of literacy for different purposes:

the single most compelling fact about literacy is that it is a *social* achievement [...]. Since social literacy practices vary in time [...] and space [...], what qualifies as individual literacy varies with them. At one time, ability to write one’s name was a hallmark of literacy; today in some parts of the world, the ability to memorize a sacred text remains the model literacy act. Literacy has neither a static nor a universal essence. (72)

With a contextual definition of literacy, error takes on new meaning. Canagarajah seems to suggest in “Toward a Rhetoric of Translingual Writing,” that error can be defined simply as the failure of speakers to negotiate meaning patiently and successfully: “it is not uniformity of meaning but the capacity and willingness to keep negotiating for meanings that interlocutors strive for in translingual orientation.” (23). He cites Alan Firth’s “let it pass” principle, in which multilinguals look for clues to explain misunderstandings or ask clarifying questions (14). In a paradigm built on contextual understanding of literacy and error, literacy crises would signal the need to redefine literacy instead of the need to toughen up on standards and teaching practices. Sociolinguist William Labov wrote in a report on variants of African American speech that high rates of error or illiteracy should be indicators of language shifts and the consequent need to revise definitions of error: “It is traditional to explain a child’s failure in school by his inadequacy, but when failure reaches such massive proportions, it seems to us necessary to look

at the social and cultural obstacles to learning, and the inability of the school to adjust to the social situation” (Labov, *The Study of Non-Standard English* 208, qtd in Parks 115).

Yet, as Sharon Crowley argues in *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*, the freshman composition course exists to measure, sort, and deny most people access to the limited number of higher paying jobs according to the standards of error and literacy derived from the legitimate language and intended to maintain inequality. Crowley writes pointedly, “The myth of the academic essay continues to nurture massive Freshman English programs for reasons other than its salience to writing instruction: it fosters and supports the persistent American belief that universal standards of literacy exist, and it legitimizes and covers over the social and institutional functions of Freshman English” (233). Like Stuckey, Crowley argues that the standards of literacy are based on class inequalities, and she writes, “Along with J. Elspeth Stuckey, I think that it is absurd and cruel to conflate economic inequality and racial discrimination with a literacy problem” (234). She goes on to historicize and contextualize the function of composition courses as essentially conservative, as opposed to the progressive promises of social mobility via literacy.

Peter Elbow similarly speculates in *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* that the failed promise of social mobility through literacy is not an unfortunate turn of events but is built into the design of literacy standards:

our culture of literacy functions as though it were a plot against the spoken voice, the human body, vernacular language, and those without privilege. That is, our pervasive cultural assumptions about speech, writing, and literacy—especially as they are communicated through schooling—seem as though they were designed to

make it harder than necessary for people to become comfortably and powerfully literate. (7)

Like Crowley and Stuckey, Elbow argues that this lack of accessibility is based on class inequalities: “Writing takes much more conscious learning than speaking, so the ability to write has been available mostly to people with more advantage, leisure, and better schools. But this ‘difficulty’ of writing is largely a cultural artifact” (27). He specifies that it’s the unequal standards of literacy (not the mere acquisition of literacy) that block people from democratic participation in literacy-based dialogues: “So it’s writing ‘correctly’ that’s difficult (and also, of course, writing well)” (28). In *Vernacular Eloquence*, Elbow argues that it’s time these unequal standards change, and he writes optimistically that they already are changing, but he urges writers everywhere to continue challenging and changing them by publicly writing texts that are influenced and injected with vernacular.

As this sample of texts shows, theorists in Comp/Rhet are concerned with the inequalities inherent in the legitimate language, which we are required to teach and test our students in. Many agree that the selection of the legitimate language is political (in that it is based on power relations and struggles over inequalities), but there is a wide range of perspectives on why it is unequal. Geneva Smitherman acknowledges that linguisticism goes back to the founding of the U.S.: “You see, the game plan has always been linguistic and cultural absorption of the Other into the dominant culture, and indoctrination of the outsiders into the existing value system [...], to remake those on the margins in the image of the patriarch, to reshape the outsiders into talking, acting, thinking, and (to the extent possible) looking like the insiders” (“Students” 25). In the same article, Smitherman also talks about “power elites” and “power brokers” to stress that the dominant class makes language decisions (“Students,” 21). Smitherman, however, often

discusses the dominant class interchangeably with white people. In a 1979 article, “Toward a National Public Policy on Language,” Smitherman wrote in a nearly identical paragraph that, rather than “power elites,” “*White America* sought to deal with the newly released black energy [of the Civil Rights Movement] in several ways. Key among them was the acceleration of research on blacks and the implementation of social and educational engineering designed to acculturate blacks into the dominant ideology” (“Toward” 202, emphasis mine). Smitherman has acknowledged the class origins of the official language, and she has also acknowledged that black people and poor whites are both denied access to this socio-linguistic capital in *Talkin and Testifyin*, but she calls the legitimate language “White English.” An alternative is calling the legitimate language “White Elite English,” which most white people do not speak.

Vershawn Young also explicitly portrays linguistic inequalities in terms of “white” and “black” in his discussions of “white English” and “black English” in *Your Average Nigga Performing Race, Literacy, and Masculinity*. Unlike Smitherman, though, he chooses to use raced terminology to stress the constructed nature of both language and race. He writes that white and black ways of talking can be codified and essentialized to the point that one may be judged by language habits to be “not black enough” or “too white.” In this vein, he proposes “code meshing” in both academic and home contexts, instead of the two other dominant options in Comp/Rhet: code switching according to context or speaking the same way in every context (something I explain more fully in chapter four). In arguing for a more fluid understanding of race and language, Young uses terminology that stresses identity constructions over actual ethnicity. In a footnote, he explains:

Although the term *Black English Vernacular* and its acronym BEV may appear to be somewhat retrograde in comparison with the more popular term *African*

American Vernacular English and its acronym, AAVE, I prefer to use BEV since I use the term *black* and not *African American* to describe myself and the black people I discuss in this book. In this I'm calling attention to the construction of black (people) in contrast with white (people) and BEV in contrast with WEV [White English Vernacular]. This is purely rhetorical and not a representation of my beliefs about the differences between blacks and whites and BEV and WEV.

(149)

Young's stress on the constructedness of race/language is important for understanding his theorization of code meshing.

Stressing the constructed nature of race and language is also important for understanding that much of the debate over language legitimacy and illegitimacy boils down to class distinctions, of which race is a primary subset. If it were only an issue of race, both Cajun Vernacular English and Appalachian English would be recognized as legitimate for academic and professional exchanges, since both Englishes are spoken primarily by "whites." But, as Kathy Sohn writes in "Language Awareness in an Appalachian Composition Classroom," language prejudice permeates every interaction between the locals and "outsiders." She quotes Michael Montgomery to illustrate the stigma of Appalachian English: "'five words out of somebody's mouth will completely affect another person's evaluation of their intelligence, their reliability, their truthfulness, and their ability to handle complex tasks'" (83). Boiling it down to the distinction between just black and white also ignores people "of color," as Villanueva writes in *Bootstraps*. He is a "portorican" academic of color who often "passes" for white but struggles to stay on the same footing as cultural elites. Describing himself, Villanueva writes, "He sees himself as essentially of the same race as the majority, and knows that sometimes they do too,

and he wonders how it is that what he hears and sees and feels and never seems able to escape is racism nevertheless” (xiii). Because linguisticism is an issue for many other non-black groups, including Native Americans, Hawaiian Americans, and Cajuns (who have traditionally been racially ambiguous), the field of Comp/Rhet has favored other terms to label the legitimate language. In *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, for example, Canagarajah portrays language issues in postcolonial terms, distinguishing between “center Englishes” and “periphery Englishes” to indicate, respectively, ownership and appropriation of language (4).

Other writers have invoked “Standard English,” “Standard Edited English,” and “Standard Written English” to indicate that it is the version of English by which other Englishes are judged. I find these terms slightly misleading, lacking the political history and implications behind the language. Peter Elbow considers the problems with using the term “standard” and discusses his own choice of terms in *Vernacular Eloquence*:

It might be nice to think of the word “standard” as merely neutral—like the platinum rod locked away in a Paris safe that is the ‘true standard’ for what we call a meter. . . . So I’m tempted to go along with a custom among many sophisticated scholars to completely avoid the word “standard.” It’s a word that does harm in our culture by silently implying that other varieties of English are inferior or bad or lacking—substandard or “vulgar.” So I will often use the term “*standardized* English.” Yet I won’t run away from the word “standard” either because it’s not the word that does harm; it’s the cultural assumption. (214)

Elbow’s use of *standardized* is helpful in that it stresses the agency involved in the standardizing process. Somebody at some point chose the standard, and then other somebodies updated it (in the process of what Bourdieu calls “dissimilation”). For the purposes of this study, I will often

use the term *standardized English*, and I borrow from Bourdieu's vocabulary to discuss what I sometimes call *Legitimate English*.

Bourdieu's Theory of Language Codification

To talk about language is to talk about politics. Describing the initial creation of the language hierarchy in *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu writes that the legitimate language is the result of an explicitly political decision. As I mentioned earlier, the overarching idea of his analysis is that the legitimate language is tied to the national class system: "The official language is bound up with the state," he writes, "both in its genesis and in its social uses" (45). So the origin of the legitimate language (and correspondingly illegitimate dialects and vernaculars) is in the creation of the nation. "Thus, only when the making of the 'nation,' an entirely abstract group based on law, creates new usages and functions does it become indispensable to forge a *standard* language," he writes (48).

Stressing the role of nationalism in the process of language legitimation, Bourdieu writes that "one must not forget the contribution which the political will to unification (also evident in other areas, such as law) makes to the *construction* of the language which linguists accept as a natural datum" (50, his italics). As the saying goes, a language is a dialect with an army and a navy. Peter Elbow reports in *Vernacular Eloquence* the histories of several efforts at political unification that required linguistic standardization. Elbow cites the standardization of English in England during empire building and Castilian Spanish in Spain, also during empire building, and Chinese during the Cultural Revolution (135-137, 183-185, 336-339). These countries were also establishing nationhood at the time. Conversely, quoting linguist Tore Janson, Elbow points out that languages evolve more naturally apart from empire and nationalism: "Where there is no political unity, the idea of a common standard for a written language is not very close at hand"

(qtd. in Elbow 368). An important part of creating nationalism is creating a linguistic nationalism.

In Bourdieu's paradigm, there are two reasons that the establishment of a legitimate language is linked to the creation of the nation: first, it is the nation builders who explicitly *codify* the language. Often, codification is simply a matter of selecting an already existing dialect (which may have had quite a bad reputation previously) and elevating it to the status of legitimacy. Benedict Anderson writes in *Imagined Communities* that during the process of nation formation, nations prefer to imagine themselves as "antique." Selecting a language that already has a long history helps achieve the illusion of antiquity. For example, the architects of the English nation threw off the French they were required to speak under Norman rule and selected a lowly vernacular spoken by peasants and warriors. Thus, the political origins of the modern English *language*.

Something similar happened in the U.S. under Noah Webster, who strove to politically differentiate American English from British English. In "Linguistic Memory" Trimbur writes, "In a stroke of linguistic nationalism, Webster makes American English historically antecedent to British English. As Webster writes in his *Dissertations on the English Language*, published in 1789, there is a 'surprising similarity between the idioms of the New England people and those of Chaucer, Shakespeare, &c. who wrote in the true English stile' (582). Webster's appeal to the past is an example of the artificial antiquity Anderson notes as part of nation building. The story of the establishment of U.S. linguistic nationalism is largely about the efforts of Noah Webster to flood language markets throughout the early United States with the dialect of English spoken by the inhabitants of New England. To understand how he accomplished this, though, it's helpful to understand the second part of Bourdieu's model of linguistic codification.

The second reason that codification is tied to nation building is that it is meant to reflect and reinforce the class system that is also being established. According to Bourdieu, the nation builders create a class system that privileges and is based on the language (as well as the habits and tastes) of the upper classes. Bourdieu's analysis of legitimate language is similar to the maxim that the victors write the history books. After they were finished with the history books, the victors went on to write the grammar books, an idea invoked in the epigraph by Sharon Crowley at the beginning of this chapter, as well as Trimbur in his analysis of U.S. linguistic nationalism. Trimbur argues that Webster set in motion our selective forgetting of U.S. multilingualism by ignoring the creoles and pidgins of slaves, people living near national borders, sailors, and most of the people living outside New England. He writes, "Webster's legacy [...] is having shaped 'American linguistic history into a final, open-ended chapter of the Anglo-Saxon spirit.' Certainly this is the linguistic memory that has been institutionalized in English studies, U.S. college composition, and the modern U.S. university" (583). In our official "linguistic memory" there has been "a systematic forgetting of the multiple languages spoken and written in North America," so that U.S. history reports that we are and always have been a monolingual nation (577). The primary language in U.S. linguistic memory, of course, is the particular version of English spoken and advocated by founding fathers like Benjamin Franklin and Noah Webster.

Linguistic history and correctness are written in favor of the people with the most clout and privilege, both because they have the authority to stack the cards in their own favor and because they need to create a way to distinguish themselves from people with less privilege. As he recounts the standardization of English, Elbow stresses that the codification process

deselected a lot of language choices that sounded natural or spoken for the sake of establishing or undergirding class differentiation:

Who *decided* to have a Standard English that made everyone's speech wrong?

There was no *Academie Anglaise* in London in the late thirteenth and fourteenth century to make rules (though Norman French was not totally dead yet). We'll never know, but these historical linguists imply a process that's actually not so hard to imagine: the 'better sort of people'—when faced with a choice between forms—tend to opt for locutions that differ from the speech of the masses—even if it means they have to adjust their own speech habits a bit. (137)

Making it difficult to speak and write high English also make it difficult to achieve high status.

Elbow cites “the point made by Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu: what is hard to learn and takes training to accomplish and causes much confusion turns out to be ideal for showing who has prestige and who can be looked down on” (274). Indeed, many of what are termed “errors” are usually expressions of what Bourdieu calls taste or distinction.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu poses the idea that taste is a form of cultural capital into which people must generally be born. Taste, which is determined by one's class, determines choices in fashion, cuisine, residence, and job, and these things in turn identify and reify one's social class. He writes, “[Taste] functions as a sort of social orientation, a ‘sense of one's place,’ guiding the occupants of a given...social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position” (466). Likewise, variances in language usage correspond to and sort people according to class. Popular linguist John McWhorter writes similarly that language errors are “arbitrary fashions of formal language that we must attend to just as we dress according to the random dictates of the fashions of our

moment. Remember that what is considered ‘proper’ English varies with the times just as fashion does” (84). He cites turns of phrases considered egregious errors in the nineteenth century: *make a choice* instead of *choose*, *have a look* instead of *look*, *first two* instead of *two first*, *the house is being built* instead of *the house is building* (74-75). These “arbitrary fashions,” however, operate like other forms of cultural capital, which serve as powerful tools for social sorting.

Crowley, describing the class sorting function of the required freshman comp course, offers a critique of usage that supports Bourdieu’s theory of distinction. She writes that it is a “pedagogy of taste” that maintains class inequalities built into the U.S.: “The pedagogy of taste, I would argue, is [...] a policing mechanism. [...] Like all ideologies, the ideology of taste works to naturalize that which is culturally instituted” (42-43). Going a little further, Crowley identifies which groups typically have bad taste: “peoples who exhibit inadequate taste are inevitably non-Anglo or non-European” (40). They are inevitably working-class and minority peoples, a dynamic Bourdieu attributes to the codification process during nation building. The upper classes of a brand new nation deem their own speaking and writing habits “correct” or “legitimate.” Their language will be taught in schools, awarded high marks, and preferred in business relations.

Because of my theoretical framing, this dissertation discusses capitalism a great deal. Economic theory is not the only way to understand the assimilation of Cajuns, but because many Cajuns understand and portray their own assimilation in classed and economic terms (as I show in this chapter and the next), I find Bourdieu’s model useful. One important part of his analysis of the legitimate language relies on the Marxist understanding of class: people born into positions of privilege start out life with more *capital* (money that is invested, not saved or used to buy commodities) than everyone else, and therefore are capable of making greater profits and

accumulating more wealth. Likewise, in his discussion of language as a form of symbolic capital, Bourdieu stresses the importance of which family and demographic one is born into, often distinguishing between the *bourgeoisie* (capitalists who are part of the ruling, or most influential, class), the *petit bourgeoisie* (members of the middle class, managers, intellectuals), and the *proletariat* (workers). The Marxist model has its limitations, but many aspects of it are still used in current economic theory, as recent increased attention to capitalism in the U.S. has shown. Marx's class analysis has also proven useful for many explanations of the value of language, as the conversations in the field of Comp/Rhet that I've reported above show. Though other systems of class hierarchy have been identified in different versions of capitalism throughout history, the idea of an economy that is built on and *reproduces* social stratification is an important part of Bourdieu's analysis of language within capitalism. One "inherits" the language capital of one's parents, so one will most likely wind up in the same part of the socioeconomic spectrum. As I show later in the chapter, Cajuns barely registered on the class charts because, apart from a few individuals who hired themselves out every now and then, they didn't participate in the capitalist economy established in the South. When they were forced to assimilate, it was at the level of manual labor, and the next generation would remain at the same socioeconomic level, because they would inherit the language capital (and other forms of capital) of their parents. The Cajuns who I have described as upwardly mobile are not exceptions to class reproduction; they must turn elsewhere to achieve the same degree of language capital that other people are born with, often taking on large school loans to pay for it.

Another feature of capitalism that Bourdieu emphasizes is that it is built on a model of *competition* instead of cooperation, pitting workers against one another (instead of, often, the capitalists who are exploiting them). He stresses that the system is designed to require a great

number average-income of “losers” in order for there to be a small number of affluent “winners,” which is represented by the polarization of the economy (“The rich get richer and the poor get poorer”). Consequently, because the model requires inequality from the very beginning, flunking out of school is not a sign of laziness or ineducability, but a byproduct of the smoothly functioning economy that requires losses for the many in order to accrue profits for the few (which is the real goal). Likewise, when capitalists “follow” the rules of capitalism, it isn’t always a reflection on their character. This type of socioeconomy can extract and reward negative behavior, creating contradictions for some people between their personal ethics and “following” the rules. It’s important to emphasize the way the values behind capitalism contrast with the values of the Cajun community (and those of many, many other people in the U.S.), which will become clearer when I explain later the socioeconomic arrangements of Cajuns. My brother, for example, turned down an offer to open his own tire and mechanic shop, because the location would have been too near what would become his former place of employment. He didn’t want to “steal” customers from his former boss, he explained, because he wouldn’t want someone to do it to him. In turning down this offer, he was rejecting the most basic tenet of capitalism, competition (which might be said to be built on a philosophy of “do unto others before they can do unto you”). Instead, he is looking at moving to North Carolina to open a mechanic shop that won’t compete with his former boss’s business (and that’s a HUGE move for a Cajun, as I explain later in this chapter). This discrepancy is important to note, because Cajuns don’t entirely support capitalism in practice, but generally still buy into it in theory and votes.²⁷

²⁷ Many conservatives support these policies because they want the freedom to enjoy their wealth in the very rare chance that they rise above the middle class (an aspiration that is generally unsupported by U.S. history). But as long as workers are doing unto others as they would have others do unto them, they can hold capitalists accountable for their unfair hiring and firing practices, bad stewardship of the earth, and manufactured financial (and other) crises, by boycotting them and voting to support regulations that enforce consequences for unbridled greed and exploitation. Federal regulation shouldn’t be a problem at all for conservatives, who are willing to ban gay marriage “out of love” (because they don’t want to support homosexuals’ “destruction” of their own lives). Likewise,

Regarding codification of the national language, Bourdieu draws on Marx's explanation of the *nation*. In Marx's model, members of the *ruling class* form alliances with other members and use their extreme wealth and political clout to lobby for (bribe) and influence (manipulate) policies that the *state* (the centralized government) creates or adjusts in their interests.²⁸ The state, according to Marx's theory, generally serves the ruling class (not the workers), enforcing the ruling class's biddings on the workers with taxes, the military, and the police. The ruling class is not monolithic or unified, but often allied. Their alliances and efforts result in arrangements on the national level (or in actually creating *nations*), so, even though they aren't the visible royalty of the nation, they in effect rule it by buying politicians.²⁹ In the processes of actual nation building and language codification, according to Bourdieu, the same structure is created in matters of language: the "winners" (the most successful capitalists) select the national language (like the national economy) and create an educational system (a kind of state) to enforce and moderate their decisions.

1. Planning the U.S. class system

Language codification in the U.S. followed the same pattern of class hierarchy. Unlike other nations that declared official languages, though, the story in the U.S. is something about a "laissez-faire" linguistic attitude (one that is guided by the "unseen hand of the market") that

conservatives can hold corporations accountable "out of love," since the decisions of corporations affect everyone, sometimes entire communities of workers and national education policies, whereas gay marriage has not so far caused many people to marry their pets or leave their spouses—now that their vows are no longer sanctified.

²⁸ G. William Domhoff suggests in *Who Rules America?* a rubric for identifying the U.S. ruling class. Similar to Brandt's theory of "sponsors of literacy," he asks the questions, "Who benefits?, Who governs?, and Who wins?" If one question doesn't fit the situation, another will, and they all point to who organizes political policies in their own interests. Based on his rubric, he identifies the U.S. ruling class as "the owners and managers of large income-producing properties; i.e., corporations, banks, and agri-businesses. But they have plenty of help from the managers and experts they hire" (<http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/>). The Koch brothers, the third-richest Americans who founded and funded the Tea Party Movement under the guise of anti-immigration and other libertarian policies (but actually to do away with corporate regulations), are a great example of Domhoff's rubric. Who wins or benefits most from the Tea Party Movement? Not the thousands of people taking a day off from work to go picket, but the extremely wealthy corporations, who will be freer to exploit the people picketing for them.

²⁹ And you too can buy your own politicians, if you just work hard enough and save your money!

allowed the strongest language to emerge and beat out the others to control a monolingual market. John Trimbur debunks this myth in “Linguistic Memory” and demonstrates that U.S. language policy has followed Bourdieu’s model that ties together nationalism and codification. He writes in response to Shirley Brice Heath’s article “English in Our Language Heritage” in the volume *Language in the U.S.A.* She claims that the founding fathers chose a wise, progressive linguistic policy of tolerance by never declaring an official language, setting “a historical precedent for bilingualism” in the U.S. (Trimbur 577). Trimbur argues, however, that the founding fathers were actually enforcing a linguistic hierarchy with the same policy of laissez-faire economics that they used to enforce racism and class structures: through markets and other economic pressures. Though they were ostensibly letting competition determine the markets and language, Trimbur points out that they quite controlled the outcomes:

To put it another way, a laissez-faire language policy, despite its ostensible neutrality, may be just as programmatic as overt forms of language policy. The suppression of African languages through the slave trade and the formation of a plantation labor force offers the most revealing evidence of how language policy operated covertly, yet systematically, in the colonial and national period. Slave traders routinely separated speakers of the same African languages as a means of social control, and plantation owners paid particular attention to purchasing slaves who spoke different African languages in order to restrict communication and the possibilities of insurrection. Under threat of harsh punishment, which included having their tongues cut out, slaves were prohibited from speaking their native languages or teaching them to their children. Instead, to manage work relations on the plantations, initially pidgins and eventually creolized versions of English were

developed as linguistic innovations that, along with compulsory literacy laws that forbade teaching slaves to read and write, constituted the official and unofficial planning of the planter class. (576-577)

Trimbur concludes that the “very covert nature [of the founding fathers’ laissez-faire language policies] virtually guaranteed the inevitable Anglification of language in the United States through the workings of labor relations, the market, and civil society” (577). The 13 colonies had an established oligarchy, which controlled the wealth of the colonies and then the early republic; this group of elites is able to set its own language practices as the lingua franca of the dominant. The “unseen hand of the market” suppressed African languages, as well as the literacy of African Americans, resulting in a very unequal opportunity to “compete” with the prevalence of English. He writes that this covert suppression of languages led to more overt suppression later—for instance, English only policies in schools at the turn of the century and a ban on the German language (even in phone conversations) during World War I.

Language selection is just one way to differentiate and to consolidate already existing differences between classes. As a result of this early codification process, Bourdieu writes that the linguistic hierarchy always corresponds to the socioeconomic hierarchy engineered by the builders of the nation. If one is born into a class that is low in the socioeconomic hierarchy, one will likely speak a vernacular that is correspondingly low in the linguistic hierarchy. So, according to Bourdieu, in order to understand the origins of linguistic inequality, it’s important to note the class system that the nation builders created and engineered into social institutions.

Noam Chomsky points out that, contrary to the commonly accepted story, the leaders of the American Revolution and the following period of policy making were extremely exclusive and undemocratic:

Keep in mind, all of the Founding Fathers hated democracy—Thomas Jefferson was a partial exception, but only partial. For the most part, they hated democracy [...]. The major framer of the Constitution, James Madison, emphasized very clearly in the debates at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that the whole system must be designed, as he put it, “to protect the minority of the opulent from the majority”—that’s the primary purpose of the government, he said.

(Understanding Power 315)

Whether or not the founding fathers hated democracy, they certainly weren’t willing to share the wonderful ideals of democracy with all of their new fellow citizens (and none of the non-citizens—women and slaves). Elsewhere, Chomsky is more pointed about the founding fathers’ exclusivity: “their sense of ‘equal participants’ included only a small part of the population: white male property-owners. Today we would call that a reversion to Nazism, and rightly so” (267). The founding fathers’ intention was not a democracy but essentially an oligarchy, a society with a few monied elites in power over a dependent mass, as the writings of the most important nation builders reveal.

Thomas Jefferson, for example, never intended equal opportunity for all. In the collection, *Thomas Jefferson and the Education of a Citizen*, Jefferson’s vision for democracy emerges as something wonderful but intended for only a few. In a 1786 letter to George Washington, Jefferson describes a large-scale, state-funded educational system that will teach people how to rule themselves, “It is an axiom in my mind that our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves, and that too, of the people with a certain degree of instruction. This it is the business of the state to effect, and on a general plan” (qtd in Wagoner 119). In his famous assertion that he’d rather have a free press than a government, Jefferson

stresses that provisions must be made to ensure everyone has access to the papers and the ability to read them:

The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them. (qtd in Wilson 84-85)

Anticipating resistance to the taxation required for a public school system, Jefferson argued in a 1786 letter to George Wythe that it was the cost of freedom:

Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against these evils [kings, nobles, and priests], and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance. (Brewer 54)

Though he lobbied for mass public education, it was intended to preserve class distinctions. Richard Brown writes that for Jefferson, “Faith in social hierarchy remained powerful—as did the sense that society, like nature, must be stratified” (91). Jefferson believed in a “natural aristocracy,” to which he belonged (Wilson 86), and this aristocracy would identify and select certain promising young men to be trained for leadership positions while assigning everyone else to what we might call today the “vocational track.” Brown explains that schools would accomplish this social stratification via a tiered system: “Jefferson’s plan aimed to unite mass

popular education with the perpetuation of the elite, albeit enlightened, rule. ‘The best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually,’ Jefferson explained, thereby gaining for the state ‘those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated’” (96). Brown writes that Jefferson’s ideas were a form of social planning for the “creation of a progressive, enlightened, and virtuous society” (100). This society, however, was guaranteed to reproduce itself with very little opposition, as the elites were the ones who chose the next generation of elites.

Further, Jefferson’s vision for public education would preserve a class hierarchy built on racism, sexism, and xenophobia: “Jefferson’s educational hierarchy (and his lack of sustained attention to the marginal status of women, Native Americans, and African Americans) paralleled the existing social inequalities of his era” (Wagoner 133-134). In Jefferson’s view, African Americans were only three-fifths human, Native Americans who failed to assimilate were to be exterminated (Grinde 195, 208), and “the notion of women, propertied or not, as political actors was almost unthinkable” (Brown 102). Jefferson never intended education to be the great equalizer of humanity, but instead to ensure general class immobility.

Similarly, Benjamin Franklin, who was extremely influential in the formation of many of our public institutions—including public sanitation, public libraries, post offices, etc.—published several texts on the education of Americans, in which he also assumes stiff U.S. class stratifications. Curiously, the idea of social mobility is commonly linked to Benjamin Franklin. In fact, he is upheld (by himself and others) as the ultimate example of social mobility—a poor merchant’s son who worked hard enough and sought enough education to pull himself up by the bootstraps to become a wealthy and influential statesman and inventor. He once remarked in the spirit of the American dream, “I’m a strong believer in *luck*. I find the harder I work, the luckier I

get.” Franklin’s *Autobiography* has set the tone for hundreds of biographies and inspiring stories of success—enough, in fact, to create a genre: the rags-to-riches narrative. Franklin, however, intended social mobility—and with it the opportunity to become a cultural leader who shapes political and economic policy—to be available only to a very small demographic: white, propertied males with the potential for aristocracy. In his *Proposals Relating to the Youth of Pensilvania*, Franklin talked about “the public” and “the People,” but, as Gerald T. Burns writes in “Class, Language, and Power in Franklin’s Idea of the English School and Other Early Texts of Vernacular Advocacy: A Perspective on the Social Origins of English,” Franklin wasn’t necessarily being democratic or inclusive: “the operative audience for his performances likely extended no further than the middle class” (107). Specifically, he writes, “The sons of Philadelphia’s ‘middling people’ were to be enabled, through systematic study of their own language and other nontraditional subjects in that language, to progress from relatively ‘lowly Beginnings’ to ‘great Things’: positions of leadership, responsibility and power in their society” (117). Franklin excluded “foreigners,” lower classes, and women from the possibility of social mobility (116), greatly restricting the people available to socially mobilize. Like Jefferson, Franklin never intended social mobility to be available to all.

Some of the founding fathers were very concerned with socially engineering the population via education in order to bring about the new nation, and their writings concerning education were, like much of the writing during the period, very explicit about politics and class considerations. Their writings reveal that the early U.S. founders envisioned and planned a stratified class system, wherein the few elites would rule the popular masses. They ardently desired to see equality of opportunity, regardless of birth, for “everyone”—everyone, that is, who was male, white, English speaking, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, property owning, and capable of

imitating the habits of the ruling class. Education for everyone else, for whom social mobility was not an option, would be denied (until a newly trained industrial working class would be required around 1830). Like the “free market” on which our economy is supposedly based, public education was not designed to be a social leveler or “great equalizer” of mankind. Mass public education didn’t become a reality until the beginning of the twentieth century, long after the founding fathers, but their plans for stratifying social class and language were built into the nation’s institutions and laws. The result has been a rigid class system that favors people born into their demographic.

2. Codifying the legitimate language

Enter Webster and his quest to codify an American English. The legitimate language corresponds to and reifies the socioeconomic structure that the ruling class intends to implement and uphold. “[A]uthority comes to language from outside,” Bourdieu writes. “Language at most *represents* this authority, manifests and symbolizes it” (109). One language isn’t inherently correct or right, but someone grants authority to that dialect to become a language—the correct language—and this authority derives from socioeconomic structures that are already (or newly) in place. The language and grammar rules that are selected as “correct” are based on the language habits of the society’s elite.

The legitimate language is given high status by those who possess high status. During the establishment phase of the legitimate language, the nation builders grant authority to some to codify the language. It is “[p]roduced by authors who have the authority to write, fixed and codified by grammarians and teachers who are also charged with the task of inculcating its mastery” (Bourdieu 45). Nationalists select the legitimate language and grant authority to certain authors, teachers, and grammarians, deemed “expert.” The chosen language can be identified in

any formal codifications of language by these “experts.” Bourdieu writes that “The dictionary is the exemplary result of this labour of codification and normalization” (48). Certain textbooks and grammar books, as well, are sanctioned codifications of the legitimate language.

Noah Webster’s work is a profound example of Bourdieu’s process of codification of the legitimate language. There are many important moments in U.S. history regarding the selection of the legitimate language, but I focus on what Bourdieu identifies as one of the most important parts of codification: the dictionary. In this vein, Noah Webster was one of the most important figures in the codification of U.S. linguistic nationalism. Author of the first “American” dictionary and probably the most influential spelling book in the early U.S., Webster was explicitly concerned with creating a national American character through language. Linguists Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable write in *History of the English Language*:

Webster was a patriot who carried his sentiment from questions of political and social organization over into matters of language. By stressing American usage and American pronunciation, by adopting a large number of distinctive spellings, and especially by introducing quotations from American authors alongside those from English literature, he contrived in large measure to justify the title of his work [*The American Dictionary*]. If, after a century and a half, some are inclined to doubt the existence of anything so distinctive as an American language, his efforts, nevertheless, have left a permanent mark on the language of this country.

(348)

Though Baugh and Cable debate Webster’s title, “father of the American language” (how much did he have to invent, really?), Webster was truly instrumental in *selecting* the legitimate language of the U.S. and *codifying* it in textbooks and a national dictionary. Maybe Webster was

the stepfather of the American language. His indefatigable efforts and considerable influence during the early years of the U.S. were important in creating not an American language but an American linguistic nationalism.

In his publications on the American language, Webster's intention was closely linked to what Bourdieu calls "the making of the nation." A "national language," Webster wrote, "is a band of national union. Every engine should be employed to render the people of this country *national*; to call their attachments home to their own country; and to inspire them with the pride of national character" (Baugh and Cable 347, italics his). Indeed, Webster sought to create that nationalism. In the introduction of *The American Dictionary*, first published in 1828 and revised today as the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Webster argued:

It is not only important, but, in a degree, necessary that the people of this country, should have an *American Dictionary* of the English Language; for, although the body of the language is the same as in England, and it is desirable to perpetuate that sameness, yet some differences must exist. Language is the expression of ideas; and if the people of our country cannot preserve an identity of ideas, they cannot retain an identity of language. Now an identity of ideas depends materially upon a sameness of things or objects with which the people of the two countries are conversant. But in no two portions of the earth, remote from each other, can such identity be found. Even physical objects must be different. But the principal difference between the people of this country and of all others, arises from different forms of government, different laws, institutions and customs... the institutions in this country which are new and peculiar, give rise to new terms, unknown to the people of England... (qtd in Baugh and Cable 348)

Webster was overtly concerned with forming a national identity and political system through language.

The national language would also help unify the nation. According to Harlow Giles Unger in *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*, Webster traveled through the states shortly after the American Revolution and resolved to codify a national language to unify the citizens:

Instead of the joyous celebrations he expected to hear among a newly independent people, he heard a dizzying cacophony of languages and accents—Dutch, French, German, Swedish, Gaelic, and varieties of English that the Connecticut Calvinist from Yale had never heard before: the muddy drawls of the rural South, the gargled grunts of Philadelphia Negroes; and the clipped utterances of militiamen from the northern reaches of New Hampshire.... Only four years out of college and a mere twenty-four years of age, Noah Webster believed he could unite the American people by creating a new, common language, or as he called it, a “federal language.” (44)

Webster did this largely by creating differences between U.S. English and British English. He once wrote that he hoped for “in a course of time, a language in North America, as different from the future language of England, as the modern Modern Dutch, Danish, and Swedish are from the German, or from one another” (qtd in Baugh and Cable 347). So, for example, Webster changed the English spellings of *musick* and *publick* to *music* and *public*, deleted the *u* from words such as *colour* and *glamour*, reversed the *-re* in *centre* and *theatre*, and dropped double consonants in words such as *traveller* and *waggon* (Unger 105). Further, he made distinctions between American and English usages in his lexicography (308).

Webster also changed the way English was taught in classrooms across the country. Unger writes that he set about trying to remedy “the regional accents and speech patterns of the children” by changing textbook pronunciation guides (55). Webster published his first textbook, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, as a three-volume set consisting of a speller (1783), a grammar (1784), and a reader (1785). In 1786, the speller was retitled *The American Spelling Book* and “made every previous speller obsolete and gained a virtual monopoly in American classrooms for more than a century” (54).

Though Webster strongly wanted to define the U.S. in opposition to Britain, he selected and promoted as the national American language a dialect of the Northeast U.S. that was strikingly similar to British English (I’m really understating it here), to the exclusion of the languages and dialects of a large portion of the rest of the United States population. This legitimate language was based on what the early leaders of the U.S. spoke, ensuring that the U.S. educational system would reward anyone who spoke similarly. Like his close friend Benjamin Franklin, Webster believed that the language of American universal education ought to be English, while Latin and Greek were reserved for the instruction of Jefferson’s “geniuses,” who were tracked into higher education.

Webster’s decision to codify his own dialect as the national language adheres to Bourdieu’s theory. The legitimate language is inevitably codified according to the tastes of the language codifiers. In addition to codifying national linguistic error and correctness and setting themselves up as experts who can distinguish between what Jefferson called the “laboring and the learned,” the founders of the U.S. socially planned the economy that would create corresponding inequalities in the educational system (qtd. in Bowles and Gintis 29). From then on, the education system carried out the order of sorting folks into the economy behind a façade

of meritocracy. The codification of the legitimate language, according to Bourdieu, is then programmed into educational institutions, which in turn reify the socioeconomic hierarchy. The long-short of it is that, wherever folks are born into the capitalist system, they generally stay. Educational and linguistic inequalities consistently correspond with the class system that the nation builders initially established.

Cajuns, who had done their best to stay outside the capitalist economy were brought in at the bottom of the social hierarchy, meaning that their language—before they even uttered a word—was bound to be a shoddy vernacular with no political clout or privilege.

Socioeconomy of Cajuns

In the early 1920s, Cajuns were familiar with capitalism, but maintained something more like an unstratified peasant class rooted in an agrarian economy, a clan society with strong family alliances (like traditional Scottish communities). If an individual chose to rise above the rank of Cajun, he or she would self-remove and now claim the title “Creole,” while many of the “underclass” from surrounding ethnicities melded with the Cajun community, soon taking on their food and language customs. The result was a community whose identity and coherence were based on social position instead of ethnicity.³⁰ Though Cajuns were very property-centered (valuing their farms in particular), there was a strong tradition of communal labor and assistance. The following brief history of Cajuns demonstrates their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

First, a word on sources. In addition to a few other historians, I rely heavily on Carl Brasseaux’s books *The Founding of New Acadia: The Beginnings of Acadian Life in Louisiana, 1765-1803*, and *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877*, in this section for a

³⁰ In fact, the Acadians who stayed in Canada (from whom Cajuns are descended, as I explain later) claim the purist blood of the Acadian diaspora, whereas Cajuns are known to be very mixed.

few reasons. In local Louisiana studies, Brasseaux is recognized as one of the most authoritative voices on Cajun history, and his books are the only academic sources for certain periods of Cajun history. Also, Brasseaux is one of the most objective writers of Cajun history, striving to correct past stereotypes.³¹ In spite of his rigor, even Brasseaux falls into sentimentalizing Cajuns at times in the style of histories about our rugged early American frontiersmen: “Though compelled to tame the wilderness themselves, some Acadian pioneers, by virtue of personal initiative and unflagging industry, nevertheless managed to build modest fortunes. Like biblical patriarchs, these frontiersmen and their descendants measured their wealth in terms of real estate and livestock” (*Founding* 190). His histories, in spite of the frontier talk, are the least sentimental in that they include records and details of some of the less noble things Cajuns have done—for example, the vigilante movement, which I recount later.

Christophe Landry, another voice in Louisiana francophone studies, contests Brasseaux’s claim that Cajuns have always been and still are white in “Multilingualism and Language Politics in Post-War Creole Louisiana” (forthcoming). Almost all communities have a certain amount of mixing, but Landry argues that people who now fall under the categories of Cajuns, black Creoles, and Creoles of color were all just “French” or “Creole” before class, racial and linguistic integration into the U.S. He cites census reports that reveal a far greater degree of residential integration in what he calls the “Latin” parishes (parishes settled by French, Spanish,

³¹ Most past representations in literature have either sentimentalized and romanticized Acadians/Cajuns or depicted them as low-class trash (in keeping with the traditionally classed terminology surrounding Cajuns). Elista Istre writes in her thesis, “*Laissez les Bon Temps Rouler! Cajun Stereotypes and the Development of Cultural Tourism in South Louisiana*,” that there have been two primary representations of Cajuns in literature—the gentle, romanticized “angel” and the dirty, ignorant, violent, and backwards masses. She writes, “Authors like Longfellow and De la Houssaye [who wrote *Poupponne and Balthazar* (1888)] isolated their [Acadian] heroines from the [Acadian] people around them, perhaps because of Victorian America’s rejection of the *real* Acadian stereotypes. In glamorizing the Acadian experience, both writers presented a surreal stereotypical figure that had little basis in fact. While praising the simplicity of Acadian life, Longfellow exaggerated the harmony and tranquility of their pastoral existence. De la Houssaye, on the other hand, was careful to distinguish between the poor, uncouth, violent ‘Cajuns’ and the genteel, upper-class French Creoles” (25).

Creole, Isleño, and so on) than in the Anglo parishes (which were completely segregated). Landry also supports his claim with research on food, music, and language in his blog post “Cajuns & Louisiana Creoles: Really a Difference?” He argues that these markers of cultural cohesion have evolved in the Latin parishes according to region rather than ethnicity, demonstrating a greater degree of mixing than Anglo parishes. Although now, according to Dubois and Horvath, “Creole African Americans without hesitation identify Cajuns as whites, while Cajuns identify Creole African Americans as blacks” (“Creoles,” 194), Landry argues that it wasn’t until U.S. assimilation that these parishes were reorganized racially into “white” Cajuns and “black” Creoles (Creoles of color have had a hard time proving they exist since assimilation; they are often just lumped in with black Creoles or African Americans, with whom they do not identify), with corresponding differences between Cajun French and Creole French, Cajun cuisine and Creole cuisine, and Cajun music and Creole music.

In my personal communications with him, Landry cites the story of the musician Amédé Ardoin (1898-1942) as an example of the mixing in Louisiana’s Latin parishes before U.S. assimilation. Ardoin, now recognized as “black,” played accordion with the famous “white” Cajun fiddler Dennis McGee, together recording the earliest tracks of Cajun music for Columbia Records. Their recordings sound far more similar to the typical two-steps and waltzes of the Cajun “chanky-chank” (a nickname for Cajun music imitating its rhythm) than the faster, blues-inflected Zydeco (nickname for black Creole music, based on the French African pronunciation of the French word for green beans, *les aricots*). Ardoin was attacked and run over with a Model A car after one performance in which he purportedly used the handkerchief of a “white” Cajun woman to wipe the sweat from his brow (some claim the handkerchief story is a euphemism for a closer relationship). Details are sketchy, but reports say that Ardoin’s attackers were from

Alabama, where such mixing in music and society was punishable by death. Landry argues that the story of Ardoin demonstrates Latin and Anglo differences in attitudes on race before the French of Southwest Louisiana assimilated into the economy and language of the South, when they also took on dominant U.S. ideas on race and separated themselves into white Cajuns, black Creoles, and—a still troubling category for the U.S. census—Creoles of color.³² He suggests that scholars in Cajun Studies today accurately label Cajuns “white” according to the dominant U.S. values regarding race, but the oversimplified racial categories of the U.S. cannot represent the complexity of Cajuns’ and Creoles’ understanding of race before their assimilation (which may have been more similar to Spanish ideas of creolization). Racism between blacks and poor whites was encouraged and largely established in the South by the 1770s, but Cajuns and Creoles living outside the Southern plantation and sharecropping economies wouldn’t conform to these new definitions and prejudices, or even necessarily be aware of them, until they began assimilating in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, outsiders living and operating within the dominant Southern economy would recognize Cajuns as “mixed” or, as they were often called, “Acadian niggers.”

Regardless of whether Cajuns have always been white (or if Cajuns are even a cohesive group apart from Creoles and other groups), Cajuns do exist now as a self-identified “white” group, as a result of the 1970s Cajun Renaissance, the efforts of local historians, and Louisiana’s tourism industry. The racially ambiguous, “non-white” past of Cajuns still shows up in literature

³² Like Brasseaux, Shane Bernard argues that Cajuns have always been white, but he paints a picture of cultural mixing that supports Landry’s theory when he describes the famous Louisiana gumbo: “Cajuns borrowed the word *gumbo* from a West African word meaning “okra,” a vegetable introduced to South Louisiana by African slaves and regarded by many as an essential gumbo ingredient. Cajuns obtained file (powdered leaves of the sassafras tree) from Native Americans, using it to thicken and season gumbo. They adopted red peppers such as cayenne, which gave gumbo its spicy flavor, from the Spanish. And the roux came from the Cajuns’ own French heritage” (*Cajuns and Their Acadian Ancestors* 46). Food fusions are compatible with racial stratification where there are hired cooks (for example, on plantations), but prairie Cajuns didn’t have hired cooks. There is a marked difference between the gumbo style of New Orleans (where hired and enslaved cooks may well have created the recipes) and the gumbo style of Southwest Louisiana around the prairies and bayous.

as recent as Doris Tentchoff's 1980 "Ethnic Survival Under Anglo-American Hegemony: The Louisiana Cajuns," in which she mentions Cajuns mixing with *les gens de couleur libres* (free people of color), Native Americans living in the area, and other surrounding groups (232). She writes that Louisiana Sabines (mixed Native Americans) describe the process of linguistic assimilation to English as "going white" (234-235). As I stressed in my introduction, however, the Louisiana French experience varies by region. In some areas, Cajunness may be completely light-skinned; in my experience, Cajunness is often darker and indicative of more than the Mediterranean mixing that Brasseaux grants. Also, because people have only claimed the term *Cajun* one generation deep (as a result of the Cajun Renaissance of the 1970s), it's difficult to tell whether their family's former use of *Creole* referred to their country of origin, their class status, or their ethnicity. In any case, the portion of Brasseaux's history that I use to explain settlement in Canada, the Grand Dérangement, and subsequent resettlements in Louisiana has not been contested.

I also rely on the research of John Mack Faragher, a Yale historian who writes that he grew curious about the Acadian story after seeing a poster that depicted the "Acadian Odyssey" after their expulsion. He writes in the introduction to his history, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland*, that the expulsion is "strikingly similar to events of ethnic cleansing in our own time" (xiii). Like Brasseaux, he uses historical documents and records to reconstruct the events of settlement, community development, and expulsion, since the Acadians themselves were mostly illiterate.

The story of the Cajuns begins far north of Louisiana. French settlers gradually arrived in what is now eastern Maine and Canadian coastal lands at the beginning of the seventeenth century at the same time that England was colonizing the east coast of what is now the U.S.; they

began peaceable trade relations with the Natives there. An encampment called “*l’Acadie*” (probably a derivation of the Mikmawísimk Indian word *-akadie*, meaning “place of abundance”) was established in 1604 in present-day Dorchet Island, Maine, for the purpose of fur trade and populated largely by indentured servants (*engagés*), who called themselves *les Acadiens*, or “Acadians.”³³ After one year and close to 50% mortality, the colony relocated to present-day Port Royal, Nova Scotia, where, over the next century and a half, they primarily dwelled throughout several political skirmishes and repopulations from France.

During this time, the Acadians established socioeconomic and political habits that would last well into their tenure in Louisiana. According to multiple historians, Acadians developed a social structure unlike surrounding colonial settlements; it was based on extended kinship ties, communal labor pools, and very little class stratification. Brasseaux writes that this unique socioeconomy was due to a number of unusual factors: common class background (peasants), geographic isolation, and a lack of direct French government (*Founding* 3).³⁴ The vast majority of Acadians were “drawn from peasant stock, usually in the Centre-Oust provinces [Poitou, Aunis, Angoumois, and Saintoge],” writes Brasseaux (4, 8), where they led agrarian lives under a feudal system and caste structure (5). As a result, Acadians imported their clan-style relations and communal labor pools, with which they invented, constructed, and maintained an elaborate system of dikes to reclaim wetlands as farming land.³⁵ Their propensity for being “clannish, self-

³³ An alternative version suggests that Giovanni Verrazano named the encampment after *Arcadia*, which eventually evolved into *Acadie*. Jacques Henry supports this theory with official maps from 1548 to 1575 that “named the area corresponding to Nova Scotia *Larcadia*, *Larcadie* or *Arcadia*” (32). John Mack Faragher concludes that, regardless of the origin, the settlement’s name came to favor the Mikmawísimk word, indicating the level of “intercultural conversations between Mikmaw hunters and French traders” (6).

³⁴ Brasseaux draws this conclusion by contrasting Acadians with “the Englishmen at Plymouth and Jamestown and the Normans and Picards in the St. Lawrence Valley” (3).

³⁵ Faragher writes that the Acadian dike system improved upon other existing dikes: “Its key feature, the *aboiteau*—a sluice fitted with a clapet that was forced shut by the rising tide on the seaward side, then pushed open as the tide fell by water draining from the fields—is found neither on *saunier* dikes nor in the drainage systems of Poitou, and the word *aboiteau* itself has no equivalent in continental French. The colonists developed this system during the

contained” was further enhanced by their geographic location in the marshes, which cut them off from much communication with neighboring settlements (10).

Another political feature that set Acadian society apart from their surrounding colonies was their relationship with Native Americans. Faragher writes that “The history of colonization is usually written as the process of native assimilation to European culture. It may be more accurate to think of the men who remained in l’Acadie as assimilated to the customs of the Mikmaq” (36-37). A majority of the first few waves of Acadian men married into the Mikmaq tribe almost immediately, and kinships between the two groups remained strong through following generations. Acadians lost their colonial ties to France.

Most important to their development as an autonomous settlement, Acadians were largely neglected by France because of France’s involvement in various wars and the rapid turnover rate in colonial officials. Because of this governing neglect, Acadians developed a sense of self-government and came to resent any attempts at outside government, including officials sent from France. Brasseaux writes, “the Acadians did not hesitate to protest the actions of local administrators and clergymen to higher authorities in Quebec and France. When appeals proved ineffective, the colonists resorted to procrastination, subterfuge, and other forms of passive resistance to foil unpopular administrative policies” (*Founding* 7). With the contracts of the *engagés* expiring and the “chronic” neglect of France, as well as the back-and-forth occupations of the French and English (over the land where the Acadians lived), the Acadians developed an independent political stance, refusing to take any side but their own in skirmishes and politics. They came to be called the “French Neutrals” by the surrounding Native Americans, Scotch, and English, because of this independence.

1640s, and it was in full operation by the early 1650s, when Nicolas Denys was impressed with the ‘great extent of meadows which the sea used to cover and which the Sieur d’Aulnay has drained’” (49).

After the French and Indian War, the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht awarded the Acadian French settlement for the last time to Britain, which demanded that the “French Neutrals” swear allegiance to the British crown. Most of the Acadians were willing to comply, as long as they were guaranteed neutrality in British skirmishes and wars: “We will take up arms neither against his British Majesty, nor against France, nor against any of their subjects or allies” (Bernard, *Cajuns and Their Acadian Ancestors* 15). Brasseaux lists provisions: “freedom to exercise their Catholic faith; guaranteed neutrality in the inevitable future Franco-English wars in order to avoid retributive raids by local French-allied Indians; and recognition by the colonial government that the Acadians were, in fact, a distinct community” (Brasseaux, *Founding* 14). In short, for the next half-century, the Acadians were almost content with British rule, even sometimes preferring it to French domination, according to Brasseaux, as long as they could assert their semi-autonomy to choose when they would comply and when they wouldn’t (19). By 1755, however, a change in colonial administration decisively ended the tenuous relationship between the Acadians and the British. Infuriated by the Acadians’ continued negotiations for a conditional oath of allegiance, General Cornwallis, who had overseen the clearances in the Scottish Highlands, told them, “You declare openly that you will be the subjects of His Britannic Majesty only on such and such conditions. It appears to me that you think yourselves independent of any government, and you wish to treat with the King as if you were so” (qtd in Faragher 254-255). The Acadians had consistently resisted assimilation and subjection to both French and British colonial administrations, but in the eyes of the new officials, the Acadians’ independence was especially threatening.

Le Grand Dérangement

The colony's new governor, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Lawrence, launched what came to be called Le Grand Dérangement, a "great upheaval," between 1755 and 1765, during which about half of the 8000 Acadians died. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow memorialized the tragedy in "Evangeline," the story of two Acadian lovers who were separated during the Grand Dérangement.³⁶ Essentially, the British tricked and captured most of the Acadians, then deported them and distributed them among British colonies all around the Atlantic rim, eventually sending some back to France. Lawrence wrote a memo revealing the English's desire for Acadian lands and distrust of Acadian alliances with the Mikmaw:

We are now upon a great and noble Scheme of sending the neutral French out of this Province, who have always been secret Enemies, and have encouraged our Savages to cut our throats. If we effect their Expulsion, it will be one of the greatest Things that ever the English did in America; for by all Accounts, that part of the Country they possess, is as good Land as any in the World: In case therefore we could get some good English Farmers in their Room, this Province would abound with all Kinds of Provisions.

(Pennsylvania Gazette, 4 September 1755, qtd in Faragher x)

Similar to other "ethnic cleansings," the British attempted to remove all Acadians and replace them with British peasants. A common tactic was to call the men of the villages to a meeting, where they were taken prisoner. Then their wives and children were kidnapped, and their property ransacked to pay for the "cost" of their removal. Many Acadians died during the deportation due to disease and bad conditions, and some died after being denied entrance to coastal colonies because of anti-Catholic and anti-French sentiment, but many others were

³⁶ Cajun scholars refute Longfellow's story as sentimentalized and romanticized and an inaccurate depiction of Acadians. The Cajun movement beginning in the 1970s criticizes the genteel Acadians' attempts to appeal to U.S. audiences by rewriting their history to conform with their Anglo expectations (created by Longfellow in *Evangeline*). Similarly, Landry now criticizes the current establishment of Cajun scholars for trying to conform to Anglo culture by insisting that Cajuns have always been white.

accepted as indentured slaves. The Acadians who fled their homes and escaped capture either died of malnutrition and starvation (after eating their own moccasins) or eventually surrendered to the British, who brought them back to their own confiscated lands as slaves to teach the newly settled Anglo-Saxon and German immigrants how to operate the complicated dike systems that the Acadians had designed for their farms. Some refugees launched guerilla campaigns against the British and even engaged in piracy along the coast, but were hunted down by British soldiers or English-allied Natives (Brasseaux, *Founding* 27-29). Approximately 75% of the original French colony was displaced in Le Grand Dérangement between 1755 and 1763.

The English's overriding motive was to destroy cultural solidarity, because Acadian solidarity was what most threatened them. Lieutenant-Governor Charles Lawrence wrote (August 1755): "That they may not have it in their power to return to this Province, nor to join in strengthening the French of Canada or Louisbourg, it is resolved that they be dispersed among His Majesty's colonys upon the Continent of America" (qtd in Faragher 335). In an effort to destroy cultural solidarity, they were to be removed "in groups not to exceed one thousand persons, in order that 'they cannot easily collect themselves together again' (336). Brasseaux disagrees with the portrayal of forced familial separations. He writes that, "contrary to the Evangeline myth," families or at least communities were often exiled together and "Acadian solidarity consequently remained intact" (*Founding* 26). Faragher, however, argues that stories of separations are too strong in Acadian cultural memory to be ignored. Though Governor Winslow instructed his officers that "whole families go together" (qtd in Faragher 359), Faragher writes that the separations probably happened as a result of the language impediments between the English and Acadians and the chaos of the removal.

William Faulkner Rushton's account in *The Cajuns: From Acadia to Louisiana* may explain the conflicting opinions. He writes that the reports of separations are due to the fact that Cajuns had no concept of the nuclear family, just the extended clan ties that structured their communities. By definition for Acadians, family included not just siblings, parents, and children, but also cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents (as well as any surviving great-relatives). He cites the experience of one woman who experienced the Grand Dérangement: ““Our manner of living in Acadia was peculiar,’ recalls the grandmother of a St. Martinville judge, in his 1907 classic oral-history account, *Acadian Reminiscences*, ‘the people forming, as it were, one single family.’ Such a family [...] forms a community where no one is left out and where institutions like mental hospitals and old-folk homes were never developed” (6-9). Because Acadians were a clan society, family was important because of emotional bonds, of course, but also because of social institutions and economic infrastructure. Consequently, one of the most devastating consequences of the Grand Dérangement was, in addition to familial separations, the destruction of Acadian internal socioeconomic relationships, a cornerstone of cultural solidarity.

Of those who survived the deliberate ethnic dispersal, a large Acadian Diaspora can be traced all over the world. Brasseaux writes in *Scattered to the Wind* that Acadians were dropped off all along the eastern American seaboard in British colonies, as well as Saint Domingue (Haiti), Martinique, French Guiana, and St. Pierre and Miquelon (off Newfoundland), as well as the Falkland Islands off Argentina, while some were sent back to France. Countless deportees simply disappeared into British coastal settlements or were imprisoned, indentured, shot on sight (Maryland), and even sold into slavery (North Carolina), because of the colonies' fierce Catholic and French prejudice. Others died of disease and starvation right outside colonies, as they waited weeks and months to be allowed to disembark their ships. Some managed to survive and

maintain their Acadian identity; several of these French communities still exist along the Atlantic rim. New Brunswick is home to the Acadian population who initially escaped during the Grand Dérangement, and other Acadian locales exist throughout the Canadian Maritimes. There remains a large community of Acadians in the Maine area (Acadian National Park) and other parts of New England. Some trekked further inland into what would become the U.S., leaving their mark on a well-known range of mountains along the way: Acadians named the Grand Tetons—roughly, “big titties.” Many of the Acadians who were dispersed throughout North America, as well as those sent back to France where they found little connection after 150 years’ separation, were treated as outcasts and refugees on the dole and became quite a problem for governments.

And this is how they wound up in Louisiana. The Acadians—who were denied entry to many English colonies, unable to return to Nova Scotia, and increasingly discontent in France—began to consider Louisiana, a former French colony now under Spanish rule that was willing to take in Acadians to settle the wilderness. Governor Antonio de Ulloa guaranteed land grants for the approximately 1000 incoming Acadians between 1757 and 1770, who hoped to reestablish their agrarian lives and be reunited with their families. While the first Acadians to arrive were given generous provision and desirable lands and permitted to settle in their former pattern of widely spaced family clusters, Governor Ulloa created a rigid settling policy for subsequent Acadian immigrants, regardless of their family or preference, in order to create a western border in Louisiana against the English. Many Acadians participated in the Rebellion of 1768 at New Orleans to overthrow Ulloa, who consistently threatened to expel them when they tried to resettle closer to family. Under the administration of the next Spanish governor Alejandro O’Reilly, however, the Acadians found a more lenient settlement policy and by 1803 were fairly settled in.

In the end, about 2,600 to 3,000 Acadians settled in Louisiana, some along the Mississippi River west of New Orleans, where they built levees to take advantage of the fertile soil and join the Southern agricultural economy, and some in the prairies and bayous west of the Atchafalaya River, where they could be almost completely economically independent (Brasseaux, *Founding* 115).

Once settled in, Acadians sought to reestablish their semi-autonomous neutrality among the colonial powers who took turns running Louisiana—Spain until 1800, France for a brief three years until the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and finally the United States. Though quite independent, Acadians weren't antagonistic toward colonial powers—and in fact were willing to “soldier up” and fight in the American War for Independence. According to historian Lauren C. Post in “Some Notes on the Attakapas Indians of Southwest Louisiana,” Acadians fought alongside Attakapas Indians, who are native to the Louisiana area, and free men of color in a contingency out of Southwest Louisiana. Post reports, “The militia, particularly the Acadians, who had not forgotten the persecutions they had suffered at the hands of the English, behaved splendidly” (John Walton Caughey, qtd in Post 230). There are similar reports of Acadians fighting in the Revolutionary War around the Northeast.

After fighting, however, Acadians were very serious about returning to their land. Their attitude toward land may have been a reactionary stance to the exploitation they had experienced under feudal France. Brasseaux writes that land acquisition, for the newly settled Acadians, was based on a desire not for profit but for autonomy: “Products of a precapitalist environment, they sought neither prestige nor affluence through land acquisition, but rather economic independence and a comfortable existence patterned upon their former agrarian life-style” (*Acadian* 4). Unlike their capitalist neighbors in the plantation areas, whose primary goal was to accumulate wealth,

Acadians' land ownership was important for subsistence farming. Their attitude toward land would eventually make trouble for them because they would refuse to assimilate with the Southern economy, but for now their attitude toward land was passionate, bordering on the absurd. Because land was such a priority, Acadians were quite a lawsuit-happy lot, impressing both their British and Spanish governments with numerous and "petty" legal quibbles. Brasseaux observes, "The intensity and spontaneity of the Acadian defense of property rights is an accurate measure of the prominent position of land in the Acadian hierarchy of values" (*Founding* 144). He writes that the early civil suits in Acadie usually involved disputed boundary lines (8), and "even the most minor property disputes were brought before the colonial magistrates" (143). Later in Louisiana, when Acadians became unhappy with the courts' justice, many became involved in 1859 with what Brasseaux describes as "the second largest vigilante movement in nineteenth-century America and third largest movement in U.S. history" (*Acadian* 116). The vigilante movement was ostensibly organized to enforce justice for thieves and outlaws who had managed to finagle the notoriously corrupt courts, but it quickly degraded into a racist campaign of wealthier Acadian men imposing their norms on any deviants (particularly interracial relationships). This class-motivated racial normalization was short-lived though. With the start of the Civil War, the vigilantes quickly morphed into "Jayhawkers," a group of anti-Confederate men, both black and white, who returned to their dedication to land by guarding local properties from pillaging soldiers, eventually disbanding after the death of their leader, Ozémé Carrière.

Land appears to have been the most important reason the Acadians showed any resistance to their colonial administrators, in fact. They demonstrated no concern for state or national interests or the scuffles going on around them, because their primary loyalty was to their own farms. In fact, Acadians chose to fight in the Union army during the Civil War—what Acadians

called “*la guerre des Confederes*,” or “the Confederates’ War”—when they got fed up with Southern drafting and pillaging of their farms for Rebel supplies (Brasseaux, *Acadian* 58). The bulk of the resistance to Confederate conscription came from the “insular, poor, nonslaveholding prairie Acadians [who] viewed the war as an elitist cause” and tried often to defect from the Rebels (62). A Union prisoner of war, one Lieutenant George C. Harding, described the deserting tendencies of the Acadians he encountered where he was detained:

Camp Pratt was filled with Acadiann [sic] conscripts [...]. The wants of the Acadiann are few and his habits simple. With a bit of cornbread, a potato, and a clove of garlic, with an occasional stewed crawfish, he gets along quite comfortably, and for luxuries, smokes husk cigarettes and drinks rum—when he can get it. The Acadiann has great powers of endurance, but not much stomach for fight. Of the herd at Camp Pratt, desertions were frequent, sometimes as many as thirty or forty stampeding in a single night. But they would be caught, brought back, made to wear a barrell [sic] for a week or two, and finally broke in. (qtd. in Brasseaux, *Acadian* 63-64)

Later, when Union soldiers moved into the area, hundreds of Acadians who had fled to avoid conscription or had defected from the Rebel army, responded enthusiastically. One Union officer wrote:

The Union feeling in this portion of the state—especially among the poor class of citizens, is very strong. They are coming into our lines by the hundreds, and either volunteering or taking the oath of allegiance. Many of them say they have not been home or inside of a house for eighteen months, but have been hiding in swamps to avoid the conscription. There is now already three hundred of them

mounted, and acting as scouts, and they are found to be very useful, as they are acquainted with every part of the country. (qtd. in Brasseaux, *Acadian* 66-67)

Acadians' willingness to fight for the North, however, changed when Union troops behaved just like the Rebel troops, raiding Acadians' crops and livestock and detaining them in a war they didn't give a hoot about. During the Civil War, both Union and Confederate troops noted the Acadian resistance to the war effort and their determination to go home. Lieutenant Colonel Bringier of the Fourth Louisiana Cavalry wrote, "They *all* have excellent reasons to go home.... Some on whom this home influence is very great, walk as far as 20 & 25 miles to spend only 12 hours at home" (qtd in Brasseaux, *Acadian* 71). An 1863 cartoon in *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* depicts an Acadian conscript, seemingly on guard duty, shackled and chained to a tree to keep him from running away (Brasseaux, *Acadian* 88c).

Acadians had an intense sense of "home" that still exists today—perhaps because of the long journey to finally establish permanent residences, as well as the traditional clan-based economy. Brasseaux researched "early land and conveyance records that provide a nearly comprehensive view of land acquisition and ownership in the predominantly Acadian parishes" and reports that they "reveal a remarkable record of residential stability based on familial cohesiveness. Even in modern Louisiana, it is not uncommon to find Acadian families residing on their ancestral Spanish land grants, and the vast majority of Cajuns currently live within fifty miles of their birthplace" (*Acadian* 91). One explanation is the difference between urban workers who control only one asset, their labor (which is exchanged for a money wage), and peasants who control their labor in coordination with the tools of production and the materials of production (land, animals, seed, etc.), which produces little cash but lots of resources, creating a strong attachment to "place." Cajuns are "one of the most stable populations in the history of

North America,” and Louisiana is the least transient state, according to the 2000 census, likely because of the localized economies, which rely on local foods and trades (Blaine Harden, “Born on the Bayou and Barely Feeling Any Urge to Roam” 1). The economy is not easily recreated, because it is not entirely mainstreamed yet, especially in smaller towns, so many Cajuns can’t imagine *how* to live somewhere else. But it’s not just the work arrangements; there’s something else, and it has to do with the extended family structure in Cajun social arrangements, something I discuss later in the chapter. Cajuns are overwhelmingly no longer agrarian and are free to move around with their labor, but they are still one of the most static populations. Though a long-term trend of leaving the area has emerged among Cajuns with higher education, Brasseaux observes that this trend invariably leads to unhappy Cajuns who live elsewhere and complain that they miss the food and their mamas (Harden 4). Many of them move back to Acadiana as quickly as possible. The effect is so common that my friend Dallas Begnaud calls it the bungee cord attached to our backs. “Has Frank discovered it yet?” he asked one night, referring to my then-fiancé. “You can run as hard and as long as you like, but the minute you stop running, it’ll snap you back.” Dallas had thought he’d never come back to Louisiana after moving away, first to Corpus Christi and then to China, but there he is, back in Lafayette like the good Begnaud he is, baking bread in the shape of fleurs-de-lis. I tell you what: I don’t know exactly what it is, but it’s something you got if you’re Cajun. The magnetism of home is only one of the many holdovers from early Acadian traditions.

The Invention of Cajun

The period after the Civil War marks the emergence of Acadian class divisions and the Cajun construction. *Cajun* is a classed term, as it represents those Acadians who did not assimilate into the Southern economy and were disdained as “low-class.” Though Acadians had remained

essentially socially unstratified in Nova Scotia, those who moved to Louisiana quickly developed extreme class divisions, leading to a new system of labels and the invention of *Cajun*. According to Brasseaux, “The fragmentation of the once extremely cohesive Acadian community appears to have taken place between 1790 and 1810, when second- and third-generation Acadians embraced both slavery and the plantation system” (*Acadian* 5). Other historians agree that the invention of Cajunness coincided with the new class divisions among Acadian immigrants to Louisiana. In “From *Acadien* to *Cajun* to *Cadien*: Ethnic Labelization and Construction of Identity,” Jacques Henry follows the evolution of terminology and cultural identity. Regarding early uses of *Cajun*, he writes, “According to [James] Dormon, the process of exclusion that resulted in the distinction between ‘lowly Cajun’ and Lordly ‘Genteel Acadian’” was achieved by 1865; Brasseaux estimates that the transition from ‘Acadian to Cajun’ was completed by 1877” (40). Henry writes that Cajuns were a “symbolically discrete” group by the turn of the century (39).

In short, a difference arose between river Acadians and prairie Acadians. River Acadians, living in close proximity to elite French Creoles and Anglos, found very fertile lands and began to accumulate wealth, with which they copied their neighbors. Many of them acquired slaves and some even climbed into the planter class. Generally, those who assimilated into the Southern plantocracy tried to pass as French Creoles and, later, as Anglo-Americans, distancing themselves from their Acadian identity and culture (*Acadian* 8). Meanwhile, the prairie Acadians established subsistence farms and ranches and, though many acquired a great deal of wealth and sometimes also took slaves (usually wet nurses and domestic labor, later field hands, according to Brasseaux), they remained mostly cut off from the Southern economy. River Acadians who did not wish to assimilate into French Creole or Anglo-American culture sold their river land and moved out to the prairies and bayous—some historians call this the “second expulsion”—where

they maintained their pre-capitalist economy based on communal labor pools, a sort of a clan system, and very little class stratification.

The word *Cajun* is a derivation of *Acadian* that arose around the time that Acadians became classed. Henry reports, “Most sources agree to award the coining of *Cajun* to *Putnam’s Magazine* contributor R. L. Daniels in 1879” (33-34), but he credits the cementing of the spelling and pronunciation to two factors. First, the pronunciation switch from *Cadian* to the American *Cajun* or the French *cagen* was due to a new consonant sound in Cajun French:

The introduction of the letters *j* or *g* accurately symbolizes the oft-noted shift in both Acadian and Cajun French from [d] to [dž] when followed by an open vowel [i]. Such a shift is found in *Dieu* [dioe] pronounced [džoe], *diable* [diabl] pronounced [džab]. French spelling has no codified symbol to represent the sound [dž] which is not a French consonant. (36)

Second, the spelling of *Cajun* came about as a derogatory Anglo label: “it follows the pattern employed to *Injun*,” writes Henry, “the spelling used by American writers to convey scorn and disdain of American Indians” (39). Spellings in literature from the period vary, but the *-jun* suffix became standard.

The word *Cajun* was such an insult that it was avoided in polite company. Henry writes, “[Rebecca] Davis [in 1887] drew a distinction between the good ‘Acadian’ and the ‘wretched Cajans.’ *Acadian* is used when positive qualities are mentioned, and *Cajun* is associated with condemnable behavior” (40). Julian Ralph, a writer for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* traveling through Louisiana in 1893, reported that “it was strange indeed to hear that we not call them Cajuns to their faces lest they be offended, that the term is taken as one of reproach” (qtd. in Henry 38). Sociological reports from the 1930s and 1940s describe the status of the word:

“Cajun became ‘a fighting word’ (St. Martin) and corresponded to the term ‘hill-billy’ in other sections of the United States (Saucier, 1943: 102)” (Trépanier 164). Henry gives an example of this usage:

Here an old Negro mammy did not say “poor white trash.” She said “Cajun”—or “blue bellied Cajun.” When the old Creoles wished to designate some ignoramus in their midst with whom they were exasperated, they tacked on an adjective... “*maudit Cajin*.”... As another educator, a man from *La Côte des Acadiens*, laughingly puts it, “Me, I am Creole; the other fellow, he is a Cajun.” (Henry 42)

The label *Cajun* was an insult for prairie Acadians well into the twentieth century.

Interestingly, *Cajun* came to designate class position far more than ethnic identity: “an ignorant or poor person, even though Creole in origin, might be called a Cajun, while a prosperous or educated Acadian would be called a Creole (Saucier, 1943: 102)” (Trépanier 164). *Cajun* was a shifting category that covered any poor whites in the French speaking areas of Louisiana. This example is from 1932: “This name is sometimes used ironically but most often conveys disdain. It does not at all appear to be the abbreviated form of Acadian; it is applied indiscriminately to any Creole who, whatever its origin, smells like the country and looks like a peasant. That’s a Cajun!” (Jay Ditchy, qtd. in Henry 39). Because the label applied to class status, it was easy for people to move in and out of categories. Consequently, it was also easy to confuse people who identified as Cajuns and Creoles: “a Cajun would have been glad to be called a Creole because of the higher status associated with the word, while a Creole would have resented being called a Cajun” (Trépanier 167). The label was always an insult, and it was always class-based.

As it turns out, though the insult was unnecessary, the socioeconomic usage of *Cajun* was accurate. Not all Cajuns were Acadian French—or even French—in origin. The insular prairie Acadians absorbed other peoples who also did not participate in the Southern economy, and collectively came to be called Cajuns. According to Brasseaux, Italians, Spanish, Germans, Scots-Irish, and some Native Americans assimilated into the Cajun culture, taking on their language, food, economy, and often Francophone name spellings. Brasseaux reports that assimilation was so successful in some families that they don't know they aren't French: “Indeed, the assimilation of the eastern Creoles into the Lafourche Acadian community has been so complete that such families as the Quatrevingts (originally Achtziger), Chauvins, Himels, Verrets, Cantrelles, and Haydels are generally unaware that their German and French ancestors arrived in Louisiana fully one-half century before the Acadians” (*Acadian* 152). Even still, some of the thickest Cajun accents I've heard have come from the mouths of Laughlins, Romeros, Mesbahs, Snyders, and Sanchezes.³⁷ The way it all shook out after the Civil War was that those who refused to assimilate into the Southern capitalist economy often merged with “lower class” Cajuns, while those who assimilated took a higher position in the social hierarchy.

So, though Acadians became socially stratified, Cajuns didn't. The system of communal labor pools and assistance that had developed in Nova Scotia remained intact in Louisiana. Some were eventually forced to work as day laborers, especially as a result of Reconstruction poverty and a series of natural disasters that reduced almost all working-class groups to extreme poverty and homelessness. But within the community, Cajuns didn't need cash because of subsistence

³⁷ Speaking of which, a note on my own last name: I'm a Stanford, but my Paw Paw Stanford was as Cajun as his accordion. His brother Gervis Stanford, who plays a mean Cajun fiddle, said some English guy came down from Kentucky or something and married into the family. The Cajun woman he married took his name, of course, but not his culture. As Brasseaux argues is typical of Cajuns, the mother passes on the culture, so it doesn't matter what your last name is. If your mama was Cajun, you Cajun. My husband likes to make fun of me because I carry the name of “the enemy.” Queen Elizabeth II of England issued an official apology for all that mess in 2003, so let bygones be bygones, but let's face it, who wants to have an English name in Acadiana?

farming and bartering—in fact, Bernard writes that, like many other isolated minority groups, most Cajuns didn't even notice the Depression (*The Cajuns* xxi). They generally didn't participate in the plantocracy or cash economy of the South unless misfortune drove them to. These economic arrangements were functional alternative structures to capitalism, built on cooperation rather than competition.

There were many food-sharing institutions in place among Cajuns, rendering money unnecessary. In addition to personal subsistence farming and bartering with eggs for supplies at local stores, Cajuns held weekly meat slaughters—boucheries (pig slaughters) in the winter and beouf boucheries (cow slaughters) in the summer. Earl Paul Broussard (b. 1931) of Rice Cove, LA, explains the economy of a beouf boucherie:

Everybody raised a few head of cattle, and they would pick out one calf in the early part of the winter, you know, and set that calf aside for the boucherie in the next summer. And somewhere about the latter part of May or the first part of June, every Saturday morning they would slaughter a calf. One of the farmers in turn—you know, they drew lots, and each Saturday was a different one's turn to furnish the calf. When the calf was slaughtered, everybody was there to help, and the meat was cut up into the different cuts of meat, and it would be stacked on a long table, and everybody had five pounds of meat to bring home. And from week to week your position on the table would move. In other words, this week you might have some of the neck steaks and the ribs, and the following week you would go down and you would hit maybe some of the rib-eye steaks, and then the T-bone steaks, and the rump roast, so every week you had a different type of meat. Some people preferred one type of meat over the others, so there was a lot

of exchange. Now, whatever meat was left over after everyone had their five pounds—sometimes there was some meat left over; the calf was too large—some people would buy a few pounds—extra pounds—to bring home if they had a large family, or, then, the person who had the calf this time, he would take this meat and go out and sell it—you know, probably bring it to town, sell it to a butcher. But they tried to select the calf that would just about make the right weight, you know, maybe about a hundred and fifty pounds of meat so that everybody could have their five pounds and there was very little left over. (audio interview ST1.023, UL Lafayette archives)³⁸

With the money they got from the butcher, Cajuns were able to buy dry goods such as sugar and flour or equipment such as wrought-iron skillets.

There were different methods of preserving the meat for those without access to ice boxes, more common in urban areas. Broussard’s community kept cooked meat in cages outside, where the meat’s grease and the ventilation kept the meat from spoiling for two or three days. Uncle Lionel (who is actually my great uncle) explained to me that they jarred the meat in Pointe Bleu for use in the winter. “We didn’t have no refrigerators, no,” he said, his voice making a perfect tonal scoop between *didn’t* and *no* in the Cajun style of stressing something incredible. “You take the meat et un ’tite peu salt, and put them in a jar, and put them in the cistern,” located beneath the house where it stayed cool. Nolan M. LeBlanc (b. 1927) writes that they “salted and/or smoked meat to prevent spoilage” in his community in Morganza, LA (Shane Bernard Archives, letter).

The community came together for labor projects as well; this type of gathering was called a *coup de mains*, or a “group of hands,” for building houses or barns. Particularly for the yearly

³⁸ This audio transcription was obtained from UL Lafayette’s audio archives, which I describe in chapter three.

tradition of chimney maintenance, folks would take turns helping at one another's homes. Chimneys and homes were typically built of bousillage, a process combining French and Native American techniques. The home's owner would prepare a mixture of silt and "cured" moss (dead, dried, and shucked) to be shaped into bricks and piled into the wooden structure, then covered in layers of lime wash, or whitewash. Like the food shares, everyone got a turn with the community labor. Other communal events were the house dances, called a *bal de maison* or *fais do-do* (because children slept, or "went *do-do*," in an adjoining room while the adults danced the night away). The *courir du Mardi Gras*, or "running of the Mardi Gras," was another community event in which men (typically masked and quite tipsy) went from home to home on horseback collecting the ingredients for a gumbo large enough to feed the whole community at the end of the day. In addition to the community food shares and labor pools, community assistance was a given. LeBlanc writes, "On Saturday the grits mill was started and all the neighbors came to get their corn ground into grits—those with no money or gas got their corn made into grits free. No one was turned away. All hobos were fed well also" (SB Archives, letter).

Some of these traditions are still integral to the lives of Cajuns, even after we've largely assimilated into capitalism; Cajuns somehow find a way to make them coexist. I remember devouring cracklins (fried pig skin) at a boucherie hosted by my Pointe Bleu cousins when I was younger, and boucheries have recently made a tremendous comeback, being featured in several *New York Times* articles and on TV shows like Anthony Bourdain's "No Reservations" (on the Travel Channel). Though nobody really does bousillage anymore (homes are mostly brick and wood), home projects are still often structured around coups de mains; the roof, front porch, and back deck on my mother's home were all constructed in coups de mains. The local men came out to help my family for those projects, and of course the men in my family went out to help the

other families when it was their turn. We also still keep another old tradition that's common to many communities: the mother's helper. When someone in the community has a new baby, whoever has a teenage daughter with baby experience sends her over to stay for a few days, a few weeks, or a few months to help the new mother. Living in New York, I was extremely disappointed that I would miss out on this tradition for my first baby, especially after having put in my own time as a teenager, but my college-aged sister graciously took a year off school to move up here and be a live-in nanny while I wrote my dissertation. Maybe one of my children will be old enough to stay with my sister when it's her turn for a mother's helper. Other communal traditions still woven into the lives of many Cajuns are things like organized food assistance during family upheavals (like a new baby, surgery, or some other crisis), during which families receive a meal every night for a week or two, and shared child rearing with extended family and even other families (in contrast to "nuclear families"). Children grow up with multiple "parents," who share in feeding, disciplining, transporting, and housing them. These grassroots social programs are often organized by locals through their churches (Catholic and Protestant), which are still dominant institutions for many Cajuns.

But these are just fragments of the pre-capitalist Cajun socioeconomy that existed in the poorest areas of Louisiana in the 1920s when French was banned in schools. As the economy and government changed in Louisiana, especially during industrialization under which many Cajuns (as well as other ethnic groups across the U.S.) were assimilated as workers, Cajuns began interacting and intermarrying with outside communities, assimilating to dominant economic and racial values. One Cajun who experienced the transition to capitalism comments in particular on the new preference for accumulation of markers of wealth over former sustenance-based labor: "They've [fellow Cajuns] got big campers, bass boats and swimming pools, but they

had to spend half their lifetime offshore [working in the oil industry in the Gulf of Mexico] to pay for them. When I was growing up on the farm, money didn't mean much to us, but oil's changed us. Now, everyone's trying to keep up with the Joneses" (qtd. in Bernard, *The Cajuns* 39). He points out that the new drive for accumulation is fueled by competition—and not just in business, but with neighbors—contrasting this with pre-capitalist Cajun values when “money didn't mean much.”

As Cajuns came to value the accumulation of wealth, they also came to value the accumulation of linguistic capital, which they now understood in terms of class value. In the process of their educational and linguistic assimilation, Cajuns came to understand that they were seen as “dull-witted, ignorant, slovenly, sexually incontinent and without ambition” (Tentchoff 229-230). As I explain some of the abusive school conditions under which they were educated in the next chapter, it becomes clear why they would internalize these values. Historian David Peyton describes the accompanying stereotypes of Cajun language: “Cajun [French] was considered an illiterate language. In fact, it was; there was no written Cajun language. [...] Cajun was so different from standard French that you couldn't write it in standard French. Like a lot of Indian languages, no one had written it down—no one had even attempted to” (qtd. in Deutsch 82). Though Cajun French was simply following the natural course of language change, it was illegitimate because of its speakers' class position.

Conclusion

Their resistance to U.S. capitalism until late in the game would bear great consequences for Cajuns' children during the period of national reorganization after World War I, when multilingualism became unpatriotic and the inability to speak English outright un-American. Cajuns' resistance to capitalism wasn't enough to protect them from forced assimilation,

especially under the pressures of national economic industrialization at the turn of the century, but it was enough to keep them from having a say in the decisions about their own schooling and the language that would be taught. The “will to unification” (Bourdieu’s helpful phrase) of the founding fathers necessarily excluded minority voices in the planning of the economy, the class structure, and the legitimate language. Only legitimate agents can have legitimate languages, and Cajuns were illegitimate because they rejected the planned economy of the U.S., opting instead for social leveling and community living.

After the legitimate language is codified according to class hierarchy, it is enforced and “normalized” through schools, as I explain in the next chapter. This was the period when French was banned in Louisiana schools, and since it was also the same time that Cajuns were being assimilated into the U.S. economy, almost an entire generation of French speakers in Southwest Louisiana internalized the idea that Cajuns and their language were “low-class.” After being shamed and physically punished for speaking French, as I recount in the second part of the chapter, many Cajuns later attempted to hide their language and background to pass as Anglo-Americans and get better jobs. Market pressures, as Bourdieu’s model explains, intimidated them into complying with the legitimate language for the sake of upward mobility; the alternative was to accept the stigma and low class position of being Cajun.

Paw Paw’s parents recognized their place in the socioeconomy during this time. They realized their son was marrying “up” by marrying a quarter-German girl from the city, so they did not attend the wedding. They were sharecroppers who earned enough to buy their 40 acres, lead a comfortable life, and keep their youngest son, my Paw-Paw, in school (the other two sons had to drop out to work the farm). After the small wedding and on their way to their honeymoon in Galveston, my grandparents stopped in to visit his parents, who generously loaded the

newlyweds up with fresh eggs for the journey. They “didn’t feel that they were good enough to be there,” recalls GrandmaMona.

My German great-grandmother never accepted her son-in-law for the same class-based reasons. Winnie never hesitated to remind my grandmother that she should have married that nice German boy she had dated at one time. But GrandmaMona said there just wasn’t the same spark; she couldn’t resist the Cajun man from Pointe Bleu with dark curls and blue eyes. For his part, Paw-Paw had three requirements for any woman he would consider marrying: she would speak French, she wouldn’t smoke, and she would be at least five feet tall. Mona Ardoin from Eunice, LA, met none of these requirements, but her feistiness matched his ambition, and he took out credit at her uncle’s jewelry store to buy her the smallest thing that could pass for a diamond. “We never thought twice about the job, the money, where we were going to live, or anything like that,” GrandmaMona told me. When Winnie, who had spent all her life trying to accumulate more money, offered to pay for the annulment so that her daughter could marry better, GrandmaMona said she felt shocked: “We were so happy, so in love. Why couldn’t she see that? Love and happiness—you can’t buy that.”

My uppity great-grandmother Winnie, who never accepted my Cajun Paw-Paw, did finally get her wish for a German man in the family when my mother remarried—this time to a man with the last name Feucht. Winnie greatly approved of Patrick Feucht’s family—all of them blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked, and fair-haired—and she enjoyed talking at our family get-togethers with his aunt Ella, who raised Patrick and his brother Stanislaus and was known locally as “the German teacher.”³⁹ Now I don’t know if Granny ever figured it out, but Pat Feucht is the Cajunest man I have ever known. I’m telling you, he doesn’t even have to put on a Cajun accent

³⁹ Incidentally, one of the Cajuns who gives an interview about the French ban (which I use in the next chapter) notes that he had a “beautiful German teacher from Mamou” named Ms. Feucht—this was my great-aunt Ella (ST1.037).

to tell a Boudreaux and Thibodeaux joke; it's already there. I can't think of a more Cajun family than the Feuchts. Growing up in Mamou, Louisiana—famous for its Mardi Gras celebrations and Fred's Lounge—my step-dad and his siblings were one of the many non-Acadian families to totally assimilate into the Cajun culture.

Chapter Three
“I will not speak French. I will not speak French.”
The Grand Dérangement de Langue⁴⁰

“Please let it be known how we were treated for speaking French. This is the first time I have had to write a letter to express my bitterness on this subject. [...] I guess after writing this letter I realize that I’m still not completely over my pain and anguish.” – K. L. Laborde, b. 1946

“[T]he night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard.” – Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo⁴¹

Introduction

Grandmama Emma, my father’s mother, was the principal of a local elementary school when I was growing up and, before that, she was a state appointee overseeing public school integration in our hometown of Opelousas, Louisiana. I knew her as an elegant, well-spoken if not slightly prissy woman. She had two impressively large closets of polyester pantsuits, sized 10 and 12, in every shade of pastel. She grew up in a Creole family named Hidalgo—“*EE*-dalgo,” she’d say purposefully. “You don’t pronounce the H.”

Having assimilated into the local Cajun community, the Hidalgos spoke only French at home, but my grandma grew up to speak almost solely English, even at home. In fact, she assimilated so well into Anglo culture that I wasn’t even aware that she still had her French until I was well into my twenties. She had us call her Grandmama Emma, not the typical “Maw-MAW” (though we still mangled it into something like GrammmmwEmma), and she nitpicked her children’s grammar. Sometimes it was her singing voice and sometimes it was her biting wit that would silence a room bustling with the arguments and reminiscences of all nine of her grown children (and who knows how many grandchildren), but language prejudice was something that could silence *her* real quick. The little-girl bitterness still showed on her face

⁴⁰ The Great Upheaval of Language

⁴¹ *Decolonising the Mind* 9.

eighty-something years later every time she recalled the humiliation of her first day of school. It was a story I heard many times, so I know it well.

The first-grade teacher asked in English who knew their colors, and my grandma, whose parents had begun teaching her at home, was one of only a few students to raise their hands. When the teacher called on her, she proudly gave the names she'd learned—*rouge, bleu, jaune*—but was interrupted by the teacher. Grandmama's face would twist up in disgust behind her glasses every time she imitated the teacher's hissing reply: "*You don't know your colors; sit back down!*"

Around Acadiana, just about everyone has a story about a parent or grandparent who was punished or humiliated for speaking French in school. The 1921 Louisiana State constitution prohibited French in public schools, and children were beaten, shamed, and ignored—even when they asked to go to the bathroom—until they learned English. My Paw-Paw Jeff said "the worst whooping" he ever got was when he asked a classmate to translate what the teacher was saying. Like many of the other children who were punished and made to write the lines, "I will not speak French," Grandmama Emma and Paw-Paw Jeff were persuaded of the illegitimacy of their mother tongue, and they made huge efforts to stop using Cajun French and learn the legitimate language. Paw-Paw raised his own children as monolingual English speakers, even though that meant they couldn't talk to their monolingual French-speaking grandparents. After three generations, Cajun French is rarely spoken: "in 1990 only about 30 percent of Cajuns spoke the dialect as their first language, and most of these were middle aged or elderly" (Bernard, *The Cajuns* xxii). The French ban has haunted Cajun cultural memory for decades; it has proven to be one of the most effective means of assimilating the notoriously clannish Cajuns into the mainstream U.S. economy.

This process of internalizing the standards and then self-policing (and often even policing others) is what Bourdieu describes as *normalization*. He writes that schools are the primary means for normalizing, or enforcing, the legitimate language that nation builders selected. The process of language normalization is always tied to class stratification. As Cajuns took on the language of mainstream Anglo America, they also accepted their position in the economy, like my Paw-Paw Jeff's parents who knew they were too "low-class" to attend his wedding. Any Cajuns pursuing the American dream strove to rise above their assigned position by renouncing their non-legitimate home language and imitating the language and habits of the higher classes. The state public school was the primary means of teaching them this dynamic.

This chapter recounts the educational assimilation of Cajuns into English and demonstrates how the educational normalization process led the children to internalize dominant Anglo-American attitudes regarding the legitimate language. Drawing on archived records (at UL Lafayette) of Louisiana School Board officials, I report the scant official story of the French ban and reconstruct the events leading up to it. Using first-hand accounts (from the Shane Bernard archives and UL Lafayette archives) of elderly Cajuns who actually experienced the French ban in schools, I detail the range of punishments and humiliations they underwent. These stories illustrate the process of normalization leading to self-censoring in Bourdieu's theory of the legitimate language, and they also demonstrate the important role of the family in normalizing the legitimate language.

Reviews of the Literature

The role of educational institutions in class reproduction has been well documented in literature on education in the U.S. As Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis have explained in their landmark *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of*

Economic Life, “the educational system does not add to or subtract from the overall degree of inequality and repressive personal development. Rather, it is best understood as an institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life through which these patterns are set, by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force” (11). Bowles and Gintis argue that there is a “hidden curriculum” in educational institutions that trains students for the appropriate class:

We have emphasized elements of the ‘hidden curriculum’ faced in varying degrees by all students. But schools do different things to different children. Boys and girls, blacks and whites, rich and poor are treated differently. Affluent suburban schools, working-class schools, and ghetto schools all exhibit a distinctive pattern of sanctions and rewards.... In important ways, colleges are different [from high schools]; and community colleges exhibit social relations of education which differ sharply from those of elite four-year institutions. (42)

Bowles and Gintis have been criticized for focusing too much on the socioeconomic reproductive function of schooling without addressing possibilities for change. Since their study, other theorists—for example, Michael Apple in *Education and Power* and contributors to *Bowles and Gintis Revisited: Correspondence and Contradiction in Educational Theory*—have written about ways to resist reproduction within educational systems. Meanwhile, despite the deterministic outlook of Bowles and Gintis, their findings have been corroborated by subsequent research.

The idea of socioeconomic divides reproduced by pedagogy was strikingly illustrated in Jean Anyon’s study “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work.” Anyon studied the classroom practices of four different types of schools, ranging from schools in lower class

neighborhoods to those in the most affluent areas. She found that the schools, though all in the same economy, equipped the children for different positions on the spectrum of labor, and one of the most defining characteristics of each level was the children's relationship to authority. The lower class school, for example, rewarded the students for following directions, whether or not they reached the correct answer. These were children of welders, waitresses, and security guards. In the school Anyon called "executive-elite," children were rewarded for creating their own paths to the solutions. Correct answers were based on whether the class reached consensus, not predetermined answer keys and sometimes not even the teacher's approval. These were the children of top corporate executives. Whereas the schools in lower-income areas prepared students for obedience in their future jobs, the schools in the highest-income areas prepared students for leadership and decision-making.

In addition to socioeconomic divisions in schools based on neighborhood, class stratification is reproduced within individual schools by means of "tracking." Jeannie Oakes's study in *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* explains the origins of tracking in the beginning of the twentieth century. She writes that tracking, though officially designed for the purposes of more effective vocational training, actually served to preserve class divisions not according to intelligence or interest, but according to subculture. Tracking was a response to a surge of non-traditional students in public schools as a result of new child labor laws, compulsory education laws, a wave of European immigration, and the migration of poor rural families to cities for industrial jobs. In light of these new populations of students, Oakes writes, "a great deal of concern was expressed about preserving dominant WASP culture, eliminating the immigrants' 'depraved' life-style, and making the cities safe" (25). Liberal educators who supported tracking were aiming for the ideal of the "melting pot," but like many policies

designed to manage subcultures, the melting wound up being unilateral (26). Those who did not “melt” sufficiently were directed into manual labor and wage-based jobs where they would be blocked from participation in hegemonic decisions like policy making, law making, lobbying, and politics. Oakes argues that tracking is a race-based form of discrimination, a “‘second generation’ segregation” (x).

Most of the foundational literature on educational reproduction is from the 1970s and 80s, but Peter Sacks argues more recently in *Tearing Down the Gates: Confronting the Class Divide in American Education* (2007) that reproduction is ongoing, all the way up to college. Sacks writes that admissions standards (test scores in particular) ensure that children from well-educated families will land in the most reputable colleges, while children of uneducated parents (these children are Oakes’s “second generation”) are not properly groomed and consequently land in community colleges or other less prestigious post-secondary institutions. The sorting process is disguised as the social-mobility myth (“if you work hard enough...”). In fact, children from affluent families often do work very hard to achieve high scores (enduring private tutoring and test prep classes during the summer, taking tests multiple times, etc.).⁴² But Sacks argues that the children of working-class parents aren’t lazy, just not aware that they are competing with students who receive private tutoring, take test prep classes, and test multiple times. They (and their parents) tend to think of standardized tests as accurate measures of intelligence, and they don’t question their scores or attempt to supplement state-provided education. They also usually aren’t aware that they can appeal most decisions, from grades to class assignments to admissions. The race- and class-based distribution of students in colleges is determined by admissions standards, but Sacks writes that the sorting begins far earlier in the educational process. Annette

⁴² A 2010 NYTimes article reports that private tutoring is now a \$5 billion to \$7 billion industry. Manhattan parents pay \$85 to \$150 an hour (and up to \$400 an hour) to prep their children for Ivy-league schools (“As Private Tutoring Booms, Parents Look at the Returns”).

Lareau confirms this idea in *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (2003). Her ethnographic study reveals that literacy practices are passed on in home and family encounters, not in schools. Schools do not equalize; they simply assess already existing literacy practices and sort students accordingly. Once the students are sorted into their (generally) class- and race-based categories, pedagogical differences like the ones Anyon describes reinforce that categorization, as well as the idea that students who wind up near the vocational end of the educational spectrum are either lazy or less intelligent. These studies consistently demonstrate that the U.S. educational system sorts students according to class and reproduces the existing social hierarchy.

This class sorting process of education relies heavily on control of language and culture. In *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*, Joel Spring demonstrates that one of the most important functions of state schooling is delegitimizing the culture and language of minority groups in the U.S. He reinforces Bourdieu's ideas of national codification and dissimulation, writing that school policies and reforms are usually designed to preserve the class (and race) hierarchy established by the founding fathers (10). In *Deculturalization*, Spring documents the educational policies and pedagogies that have paralleled "the legacy of laws and judicial decisions that enslaved, segregated, discriminated against, and attempted to deculturalize Africans, Chinese, Mexicans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Hawaiians" (1). To this list I add the French-speaking pre-capitalist communities of Southwest Louisiana.

According to Spring's definitions, the Cajun experience in schools at the turn of the century falls under the category of deculturalization (what he writes was called "Americanization" at the time). Similar to Villanueva's distinction between those who are

internally colonized and those who voluntarily immigrate, Spring writes that the tactics for dealing with minority populations have corresponded to the distinction between dominated and immigrant: “Dominated groups in the United States have primarily experienced cultural genocide, deculturalization, and denial of education. Immigrant groups have mostly experienced assimilation and hybridity” (7-8).⁴³ Because Cajuns are one of many groups in the U.S. that have been internally colonized, their experience is more similar to the former category. Within these categories, he defines deculturalization as:

the educational process of destroying a people’s culture (cultural genocide) and replacing it with a new culture. In the case of the United States, schools have used varying forms of this method in attempts to eradicate the cultures of Native Americans; African Americans; Mexican Americans; Puerto Ricans; and immigrants from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia. Believing that Anglo-American culture was the superior culture and the only culture that would support republican and democratic institutions, educators forbade the speaking of non-English languages, particularly Spanish and Native American tongues, and forced students to learn an Anglo-American centered curriculum. (8)

This was the experience of Cajun children between the 1920s and 1960s, including being taught Anglo-American opinions of Cajuns. One state textbook, *The People of Louisiana* (1951), specifically blames Cajuns for the backwardness of Louisiana. It states that “The educational standing of the population is lowest in those particular parts of the French section in which the Acadian influence has been the greatest,” and it faults Acadian values (specifically, lack of

⁴³ I would qualify this assertion by saying that small waves of immigrants experience assimilation and hybridity, but large waves of immigrants (for example, at the turn of the twentieth century) experienced deculturalization and cultural genocide in their schooling, just like internally colonized groups. There are reports of Jewish and Italian children experiencing treatments similar to what I describe later in this chapter for Cajun children. Additionally, the status of immigrants depends on where they’re from and the color of their skin.

Anglo values) for the entire state's failures: "More than any other factor, this contributes to Louisiana's poor national standing, just as the Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico is responsible for that state's low ranking educationally" (qtd. in Bernard, *The Cajuns* 32-33). This state geography textbook, like most textbooks, was likely in circulation for at least a decade before being replaced. This is only one example of the deculturalization that Cajun children, like other internally colonized groups in the U.S., were being subjected to.

Studying the educational efforts to dominate minority groups, Spring concludes that an integral part of deculturalization is eradication of the minority's language. He writes, "Forcing a dominated group to abandon its own language is an important part of deculturalization. Culture and values are embedded in language. Educational policymakers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believed that substituting English for Native American languages and for Spanish was the key to deculturalization" (107). Replacing minority languages with Legitimate English was intended to compel minorities to submit more quickly to the socioeconomy of the U.S.

Bourdieu's Theory of Language Normalization in Schools

The educational assimilation of the Cajuns is an example of the power of normalization through education. Bourdieu writes that class inequalities, once established and encoded in the nation's legitimate language, must be perpetuated, or normalized, through a combination of laws, institutional enforcement, and individual compliance. Michel Foucault explains the process of normalization in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; experts establish what is normal by issuing judgments or statements (he calls this "expert discourse"), and then everyone adjusts to the new standard or is corrected into a "normal" way of behaving or thinking. The use of normalization corresponds to the societal switch to using institutions to enforce discipline. The

two most influential institutions for normalizing “correct” language, according to Bourdieu, are “the family and the educational system” (*Language* 62). But the educational system has the most weight when it comes to normalizing state policies, because the legitimate language “acquires the force of law in and through the educational system” (49).

Using the legitimate language as a standard, schools sort people into the appropriate social positions. English classes and departments, specifically composition courses and programs, are charged with ensuring that everyone adjusts to the linguistic standard or is barred from entering high-level or culture-defining jobs. This happens indirectly as teachers either train students to pass departmental and exit exams (normalize) or allow them to fail those exams, eventually dropping out of college and getting a working class job (also a form of normalizing). “Grammar is endowed with real legal effectiveness via the educational system,” writes Bourdieu, “which places its power of certification at its disposal [... T]his is because, through examinations and the qualifications which [grammar and spelling] make it possible to obtain, they govern access to jobs and social positions” (258). Specifically within language, Bourdieu identifies concepts of error and correctness in grammar as the primary linguistic-pedagogical means of preserving class hierarchy. The result, writes Bourdieu, is that the educational system reproduces already existing class structures: “the educational market is strictly dominated by the linguistic products of the dominant class and tends to sanction the pre-existing differences in capital.... The initial disparities therefore tend to be reproduced” (62). Shirley Brice Heath’s finding in her long-term ethnography *Ways With Words* demonstrates that Bourdieu’s theory is accurate in the U.S. Heath researched literacy development in three South Carolina communities and found that only the white middle-class students thrived academically because their home-based literacy events mirrored preferred usage and rhetoric in the schools,

while both African American and white working-class kids performed academically at a lower level as a result of their different socializations at home into literacy and rhetoric.

Bourdieu identifies the agents in this sorting process as, first, the grammarians who make decisions about the legitimate language and, second, the teachers who enforce the decisions: “this linguistic law has its body of jurists—the grammarians—and its agents of regulation and imposition—the teachers—who are empowered *universally* to subject the linguistic performance of speaking subjects to examination and to the legal sanction of academic qualifications” (45). Policy makers, in adherence to the class system in place (or taking its place), create language norms that teachers in turn carry out through various pedagogies. In the next chapter, I address the role of teachers in the normalizing process of the legitimate language. In this chapter, I examine the effects of policy decisions, particularly on the French speakers of Southwest Louisiana.

Bourdieu divides normalization into two primary categories: *coercive forces* and *intimidating forces*. Coercive forces directly and externally enforce the new standard, often physically or corporally, and intimidating forces pressure individuals to comply in a way that seems almost voluntary. Compliance is never entirely voluntary, however, when there is threat of shame, social ostracizing, or insufficient income to meet one’s perceived needs. Coercive and intimidating forces are so well tied together that it is difficult to separate them, as some of the stories from Cajuns who underwent the French ban later in the chapter demonstrate. Many of the former students follow up their memories of physical punishments immediately with statements about their decisions not to speak French anymore or their decisions not to teach it to their children. Most of the former students report that they strove not only to learn English but also to erase any French linguistic markers. Hilda Richard Breaux, who began school in 1938, reflects

on her experiences: “I know that when you read this you will sense the anger and frustration I felt and probably still do. For many years I did not want it to be known that I knew the French language” (SB Archives). Coercive forces led Cajuns to internalize dominant values about language so successfully that they came to self-censor French from their own public discourse (something I describe as *code censoring* in chapter four). Many even opposed efforts to bring French back into schools during the 1980s.

Dominique Ryon expands on the concept of normalization in “Language Death Studies and Local Knowledge: The Case of Cajun French.” Drawing on Michel Foucault’s theories of discourse and power and building on Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language, she explains that the way we discuss language dynamics influences what is actually happening to language because of the power of expert discourse and the normalization process. Ryon argues that linguists’ rhetoric of “death” and “loss” contributes to the erosion of Cajun French, because everyone else normalizes to their expert pronouncements. She writes that according to Foucault, “citizens of modern democracies are controlled less by the army, police, economic power, or a centralized, visible state apparatus, than by pronouncements of expert discourse, what he calls ‘regimes of truth’” (57). She examines metaphors that linguists use in their discussions of Cajun French that contribute to its demise and contrasts them with positive attitudes and statements about Cajun French from younger Cajuns (who do not speak Cajun French). The discourse surrounding a language can determine political and local decisions: “If a language is considered dying and if the process is widely assumed irreversible, then it is logical to consider as a waste of time and money both the production of pedagogical material in that language and the training of teachers to teach it” (58). Consequently, she concludes by advising, “The discrepancy between

the two versions of linguistic assimilation—one coming from the victor, or dominant group, and the other from the defeated or linguistic minority—should be given a close examination” (70).

Ryon focuses on the ways that linguists portray Cajun French, but her article is also instrumental in explaining the way normalization has operated in Louisiana schools. She writes that Cajuns’ linguistic assimilation to American culture has been achieved largely through the process of normalization in schools. After “decades of repressive measures, institutional intimidation (especially through schooling), and procedures of humiliation,” Cajuns have internalized the dominant attitude that Cajunness equals ignorance (62). As an example of normalization to teachers’ pronouncements and institutional power, she quotes Jean Arceneaux’s poem “*Schizophrénie Linguistique*,” which demonstrates the process of internalization.⁴⁴ I include the original, a mixture of French and English, on the left, and Ryon’s translation on the right:

I will not speak French on the school grounds.	I will not speak French on the school grounds.
I will not speak French on the school grounds.	I will not speak French on the school grounds.
I will not speak French...	I will not speak French...
I will not speak French...	I will not speak French...
I will not speak French...	I will not speak French...
Hé! ils sont pas bêtes, ces salauds.	Well, they are not stupid, those bastards.
Après mille fois, ça commence à pénétrer	After one hundred times, it begins to penetrate
Dans n’importe quel esprit.	In anyone’s mind.
Ça fait mal; ça fait honte;	It hurts, it brings shame;
Puis là, ça fait plus mal.	And suddenly, it does not hurt anymore.
Ça deviente automatique,	It is almost natural,
Et on speak pas French on the schoolgrounds	And we don’t speak French on the schoolgrounds
Et anywhere else non plus.	And anywhere else either. (64)

The internalization of dominant values that Bourdieu, Ryon, and Arceneaux describe is central to understanding how Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language accounts for the complicity of individuals with dominant policies and practices. Once people have internalized the language

⁴⁴ Jean Arceneaux is the pen name of Barry Jean Ancelet, a prominent activist and folklorist in Cajun studies.

standards, they enforce a kind of censorship on themselves, something that is more effective than any coercive force. In this sense, having internalized the values of the dominant, even the subordinated help enforce the same standards. This self-censoring happens both in school and outside school in situations where speakers encounter the same standards, particularly the job market. Bourdieu explains, “It is this sense of acceptability [...] which, by encouraging one to take account of the probable value of discourse during the process of production, determines corrections and all forms of self-censorship” (77). He pointedly adds that these are “the concessions one makes to a social world by accepting to make oneself acceptable in it” (77). Linguistic insecurity (as a result of normalizing to dominant standards) leads speakers to silence their linguistic codes, as well as their ideas, because they don’t feel authorized to speak. Bourdieu writes that “dominated speakers, as they strive desperately for correctness, consciously or unconsciously subject the stigmatized aspects of their pronunciation, their diction [...] and their syntax, [leaving] them ‘speechless,’ ‘tongue-tied,’ ‘at a loss for words,’ as if they were suddenly dispossessed of their own language” (52). Self-censorship works in connection with ideological submission. In many cases, as I show later in the chapter, the dominated literally are “dispossessed of their own language,” but they are also dispossessed of their political autonomy.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o illustrates the connection between linguistic domination and the colonization process, which I invoke here because of the process of internal colonialism that Cajuns experienced in the U.S. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngũgĩ writes that language normalization in schools is ultimately motivated by the need for more capital: “The real aim of colonialism was to control the people’s wealth. [...] Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. [...] The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to

the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” (16). The educational process of normalizing the legitimate language is integral to securing control of the colonized people, according to Ngũgĩ. He writes that education is a weapon of imperial warfare for conquering people; it is a “cultural bomb” that “annihilate[s] a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (3). He describes the process of the cultural bomb in his own childhood: first, students were punished for speaking their native languages: “one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school—the culprit was given corporal punishment” (11). In the process, Kenyan children internalized the stigma of their home languages: “Where his own native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability or downright stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism, this was reinforced by the world he met [...] not to mention the pronouncement of some of the giants of the western intellectual and political establishment” (18). Finally, having normalized to the standards of the dominant, the children began to enforce the legitimate language on each other when they were required to turn each other in, or, as Ngũgĩ puts it, “children were taught to be witch hunters” (11). In the end, Ngũgĩ writes, colonization is complete when the colonized have so well normalized that they identify with their colonizers and prefer their culture: “It is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its virtues” (20). The cultural bomb that Ngũgĩ describes helps explain the Cajuns’ reactions to their experiences in schools in the first half of the twentieth century.

Le Grand Dérangement de Langue

Though the 1921 French ban was easily the greatest determining factor for the direction of Cajun cohesion and identity since the Grand Dérangement, there is little information in the public record on the pedagogies and policies of Louisiana schools in the 1920s when the French ban took effect. Cultural memory of the French ban is often based on hearsay, like the stories people have heard from their grandparents, and recent literature on it is usually intended to summarize, not give detail. I've had a hard time writing about the French ban because there hasn't been much available, and what *is* available seems to leave me with more questions than answers. Some people say the punishments were horrific; others say there weren't really many punishments. Some express a sense of betrayal that it was often Cajun teachers doing the punishing, and others say it was for the children's own good. So I'm reconstructing from the extant histories and several archives containing bits of the educational assimilation of Cajuns into English, interpreted in the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's analysis of language and power.

I rely heavily on the research and data of historian Shane Bernard. His account of the assimilation of Cajuns into the mainstream U.S. socioeconomy, *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People*, is the best (and only authoritative) history of this period. He provides the most extensive report of the French ban and punishments to date, but it's still fairly brief, because his focus is the overall assimilation of Cajuns into the U.S. He recounts the history of Cajuns from early in the twentieth century to the end of the century and writes that World War II was the most important factor in assimilating Cajuns, closely followed by the French ban in schools (5). Many GIs came home, he reports, and announced to their families that they were now American: "The war exerted a profound influence on Cajun GIs, giving them a new sense of national

identity and beginning the process of rapid, widespread Americanization. Proud of their wartime contributions, they came home staunch patriots, defenders of the American way of life” (11). Cajun GIs Anglicized the pronunciation of their French names, and Cajuns who stayed home involved themselves, like the rest of the U.S., with communist hunts and victory gardens.

Along with WWII, I suggest that the changing educational policies of this era were equally important, not only because of the role of schools in normalizing and sorting students into the economy, but also because education was a far more prevalent experience for Cajuns than the war. Though he does not downplay the weight of the French ban, Bernard concludes that the war was more influential, because “census data shows that the use of Cajun French as a first language dropped 17 percent for Cajuns born during U.S. involvement in World War II, the single largest decrease since the beginning of the century” (5). He speculates on why the influence of the war on language use was greater than educational policies:

Even the practice of punishing Cajun children for speaking French on the school playground or in the classroom, a byproduct of the era’s intense Anglo-Saxonist nationalism, did not result in immediate Americanization. Many south Louisiana children did not attend school and so were spared the humiliation of writing lines or being paddled. Those who did experience punishment still tended to use French at home, but when they became parents around World War II, many declined to teach the dialect to their children, viewing it as a shameful impediment to social and economic advancement. (xx)

As some of the testimonies of Cajuns in this chapter show, however, they made their decisions not to teach their children French many years before the war, when they were children in school themselves. Additionally, the French prohibition was in full effect from 1921 till well into the

1950s and maybe later (one respondent in my survey from Crowley, LA, reported that she was punished for speaking French when she entered school in the early 1980s), so even the children who dropped out in the beginning probably saw their own children assimilate to English only. Based on the reports of Cajuns from this period, I think it's safe to say that WWII may have been what made Cajuns decide they were American, but education was what made many of them decide that they weren't Cajun. Ultimately, World War II and the French ban were two sides of the same nationalist coin; wars and language standardization are both integral to nation (empire) building.

Bernard also generously gave me access to a collection of letters he compiled in response to a questionnaire he posted in newspapers in south Louisiana and east Texas (1997-1998). Letters poured in describing the experiences and emotions of Cajuns who underwent the ban in schools. I also mined his audio interviews in the UL Lafayette Archives, which additionally contain dozens of audio files of interviews conducted by Barry Ancelet and students working on various projects for the Cajun Studies program from the 1990s to the present. Many of the respondents are now deceased, but the audio files preserve their stories about their experiences in schools. In addition to these records, I studied in the Acadiana Manuscripts Collections the records of T. H. Harris, the Superintendent of Louisiana Schools overseeing the French ban—his personal letters and memoirs, his public reports of school finances and scores, and a few of his publications in journals. Some articles from the *Journal of the Louisiana Teachers' Association* during the first few decades after the French Ban have also yielded a small amount of information regarding attitudes and pedagogies concerning French speakers in Southwest Louisiana.

What I've found has been every bit as varied and contradictory as I had originally heard in the oral reports around the community. Like everything else in Cajun culture, there is no monolithic story. Some of the punishments were terrible, while some students hardly even noticed they were being assimilated. Some of the reports stress the fact that it was Cajun teachers who helped this process along, and some Cajuns are appreciative of their teachers' efforts—even the physical punishments. I noticed a correlation between this appreciation and level of Anglo-American assimilation: those who eventually assimilated the most successfully into the dominant American culture (speaking with the most standard English accents and having the highest social positions) were the most forgiving or even defensive of their teachers' punishments. In particular, I noticed that the young Cajuns who went on to become teachers as adults were the most defensive of their teachers' actions. I include data on this internalization phenomenon, which is consonant with Bourdieu's model of linguistic assimilation. I also include data on the more generalized process of cultural normalizing in which individuals who have learned to self-police according to the legitimate language now insist on the same cultural norm for others. In almost every case, the respondents articulate their decisions to censor their French in terms of class or work, demonstrating the connection between schooling and the economy.

The great exile of Cajun French in Louisiana actually happened during a time of optimism and hope for social equality, as Deweyan school reforms swept through the U.S. These reforms promised the same educational opportunities to the poor as to the rich. As I explain in greater detail in chapter four, though Deweyan reforms were couched in terms of “opportunity,” “social cooperation,” and “equality,” the tenets of John Dewey's schooling reforms were incompletely appropriated by the educational system to create not democratic citizens but “corporate citizens.” Extremely wealthy and influential capitalists who required a new kind of

labor for a new kind of industrial economy (as well as more laborers) funded massive changes to schooling at the turn of the century to train people for what I explain later as the “corporate model.” These capitalists also directly funded the changes to Louisiana education, something I point out later in this chapter. Just like many other ethnic groups across the U.S., Cajuns were assimilated at a time of national reorganization after the Civil War and Reconstruction that required a revised, less tolerant definition of what it meant to be American, and during industrialization, which required a kind of corporate cooperation, as well as higher levels of internalization and self-policing (in contrast with previous school models that relied on obedience and punishments). Though most of the key figures involved in ushering in the Louisiana school reform that led to Cajuns’ forced assimilation were optimistic and well-intentioned as they imposed these top-down programs, they were following in the tradition of other social programs coming from the center that are intended to “help” periphery groups. Education planners were making decisions for Cajuns and other lower-income residents of Louisiana, who were too poor and uneducated to be trusted with decisions about their own governance.

One of the most influential leaders of the Louisiana education reform that led to Cajuns’ assimilation was Thomas H. Harris, Superintendent of Louisiana schools from 1908 to 1940. It was under Harris’s thirty-two-year tenure as Superintendent that the Louisiana state schools joined the progressive movement. Harris was trained in the Normal School under Thomas Boyd, a huge proponent of progressive education. Edwin Lewis Stephens, a former president of what is now UL Lafayette, gives a glowing account of Thomas Boyd in 1933, as he describes the impetus that led to one of largest school reforms in the history of the state in “Education in Louisiana in the Closing Decades of the Nineteenth Century.” The following section was written

during the height of Deweyan educational optimism in Louisiana; I quote it at length to show the enthusiasm and missionary fervor Stephens associates with Boyd's educational changes:

I am glad of an opportunity, while that great schoolmaster is still living, to pay to him the sincere tribute of my humble opinion that to him, more than to any other man, is due the credit for that foundation for the cause of public education in Louisiana during the closing decades of the Nineteenth century, upon which has been built the structure of the organization of public education which exists in this State today. Thomas Duckett Boyd, a Virginian, who came to Louisiana in 1868 [...] was educated in Louisiana and became a graduate of the University in the class of 1872. A diligent student and classical scholar, he continued his studies and afterwards became a professor of English in the University. He acquired a reputation with all his students for purity of style, logic of thinking, reasonableness and wisdom of counsel, pre-eminent fairness in 'marking' or 'grading' of students in class, firmness with kindness in discipline, and the uttermost cleanness and integrity of character. In 1888 he was called to the presidency of the State Normal School in Natchitoches. And it was here in eight years that he did the great work for public education in Louisiana. He saw and understood the condition of education in the State. He realized that the solution lay in the development of a popular demand for free public schools in every town and village in every parish. He mobilized the support and vigorous assistance of able friends and agencies for public education. He enlisted a large and generous measure of support from the Peabody Fund [...]. He organized Teachers' 'institutes' and summer normal schools at public expense in every part of the

State. He aided in the organization of the Louisiana Educational Association, the forerunner of the present Louisiana Teachers Association [...]. He had as a pupil there Thomas H. Harris, destined to become the greatest individual factor in the growth of public education in Louisiana in three decades of the new century. He elevated the public idea of the mission of the teacher and the great work that had to be done in the State, from the dimmest awareness into an enthusiasm like the call to a crusade. In me he inspired the first real appreciation I had had, of the ideal of public education later enunciated by John Dewey—that the culture the wisest and best parents desire for their own children, the Community should desire and should provide for all of its children. (42)

The prodigy of Boyd, Harris was celebrated as the greatest mover and shaker of Louisiana education during the beginning of the twentieth century, as he folded Louisiana into the progressive movement. Another account of early twentieth-century education is from *Louisiana Education Since Colonial Days* (1941) by Joel Fletcher, who also served as president of Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now UL Lafayette). Fletcher similarly praises Harris as “the most influential figure in the public schools of Louisiana” (22).

And Harris did vastly change the state of affairs in Louisiana education. The leaders of socialized education in Louisiana were enthusiastic in particular about progress in state schools after a very slow start in education. Raleigh A. Suarez writes in “Chronicle of a Failure: Public Education in Antebellum Louisiana” (if the title weren’t sufficiently self-explanatory) that Louisiana state education was sorely underdeveloped in the pre-Civil War period for a number of reasons—mostly state neglect, apathy from all segments of the population, and outright resistance from the French Catholics. State neglect began as a result of military involvement. “In

the years immediately following statehood [in 1812],” Suarez writes, “little was accomplished in the field of education partly because of the War of 1812 and the concentration of defending New Orleans against the British in 1814 and early 1815. Public education was not even mentioned in [...] Louisiana’s first state constitution [1812]” (112). Finally in 1845, the state constitution made provision for public education, but funding was greatly reduced by the late 1850s for textbooks, teachers’ salaries, and schoolhouse maintenance, in order to fund military expenditures.

Meanwhile, Louisianians didn’t make much effort to fight the funding cuts to public education. Suarez writes that, “as disadvantageous as the above factors were, the program would have had a chance to develop if the people had truly supported it” (120). Suarez blames the apathy of middle-class Louisianians, who rarely voted, and the outright opposition of the planter and wealthy merchant class, who sent their children to private schools. Like the 1950s Louisiana state geography textbook, Suarez also specifically blames the backwardness of the insular Acadians and Creoles: “The situation was worsened, if possible, because a large segment of the population in South Louisiana was French and Catholic. This group was opposed to any institution that might lessen the power and influence of church and family” (122). Edwin Stephens, in “The Story of Acadian Education in Louisiana,” is somewhat kinder in his analysis of French resistance, attributing it to “the natural cause of the difference in language between the colonial settlers in Louisiana and the colonial settlers in the rest of the United States [...]. And it should therefore never be taken as a reproach to the French parishes of Louisiana that they remained longest in the high percentage of illiteracy” (20). The long shot, however, is that Louisiana lagged behind other states in education until the 1880s.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, from 1861 to 1879, education had fallen to a very low position in state interests. In addition to the human and property costs of the Civil War, a series of floods and crop blights reduced a large portion of the state population, of all ethnicities and class positions, to near starvation and homelessness. The state constitution of 1879 again raised the issue of education, and “Anglo-Americans throughout the state began clamoring by the early 1880s for increased educational activity” (Brasseaux, “Acadian Education” 216). In addition to the interest of the Anglo-American sector in Louisiana, wealthy Northern philanthropists invested heavily in updating the schools of the South during and after Reconstruction, as this was an excellent opportunity to re-engineer the economy and train workers accordingly (more on this dynamic in the next chapter). Louisiana schools by 1921 were largely modeled on Deweyan progressive ideas, as a result of the Natchitoches⁴⁵ Normal School, established in 1884 (referred to earlier in Stephens’ speech about Boyd).

Harris’s legacy was guiding Louisiana into the pattern of educational reform that other states were following at this time. In his memoirs, he reflects on the conditions of Louisiana State education at the beginning of his term in 1908:

Several causes operated in favor of illiteracy in Louisiana. The public system of education was late getting under way, and when a system was inaugurated, public sentiment was apathetic, and in certain sections of the state, antagonistic. Not much was done for negro children anywhere. Due to these and other causes the schools failed to reach many children of both races, with the result that many thousands of our children never attended schools and were unable to read and write. They were illiterates.

⁴⁵ You would never know from looking at it, but this city’s name is pronounced “Nack-a-dish.”

The same conditions prevailed in all of the southern states, and the illiteracy percentages were high in all of them, but Louisiana headed the list for several years, then climbed to second place. She is probably now near the tops of the literate states in the south. (“Adult Illiterates”)

Harris revamped the state’s school structure to resemble that of other states. He lobbied for and secured stable funding from the State of Louisiana through taxation, as well as from capitalist philanthropists who were interested in reforming education, and he established a broader administration than what previously existed. He explains,

Since 1908 many divisions have been added. [...] The various divisions of the state department came into existence in response to the needs and demands of the schools and in the early days of public school lethargy in the south, the General Education Board of New York, a John D. Rockefeller foundation, usually was the friend in times of stress by financing the divisions until such time as public sentiment made possible state financing. (“The High School Division”)

The increased funding for schools allowed for better and more buildings. Harris describes the inferior method that was in place when he came into his position:

Our older citizens can easily recall when practically all of the country schools were of the one-teacher type. And it was natural that the one-teacher school developed in the country communities and villages. Ten to twenty families living within a radius of a mile or two would become interested in providing at least the rudiments of an education for their thirty or forty children. They would raise among themselves a few dollars and buy the necessary lumber and bricks for a school house twenty-five by twenty-five and for fifteen or twenty double-desks

and one or two recitation benches. Certain members of the group would agree to “rive” a sufficient number of cypres [sic], oak or pine boards to cover the house and the work of building the house would be apportioned among the families. In a few days the community would have a school house ready for use. It would be rough and unpainted and the openings would be covered with wooden shutters, but it would answer. (“Parish Superintendents”)

In contrast, Harris reports in a 1914 letter to *Educational Foundations: A Monthly Magazine of Pedagogy*, “we have been building good houses, consolidating country schools, organizing industrial departments for both boys and girls, establishing high schools, raising the standards of teachers, getting more children into the schools, lengthening the session, and improving the schools generally” (“Live-Wire” 184). Stephens confirms the immense educational growth under Harris: “Where there were not a dozen high schools in all of southwestern Louisiana in 1900, there were more than 125 in 1930. Where there were less than 50 high school graduates in this territory in 1900, there were more than 1,000 for the year 1930” (“The Story” 23). Stephens attributes this growth to the fact that the college (where he later served as president) required high school graduation, but it was probably a combination of the new entrance requirement, Harris’s activism, and state laws requiring attendance.

No Public Record of the Pedagogy in the French ban

It was also under Harris’s tenure that the 1921 French ban, which had been previously written into the Reconstruction-era Louisiana State Constitutions of 1864 and 1868 (Ancelet 354), was finally enforced. The mandatory school attendance law, Act 27, was passed in 1916, requiring Cajun families who preferred local Catholic education at church or no education at all to send their children to public school, and the Louisiana State Constitution of 1921 banned

French in schools, requiring all instruction in English.⁴⁶ These two acts of legislation combined to change the lives of hundreds of Cajun children drastically. Yet there is virtually no mention of the French ban in any public or private records. I concluded that it was finally enforced in 1921 because of changes in capitalism that were accompanied by changes in how teachers were being trained at their normalizing schools. Because there is so little information in Cajun Studies about the official conversations surrounding the French ban, I report here my findings on the status, official policies, and teacher pedagogies regarding French from period documents, demonstrating the state's official silence on the French ban.

Now Thomas H. Harris, before he became Superintendent, had served ten years jointly as principal of high schools in Baton Rouge and Opelousas—the latter of which is my hometown and one of the oldest, highest concentrations of Cajuns and Creoles—so he was definitely exposed to French speakers. But the only mention in his memoirs and annual school reports that can even be construed as referring to Cajuns is “country schools.” Here, he describes the resistance to public education and taxation he found among poor Louisianians:

In the last quarter of the 19th century there was no demand for public schools in the [primarily Anglo-Saxon] section of rural Claiborne Parish in which I grew up. I think the same may be said of the rest of the parish and the state. Most people were small farmers and while they lived well, they were poor. The boys worked on their fathers' farms, and the girls did the house-work. There was little hired labor, except in the form of renters and share croppers. The older children worked on the farms and could not be spared for much schooling. It was different in the towns, but the towns were too few to affect the conditions. The private pay

⁴⁶ The Louisiana Board of Education banned French in school as early as 1916 (Bernard, *The Cajuns* 18). Later in 1944, Act 239 made provisions “for the punishment of parents who failed to comply” (33).

schools cared for the educational interests of the younger children, and of the few older ones who had in view professional careers.

Then, the people were not accustomed to taxation. There were state and parish systems of government, but they were simple and inexpensive. There were not many public officers, and those in office were paid small salaries. There was no road system [...].

I am also impressed that there was a strong sentiment *against* free schools, except for indigent pupils. "If a parent wishes to educate his children, let him pay for the instruction," was the generally accepted viewpoint. No justice or fair play in requiring one man to educate the children of another man. This was the attitude of the people generally, and there were no crusaders to present the arguments for the education of all the people at public expense. ("Public Opinion")

Harris would write in his 1921-1922 annual school report, the very year that public school teachers were required to revise their pedagogies to banish French from their classrooms, that he was proudest of the progress in "country schools." He never mentions the French-speaking population, which I later explain as a function of their class status, and is singularly optimistic about the great changes that year:

If we should select one department of education in which we have made the greatest progress, we should unquestionably choose that of the country schools. The people of Louisiana realized many years ago the importance of providing good schools for the country children.... Many of the country schools have been organized as state approved high schools which employ the best equipped teachers

and are offering educational advantages equal in every respect (and perhaps superior) to those offered in the cities (*Annual Report* 5-6).

The 1921 French Ban and its implementation in schools was a source of great anxiety, shame, and punishments for Cajun students that would completely change the linguistic landscape of Acadiana. Yet, in all the records and archives I searched from the period, I found no contemporary mention of the schooling of Acadians or other French-speaking students at the time of the ban. What was a benchmark event for Cajuns barely even registered in the surrounding Anglo-American literature.

Two references in scholarly publications from that period may refer to Cajuns, but they are brief, unexplained, and just as easily concerned with other local poor subcultures. Four years after the French ban, an article appears in the *Journal of the Louisiana Teachers' Association* with “skills and drills”-type pedagogical suggestions to help students learn “the habits, skills, attitudes and ideals essential to the mastery of spoken and written English” (Conniff 11). The only indication that this pedagogy is intended for ESL students is the editor’s note introducing the article with a brief contextualization:

Few engaged in educational work in Louisiana have made a more careful study of spoken and written English, with the idea of improving the language ability of teachers and children, than has Mr. Conniff [member of State Department of Education]. *He is anxious to assist in the removal of conditions that permit children to enter life with a poor command of the mother tongue and has prepared the following paper with the hope that it will be instrumental in helping the teachers give the high school boys and girls of the state a better working knowledge of the English language* (11, emphasis mine).

It is likely that many of the “boys and girls of the state” are French-speaking, but there is still no mention of what the other language is.

The second possible mention of Cajuns is in a 1928 article, “Problems in the Teaching of English” by Albert L. Voss. In this article, Voss discusses the problem of the new population of students he and other teachers are struggling to educate (strikingly similar to opinions surrounding CUNY’s Open Admissions in the early 1970s). He agrees with the progressive Deweyan changes that have come to the State of Louisiana but laments the difficulty of trying “to make some of our students assimilate what is to them totally unassimilable material” (27). He writes that he has no solutions, only problems:

We know what has happened to our educational system within the past two decades. The change that has come about is perfectly well recognized in theory at least. Twenty years ago we admitted into our public high school smaller numbers of students generally from the best environments. Then we commenced to “sell” education, working on the theory—and rightly in my opinion—that in a democracy the masses should have equal rights educationally as well as in other respects. Higher education ceased to be a class privilege and became a social duty. [...] Thus we are immediately faced with the problem of finding different types of pupils in our schools today. (26-27)

Writing out of New Orleans, Voss is likely dealing with French-speaking students, though probably not Cajuns.

It was 26 years later, in 1947, before anyone mentioned anything specifically pedagogical about helping French-speaking students learn English. In the *Journal of the Louisiana Teachers’ Association*, Archie S. Hollister published an article titled “The Use of French in the Language

Class,” in which he stresses the convenience of highlighting cognates between French and English. He writes from Lake Arthur, LA, a famously Cajun area:

Due to the close affinity existing between the English and French languages, those of us who teach in the schools of South Louisiana have an excellent opportunity, by exploiting this relationship, to aid our pupils in solving many of their reading problems.... [T]he writers of our textbooks, who write for [English-speaking children] often include material that is difficult for [French-speaking children]. However, if an analogy can be established, the new word is often seen to be only the English form of a French word with which the child is perfectly at home. (23, 26)

This glossing in the public record during the first two and a half decades of the French ban indicates that Cajuns were a stigmatized minority group that was easy to ignore and override.

As Harris notes of the poor whites in Louisiana, Cajuns were generally unsupportive of public education. Because Cajuns successfully operated outside the Southern capitalist economy even as late as the 1920s and 30s, public education was not appealing to them, because it wouldn't train their children for the jobs they would enter. Not surprisingly, before the mandatory school attendance act, Cajuns usually educated their children at home for farm- and housework. Elista Istre in “*Laissez les Bon Temps Rouler! Cajun Stereotypes and the Development of Cultural Tourism in South Louisiana*,” writes that Cajuns also resisted public education because they distrusted dominant Anglo-American socioeconomic values. She quotes George Washington Cable, who “reported that many other Cajuns claimed ‘My son is rascal enough without an education’” (28). Cajuns perceived dominant U.S. values as dishonest and unequal, but their resistance to education was not well received by the Anglo-American

community. Istre quotes a travel writer in an 1866 edition of *Harper's Weekly*, who writes, “without energy, education, or ambition, they [Cajuns] are good representatives of the white trash, behind the age in every thing. The majority of all the white inhabitants of these parishes are tolerably ignorant, but these are grossly so—so little are they thought of—that the niggers, when they want to express contempt for one of their own race, call him an Acadian nigger” (31). Cajuns distrusted U.S. socioeconomic structures that encouraged fragmentation over cooperation, but their resistance to educational assimilation was interpreted as laziness, ignorance, and even racial inferiority.

Carl Brasseaux writes in “Acadian Education: From Cultural Isolation to Mainstream America” that even “the few Cajuns who broke with tradition and attended school” were rarely given jobs in “Anglo-American commerce and industry” due to prejudice or what Brasseaux calls “Anglo-American ethnocentricity” (218). Brasseaux stresses the socioeconomic reasons behind the cultural differences. Cajuns, he wrote, preferred “an education based on practical need (just as the Anglo-American parent sought formal education as a practical need)” (214). The surrounding Anglo-American community was a “commercial-industrial class [that] eagerly accepted Horace Mann’s concepts of publicly supported education,” which required increased taxation for more comprehensive schooling (213). So, due to what Brasseaux calls Anglo-American “cultural imperialism,” Cajuns were required first to pay taxes for schools they did not attend, then to attend schools they did not want, and finally to dissociate from their family language.

In addition to no official mention of the French ban in the educational documents of this period, there is no official pedagogy for enforcing the ban. At one point, oral histories and local publications (after the Cajun Renaissance of the 1970s) on the French ban report that it was a

Louisiana state policy for teachers to punish Cajun students who spoke French. For example, a Jefferson Davis Parish publication states, “In 1921 the Louisiana Constitution prohibited the speaking of any language except English on school property. Legally teachers were required to punish any child who spoke French at school” (Giovo et al. 38). But there are no documents supporting this kind of edict. It’s possible that there were verbal orders but more likely that each school enforced the French ban according to practices it already used for other infractions.

According to Bernard, there was never a centralized school board decision about how to implement the ban, so the consequences for speaking French varied by parish and by school. In my personal communications with him, Bernard said he has also scoured period records to find the “smoking gun” document ordering that all Cajun children be punished for speaking French, but he never came across any. Though Brasseaux still believes there may have been a centralized “order,” Bernard has concluded that the lack of uniform consequences for speaking French and the lack of mention in any state literature of these punishments indicate that individual teachers, principals, and school boards determined their own methods for enforcing the French ban. “Nevertheless,” he writes, “by using the classroom as a pulpit for teaching Americanism tainted by Anglo-Saxonism, the Department of Education created an environment that encouraged punishment. It also did little to discourage the practice” (*The Cajuns* 18). As a result, the practices of each parish and school varied widely. Reports from former students during the French ban indicate that, in some parishes, there was an unwritten policy that there be only non-French teachers so that the students were forced to learn English more quickly. In other parishes, though, it was the local bilingual teachers who were enforcing these rules and punishments.

The experiences of Cajun children also varied widely. Though there is no official record of the pedagogy teachers used to implement the French ban, there is a great deal of data from

older Cajuns who underwent the French ban in schools. According to these reports, there was a general policy of French eradication, consonant with an English-only sentiment sweeping the nation in the first part of the twentieth century. Apart from Hollister's description of his gentle cognate approach in 1947, there are no reports of what we now call code switching, where students may use their home languages in all but formal communications. Reports from Cajuns who experienced the French ban well into the 1950s indicate that teachers almost universally discouraged students from speaking French at all, even at home. Often they did this by communicating negative messages about the language in various ways, including physical punishments, shame-based punishments, and directly negative statements about Cajuns and/or Cajun French. A handful of Cajuns reported a fairly positive transition to English, while others were subjected to surprisingly cruel shaming.

Coercive Forces of Normalization for Cajun Students

To say that the reports are remarkable is an understatement. They are informative, moving, and often stunning. As much as possible, I let the stories speak for themselves, adding only introductions and a few extra explanations and analyses where appropriate. Because I want these excerpts to speak for themselves, I've also chosen to adjust nonstandard spelling and grammar. Some of the accounts are handwritten, so they were prone to handwriting mistakes such as using *an* for *am*. Some were typewritten with typos such as *didn'* for *didn't*. Some were transcribed by other people, who also included typos in their transcription (which the participants clearly didn't say), such as *pthe* for *the*. Many others simply had misspellings, nonstandard grammar, or accidental omissions in their letters. My problem was that I directly transcribed many from audio recordings, using standard punctuation and spelling for them and editing out false starts, so some of the participants, even those who were illiterate, falsely seem to have a

better grasp of English than the ones who wrote their own letters. None of the mistakes in the handwritten letters were very distracting or unreadable, but it didn't seem fair to clean some up and not the rest. Some people were represented with my grammar, some were represented by others' grammar, and some were represented by their own grammar. Since this chapter isn't an analysis of their writing, I thought it best to standardize grammar and spelling for the purpose of readability, while preserving all the language. It's probably still possible to distinguish the oral from the written reports, and that's fine. My intent was simply to include both oral and written reports in a way that would not detract from the fascinating stories and recollections of elderly Cajuns who underwent the French ban.⁴⁷ As I explain later, the data I found in these reports confirms that the purpose of these schooling practices was to assimilate Cajuns into the U.S. class and labor system.

Physical punishments were very common in the reported experiences of elderly Cajuns, ranging from kneeling to being spanked with shingles:

If French words were spoken, we were turned over to the Principal's Office, where this big old man had a set of rubber tubes tied together and we were whipped. The girls caught were punished different, as they were forced to walk around the flagpole with bricks in their hands. (Arlyn Berthier, senior in 1955)

My first grade teacher would knock me on my knuckles with a wooden ruler for speaking half English and half French. I stood in the back corner of the classroom for what seemed like all day at the time. I had no recess ever. I had to read

⁴⁷ One more note on representing the stories of these Cajuns. It wasn't possible to standardize how I represented the ages of the respondents. As much as was possible, I tried to list the year they were born, but other times the only information I had was the year they entered first grade or the year they graduated. Students generally entered school at the age of five.

English books while other children played outside. (Virginia Verret Landry, started first grade in 1946)

You were put on your knees if you spoke French. The impact was to speak English and dream of having an Anglo name. (Cynthia Jones, b. 1939)

The principal would instruct us to go on the shingle pile. There was a pile of shingles, you know (they would reroof the old buildings, and they would stack up the shingles there to burn them in the pot-bellied stove—we had to use wood to fuel up, to heat up the buildings), and we'd go out there and grab a couple shingles and bring them to him, and he'd make us bend over, and he'd spank us. (Richard Nunez, b. 1925 in Lake Arthur)

Many of the punishments were specifically designed to publicly humiliate the students. This kind of consequence for speaking French is a particularly effective form of normalization, because linking embarrassment with language use ensures that students learn negative attitudes toward the language:

They'd make you kneel on the spot or they'd bring you up to the schoolhouse which had a long porch in the front facing the highway and they'd make you kneel alongside that banister for everybody to see going back and forth [on the highway]. (Elvin(?) Soileau, b. 1932)

I was not punished [...], but my classmates were punished by being struck with a wooden paddle and having to sit on a stool facing the whole class. (Alice S. Girouard, started school in 1945)

I will never forget my first grade teacher for making me kneel on two pieces of chalk and putting another chalk between my nose and the blackboard for speaking French to the other boys who were like me. It was humiliating and embarrassing to me and the French kids. The teacher and city kids would laugh at us. Maybe I could not speak English, but being a country boy who had to work on the farm & could throw a punch, that took the laughter out of many after a couple of months.

Of course, there again I was punished for fighting. (K.L. Laborde, b. 1946)

Bernard describes one of the most appalling punishments from the interviews. Paul L. Landry reports that one of his teachers locked students who were caught speaking French in a closet and forced them to wear nooses around their necks (*The Cajuns* 33). “Whoever was caught with the noose at the end of the day got a spanking” (Bernard, Unpublished audio interview, BE1.063). Like Ngũgĩ’s “witch-hunting” experience with Gikuyu on the playground (which I described earlier in this chapter), this policy encouraged students to turn one another in so that they wouldn’t wind up being the one with the noose at the end of the day.

Writing lines was a nearly universal common experience reported by elderly Cajuns. A typical report follows:

We were punished by writing on the blackboard 100 times: I will not speak French in school. (James M. Sattler, b. 1927)

Writing lines was such a prevalent experience in Acadiana that many Cajun homes have reproductions of a painting by George Rodrigue, a popular Cajun artist (author of the “Blue Dog” series), featuring a student writing “I will not speak French” on the blackboard. A typical common-school pedagogy, writing lines was reported by most Cajuns as more of an annoyance than a normalizing experience. One letter had a surprising ending. Winnie Landry Hebert (b. 1917) writes that she and her girlfriends were assigned lines for speaking French. She was embarrassed and didn’t tell her parents; she dutifully wrote her lines and turned them in. Her girlfriends, however, told their parents, and the parents had their daughters drop out of school immediately (in violation of the mandatory attendance law).

What turned out to be a very effective normalizing locale, even with consequences as simple as writing lines, was the playground. Recess was a chance for French-speaking children to try to make heads or tails of what was happening in the classroom all morning (or simply to let loose), but children were surprised in (often intensely) negative ways when they were punished for using their native language even in the schoolyard:

When I began school I could not speak a word of English, so when we were outside on the playground, those of us who could speak Cajun French would converse in French to find out what was said by the teacher in the classroom. If the teacher heard us talking Cajun French, we were punished by having our hand whipped with a ruler. I determined that if I had children, I would not teach them to speak Cajun French because of that experience. (Eva Meyers Mooney, b. around 1927)

I knew better than to speak French in the classroom because my sister had warned me about that faux pas. She is 7 years older than I am. No one had warned me about the playground [...]. We were playing and running and yelling to each other. We made the mistake of yelling in French to each other within hearing of the teacher. She quickly let us know that French was not a proper language to speak at school. We were made to stand quietly at her side during the entire recess. (Billy P. Leonard, b. 1947)

My best friend and I were eating our cold lunch, sitting on the grass behind an old garage and just talking up a storm—of course French—and all of a sudden our algebra teacher sneaked up and caught us. He was very firm and told us to write 400 lines—“I will not speak French on the school grounds.” (Hazel M. Thibodeaux, junior high in the late 1930s)

Some students, though, were not so easily deterred:

When [French] students who were not bilingual asked me (at recess) to explain what the teacher had said during class that morning, I promptly began to explain—in French. The teacher would grab me by the arm, take me to the classroom, hit the tips of my fingers with a ruler, and have me kneel in the corner of the classroom. She told me that French was not allowed on the school grounds. When again asked for an explanation by a French-speaking student I obliged and was punished each time. Unlike other bilingual students I adamantly refused to stop speaking French on the school grounds when a fellow classmate needed help. [...] My experience in school made me all the more determined to continue

speaking French. Never did I feel inferior. (Mr. Camille J. France, began school in the 1940s)

The pressure to normalize also came from peers. In many schools, the message was reinforced by Anglo students who had learned to treat Cajun students badly:

In 1935 my parents & I moved from Leonville, La., to Pt. Arthur, Texas. My father sold our farm & went to work for the Texas Company in Pt. Arthur. I was 5 yrs. old and could not speak English. When I started school the other children laughed & teased me. (Jesse Stelly, b. 1930)

I got kidded some about my accent by Texans who naturally called us “coonasses.” (James M. Sattler, b. 1927)

I had a lot of fistfights in school due to the fact I couldn't speak English very well. (Delton J. Menard, finished high school in 1944)

One Cajun respondent writes that she felt pressured to enforce language standards on her peers:

Although I don't remember being physically punished, the holy and dedicated nuns of the Most Blessed Sacrament left no doubt in my mind as to my duty to help others do away with the French or Cajun language. (J. L. Melancon, graduated high school in 1937, emphasis in original)

Eventually, according to Bourdieu's model, some students normalize to the language hierarchy well enough that they learn to apply the same standards to their peers.

In many cases, it wasn't the direct punishments that Cajuns remember from the French ban, but the confusion, frustration, and helplessness. The experiences were written permanently on the developing identities of these very young children:

We were playing outside and they said the bell is ringing. I did not hear it and didn't understand what they said. I lay down on the ground and fell asleep—and when I woke no one was outside. I felt so alone—and the teacher sent me home for two days, cause she said I was real bad. I cried all the way home, cause I was bad. I wanted to be good. (Viola Domingue Stevens, b. 1935)

I got caught speaking French and was sent to the principal's office and was spanked. I was very frustrated and angry—really pissed off. (Kermit, b. 1926)

I was spanked and punished for speaking French in school. I was also put in the closet for speaking French. I was slapped, whipped with a ruler, pulled my hair, all for speaking French. I could not speak any English, so I'd speak French. It was hard to be treated this way. I could not understand why I could not speak French. At home we all spoke French. Then I'd go to school and get whipped for speaking it. And now they teach French in school. Very hard to understand. (Chester Abshire, b. 1939)

I remember that in first grade a friend we called "Armadillo" was caught speaking French in the classroom. When the teacher started coming over to his desk to slap his hand with the ruler, he got scared and confused to the point that he stood up on

the seat of his desk. The seat came up and his foot got caught in it and he was so scared he started to cry and soiled himself. The teacher whisked him out of the room, I guess to clean him up, because when he did come back, he didn't smell as bad. (Tom, b. 1931)

One of the most common humiliating experiences that the respondents reported was not knowing how to ask to go to the bathroom. Teachers often ignored all requests in French, forcing children to wet and soil themselves. Though the English only policy was meant to Americanize subcultures, this kind of treatment wasn't training children to be better citizens, to have better character, or even to speak English. After all, someone *else* had to teach them the English words, perhaps on the playground in secret. This treatment was intended only to humiliate them for speaking French.

We were not allowed to speak or ask the teacher in French to let us go to the restroom or be excused for personal reasons. (Arlyn Berthier, senior in 1955)

I was so excited about this experience [beginning school] that I did not sleep the night before. Little did I know that I would be going to be in a total world of disbelief. On my first day, the teacher announced that we could not speak French anymore, in French no less. I had no idea how to ask to go to the bath facilities. Therefore my biggest punishment was that I had to return to infancy and use my clothes. I was spanked by the teacher, then by my parents for doing this terrible deed. (A. Grace Guidry Dupuis, b. 1935)

We spoke no English when we started school. If we had to use the bathroom we asked in French and got no answer. Put your hand up—no response. You did it in your clothes because you could not say it in English. (Viola Domingue Stevens, born 1935)

It was sad to see five and six year olds wet their clothes or worse soil them because they knew not how to ask for bathroom privileges. Eventually one learned but the process was humiliating and embarrassing. (Hilda Richard Breaux, began school in 1938)

As the most basic literature on potty training explains, toilet behavior is identity-forming for children at this age, so the policy of ignoring requests to be excused to the restroom was probably particularly effective at normalizing students not only to using the English language but also to associating negative experiences with French.

As the respondent Breaux notes above, children eventually learned how to ask permission to be excused, but the learning conditions were harsh and unhelpful, and many students didn't even actually learn the English phrase they were aiming for. Ignoring the children's physical needs didn't help them learn English; it simply humiliated them for not knowing it.

I remember going to school, having never heard English spoken before. It sounded to me harsh and I thought that by talking in a rougher voice, they'd understand me. [...] I first learned the phrase, "May I go out?" I realized that that was what one said to go to the bathroom. My idea how to pronounce those words was far from the way it should have sounded, but soon I was able to make the teacher understand and was able to get that permission. (Tom, b. 1931)

The first thing we learned the first day of school is how to ask to go to the bathroom. We'd raise our hand and we'd say to the teacher, 'Be-scue.' We thought it was a word, but we found out later it was a whole sentence, a question: "May I be excused?" (Allen Simon, Abbeville, b. 1937)

Simon adds that it was years before he and his friends learned the actual English words:

The school I went to in Meaux, everybody knew what *be-scue* was, and we'd use it on occasion. We'd go to the dance and somebody in the group is missing— somebody would say, "What happened to Houston or Rodney or Curtis?" "Oh, he went be-scue." We were several years in school before we knew exactly what this word meant.

Many of the grown Cajuns report that they never suffered any physical punishments for speaking French, but they were specifically taught that speaking Cajun French was shameful and inferior. Consonant with Bourdieu's theory of the classed status of languages, nearly all of them express their shame in terms of their socioeconomic position:

What I did experience was probably worse and to me did more harm than any whipping, that is, we were constantly reminded in one way or another, that if you spoke French you were "bas class," "low class." So many others believed this, including my own nephews and nieces. (H. C. "Papa" Meaux, grew up during 40s and 50s)

She [the teacher] said all dumb people spoke French and all smart people spoke English. I wanted to be real smart, so by the time I was ten we could speak

English real well. But the teachers said we were dumb—cause we were poor—and that all French speaking kids were never going to be nothing (Viola Domingue Stevens, b. 1935)

I never remember anyone being slapped for being a Cajun, but we were ridiculed by teachers and students alike because it meant you were “poor, stupid, white trash.” (Paul A. Mire, b. around 1943)

I don't recall being punished for speaking French at school, but I do remember being told in no uncertain terms that French on the school grounds was unacceptable. Of course, this made me feel that my Cajun-French heritage made me a “second-class” person. (Sylvia Ann David More, b. 1939)

I really felt humiliated and felt that all the other children were laughing at us for speaking a stupid language. The feeling that Cajun French was less than other tongues was reinforced many times in my childhood. (Billy P. Leonard, b. 1947)

You want to know how I felt? I thought of myself as being below the English speaking people. (Winnie Landry Hebert, b. 1917)

These socioeconomic associations with Cajun French and Standardized English would eventually lead Cajuns to comply with, as well as reproduce, the language inequalities to which they'd been normalized.

These stories illustrate what—represented in long, latinate words and dozens of quotations of a translation of French theory—can seem abstract, impersonal, and even trivial. But the strength of reproduction, the forces compelling people to normalize and comply, is almost inescapable for anyone under these kinds of circumstances. As a Cajun, collecting and analyzing these stories was sensitive work for me, because I can now understand the kind of experiences and emotions that my grandparents must have felt but refused to talk about. For the first three decades of my life, Paw-Paw Jeff denied remembering what happened to him under the French ban. He never spoke publicly about being Cajun until the night of my wedding rehearsal supper, which he and my grandmother hosted in their home with a giant gumbo, potato salad, boudin, and cheesecake. That night, after meeting my husband's parents, who grew up as peasants in Southern Italy, he welcomed our Italian-American guests from New Jersey and spoke at length to them about the stigma of growing up Cajun, the punishments in school, and the socioeconomic battles he fought to become an independent insurance salesman. It was a really, really long toast, during which my grandmother rolled her eyes multiple times, but it was the first time I heard him open up about being Cajun in public. He was 79 years old. I can also now understand why my other grandma, Emma, rarely let on that she spoke Cajun French, even though she was never physically punished. To endure the humiliations described in some of these accounts and watch other children being punished must have been sufficient to teach her proper self-censorship.

As a grandchild I'm sympathetic, but as a parent I'm appalled. When I imagine my own children enduring such physical and psychological abuse, I can understand why these Cajun children grew up not only censoring their own ethnicity and language but decided as parents to censor their children's ethnicity as well and later protested bringing Cajun French back into

schools. In the normalization process, the coercive forces of punishments eventually persuade individuals to self-censor and then also to help enforce these standards on the rest of the community. In the next section I examine reports of internalized ideas, economic pressures, and home language practices—all aspects of language normalization that are tied to but that are also *external* to school pedagogy and policy.

Normalizing Leads to Extracurricular Reproduction

Cajuns who endured the French ban not only internalized the dominant message about Cajun French as a result of external enforcement; they came to enforce the new standard on themselves, even without teachers around to punish them. This dynamic is an example of what Foucault calls “subjectless subjugation” or “headless subjugation.” After the recipient of normalization has internalized the new standard, there is no need for direct enforcement, because the forces of what Bourdieu refers to as “intimidation” take over. The normalized student now self-polices, as in the excerpts below where students denied in public that they spoke French at home:

This punishment degraded me and all Cajuns. It made me feel like an inferior person, one to be ridiculed by so-called “Americans.” It was embarrassing and led me to occasionally lie when asked if my folks spoke French to me at home.

(Rodney J. Guilbeaux, Jr., b. 1926)

I was never punished for speaking French [...], but I remember feeling “less than” because I could speak French. I remember denying I could speak French once [...] (I was wrong, but didn’t understand). (Willis J. Ducote, b. 1944)

In addition to lying about speaking Cajun French, some students did in fact stop speaking French at home. The effect of the French ban was to reorganize even the home language practices of students. Not only did the students begin to deny their culture, but some learned their lessons so well that they alienated themselves from their own families:

I would communicate in the class with a very heavy accent and in French.

Consequently, I was teased unmercifully causing me to strike back violently and frequently. It got to the point where I did not want to speak any French, even to my grandmother who could only speak French. I was fussed at by my parents and grandparents for not using the French language. (Ashton J. Landry, b. 1921)

This policy led to other family divisions too, as Cajun children sought to distance themselves from the stigma of speaking French. The following student's older sister had "passed" as a native English speaker until he began to attend the same school as a monolingual French speaker.

Evidently, she felt pressured to deny her family rather than admit they spoke French at home:

To this day I have never forgotten or forgiven her [my sister] for denying to her friends that I was her brother because I was obviously from the second class [French-speaking class]. I can still see her laughing and making fun of me. (Paul A. Mire, b. around 1943)

Linguistic normalization was effective in Acadiana. The practices that these students learned in school generally stayed with them throughout the rest of their lives. The following students entered school as monolingual French speakers:

Being of a Louisiana native, with a French name, I am not able to speak French.
(Arlyn Berthier, senior in 1955)

I can still speak French, but I am not nearly as fluent as I was as a child. My French now is halting and hesitant. I sometimes forget words or can't find the correct French word to express what I really mean. I will speak French to my mother, but my French is so bad that after a couple of sentences we both give it up by some unspoken agreement. (Billy P. Leonard, b. 1947)

Leonard reports that he still feels compelled to censor Cajun French from his language:

I quickly learned that having a Cajun accent was something to be avoided. I strove to remove all traces of my Cajun accent from my English vocabulary. Even today, I will sometimes misspeak and pronounce a word with a heavy Cajun flavor and be embarrassed by it.

The result of all this self-policing was a massive loss of Cajun French in the culture (a 17 percent drop in one generation), because Cajuns were censoring themselves even at home. Many report that they decided not to pass on the French to their children, usually because they wanted to protect their children from the shame they had endured:

I determined that if I had children, I would not teach them to speak Cajun French because of that experience [punishment]. I am the mother of ten children, eight of whom took French in High School, but I did not teach them Cajun French because of my earlier experience—plus the fact that my husband never spoke Cajun French (he only knew English). However, I realize now that I should have taught them Cajun French because there is a definite advantage to being able to speak two languages. (Eva Meyers Mooney, b. around 1927)

My biggest regret is that my wife & I did not teach our five children French.

Guess it just wasn't the thing to do then. (Elton P. Bourgeois, b. 1931)

My wife and I still speak Cajun French. But we did not teach the children how to speak French at all. (Dudley Theriot, began school in 1931)

One parent reports that she didn't teach her children English (only Cajun French), yet she still helped enforce their punishments for speaking French at school:

They came home and like every week they had lines to write because they were caught speaking French. I didn't like it at all but I was always sure that they would do their work. (Mrs. Adam Domingue; her children entered school in 1956, 57, 58; emphasis in original)

These reports are examples of a successful normalization campaign. The process begins in schools and leads to self-policing and even further policing in homes. This was the story of my own family; after the shame my grandparents experienced in school for speaking French, my parents and all their siblings were raised as monolingual English speakers.

Schools are important sites of normalization, as Bourdieu writes, but the same inequalities exist throughout the entire socioeconomy. Many of the students who underwent punishments and shaming in schools internalized the stigma of Cajun French and grew up continuing to censor themselves not only because they had learned their lessons so well but because they encountered the same standards everywhere else too, as a result of socioeconomic norms established during nation building. After all, the schools were only normalizing what already existed in the socioeconomy. Cajuns who assimilated to U.S. culture found it necessary to deny their ethnicity for the sake of socially fitting in, as well as for the sake of a job. Allen

Simon (b. 1937), a native Cajun French speaker who noticed this dynamic, recounts how common it was for Cajuns to lie about speaking French to get and keep a job:

I have been hanging around Lafayette since 1956, and I had a habit of dropping little hints. I'd go buy some shoes or buy something in a restaurant or leave with a little *merci* when I'd leave, to see if they would bite, and a lot of people in the larger cities have flat told me, "I don't speak that French trash." They were trying in their mind to uplift themselves, which I admire, but they didn't have to be ashamed of their heritage and the language, and I knew better. I knew that they spoke French. But it was so frowned upon, and a lot of them just to get a good job—you could tell that they had a French accent, but they tried and there were some words they couldn't even pronounce—I mean they slaughtered—but still in all, they still wouldn't speak French, because they wanted to be in that upper crust of society. And it always bugged me and it still does—people denying their heritage. (audio interview BE1.060 - BE1.061)

Simon's observations of "upwardly mobile" Cajuns censoring their language illustrate Bourdieu's claim that people will comply with established standards in hopes of acquiring the language capital necessary to participate in job markets. As Cajuns sought jobs outside of Cajun communities, they needed to speak English to fit in with the Southern socioeconomy, so the schools' heavy-handed normalization actually did them a kind of "favor" by, as Bowles and Gintis describe the purpose of education, "facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force" (11). As I mentioned earlier, some Cajuns were thankful for their teachers' diligence, even when it came in the form of physical punishments. The pedagogical linguisticism

that Cajuns experienced under the 1921 French ban had begun long before they were mandated to attend school; policy and pedagogy just helped the process of cultural domination along.

Similar to Ngũgĩ's description of the cultural bomb, many of the children who endured the French ban had normalized so well that they later fought to keep Cajun French out of schools when it came to their own children and grandchildren. Barry Jean Ancelet documents the struggle to reinstitute French in Louisiana schools in "A Perspective on Teaching the 'Problem Language' in Louisiana." Under the direction of U. S. Congressman James Domengeaux, The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) sought to reintroduce French to the Cajun community from the 1970s on, with a number of French immersion school programs—a counter to the English immersion of 1921. Yet there was much resistance from the community, as Cajuns who had internalized the illiterate stereotypes "dutifully echoed past criticisms," and adamantly opposed the teaching of Cajun French: "Older Cajuns, who had written 'I will not speak French on the schoolgrounds' a few thousand times, had learned the lesson well," writes Ancelet, "and avoided inflicting on their own children what was long considered a cultural and linguistic deficiency" (346). After being legally persuaded that Cajun French was an illiterate dialect, not many Cajuns wanted to pass on a language that "was 'not the real French, just broken Cajun French'" (346). Domengeaux achieved the revocation of the French ban in the 1974 state constitution, but there was no community support for CODOFIL's efforts to bring back Cajun French to schools.

This progression of events is a poignant example of linguisticism that was enforced in Louisiana schools beginning with the 1921 French ban but, as I've shown in chapter two, actually originated outside schools and also failed to be redressed in schools, even with progressive policies and state support. Schools play an enormous role in normalization, as this

chapter demonstrates, but the intimidating pressures outside school—the job market, hegemonic stereotypes, and deeply rooted censorship practices—compelled Cajuns to protest their own language in schools. The response of CODOFIL and its supporters to the rejection of their efforts was bafflement, as this 1984 forward-thinking letter to the editors of the magazine *Louisiana* shows. In response to the local education board's decision not to require foreign languages in high school, one supporter of bilingual education wrote:

Chers Amis,

There are a lot of us walking around long-faced today, and just a little puzzled—those of us throughout [bilingual] Louisiana who were waiting expectantly to see foreign language requirements return to our schools. We were sure that the State Board of Education and Secondary Education (BESE) was going to show the rest of the states what a class act we are down here. We were going to be new pioneers, helping to lead our country back out of its insular attitude to the rest of the world. We were going to have youngsters who would be able to communicate with and relate to our growing numbers of Hispanic citizens. We were going to have happy Cajun grandparents who could look forward to conversations in French with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We were going to have a state full of future adults who would one day be able to communicate at least a little with the many foreign visitors who come here and would be confident and articulate travellers abroad. Our children were going to develop an essential awareness of other peoples and other cultures. [...]

I suggest that the next issue of *Louisiane* be bordered in black. (McDowell)

The ideas espoused by CODOFIL and its supporters were progressive for their time, but this is an example of a progressive policy decision for schools that lacked community support and consequently failed. When the schools' French immersion programs were finally instituted, they were conducted in standard Parisian French, as Cajuns had requested, and children still could not speak to their grandparents in Cajun French.

Conclusion

That was the case in my family. Then again, maybe I would have tried harder to communicate with my grandma in French if I had known that she even spoke French. She had done an excellent job of internalizing dominant values and customs. In spite of her Anglo posturing and successful assimilation, I don't think Grandmama Emma ever forgave her first-grade teacher. "I *did* know my colors," she would insist to us. And she was right; she did know her colors. But knowing that she was in the right didn't change the fact that she hid her French later. Apparently, her airs weren't limited to just language either. When they were newlyweds, Grandmama Emma went out way back in the fields to find Paw-Paw Roland and tell him it was time for supper. Barefoot for some reason, she picked her way between cow patties the whole way out to meet him. When Paw-Paw saw his well-bred Creole wife daintily avoiding the patties, he asked if she'd ever stepped in one. Of course not, she replied. I guess Paw Paw thought it was an experience not to be missed; either that, or he thought she could use some humility. He chased Grandmama and wrestled her till he finally got one of her pretty feet planted in a pile of cow manure. She stormed back to the house, enraged. Maybe Paw Paw Roland's supper wasn't cold that night, but I bet his wife was.

Many of the Cajuns I quote in this chapter—those who attempted social mobility—have subscribed to the American model by denying their Cajunness, abandoning French, and trying to rid themselves of their Cajun accent in English. And because of the political climate today, monolingual English-speaking Cajuns are often still trying to normalize to dominant standards by cleaning up the lingering French influence on their language. Though public sentiment about Cajun French has changed, as Ryon reports, Cajunness still doesn't help when it comes to achieving the American dream, as I argued in chapter one. Cajunness only has meaning in dominant American values in terms of its postcolonial status (illiterate, exotic, comical, drunk, and so on), so Cajun French and CVE have no socioeconomic worth in Bourdieu's language markets (apart from the few jobs in the performance industry). As I demonstrate in the next chapter, teachers are still trying to eliminate the Cajun linguistic markers from their students' writing in order to help prepare them for the job market. But eradication is no longer the policy; now it's code switching. I argue that the name *code switching* is inaccurate and misrepresentative of what's actually happening for many reasons, and that a better term is *code censoring*.

Chapter Four
Don't Blame Teachers (Not Too-Too Much):
Code Censoring in Classrooms

As teachers of English, we feel the pressure to teach our students traditional academic discourse so that they can function adequately once they join the work force. – LuMing Mao⁴⁸

[G]reat psychological damage is inevitably done when a student is cut off from the way of life he wishes to lead because he lacks the competencies expected in professional life. For us to shirk the more difficult job of teaching the standard dialect and traditional modes of academic discourse is a serious mistake, for which our students pay the price. – Sarah D'Eloia⁴⁹

I do require that [Cajun] students write in standard English in their formal writing assignments, but since I teach composition, that's my job. – Louisiana teacher of freshman composition

Introduction

I remember the glorious day I felt I could finally pass as a normal, non-Cajun speaker of Legitimate English. It was a warm Louisiana night, my second semester of grad school. The UNO campus was beautiful that night—trees dotting the navy sky, sidewalk sparkling in the moonlight, and a steady breeze off the Pontchartrain, the lake that would tragically flood New Orleans four years later. I was still chewing on bits of an intriguing night-class discussion as I walked to my car when I noticed something that surprised me: I was thinking in the same language that my professor used. I thrilled silently; I couldn't believe that I had internalized academic discourse enough to use it subconsciously. I had learned long before then to mitigate my accent and not to use Cajunisms like *cher*⁵⁰ and *mais la*⁵¹ and *frisson*⁵², when my mother moved me in sixth grade to a private school with teachers recruited from Northern states who

⁴⁸ “Re-Clustering Traditional Academic Discourse: Alternating with Confucian Discourse” 121.

⁴⁹ “Teaching Standard Written English” 10.

⁵⁰ Pronounced “sha,” it is invariably invoked when a new baby or puppy is presented.

⁵¹ An exclamation of disapproval, frustration, or other strong emotion.

⁵² A chill or shudder.

balked at our grammar and vocabulary. But there were still a few things I couldn't weed out like saying "fark" for *fork* and "cahnftabuh" or something like that for *comfortable*. But now I had internalized what I thought was a neutral accent. I felt extremely intelligent at that moment; I felt like I belonged in the university. I didn't think anyone could tell I had started out on food stamps on the other side of the Mississippi. This Cajun girl had finally mastered good English for upward mobility. And this would be a happy ending, except that what I was so proud to be learning was actually *code censoring*. After all, I already knew Legitimate English; that's how I was accepted into my M.A. program. But like my grandparents before me, I was aiming to self-censor so well that nobody would know I'm Cajun. Mais la.

This conflation of linguistic error and cultural difference is common to English composition classrooms. In spite of a raised awareness of linguisticism that led to the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)'s 1974 resolution, Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), many teachers still feel compelled to teach only the legitimate variety of English. As a result, students still feel compelled to normalize to the legitimate language, like I was still doing in a graduate-level introductory course to Comp/Rhet studies nearly 30 years after the resolution was passed. SRTOL was an important convergence of counterhegemonic movements and educational policy, but the language of the resolution was limited to the paradigm of nationalism (something I explain later). Further, as Stephen Parks argues in *Class Politics: The Movement for the Students' Right to Their Own Language. Refiguring English Studies*, there has been no institutional support of SRTOL to speak of, and the statement became "a document that had no effective use" (19).⁵³ This neglect of nonstandard Englishes and other languages, as I show in

⁵³ Parks writes that the activism leading to SRTOL created hegemonic changes in the field, but it "was quickly shunted aside by an expanding CCCC and replaced with a muted endorsement of Black English as a symbol of the

this chapter, is consonant with the field's long time purpose of teaching the legitimate language, which is a function of class and race inequalities, so teachers will never be able to *completely* affirm the students' rights to their own language within its structure.

Likewise, another reason that it is not sufficient to address U.S. linguisticism in schools alone is that any pedagogical or policy-related changes are limited by the reproductive function of schools, or their *sociopedagogical* function. As I argued in chapter three, schools exist to sort and integrate students into the appropriate place in the socioeconomy (this is the "reproductive" function of schools), and students normalize to language inequalities eventually by internalizing the messages they receive. In this chapter, I point out that pedagogy (at least pedagogy that sufficiently equips students for gatekeeping obstacles and job markets) is limited by the system it's contained in, so the position of any composition teacher who supports language equality (and other forms of equality as well) is particularly difficult. As the epigraphs above demonstrate, teachers' consciousness of the economic pressures of the job market (for both their students *and* themselves) influences their pedagogical decisions. Teachers may not want to reinforce inequalities, but they almost certainly will do so if they perform their jobs well.

This has been the case in the Cajun community, as I demonstrate in the results from a survey of teachers of Cajun students in Southwest Louisiana to assess current popular ways of dealing with language issues in the area. These teachers report across the board that they are keenly conscious of job markets as they make pedagogical decisions, again demonstrating the connection between pedagogy and the economy. Though a popular pedagogy called "code switching" (which I argue is actually *code censoring*) has replaced the policy of eradication that all but destroyed Cajun French, composition courses still serve to reinforce the legitimate

United States' possibilities" instead of a broader focus on race, gender, and class inequalities (5). He argues that radical academics need to build coalitions with nonacademic workers and organize within institutions to continue the efforts that were coopted by a conservative backlash in the field.

language by continuing to encourage students to censor all traces of Cajunness. To explain this dynamic, I draw on Bourdieu's theory of *dissimilation*, a strategy in capitalism that ensures class differentiation in language (which teachers then normalize), and I situate it in Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis' explanation of the connection between national reorganization and major shifts in pedagogy in *Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*, focusing on the shift to what I call "multicultural pedagogy" in the 1960s. I show that dissimilation is often the impetus behind institutionalizing new pedagogies, even ones that seem more progressive, and I conclude by discussing recently emerged translingual pedagogies.

Bourdieu's Theory of Dissimilation

Bourdieu's model predicts that the inequalities created by the legitimate language evolve alongside attempts at equality, so pedagogical changes geared toward equality wind up being slightly altered (sometimes better) forms of normalization. It's common knowledge that education is never neutral. Information is given out just so—limited this way, spun that way, mistranslated, and so on. But it's not just the content that's not neutral. The pedagogy is also not neutral. Pedagogy models for and teaches students how to behave in their future relationships with authority figures and with their work. If the economy is unequal, then any pedagogy that prepares students to fit into it prepares them for inequality.

Pierre Bourdieu argues something similar in his analysis of education. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu argues that teachers are participants in the process of language legitimation (and illegitimation) in that they are the enforcers of the legitimate code. But he also writes that teachers instill the logic and tastes of the dominant through their teaching philosophy: "the schoolmaster, a *maître à parler* (teacher of speaking) [...] is thereby also a *maître à penser*

(teacher of thinking),” a French phrase that denotes someone with disciples (48-49). In this way, even if teachers are unable to teach their students mastery of the legitimate language (and social mobility), they teach legitimate values that help students recognize the legitimate language and where people deserve to be in the economy as a result of their level of mastery. He writes, “the social mechanisms of cultural transmission tend to reproduce the structural disparity between the very unequal *knowledge* of the legitimate language and the much more uniform *recognition* of this language” (62). So pedagogy actually teaches students how to recognize and defer to their superiors in the class hierarchy. This sociopedagogical function of education is central to my analysis later.

Michel Foucault similarly wrote that teachers are “relays” of the disciplinary gaze in the tradition of the panopticon. They function to create individuation of students by fostering competition (where collaboration could easily be rewarded instead) via test scores. Foucault calls this process *cellularizing* students to create *docile bodies*, or compliant participants in society. (Elsewhere, it’s called “divide and conquer.”) But teachers aren’t to blame for the class and language inequality that exists long after nation building. As Foucault’s word *relay* indicates, teachers are simply another link in the chain. They didn’t create the inequality; they are merely passing it along. In *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, Victor Villanueva explains that teachers are essentially middle managers for “those who are in truly dominant positions” (134-136). Similarly, when the economy changes for some reason, teachers often adjust their pedagogies to better prepare their students for the job market, even if the economy is growing more and more unequal and requires them to normalize their students to corresponding inequalities.

Bourdieu explains these changes in capitalism (and language pedagogy) in terms of *dissimilation*. After nation builders codify the legitimate language and program it into the educational system, the institutionalized class hierarchy doesn't automatically reproduce itself. When capitalism, which requires differentiation between the working class and the ruling class, is threatened by an *assimilating*, or rising, working class, the major players in capitalism find it necessary to create new ways to *dissimilate* from the working class. Bourdieu calls these updates to the class hierarchy "strategies of assimilation and dissimulation" (*Language* 64). Since, as Bourdieu reminds us, this "competitive struggle" requires losers in order for there to be winners, the winners (or people who hope to be winners) need to find new ways for people to "lose." To maintain class inequalities (disparity), people in dominant positions in society constantly redefine the legitimate language. Bourdieu calls these modifications to the legitimate language "distinctive deviations" in usage (64). As I showed in the last chapter, what constitute distinctive deviations are the language practices that are the most awkward and difficult to learn. When it's too easy to learn the legitimate language, too many people can succeed. As I wrote in chapter two, Deborah Brandt provides a literal example of literacy standards fluctuating according to numbers of soldiers needed in "Drafting U.S. Literacy." During the 1940s, for example, "in the space of five years, what counted as literacy—or enough literacy—changed six times" (486). These literacy fluctuations were prompted not by expert measures of intelligence but simply by the number of soldiers needed during World War II. When there aren't enough jobs (because, say, corporations have moved offshore), competition for the few remaining jobs increases and higher levels of literacy (that is, increasingly obscure definitions of literacy) are required.

Bourdieu writes, like other linguists, that language change is normal—so normal that when languages don't change very much, one must wonder why. As Peter Elbow writes in

Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing, language divergence is the rule not the exception: “A single standard for language that differs from spoken dialects is not built into the universe or the nature of language; it’s something that has *sometimes* emerged. In cycles. Usually it’s been imposed” (364). According to Bourdieu, schools are designed to preserve the legitimate language: “the educational system [...], charged with the task of sanctioning heretical products in the name of grammar and inculcating the specific norms which block the effects of the laws of evolution, contributes significantly to constituting the dominated uses of language as such by consecrating the dominant use as the only legitimate one, by the mere fact of inculcating it” (59-60). Again, he writes, “The legitimate language owes its (relative) constancy in time (as in space) to the fact that it is continuously protected by a prolonged labour of inculcation against the inclination towards the economy of effort and tension which leads, for example, to analogical simplification (e.g. of irregular verbs in French [...])” (61). But language does evolve over time, not because of top-down edicts but because of usage trends and the tendency toward democratization (assimilation).

When these language changes make the legitimate language too easy to acquire, though, it’s time for linguistic dissimilation. So in the end the legitimate language does evolve, but not in a way that reflects “other” speakers. It starts to follow them because language evolves to represent anyone speaking it, but then it is refined: “Thus distinctive deviations are the driving force of the unceasing movement which, though intended to annul them, tends in fact to reproduce them (a paradox which is in no way surprising once one realizes that constancy may presuppose change)” (64). So while it has evolved to allow for colloquialisms of white males in dominant (culture defining) positions, as Elbow shows, the legitimate language still doesn’t allow for many colloquialisms of minority and working-class groups (unless tongue in cheek)

(348-357). That means that, even if pedagogues teach lower-class students how to “work the system” and sound like upper-class speakers and writers, upper-class people will only invent new usages to differentiate themselves. For this reason, modifications in pedagogy are not always headed in the direction of equality, even when they seem like vast improvements.

Bowles and Gintis point out that pedagogy, like the legitimate language, usually changes in favor of the needs of the capitalist “winners.” Similar to Bourdieu, Bowles and Gintis stress the socioeconomic reproductive function of schools: “The educational system, basically, neither adds to nor subtracts from the degree of inequality and repression originating in the economic sphere. Rather, it reproduces and legitimates a preexisting pattern in the process of training and stratifying the work force” (265). They stress the roles of the teacher and pedagogy in the educational process: “The heart of the process is to be found not in the content of the educational encounter—or the process of information transfer—but in the form: the social relations of the educational encounter” (265). The “form” of the educational encounter is pedagogy, which they define as the triune relationships between the teacher and the information, the students and the information, and the teacher and the students. This aspect of the classroom is more determining of students’ future relationships than any of the content. After having practiced these relationships for twelve (plus) years, students have perfected their roles and are ready to join the labor force quietly and seamlessly. This sociopedagogical function of education is present in any form of schooling, whether it is preparing students to mindlessly join the current society or help create a new one.

Because of its role in supporting nationalism, the legitimate language is also recodified according to national needs. Following nation building, Bourdieu writes, the legitimate language is updated during periods of national reorganization, as class divisions must also be refined.

Antonio Gramsci explains it similarly but in terms of hegemony: “Each time that in one way or another, the question of language comes to the fore, that signifies... the reorganization of cultural hegemony” (Gramsci, qtd in Donald 36). James Donald borrows Gramsci’s concept of reorganization in “How Literacy Became a Problem (and Illiteracy Stopped Being One)” to explain how the ruling class in England invented and used mass public education to control the political habits of the working class (which I explain in detail later). He writes that literacy crises are actually moments when the ruling class strives to acquire, maintain, or reassert control over ways of thinking: “Political struggles around language therefore involve the attempt to control these codes [that define meaning and provide interpretations], to generate certain meanings rather than others, literally to define a society’s common sense” (47). Bourdieu writes that there are ongoing interventions of the legitimate language during later periods of national reorganization (e.g. wars, economic upheavals), which are also essentially moments of nationalism. In this sense, the legitimate language is a construct, “a semi-artificial language” that nation builders selected during the initial period of political organization and redefine as needed (60).

To illustrate the fact that pedagogies are intrinsically tied to the economy, Bowles and Gintis argue that the major changes and reforms in U.S. pedagogy have historically corresponded with the evolution of the economy to better equip workers for the environment of the work place into which they are to be integrated (199). The type of training in turn corresponds to the kind of labor the students will likely be performing once they enter the labor force. Bowles and Gintis describe three major transitions in U.S. pedagogy that have corresponded with three major transitions in capitalism: the common school reform during early U.S. nation building, the progressive educational movement after the Civil War, and the movement begun in the 1960s.

The common school reform corresponds with a transition to entrepreneurial capitalism during industrialization, which required workers (who were trained separately from capitalists) to normalize to factory labor habits, so I call this a transition to “factory pedagogy.” The progressive educational movement corresponded with a transition to monopoly or corporate capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century that relied on increasingly intricate forms of middle management in its large bureaucratic structures, requiring workers to normalize to self-policing and cooperation, so I call this a transition to “corporate pedagogy.”⁵⁴ Bowles and Gintis don’t name the last transition, simply calling it “the movement begun in the 1960s,” but they explain that it corresponds with the integration of new populations of workers, which they define as “uprooted Southern blacks, women, and the once-respectable, ‘solid’ members of the precorporate capitalist community—the small business people, independent professionals, and other white-collar workers” (234-235). This last period of diversification of labor, a result of economic and national reorganization, is central to my analysis later in the chapter because it is the context from which code switching and other elements of what might be called “multicultural pedagogy” emerged. Here, to illustrate the way pedagogy follows the economy, I explain the first two periods, factory pedagogy and corporate pedagogy.

Even before these pedagogical transitions, though, the very genesis of mass public schooling in the U.S. was a socio-pedagogical response to a shift in capitalism. Capitalism began as simple money lending (usury), and had moved to a system of “early sharecropping” (this is often referred to as “cottage industry” in England) around the time of the founding of the U.S. In this particular system, capitalists supplied materials for working and collected the products, but they didn’t oversee any of the processing, similar to the practice in which the colonies were

⁵⁴ Bowles and Gintis accurately use the term *corporate capitalism* for this period, but their use of *corporate* is different from the way it is generally discussed today (under what David Harvey and other economic theorists call “finance capitalism.”)

responsible for procuring raw materials and shipping them over to the mother country to be refined and sold back. With a work environment like this, apprenticeships were the main source of job training. Education requirements were otherwise minimal—a little reading, writing, and arithmetic. As a result, schooling was minimal as well. Apart from classical education for the children of elites, most children received some degree of religious instruction and the three Rs at dame schools, which varied in rigor by the matron's choice.

With a transition to entrepreneurial capitalism, in which nonworkers (production managers) oversaw workers as they processed commodities in factories, education requirements rose, spurring a transition to factory pedagogy. In addition to factory labor skills, workers needed to be trained how to work in the special setting of a factory; they would need to be obedient and disciplined. The idea of social control may seem a tad conspiratorial, but several literacy theorists have documented it as the inspiration for mass education in the U.S. James Donald reports in his article “How Illiteracy Became a Problem (and Literacy Stopped Being One)” that public education was invented by British elites to help cement class hierarchy during a time of transition to industrial (or factory) capitalism by controlling the already existing widespread literacy and training workers for factory discipline (not skills). Donald demonstrates that the working class already had high (and increasing) rates of literacy, but was using literacy for political purposes like reading Thomas Paine's tract *Common Sense* or for “incorrect” interpretations of the Bible. “What changed at the end of the eighteenth century [after the institution of public education],” writes Donald, “was not the number of people who could read and write (the rise in literacy rates was marginal) but the perception of literacy” (36-37). Similarly, literacy rates were already high in the U.S. before public education, about 90 percent of white adults. As Bowles and Gintis point out, “It is particularly difficult to make the case that

the objective of early school reform movements was mass literacy in view of the fact that literacy was already very high [...] prior to the common school revival” (228). State-sponsored public education was developed originally not to encourage literacy but to control the already existing circulation of literature, literacy, and interpretations of the working class—that is, to teach how to think, especially on matters of politics.

In addition to controlling literacy, state-sponsored public education was invented to foster not *skilled* laborers but *disciplined* factory workers. There were already plenty of skilled laborers in the working class, but these workers were accustomed to setting their own hours and rates, and this was a problem for overseers. Harvey Graff writes, “the laboring population had to be trained for factory work and taught industrial habits, rules, and rhythms.... The problem of course was one of discipline, [...which was] required to produce goods on time” (228). This new public training was intended explicitly to keep the working class “in its place.” In response to concerns from the ruling class that education might cause uprisings from the working class, one educator wrote, “It is not [...] proposed by this institution, that the children of the poor should be educated in a manner to elevate their minds above the rank they are destined to fill in society... Utopian schemes for an extensive diffusion of knowledge would be injurious and absurd” (qtd. in Donald 39). Another educator replied that, only by education “can the workman be induced to leave undisturbed the control of commercial enterprises in the hands of capitalists” (qtd. in Donald 44). Graff writes that North America copied Britain’s model of education for similar purposes: “for the efficient training of the masses to the social order and the reassertion of hegemony” and “the additional important task of assuring that manual workers did not aspire to rise above their station in life” (23, 31). Graff stresses the class requirements for establishing capitalism in the U.S.

In order to train people for factory-type labor, factory pedagogy was highly disciplined; it “brought us the chairs-nailed-to-the-floor classroom” (Bowles and Gintis 254). The curriculum featured memorization and recitation, which came to be criticized as “rote learning” and “knowledge without understanding” during the Progressive era. Education theorist Paulo Freire also criticizes this type of education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as what he calls the “banking model”: the teacher deposits information in the students’ brains, to be withdrawn again for the test (76). “Back to basics” movements like No Child Left Behind also draw from factory socio-pedagogical traditions that emphasize heavy testing and close surveillance.

The next major economic shift to monopoly capitalism (an early form of corporate capitalism) required workers to internalize the idea of surveillance and police themselves, so schools transitioned to corporate pedagogy. This corresponding pedagogical shift was during “the period from 1890-1920, marking the transition of the U.S. capitalist system from its earlier individualistic competitive structure [under entrepreneurship capitalism] to its contemporary corporate form” (Bowles and Gintis 18). Monopoly capitalism required a form of cooperation instead of mere obedience, because workers were increasingly tiered into middle management positions. The accompanying pedagogy, a cobbling of elements from the Progressive movement, would focus on student normalization instead of coercion. Under corporate capitalism, there are also increasing divisions of labor by group (and even nations) instead of individuals, controlled by a more centralized bureaucracy. Bowles and Gintis write that factory pedagogy became obsolete as a result: “The Progressive Era accompanied the transition to corporate capitalism, in light of which the small decentralized common school was manifestly anachronistic, both in its internal social relationships and in the degree to which it could be centrally controlled through enlightened social policy” (199). Recognizing the need for a more centralized (national)

educational system and a new type of laborer, prominent capitalists invested heavily in updating both K-12 schools and teacher training schools (“normal schools” for normalizing pedagogy). Bowles and Gintis write that J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and “a number of leading capitalists” supported the vocational education movement during the 1890s both politically and financially. Additionally, “the bureaucratization, tracking, and test-orientation of the school system [was] promoted by seed money from large private foundations, articulated by social scientists at prestigious schools of education, and enthusiastically implemented by business-controlled local school boards” (200). Influential capitalists who understood the need for a new kind of worker were major sponsors of the new version of literacy (or education), because they stood to profit from these educational investments.

John Dewey was one of the most influential school reformers during this period, with his vision for creating a truly egalitarian educational system that would model and foster a democratic consciousness in all students, but his ideas were only appropriated into mass public education inasmuch as they helped further corporate capitalism. For example, two of the most important features of Deweyan education were integrating schools with communities and giving students equal participation in school governance (Sabia 4). Educational policy makers in most states adopted Dewey’s perspective on treating all the community’s children as their own by enforcing mandatory school attendance, but they were not as keen on letting the students participate in pedagogical and curricular decisions. Teachers, administrators, and parents were often supportive of the transition to corporate pedagogy, because it provided better job training for students. Bowles and Gintis write that there were multiple interests in transitioning pedagogies, and workers often got what they wanted, but only when capitalists wanted it too: “expansion of public education was supported by employers and other powerful people as well

as by organized labor. Where the educational demands of organized labor diverged from that of business elites—as in the turn-of-the-century struggle for control of vocational education—labor generally lost” (228-229). The school reforms of the Progressive Era are an example of the interests of capital beating out the interests of progressive educators, of pedagogy following the economy.

These economic and pedagogical transitions, as Bourdieu predicts, have also corresponded with major language debates and attempts to redefine the legitimate language. The period of U.S. nation building and common school reform, of course, corresponds to Webster’s drive to define a national language. The Reconstruction Era after the Civil War was an important time of national redefinition and reorganization—economically, linguistically, and even in terms of self-identification for states who had seceded. Once again, people needed to be taught how to be American. As I explain in the next section, it was also during this economic and linguistic transition that the freshman composition course was born.

Dissimilation in Composition and Rhetoric

Like pedagogy in general, language pedagogy is intended to integrate laborers into the status quo and sort them according to class. Freshman composition has functioned on different levels, as I explained in chapters two and three, to keep students in their classes, foster nationalism, assimilate minorities and subcultures into the mainstream economy, and teach students how to think (maybe even what to think). Teachers of freshman composition help students conform to the demands of the job market; if students can’t or don’t conform, teachers are generally expected to fail them until they do conform or are sorted into manual labor. In this section, I chart the developments in language pedagogy that paralleled the transitions to

corporate capitalism, and then I discuss the multicultural pedagogical responses to what Bowles and Gintis calls “the movement begun in the 1960s.”

Freshman composition has always had a strong link with capitalism, as Donna Strickland explains in “How to Compose a Capitalist: The Predicament of Required Writing in a Free Market Curriculum.” The universal college requirement was enacted at Harvard in the 1890s, during the shift to corporate capitalism, to serve as a way to sort capitalists from workers (who were trained differently). Strickland describes the change in pedagogy and how it related to composition. Colleges were transitioning to the elective system (as initiated by Harvard and eventually copied by everyone else), because the most desirable kind of capitalist was one who was competitive and unpoliced yet motivated to study. The role of the composition class, the one required course in an otherwise elective system, writes Strickland, was to filter out students who didn’t have the right background. “Students needed to enter the college classroom with a certain amount of English capital already acquired,” Strickland writes, or they could not proceed with their studies (35). In other words, if they had been raised with a language or dialect other than Harvard’s standards, there was a good chance that they would not be allowed to study at Harvard and consequently have a Harvard-worthy career. The composition course was an effective (and delicate) way to socially sort students. Sharon Crowley writes in *Composition in the University* that, because the composition course was portrayed as a meritocratic competition, students accepted their failure as their own fault instead of recognizing that the educational system tended to penalize people from the wrong class. “To put this in Foucauldian terms,” she writes, “Freshman English was (and is?) a ‘political technology of individuals,’ a pedagogy designed to create docile subjects who would not question the discipline’s continued and repeated demonstration of their insufficient command of their native tongue” (77). Harvard blamed

secondary schools for inadequately educating students, and secondary schools subsequently began changing their own composition standards and tracking methods.

Also during this shift to corporate capitalism, monolingualism was instituted in the educational system. Bruce Horner and John Trimbur write in “English Only and U.S. College Composition” that attitudes toward modern languages were reorganized at the same time as college departments (and these attitudes are still with us today). By 1897, they write, “English was elevated to its preeminent status in the curriculum, and the other modern languages were, in effect, assigned their limited spheres of influence, territorialized as national literatures in their separate departments, where students encountered them as texts to be read, not living languages to be written or spoken” (602). The boundaries of languages came to be seen as fixed at this time, and to be American was to speak English. Horner and Trimbur explore ways of instituting multilingualism in the educational system and conclude,

This largely unexamined language policy has made it difficult to see that U.S. college composition, from its formation to the present day, operates for the most part within national borders, at worst justifying writing instruction for reasons of economic productivity, cultural integration, and now perhaps homeland security, while at best imagining a more inclusive, pluricultural, and participatory civic life in the U.S. (623)

The attention to public education composition standards and the institution of freshman composition coincided with a shift to monolingualism when it became unpatriotic in the U.S. to speak more than one language (after huge waves of immigration at the turn of the century and following World War I). John Trimbur charts other moments when the legitimate language came to the forefront in connection with nationalism in “Linguistic Memory and the Politics of U.S.

English,” including anti-German legislation during World War I and Americanization campaigns designed to teach English. These efforts to influence workers’ internal linguistic and nationalist values (which were successful among Cajuns, as I show in chapter three) corresponded with the transition to corporate pedagogy, which favored self-surveillance and cooperation over obedience.

The next major pedagogical shift that Bowles and Gintis chart was extremely significant in Comp/Rhet. They don’t explain the shift, but the 1960s saw a great deal of national reorganization in response to major national challenges—from both within and without—particularly the Cold War and the space race following the arms race, the Vietnam War, and demands for access to higher education and job parity from populations that had been previously excluded. In *Class Politics: The Movement for the Students’ Right to Their Own Language*. *Refiguring English Studies*, Stephen Parks describes the influence of counterhegemonic movements like Student Power, Black Power, the New Left, Civil Rights, women’s liberation and antiwar organizing. At the same time that the U.S. required increased levels of nationalism to support its military endeavors, a task that already required significant pedagogical changes, workers were demanding new economic arrangements, which would also require pedagogical changes. This convergence led to a rare opportunity of educational integration. Whereas women and people of color had been previously sorted into different educational (and pedagogical) arrangements, the state conceded to their demands for equal entrance and access to schools and jobs. The educational system would need to negotiate simultaneously a new form of nationalism (to organize citizens against “the enemy,” as well as to equip them for the space race) and the labor training of new populations of workers. The field of Comp/Rhet was heavily involved with these tasks, as shown in the field’s conversations about Open Admissions at CUNY, the resulting

emergence of basic writing, the Ebonics debate in Oakland, and SRTOL. These are all important elements of what I categorize under “multicultural pedagogy,” or educational responses to the problem of normalizing speakers of new Englishes in classrooms. This period also marked the development of the pedagogical stance that is most popular among teachers of Cajun students in Southwest Louisiana, code switching.

The first part of creating code switching was to define the distinction between the legitimate variety of English and other Englishes. Trimbur writes in “The Dartmouth Conference and the Geohistory of the Native Speaker” that the Dartmouth Conference of 1966 was instrumental in this process. In addition to being deemed the official start of the process movement, this conference was an important moment for creating a distinction between native speakers and nonnative speakers of English. Composition teaching had already come to be seen as an important way of shaping U.S. citizen consciousness, enough that the U.S. was willing to fund English departments as a part of the war effort with the National Defense Act of Education (NDEA) in a 1964 decision called “Project English” (150). In fact, long before this conference, Trimbur writes, others had recognized the importance of teaching English for spreading imperialism, including Winston Churchill: “I am very much interested in the question of Basic English. The widespread use of this would be a gain to us far more durable and fruitful than the annexation of great provinces” (qtd in Trimbur 146), and for spreading capitalism: “As [Robert] Phillipson’s research makes clear, however, there was a consensus among government, foundations, and academics on the value of English in Cold War strategies to counter the Soviet Union in the Third World and to modernize postcolonial nations by opening them to foreign investments, market economies, and the political influence of the West” (147). But now freshman comp was being redefined to impose the same cultural norms (empire and capitalism)

on U.S. speakers of English. Like Bourdieu, Trimbur points out that definitions of legitimate English have been controlled by those with more power: “the means of producing knowledge about English have been unevenly distributed—according to geohistorical location and differential relations ascribed to native and nonnative speakers, metropolis and colony, center and periphery,” and the result of this control over definitions has been to grant more legitimacy to those who already have privilege (145). In the end, even native speakers of English could be deemed “nonnative” if they didn’t have command of the legitimate usage.

This native/nonnative distinction in Comp/Rhet provided the basis for code switching. Whereas previous conversations in the field focused on discrepancies in usage, the focus shifted around the 1960s to deal with entirely different language systems, as the content from contemporary *CCC* issues shows. In the Spring 1957 issue of *CCC*, sentence-level correctness is the primary issue in a great number of articles, indicating that most writers assumed a population of students familiar with Standardized English. Though theorists in the linguistics field at the time are beginning to consider the “relativism” of context-appropriate usage, there is a strong current of grammar guardianism in Comp/Rhet, as in titles like “Do Illiterate A.B.’s Disgrace Us All?” and “Doctrines of English Usage.” The purpose of composition classes is articulated as refinement of manners and mind (unlike today’s explicit focus on job training). For example, one submitter writes, “*general education* means pretty much what I get from the term *enlargement of the mind* in Cardinal Newman’s *Idea of a University* or from the expression *Liberal Knowledge* as Matthew Arnold used it in contrast with *Useful Knowledge*” (Harold Allen 33, italics his). Likewise, a speech teacher declares in another article that his purpose is “To assist his students to talk as educated and mature men and women” (Burnet 23). Another writer decries his students’ grammar with missionary fervor, writing that he needs “a minor miracle” to convert “the tongues

of the philistines” (Timmerman 51). One article in this journal issue predicts the coming transition. A group of writers explain a new military-invented teaching approach based on the idea that language use is a habit that can be replaced or retrained behaviorally, and they suggest that the approach may aid in teaching the legitimate language to nonstandard students. They write, “The student’s use of his native dialects and styles is anchored on firmly established systems of habits. [...] He will have to acquire new sets of habits” (Sullivan et al. 15). In this article, Sullivan et al. are introducing the emerging field of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, ignoring the fact that “problem” students are typically native English speakers whose “errors” are simply English dialect differences. The fallacy of treating native English speakers as foreigners has plagued Comp/Rhet theory ever since.

The native/nonnative distinction also helped enforce a form of cultural purism in Comp/Rhet studies, leading to pedagogies that confused working-class and minority students with tourists or immigrants. As a result, teachers strove specifically to assimilate or acculturate students to dominant values and habits. Crowley describes this cultural purism as a “function” of freshman composition, explaining that entering students must take on a new cultural identity: “The course is meant to shape students to behave, think, write, and speak as students rather than as the people they are, people who have differing histories and traditions and languages and ideologies” (89). Chris Schroeder, coeditor of *AltDIS*, agrees: “instruction in academic literacy has always been about acculturation” (“From the Inside Out” 182). Metaphors of assimilation and acculturation to a new country have been used uncritically to undergird the practice of discrediting the language skills students already have. Even Mike Rose, who is very conscientious about depictions of minority and working-class students, compares vernacular-speaking students to travelers in a foreign land who must learn how to communicate with and not

offend the locals:

A traveler in a foreign land best learns names of people and places, how to express ideas, ways to carry on a conversation by moving around in the culture, participating as fully as he can, making mistakes, saying things half right, blushing, then being encouraged by a friendly native speaker to try again. He'll pick up the details of grammar and usage as he goes along. What he must *not* do is hold back from the teeming flow of life, must not sit in his hotel room and drill himself on all possible gaffes before entering the streets. [...] My students, too, were strangers in a strange land [...]. (*Lives* 142)

Though Rose argues that there are real class and race inequalities (and also uses the metaphor of an “academic club”), the “traveler” conceit can lead other teachers to treat internally colonized students as if they are voluntary immigrants or, worse, on vacation. The conceit breaks down, because vernacular-speaking American students *aren't foreign*. The model of acculturation assumes that the new students are “nonnatives,” so they should be the ones to change. But it's the university culture that's nonnative. It's a transplant, an immigration, of values and traditions. The only cultures that are native to this continent are Native American ones.

Ten years after the ESL article and one year after the Dartmouth Conference, the topics in *CCC* have moved further from sentence-level issues to considerations on the place of grammar in composition instruction with articles like “Sequence of Tenses, or Was James Thurber the First Transformational Grammarian?” and “Some Thoughts on Teaching Grammar to Improve Writing.” In “Some Thoughts,” Baum concludes that grammar mastery is important but only one element among many that determines good writing (4). This was around the time that contrastive rhetoric came onto the scene, proposing that errors in written arguments were usually simply

contrasting cultural values in styles of rhetoric, as explained in Robert Kaplan's 1966 article "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education." He wrote that the rhetoric of English writers was linear, whereas French, Spanish, and other romance language writers were expected to digress, Asian writers to be indirect (because of cultural norms), and Jewish writers to be repetitive (in the style of "Semitic parallelism" in Hebrew books like "Psalms" and "Proverbs"). Kaplan recommended exercises to behaviorally train students to adjust to the standard language. Another new item in 1967 was the beginning of professionalization of composition studies in English in the article "The Careers of English Majors," which traced the career paths of several hundred English graduates.⁵⁵ Increased numbers of English teaching careers were due to the massive influx of students at the time, coinciding with Bowles and Gintis's third economic and pedagogical transition.

With new definitions of native speakers and theories on contrastive rhetoric and ESL, this period also saw the birth of what is commonly called "code switching" in Comp/Rhet. Geneva Smitherman writes in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* that discussions of the "bi-dialectical model" of Black speech originated around this time. Breaking from the tradition of eradicating the "deficient" language practices of African American students, more liberal educators espoused the idea that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was simply "different" and AAVE speakers should just learn to be "bi-dialectical" for "home talk" and "school talk" (204-206). This pedagogical strategy is now commonly known as *code switching* in Comp/Rhet discussions. Code switching is the practice in educational circles of disallowing vernaculars in the classroom because school isn't the appropriate context. Students should be aware of their audience (a teacher or group of scholars) and self-censor street slang

⁵⁵ Despite the progress of the field, attitudes were still very traditional when it came to women, who were not even considered in professional contexts. In the article "The Use of 'Mr.'" the titles *Professor*, *Dr.*, and *Mr.* are clarified. Wyld recommended *Mr.* for every situation, making no mention of female faculty.

from their writing (speech would be nice too). Vershawn Young explains in *Your Average Nigga: Performing Race, Literacy, and Masculinity* that code switching is:

a popular concept and approach to language instruction because it appears to be egalitarian. It's supposed to allow students to keep intact their authentic black identity since they are encouraged to speak one dialect and hold one set of beliefs appropriate for the hood (where their dialect and identity are validated) and speak another version of English and adopt thoughts more suitable for school (where they are asked to give up their dialect and identity for a short time in order to achieve the most good in the long run). (7)

Pedagogically, code switching seemed to some teachers like a reasonable solution to eradication, especially in the face of increasing multiculturalization of classrooms, because the teacher could respectfully exclude the student's home discourse and get on with teaching the legitimate one. Race and class inequalities were still structured into the economy, so teachers who hoped to prepare their students adequately for jobs couldn't ignore the demand for Standardized English. Though Smitherman was identifying the flawed logic in code switching as early as 1977, something I explain later, code switching is still the most popular way of dealing with dialect influence among Cajuns, as my survey responses of teachers of Cajun students in Southwest Louisiana indicates.

Survey of Pedagogical Responses to Cajun Students

The survey participants were teachers of college freshman composition, ranging from graduate student teachers to full professors. I drew my participants from an area where they were almost sure to have encountered Cajun students. During the spring of 2011, with approval from the CUNY IRB, I sent requests to the English Department chairs at four different colleges in the

Southwest Louisiana area to post my survey on their departmental listservs. The colleges were University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL Lafayette), Southwest Louisiana Community College (SLCC), Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge (LSU), and Louisiana State University at Eunice (LSUE). At each college, the chairs of the English departments agreed to have their faculty participate, and I received a total of 40 responses from self-selecting individuals who consented to participate. All survey results are from the spring semester of 2011.

I broke the survey up into several sections to assess different things. The first was a page called “Personal Information” to find out personal and educational background, as well as teaching experience. The next section was “Personal Views of Literacy” to assess the teachers’ views on the purpose of freshman composition classes (and thus the role of the instructor). The third section was a questionnaire for only Cajuns entitled “Cajuns’ Experience with Cajun Vernacular English.” Here, I asked questions about their attitudes and experiences with language. Finally, on the page “Pedagogical Strategies Regarding CVE,” I asked if teachers had encountered CVE errors and how they handled them. The survey format was a simple web questionnaire on surveymonkey.com delivered in a variety of dropdown boxes, multiple-choice answers, and a few short answers. Every question (apart from basic information questions like name and institution) provided room for additional thoughts, so that teachers could qualify their answers, provide an answer that I hadn’t included in the multiple choices, or comment on the survey or question. Every teacher added additional comments to at least some responses. See Appendix A to view the survey as posted online. Appendix B includes all questions, all possible drop-down and multiple-choice options, all survey responses, and all additional comments.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the attitudes and pedagogical strategies of teachers regarding Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) in their classrooms. (A secondary purpose

was to assess the personal language practices of teachers who identify as Cajuns; I mentioned those results in chapters one and five.) Seventy percent of the teachers report that they espouse a strategy of code switching, in which they assess their students on the ability to conform to dominant stereotypes of class and race and to avoid any linguistic “triggers” of prejudice (the rate is much higher if I include the teachers who reported that they work between code switching and some other strategy). They generally explain that they espouse code switching because of their more sophisticated understanding of language difference, as one response shows: “I wish more instructors knew about code switching and do not tell Cajun students that they ‘speak poor English.’” I discuss their use of code switching later in the chapter, but my analysis is not concerned with critiquing their pedagogical methods or improving them. Rather, my most important finding concerns the intentions, attitudes, and motives of the teachers of Cajuns. The survey data I include below demonstrates that the respondents generally had positive attitudes toward CVE, were thoughtful and critical of “standard” English and its constructed nature, and, as Bourdieu’s model would predict, all taught with an eye toward the language inequalities that exist “out there.”

Though nearly all of them required students to hide cultural markers in language, not one respondent denigrated Cajun culture or hoped to eradicate CVE. Many of the teachers (both Cajun and non-Cajun) in my survey also really hoped to honor CVE. In response to a statement that “the Cajun accent sounds backwards and illiterate,” several teachers strongly disagreed and wrote that they personally have positive attitudes toward other Englishes:

I enjoy regional dialects of all types and find them fascinating.

No one speaks SAE [Standard American English] the exact same way, and I don't think anyone should.

Language evolves, and part of the way it does that is through vernacular diversity.

Plus, cultural diversity is what makes language so interesting.

One respondent argued for CVE on the grounds of nationalism:

Regional dialects are important parts of American culture!

Another respondent, who identified as Cajun, focused on preserving local culture:

I think we need to protect our [Cajun] language and lifestyle.

One teacher wrote in a later section on pedagogy that he or she values CVE enough to actually encourage using it in some student writing:

I have included assignments specifically to ALLOW students a creative space to use their colloquialisms.

The responses in almost every case indicated that the teachers appreciate the vernaculars of their students.

Further, responses indicated that the teachers were without exception thoughtful, intelligent, conscientious instructors with complex views on the language standards they find themselves teaching. This may have been a function of the self-selecting nature of the survey; it's possible that only teachers with complex views about language standards would choose to click on a link about teaching English to Cajun students and volunteer approximately 20 minutes of their day to write responses. The level of engagement of the teachers was best illustrated in the section "Personal Views of Literacy," in which I listed several polarizing statements about language, literacy, and CVE, and I asked for responses ranging from "strongly agree" to

“strongly disagree.” I intentionally left statements simplified to elicit comments and allow space for the teachers’ own nuancing. It was very rare that any of the teachers had uncomplicated views on literacy. As an example of the kind of nuance I’m talking about, here are a few of the responses to the statement, “Standard Edited English is correct English.”

Most respondents took issue with the word *correct*, arguing that correctness is relative to the context:

This is entirely dependent upon the context. In some settings, standard English is preferred and advantageous. In others, it is not necessary.

Another writes,

It is correct in a formal sense, but not in a cultural sense.

Many defined correctness in terms of academic discourse and genre conventions, as these responses show (emphasis mine, here and following):

Standard Edited English is *the language of the academy*. In the context of a college classroom it is the expected language. Outside of this context, such as spoken English, other forms of English are acceptable.

Different genres require different language choices. To tell students that all writing must follow Standard Edited English is a disservice to the students.

Teaching them to analyze the writing situation and determine what is appropriate will serve them in and beyond the University.

Two respondents in particular were very critical of the prejudiced statements I asked them to discuss:

Question does not make sense without defining “correct.” I take it that you’re looking for prejudices of participants. Not a good question.

I reject the premise of this question, as I understand it.

The writer of the first comment was so upset by my questions about language attitudes that he or she eventually dropped out of the survey, writing, “Here’s where I get off.” (Both teach at UL Lafayette, but neither is from the Acadiana area.) Meanwhile, the rest of the respondents defined correctness of standards imposed from outside their classrooms, as this response explaining correctness in terms of hegemonic standards indicates:

“Correctness” has been in debate far too long to speak with any certainty now.

“Correct” for me is ultimately a judgment claim, the value/assessment of which usually depends on one’s audience. However, *it is also a power issue with the people in power determining which usages are “correct.”* So, there is some practical sense to the claim that Standard Edited English is the (hegemonic) “correct” version.

Another stressed that language teaching standards are imposed from outside schools:

The point is not whether it is correct, but whether one’s ignorance of it will limit one’s future. In other words, the question is not one of correctness, but of *perceptions and expectations over which Academia has very little control.*

The rest explicitly described correctness in terms of the standards imposed by job expectations (again, outside the classroom), as this response demonstrates:

“Correct” is a dicey word. [Standardized English] is the correct English for business, academics, etc. but as far as the correct English for home use, that can and does vary.

This explanation for correctness was extremely common. In fact, the majority of teachers qualify their understanding of correctness in terms of jobs.

The teachers’ overwhelming attention to the U.S. socioeconomy in relation to their classroom practices was surprising to me. I never explicitly asked what teachers thought about their roles when it comes to jobs or the economy (the idea wasn’t even on my radar yet when I created the survey, so I don’t think I asked it implicitly either), but many volunteered their opinions anyway. When it comes to pedagogy, many of the teachers indicated that they selected the most effective one based on what gives their students the best job opportunities or, to put it in Bowles and Gintis’ terms, the pedagogy that best “facilitat[es] a smooth integration of youth into the labor force” (11). This socio-pedagogical link came up unambiguously in many survey comments. Because there were so many instances, I’ve listed the words in each response that demonstrate the teachers’ concern with job preparation. These quotations come from the additional comments to several different questions that were unrelated to anything political or economic (for example, “Have you ever addressed any of the above features in your students’ speech? If so, please explain”):

Jobs: I encourage them to use their language verbally, but caution them that when they write, they need to treat CVE as they would a second language, because they will be expected to write in Standard English on their jobs.

Industry, workers: Industry requires its workers to communicate in Standard English.

Professional world, corporate community: The professional world can be a cruel place to those who do not conform to Standard English, and since many people from Louisiana are often judged harshly based solely on their geographical background, they may have even more difficulty proving themselves to be intelligent, thoughtful individuals. Poor language and composition skills will only hinder those aiming to be part of a larger corporate or academic community.

Business, commerce: Needed for business and commerce. How they talk is fine in any register if they can carry on life skills, but standard written English is a must.

Professional world, business, employment: I believe SEE [Standard Edited English] or SAE [Standard American English] is the “standard” that the professional world generally demands for upwardly mobile employees. Vernaculars are just as “correct” in their context, but American society demands a uniform language for upper levels of business and academia, and that language happens to be SAE. A student who masters SAE has a wider range of options for employment than one who does not.

Professional situations: There is no correct English. However, I recognize the value in our having a common version of the English language that we use to

communicate in professional situations, and students need to learn to be competent in this English. Students from the South really need to master this English as their speech patterns (and writing patterns) can cause them to be judged as less intelligent than their northern counterparts.

Jobs: I encourage them to use their [home] language verbally, but caution them that when they write, they need to treat CVE as they would a second language, because they will be expected to write in Standard English on their jobs.

Workplace: There are many Englishes, as I tell my students. You may not need all of them. But you need to know how and when to use Standard Edited English (usually for workplace situations and school).

Business, commerce: There is no such thing as “correct” or “perfect” English, but in written English standard form is preferred for business and commerce.

These teachers show that they try to keep an eye on job requirements when they make decisions about how to handle language issues in class. This concern is consonant with the fact that schools (thus pedagogy and policy) exist to normalize students to the working conditions they can expect to encounter in the labor force.

In their efforts to prep students for the job market (which they recognize as central to education, as their comments show), the participants’ responses indicate that code switching is very popular among the Louisiana teachers in my survey. Some write that the most basic problem in their classrooms is that students aren’t code switching well enough between spoken

and written language. In the following responses, teachers assume that students aren't aware of the difference:

There is a clear distinction between written and spoken language and a composition class is the primary location for them to *understand and practice this distinction*. If not in this type of setting, then where?

They must learn the difference between academic writing and less formal options.

If I see that it [CVE] *carries over into the writing*, then we discuss it and we do discuss code switching. The proper places to use the proper language. But, lately this has been more often because of subject-verb agreement problems among my African American students.

The following responses describe code switching in terms of audience awareness, assuming that students need help recognizing different rhetorical situations:

I work in between code meshing and code switching, encouraging students to consider word choice (in vernaculars and also informal/formal language) *based on audience and context/rhetorical situation*.

I have explained the validity of spoken CVE and also explained "code switching" as when the *language changes, for example, if a group of young men are talking and Grandma or the priest walks up*; we can all, and most of us, do switch codes without even thinking about it. I encourage conscious code-switching into more formal written English and do not correct CVE in class, as it is a normal given.

A few respondents argued that code switching is necessary for connecting people from different cultures with different Englishes. Standard English in this case is a sort of “lingua franca,” without which people wouldn’t understand one another:

I do think that we need to be able to code switch well enough to communicate across vernaculars, and the easiest way to do that is *an accepted “standard” form of English.*

I recognize the value in our having *a common version of the English language* that we use to communicate in professional situations, and students need to learn to be competent in this English.

But the writer of this second comment goes on to base the selection of a lingua franca not on best communication practices but on avoiding already institutionalized prejudice:

Students from the south really need to master this English as their speech patterns (and writing patterns) can cause them to be judged as less intelligent than their northern counterparts.

I come back to this point again later. In the end, most require students to filter out vernacular influence for their classroom writing, and it is generally based on their understanding of inequalities that they imagine their students will go on to face. As a Cajun student who underwent educational normalization in the area and heard these arguments all my life, I should have predicted these responses. I have also taught with teachers at UL Lafayette and University of New Orleans who espouse the same things. As a teacher of Cajun students myself, actually, I have argued the same things (as I explain in the next chapter). Though I argue that the strategy commonly called “code switching” is a flawed approach to handling language difference,

reinforcing linguisticism, it is one that is based not on teacher-created inequalities but on social, political, and economic inequalities, as these teachers are careful to point out.

Code Censoring

There are several problems with code switching. The name is misapplied, for one. Conversations between sociolinguists and composition teachers about code switching may be confusing, because the term, which originated in applied linguistics, simply refers to the practice of using multiple dialects or languages *at the same time* within *a single conversation* (and it refers to speaking, not writing). Within composition it now means writing completely in one language or dialect, to the exclusion of all other codes (or influence from them), which may be used in other situations. Educational code switching is the exact opposite of linguistics code switching, because it demands absolute compartmentalization of language. And it's in this sense that the standard pedagogical stance regarding language is *code censoring*, not code switching (which is alternatively called *code mixing*). The point is to eradicate illegitimate languages completely from classroom writing (though usually not from classroom speaking). Current classroom practices should not be confused with code switching; as I have argued in "Publishing in the Contact Zone: Strategies from the Cajun Canaille," we generally require *code censoring*. The difference in meaning between the linguistics and Comp/Rhet uses of the term "code switching" has created confusion in some professional dialogues, so I discuss it here as "code censoring."

Another problem with code censoring is that it doesn't necessarily help students communicate more clearly or effectively; it mostly helps them dodge discrimination. Situational awareness would have the interlocutor speak in the way that is most intelligible to his or her audience; this is a reasonable practice, and I wholly support it. Most issues corrected or adjusted

under code censoring, however, are not questions of being understood but flags that betray the writer's position in the social hierarchy (for example, subject/verb agreement in a simple sentence). Yes, punctuation can make a huge difference, as Lynne Truss, author of *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: Why, Commas Really Do Make a Difference!* pithily reminds us. Spelling variations, slang, and non-standard grammar, however, are usually understandable; the problem is that they betray the fact that the writer grew up in a neighborhood, country, or social class other than what has been codified as legitimate. And what's wrong with being from somewhere else? Code censoring is not the practice of choosing the language or words that are most intelligible, but a strategy to hide non-privileged cultural markers from the audience.⁵⁶

As Elbow points out, learning to dodge discrimination is a valuable lesson. He writes that he wants to protect his students from unnecessary flack. In an email to me, he explains his position on teaching code censoring:

I think you give the most clear and fair-minded statement of the indictment against me—and I think your term “code-censoring” is MUCH better than “code-switching.” That word is hopelessly ambiguous and has been used in lots of [sociolinguistics] scholarship for what Vershawn [Young] et al. are calling “code-meshing.” And your term carries the useful negative implications. So I want to be able to plead guilty to suggesting a teaching practice that does indeed involve “the desire to be accepted”: (great and helpful distinction, again, when you write: “altering codes is motivated by the desire to be understood, code-censoring by the desire to be accepted” ([Stanford] 128). (“also”)

Along with Elbow, a huge number of English teachers (including me) would plead guilty to

⁵⁶ Elbow adds that it's not just minority groups who must code censor, but also white males from the dominant group, just because general language has changed so much more than written English.

wanting to teach our students how to be accepted and avoid discrimination. In fact, many teachers in my survey expressed something similar. Their desire to help their students code censor is usually based on their own awareness of other people's perceptions of Cajun linguistic markers. When I asked them if they thought Cajun features in speech are "backwards and illiterate," many replied that they didn't think so, but they know that others do. These two responses were typical of many of their views:

I personally enjoy the local color aspects of it [CVE], but I do know that many people would consider it backwards and illiterate (and when used in certain contexts, it could actually create an impression of illiteracy for more than just the individual speaker).

If you are not from the area and have not grown up with this [Cajun French colloquialisms], then you might think the person saying it is not smart, but this may not be the case.

Another teacher, who identifies as Cajun, admits that educational normalization led to his or her own perception of the Cajun accent as uneducated (yet beautiful):

I am certainly biased because I grew up surrounded by Cajun accents, but it can sound very beautiful, especially when the speaker uses many French terms throughout their speech. On the other hand, having "learned" how a "proper" accent should sound, [I think that] some Cajun accents can make the speaker sound a bit uneducated.

Even when they personally see nothing wrong with linguistic Cajunisms, they understand other people's perceptions. Concerned with protecting their students from social and job

discrimination, these teachers enforce code censoring with CVE the same way that Cajun parents who were normalized under the French ban taught their children not to speak Cajun French.

As I said before, I'm sympathetic to this position. But *mais la*. Does anybody else see a problem with the fact that a major course objective of English composition is to teach students about class- and race-based language prejudice and how to accommodate it? Why is this the responsibility of English teachers? And is it even worth teaching students how to avoid linguistic prejudice in writing when there are so many other forms that will sort them according to class, gender, and race? Teaching code censoring is a temporary, shoddy work-around, and it is also the institutionalization of prejudice. We should not grow (or remain) comfortable with code censoring.

Further, even though code censoring is almost always required of Cajuns throughout the entire semester, it isn't taught as a part of the curriculum, just quietly edited out of their drafts. Teaching approaches generally in comp courses are things like: mostly writing vs. a lot of reading; reading student texts vs. reading "official" texts; reading essays vs. reading novels or stories; allowing revisions vs. allowing only one product; teaching the "modes" vs. teaching genres; things like that. These approaches are integral to the syllabus schedule, class discussions and/or lectures, and in-class practice writing. But, according to the Louisiana teachers who espouse code censoring, they don't usually specifically teach any code censoring methods; the majority of them reported that they just deal with them as they mark papers. This handful of responses was representative of most of the other views, answering the question, "Have you ever addressed any of the above in your students' writing? If so, explain as thoroughly as possible your pedagogical strategy for dealing with CVE in your students' writing":

I have just written "nonstandard" or explained that one cannot write as one talks.

I don't really have a strategy for addressing these problems. I just identify why they are deviations from standard English and tell them to cut it out.

No strategy. My rubric for all writing is based on the same three standards: Form (the essay proper), Function (carry out the assignment as given), and Use (all mechanics). I use Word's comment feature and make corrections/comments on individual issues in balloons to the right. My explanation will be centered on whichever standard applies—assuming Standard English.

Even this very sympathetic response is just an explanation of *why* students should code censor not *how* to:

I frequently point CVE features out because many students don't realize the uniqueness of their idiom or usage. I never represent their vernacular as sub-standard or incorrect—the school system did enough of that two generations ago, greatly aiding and abetting the demise of the language and, in some ways, the culture. Actually, I would never demean speakers of any regional or ethnic dialect, including BVE or the Southern U.S. Scotch-Irish, but *I do explain to students the reasons for appreciating their language, for understanding levels of usage, and for adapting usage to a variety of audiences.*

It's common to minimize the weight of failing to code censor by refusing to discuss it:

I simply mark the mistakes without addressing possible reasons for the mistake.

I don't make a big deal out of it as I understand where it's coming from. I simply correct it as it comes up in papers.

Like these last couple respondents, many teachers don't want to "make a big deal" of it, so they are purposefully vague. They don't teach it, just flag it. As Lisa Delpit points out in "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," when there is race- or class-based awkwardness, educators grow more and more ambiguous in their directives, and this only serves to further disempower people of color. These students know they have broken some rule, but they don't know what the rule is, and no one will tell them, leading them sometimes to internalize their failure as a sign of personal deficit. Glynda Hull et al. provide a striking example of this dynamic in "Remediation as a Social Construct: Perspectives from an Analysis of Classroom Discourse." A minority student they identify as Maria begins the semester enthusiastic about English and her own student abilities but, after breaching the etiquette of her instructor's style of discussion all semester (because she didn't understand the social structure of her freshman comp class), Maria leaves with a new idea of herself—that she simply is not cut out for success in English. The surprising thing is that Maria's instructor is known in the community for being an engaging teacher who uses progressive classroom practices like lots of dialogue and class discussions. Hull et al., however, observe that the instructor's ostensibly open-ended questions in these "dialogues" are not in fact "open" to student interpretations. Like traditional banking pedagogies, the instructor looks for very specific, "correct" responses, but the misunderstandings are amplified because she is vague and misleading in her questioning and instruction style. After describing situations similar to Hull et al.'s, Delpit urges teachers to be explicit in their discussions of these rules and explanations of language. She writes, "Tell them that their language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political game

that is also being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are certain games that they too must play” (581). Hiding the rules to the game, she argues, is hiding the access to the power.

Delpit writes the article to represent the voices of non-white educators, who “have spoken passionately on being left out of the dialogue about how best to educate children of color,” in contrast to white educators, who in Delpit’s experience assume authority about how to educate “other people’s children” (567). As a Cajun/Creole student who looks white but often feels like I didn’t get the white memo, I agree with Delpit. I have had to go to great lengths sometimes to get understandable feedback from my professors (or from people who could interpret their feedback for me), when I didn’t understand the reason for scores that are lower than I expect. I’ve created a lexicon for my own reference, based on things I’ve figured out in the past. “Why don’t you think about this some more?” means “Wrong answer; read my mind and get back to me,” not “Keep thinking in this direction.” In those situations, thinking has never helped me, but asking other students who’ve studied under that professor or reading the professor’s publications has. Before I developed the strategy of apologizing excessively and joking about how “slow” I am, my clarifying questions often seemed to be taken as challenges or argument. I have come to understand these communication misses and near misses as a kind of dissonance that is based on a combination of my gendered speech, my Cajun rhetoric, and differences in class habits when relating to authority.

Like the working-class African Americans Delpit describes, I was raised in a strict working-class home with direct orders and immediate physical punishments for disobedience, so I often take people too literally and don’t understand vague instructions (and have seen in hindsight many times that I actually missed important opportunities that were presented as polite hints). Even now, the more I want to perform well, the more I tend to slip into working-class

silent deference, which, I've learned, comes off as disinterest (and an accidental "yes ma'am" or "no sir" is just awkward). I've also missed opportunities during presentations to "show off," because I tend to answer questions as directly as I was taught to ask them, including stating that I don't know. I've benefited from learning these linguistic differences, and I've been thankful for professors from working class backgrounds who point them out to me—for example, the voice modulation characteristic of elite language users (and uncharacteristic of minority and working-class speakers, who can seem intimidating or uncontrolled in academic settings). So even as I critique the language inequalities in the educational system and argue against code censoring, I understand that I'm participating in what Delpit calls a "game" with "rules," and as long as I'm here I want to at least be aware of how I come across in both speech and writing so that I don't "lose" without knowing why. It's not like I'll automatically have as equal a shot as someone from a more privileged background, but at least I'll have a *better* shot.

I also agree with Delpit that there are rules, especially in school. In my undergraduate freshman composition course, I made a D on my first paper, but the teacher never explained why. No written comments, no revision suggestions, and no discussion in class about how to write papers. Initiating an unsolicited conversation with my authority (or asking him for help) was out of the question, and the professor—Skip Fox—was terrifying to me anyway, so I dropped out of the course and turned to a cousin in grad school at the same campus for help. Angelina gave me my first lesson on thesis statements, inverted triangle-shaped introductions, topic sentences, and so on, in about 15 minutes in her tiny adjunct cubicle. It was this extremely simple formula that any of my English teachers could have taught me at any point in my education, and I'm really not sure why they didn't, but I wound up learning it from family. From then on, I made A's on most of my papers, and I realized it's just a game with rules. When my

actions or writing provoked reactions that surprised me, I tried to be scientific about figuring out what rule I had broken so that, if I did break rules, I was at least aware of what consequences I might expect (leaving room for human error, moodiness, and personal preferences, of course).

In the same vein as Delpit, several teachers were far more explicit in helping their students code censor:

I find the best way is to model the correct grammar/construction for them. I simply re-word their sentence, then they must write it down correctly in their revision. Later, *when we have one-on-one conferences, I discuss the error with the student in greater detail.*

It's no different than what I do for students who have other dialects, *explicitly point out the difference between the grammar of the dialect and the grammar of the Standard dialect* and ask that they use the Standard in writing.

I spend a considerable time *working on sentence structure, particularly subject verb agreement, and proper verb selection.* I also go over *how to use foreign words* within academic language.

Using Delpit's strategy of directly addressing language difference (even if they don't know Delpit's work), these teachers help their students become more aware of instances where they fail to code censor. Had my teachers been this explicit, I would have appreciated their efforts. As long as teachers require code censoring and grade for it, they can do it unambiguously.

Unfortunately, though, even with explicit instruction, code censoring may not be teachable. Patrick Hartwell argues in "Grammar, Grammars and the Teaching of Grammar" that

grammar cannot be taught, period. Familiarity and grammatical dexterity with any given linguistic code is a matter of how much one has used it, not how many rules one has memorized about it. Hartwell builds on W. Nelson Francis's differentiations in meaning of the word *grammar* to discuss problems with the teaching of grammar. He writes, "learners must already have internalized [language knowledge] by means of exposure to the code" in order to make decisions about grammar (201). In fact, the writing of students who memorize language rules has been shown time and time again to decline in quality (he cites the research of Mina Shaughnessy and Mike Rose as examples, 200). Only very long-term exposure to the legitimate language has been shown to be helpful. Explicit grammar and usage teaching may help students better understand the rules of the game, but mere knowledge of the rules has not been shown to help poor students and students of color perform code censoring well enough to pass as "not poor" and "not of color."

The reason for Hartwell's conclusion that grammar is not teachable is that language is, as Bourdieu argues, a form of cultural capital. In the same way that it is impossible to teach cash into someone's pocket, it's impossible to give students a decade or two's worth of another student's linguistic wealth. We can warn students explicitly that people will look down on them if their vernacular leaks in, we can carefully explain grammar rules, and we can provide exercises to help our students practice following the rules, but one or two semesters can't transform the internal grammar of one student to that of another student. Bourdieu writes that "the two principal factors of production of the legitimate competence [are] the family and the educational system"; students who are exposed to the legitimate language in school alone will never perform as well as students who are also exposed to it at home (62). Level of normalization to the legitimate language boils down to which family the students were born into;

students will inherit the literacy practices of their parents, and then they will be sorted into the “proper” curriculum.⁵⁷ When some students are unable to sufficiently perform code censoring by the end of the semester, it’s often chalked up to laziness or inability; those students must not have deserved to pass. But it’s not that they are cognitively unable to recognize changes in the scenery; it’s that they don’t possess the socio-linguistic capital to make the switch. Better paragraph cohesion and stronger thesis statements are teachable, but language capital must be bought. Since code censoring cannot be taught, though, many of the teachers of Cajun students are unwittingly simply enforcing it. Students are expected to perform it (meaning they come to class already knowing how to do it) or fail.

Ultimately, the policy of code censoring is a justification for continuing to enforce the same standards as before the multicultural shift in pedagogy. In fact, I’ve heard many teachers invoke *code switching* only to explain why they still teach the same thing composition teachers have always taught: the legitimate language to the exclusion of all vernaculars and other languages. Teachers of Cajun students respond differently to multilingualism in classrooms from the days of eradication, and these are positive changes—for example, less shaming and of course decreased physical brutality. But the end message is still the same: if you do not write Standard English to the exclusion of illegitimate vernaculars (or influence from them), you will not make it past the gates that guard the ability to be a culture maker and decision maker in our society. And that’s just another form of: sorry, you weren’t born into the right family. (And that’s aristocracy.)

⁵⁷ As I wrote in chapter three, Annette Lareau confirms this idea in *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (2003). Her ethnographic study reveals that literacy practices are passed on in home and family encounters, not in schools. Schools do not equalize; they simply assess already existing literacy practices and sort students accordingly. Once the students are sorted into their (generally) class- and race-based categories, pedagogical differences like the ones Anyon describes reinforce that categorization, as well as the idea that students who wind up near the vocational end of the educational spectrum are either lazy or less intelligent.

Every now and then, there's a rags-to-riches story, but those "successful" students didn't receive upward mobility for free from their public education. They paid for every cent of cultural-linguistic capital they got. Keith Gilyard describes this price as "psychic costs" and "psychic payments" in *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence* (11). He writes that he did manage to achieve social mobility, but it wasn't something school provided, rather something he had to pay for himself: "So if I criticize elements of the school system, let it not be said that I am ungrateful. I learned a lot, but I had to *foot the psychic bill* for any success I managed to attain" (70, emphasis mine). Some of these "psychic costs" are "educational schizophrenia" (163) and "self-annihilation" (161). Richard Rodriguez also acknowledges the price he paid for his upward mobility in *Hunger for Memory*. Envyng other Latin students who could still speak Spanish and relate to their families and home communities, Rodriguez resigns to his cultural isolation, explaining, "I had long before accepted the fact that education exacted a *great price* for its equally great benefits" (172, emphasis mine). Gilyard criticizes Richard Rodriguez for "insist[ing] on cultural suicide, a conclusion totally unappealing to me, one I rejected as an adolescent" (161). Victor Villanueva similarly writes in *Bootstraps* that Rodriguez succeeded "at the *expense* of his ties to his family and to his culture. He said this *great expense* is simply the *cost* of becoming American" (xvi, emphasis mine). Villanueva writes that his own academic success was also very expensive culturally: "Choosing to speak the language of the dominant, choosing racelessness, bears a *price*, however. And that *price* is alienation—the loss of fictive kinship without being fully adopted by the white community" (40, emphasis mine). The price of upward mobility is giving up a certain connection to home and creating a connection with dominant culture. It's unfair that minority and working-class people are put in

this position of choosing between family and success, yet another illustration that the educational system does not offer equal opportunities to all Americans.

Not only does social mobility cost family and community ties, but it is available for purchase to only a very few people. As Gilyard points out, “Masses and masses of minority students have been unable to use the public school system as a ladder of upward mobility. It is clear that whatever benefits the school can claim to have offered can be matched, if not overshadowed, by a legacy of default” (63). Villanueva explains this phenomenon in terms of class theory: “Some *must* get through, a matter of ideological credibility in the land of opportunity, the workings of hegemony. Yet internal colonialism remains, never quite equity. How the doctorate? [...] I didn’t know what I was getting into, but knew I was getting into something not intended for the likes of me. There are always the contradictions” (xv). Social mobility is the exception to the rule; the U.S. educational system is designed for class reproduction.

Even if it were possible to guarantee the upward mobility and job security of every single student who comes through freshman composition by teaching them to code censor (and even in this terrible economy that lays off perfect code censors), we would still be merely “working the system,” leaving an unequal educational system unequal. Geneva Smitherman argues in *Talkin and Testifyin*:

Talking about Black English, listing its features and suggesting ways of changing *or* adding to it, without commensurately advocating changes in the sociopolitical system in which black people struggle is not only short-sighted, it amounts to so much pure academic talk, and ultimately, is an implicit acknowledgement that the

system is good and valid, and all that need be done is to alter the people to fit into it. (207)

Young also argues that code censoring is based on institutionalized racism, writing that learning it shouldn't "be called education but could be seen as an effect of de facto segregation" (7).

Smitherman points out that the same goes for "other minority groups and lower-class whites as well [who] have had to assimilate the language patterns of the dominant white middle class" (173)—for example, Cajuns and Appalachians. Code censoring is often an immediate solution for negotiating unfair gates, but it skirts the political inequalities built into our institutions and economy by keeping languages "separate," but definitely not "equal." So teaching code censoring ultimately reinforces the unequal standards outside classrooms that reinforce teachers' decisions to adjust their pedagogies accordingly, which reinforces the inequalities, which reinforces pedagogy, which reinforces inequality, etc.

But teachers who want to break the cycle can't do it by simply inventing and imposing more language policies and pedagogies, not even extremely permissive ones that affirm students' home identities and languages—not as long as there are unaddressed prejudices everywhere else. Some liberal educators, including Young, have argued that they cannot in good conscience teach things like code censoring, so they choose to completely ignore outside standards in their classroom language policies (personal communication). I understand the pull of conscience, but isolated acts of teacher dissent can also reinforce unequal standards by failing to effectively challenge them. Permissive language policies can create positive experiences in classrooms, and it's possible that they can give students the impetus to go on and assert language difference in other contexts and even lobby for equality. In most cases, though, students won't make it very far, failing the next departmental exam or class or some other gatekeeping hurdle. And, chances

are, students who were raised in working-class homes like mine will accept their failure as their own. I don't think the main argument here is which is the best pedagogy regarding vernaculars, but which *sociopedagogy*.

The Sociopedagogy of Comp/Rhet

As I argued earlier, based on Bourdieu's theory of the *maître à penser*, what is reproductive about schools is not just the content that the teachers pass on but also the relationships they create with their students. And, as I've demonstrated using Bowles' and Gintis' model of pedagogical transitions, the educational system exists to convince people to comply with socioeconomic conditions. The conditions to be normalized to change all the time, but the demand for compliance does not. When teachers impose top-down policies on their students, even with the best of intentions, they are continuing the traditions of colonization and domination by denying their students' rights to make their own decisions. Edward Said writes in *Orientalism* that past efforts from the center have often been top-down imposed ideologies that were ostensibly benevolent but that actually supported imperialism and conquest. Programs geared at spreading mass civilization—Christianity, education, and progress (and I add democracy)—were usually foreign to the communities being “aided,” and they only created or reinforced dependence on the center. Center perspectives, limited by postcolonial attitudes toward colonized and internally colonized groups who are “naïve” at best and “inferior” at worst (both meaning they need someone to step in and govern them), can lead to paternalistic solutions that reproduce domination instead of resisting it. So I'm wary of any top-down policies or pedagogies to “help” minority and working-class groups, especially if the decisions are made *for* these populations—even in “their best interests” or to “liberate” them. Kathy Sohn, for example, writes in *Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices Since College* that the

Appalachian region has been subjected to a “plethora of programs designed by missionaries and politicians since the late 1800s to shape this region into step with the rest of the country” (168). These well-intentioned efforts of liberals to aid Appalachians have only reinforced their marginalization and socioeconomic inequality. As Villanueva puts it, “Authoritarianism is authoritarianism, no matter what the authority is espousing. To dictate is not to liberate” (*Boostraps* 62). Likewise, in matters of linguisticism the problem isn’t just that teachers need to affirm students’ rights to their own languages. Teachers also need to affirm students’ rights to think critically about issues and make their own decisions.

As Min-Zhan Lu categorizes Basic Writing (BW) approaches in “Conflict and Struggle: The Enemies or Preconditions of Basic Writing,” she creates a model that I find helpful for understanding the sociopedagogical limitations of conversations in Comp/Rhet. Though her analysis is concerned with BW courses, it also applies to the vernacular issues in freshman composition, because she argues that pedagogical discussions have been limited by their normalizing function. She compares the old-school thinking of *assimilation* with newer ideas of *acculturation* and *accommodation* and argues that they are essentially the same thing but with varying levels of kindness and understanding on the teacher’s part. Under the policy of assimilation, students were expected to conform “or else.” Under acculturation (Lu lists Irving Howe, James Baldwin, and W. E. B. Du Bois as examples), students understandably have a difficult time dealing with the new culture of the academy, so teachers should affirm their content and *gently* help them conform “or else.” With accommodation (which she most strongly links with Mina Shaughnessy and Mike Rose), students have the right to resist assimilation and the difficult feelings that accompany this identity transition, but teachers, sympathetic to their students’ resistance, find ways to teach them painless ways to *perform* conformity “or else.” Lu

criticizes the narrow scope of pedagogical responses to student vernaculars, arguing instead that educators need to make pedagogical decisions that take into account and build on student agency.

To put the vernacular debate in the terms of Lu's analysis, code censoring is a gentler form of eradication, as acculturation and accommodation are gentler forms of assimilation, even when we allow (celebrate even) the students' vernaculars but still require them to "clean it up" for the test or the departmental exam over which we have no control. Shaughnessy was far kinder about student error than some of her contemporaries, as Lu explains, but she was still doing the same old same old: sorting students according to linguistic capital. Likewise, the policy of eradication literally banned free speech in public spaces (with physical punishments of children who spoke Cajun French on state property), and the message of code censoring is strikingly similar: "you have the right to freedom of speech but only at home." Even in the kindest, most permissive classes, it's hard to get beyond "you have the right to freedom of speech (and I understand why you might want to exercise that right), but you shouldn't exercise it if you want to pass." Lu argues that there is never an option to embrace both cultures or to see the university culture changed by the new population. Instead the "non-standard" students must conform (or perform conformity) to the university culture, which Sharon Crowley defines as "male, European American, middle- or upper-class," the only demographic that was allowed in colleges until this past century (27, 253). The assimilation/acculturation/accommodation model is based on a sort of imagined cultural purism, in the tradition of the native/nonnative distinction Trimbur describes.

Further, Suresh Canagarajah points out that the discussions in Comp/Rhet have also been limited by nationalism (which is a primary force behind language normalization). He writes that

SRTOL, which has formed the basis for most discussions of pedagogical alternatives to code censoring, appeals to nationalist ideas to argue for linguistic diversity. First, the actual wording of the resolution (emphasis mine):

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. *A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects.* We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (Smitherman, “‘Students’ Right to Their Own Language’: A Retrospective” 21)

Canagarajah acknowledges the radical position of SRTOL on language for its time, but he proposes updating it without nationalist appeals to affirm the constant flux of language and the multilingualism and multidialectism of students. He writes in a November 4, 2010, CCCC blog post:

SRTOL, written and adopted in 1974, was far ahead of its time in articulating the connections between language, power, and pedagogy. However, today in the twenty-first century, it is beginning to show the traces of the dominant ideologies of its original context. In terms of language, SRTOL is informed by a structuralist orientation. It focuses on systematized varieties of language, with a stabilized

grammar. In this sense, languages are treated as separate and discrete entities. [...]
SRTOL's social vision was and continues to be circumscribed by national boundaries. It perceives the locus for policy making as the nation-state. It is for this reason that it doesn't address the language use rights of migrant and transnational groups. It is also silent about the rights of languages other than English.

He argues "to build from its position of strength and legacy of radical change" for a revised statement based on a poststructuralist understanding of language that allows for change and hybridity (participants of the 2011 Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition collaborated to propose a revised draft).

Conversations within the field of Comp/Rhet have been circumscribed by nationalism, class hierarchies, and cultural purism but, according to Bourdieu, anyone teaching in schools will be complicit with language normalization to a certain extent, because that is specifically what the job calls for. When the First Lady or the school board (usually comprised of the most influential local business people, not teachers) decides to institute new educational standards or a "back to basics" campaign, teachers adjust their pedagogies and try to normalize their students to the new "distinctive deviations" of language. Students who hope for upward mobility strive to internalize the new norms. In this way, Bourdieu writes, there is support for class inequality coming from both the top and the bottom, something he calls a process of "diffusion":

What is described as a phenomenon of diffusion is nothing other than the process resulting from the *competitive struggle* which leads each agent, through countless strategies of assimilation and dissimilation (*vis-à-vis* those who are ahead of and behind him in the social space and in time) constantly to change his substantial

properties (here, pronunciation, diction, syntactic devices, etc.), while maintaining, precisely by running in the race, the disparity which underlies the race. (64)

To simplify this sentence, “each agent [... is] maintaining [...] the disparity,” led by “the competitive struggle.” According to Bourdieu, anyone who participates in the process at any level—creating the standards, enforcing the standards, or normalizing to the standards—helps reproduce the hierarchy.

But don't blame these teachers (or administrators), at least not excessively—or, as we say in Acadiana, not too-too much. I agree with Bowles and Gintis when they write, “Repression, individual powerlessness, inequality of outcomes, and inequality of opportunity did not originate historically in the educational system, nor do they derive from unequal and repressive schools today. The roots of repression and inequality lie in the structure and functioning of the capitalist economy” (49). U.S. inequalities were largely established during the nation building process, as I described in chapter two, and educational policies have followed those arrangements. Many teachers, especially the Comp/Rhet theorists I've named above, understand the race- and class-based discrimination of the composition course, but what else should they do? Pass every student? Then the next teacher will fail them (as well as be angry at the first teacher for passing the student), and that's not to mention the threat of losing one's job for breaking university policy. Also, most students come to college specifically to learn to imitate the “right” demographic so that they can do what it takes to get a good job (or at least hope and try). Though code censoring doesn't guarantee social mobility, it seems unethical to deny them the service they're specifically paying for. And many teachers believe in code censoring, passionately, because they believe (often rightly) that it is what allowed them to climb out of their cultural

blue-collar destiny to become a member of Academe. Further, there's nothing wrong with wanting to equip students for jobs in the current socioeconomy (even while disagreeing with the socioeconomic structure). Because of the complicated position of teachers, I don't fault them for equipping students for the prejudices they will go on to face (and have already faced for most of their lives). But it is not necessary to teach the mandated material uncritically, as many theorists like Lu have pointed out, or to comply with the sociopedagogical function of education.

Alternatives to Code Censoring

One possibility for a writing policy that both equips students for current standards and challenges the hierarchy of languages is based on a growing awareness of translanguaging practices in language intersection and change (the original definition of *code switching*). In "Toward a Rhetoric of Translingual Writing," Suresh Canagarajah categorizes the many terminologies in different fields about this topic:

composition: codemeshing (Young; Canagarajah, "Place of World Englishes"),
translingual writing (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur.), and transcultural
literacy (Lu); new literacy studies: multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis), continua
of biliteracy (Hornberger), and hetero-graphy (Blommaert); sociolinguistics: fluid
lects (Auer), ludic Englishes (Pennycook), and poly-lingual languaging
(Jørgenson); applied linguistics: translanguaging (Canagarajah,
"Translanguaging"), pluriliteracy (Garcia), and third spaces (Gutierrez)." (1)

In contrast to older models that portrayed language difference in classrooms as either a cognitive failure (blaming the students), a sign of incomplete acculturation (placing more of the burden on teachers), or resistance to the legitimate language (chalking it up to "student choice"), this approach recognizes the normal processes of language change, as well as the power issues

involved in language decisions, engaging both students and teachers in a negotiation of meaning and of writing standards. Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur explain in a basic introduction to translanguaging, “This approach sees difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (“Language Difference in Writing” 303-304). I support this new movement, and I second these scholars’ emphasis on student agency, but I caution that translanguaging pedagogies can be used in the same sociopedagogical way as code censoring and eradication, as I explain shortly, so it’s still important to teach translanguaging critically.

The burgeoning conversation in Comp/Rhet around translanguaging has commonly been discussed in terms of the pedagogical approach, *code meshing*. Vershawn Young coined the term in his article “Your Average Nigga,” based on his dissertation, as he explains in a footnote:

As an alternative to code switching, I argue, in my doctoral dissertation “Your Average Nigga: Language, Literacy, and the Rhetoric of Blackness,” that true linguistic and identity integration would mean allowing students to do what some linguists have called *code mixing*, to combine dialects, styles, and registers. Code mixing, or what I call *code meshing*, means allowing black student to mix a black English style with an academic register (much as I do in this essay). This technique not only links literacy to black culture, it meshes them together in a way that’s more in line with how people actually speak and write anyway. (713)

In his book *Your Average Nigga*, Young writes that though code meshing is “no panacea,” but he also writes, “I believe that it is crucial, if beneficial, for no other reason than that it allows black students (and some teachers) from the ghetto a place in school, a site where many feel alienated”

(8). Though he doesn't give any practical suggestions for using or teaching code meshing, Young pushes for the language standards in classrooms to extend to include stigmatized ways of using English.

In "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued," Canagarajah theorizes and extends Young's theory of code meshing to create practical ways of teaching the multilingualism that Smitherman and Horner and Trimbur propose to institutionalize through policies. He writes that "teachers don't have to wait till these policies trickle down to classrooms. They have some relative autonomy to develop textual practices that challenge dominant conventions and norms before policies are programmatically implemented from the macro-level by institutions" (587). He suggests that students can use code meshing to "work from within the existing rules to transform the game" and that code meshing actually requires a higher level of sophistication from students than merely writing in the legitimate language (599, 598). Students can insert nonstandard English and even other languages into their formal academic writing with textual cues or footnotes to explain the meshings for any readers unfamiliar with the writer's codes. Canagarajah gives a textual analysis of Geneva Smitherman's writing style to show a successful model of code meshing in high-stakes writing.⁵⁸

Elbow, who once advocated using home discourse only in drafts (to be edited out for the final product), considers what he calls "invisible" code meshing in *Vernacular Eloquence*:

Canagarajah and Young somewhat neglect two issues I'm interested in: first, the importance of making lots of room where students can write *wholly unplanned*

⁵⁸ Other scholars have developed approaches to code meshing. In "The Blues Playingest Dog You Ever Heard of: (Re)positioning Literacy Through African American Blues Rhetoric," Carmen Kynard compares code meshing to the meshed musical genre "the blues" and suggests playing the "trickster" in writing to "alter old conditions by rhetorically creating new possibilities and worlds" (368). Additionally, the "Pedagogy" section in *Code-Meshing as World English* (edited by Vershawn Ashanti Young and Aja Martinez), contains several articles on classroom approaches to teaching code meshing.

vernacular language—with *no* need for linguistic sophistication or control; second, the possibilities for what might be called “invisible” or “under the radar” code meshing. That is, what I’ve learned from Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (earlier) is that people can use quite a lot of their comfortable spoken vernacular if they avoid certain usages that trigger the error alarm. (331)

He proposes this kind of meshing for now because, he writes, it can enrich formal writing without causing students to fail gatekeeping moments. He cites the research of Geneva Smitherman to show that it can work: “Smitherman and her team [...] looked at thousands of papers on the nationwide NAEP exams and showed that ‘Black expressive discourse style’ correlated with *higher scores*—as long as it wasn’t accompanied by the Black syntax or grammar—and this was twenty years ago” (332). Elbow suggests that, while he supports the “in your face” meshing of Young and Canagarajah, encouraging “invisible” code meshing may be a better temporary solution for students.

Horner and Lu point out in “Translingual Literacy and Matters of Agency” that translingual pedagogies are not limited to code meshing. The primary tenet of translanguaging practices is the view of language as historically and politically situated so that students, outfitted with this perspective, can make decisions about their own language use. The purpose is to acknowledge and encourage student agency in writing decisions, in contrast to the traditional model of top-down, teacher-prescribed writing requirements. They write, “We have argued that a translingual approach identifies the issue we face not as a question of whether to teach standardized forms and meanings but, rather, the need for all of us to deliberate over how and why to do what with language in light of emergent and mutually constitutive relations of language, context, identity, and power relations” (29). Horner and Lu deal with two main

concerns about translingual pedagogies: that students won't be properly "equipped" for the legitimate language and that translanguaging isn't relevant to "mainstream" students. They respond by pointing out that, whether students choose to code censor or code mesh, both are acts of agency, based on a translingual awareness of language processes: "both [...] represent rhetorical strategies in which writers exhibit agency and engage in the process of language sedimentation in light of different spatial-temporal, macro-micro contexts" (28). And they argue that this applies to "so-called 'native,' 'monolingual' 'mainstream' students" too, who can be asked to think about "how they are doing English and why" (19). The statement on translingual pedagogies by Horner et al. sketches a few ways these ideas work out in the classroom, including dealing with error and how monolingual teachers can handle translanguaging.

I agree with these theorists that translingual pedagogies have a lot of potential to help institutionalize plural (and changing) models of language in school writing and invite students to think critically about language choices—as long as these approaches aren't appropriated as better methods for assimilating and ushering students into their places in the economy. First of all, like past correlations between shifts in capitalism and pedagogies, attention to translanguaging in classrooms is increasing at the same time that job requirements for translingual skills are increasing. As global capitalism expands and talk of "transnational markets" is increasingly common, translingual training happens to be better job training, because the capitalist economy is no longer circumscribed by national boundaries. Whereas nation states have relied on national languages to unify the markets of internally colonized and assimilated groups, the nationalist model is growing obsolete. Instead, the transnational model is on the rise, requiring a global language—a language of commerce or a "lingua franca"—to enable the circulation of capital. The British *Times Higher Education* recently addressed lingua franca studies in an article

featuring Jennifer Jenkins, the director of the University of Southampton's new Centre for Global Englishes, who argues against teaching the nativeness model in favor of teaching for comprehension. She writes, "[Nonnative English speakers] use [English as a lingua franca] very successfully, but not in the ways that native speakers speak to each other. Their priority is communication rather than correctness or imitating some particular native version of English," (Reisz, "A word of advice: let speakers of Englishes do it their way, UK told"). Under translingual pedagogies, students learn to be more tolerant of language differences and espouse more sophisticated attitudes about error. These classroom lessons easily accommodate the economic transition that will put them in contact with more speakers of other Englishes and languages. In these job encounters, they will need to know how to negotiate "error" and be more forgiving and flexible about language.

Canagarajah has addressed the danger of appealing to arguments based on following the economy, a position even he has unintentionally promoted. In his CCCC blog post critiquing and proposing changes to SRTOL, he appeals to newer transnational economic arrangements as the basis for arguing for transnational language policies. He writes, "The languages students from outside the U.S. bring to American classrooms are a resource that should be harnessed and promoted—if for nothing else than the good of the nation, all language, and writing instruction," and this will serve to expand the "repertoires all of us need for transnational relations."

Canagarajah writes that incorporating multilingualism into one's pedagogy actually helps prepare students for future jobs, as multilingualism is a helpful resource for students in increasingly international markets. When asked in the blog comments about this issue, Canagarajah agrees that it's a fallacy to appeal to arguments about normalizing students to the economy: "John Trimbur has pointed out to me that though we transnational scholars/students

may benefit from a resources-based argument, indigenous minority groups (such as the African American and Native American communities) are more concerned about protecting their languages. So, I think, it is important to keep the rights-based discourses alive as we update SRTOL” (Comment #2). Incorporating multilingualism and transnational perspectives in classrooms is an improvement on institutionalized nationalist-based monolingualism, but, as Canagarajah agrees, even these progressive changes to pedagogy can be used in the U.S. as another form of class sorting, requiring students to conform to the (revised) discourse practices of the dominant “or else.”

This shift to translingual pedagogies is occurring at the same time as another pedagogical shift in educational systems, indicating that capitalism is also shifting. Francesco Crocco argues in “Critical Gaming Pedagogy” that there has been a great deal of interest in building digital games into K-12 school curricula to help engage and motivate students to learn, but the increased attention to gamification in classrooms directly parallels the growing trend of “business gamification.” Crocco argues that using gaming pedagogies really does help students learn better, but doing so uncritically only helps students better learn their places in existing social conditions.⁵⁹ He writes, “Game-based learning will likely inherit the work of traditional schooling, albeit with an updated pedagogy and cutting-edge technology. It will produce a more highly trained workforce without addressing the growing inequality and instability of the global capitalist economy in which this workforce must operate” (29). Indeed, gamification is being used in schools primarily for STEM fields—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math—which have traditionally received greater attention during national wars. Crocco concludes by encouraging teachers to incorporate digital and non-digital games in ways that provoke students

⁵⁹ Game-based learning is built on things like situated learning (more like simulations or apprenticeships than book learning), “failing forward” (low-stakes opportunities to learn from mistakes), simple-to-complex learning progression, instant feedback, and “just-in-time” information (Crocco, personal communication).

to reflect critically on current social conditions (using Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy) instead of simply adapting to them; he provides a modified use of the board game *Monopoly* as an example.

In the same way that the modern corporate business model is based on the military corporate model, business gamification and the gamification pedagogical trend are training and working strategies that derive from current military practices. In *The Speed of War*, Corey Mead builds on Deborah Brandt's theory of "sponsors of literacy" (which I explained in chapter two) to show the connections between game-based military training and game-based learning in our public schools. Mead illustrates this connection by describing how the Army-developed recruitment video game "America's Army" is now being used to teach science, engineering, and mathematics in thousands of junior high and high schools in all 50 states. The military has seen impressive results in recruitment increases due to the popularity of "America's Army," which was developed as a tool to recruit tech-savvy young people into the Army. As Mead writes, "Barely one year after the game's release, 20% of incoming West Point freshmen reported having played it. By 2008, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology study noted that, '30 percent of all Americans age 16 to 24 had a more positive impression of the Army because of the game and, even more amazingly, the game had more impact on recruits than all other forms of Army advertising combined.'" The explicit military connections to emerging pedagogies and the U.S. government's financial investments in them demonstrate an interest in not only a larger military but also a revised kind of labor training.

These current pedagogical shifts, addressing both language normalization and sociopedagogical normalization, indicate that we are in the middle of a period of national reorganization. According to Bowles and Gintis's framework, conditions are ripe for an

economic transition, since the largest socioeconomic changes have historically been signaled by nationally reorganizing events like wars and crises, during which the most influential capitalists lobby heavily for changes in education (234-235). The last decade or so has seen tragedies (like 9/11) that prompted national unification, as well as crises (the “recession”) that demand national redefinition; multiple wars; and civil unrest (Occupy Wall Street, for example, and dozens of protests across the country that have also been violently repressed). Meanwhile, influential capitalists are granting huge sums of money to redesign education by privatizing public schools (charterization), reforming community colleges (the recently proposed CUNY “Pathways,” for example), and even buying testing industries (Rupert Murdoch recently acquired 90 percent of Wireless Generation, a student tracking software company, for \$360 million⁶⁰). Bill Gates, who has taken an interest in social engineering experiments like mass vaccine gassing and stealth sterilization of human males, funds one of the largest research grants available for digital pedagogy, and he has also funded an experimental community college to test a new model of education that he hopes will catch on. The New Community College at CUNY in Manhattan is, according to its web page, “a powerful, purposeful college, specifically designed to link classroom learning to practical career experiences.” Geared at improving student retention rates, this new community college model has so far been reported to have unsatisfactory faculty retention rates, with several teachers quitting due to poor labor conditions. Meanwhile, the community college’s explicit link to job training and its “sponsor” are indicative that it is part of national reorganizing. The efforts of affluent businesspeople to reform education on all levels also extend to Louisiana: NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg contributed \$100,000 “on behalf of pro-charter, anti-teacher-tenure and anti-union candidates” via his PAC, Alliance for Better

⁶⁰ More information is available in the *Huffington Post* article, “Murdoch-Owned Wireless Generation’s Contract Should Be Scratched, Teachers’ Union Leader Writes.”

Classrooms, in 2011.⁶¹ This contribution helped secure votes in favor of Governor Bobby Jindal and big-business groups backing him in his K-12 education reforms (as well as substantial cuts to Louisiana state colleges).

Because of these signals of national, economic, and pedagogical reorganization, another caution I offer about code meshing and other translingual pedagogies is that, if taught uncritically, they can wind up serving the same sociopedagogical function of assimilating students into the national economy as code censoring and eradication. As Bowles and Gintis explain, it's not the content or product (or even the writing process, I might add) being taught that normalizes students to class inequality but the sociopedagogical relationship between the teacher, the students, and the material. Like past programs intended to "help" marginalized people, code meshing can be used in just as authoritarian a way as code censoring or eradication to reinforce the sociopedagogical objective of assimilating students into the relationships of the capitalist economy. Canagarajah reports that some students have been resistant to showing their vernaculars in classrooms, indicating that it's not something every student would choose ("Subversive Identities"). Horner and Lu's model in "Translingual Literacy and Matters of Student Agency" avoids imitating the top-down model of past pedagogies by building in an awareness of student agency, but I'm cautious of a kind of parallel assertion they make that translingual pedagogies are intrinsically positioned to honor student agency.

I agree with Horner and Lu (as well as Canagarajah and Elbow) when they write that it's important to honor student decisions to code censor as an act of agency and to point out the

⁶¹ Mikhail Zinshteyn reports the details in "Mayor Bloomberg trust donated big to Louisiana education board elections" in *The American Independent* online. Though Gov. Jindal initiated a series of anti-corruption campaigns to "clean up" Louisiana politics (for instance, making the IRS records of any state employees public), he has essentially flushed out a substantial number of democrats and established a new set of corrupt practices (Zinshteyn focuses on the efforts of brother-system team Chas and Caroline Roemer) as he pushes for the privatization of Louisiana schools and other social programs.

agency in these decisions to students: “we need to learn to recognize, and help students learn to recognize, the production of the same in what appears to be different, the production of difference in what appears to be the same, and the agency operating in both” (29). Canagarajah provides a classroom illustration of this principle when he describes in “Toward a Rhetoric of Translingual Writing” the case of one student (he calls her Buthainah) who produced code meshed texts in class. He emphasizes the need to explain to students the impressions their writing choices can make, so that they can make informed rhetorical decisions. During Buthainah’s revising process, feedback from both her fellow students and Canagarajah helped her distinguish which meshes (based on several languages) were helpful for her readers (for example, nonstandard phrasings of ideas) and which were distracting in an unproductive way (like spelling variations). She then was able to make decisions about how she wanted to come across in her writing. Canagarajah writes that, though he personally would have made different decisions had it been his own text, he respected her rhetorical decisions, and he concludes that the most important part of the process for Buthainah was being equipped to make these writing decisions: “Buthainah didn’t elaborate on the distinction between error, mistake, and codemeshing. However, intentionality seems to make a difference in some cases” (26). Buthainah was able to engage productively with her text, bend it and stretch it, until it communicated what she wanted it to communicate. This is the process of negotiation that a translingual approach can bring to classrooms. Students aren’t forced into top-down writing molds, and they also aren’t left to flounder because their writing is already “beautiful” (yet “illegitimate”), but they and the teacher work together to create texts that accomplish the students’ intentions. Students must be made aware of what can look like errors, or their decisions to code mesh can’t really be counted as agency.

Thus, Horner and Lu argue that a translingual approach may include code meshing, but it may also include code censoring and even “the most seemingly clichéd writing” (they cite David Bartholomae’s example of the author of “White Shoes” from “Inventing the University”), based on students’ differing intentions (17). When students like Buthainah choose to censor some of their vernacular influence from a sentence or even an entire text, it’s an informed decision. And when they break the rules, they are doing it on purpose, fully aware of the impact their decisions will have on their audiences. As a minority student myself, I’ve benefited from being informed of my meshing decisions. My writing group consistently interpreted the “colorful” style of Cajun rhetoric—which is warm, humble, and engaging in speech—as sassy, grandiose, and offputting in writing. Since I don’t want to seem grandiose, I’ve chosen to code mesh very little in my theoretical discussions and arguments. Choosing to self-censor may seem like “token” code meshing, but the stakes in this particular gatekeeping moment appear too high for me to risk it. And I think other minority and working-class students should have that choice too. As I’ve argued earlier, code censoring reifies sociopolitical and economic inequalities, it’s just a shoddy workaround (“working the system”), and I don’t think students should be required to do it, but I still teach it to students who want it. And, like Delpit, I teach it explicitly. It may sound schizophrenic to argue that code censoring is terrible and that I would teach it unambiguously, but this is the schizophrenic position that minority and working-class academics are put in. Students must conform to school expectations today not for the sake of achieving upward mobility, but just to avoid downward mobility, as jobs are increasingly scarce compared to their parents’ job prospects (and ability to live comfortably on the wage). So I support Horner and Lu when they write that code censoring is also a legitimate decision.

I disagree with them, however, when they write that translingual approaches automatically involve student agency; this claim conflates pedagogy with sociopedagogy. They write, “By foregrounding the mutual interdependence of structure and language practices, a translingual approach shifts attention to matters of agency—the ways in which individual language users fashion and re-fashion standardized norms, identity, the world, and their relation to others and the world” (5). Though they write that a “translingual approach shifts attention to matters of agency,” it’s completely possible to separate the teaching of translingual awareness (the pedagogical approach) from asking for student input and decisions (the sociopedagogical approach). Or teachers might stress student agency in writing decisions while ignoring student agency in all other matters. As the example of the Deweyan progressive model shows, there can be an uptake of the principles that serve the economy and a rejection of the ones that don’t. Elements of translingual pedagogies may be appropriated for what serves capitalism, especially since translingual pedagogies are emerging at the same time as a transition to a transnational economy, which requires a global language to enable the circulation of capital. As I wrote earlier, a more sophisticated understanding of language and error is appropriate for the current economic shift, but not necessarily a more sophisticated understanding of policymaking or race and class inequality. Unfortunately, like Dewey’s progressive pedagogy, even extremely democratic translingual approaches can be appropriated to sociopedagogically assimilate students into an unequal economy.

Further, though I agree that choosing to code censor is an act of agency, it’s not completely voluntary, so I don’t think it should be presented as an *equal* option in translingual pedagogies. As Horner and Lu point out, choosing to abide by prejudiced rules is a form of agency because it’s not completely involuntary, but compliance is also never fully voluntary, as

Bourdieu writes, under the threat of intimidating forces like the possibility of not being able to provide for one's children or pay rent for housing—basic physical needs, which can carry more weight than ideological decisions about asserting one's linguistic identity. Choosing in the spectrum of code censoring and meshing is not like choosing between a semicolon and a period, more like choosing whether or not to show one's class or ethnicity. Though Lu generally calls these “stylistic” decisions in “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone,” they are more like, as she acknowledges in her title, political decisions. Horner and Lu are known for acknowledging and encouraging student agency, so I don't question their own practices. But, again, I'm cautious about the general uptake of translingual pedagogies—especially since there is another discourse of student agency surrounding the old idea of code censoring: if students *want* to succeed, they can *choose* to code censor; if they don't code censor, they are *choosing* to resist language assimilation, and teachers can respect that (as they fail the students). I can imagine, for example, situations in which teachers teach translingual pedagogies, with proper understanding of language processes and situatedness, and then require code censoring in the name of translanguaging. Any teacher can claim translanguaging and still teach only code censoring by claiming that students have already mastered translanguaging or code meshing in their practices outside the classroom; the students' amateur writing might be interpreted as a need for class time dedicated entirely to the legitimate language only. In this way, translanguaging can come to be another name for code censoring. In their efforts to make translingual approaches accessible to any teacher and applicable to any student, I think Horner and Lu may lose what is truly radical about their own translingual approach if it becomes institutionalized.

That said, I'm not arguing against their pedagogy, just being cautious. It's productive to debunk the native/nonnative myth of language use, but I'm wary of what will replace it. The sociopedagogical function of school is still integrating workers into the economy, regardless of scholars' theories about language as situated and emergent. I am impressed with practitioners of translingual approaches' awareness and validation of student agency, but translingual pedagogies are not inherently critical. They require, as Crocco argues for gaming pedagogies, a critical lens. It's important for teachers to acknowledge that translingual approaches to language instruction correspond with the needs of transnational capitalism and that they can be taught either critically or uncritically. I also suggest that teachers don't present code censoring as a stylistic choice but as a political choice. To continue the efforts of theorists of translingual pedagogies in inviting student agency, I suggest going one step further than asking for students' opinions and decisions about language and ask them what they want to learn/study. Instead of continuing to sociopedagogically prescribe what is in their best interests, teachers can draw on the tenets of critical pedagogy and ask students to negotiate the actual curriculum with them.

Based on the work of Paulo Freire in Brazil, critical pedagogy is a time-tested sociopedagogical approach for both conveying the material effectively and encouraging students' capacity to think critically about the material. Freire aimed to teach his adult students how to read words and how to "read the world." Ira Shor develops ways to implement Freire's theory in U.S. classrooms in the "bible of critical pedagogy," *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. In it Shor explains how to use problem-posing strategies, generative pedagogy, critical dialogue, and other tools, which can be used to raise students' awareness of the political context surrounding language. His ideas around the practice of *desocializing* are particularly important to me, as I explain in the next chapter. Shor's and Canagarajah's work,

informed by Horner and Lu's multicultural ideas and made more accessible to working-class and minority students with Delpit's explicitness, can converge to create "critical code meshing" or "critical translanguaging." I also like Sharon Crowley's idea in *Composition in the University* of teaching the field of Comp/Rhet to our composition students. Bringing the students in on the discussions we have about them and the legitimate language will help them learn the content they are supposed to learn in a comp course, how to think critically about these policies and pedagogies being "done" to them, and the process and politics of policymaking in the U.S.

Conclusion

If I seem brief on pedagogical solutions, it's because I think there's already a lot of conscientious work in this area, and also because I'm interested in looking beyond pedagogical solutions. Unfortunately, as I've shown throughout this chapter, changing language policies in classrooms can't truly change the linguisticism that students (and teachers) face, because the current standards are mainly a symptom of the inequality. The place of language in the socioeconomy is a sorting mechanism that orders laborers according to which occupations they might qualify for, from Wall street to wage labor and to illegal immigrant labor too. The language hierarchy is easy to enforce because it's easy to pass off as meritocratic. Since the inequality doesn't proceed from the classroom, it can't be fixed solely in the classroom. At this point, Bourdieu writes, the inequality is diffused throughout the entire society, and anyone involved in the cultural markets helps reinforce it. Critical code meshing is one way to push for more equal standards in language, but I discuss in the next chapter ways to change the hegemonic values and practices that underwrite the unequal language markets. After all, even if Cajun students weren't being assessed according to the standards of code censoring in classrooms, they would still normalize to the legitimate language in other contexts, as I did.

I was 19 the summer that I was (first) mortified to discover I have a Cajun accent. I mean, I knew I had one when I was younger—I'd heard the cassette recordings made by my mother—but by that summer, I thought I was accent-free. In fact, people back home complimented me for sounding like I was from somewhere else—for sounding educated—which made me walk a little taller. Made me feel like I was a hot patate.⁶² But it was when I spent a summer way up north in Louisville, KY, that I discovered I said everything wrong. Shock and horror aside, I set about changing my accent to something like the Louisville accent so I wouldn't sound so stupid. This strategy worked fine in Louisiana, where a Southern drawl has higher status than a Cajun accent. More than a decade later in New York, though, I still find myself lapsing into that Louisville accent when I make it a point to use linking verbs for discussing important things, like educational issues. Though the Southern accent worked out just fine back home, it's not so cool in New York. Come to find out, most of the educational programs, according to Sohn, designed to “aid” Appalachia (which includes Louisville) are from the Northeast, so the Appalachian accent has a terrible reputation of illiteracy up here in New York. Mais la. The other odd accent that pops out when I'm being intelligent is the one I got from imitating my professor at the University of New Orleans—the one whose intonations and vocabulary I was thrilled to have internalized. That prof, a brilliant and well-spoken man, later admitted that he learned his own academic voice by imitating Thurston Howell III from “Gilligan's Island.” So if I ever sound like I own a yacht, that's why. Funny thing, though. Turns out he was trying to overcome his own home accent, which was stigmatized as “uneducated.” He was from Louisville, KY.

⁶² Acadian French for *potato*, pronounced puh-TAT (standard French is *pomme de terre*).

Chapter Five
Beyond Classrooms:
Debunking the Language Myths

Myths of unchanging, universal standards for language have often been invoked to simplify the teaching and learning of language. – Bruce Horner et al.⁶³

The invader thinks, at most, *about* the invaded, never *with* them; the latter have their thinking done for them by the former. – Paulo Freire⁶⁴

And because we internalize how our language has been used against us by the dominant culture, we use our language differences against each other. – Gloria Anzaldúa⁶⁵

Introduction

The particular things everyone picked on Jerry from St. Martinville for saying, along with compulsively adjusting his shirt over his thick shoulders, were “Choosday” for *Tuesday* and “Ee’s cawl-aside” for *It’s cold outside*. People also joked that you have to use caution when asking to borrow money from Jerry, because he might try to give you his right arm too. We went to college in Lafayette, which had a less pronounced accent than the surrounding smaller towns. I’m from one of those smaller towns, but I had polished my accent when my parents switched me to private school. Jerry told me he resigned to his Cajunness when he learned somewhere that if you don’t change your accent by age 18, you’re done. We were all from Louisiana but with different levels of language capital, and we knew who was above and below us on the hierarchy. Dallas from chapter two, who bakes bread in the shape of fleurs-de-lis, was one of Jerry’s chief antagonizers. He had a clear, “neutral” accent, perfected for his job as a radio DJ (his station aimed to normalize to the accent of St. Louis, Missouri). But now that the Louisiana bungee cords have snapped him back to Lafayette, Dallas is treasuring the remaining French influence in

⁶³ “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach” 305.

⁶⁴ *Education for Critical Consciousness* 103.

⁶⁵ *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* 80.

his family and using French phrases I didn't know he knew. Me, I moved all over—Venezuela, France, Burkina Faso, New Orleans, and New York City—looking for something exotic, a break from the banal world of Louisiana with its backwards, illiterate culture. I couldn't wait to get out. Now I'm doing everything in my power to get back, watching “Swamp People” in the meantime to get my fill of Louisiana French accents.

Something about the change in perspective makes you value what you disdained before—even the “broken English.” One Cajun I briefly met said he set out on a tour of the U.S. to “find his happy”; he returned determined to open the eyes of Cajuns to what we have in Acadiana and never to leave again. Now he works at Vermilionville, maintaining the historic Acadian homes and keeping the Vermilion River clean. Elista Istre writes about a similar experience coming to appreciate Cajun culture in the introduction to her study of Louisiana tourism, “Although born and reared in Lafayette, ‘the Heart of French Louisiana,’ I had little appreciation for Cajun culture until I went away and returned, thirsty to discover who my people are after discovering who other people were” (“Laissez” 1). Since then, Istre has served in various capacities in museums and cultural celebrations geared toward raising awareness and preserving Louisiana French culture.

This is the story of many Cajun activists, according to Shane K. Bernard in *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People*. Barry Jean Ancelet had an awakening of sorts in Nice, France, when he heard a musician there play an old Cajun tune, “The Crowley Two-Step.” He recognized the melody but realized he didn't know any of the musicians back home who had influenced this fellow all the way over in France. Since that awakening, Ancelet has gone on to become instrumental in establishing some of the most important cultural institutions for Louisiana French speakers, including Festival International, French immersion school programs,

and the UL Lafayette archives on Cajun music and folklore. Bernard writes that there was a wave of Cajuns who had similar “exile experiences” (as Ancelet describes his own story) and, because of the change in perspective, became activists for guarding the disappearing Cajun culture. He writes, “By leaving their homeland and exposing themselves to new ideas and surroundings, these Cajuns were either inspired to become activists or, if already activists, were inspired with a renewed sense of mission” (108). He mentions as examples historian Carl A. Brasseaux, linguist Richard Guidry, attorney David Marcantel, and musicians Michael Doucet and Zachary Richard, who all grew up in the 1950s and 1960s “suspended between traditional and mainstream cultures” (108). In addition to these activists and several Canadian French activists and scholars (including Sylvie Dubois and Dominique Ryon), there is now a new generation of activists that grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, still feeling the same tension between the “traditional and mainstream cultures” as the last generation, including Louis Michot, Christophe Landry, Elista Istre, Anne Laughlin, Stephen Ortego, and many others. Most of them also experienced the “exile experience” of moving away or traveling, then returned with a new love for Acadiana. This change in perspective, which in some cases has driven people to become full-time activists for and experts on language, didn’t come from schools. It came from seeing the way the world really works.

These experiences are examples of what Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* calls *conscientization*, or coming to consciousness.⁶⁶ People are presented with a new perspective of something they previously saw in terms of culturally dominant hegemonic beliefs, and this new perspective changes their political understanding of—as well as their consent to—their own unequal conditions. Ira Shor describes this as a process of “desocialization” in *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Bourdieu addresses the power of these

⁶⁶ His term is originally the Portuguese *conscientizacao*, but many scholars simply use *conscientization*.

culturally dominant hegemonic beliefs in his theory of the legitimate language as something he calls language “myths.” These myths are powerful forces that underlie the values and practices of the “language markets,” which in turn determine the economic potential of all language users. I propose that, in addition to pedagogy and policy, the collection of language myths is an important site for addressing language inequalities, because these myths help define the language markets and ultimately the job markets toward which education is geared. Drawing on Shor’s concept of desocialization and the reports of Cajuns who no longer code censor, I also consider ways to change people’s perspectives of these language myths.

Bourdieu’s Theory of Language Myths

As I’ve demonstrated in the last few chapters, there are several factors that lead to people’s compliance with the legitimate language. Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the legitimate language in *Language and Symbolic Power* breaks down the factors that lead to individual compliance: first, during the period of national codification, nation builders determine the hierarchy of languages according to the class structure, creating a “language market” in which some ways of speaking are worth more cultural capital than others; next this language inequality is programmed into schools, where students (under compulsory attendance laws) are normalized to the standards surrounding the legitimate (and resulting illegitimate languages) with policies such as eradication and now code censoring; then students who have internalized this inequality reinforce the linguistic hierarchy in the markets when they self-police their own language, as well as the language of others. This compliance, as I’ve reiterated throughout the dissertation, is never quite voluntary when the alternatives to compliance can be social ostracization and the inability to meet one’s needs. Cajuns who code censor and pressure one another to code censor,

as I've shown in chapters three and four, have consistently reported doing so for the sake of a good job and/or to avoid shame or humiliation.

A final critical reason individuals comply with language inequalities, according to Bourdieu's theory of the legitimate language, is the inaccuracies they believe about language. It is necessary to keep people ignorant of normal linguistic processes, believing false notions instead, to keep them complying with unfair language sorting practices. He writes, "the language of authority never governs without the collaboration of those it governs, without the help of the social mechanisms capable of producing this complicity, *based on misrecognition*, which is the basis of all authority" (113, emphasis mine). According to Bourdieu, what supports the very foundation of unequal language markets are intentionally deceptive ideas about language. Language markets in turn determine job markets, which in turn determine school normalizing policies, so these false notions are integral to producing individual collaboration.

Bourdieu calls these language inaccuracies "myths," and he commonly puts them in market terms to situate them within his theory of language markets. Like Bourdieu, linguist Geoffrey Nunberg invokes an economic metaphor to explain the problem with these myths in the foreword to *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*: "Indeed, to linguists who have studied these questions, most of these 'everyday common sense' ideas about language sound very much the way an appeal to 'everyday common sense' ideas about inflation would sound to an economist—they're hardly the grounds that you would want to rely on for making policy" (xv). Nunberg invokes the idea of "common sense" as a reference to Antonio Gramsci's notion of *cultural hegemony*. Though Bourdieu does not use the word *hegemony* (instead explaining the circulation of the legitimate language in terms of a market), language myths are easier to understand in terms of Gramsci's theory, which is based on the idea of "mass consent,"

a form of what Bourdieu often calls “collaboration.” Gramsci’s articulation of how these values are internalized accounts for the power of Bourdieu’s language myths.

Cultural hegemony, or mass consent, is the ideological component reproducing inequalities in a capitalist society (like the U.S.), where violence and political coercion are less popular (though still present). Language myths are part of the “common sense” that circulates throughout the society and seems to always confirm the order of things. We quote it and pass it on without knowing the source of it. The source, Gramsci argues, is the dominant of the society, who put a lot of money and time into creating and maintaining “common sense” ideas that reify their positions. By the “dominant” (what Gramsci calls the “ruling class”), I mean the relatively few who benefit from an economy that exploits those who do the actual labor. In Gramsci’s theory, the dominant values in cultural hegemony mask as common sense, so it’s difficult to discern one’s beliefs from the beliefs circulating in the hegemony. He explains:

Common sense is not something rigid and stationary, but is in continuous transformation, becoming enriched with scientific notions and philosophical opinions that have entered into common circulation. “Common sense” is the folklore of philosophy and always stands midway between folklore proper (folklore as it is normally understood) and the philosophy, science, and economics of the scientists. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, a relatively rigidified phase of popular knowledge in a given time and place. (*Selections* 421)

Like common sense, the myths are part of hegemony the way that forwarded emails are a part of internet hegemony. People send on these emails, which circulate for years, often with outdated, inaccurate, and outright false information. Likewise, people pass on myths about language that often contain outdated, inaccurate, and outright false information.

Bourdieu presents two primary language myths. I've touched on these misconceptions in previous chapters as I've explained the processes of codifying, institutionalizing, and circulating the legitimate language; here, I summarize these myths again and critique them more pointedly:

1. The Myth of Linguistic Democracy

Bourdieu calls attention to the façade of a democratic language. He criticizes linguists who treat language as a neutral medium for expression, and he refutes the idea that everyone has equal access to linguistic capital, thus an equal shot at success. Bourdieu calls it “the illusion of linguistic communism which haunts all linguistic theory,” invoking the idea of having all things in common (*Language* 43). He quotes Auguste Comte as someone who promotes this linguistic myth: “Language forms a kind of wealth, which all can make use of at once without causing any diminution of the store, and which thus admits a complete community of enjoyment; for all, freely participating in the general treasure, unconsciously aid in its preservation” (43). In fact, writes Bourdieu, language is a limited form of capital that is distributed according to class; it is not “limited” by its formal qualities (language in any usage can be recombined into infinite formulations), but rather “limited” politically and artificially by restricted access to usages of high distinction. He writes, “To speak is to incorporate one or other of the expressive styles already constituted in and through usage and objectively marked by their position in a hierarchy of styles which expresses the hierarchy of corresponding social groups,” or, as he says a few sentences later, “social classes” (54). Language-wise, it might be said that some are born on third base and think they hit a triple.

This myth is prevalent in the U.S. as well. Given our history with the c-word in the U.S., however, we might recognize it as the myth of “linguistic democracy,” the myth that every child has equal access to high-status linguistic capital and therefore has an equal shot at success.

Anyone who doesn't want to take advantage of linguistic democracy is lazy or undeserving because they didn't work hard enough. E. D. Hirsch, Jr.'s *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* is a well-known representative of this perspective. Hirsch itemizes the cultural capital everyone needs to obtain in order to pass as upper-class, from grammar to classical literary allusions to popular culture references. Social mobility, in his view, is as easy as studying his index of culturally literate references. Notwithstanding the fact that Hirsch assumes no one will mind replacing his or her own cultural knowledge and traditions (as well as perspectives and beliefs) with an apparent Anglo cultural bent for the sake of upward mobility, he ignores the U.S. sociopolitical system which requires losers in order to have winners. Bourdieu writes that capitalism is a "competitive struggle" that requires differentiation between the working class, the professional and middle class, and the ruling class so that, even if working-class students learn how to work the system and sound or write like upper-class speakers and writers, a new standard will emerge to ensure differentiation. As I explained in chapter four, Bourdieu calls this a "strategy of assimilation and dissimilation": there are "deep mechanisms which, through surface changes, tend to reproduce the structure of distinctive deviations and to maintain the profits accruing to those who possess a rare and therefore distinctive competence" (64-65). As long as the U.S. is a capitalist country, according to Bourdieu, it is impossible to achieve linguistic or any other kind of equality. The educational system reproduces already existing class structures: "the educational market is strictly dominated by the linguistic products of the dominant class and tends to sanction the pre-existing differences in capital [...]. The initial disparities therefore tend to be reproduced" (62).⁶⁷ Put another way,

⁶⁷ In *Ways With Words* Shirley Brice Heath researched literacy development in three South Carolina communities and found that only the white middle-class kids thrived academically because their home-based literacy events mirrored preferred usage and rhetoric in the schools, while both African American and white working-class kids performed academically at a lower level as a result of their different socializations at home into literacy and rhetoric.

the cultural capital needed for success circulates unequally, distributed prejudicially by birth and schooling.

Requiring students to code censor (or “code switch”) is based on the myth of linguistic democracy. Specifically within language, as I’ve demonstrated in chapters three and four, Bourdieu identifies concepts of error and correctness in grammar as the primary linguistic-pedagogical means of preserving class hierarchy: “Grammar is endowed with real legal effectiveness via the educational system. . . because, through examinations and the qualifications which [grammar and spelling] make it possible to obtain, they govern access to jobs and social positions” (258). Similarly, Smitherman criticizes the strategy of requiring African Americans and “other minority groups and lower-class whites as well [...] to assimilate the language patterns of the dominant white middle class” (173). She writes that it actually maintains the status quo in the end: it “is an implicit acknowledgement that the system is good and valid, and all that need be done is to alter the people to fit into it” (207). It’s not linguistic democracy when one demographic speaks the legitimate code, and all other demographics must master two codes—or master only the academic code while giving up the family code, as Rodriguez did—just to have an “equal shot.” Rodriguez and Villanueva both contest the idea of the “equal shot” when they point out that scholars of color often achieve academic success only because of Affirmative Action policies and funding.

Yet discussions about “proper,” “correct,” or “error-free” English are based on and reinforce the myth of linguistic democracy. In *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English*, John McWhorter, a popular linguist, stresses the lack of science behind these beliefs: “To a linguist, if I may share, these ‘rules’ [of ‘correct’ grammar] occupy the exact same place as the notion of astrology, alchemy, and medicine being based on the four humors. The

'rules' make no logical sense in terms of the history of our language, or what languages around the world are like" (63). He writes that an actual error in language means there is a linguistic stumble that hides or loses meaning in communication, but the "rules" of "correct grammar" are the linguistic equivalents of fashion; they are not necessary for language to function. Definitions of error, arbitrary "fashions" of usage though they may be, bear very real consequences for those who write in academic settings. In *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, Mina Shaughnessy, the first compositionist to suggest that BW errors are often simply variants of elite "refinements of usage" (9), pointed out that "most college teachers have little tolerance for the kinds of errors BW students make," interpreting them as "indicators of ineducability" (8). Further, what are deemed errors in writing can lead to academic failure and ultimately exclusion from certain jobs and social privileges, a form of academic gatekeeping.

Consequently, "error" in basic writing and first-year composition courses often winds up being more a political consideration than one of clear communication. For instance, "He like to play tennis" is understandable and, as far as anyone knows, true; it is nevertheless an erroneous sentence, because it adheres to the grammatical rules of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) instead of Standard Written English (SWE). As in past language struggles, certain vernaculars of English are privileged over others in U.S. gatekeeping moments (such as entrance, placement, and exit exams), not because they're inherently better for communication, but because of the political clout associated with them. Bourdieu argues that there are distinctions in language use that carry a form of social capital, either enabling speakers access to certain social privileges or excluding them. Social structures are encoded in and reified by language use, as defined by "error." Misconceptions about "error" and "correctness" in English are part of the

myth of linguistic democracy that portrays the educational system (and consequently economic access) as a meritocratic institution rewarding hard work instead of privilege and conformity.

2. The Laissez-Faire Language Myth

Along the same lines, another misconception Bourdieu describes is what I call the “laissez-faire myth” of linguistic evolution. This myth is based on a misinterpretation of the normal process of language change, and it results in several ill-advised arguments in support of linguisticism. The main problem with the laissez-faire myth is that it writes out the process of national codification that I described in chapter two. According to this myth, the unseen hand of the markets has guided our language standards into the best possible scenario, and one narrow version of English has emerged as the fittest survivor in a competition of legitimate languages with no policies, no restrictions, no taxes, and no bailouts. All other languages have naturally deselected themselves from the running. They are fit for only home and street talk, not school and job talk.

But Bourdieu stresses that language standards under capitalism are artificially engineered during national codification and maintained as a continued function of nationalism. The legitimate language does not neutrally emerge as the most egalitarian language, nor is it the most efficient one for communication. Rather, it is selected, imposed, and preserved: it is “[p]roduced by authors who have the authority to write, fixed and codified by grammarians and teachers who are also charged with the task of inculcating its mastery” (45). Stressing its political origins, John B. Thompson writes in the introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power* that the legitimate language can also be called the “victorious language,” because it “has been *pre-constructed* by a set of social-historical conditions” (5). Public language use has traditionally been politically controlled by nations and tribes who outlawed the local languages of whomever they conquered

when they instituted their own languages. For instance, after the Norman invasion of 1066 and subsequent occupation of what is now England, the Normans outlawed the local Germanic dialect and required French in public, legal, and ecclesiastical settings. The conquered Anglo-Saxons continued to speak their own dialect in private but Latin-derived French in public. The result today is that English has an unusually large number of synonyms that still correspond to those home/public language practices: *job* for informal settings but *occupation* for formal settings, *sheep* in the pasture and *mutton* on the table, *ask* at home but *enquire* on the cover letter, and so on. Further, as the language evolves (as all living languages do), it is controlled by the same strategy of “assimilation and dissimulation” I mentioned above, in which the dominated assimilate to elite usages and the dominant invent new ways to dissimilate their status from everyone else. Language only evolves in favor of those who are already socio-politically dominant, so even if the language shifts, the social structure is retained.

This process of class sorting by language has been the case with English. As John Trimbur points out in “Linguistic Memory and the Politics of U.S. English,” the founding fathers instituted language inequalities by instituting race and class inequalities. With race and class inequalities such as the slavery of African American, the genocide of Native Americans, and gender-based discrimination of women woven into the socioeconomy, nation builders didn’t need to declare an official language, because the language markets automatically followed the already established job markets. Unlike other forming nations, the U.S. allowed for a “laissez-faire language policy,” but it wasn’t exactly a natural, “hands-free” process. Trimbur writes that this “laissez-faire language policy, despite its ostensible neutrality, may be just as programmatic as overt forms of language policy” (576). As I’ve stressed elsewhere in this dissertation, the foundation of unequal language markets is an unequal job market. Trimbur writes similarly about

the “laissez-faire language policy” that “its very covert nature virtually guaranteed the inevitable Anglification of language in the United States through the workings of labor relations, the market, and civil society” (577). Like the socioeconomic inequalities that were instituted at the founding of the U.S. but are now often interpreted as evidence of race and class inferiority, the language hierarchy can seem like the result of natural processes. In addition to the “covert” workings of language policy at the founding of the U.S., Trimbur points out that there were overt efforts to suppress the circulation of other dialects, such as African and Native American languages. Since then, as I’ve described in chapter three, English has been imposed on other immigrants and internally colonized groups like Mexican-Americans, Hawaiians, and Cajuns via abusive physical and psychological punishments in U.S. classrooms. Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo writes that English has been imposed in other countries with similar levels of coercion. Even populations who assimilate to English because of economic hardships are responding to a form of coercion created by transnational capitalism.

Some people do acknowledge the nationalist origins of English, and they lobby to institute it as the only legally observed language in the U.S., arguing that a national language is necessary for national unity, because languages will diverge so much that communication will become difficult, if not impossible. First, though, Americans can communicate just fine with people from England and Australia, which are completely different countries. In my experience, differences in grammar, idiom, and vocabulary cause initial difficulties and misunderstandings, but they are generally resolved (with chuckles and good attitudes). Swedes and Norwegians can converse easily in their own respective national languages with each other, so national languages don’t automatically draw boundaries for inclusion and exclusion (this also shows that the difference between *language* and *dialect* is subtle). Meanwhile, I’ve heard people complain that

African American Vernacular English is unintelligible, but I wonder if problems in communication might be rooted in the desire to communicate. Linguists point out that language evolves in favor of people who *want* to communicate, meaning that any divergence that impedes communication is often based on an already existing lack of communication. Further, as Bourdieu argues, drives for national linguistic unity are more likely to crop up during periods of “national reorganization”—generally when wars are imminent or being waged. Global languages enable the global circulation of capital, which replaces independent subsistence economies with exploitative, export-dependent economies based on cash crops, so I’m also cautious about supporting the idea of world Englishes and other lingua franca. Also, I’d point out that even as translingual pedagogies catch on, there is still a hierarchy of usage, and it’s often based on nationalisms. Recognized world Englishes so far have been labeled by the nation states they come from—Indian Englishes, Malaysian English, and so on. And these, I predict, will have more status than, say, CVE or AAVE, because of the level of power backing each one (a nation state has more clout than a subculture, if only because of the army and navy).

Another manifestation of the laissez-faire language myth is the idea that, though English has evolved up until now (guided by the unseen hand of the markets), it shouldn’t evolve anymore. Linguist Edward Finegan, who charts the idea of language error in *Attitudes Towards English Usage: The History of a War on Words*, explains that linguistic evolution is necessary for healthy languages: “in order to have a language become fixed, it is first necessary that those who speak it should become dead” (78). And linguistic evolution is usually beneficial, enabling better communication. For example, many linguists write that the best thing that ever happened to the English language was being neglected by language guardians like scholars and political leaders for centuries after the Normans invaded the Anglos in 1066 and instituted French as the

official language. During that time, English evolved for efficiency in the mouths of peasants, who simplified it by dropping most conjugations and declensions. For example, as any medievalist probably knows, the word *help* used to have the past forms *holp* and *holpen*, but has simplified to *helped*. This is one example from hundreds. The result today is that English is one of the easiest languages to conjugate and decline, because it came to rely primarily on word order instead of endings to mark parts of the sentence. Note that it was the “errors” that made English clearer; it was the fact that English was put into the hands of the “illiterate” who simplified it out of disregard for the rules. They dropped declensions much like some people drop linking verbs. However, the language evolution slowed again in the late 1300s in Chaucer’s time, when it was again used by academics and language critics who deemed certain usages—not “effective” or “ineffective” but—“right” or “wrong.”

This myth is evident when people talk about “bad,” “broken,” or “impure” Englishes, implying that Legitimate English is “pure” or “whole.” But McWhorter explains that the English we speak today emerged specifically from “impurities”: “The real story of English is about what happened when Old English was battered by Vikings and bastardized by Celts. The real story of English shows us how English is *genuinely* weird—miscegenated, abbreviated” (xxii). Not only is English a result of conquests, compromises, and peoples of different ethnicities living together, but a formative part of English coming to be what it is today was “adult learners screwing things up,” because of the prevalence of people speaking English as a second language and passing it on (similar to a “patois”) to following generations (124). As English continues to mix with other languages or diverge into other Englishes, though, it’s considered “impure.” Peter Elbow responds to this myth in *Vernacular Eloquence*: “It’s touching when speakers of English argue for purity of language since English is probably the most impure bastardized language there’s

ever been. It's slept with every language it ever encountered, even casually. The strength of English comes from how many babies it's had with how many partners" (365). Though most people are aware of Old and Middle English, they aren't usually aware that today's version of English is just one point on a long continuum that will continue to evolve and mix with other languages. This misconception can lead people to believe that the normal language processes of change have somehow not worked properly in the cases of illegitimate vernaculars and language meshings. They are mutations of English that are not fit to survive but are strung along by liberal language policies (bilingual education programs, for instance), whereas Legitimate English is the self-evident victorious language.

Another version of the laissez-faire myth is the idea that, though currently there are language inequalities, given enough time and freedom, conditions will become more democratic because language change happens so fast (due to technology changes and so on). Peter Elbow writes that language standards are evolving on their own to become "more democratic" ("Reflections" 152) and, he again argues in *Vernacular Eloquence* that language will become more democratic on its own. He points to developments in history like the invention of the printing press and the resulting spread of democratic ideals, and he predicts that the internet will make language more democratic. It's true that new technologies offer opportunities to disseminate uncontrolled and uncensored information, but the means of production are quickly bought by capitalists who impose proprietary restrictions on what information is available. Today's publishing industry, for instance, is owned and tightly controlled by capitalists, in spite of the democratic origins that Elbow cites. Writers are keenly aware of which are the prestigious presses. Writers' words matter more (and are often more expensive) when they are published by more elite presses than when they are printed by a recent upstart. Even now, the free access of

the internet is being threatened by attempts (SOPA and PIPA, for example) to stratify what information is available and at what speeds, based on how much customers can pay.

Elbow fails to acknowledge in his predictions of language democratization in *Vernacular English* that social conditions tend to be reproduced, without resistance and even in spite of resistance, because of the structures and institutions in place to guard the socioeconomic order. Similarly, he ignores the forces of nationalism and efforts to maintain class differentiation in language change; language does evolve, but it's a controlled evolution in favor of the dominant. The key is controlling the circulation of texts; small-scale niche circulation is possible for self-selected adherents to a website or list, but mass circulation is tightly controlled through a few corporate hands determining what gets broadcast over TV and cable; what gets printed in books, newspapers, and magazines; and what narratives are represented as reality through cinema. Hegemony is vigilant about linguistic competitors to its own products. When oppositional culture does achieve a breakthrough in hegemonic representations, it attracts enormous restrictive/suppressive attention, as in the case of the Occupy Wall Street movement after September 17, 2011. Protesters have generally sought to exercise their right to free speech by peacefully assembling in public places with signs and speeches, but the movement's statements and demands have been continually silenced by police brutality and extremely limited media representation. Elbow is optimistic about language change in the direction of democracy, but I'm cautious that the changes he notes are part of the same signals of economic shift I described in chapter four. Language has not historically become more egalitarian under repressive conditions. So, though Elbow urges readers to be patient and they'll see positive change in time, I agree with

Villanueva when he writes, “Time changes nothing, only people make change—the message of Martin Luther King’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’” (*Bootstraps* 53).⁶⁸

These myths based on commonsense notions of language win the compliance of everyone participating in language markets, but they are particularly resonant for those who are in hardest pursuit of upward mobility. Bourdieu explains that working-class speakers internalize and reinforce these norms in their efforts to assimilate to higher social positions, whereas “the bourgeois and the intellectuals [exhibit] controlled hypocorrection which combines confident relaxation and lofty ignorance of pedantic rules with the exhibition of ease on the most dangerous ground” (63). Consequently, minority and working-class groups are the most likely to internalize language myths and the most likely to support language pedagogies and policies that hurt them the most. Elbow writes similarly, “The most fiercely imposed standards often come from the margins” (370). As an example of a politically marginalized group that internalized and reinforced national language standards, he summarizes Miller’s account of the seventeenth-century Scottish rhetoricians (during British nation building and language codification) who sought, after being colonized by the British, “to establish an aggressively *proper* standard for [English] rhetoric and language” (370). The style guides of rhetoricians like Hugh Blair and George Campbell were so “proper” that they persisted long into the nineteenth century.

Villanueva also writes about this dynamic in *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, focusing on groups that have been internally colonized in the U.S. He describes his surprise during his service in Vietnam when his Japanese American company commander ordered his company to speak only English, even in private, because they were in the “American Army.” He writes that it was surprising coming from someone who was a racial minority, who,

⁶⁸ I have asked Elbow at a recent conference (June 2012) to acknowledge in his writing that people, not time, will make change. He has agreed to.

like Villanueva and his fellow Spanish-speaking soldiers, seemed more patriotic than the monolingual English-speaking kids who were burning flags back in the U.S. Villanueva couldn't understand why language alone would determine someone's loyalty. But he came to understand that his company commander had given the English only order because he had bought into the myth of upward mobility even more ardently than non-minorities: "Now I see that the order came from one who had succeeded, one who had taken the path of racelessness, one who would impose racelessness on us all" (44). As a result of economic pressures and promises of upward mobility, marginalized groups who have bought into the idea of upward mobility can be the toughest audiences when it comes to contesting language myths. McWhorter describes the reactions he receives when he discusses basic linguistics principles that do not agree with national language myths: "Yet, in my experience, to try to get these things across to laymen often results in the person's verging on anger" (64). These language myths are deeply ingrained; they help support an entire socioeconomic structure, from poverty and crime to hope and perseverance under sometimes terrible conditions. They hide the class and race inequalities built into the U.S. socioeconomy, winning the complicity of untold numbers of well-meaning individuals.

As Bourdieu's model predicts for working-class groups, Cajuns are led to comply with linguicism by their inaccurate beliefs about normal language processes, myths that hide the fact that U.S. capitalism depends on extreme economic disparity to function properly. Like other assimilated groups, Cajuns have learned to talk about language in terms of its "correctness" or "brokenness." As I wrote in chapter three, Cajuns who experienced punishments under the French ban grew up to repeat the same phrases about Cajun French that they had learned as children ("broken French," "bastardized French," "*pas le vrai français*"), so parents avoided

passing on Cajun French to their children and even resisted bringing it back into schools. But Cajuns also learned inaccurate linguistics principles about basic language acquisition processes, so parents not only didn't pass on their French to their children but also made it a point to prevent bilingualism. Ann Martin Scott, a professor in the composition studies Ph.D. program at UL Lafayette, writes in "Language Education in Acadiana" of her dismay at learning about local beliefs about language when she moved to Louisiana. She writes:

Soon after moving to Cecilia I ran into a local high school teacher at the hardware store, and in the course of the conversation he said to me, proudly, "Me, I don't *let* my little girl learn French!" When I recovered the ability to speak, I asked why, and he replied that it would interfere with her learning "good English." It was obvious that he was sincere in his attempt to look out for the linguistic welfare of his daughter, but equally obvious that he knew little about the nature of language or about the language acquisition process in children. If he had, he would no doubt have made different decisions about his daughter's language education. (92)

Scott's story demonstrates that this well-intentioned Cajun high-school teacher misunderstood language acquisition processes; he also subscribed to the myth that there can be "good" and "bad" Englishes. Scott concludes that it will be necessary to "instill linguistic pride in our youth, and effect the unlearning of misconceptions in adults" before Cajuns will stop seeing their languages and themselves as inferior (100). The French ban was a huge factor in the loss of Cajun French, but inaccurate ideas about language have fueled the process of eradication.

Carl Brasseaux describes another myth about language circulating among Cajuns that especially reinforces the idea that they are illiterate (related in an article by Chris Segura). As the

story goes, Cajun names like Boudreaux, Thibodeaux, Arceneaux, Comeaux, and Quibodeaux originally did not contain the final “-x” (as in many Parisian French names), but since Cajuns could neither read nor write, the local priests drawing up birth, death, and wedding certificates had them sign their “X” after their printed names. As records were compiled by literate officials later, Cajuns continued to go by the spellings ostensibly written on those certificates. However, Brasseaux refutes this story and the illiterate stereotype it carries. Actually, he argues, one Judge Paul Briant, an Antilles exile, decided to standardize the many different spellings of *ō*-sounding last names for the 1820 census, and arbitrarily chose “-eaux” when, “phonetically, he had about 12 ways to standardize [them]” (Segura 1). Brasseaux goes on to point out the stigma inherent in the circulating myth: “It’s a strong indication of the negative, internalized attitudes about our culture that so many Cajuns would naturally assume their ancestors were illiterate.” These assumed hegemonic values persist, even after the Louisiana constitution of 1974 “recognized” French (though it did not yet rescind the prohibition), and other forms of legislation opened opportunities for reclaiming “historical origins” (Ancelet 346). Brasseaux maintains that their perpetuation of their low societal position is a psychological result of Cajuns’ “internalization of negative stereotypes [...] of a web-footed, ignorant, inbred and generally inferior ethnic group [who are exploited] in motion pictures, books written for mass consumption, and demeaning so-called ‘Cajun humorists.’” He says Cajuns know what’s expected of them and perform accordingly, “especially when the movie cameras show up” (1). The negative stereotypes have become a part of Cajuns’ oral traditions, which will persist unless new oral traditions are introduced.

Deany Marie Chermie similarly argues that language myths are detrimental to CVE in Louisiana. In her dissertation *Cajun Vernacular English and the Influence of Vernacular on*

Student Writing in South Louisiana, she points out that teachers of composition generally aren't trained in vernaculars and linguistics principles, so they tend to pass on their own language misconceptions to students. She quotes from a background report by the committee who drafted the CCCC resolution Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), in which the members argue that "all teachers should, as a minimum, know the principles of modern linguistics, and something about the history and nature of the English language in its social and cultural context" (Committee on CCCC Language Statement, qtd. in Cherie 150). Citing two studies that demonstrate that teachers consider speakers of nonstandard dialects to be "less capable" (Taylor 1973, Bowie and Bond 1994), Cherie writes that students become "obsessed with errors" because of their teachers' negative attitudes (151-152). She concludes by arguing for teachers and students to be educated about language varieties so they won't continue to see them as stigmatized. The results of my own study (reported in chapter four) show that college teachers of English in Acadiana generally no longer see language difference in terms of intelligence or ability, but as a problem with students' audience awareness—another myth hiding the reality of limited access to language capital in an unequal socioeconomy. In an echo of other language experts, Cherie writes, "the myths about language will be resistant to change" (152).

Yet the collection of language myths is one of the most important sites for opposing linguisticism because, as Bourdieu explains, these language myths underlie unequal language markets, and they keep people from supporting more progressive school policies about language. Doing away with the myths will not make everything equal, but it will strip away the veil of meritocracy and the euphemisms for class and race inequality that keep people from seeing exactly what's going on. To answer the question I posed at the outset of this study, Bourdieu's model of the language/class correlation explains that, in spite of the recent Cajun Renaissance

and the odd U.S. fascination with Cajunness, the economy is structured in a way that pressures Cajuns to censor CVE in relation to their economic aspirations. As Dubois and Horvath have shown and my survey has confirmed, degree of code censoring does correlate with level of education, especially since the educational system is a primary means of normalizing the legitimate language. But correlation is not causation. Though level of education correlates with the disappearance of CVE, and though it was the cause for individual decisions to censor Cajun French (in the cases of the children who were schooled under the French ban), level of education is not the cause of CVE disappearance today. Based on my research, I conclude that what actually determines the decision to code censor CVE is pursuit of upward mobility, and this pursuit is fueled by inaccurate hegemonic myths. Language myths are now one of the key factors in winning the compliance of Cajuns in the process of social reproduction, as they interpret poverty and poor grades not as a sign of systematic inequality but as a sign of laziness, inferiority (racially, biologically, or mentally), or lack of patriotism.

Balancing Reproduction and Resistance

As we say back home, though, it's just a bunch of yanh-yanhing if you never do anything about it. After a dissertation focused solely on the process of social reproduction in the educational and linguistic assimilation of Cajuns, the next step is examining possible roads out of this linguisticism—for the Cajun community, as well as other minority and working class communities. During the course of my studies, I discovered, like Suresh Canagarajah in *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, that it's often necessary to turn to subaltern and marginalized groups to find resistance literature discussing language inequalities. Much of the existing literature on language inequality is based on the “reproduction model,” the idea that power inequalities inevitably recreate themselves. “Reproduction models,” Canagarajah

clarifies, “explain how students are conditioned mentally and behaviorally by the practices of schooling to serve the dominant social institutions and groups; resistance theories explain how there are sufficient contradictions within institutions to help subjects gain agency, conduct critical thinking, and initiate change” (22). Canagarajah writes, as I explained in chapter one, that the skewed perspective stressing the reproduction model is especially true of the literature coming from the “center,” whereas periphery literature deals more with resistance (32). He goes on to discuss a “resistance linguistics,” in which he describes the many forms of resistance already happening in the Sri Lankan community. Periphery people aren’t just unthinking victims of language programs who swallow dominant values; they also make savvy decisions about language use for their own political advantage.

Like Canagarajah, I think that language debates in Composition and Rhetoric (Comp/Rhet) will benefit from more attention to resistance, and the voices of periphery scholars are integral to these discussions because of their perspective. As a periphery scholar who has undergone extensive normalization to center perspectives (twenty years of schooling, seven of those in graduate school), I draw on what postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha calls my “two-ness” to discuss the myths that win individual compliance to dominant policies. As I mentioned before, I think a huge problem with creating positive changes in language markets will be the lack of popular support for more progressive language policies and pedagogies, particularly from the dominated themselves. I often hear from my own family—which has endured the punishments and humiliations of the French ban and has constantly heard and shared the stories of the French ban in hushed, reverent tones—indignant complaints that they “have to press one for English” (shorthand for their objection to automated phone menus offering bilingual options). It’s a contradiction I wouldn’t understand, except that I grew up with the same attitude.

I used to be an avid proponent of code switching for minority and working-class students. It was the obvious answer for upward mobility; anyone who didn't do it must be lazy or morally incompetent. I wrote my Masters thesis about code switching—how Ralph Waldo Emerson changed the form of his writing according to context and why this can work for minority students too (not exactly a parallel argument, since Emerson wasn't switching between privileged and non-privileged codes and also because he was redefining writing during a period of national recodification). I intended to extend this research into a Ph.D. dissertation all about the merits of code switching, but the more I learned the more I began to question the actual function of education. If languages are *supposed* to evolve and diverge, why were people, particularly groups who had been internally colonized, being punished for language divergence? English has evolved since the founding of the U.S. but, as Paul Kei Matsuda points out as he concludes the volume *AltDIS: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*, not in favor of minority populations. The other thing that changed my perspective was the reactions to my accent up here in New York—when it crept out, people found it exotic and musical, not low-class and illiterate. Made me see up close how constructed and unstable our language standards are. I never anticipated writing a Ph.D. dissertation on Cajuns; I was trying to distance myself from being Cajun so that I could be academic. Even after selecting my topic, I had to be pressed by my advisers to focus more on Cajuns.

So I understand where my family and the friends I grew up with are coming from, as they try to erase their Cajun accents and tease those who can't. Following in my grandparents' steps, much of the rest of my family has taken on the dominant culture's values against multilingualism and multidialectalism in their quest to be upwardly mobile, to identify with the winners instead of the losers. There are definitely Cajun and Creole families with different perspectives from my

family's—especially culturally iconic families who benefitted from their Louisiana French cultural capital—but there are a lot of families like mine too.⁶⁹ Loving to the core, one foot still in the communal family clan thing, but “making” extra novenas for anyone who disagrees on the merits of capitalism or imposed monolingualism. And this understanding makes me want to learn how to change the values of people who are no longer in school, who are beyond the reach of pedagogies and policies, who are the parents objecting to progressive language policies in their children's education and progressive legislation allowing for multilingualism, who are passing on the chain emails that portray multilinguals as lazy mooches.

Digging into the literature of counterhegemonic movements like French Feminism, the Civil Rights struggle, Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent resistance, early Christianity, the abolition movement, liberation theology, and several other postcolonial struggles, I found a great deal of theorization on the compliance of the dominated. Many writers on the margins have asked the same question I did at the outset of this dissertation: “Why do we comply?” In spite of the very diverse perspectives comprising the huge body of counterhegemonic literature, an extraordinarily common theme is what I've described in terms of Bourdieu's “myths” and Gramsci's “common sense”: ideological beliefs that keep us complying, in lieu of coercive forces standing over us. These myths are a key part of creating reproduction, so their undoing is a key part of inspiring resistance. William Blake, critiquing the class inequalities and exploitation created by British empire in his poem “London” calls the internalization of hegemonic beliefs “the mind-forg'd manacles,” Karl Marx calls it “false consciousness,” Michel Foucault calls it “regimes of truth,” Simone de Beauvoir calls it “mythologizing” (the “eternal feminine”), Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo calls it “colonization of the mind,” the apostle Paul calls it “confusion,” W. E. B. Du Bois calls it

⁶⁹ In particular, the families of well-known Cajun musicians are still respected in Acadiana as they uphold these traditions—the Michots and the Balfas, for instance.

“double consciousness,” Martin Luther King, Jr., calls it “mental slavery,” Gandhi calls it “the enemy within,” and Freire calls it “oppressor consciousness.” These writers stress that effective resistance is only possible when people can remove the “chains” or other metaphors of oppression from their minds. Reiterating what I wrote earlier, stripping away the myths will not automatically make everyone equal but will make it possible for people to see what’s really going on and make informed choices at that point.

In addition to the theme of internalizing false ideas, another common feature among subaltern and marginalized writers is a focus on the complicity of the dominated rather than their victimization alone. Consent to inequalities is never completely voluntary, as Bourdieu writes, but these periphery writers point out that it is never completely involuntary either. Understanding the compliance of the dominated is essential to acknowledging their agency. Failing to acknowledge their agency, and thus their ability to participate in decision making, leaves only one conclusion: the dominated *deserve* to be dominated. The discourses of aid and victimization found in reproduction models actually reproduce domination, but subaltern writers recognize the agency of the dominated by acknowledging their complicity. Though their thoughts vary when it comes to violent or peaceful methods, subaltern writers almost universally call for noncompliance, indicating that they acknowledge that subordinated people comply.⁷⁰

It may seem disrespectful to discuss the complicity of working-class and minority groups in the U.S., but a balanced discussion will acknowledge both sides: the culpability of the center *and* the culpability of the periphery. After all, if people aren’t blameworthy, they also aren’t

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault’s personal change of views is a good example of the contrast between center and periphery perspectives of agency. Known to have a deterministic view of domination (or “power over”) as inescapable and liberation as impossible from books like *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault recanted on the reproduction model near his death as a result of his involvement in the gay community, another significant counterhegemonic movement. He came to argue in *Care of the Self*, based on his experiences with power sharing and role switching in gay relationships, that self-rule is the most important way to reject domination.

praiseworthy, and their actions can only be interpreted as beast-level instincts, meaning yet again they need to be ruled by those who are capable of making moral decisions in their best interests. Failing to hold the marginalized responsible for their complicity (not necessarily for the origin or cause) with institutionalized, ongoing inequalities (not crimes done to them) is another form of domination that takes away their right to make their own decisions. As long as the center doesn't recognize that people in the peripheries are complicit in their domination, using the myths and stereotypes to their own advantage, the center will never recognize their agency but continue to make decisions for them instead of with them. So if the center wants to do anything helpful, they can stop creating policies to "help" the periphery and ask them what they think. In many cases, though, people who have long been subordinated aren't sure what they think because of the myths they have learned to repeat in discussions of language issues. Thus, the need for conscientization.

Stepping off from Bourdieu's theory of the language markets, the primary way I understand conscientization is in light of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Gramsci literally "wrote the book" on counterhegemony, theorizing cultural hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks* during his imprisonment under Benito Mussolini's fascist regime from 1926 until his death in 1937. I find education theorist Michael Apple's discussion of hegemony and education in *Education and Power* useful for understanding the spaces for resistance in Gramsci's cultural hegemony. Like Canagarajah, Apple contests the "education as reproduction" model that became popular in the 1970s. He critiques his own work and the work of others who have leaned too far in one direction to stress the lack of agency teachers and students have in schools. Schools, according to what he calls the "mechanistic" view, exist only for capital's accumulation ("they sort, select, and certify a hierarchically organized student body") and legitimation ("they

maintain an inaccurate meritocratic ideology and, therefore, legitimate the ideological forms necessary for the recreation of inequality”) (13). Like Apple, I find the Marxist analyses of schools as sites of reproduction—one major example being Bowles and Gintis’ *Schooling in Capitalist America*—useful for understanding how inequalities are so readily perpetuated. But these reproduction analyses don’t tell the whole story. Instead of a simple input/output model of hegemonic reproduction where students enter school, undergo the hidden curriculum (which reproduces class inequalities), and exit as normalized labor, Apple argues that schools are also sites of *production*. He admits he has focused excessively on reproduction in the past and argues for more focus on resistances within schools.

It’s for this reason that changing pedagogies and policies is such important work. As I wrote in the introduction to this dissertation, I support the efforts of Geneva Smitherman, Bruce Horner, John Trimbur, Suresh Canagarajah, and other education activists who push for more egalitarian language standards in schools. In addition to their work in schools, though, a critical place to fight linguisticism is in the language markets—the network of forces that pressure individuals to comply even after they’ve finished their schooling and even in their private practices at home. And a primary way to address the inequalities of the language markets is to strip away the language myths that underlie it, or as Gramsci would put it, the “common sense” of the cultural hegemony. Below I expand more on the workings of hegemony, then relate it to language change and possibilities for contestation of language inequalities through Shor’s idea of desocializing.

There are a few reasons to be optimistic about changing U.S. cultural hegemony. For one, there are many opportunities to challenge it. Since hegemony is constantly changing (because it is constantly being *produced*, as Apple argues), encountering new ideas and events that must be

interpreted and absorbed, it must constantly be renegotiated according to certain power lines if inequalities are to be maintained. As Canagarajah has pointed out, “cultural hegemony is an ongoing activity, a process, that can always be met by opposition” (*Resisting* 31). Within hegemony, there is space for resistance leading to real shifts in power, because it is constantly being renegotiated and redesigned. These new negotiations are important points of potential. Another way that hegemony is unstable, and consequently changeable, is that the dominant who benefit from the state’s efforts are not unified, even if allied. Apple writes, “to maintain its own legitimacy the state needs gradually but continuously to integrate many of the interests of allied and even opposing groups under its banner” (26-27). The power that seeks to keep hegemony unequal isn’t monolithic or unpenetrable.

As hegemony is produced and reproduced, another reason I’m arguing that there is room for change is that much of what passes for hegemony is counterintuitive and even detrimental for the majority of people consenting to it. There are tons of people, for instance, who support legislation against the right to collective bargaining, who vote to privatize Medicare, who support tax cuts for the wealthiest few, who staunchly argue for English only, even when they and their own families are consequently excluded from political participation. It’s easier to get people to support things that benefit them than it is to get them to support things that don’t, so people who struggle for equality have the advantage of people’s personal interests. There are considerable efforts and actions of the subordinated in the struggle for equality, but I think it’s worth acknowledging that there’s a lot of hard work on the part of the dominant too, when it comes to keeping hegemony working for them. It takes a great deal of work to maintain the U.S. hegemony, which privileges such a small demographic over the rest of the population. In terms of numbers, the odds are in the favor of the people who get the short end of the stick.

Consent is the pivotal word here. While people usually don't invent and lobby for policies that aren't in their best interests (in fact, they resist when they think they're outrageous), they often grant consent for them (in a lesser-of-two-evils situation, for example), so I'm arguing that people need to quit consenting. It's not possible to control everyone's thoughts, as Apple points out (26), so the state settles for consent. While the subordinated are constantly resisting, contesting, etc., the state is conducting a "process of compromise, conflict, and active struggle to maintain hegemony" (27). Because hegemony requires consent, a lot of what gets represented in the hegemony are actually the values of the subordinated; these are "gains" or "wins." One might argue that these are only small concessions from the ruling class that take the wind out of the working class, tricking them into working harder and happier. I agree that some reforms actually solidify the power of the ruling class, but there are also true gains wherein the subordinated win more autonomy (as opposed to winning a gift or concession from someone(s) who continue(s) to rule them). A true win will alter the relationship between dominant and subordinated, not maintain the relationship while alleviating some of the discomfort of the subordinated.

Language has the same opportunities for change as hegemonic values. Within Bourdieu's theory of language legitimation, language is constantly evolving, because people are constantly challenging meaning, inventing new words, inventing new concepts that need to be named, incorporating new ways of saying things, and encountering new languages and ethnic groups. If the hierarchy is to be maintained, the dominant discourse must evolve along with the subordinated ones. It accepts new words in the dictionary, it allows professionals to write in first person and reflective essays, and some grammar and style rules change. Peter Elbow writes in *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* that white, middle-class men have taken a lot of liberties by using a relaxed, vernacular style in their professional writing (in *New*

York Times articles and editorials, for example), but it's still unacceptable for minority writers to use their vernaculars in professional writing (348-357). This is an example of Bourdieu's "strategy of assimilation and dissimulation"; as language evolves, correctness is redefined so that there are still ways to sort people according to class. But language does change, and as hegemonic standards are newly produced to handle new content, the uncertain and uncodified sites of writing—for instance, the internet, as Elbow suggests—are strategic places for dissent.

Rejecting the practice of code censoring is one way to take advantage of this constant struggle of assimilation and dissimulation in language, as I've argued in "Publishing in the Contact Zone: Strategies from the Cajun Canailles." I think it's important for academics to use home and other discourses in publications. "None of us are 'dead white males,'" I write, "meaning each of us has something to contribute from our own Englishes and our own literacies, be it gendered, cultural, visual, multi-medial, or anything that will further communication" (134-135). This kind of public challenge to hegemonic language standards can begin to push our language standards to evolve to accommodate today's academics, an entirely different population from that of 200 years ago. Yet I've seen very little (if any) meshing or translanguaging in the writing of some of the very scholars who are its greatest proponents for students (for example, Bruce Horner, Suresh Canagarajah, Min-Zhan Lu, and John Trimbur), or if they do code mesh in their scholarship, it's only what Elbow calls "hidden meshing."

Code meshing, like Young warns, is "no panacea" (*Your* 8). Even "in your face" meshing may stir up a lot of trouble by pushing English to evolve a little, only to resettle into a new pattern of dissimulation. It's an ongoing struggle. And code meshing, which is very difficult, may still have a lower status than texts written wholly in the legitimate language. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngũgĩ criticizes "the literary gymnastics

of preying on our languages to add life and vigour to English and other foreign languages” (8). He continues, “Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission?” (8). Even after “the literary gymnastics,” he writes, the colonized still don’t have any more power or legitimacy of status. So, on one hand, code meshing can wind up being just one more form of submitting to the legitimate language, but with a few marks of cultural resistance on it. On the other hand, some of us no longer have mother tongues that aren’t varieties of English, and the only way to express our cultural identity and resistance is through English. To code mesh in formal writing is, as Young argues, to write it like we would say it anyway. In their roles as scholars, theorists in Comp/Rhet can also bring this conversation to the public by writing for general audiences, as Peter Elbow and Mike Rose have striven to do as they address hegemonic myths about language and education.

Likewise, the hegemony *within* each individual who complies is constantly being revised and produced as we encounter new ideas and experiences; it takes a lot of work to keep everyone complying. So I think there are a lot of reasons to be optimistic that personal standards and values can shift as a result of Freire’s theorization in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of conscientization—creating a critical consciousness in people by helping them distance themselves from and rethink circumstances they tend to take for granted or see as hopeless, unchangeable, or even deserved. Freire’s theories are particularly appropriate in a discussion of language myths that hide structured inequality because, though his title is obviously pedagogical, he isn’t writing about how to teach the required content of an academic discipline but specifically about how to make people conscious of hidden inequality. Freire was writing from the counterhegemonic position of critiquing class inequality in his home country Brazil. He was

jailed and exiled for radicalizing peasants in his work with adult literacy programs, in which he taught them to read words, as well as to “read the world.” Drawing on his experiences in these adult literacy programs, he writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that “people must first critically recognize [the causes of inequality], so that through transforming action they can create a new situation” (47). In order to see the inequalities and create a new situation, people must be able to think about hegemonic common sense and myths in light of their own experiences by having new encounters with them, what Ira Shor calls “desocializing” experiences.

Changing the Hegemony Within

Shor has developed in *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* practical ways to apply some of the main features of Freire’s critical pedagogy in U.S. classrooms—for example, how to conduct a democratic classroom, how to foster dialogue (rather than teacher talk), and how to use problem-posing teaching methods that lead to activism. He describes what he calls a “desocializing” aspect of critical pedagogy: “When educators offer problem-posing, democratic dialogue in the classroom, they challenge socialization into the myths, values, and relations of the dominant culture” (117). As an example, he describes a teacher who presented a new perspective on Columbus’s “discovery” of America by “stealing” a student’s purse (with prior permission), claiming that it wasn’t stealing because he “discovered” it. Students rethought the story of Columbus and the New World, concluding that Columbus “‘stole’ it, ‘took’ it, ‘ripped it off,’ ‘invaded it’ and ‘conquered it’” (121). The teacher then asked the students whose interests were served by the account that portrayed Columbus’s experience as a “discovery,” leading them to see the racism hidden behind the official story. Similarly, people can be desocialized from language myths that portray socioeconomic position as the natural results of meritocracy.

Similar to what Bourdieu calls “myths,” Freire argues that subordinated people often have fatalistic attitudes toward their conditions, because they are “under the sway of magic or myth” (61). He writes that “they must first cut the umbilical cord of magic and myth which binds them to the world of oppression” (175). In order to see through the myths, the subordinated have to deal with their own “oppressor consciousness,” the hegemonic beliefs they have internalized. What Freire calls “oppressor consciousness” is another way of explaining the way people internalize the values of the dominant under Gramsci’s cultural hegemony: “They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized” (48). Once people have come to consciousness or have gotten rid of the deceptions—the myth and magic—that hide unequal conditions, they can see the world as it is and become agents for change: “The world—no longer something to be described with deceptive words—becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization” (86). Desocializing experiences can debunk Bourdieu’s language myths, allowing people to see class stratification for what it is and whose interests are being served by it.

This was the process, as I wrote in the introduction to this chapter, for Cajuns who have become cultural activists. Their “exile experiences” gave them a desocialized view of what they had previously taken for granted in Cajuns’ status and disappearing culture, inspiring them to quit complying with the hegemonic values that pressured them to code censor (and censor others). In fact, most of these Cajun activists now heavily advocate the public use of Cajun French and CVE, as well as Spanish and other local languages, as one of the most prevalent and audible forms of cultural protest.⁷¹ Though research shows that CVE disappears in relation to level of education, these statistics seem to go out the window in the face of consciousness-raising

⁷¹ Louisiana’s Iberia Parish began efforts in 2011 to erect trilingual public signs (English, French, and Spanish) in recognition of “all three languages as part of Acadiana’s culture” (Shawn Kline, “Spanish becoming ‘just as influential’ as French”).

experiences about prejudice and social inequality, because the greatest determining factor for compliance is the degree to which people have bought into U.S. myths about language, education, and upward mobility.

The process of desocialization was also the catalyst that reversed the shame and other negative attitudes toward Cajun French that Cajuns learned from their punishments after the 1921 French ban. Grace Dupuis (b. 1935), like many other Cajuns, reported that visiting Canada was a life-changing experience for her, one that reshaped her language practices at home and in public. Dupuis was one of the children who was forced to wet her pants because she didn't know how to ask to go to the bathroom in English when she began attending school—what she described as a “total world of disbelief” (SB Archives). She writes that she learned to be ashamed of being Cajun, because “*Cajun* became a nasty word which meant I was nasty.” After visiting Acadian settlements in Canada and using her language in a non-stigmatized way, though, her view of French and her own Cajunness changed: “I now speak French with a great deal of pride because of my visiting Canada and feeling ‘at home.’” Dupuis didn't even need a lesson on linguistics, as Chermie and Scott argue for, just an experience that demonstrated Cajun French has worth in language markets. Dupuis probably didn't articulate it in terms of critical pedagogy or French theory, but she learned that the devaluing of her language in Louisiana had nothing to do with its brokenness or correctness and everything to do with socioeconomic discrimination against it.

Many other Cajuns followed the same path as Dupuis, growing up feeling ashamed of French and then realizing it was something valuable. For a great number of Cajuns, it happened because of military service. Shane Bernard writes in *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* that, though many French-speaking Cajuns report negative experiences in their military service

such as discrimination (often being called “coonass”), culture shock, and linguistic isolation, many others had positive experiences reinforcing their linguistic abilities. Several Cajuns came to be integral as French interpreters during World War II. Robert J. LeBlanc writes, “Many times my radio operators and driver would wonder if I was coming back. My ability to speak French was crucial” (qtd. in Bernard 9). Dudley J. Theriot describes his translating work: “I would ask the French people where some of the Germans were dug in the ground, or the building they were hiding in. [...] They spoke very fast, but after asking them to speak slower I could understand them easily” (qtd. in Bernard 9). Delton J. Menard (who finished high school in 1944) writes that he identified with people from other similarly stigmatized U.S. subcultures and groups, “I had a lot in common with the Spanish speaking soldiers, because most of them had an accent and of course the people from Georgia and especially the Yankees from the Bronx” (SB Archives, letter). As a result of these positive experiences with their first languages, which they had previously suppressed in most cases, many Cajuns began to see Cajun French in a different light; they became proud of their French, and they quit code censoring. Allen Simon (b. 1937), who writes that he encountered Cajuns all over Lafayette who denied speaking French for their jobs, explains that it was his military service in Europe that changed his own habit of code censoring: “I was embarrassed until I left for the service. I wish somebody would have told me a long time ago, ‘It’s ok; it’s all right!’ But I had to pass my twenty-second birthday before I found out that there was nothing wrong [with speaking French], and in Europe, if you speak one language, *you’re* the oddball!” (SB Archives, letter). Like Dupuis, these Cajuns reconceived Cajun French in terms of its linguistic function, which varies by context, instead of its assigned class status. With a broader perspective as a result of desocializing experiences, they were able to distance

themselves from the discrimination associated with the language and quit code censoring, in spite of Cajuns' overwhelming movement to censor Cajun French at the time.

The experiences above relate to Cajun French, but there have also been similar changes in view regarding CVE. As part of my survey, I asked Cajun teachers who reported that their attitudes had changed about Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) what had brought about the change with the questions, "Are there any defining moments that have shaped your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features? Explain" and "Has your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features changed since you were a child? Describe." Four of the ten Cajuns responded by describing times they began to feel more positive toward their own and others' marks of Cajunness (other Cajuns responded by describing their attitudes but not with examples). Like the stories of the French speakers, it was desocializing experiences that led them to change their views on language. Two report that it was a change in location or community:

Living outside of the state, I was struck with the dullness of standard English.

Greater exposure to the cultural absence that marks English in other parts of the nation has resulted in a greater sense of pride.

As I entered college and adulthood, I gained a new respect for my culture, accent and all.

For some it was traveling and experiencing new things; for another it was learning actual principles of linguistics in contrast to the myths of "broken" English and illiteracy circulating in the hegemony:

Studying linguistics and learning more about dialects have made me regret my intentional loss of much of my dialect and accent. The older I get, the less I "look

down” on those features that I worked so hard to get out of my speech, [and] the more I wish I hadn’t done so.

The fourth respondent writes about feeling more linguistic pride after studying Cajun culture in the UL Lafayette Cajun Studies program, where he or she would have studied under Barry Ancelet, Carl Brasseaux, and/or some of the other Cajun scholars who had desocializing “exile experiences” and became activists:

Getting a degree with a specialization in Louisiana folklore certainly helped to shape my attitude. The above-mentioned degree helped to strengthen the pride that I already had in my Cajun heritage, including [CVE] linguistic features.

In this last case, the desocializing experiences of a few resulted in the institutionalization of a new degree at UL Lafayette that has helped this respondent—and most likely many others Cajuns (and non-Cajuns)—to see past the myths that win their complicity with class inequality. In the other reports, people who previously thought they deserved lower grades and income because of their linguistic “inferiority” realized that they were just experiencing discrimination. Again, these desocializing experiences didn’t make everything equal; they just debunked the myths that hide the function of linguistic inequality in the U.S. socioeconomy.

Though minority and working class speakers often undergo the most extensive normalization and are therefore the most resistant to progressive standards, conscientization can change the perceptions even of people who are staunchly mainstreamed, like I was. Many activists for language and class equality already recognize this principle and dedicate their time to creating and improving pedagogies and policies designed to raise this kind of consciousness. Institutionalizing programs that conscientize is effective, as in the case of the survey respondent I quoted above who studied in the Cajun Studies program and came to have a new

understanding of Cajun culture and language. I also agree with Cherie when she argues that teachers need to be educated about language varieties and language change (Smitherman and others also argue for this). That way, even if teachers continue to teach code censoring, they teach their students that it's explicitly because of U.S. structural inequalities, not because of minority and working class groups' inferiority. And as long as they're teaching code censoring, I agree with Delpit that they should be very explicit about it. But schools exist to normalize, so it would be difficult for teachers to do much more than teach the required curriculum critically (without being fired). I suggest that much stricter laws and regulations of corporations, banning or at least heavily discouraging their offshoring practices and exploitation of workers, will spur drastic changes in the educational system, since schools are explicitly tied to labor training. More equality in jobs will mean more equality in schooling. Meanwhile, there are effective and meaningful ways to teach to current standards critically, as I explained in chapter four, particularly with a combination of Shor's critical pedagogy and Canagarajah's code meshing. In addition to the work of these theorists, I propose that one important way to raise the consciousness of people who find themselves in an unequal language market but are beyond the reach of pedagogy is through what Bourdieu writes is the *other* most important institution for normalizing the legitimate language: the family.

La Famille

In the same way that language activists are attempting to reverse institutionalized linguisticism by rewriting policies and pedagogies, I propose reversing its normalization in families. Bourdieu writes that "the two principal factors of production of the legitimate competence [are] the family and the educational system" (62). This is consonant with the experiences of Cajuns in my parents' generation and my generation who grew up with intense

language normalization at *home* instead of school. Many Cajuns in my parents' generation are monolingual English speakers because their own parents (my grandparents' generation) were deliberate about censoring Cajun French at home to protect their children from experiencing linguistic normalization in school (after their own terrible experiences). As I've demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the experience of language loss among Cajuns was always intimately tied to family practices, experiences, stories, and knowledges.

Cajuns in my own generation, as my survey results confirm, have few negative educational experiences regarding CVE to speak of. Experiences can differ by parish and family, but the responses to my question, "Have you ever been corrected for Cajun features in your speech/writing by a teacher? If so, how did your teacher handle it? Was it effective, in your opinion?" indicated overwhelmingly that they didn't experience or don't remember experiencing linguistic normalization at school:

no

I have never been corrected for this.

No.

If so, it happened too long ago for me to recall.

Never

No.

Nope.

Two report having experienced normalization in school, but only one seems to have been surprised by it. The response below indicates that the respondent wasn't prepared for CVE prejudice before entering school:

Yes, when I was younger I was corrected for these things. At first, I think I was angry. Then, I was embarrassed. After I learned not to speak this way, I then learned to not speak this way around that teacher and to code switch for school/home.

The respondent above probably hadn't been taught about the stigma of CVE at home, but the next respondent comments very minimally, possibly indicating that he or she had no emotional responses to correction at school because correction was expected. He or she writes simply:

Not since high school.

One respondent explains why he or she wasn't corrected for CVE in school:

I learned very early in life how to filter the Cajun features out of my writing; my mother was very instrumental in this.

This form of normalization was also my experience at home and in school. Though my peers and I continued to learn to distinguish CVE features from standardized English in different encounters (including school sometimes, as well as graduate studies), teachers who embraced code censoring practices (under the name of "code switching") were only reinforcing what we already knew about the status of CVE as a result of values we had learned in our homes. We had already normalized to code censoring, so that any correction we received in school just reinforced the censoring we were already practicing.

So an important place for language activists, Comp/Rhet scholars, and people who have been conscientized to the reality of U.S. hegemony to work to raise consciousness is in their own family networks—nuclear families, extended families, or the close ties that have come to be (or in some cases replace) family.⁷² Freire writes that this is as simple as conversations in everyday situations. Simply negating the myths in dialogue with people is a huge step: “There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis [the interaction of action and reflection producing activism]. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world” (87). There is no need to create any campaigns, programs, or special circumstances to raise consciousness, because “the starting point” for conscientization is, Freire writes, “the present, existential, concrete situation” (95). Dialoguing in everyday encounters is similar to Freire’s “generative pedagogy,” the practice of letting students (who he calls “student-teachers” to stress their equality in the dialogue process) pose the discussion topics—like when someone says that being an English teacher must be a terrible job because everyone is so illiterate. In these encounters, Freire stresses the importance of dialoguing instead of sermonizing, and he requires anyone participating in raising critical consciousness to be humble, loving, and respectful of the other person’s knowledge. Admittedly, being humble, loving, and respectful is not always easy with family members, so the family can be one of the most difficult places to protest hegemony and practice critical pedagogy.

Equally important is putting the topic in desocializing terms to give people an opportunity to think their own thoughts and arrive at their own conclusions instead of repeating the values of hegemony—like the students Shor mentions who came to describe Columbus’s actions in terms of theft and conquest instead of discovery (121). In my own conversations, I’ve

⁷² I want to stress that I’m not connecting this discussion of family with the references to “family values” in many political debates.

found it helpful to draw on people's prior knowledge and opinions of recent debates of the political biases of history textbooks. I've often responded to people's questions about my dissertation with the statement, "The victors wrote the history books, then they went on to write the grammar books." I've seen some great discussions and a good deal of head nodding as people come to see that language standards can serve dominant interests. But, as Freire warns, sloganizing is not enough. It's also helpful to ask people about their own experiences to see if their real experiences match the myths they are often willing to repeat and apply to others. It can be particularly effective to ask people to compare the way one of their family members is judged according to language standards with what they know of the family member—for instance, a brother with poor grades or a parent who speaks nonstandard English. Is that family member unintelligent or lazy or a bad member of society? The end of the conversation is usually something like, "Of course not, but other people will judge him or her that way, so he or she needs to conform." At that point, both members of the dialogue have agreed that language standards are based on discrimination not inherent superiority or inferiority.

The other day, for example, my mother was observing to me that the fax she had received from a local state worker showed that he must not have really paid attention in English class. I responded, yeeeee, but it didn't mean he was any less equipped to do his job well. She thoughtfully asked, "But isn't it true that you can tell—maybe not their character—but you can tell someone's level of education by their language and grammar?" I agreed, of course, because distinctive usages absolutely correlate with level of education, but I asked her about her personal knowledge of speakers of nonstandard Englishes to see if she experientially believed that they can be expected to perform their jobs less well than people with elite usages. Many people would judge the language, accent, and grammar of her husband, the completely Cajun Pat Feucht from

Mamou, as “illiterate” and “uneducated” and definitely unrefined. But he rocks at his job as a commercial tire salesman, which requires enormous levels of language and literacy for every client meeting and all the paperwork that goes along with it. Like I said before, he doesn’t even have to put on a Cajun accent for Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes, but he has been consistently recognized as one of the top salesmen in his industry in Louisiana. Basically, I asked my mother if the myth that people have to learn standardized English and make good grades to be equipped for a good job is true in her experience, and it’s not. So she agreed that there’s probably no reason to expect that state worker with nonstandard grammar to be any less proficient at his job than if he had standard grammar.

An excellent way to teach our students how to do the same thing in their families is Shor’s simple but potentially huge strategy of having students interview members of their family about different topics in class. Though Margaret Mead noted in 1943 that modern education has overwhelmingly served to create discontinuity between familial generations, capitalism has ensured that the family network, particularly in minority and working-class communities, remains strongly intact by reinforcing the network of social supports that enables people to survive on extremely low wages. By economic necessity, families are mini-economic units that operate on the principles of sharing and cooperation, often providing childcare, loans, transportation, meals, and even living arrangements for each other. Capitalism, which is ostensibly based on fair competition and survival of the fittest, is actually based on socialism for the wealthy capitalists who own the means of production (as the bailouts of 2008 and 2009 have clearly shown) and socialism for the workers (through social programs and lingering pre-capitalist family arrangements). Federal neglect of social programs in the past few decades has possibly helped reinforce the strength of the family structure, making it a particularly effective

purveyor of values today. So asking students to dialogue about what they've learned in class with a family member or two, as Shor suggests, is a simple, low-stakes assignment that can potentially introduce counterhegemonic ideas to the other primary institution responsible for normalizing language inequalities, the family.

What I've touched on here regarding organizing families into counterhegemonic movements is only an introduction to what would need to be its own book with chapters exploring things like the social organization of families in the U.S. history; the impact of education and economic changes on families according to class, race/ethnicity, location, and parenting structures (e.g., single parents, same-sex parents, stay-at-home mothers and fathers, adoptive/foster parents, clan-based parenting, and so on); and methods for organizing in families. But that's a dissertation for someone else. In this dissertation, I've examined the self-censoring practices of Cajuns, concluding that it is the compliance of individuals in everyday decisions that constitutes their consent to linguistic and—by extension—socioeconomic inequalities. These individual compliances are multiplied in families and combine to form mass consent, the basis of hegemony. So the *noncompliance* of individuals in everyday situations, especially in social organizations as strong as family units, is also an important factor in creating mass *dissent*.

Conclusion

Before Paw-Paw Jeff died, he read an article I wrote about CVE and language inequalities (“Publishing in the Contact Zone”). “Good God but you smart!” he declared in a voicemail that I listened to at least 16 times before my phone automatically deleted it. I thought it was funny that he assumed I was the smart one, since he was the one who had no training in my field but managed to wade through an entire scholarly article on language issues, just as he had pushed himself as a boy to read all the newspapers passed on from his city cousins before the

family used them for toilet paper. But I loved watching his changing opinions on his Cajunness as I explored my own and shared them with him. Though he was already practically a third parent to me, we grew closer as we desocialized together about the place of Cajuns in the U.S. socioeconomy. Our last conversation was over the phone on an Easter Sunday. He was in the hospital after having major skull surgery from a buildup of several bruises that were putting too much pressure on his brain (from multiple incidents over several years). As GrandmaMona puts it, “Apparently, he wasn’t as hard-headed as we all thought.” I called him from the New Jersey home of my Italian in-laws, who told me to wish him “Buono Pasquale.” He replied with the Cajun “Joyeau Paque” and asked about the baby I was carrying at the time. He would never meet her; he died two months before she was born. I told him I could tell she was Cajun because I always craved Community coffee, a fixture of Cajun households. (Don’t judge me for drinking coffee while pregnant; I was writing a dissertation.) He laughed and replied with his signature “Dat’s grrreat.” I could picture him doing his right hook at the same time. Then, just before he passed the phone back to my mom, he added, “I know you’ll be a great mother.” I told him I hope so.

If assimilation of minority groups requires the complicity of parents in censoring themselves at home, my Italian-American husband and I have chosen to dissent to that practice. I can’t pass on Cajun French to my children, but I do pass on CVE (easy, considering that it has a way of asserting itself in domestic contexts). My husband speaks English meshed with his Calabrese variety of Italian. We jokingly call our home culture “Cajalian,” a combination of Cajun and Italian, as we mesh our languages, cooking, and cultural traditions. Our children will grow up normalized to celebrating Easter with Italian eggloaf while “paquing” eggs⁷³, eating rice

⁷³ “Paquing” eggs (from the French word for Easter “Paque”) is a friendly competition of knocking dyed eggs together to see whose egg is the strongest.

and gravy as much as pasta, and equally familiar with my Cajun “Mais la!” and my husband’s Italian “Aye ye yai, questa qua!” (“this one here”). For us, this linguistic relaxation is not the “hypocorrection” that Bourdieu ascribes to the intellectuals and bourgeoisie, but a rejection of attempts at achieving socioeconomic status through our language practices. Both disillusioned by the Ph.D. and tenure process, the “shadow workload” of committee work and publishing requirements, enormous student debt, and increasing corporatization of higher education, we have made a conscious decision not to pass on to our children the drive for upward mobility that our own parents instilled in us.

Because it’s built into the economy, our children will still pick up on these values from their schooling, from seeing their parents unconsciously code censor in public (it’s hard to undo a lifetime of practice), from hearing their Italian grandparents’ apologies for their own “broken” Italian (Calabrese is a stigmatized dialect in Italy), from media representations of language and prejudice, and so on. Hegemony is constantly asserting itself, so we have to be on the lookout for it. I was working at a café the other day when I was totally annoyed to overhear the “grating” accents of a couple of Italian-American women. I had to acknowledge to myself that my prejudice against their accent is probably just because of the show “Jersey Shore,” which once drove my husband to say, “This show makes me ashamed of my own people.” It’s going to be my turn soon enough with the debut of “Party Down South.” Our hope is that our children will understand these values but not internalize them, that they will be able to maintain a critical distance from them, while internalizing our own home values that are based on cooperation, sharing, and mutual respect.

Appendix A
“Survey on Cajun Vernacular English in Classrooms”
Questions per Page

1.

This anonymous questionnaire is intended to survey English teachers' pedagogical strategies for handling vernacular influence in their classrooms, taking Acadiana as an example. The speech of many people in Cajun areas of Louisiana has distinct features from Cajun French, including accent, vocabulary, grammar, and a preference for story telling over argument. Sylvie Dubois and Deborah Horvath have termed this Cajun Vernacular English (CVE). This is a survey of teachers' strategies when they encounter Cajun features in students' English language use.

This survey is done over the Internet using a drop down box and short answer format and should take about 15 - 20 minutes to complete. Please read the confidentiality agreement below, and click if you agree to participate:

1. I have freely chosen to participate in Nichole Stanford's voluntary, anonymous research survey designed to provide information about teachers' pedagogical strategies when they encounter Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) in classrooms. I agree to permit Nichole Stanford to obtain, use and disclose the information provided as described below.
2. I understand that all information is confidential and anonymous. I will not be personally identified in any reports. I agree to complete the "CVE in Classrooms" online survey for research purposes and release the data derived from this survey to be made available for the general public in the forms of public presentations, journals or newspaper articles, and/or in books.
3. I may choose to let Nichole Stanford contact me for further information, but my identity and views will still remain confidential and anonymous. I may also contact Nichole Stanford at any time for any questions related to this survey (nicholestanford@gmail.com).
4. I understand that the online survey involves questions about my teaching experiences in colleges in Cajun areas, my pedagogical strategies for handling Cajun influence in students' language, and my own experiences with CVE. My responses will be stored for a minimum of three years for use in similar research.
5. I understand that my participation in this research survey is totally voluntary, and there are no direct benefits. Declining to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. Choosing not to participate will not affect my employment or professional standing in any way. I am also aware that my consent will not directly benefit me, but will provide data for research regarding vernaculars and pedagogy. If I choose, I may withdraw my participation at any time. I also understand that if I choose to participate, I may decline to answer any question that I am not comfortable answering.
6. By clicking below I freely provide consent and acknowledge my rights as a voluntary, anonymous research participant as outlined above, and I provide consent to Nichole Stanford to use my information in her research.

1. Click below if you consent to participate.

I consent to participate.

2. Participant's Information

1. Universities attended:

2. Degree(s):

3. Specializations:

4. Where are you currently teaching?

5. What classes do you typically teach?

6. Where did you live for most of your early life?

7. Do you code switch (use different ways of speaking/writing for different contexts, for example, family interactions compared with school situations) in either speech or writing?

If so, which codes do you use?

3. Personal Views on Literacy

Please select an option from the drop down box below each question to indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, aren't sure, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. Students should master Standard Edited English in a composition class.

Additional comments:

2. Illiteracy is a big problem in the U.S.

Additional comments:

3. Standard Edited English is correct English.

Additional comments:

4. Nonstandard French constructions in English, such as "get down from the car" and "save the dishes," are incorrect.

Additional comments:

5. The Cajun accent sounds backwards and illiterate.

Additional comments:

6. All vernaculars of English are broken and/or incorrect.

Additional comments:

4. Cajuns' Experiences with Cajun Vernacular English

This page is intended to survey Cajuns' attitudes toward and personal experiences with CVE. If you are not Cajun, you may skip this page and go on to "Pedagogical Strategies Regarding CVE."

1. Do you identify as Cajun? If not, you may skip this page.

- Yes
- No (please click "Next" at the bottom of the page)

Additional comments:

2. I speak Cajun French.

Additional comments:

3. My parents/grandparents were punished for or prohibited from speaking Cajun French in school.

- Yes (please explain below)
- No

Please explain:

4. My parents/grandparents think speaking with Cajun features is illiterate.

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

5. Cajun features in speech (click all that apply).

- I speak English with a Cajun accent.
- I try to filter out Cajun words and accent in professional settings such as teaching, job interviews, and public speaking.
- I am proud of my Cajun accent.
- I am embarrassed when others call attention to nonstandard, Cajun features in my speech (give examples below).
- I don't really have an accent; I speak Standard English

Additional comments:


6. Cajun features in writing (click all that apply):

- I use nonstandard Cajun features in my high-stakes writing (e.g. for a grade or publication).
- I was embarrassed when the nonstandard, Cajun features of my writing were pointed out to me.
- I use nonstandard Cajun features in my low-stakes writing (e.g. personal emails or letters).

7. Have you ever been corrected for Cajuns features in your speech/writing by a teacher? If so, how did your teacher handle it? Was it effective, in your opinion?

8. Are there any defining moments that have shaped your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features? Explain.

**9. Has your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features changed since you were a child?
Describe.**



5. Pedagogical Strategies Regarding CVE

1. I have, or have had, students with Cajun linguistic features.

- Yes
- No (you may skip to #6 below)

Additional comments:

2. Select Cajun linguistic features you have encountered in your students' SPEECH. Some of the following are not necessarily always CVE, but select them if you think they are examples of Cajun Vernacular influence (click all that apply):

- Cajun accent ("clipped" or "flat" vowels, lack of "th" sound, etc.)
- Cajun cadence (sometimes described as more "musical" than Standard English)
- double pronoun usage (e.g. "I don't know, me")
- deleting final consonant (e.g. "las" for "last," "dis" for "disk," "barb" for "barbed")
- dropping linking verbs (e.g. "we leaving")
- using "go" as a linking verb (e.g. "we went eat")
- using French words (e.g. cher, lagniappe, couillion, envie)
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument
- nonstandard French constructions (e.g. "pass a good time," "save the dishes," "make a B+")
- French interrogative constructions (e.g. "you like that, yeah?" and "why you like that?")
- other (please specify)

3. Have you ever addressed any of the above features in your students' SPEECH? If so, please explain.

4. Select Cajun linguistic features you have encountered in your students' WRITING. Some of the following are not necessarily always CVE, but select them if you think they're the result of Cajun Vernacular influence (click all that apply):

- misspellings based on CVE pronunciations (e.g. deleting final consonant, wrong vowel)
- dropping linking verbs (e.g. "we leaving")
- using "go" as a linking verb (e.g. "we went eat")
- using French words (e.g. cher, lagniappe, couillion, envie)
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument
- nonstandard French constructions (e.g. "pass a good time," "save the dishes," "make a B+")
- double pronoun usage (e.g. "I don't know, me")
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument
- French interrogative constructions (e.g. "you like that, yeah?" and "why you like that?")
- other (please specify)

5. Have you ever addressed any of the above in your students' WRITING? If so, explain as thoroughly as possible your pedagogical strategy for dealing with CVE in your students' writing:

6. My pedagogy can best be summed up as:

- eradication (teaching students never to use the vernacular)
- multiculturalism (teaching students to use the vernacular everywhere, including the classroom)
- code switching (teaching students to use Standard Edited English in classrooms and vernaculars at home)
- code meshing (teaching students to use a blend of Standard Edited English and vernacular everywhere, including the classroom)
- other (please specify)

7. I learned my pedagogy for dealing with vernaculars from (click all that apply):

- my own teachers
- my teacher education/certification
- reading literature on the topic
- trial and error
- my parents or other family member
- personal reflection
- other (please specify)

6. Contact Info

Thanks for completing the survey!

Are you willing to be contacted regarding your thoughts, experiences, and opinions? You may choose to remain anonymous, or you may leave your contact information (in which case your responses will remain completely confidential).

1. May I contact you for further information or an interview regarding your thoughts, opinions, and experiences?

- Please do not contact me.
- Yes, you may contact me (name, email and/or phone):

2. Additional thoughts:

You may contact Nichole Stanford with additional thoughts or questions at any time:
nicholestanford@gmail.com

Appendix B
“Survey on Cajun Vernacular English in Classrooms”
Responses per Page

Appendix B reports the responses to all the questions listed in Appendix A. I have assigned a number to each of the 40 respondents who took the survey, so that their additional comments can be identified beneath each question. The responses from the 11 Cajuns are italicized (respondents 1, 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 32). One other respondent (6) also identified as Cajun, but I have not included this one in the Cajun responses, since he or she did not grow up identifying as Cajun or experiencing the prejudices toward Cajuns (he or she reports having “married into” being Cajun). Additionally, while 8, 15, and 33 do not identify as Cajun, they are from the Acadiana area, so their responses are also of interest when it comes to local attitudes.

PAGE 1: Participant’s Information

1-3. Universities attended, Degree(s), Specializations:

	Universities attended:	Degree(s):	Specializations:
1)	<i>Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota; USL, UL Lafayette</i>	<i>BA, MEd, PhD</i>	<i>Cognitive Science</i>
2)	Univerzita J.E. Purkyne, Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic; Emory University, Atlanta, GA	MA, English and Czech PhD, Translation Studies - in progress	translation studies, literary avant-gardes, modern and contemporary American poetry, creative writing
3)	Southern University; Southeastern Oklahoma State University; Mountain State University	BA Liberal Arts - English M. ED Education (concentration in English) MA Interdisciplinary Studies (concentration in Instructional and Curriculum Leadership	English
4)	Kenyon College, Exeter University (England, Junior Year Abroad), Naropa University	MFA, Prose, & BA English/Creative Writing	Creative Writing
5)	Virginia Commonwealth University	B.A. in English (2000) and M.F.A. in Creative Writing	Fiction, Technical Communications
6)	University of Louisiana Lafayette, Northwestern State University, McNeese State University, University of New Orleans	M.A.	English--Rhetoric/Comp
7)	Samford, LSU	M.A., ABD in History	English, History

		and Reading Education	
8)	University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University	Honors Baccalaureate in English M.A. in English	Renaissance Studies Rhetoric Pop Culture Texts
9)	UNC Chapel Hill, The New School for Social Research	B.A., M.A.	Literature
10)	<i>University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University</i>	<i>ULL, BA, 2005; LSU, MA, 2008; Working on PhD at LSU</i>	<i>BA: English and Spanish, History Minor; MA: English, Comparative Literature Minor; PhD: Renaissance Literature and British Women Writers</i>
11)	Louisiana State University	PhD	Adolescent Literature, Horror Fiction, Gender Studies
12)	University of New Hampshire, Clark University, Louisiana State University	B.A., M.A., PhD (abd)	Literature (critical theory, American and British 20th century novels and film)
13)	University of Louisiana at Lafayette, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, MN	M.Ed. (English instruction, adults)	Critical thinking; teaching across disciplines
14)	<i>UL Lafayette</i>	<i>M.A. Rhet/Comp, B.A. English</i>	<i>Freshman Writing, Grammar, ESL, Pop culture, Moving Media</i>
15)	La Tech University. Our Lady of Holy Cross College, University of New Orleans, USL	Bachelor--Tech Master's--USL Post graduate work in Library Science--the other 2 colleges	Reading Specialist
16)	Centenary College of Louisiana, Cerro Coso Community College, Universite de Mons-Hainaut, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Mcneese State University, University of Colorado at Boulder, Louisiana State University	BA Interdisciplinary Language and Literature MA Comparative Literature MA Teaching, Secondary Level	French, Spanish, Francophone Vietnamese Literature, Writing
17)	<i>Louisiana State University Eunice Louisiana State University Baton Rouge University of Louisiana at Lafayette</i>	<i>B.A. English M.Ed. Secondary Education M.A. English Ph.D. English</i>	<i>American Literature Creative Writing (Fiction)</i>
18)	<i>The University of Louisiana at Lafayette</i>	<i>Bachelor's in Mass Communications Master's in English</i>	<i>Bachelor's in Mass Communications specialization print</i>

		<i>with a specialization in Folklore</i>	<i>journalism Master's in English with a specialization in Folklore</i>
19)	<i>University of Louisiana-Lafayette Texas A&M University</i>	<i>Honors BA in English MA in English PhD in English</i>	<i>Irish Drama Cajun/Louisiana Literature</i>
20)	<i>University of Louisiana at Lafayette Western Kentucky University-Bowling Green, KY</i>	<i>BA MAE</i>	<i>Secondary Education British/American Literature</i>
21)	<i>University of South Florida, Ph.D. Colorado State University, M.A. California Univ. of PA, B.A.</i>	<i>Ph.D., M.A., B.A.</i>	<i>Creative Writing; Honors</i>
22)	<i>Southern Methodist University UT Austin UT Dallas</i>	<i>BA Liberal Arts MA and PhD Arts and Humanities Literary Studies</i>	<i>Virtual Rhetorics Evolution and Literature Twentieth-Century Theatre Theory</i>
23)	<i>St. Joseph Seminary College, Louisiana State University, McNeese State University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, University of Texas at Dallas</i>	<i>B.A. in English, McNeese St. M.A. in English, McNeese St. M.F.A. in Creative Writing, McNeese St. Ph.D. in Humanities (Studies in Literature), UT-Dallas</i>	<i>poetry and poetics, playwriting and theatrical performance, American and European Modernism, 19th and 20th century European intellectual history, antisemitism, Ezra Pound</i>
24)	<i>UL Lafayette</i>	<i>BS Secondary Education MED Curriculum- Minor English</i>	<i>English Mathematics</i>
25)	<i>Austin Community College, AAS New England College, BA University of Northern AZ, MA University of Louisiana at Lafayette</i>	<i>AAS, BA, MA, currently ABD for PhD</i>	<i>19th century literature in French and English and Cajun and French folklore</i>
26)	<i>University of Louisiana Lafayette</i>	<i>BA--English, BA--History, MA--English</i>	
27)	<i>University of California, San Diego, Northwestern State University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette</i>	<i>B.A., M.A., PhD (in progress)</i>	<i>Folklore and American Literature</i>
28)	<i>Trinity University, University of York, University of Louisiana at Lafayette</i>	<i>B.A. English M.A. Renaissance Literature Doctoral Candidate, ABD, Rhetoric and Composition</i>	<i>Rhetoric and Composition, Renaissance Literature, Folklore</i>
29)	<i>U of North Alabama, U of</i>	<i>B.A. M.A. Ph.D.</i>	<i>Rhetoric, feminist theory</i>

	Tennessee (Knoxville) U of Minnesota		
30)	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	B.A. and M.A.	English
31)	New Mexico State University – Carlsbad, Eastern New Mexico University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Associate of Arts Bachelor of Science - English & History Master of Arts - English PhD - English (in progress)	sci-fi; creative writing; rhetoric
32)	<i>ULL</i>	<i>BA in English MA in English</i>	<i>Renaissance English Lit</i>
33)	Southwestern Louisiana Institute, University of Southwestern Louisiana, University of Louisiana @ Lafayette	BME(Voice) - bachelor of music education; MED Master of Education with emphasis in English; Specialist in Reading Education	Reading, Teaching children to read, and teaching content for interpretation and understanding; English: Grammar, History/Linguistics, Modern American Literature, Black Literature.
34)	University of South Florida, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Manatee Community College, Florida State University	MA in English MA in International Affairs BA English BA Women's Studies AS Film and Media Studies	Victorian and Women's Literature
35)	Webster College (now Webster University) St. Louis Community College at Meramec (non-degree seeking student) University of Arkansas at Fayetteville	B.A. Child Study M.F.A. Creative Writing (Poetry)	Creative Writing (Poetry) Composition 16th Century Poetry and Prose (Shakespeare, etc.)
36)	Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH	B.A., M.A., Ph.D.	Modern and contemporary American poetry and creative writing.
37)	University of North Carolina at Wilmington, University of Florida	BA, MA, PhD	Modernism, Narrative Theory, Film and New Media
38)	Colby-Sawyer College, Fitchburg State College, University of Louisiana at Lafayette	BA, MA, Ph.D in progress	Folklore, British Victorian lit, Early American lit, Children's lit,
39)	Warren Wilson College, College of Charleston, University of Louisiana at	Masters. Working on PhD.	African American Literature.

	Lafayette		
40)		Master's in Literature	

4. Where are you currently teaching?

- 1) *UL*
- 2) instructor at Department of English, LSU
- 3) retired but currently teaching adjunct classes at South Louisiana Community College
- 4) Louisiana State University
- 5) LSU
- 6) English composition
- 7) LSU
- 8) Louisiana State University
- 9) LSU
- 10) *LSU*
- 11) Advanced Comp (Environmental Writing), Gender and Popular Culture, American Literature 1865 to present
- 12) Composition First and Second Year
- 13) South Louisiana Community College
- 14) *Freshman writing courses, developmental English, Advanced Writing in the Academy*
- 15) SLCC--New Iberia
- 16) Church Point High School, Louisiana State University at Eunice
- 17) *Louisiana State University Eunice*
- 18) *Louisiana State University -Eunice*
- 19) *South Louisiana Community College*
- 20) *Dual Enrollment, AP, English IV*
- 21) Louisiana State University-Eunice
- 22) Louisiana State University Eunice
- 23) *Louisiana State University Eunice*
- 24) *English 1001 online, English 1002 online*
- 25) University of Louisiana at Lafayette South Louisiana Community College
- 26) *Composition and Rhetoric, Composition and Critical Thought*
- 27) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 28) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 29) U of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 30) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 31) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 32) *ULL*
- 33) U.L. of Lafayette
- 34) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 35) ULL
- 36) UL
- 37) UL-Lafayette
- 38) Lafayette LA
- 39) University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- 40) University of Louisiana Lafayette

5. What classes do you typically teach?
- 1) *Grammar, Linguistics, Honors Freshman English*
 - 2) English Composition 1001 and 2000
 - 3) Developmental English English 1010 English 1020 Sophomore levels
 - 4) Freshman/Sophomore English Composition, Sophomore-level English literature
 - 5) I teach Freshman and Sophomore Composition and a variety of engineering courses as a non-grading instructor
 - 6) College freshman composition
 - 7) E1001, E2000
 - 8) Basic composition and argument, occasionally fiction or major British authors.
 - 9) Composition 1000 and 2000
 - 10) *English 1001 or 2000 (writing courses). I have also taught Major British Authors, Drama, Shakespeare, and Images of Women. I will be teaching Images of Women again this summer.*
 - 11) Advanced Comp, Adolescent Literature, Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, Horror Fiction, Business Writing, Technical Writing, Zombie Fiction, and various survey courses
 - 12) Composition
 - 13) English 1010, 1020
 - 14) *Freshman writing courses, developmental English, Advanced Writing in the Academy*
 - 15) REading and Engl 92
 - 16) French I, French II, English IV, Advanced Placement English IV, Dual Enrollment English IV, Remedial English 001, English Composition 1001, English Literature 1002
 - 17) *Freshman Composition English American Literature*
 - 18) *composition literature*
 - 19) *English 092 English 1010*
 - 20) *Dual Enrollment English IV*
 - 21) English Composition I and II, Honors Classical Literature, Classical Mythology and Folklore, Survey of English Literature from 1798 to the Present, Honors Seminar III
 - 22) ENGL 1001, 1002, 1003 (Honors), 0001 (Developmental) , 2007 (Introduction to Writing Poetry), but have taught others
 - 23) *ENGL 1001 - Freshman Composition*
 - 24) *English 0001, English 1001, and English 1002*
 - 25) Freshman and sophomore English, American and British Literature, Advanced Rhetoric and Exposition (junior & senior level)
 - 26) *development courses, composition courses, and literature courses*
 - 27) First Year College Writing
 - 28) Freshman Composition, Advanced Composition and Technical Writing
 - 29) English 101, English 102, graduate-level courses
 - 30) ENGL 101, 102, 205, 206, 304, 360, 365. Respectively, Intro to College Writing, Research and Composition, Early and Late American Lit., Vocabulary Development, Advanced Composition, and Technical Writing.
 - 31) Freshmen English composition and Freshmen English Research
 - 32) *Freshman Comp, Advanced Comp, British Lit I*
 - 33) Usually English 101, very seldom 102

- 34) Developmental English Composition (102 usually) 200-Level Surveys (American Lit I, British Lit II, Novel and Short Story, Poetry, Drama) Humanities Survey
- 35) 102, 293
- 36) 115, 214, 319, 496, 580, other seminar-level classes
- 37) Graduate Seminars, Sophomore Surveys, Upper-Division Special Topics Courses, Freshman (Honors) English
- 38) First Year writing courses (Eng 101, Eng 102), Early American Lit, British Lit, Advanced writing.
- 39) 101 and 102
- 40) Eng 102, 101, American Lit

6. Where did you live for most of your early life?

- 1) *southwest Louisiana*
- 2) Czech Republic
- 3) Franklin, LA
- 4) Southern California
- 5) Tennessee and Virginia
- 6) Southeast Louisiana (New Orleans area)
- 7) LA, AL, MS
- 8) Lafayette, LA
- 9) North Carolina
- 10) *Born and raised in Lafayette, Louisiana until I moved to Baton Rouge in 2005. I go home once or twice a month.*
- 11) outside of Chicago near Gary, Indiana
- 12) Massachusetts and Rhode Island
- 13) Brooklyn/Long Island, New York
- 14) *South La., baby! Originally from Crowley, La.*
- 15) ACADIANA
- 16) Sierra Nevada Desert, rural California
- 17) *Lawtell, Louisiana*
- 18) *Lafayette, LA*
- 19) *Acadia Parish Louisiana*
- 20) *rural South Louisiana*
- 21) South Louisiana
- 22) Pennsylvania
- 23) *Dallas, TX*
- 24) *Raceland, Louisiana*
- 25) Wabash Valley in Southern Indiana
- 26) *A very small, rural town within the geographical and cultural area identified as Acadiana*
- 27) Southern California
- 28) Houston, Texas
- 29) Florence, AL
- 30) New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Manila, Hong Kong, Honolulu, Sausalito, and back to New Orleans from 2nd grade until the end of high school.
- 31) New Mexico

- 32) *Acadiana*
- 33) In Carencro, Louisiana, middle of Cajun Country, I spoke French before English, I have taught many Cajun students in Music and in Language Arts classrooms.
- 34) St. Louis and environs
- 35) Florida
- 36) Wyoming, Ohio
- 37) North Carolina
- 38) New Hampshire.
- 39) England and then South Carolina
- 40) Midwest

7. Do you code switch (use different ways of speaking/writing for different contexts, for example, family interactions compared with school situations) in either speech or writing? If so, which codes do you use?

- 1) *Yes.*
- 2) Standard English colloquial English (with some Southern vocabulary)
- 3) Yes. I mainly use correct grammar; however, outside of my immediate family, I may code switch just a bit in speech. I never code in writing.
- 4) Yes: different slang, political ideas, pop culture references, tone, etc.
- 5) Yes, I can converse in multiple registers: formal for presentations and other professional contexts, semi-formal for classroom interactions and day-to-day dealings, and downright goofy southern twang for friends and family.
- 6) casual, formal academic
- 7) No
- 8) Slightly, but despite coming from a heavily Cajun area, my schools were mostly inner city, and my parents do not use much colloquial language (outside of the familiar "y'all" and a few distinct phrases). My brother (schooled on the more Cajun outskirts of Lafayette) code switches noticeably between SAE and CVE, however. He uses CVE primarily with coworkers in the oil field and shipping industries and SAE at home and elsewhere.
- 9) Not really
- 10) *Although my family thinks that I speak "proper English," I know that I will use some slang or contractions like "aint" when talking with family.*
- 11) constantly. I use academic speech in situations where I need to assert my authority and sound professional. I use southern speech patterns with friends and neighbors and in less formal situations, I use northern speech in medium formal situations and when I am among my relatives from the north who mock me for speaking like a southerner (can't help it as I have been here since 1978).
- 12) Yes. Academic and provincial New England accent shifts between professional/academic and personal situations.
- 13) No.
- 14) *Absolutely. I use Academic discourse, sometimes informal, with my students, and some Cajun vernacular does come up from time to time, but at home I curse alot more and also French Cajun expressions (for cursing and otherwise lol)*

- 15) Not sure what you mean. Sometimes but try not switch from the Standard Edited English to the vernacular. Probably do it more with family and home. Try real hard not do it in a classroom. This I feel would be confusing to the students.
- 16) yes, Spanish at home with mom, English everywhere else
- 17) *Speech--I say "Ya'll" instead of "you" when I'm with family. Also "gonna" instead of "going to."*
- 18) *Yes. Cajun English dialect to Standard English*
- 19) *[unanswered]*
- 20) *Yes, most definitely. I even wrote a paper on code switching in my undergraduate journalism studies*
- 21) Yes. Formal English in the classroom and in general workplace situations. A mix of formal, informal, and slang with colleagues I'm closer to. Informal, slang, and CVE including French phrases at home and with select friends and family.
- 22) No
- 23) *I'm not sure I understand the question. I use whatever code is appropriate to the rhetorical situation.*
- 24) *At school I speak more formally than I do at home. I grew up in South Louisiana, so I have to be careful not to let things like "ya'll" slip in while I am teaching.*
- 25) Yes. Hoosier, Southern and Cajun.
- 26) *Very much so; my speech is much more polished and Anglicized when addressing my students, whereas my familial speech is peppered with various Cajun-French phrases and pronunciations. Some terms that I would not typically use in a classroom setting that I do use with family are "ain't", double-negatives, "cher", "beb"/"bebe", and other common Cajun-French terms.*
- 27) No
- 28) Of course. I am from a mixed black and white family, so I use more African-ethnic language with my black family and more white-southern vernacular with my white family. Both families are lower-middle class, so I speak differently with them than I do with my colleagues at work.
- 29) no
- 30) I attempt to make no distinction between academic and situational speech because it is readily understood that I am an English instructor and hold myself to a "beyond the spoken" treatment of language. For family interaction my diction tends to run the gamut from high to low brow, so as to keep understanding to a premium but, at the same time, not forsake my educational background for the sake of belonging.
- 31) Yes; family interactions and my accent (Texas twang); school situations and grammar
- 32) *Yes - friends, family, and academic*
- 33) Yes, I do. I often speak to my family and friends in French. Whatever works. In government, shopping, driving, and other basic communications, I speak the language of the person to whom I am speaking. I definitely "dumb down" my writing for people who can't read or write very well.
- 34) Formal and Less Formal (For family, I care less about grammar and use more slang expressions/speech short cuts). In the classroom I speak more formally, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.
- 35) Yes. I use text speak and some southern slang while around friends/family.
- 36) No

- 37) Sure. Outside of simple levels of formality, I speak something of a relic dialect with my close relatives from coastal North Carolina (see Walt Wolfram's work on the Outer Banks dialect for an example).
- 38) Yes. Formal and informal English, depending on the situation.
- 39) No.
- 40) NO

PAGE 2: Personal Views of Literacy

1. Students should master Standard Edited English in a composition class.

Strongly agree 56.4% (22)

Somewhat agree 35.9% (14)

Not sure 2.6% (1)

Somewhat disagree 5.1% (2)

Strongly disagree 0.0% (0)

Additional comments:

- 3) They must learn the difference between academic writing and less formal options.
- 4) Actually, I don't have a strong interest in "standard edited English," as long as their tone/voice is appropriate to the audience and makes a strong point. Strong writing is important, but grammar/spelling can always be adjusted through peer editing. If a student's ideas and voice are strong, grammar/spelling are secondary, and I expect them to master that in high school, or at least have a basic
- 5) We should privilege critical thinking over language use. Use of "proper English" is overrated in some academic circles, IMHO. (Note the use of a different code.)
- 8) I believe that in spoken language we can be less exacting, but in writing, where we generally lack the immediacy of spoken dialogue, it's important to avoid extremely colloquial language or phrasing that might not make sense or be misconstrued by people unfamiliar with the vernacular. This is far more true for professional and academic writing, however.
- 9) I think it's important for them to learn to speak at that register but I don't want them to feel like they have to abandon their own form of speaking.
- 11) Students need to master Standard English in composition classes and in other courses because they will be judged later if they have not acquired this mastery.
- 13) Industry requires its workers to communicate in Standard English
- 15) The student needs to know standard edited English for writing purposes. May not need it as much in the speaking.
- 17) *"Master" may be a strong word. As long as they know the difference b/w informal and standard English, I am happy.*
- 23) *Students should at least attain competence: clear, precise, and organized communication of basic ideas and information presented with minimum errors.*
- 25) The professional world can be a cruel place to those who do not conform to Standard English, and since many people from Louisiana are often judged harshly based solely on their geographical background, they may have even more difficulty proving themselves to be intelligent, thoughtful individuals. Poor language and composition skills will only hinder those aiming to be part of a larger corporate or academic community.
- 26) *Needed for business and commerce. How they talk is fine in any register if they can carry on life skills, but standard written English is a must.*
- 28) Students should be able to recognize Standard Edited English and participate in those conversations with competency, not mastery.
- 30) There is a clear distinction between written and spoken language and a composition class is the primary location for them to understand and practice this distinction. If not in this type of setting, then where?

- 32) *"master" is too strong of a term, they should be competent in it.*
- 34) Grammar is something that can be worked on throughout life. I do not think that a student should fail because of some problems, though they might not receive a high grade for the course. In other words, there are exceptions, in my opinion.
- 40) The composition class has a goal to help students move forward. Mastery is setting students up for failure.

2. Illiteracy is a big problem in the U.S.

- Strongly agree** 48.7% (19)
- Somewhat agree 28.2% (11)
- Not sure 12.8% (5)
- Somewhat disagree 10.3% (4)
- Strongly disagree 0.0% (0)

Comments:

- 3) Because we are mainly a verbal society, speakers are unaware that a difference exists between the written and spoken word.
- 5) I have taught at a variety of institutions of higher ed, and I have seen brilliant students, but I have also seen students who didn't know how to punctuate a sentence. In college. What did the work of the non-college-bound students from those neighborhoods look like?
- 8) I don't think we have as much outright illiteracy as unfamiliarity. This shows most often in poor spelling and simple grammar errors. Students aren't retaining what they are taught in elementary school.
- 11) I have been at LSU since the days when we were an open admissions institution, and I taught many remedial courses. Several of the kids in those classes were functionally illiterate. We have this problem today in the public schools. A friend of mine is a high school reading coach. And there are a number of jobs at community colleges for people who can teach students how to read, so apparently students everywhere are graduating from high school unable to adequately read.
- 13) Among some immigrants who have not spoken the language for 7 years or more
- 15) Students have problems writing and they do NOT read. Some think that the texting they do constitutes good writing because it is carrying over into writing of essays, paragraphs, etc.
- 17) *Based on the freshmen at my university, I would say that 5% are functionally illiterate, and that is only the young people who try to attend college--many more never go beyond high school.*
- 23) *it's impossible to make such a claim because the term "illiteracy" lacks a precise definition. I believe most people are capable of reading and writing, but the degree and effectiveness of these skills varies greatly. Furthermore, the purposes to which these skills are applied ought to be taken into consideration. For example, though most politicians are literate (and most likely to a higher degree than average), when the basic expectations of a freshman composition class are applied to it, much political rhetoric can only be called "illiterate."*
- 25) Many people may know how to read words, but the comprehension level and vocabulary of many individuals is far below par.

- 26) *Especially here--as much experience in and out of school has shown.*
- 28) Any illiteracy in a nation as developed and wealthy as the U.S. is a major problem.
- 30) Semi-literacy is almost worse than complete illiteracy because at least the illiterate do not make a pretense of understanding what they read instead of actually understanding what they read. As King says, "Lukewarm indifference is worse than outright and vociferous rejection." This semi-literacy is the academic equivalent of going through the motions with a noticeable lack of substance. This is the struggle that most composition teachers are fighting because, yes, the students are in college, therefore display at least a modicum of literacy, but the real issue is to take that semi-literacy and mold it into constructive literacy, not just the bare minimum of literacy required to "pass", which is a misnomer because it doesn't prepare them for the very non-pass/fail-oriented real world.
- 32) *Too many cell phones and too much mindless entertainment (music, tv, film)*
- 40) I don't feel students are illiterate, unprepared would be a better term.

3. Standard Edited English is correct English.

- Strongly agree 20.5% (8)
 Somewhat agree 17.9% (7)
 Not sure 23.1% (9)
Somewhat disagree 25.6% (10)
 Strongly disagree 12.8% (5)

Additional Comments:

- 2) but it's not the only correct way to speak or write English.
- 4) I don't find such generalizations useful.
- 5) It depends on audience, purpose, and conventional expectations. All rhetoric is situational.
- 8) I believe SEE or SAE is the "standard" that the professional world generally demands for upwardly mobile employees. Vernaculars are just as "correct" in their context, but American society demands a uniform language for upper levels of business and academia, and that language happens to be SAE. A student who masters SAE has a wider range of options for employment than one who does not.
- 11) There is no correct English. However, I recognize the value in our having a common version of the English language that we use to communicate in professional situations, and students need to learn to be competent in this English. Students from the south really need to master this English as their speech patterns (and writing patterns) can cause them to be judged as less intelligent than their northern counterparts.
- 12) It is correct in a formal sense ... but not in a cultural sense.
- 15) Not necessary
- 18) *This is entirely dependent upon the context. In some settings, standard English is preferred and advantageous. In others, it is not necessary.*
- 19) *"Correct" is a dicey word. It is the correct English for business, academics, etc. but as far as the correct English for home use, that can and does vary.*
- 23) *The point is not whether it is correct, but whether one's ignorance of it will limit one's future. In other words, the question is not one of correctness, but of preceptions and expectations over which academia has very little control.*
- 25) I'm not familiar with Standard Edited English.

- 26) *There is no such thing as "correct" or "perfect" English, but in written English standard form is preferred for Business and commerce.*
- 28) "Correctness" has been in debate far too long to speak with any certainty now. "Correct" for me is ultimately a judgement claim, the value/assessment of which usually depends on ones audience. However, it is also a power issue with the people in power determining which usages are "correct." So, there is some practical sense to the claim that Standard Edited English is the (hegemonic) "correct" version.
- 30) Once the distinction between spoken and written language is explained, spoken is indicated as more "open" and nearly infinitely improvisable compared to written language, which is infinitely revisable and adheres to conventions of formality. Insofar as this caveat is concerned, these are the "correct" parameters of language usage. I eschew the purist/absolutist notion of language purity, unlike the French proper.
- 34) There are many Englishes, as I tell my students. You may not need all of them. But you need to know how and when to use Standard Edited English (usually for workplace situations and school).
- 35) I do believe in using different ways to communicate in different situations. Writing a perfect text message, for instance, seems a bit over the top.
- 36) Question does not make sense without defining "correct." I take it that you're looking for prejudices of participants. Not a good question.
- 37) I reject the premise of this question, as I understand it.
- 38) Standard Edited English is the language of the academy. In the context of a college classroom it is the expected language. Outside of this context, such as spoken English, other forms of English are acceptable.
- 40) Different genres require different language choices. To tell students that all writing must follow Standard Edited English is a disservice to the students. Teaching them to analyze the writing situation and determine what is appropriate will serve them in and beyond the University.

4. Nonstandard French constructions in English, such as "get down from the car" and "save the dishes," are incorrect.

- Strongly agree 5.1% (2)
- Somewhat agree 23.1% (9)
- Not sure 15.4% (6)
- Somewhat disagree 23.1% (9)
- Strongly disagree 33.3% (13)**

Additional comments:

- 3) In informal conversations, these may be acceptable.
- 4) They are regional dialects/slang and I find them endearing. At the same time, I discourage all students from using regionalisms in formal academic papers because of the chance it may alienate the reader. In other words, if they reference something the reader doesn't understand, then the reader is left out in the cold. But such phrases, as above, would be wonderful for more creative/narrative/personal essay types of writing because of how they contribute to tone/voice.
- 5) "Incorrect" implies a single set of criteria for all rhetorical situations. See above for comment on that.

- 8) As stated previously, these are phrases that are "incorrect" for SAE but are perfectly correct given the linguistic development of CVE. French constructions are no less correct than English constructions--they just bear a different historical and cultural context.
- 13) I do not know what those constructions are. I do hear, however, omissions of certain verbs [Where she at?]
- 15) If you are not from the area and have not grown up with this, then you might think the person saying it is not smart, but this may not be the case.
- 16) I think we should maintain Cajunisms...the French is dying so we need to keep any heritage we have left.
- 17) *They are incorrect in the professional world.*
- 18) *Again, context is everything. See answer for #3 above.*
- 19) *They aren't incorrect, they're local and in many cases, they are literal translations from French. Losing the local vernacular isn't necessary. Learning to code switch, well that's another matter.*
- 21) Again, I refer to my point above. Also, since "get down from the car" is the only way I know to indicate exiting an automobile, I'm not sure I'm the right person to be asked this question.
- 22) They are, perhaps, translations from the French or just have long term old Southern connections; "get down" pertains to the horse and buggy days, for instance; students can rephrase such points or put quotations around them to show their recognition of the local color phrases.
- 23) *In what context?*
- 24) *They are fine when speaking, but they are not okay in writing.*
- 25) Truthfully, I have always used the term "get down" when referring to exiting a vehicle. My mother has fought the use of this term my whole life. Finally, as an adult, I researched the origin of the phrase and found that it dates back to carriage days when people physically had to descend from, or "get down from" the carriage. I hold that some of these terms, while possibly antiquated and not always correct, do have interesting origins, even if they are outdated. (P.S.--I'm very short, so I really do have to "get down from" most vehicles.)
- 26) *Simple local Cajun English is clearly understood here, but will not be understood as well if the person moves to another region.*
- 30) It illuminated Twain's vernacular characters and gave them a "realness" or verisimilitude that would have been lost had the diction/dialogue been sanitized or "made proper." In this context, nonstandard French constructions keep the mother language in its "sponge-like" state that keeps it vital and ever-adapting to differing cultural treatments.
- 32) *Like most issues, it's a matter of context. If those lines succeed in communicating information between two people who both understand them, then they're acceptable in such a context and are correct. If they fail to do so in a different context, then they are incorrect.*
- 34) Depends on context
- 36) Ditto. Be direct with questions. It's beginning to sound like you have an agenda and are not after objective discovery.
- 37) Wouldn't be appropriate in what you're referring to as SEE.
- 38) It depends on the context. Spoken and informal situations, these phrases are acceptable. In academic writing they are not.

40) See comment above.

5. The Cajun accent sounds backwards and illiterate.

Strongly agree 0.0% (0)

Somewhat agree 7.7% (3)

Not sure 17.9% (7)

Somewhat disagree 25.6% (10)

Strongly disagree 48.7% (19)

Comments:

4) I enjoy regional dialects of all types and find them fascinating.

5) It doesn't make a good impression in all situations, but no accent does that I know of.

8) In the same way that AAVE is often accused of sounding "backwards and illiterate," so is CVE. I've grown up with SAE, and I'm a strong supporter of proper grammar and conjugation, so at times I feel myself resistant to CVE constructions and conjugations, but just because a culture speaks a certain way doesn't make them stupid or illiterate.

13) Here no. Elsewhere, maybe.

15) Some persons who have advanced degrees have that accent but it does not make them backwards or illiterate.

16) I think we need to protect our language and lifestyle

17) *It's not the accent that sounds backwards and illiterate--many educated Cajuns sound "Cajun" but speak almost perfect English. The reason some people think a Cajun accent sounds illiterate is because there are too many illiterate (or uneducated) Cajuns. However, the accent itself does not sound backwards or illiterate. To me, that would be like assuming anyone with an Irish accent was backwards and illiterate--which is certainly not true.*

18) *To which Cajun accent are you referring? There isn't only one Cajun accent. Additionally, you need to clarify if you are referring to Cajun accented English or Cajun accented French. And in what context?*

19) *The Cajun accent is part of what makes this area of Louisiana distinct and interesting.*

21) This is a matter of perspective. I don't think anyone would vote for a presidential candidate who had one.

23) *It merely sounds French, but once you have lived with them for a long time, it is no longer evident to you.*

25) I am certainly biased because I grew up surrounded by Cajun accents, but it can sound very beautiful, especially when the speaker uses many French terms throughout their speech. On the other hand, having "learned" how a "proper" accent should sound, some Cajun accents can make the speaker sound a bit uneducated

26) *But it does say "country" doesn't it?*

30) Maybe to the ignorant.

32) *How can an accent alone be backwards or illiterate? It seems that it would only be through mistaken association that this could occur.*

34) I personally enjoy the local color aspects of it, but I do know that many people would consider it backwards and illiterate (and when used in certain contexts, it could actually create an impression of illiteracy for more than just the individual speaker).

- 35) However, I do have a hard time understanding it. For instance, when a student said "around" once, I heard "Ryan" and was very confused.
- 36) Here's where I get off.
- 37) This question is not phrased well.
- 38) The media has considerable influence on the way accents are perceived. For instance, the Disney Film The Princess and the Frog portrays those with Cajun accent as backwards an illiterate. However, this perception is not necessarily accurate, simply commonly reinforced.
- 40) I think this is the perception of many.

6. All vernaculars of English are broken and/or incorrect.

Strongly agree 0.0% (0)
 Somewhat agree 23.7% (9)
 Not sure 15.8% (6)
 Somewhat disagree 21.1% (8)
Strongly disagree 39.5% (15)

Additional comments:

- 5) Only if you like living atop an ivory tower.
- 8) No one speaks SAE the exact same way, and I don't think anyone should. Language evolves, and part of the way it does that is through vernacular diversity. Plus, cultural diversity is what makes language so interesting. Accents are the same way. But I do think that we need to be able to code switch well enough to communicate across vernaculars, and the easiest way to do that is an accepted "standard" form of English.
- 16) Regional dialects are important parts of American culture!
- 23) *These questions are beginning to reveal an agenda that is more political than scientific.*
- 25) If the standard is not being spoken or written 100% precisely, then it would serve to reason that all vernaculars are somewhat incorrect.
- 26) *If you can carry on your life in it, it is fine. If it gets in the way of that, it must be modified for success.*
- 30) Regionalism clearly illustrates that there are varying treatments of the mother language based on locale, personality types, and cultural history. It is a main theme on which to creatively embellish. Again, these vernaculars are "real" manifestations of the language and should not be derided because of it.
- 32) *See above comments about context.*
- 35) Some vernaculars are actually more regular in their constructions than Standard English.
- 37) Neither is this one.
- 38) Again, the perception of vernacular is influenced by the way media presents it. This can be traced back to the construction of characters who speak in vernacular. Compare the Artful Dodger with Oliver Twist. As the protagonist, Oliver speaks in Standard English; his foil, The Artful Dodger speaks in the vernacular, which symbolizes his character.
- 40) Again, I think we overlook the value of the vernacular. Is the use of the vernacular appropriate in my History 101 research paper on World War II, no. Was it appropriate in Twain's "Jumping Frog," I would argue yes.

PAGE 3: Cajuns' Experiences with Cajun Vernacular English

1. Do you identify as Cajun? If not, you may skip this page.

Yes 36.4% (12)

No (please click "Next" at the bottom of the page) 63.6% (21)

16) (No.) I moved here to raise my children in a french-speaking environment.

17) *Both of my parents are Cajun.*

23) *My father grew up in Rayne during the Depression. He did not speak English until he began attending school.*

24) *My mom was a Boudreaux!*

32) *Both of my parents are from Acadiana. My father's family was part of the second generation of French immigrants who came to the area after Le Grand Dérangement and intermarried with the original Cajuns.*

2. I speak Cajun French.

Not at all. 26.7% (4)

A little. 46.7% (7)

I don't speak it, but I understand a lot. 13.3% (2)

I am fluent. 13.3% (2)

Additional comments:

10) *My grandparents spoke/speak Cajun French. One aunt speaks it, and another understands. Otherwise, it hasn't been passed down.*

17) *My parents never taught me, nor did they speak to me in French, because they were punished for speaking French when they were in school.*

23) *My father never taught me French, but he was very insistent that I speak English correctly.*

26) *I understand a significant amount, and I can say several words and short phrases.*

32) *I picked up a little from working with my father at his business when I was younger as he spoke it with his friends and customers who were locals.*

3. My parents/grandparents were punished for or prohibited from speaking Cajun French in school.

Yes (please explain below) 71.4% (10)

No 28.6% (4)

Additional comments:

1) *My mother was required to see a speech therapist and was punished (spanked) for speaking French.*

10) *I remember my maternal grandmother talking about her elementary school experiences. She and other students would get paddled/punished for speaking in French in the classroom.*

14) *And so was I! Although I began kindergarten in the early 80s, I spoke fluent Cajun French at that age and was disciplined for using it in school.*

16) not from here

- 17) *My father, who was in grade school in the 1940's, told me that he and his brother would be "put on their knees" by teachers who heard them speaking French.*
- 18) *My father claims that this was not the case, but I am inclined to think he was for reasons too difficult to elaborate on here.*
- 20) *Not that I'm aware of*
- 23) *My father was forbidden to speak French in school. He was punished if he uttered one word in French.*
- 24) *My mom's grandparents were punished if they spoke Cajun French at school.*
- 26) *My paternal grandfather was made to kneel on rice for speaking Cajun-French.*
- 32) *My father (who was born in 1938) was punished for speaking it, but (at least in his case) it was not as severe as some stories made it out to be.*

4. My parents/grandparents think speaking with Cajun features is illiterate.

Yes 0.0% (0)

No 66.7% (10)

Other (please specify) 33.3% (5)

Additional comments (responses to "Other"):

- 14) *To some degree, my parents' generation (early 50s now) was indoctrinated to thinking Cajun was "bad" and it wasn't good to be different so they never used it in the home when I was growing up although my grandparents sure did, especially when fighting and/or cursing.*
- 16) not applicable
- 19) *This is too complex an issue for a blanket Yes/No answer. First off, what are "Cajun features?" Second, are you referring to "Cajun features" in French or English? This survey also needs to account for regional variation. Within this culture, the language (let's use French in this example) of one community is sometimes judged "better" than the French of other communities. As an example, many individuals consider the French of the Henderson/Cecilia area to be inferior to the French of the Opelousas/Eunice area. Others do not make such distinctions.*
- 23) *It would depend on the features and the social context.*
- 39) They haven't really been exposed to it.

5. Cajun features in speech (click all that apply).

I speak English with a Cajun accent. 20.0% (3)

I try to filter out Cajun words and accent in professional settings such as teaching, job interviews, and public speaking. 46.7% (7)

I am proud of my Cajun accent. 40.0% (6)

I am embarrassed when others call attention to nonstandard, Cajun features in my speech (give examples below). 0.0% (0)

I don't really have an accent; I speak Standard English. 53.3% (8)

Sometimes I exaggerate my Cajun accent. 20.0% (3)

Additional comments:

- 16) I have worked hard for it!

- 18) *For the most part I speak Standard English but at home with my family, I do have a Cajun accent and this is fine.*
- 32) *I filter my word selection when it would not generally be understood - in an academic setting, with non-local professionals. I don't turn off the accent, though it's not strong in the first place and generally understandable to non-locals.*

6. Cajun features in writing (click all that apply):

I use nonstandard Cajun features in my high-stakes writing (e.g. for a grade or publication). 0.0% (0)

I was embarrassed when the nonstandard, Cajun features of my writing were pointed out to me. 0.0% (0)

I use nonstandard Cajun features in my low-stakes writing (e.g. personal emails or letters). 100.0% (7)

7. Have you ever been corrected for Cajun features in your speech/writing by a teacher? If so, how did your teacher handle it? Was it effective, in your opinion?

1) *Not since high school.*

4) no

6) No

10) *I have never been corrected for this.*

14) No.

18) *If so, it happened too long ago for me to recall.*

19) *Yes, when I was younger I was corrected for these things. At first, I think I was angry. Then, I was embarrassed. After I learned not to speak this way, I then learned to not speak this way around that teacher and to code switch for school/home.*

20) Never

24) No.

26) *I learned very early in life how to filter the Cajun features out of my writing; my mother was very instrumental in this.*

32) *Nope.*

8. Are there any defining moments that have shaped your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features? Explain.

1) *Studying linguistics and learning more about dialect have made me regret my intentional loss of much of my dialect and accent.*

4) no

6) *I am not a native Cajun speaker--I acquired Cajun French conversational skills as an adult. I was drawn to the language first by hearing and enjoying traditional Cajun folk music.*

14) *Times when I realized someone didn't know what I was talking about because they weren't from here.*

17) *When I entered college, my freshman year, I realized that most professionals (in this case, my professors) pronounced the "th" sound, and I often did not. I remember hearing myself say, "I'm going to da store," and thinking, "My professors would never say 'da store'." That's when I really began to force myself to remove "Cajun-speak" from my writing and speaking.*

- 18) *Living outside of the state, I was struck with the dullness of standard English.*
- 19) *Getting a degree with a specialization in Louisiana folklore certainly helped to shape my attitude.*
- 24) *No.*
- 26) *Throughout school, engaging in extracurricular activities that often involved public speaking made me acutely aware of how Cajun accents affected attitudes toward those speakers. Many people believe that the Cajun accent sounds unintelligent and uneducated, so I fought to develop a more "Anglicized" accent, especially in professional and public matters. My personal attitude toward the accent and features of the Cajun language is still one of pride, but I do recognize the stigma associated with those features.*
- 32) *Nothing specific.*
9. Has your attitude toward Cajun linguistic features changed since you were a child? Describe.
- 1) *The older I get, the less I "look down" on those features that I worked so hard to get out of my speech, the more I wish I hadn't done so.*
- 4) *not really*
- 14) *Yes, I am more proud of it now as an adult than when I was a child.*
- 17) *I was never embarrassed, really, but my Cajun accent. And as I grow older, I am more and more proud of it. I'm just careful to keep some of the "Cajun slang" in check when I'm in a professional setting.*
- 18) *Yes. Greater exposure to the cultural absence that marks English in other parts of the nation has resulted in a greater sense of pride. But, again, this question is too vague. What is a "Cajun linguistic feature?"*
- 19) *The above-mentioned degree helped to strengthen the pride that I already had in my Cajun heritage, including these linguistic features.*
- 24) *Since becoming a teacher of composition, I am more careful when writing.*
- 26) *As a child, I didn't realize that the accent was different; I was living within a society that consisted of nothing but Cajun accents. As I became a young adult, I did become a bit more ashamed of my accent and those of my family members, but only because I was learning that people associated that accent with a lack of intelligence. As I entered college and adulthood, I gained a new respect for my culture, accent and all. Although I do speak differently given the situation and company, I am very proud of my heritage, and the accent is a huge part of that.*
- 32) *Nope. I've always been proud of it and have suffered no persecution because of it.*

PAGE 4: Pedagogical Strategies Regarding CVE

1. I have, or have had, students with Cajun linguistic features.

Yes 91.7% (33)

No (you may skip to #6 below) 8.3% (3)

Additional comments:

- 8) I have not had distinctly Cajun students, but I do have friends with whom I've discussed some of these elements, particularly the ones that seem to linger after code switching to SAE/SEE.
- 9) I'm not familiar enough with Cajun English to know
- 10) *Since I teach at LSU and most LSU undergraduates are from Louisiana, I have taught many students who speak with a "cajun" accent. There are also many from New Orleans who have that accent.*
- 14) *Mon dieu! I do teach in south LA.*
- 16) these students teach me more about rural Louisiana than any book!!!
- 17) *I teach in Acadiana, so I get Cajun students every semester, some of whom have thick accents and use lots of Cajun vernacular.*
- 19) *As much as I know what you mean by a "Cajun linguistic feature," I'll answer yes.*
- 25) And some very bright ones too.

2. Select Cajun linguistic features you have encountered in your students' SPEECH. Some of the following are not necessarily always CVE, but select them if you think they are examples of Cajun Vernacular influence (click all that apply):

- **Cajun accent ("clipped" or "flat" vowels, lack of "th" sound, etc.)** 88.2% (30)
- Cajun cadence (sometimes described as more "musical" than Standard English) 73.5% (25)
- double pronoun usage (e.g. "I don't know, me") 58.8% (20)
- deleting final consonant (e.g. "las" for "last," "dis" for "disk," "barb" for "barbed") 70.6% (24)
- dropping linking verbs (e.g. "we leaving") 79.4% (27)
- using "go" as a linking verb (e.g. "we went eat") 70.6% (24)
- using French words (e.g. cher, lagniappe, couillion, envie) 64.7% (22)
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument 52.9% (18)
- nonstandard French constructions (e.g. "pass a good time," "save the dishes," "make a B+") 55.9% (19)
- French interrogative constructions (e.g. "you like that, yeah?" and "why you like that?") 58.8% (20)
- other (please specify) 14.7% (5)

Additional comments (responses to "Other"):

- 3) I'm going to prom. I don't want you to fuss me. or Don't fuss me.
- 8) One of the most common elements of CVE I see is "axe" instead of "ask." Several people I know from Cajun families (or who started school in more Cajun districts) bear very little evidence of it in their speech except for this. Also, outside of Cajun society, this pronunciation tends to be corrected by ridicule, taking the pronunciation as a literal "axe."

- 29) I've heard a lot of students and teachers use "y'all" in a sort of French construction, with a dropped possessive, like "get out y'all books" or "get in y'all groups"
- 34) See previous
- 37) How is "make a B+" a French construction? Do you mean as opposed to "earn?" This is not a Gallicism, I don't think. I'm also not sure on what basis you're making the distinction between story-telling and argument.

3. Have you ever addressed any of the above features in your students' SPEECH? If so, please explain.

- 1) *NO*
- 3) Only sometimes
- 4) No.
- 5) I address all accents in presentations and lessons covering speaking styles in technical and professional presentations.
- 6) I frequently point CVE features out because the students usually don't realize the uniqueness of their idiom. I never represent their idiom as being sub-standard or incorrect.
- 7) No, Working on writing is challenging enough
- 10) *No, I haven't.*
- 13) I encourage them to use their language verbally, but caution them that when they write, they need to treat (CVE) as they would a second language, because they will be expected to write in Standard English on their jobs.
- 14) *Not really. If so, it was only to have open dialogue, with a pedagogical aim.*
- 15) I have only had one or two students who did this, but it has not been recently. Most of the students who are of Cajun background have not learned to speak the language and neither have their parents.
- 17) *I often point out that South Louisiana speakers will drop the linking verb when we cover verbs. Also, we talk about how South Louisiana speakers might end a declarative statement with "for true?"--For example, "He got into a car accident, for true?"*
- 18) *I don't teach speech.*
- 19) *No because my job is teaching writing, not speaking. If I see that it carries over into the writing, then we discuss it and we do discuss code switching. The proper places to use the proper language. But, lately this has been more often because of subject-verb agreement problems among my African American students.*
- 20) *This happens most often during whole group discussion. Today, students "catch themselves" and are aware they are using nonstandard English.*
- 21) No--only in their writing...
- 22) No.
- 24) *No*
- 25) I have explained the validity of spoken CVE and also explained "code switching" as when the language changes, for example, if a group of young men are talking and Grandma or the priest walks up; we can all, and most of us, do switch codes without even thinking about it. I encourage conscious code-switching into more formal written English and do not correct CVE in class, as it is a normal given.
- 27) *No*
- 29) no

- 31) No.
- 32) *only in writing*
- 34) No.
- 35) I ask questions when I don't understand.
- 37) No.
- 38) No. In speech I accept their language as is.
- 39) No.

4. Select Cajun linguistic features you have encountered in your students' WRITING. Some of the following are not necessarily always CVE, but select them if you think they're the result of Cajun Vernacular influence (click all that apply):

- misspellings based on CVE pronunciations (e.g. deleting final consonant, wrong vowel) 44.4% (12)
- **dropping linking verbs (e.g. "we leaving")** 55.6% (15)
- using "go" as a linking verb (e.g. "we went eat") 51.9% (14)
- using French words (e.g. cher, lagniappe, couillion, envie) 37.0% (10)
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument 51.9% (14)
- nonstandard French constructions (e.g. "pass a good time," "save the dishes," "make a B+") 48.1% (13)
- double pronoun usage (e.g. "I don't know, me") 25.9% (7)
- a preference for story telling over logic or argument 25.9% (7)
- French interrogative constructions (e.g. "you like that, yeah?" and "why you like that?") 18.5% (5)
- other (please specify) 11.1% (3)

Comments (responses to "Other"):

- 13) where he at? We arrived to; And then add to all of these unique patterns, the new tendency to text in the essay. (So you could invent text language for unique linguistic features -- just as easily as you can for Standard English features.)
- 19) *It would be a logical jump to connect writing errors such as these to "Cajun linguistic features." Many--if not most--of the same issues were present in students I've taught in Texas and Missouri.*
- 25) Much black English constructions of verb to be used in black English.

5. Have you ever addressed any of the above in your students' WRITING? If so, explain as thoroughly as possible your pedagogical strategy for dealing with CVE in your students' writing:

- 1) *It's no different than what I do for students who have other dialects, explicitly point out the difference between the grammar of the dialect and the grammar of the Standard dialect and ask that they use the Standard in writing.*
- 3) I provide examples of correct options; however, since many of these are the result of family background and regionalism, not much changes. There are some students who wish to excel in their writing, so they work harder are affecting a change.
- 4) For the most part, many French Cajun words (like lagniappe), I consider so integrated into everyday speech that they are no longer even slang, for readers/academics in South Louisiana. If anything, as an outsider, I had to learn some of them just to participate in normal conversation, so I was the one adapting my speech for this community. I have

encouraged particularities in speech for some assignments, like personal essay/narrative/profile, because it helps establish character and forces students to pay attention to language use.

- 5) Usually, the students correct the issues themselves in peer response groups focused on editing.
- 6) I frequently point CVE features out because many students don't realize the uniqueness of their idiom or usage. I never represent their vernacular as sub-standard or incorrect--The school system did enough of that two generations ago, greatly aiding and abetting the demise of the language and, in some ways, the culture. Actually, I would never demean speakers of any regional or ethnic dialect, including BVE or the Southern U.S. Scotch-Irish, but I do explain to students the reasons for appreciating their language, for understanding levels of usage, and for adapting usage to a variety of audiences.
- 7) Yes, Try to explain street vs formal in language
- 10) *I have not seen this as much in student writing. More often, I see standard grammar and punctuation mistakes.*
- 11) I don't see the CVE problems in my students writing, or I do so rarely. However, several of the things you have identified as characteristic of CVE are also things I see in black and white students, particularly from the New Orleans area. Since we have raised our standards substantially at LSU over the past decade, I rarely see these problems in student writing, and when I do, I see them most frequently in the writing of African-American students. I don't really have a strategy for addressing these problems though. I just identify why they are deviations from standard English and tell them to cut it out.
- 13) No strategy. My rubric for all writing is based on the same three standards: Form (the essay proper), Function (carry out the assignment as given), and Use (all mechanics). I use Word's comment feature and make corrections/comments on individual issues in balloons to the right. My explanation will be centered on whichever standard applies -- assuming Standard English
- 14) *Yes, because my job is to teach formal academic english.*
- 15) I have not had any one recently.
- 16) I have included assignments specifically to ALLOW students a creative space to use their colloquialisms and find most do not use them in their formal work.
- 17) *I find the best way is to model the correct grammar/construction for them. I simply re-word their sentence, then they must write it down correctly in their revision. Later, when we have one-on-one conferences, I discuss the error with the student in greater detail.*
- 19) *In what context? As errors, yes. As cultural elements, no.*
- 21) I will mark them and then show them how to say that phrase in standardized English.
- 22) No. They worked in the context they were used.
- 24) *Yes. I simply mark the mistakes without addressing possible reasons for the mistake.*
- 25) I definitely address these issues in students' writing, usually simply by writing "colloquialism" near the error, followed by an explanation of why it doesn't fit Standard English guidelines. Most students don't realize that these features are not commonplace in other vernaculars until they are pointed out to them.
- 26) *See above.*
- 27) No

- 28) I do not address the vernacular in writing unless it adds nothing to the essay being written. I may not have enough knowledge to know when grammatical errors are CVE errors and so may not know that I have corrected these.
- 29) it hasn't been widespread enough for me to really call attention to it. Most students, everywhere I've taught, prefer story telling over argument, and I've always chalked that up to being just an early stage in their intellectual development.
- 31) It has been very limited in my students' writing, even from locals (the bulk of my students). I don't make a big deal out of it as I understand where it's coming from. I simply correct it as it comes up in papers.
- 32) *showing proper useage of Standard American English; discussing the issues of written language and why they need to know the difference.*
- 34) The features I associate with CVE are not ones I usually find in written work, and that's the only place I would deal with it. I never address it when students are speaking to me. There are some items on your list that I do see in writing, but I don't particularly associate those features with CVE (leaving out a verb, for example, or preferring story telling over logic or argument).
- 35) Yes. I usually suggest a more stand usage. I do stress argument over storytelling. However, I do not comment on the use of cajun words, such as lagniappe, in writing. I have not come across the use of "cher" in writing.
- 37) I've never seen any of those issues in students' writing, at least not any that could be tied to CVE specifically.
- 38) I spend a considerable time working on sentence structure, particularly subject verb agreement, and proper verb selection. I also go over how to use foreign words within academic language.
- 39) Yes, I have just written "nonstandard" or explained that one cannot write as one talks.

6. My pedagogy can best be summed up as:

- eradication (teaching students never to use the vernacular) 0.0% (0)
- multiculturalism (teaching students to use the vernacular everywhere, including the classroom) 5.7% (2)
- **code switching (teaching students to use Standard Edited English in classrooms and vernaculars at home) 62.9% (22)**
- code meshing (teaching students to use a blend of Standard Edited English and vernacular everywhere, including the classroom) 11.4% (4)
- other (please specify) 20.0% (7)

Comments (responses to "Other"):

- 4) Multiculturalism (in general) with Code Meshing when necessary
- 8) I work in between code meshing and code switching, encouraging students to consider word choice (in vernaculars and also informal/formal language) based on audience and context/rhetorical situation.
- 11) not sure how to answer this question. I do require that students write in standard English in their formal writing assignments, but since I teach composition, that's my job. I don't, however, make comments about their spoken English usually unless they are giving an oral presentation and honesty, I've not really had problems with students' dialects when they make oral presentations.

- 13) Standard English in their writing; vernaculars wherever else they wish
- 21) Eradication or quotation marks to show their recognition of the phrases, but I only do such correcting as it pertains to writing...
- 37) I believe that teaching what you're calling SEE for writing in composition classes is necessary, though I would call attention to the arbitrary and constructed nature of it while doing so.
- 40) Teaching students to assess when CVE is appropriate.

7. I learned my pedagogy for dealing with vernaculars from (click all that apply):

- my own teachers 58.3% (21)
- my teacher education/certification 30.6% (11)
- reading literature on the topic 36.1% (13)
- trial and error 41.7% (15)
- my parents or other family member 27.8% (10)
- **personal reflection** 72.2% (26)
- other (please specify) 13.9% (5)

Comments (responses to "Other"):

- 6) marrying into the Cajun culture: "If you marry a Cajun, you become a Cajun" :)
- 13) actual classroom experience -- and 30 years of experience in industry before that.
- 21) As it came up in written work...
- 25) I've been here since 1995 and I'm kinda' "Cajunized."
- 38) I spend a lot of time communicating with my students about their needs and expectations for our First Year writing courses. Most students want to learn to use Standard English in their academic papers.

PAGE 5: Contact Info

1. May I contact you for further information or an interview regarding your thoughts, opinions, and experiences?

Yes (27)

No (7)

2. Additional thoughts about the survey:

- 6) I'm happy to see this study. I did a linguistics project on CVE in grad school (years ago) and have always been fascinated by the issues.
- 13) You probably could add a question or two that deals with texting in the vernacular.
- 14) *This was fun! Good luck with your project, you :)*
- 18) *Honestly, I've had less problems with language from my Cajun students and/or because of Cajun vernacular than I have had with current slang vernacular and with my African American students this semester. This could be because I have, I'd say 60% of the class that is African American right now. But I've never really noticed a particularly strong problem with people putting local regional accents/regional speaking into their writing.*
- 19) *This survey seems to need additional refinement. In particular, the blanket assumptions of a homogenized Cajun culture are resulting in problems. There is no, single, Cajun identity or accent. Additionally, any consideration of this area needs to address the influences of Creole French as well.*
- 25) I wish more instructors knew about code switching and do not tell Cajun students that they "speak poor English."
- 32) *Interesting project.*
- 34) Very interesting study. I would like to read it when it is finished--it might help me with my students.
- 36) Any sociology undergraduate would call this a poor instrument.

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