In the ruins of zine pedagogy: a narrative study of teaching with zines

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IN THE RUINS OF ZINE PEDAGOGY:
A NARRATIVE STUDY OF TEACHING WITH ZINES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by
Karin H. deGravelles
B.A., Reed College, 2003
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2009
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For Rainier and Emmett
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Abstract

This study considers the educational significance of zines—small circulation, self-published magazines—by asking how educators who teach with zines encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy. Though the literature on zines and teaching describes many potential benefits, it also describes contradictions and failures, with some researchers even going so far as to claim that “zines do not belong in classrooms” (Guzzetti, Elliott, & Welsch, 2010, p. 71). Through this dissertation, I investigate and complicate these claims by examining the stories and perspectives of teacher/zinesters—educators who teach or have taught with zines in a classroom setting. The project is situated within theories of the public sphere, scholarship on teaching public writing, and existing work on zine pedagogy. Adopting a narrative research design, I collected data in the form of written and telephone interviews with seven teacher/zinesters, their class materials related to zine pedagogy, their own zines, and other documents and media in which they discuss zines or zine pedagogy. I also examined narratives about zines and their history from books, films, articles, and websites published by members of the zine community. My analysis involved coding the teacher/zinester narratives to develop categories and themes, which I triangulated with supporting data.

I found that these teacher/zinesters encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy as an act of making space, publishing, and engaging in conversation. The teacher/zinesters describe zine pedagogy as promising to create space that may not otherwise be
available in school, but must contend with the constraints that school imposes on the “radical” space of zines. Multiple promises of zine pedagogy as publishing were identified by the teacher/zinesters, including publishing as a stage in the writing process, as the creation of a physical product, and as sharing. The teachers/zinester narratives also reflected a view of zine pedagogy as conversation, promising to provide students with a model of writing as conversation, as well as to pull them into conversation through saying “yes” and saying “no.” I interpreted these themes through public sphere theory and the feminist poststructural strategy of the figuration: in this case, a narrative of promise, failure, and ruins.
Chapter One: Introduction

When WordPlay, a local youth writing project, put out a call for volunteers to help groups of teens put together and distribute poetry zines, I knew I wanted to be involved. Though I had never actually created a zine, I remembered the small-circulation, self-published, noncommercial magazines from the zine racks at my subculture-friendly college coffee shop and at the large, independent bookstore I frequented as an undergraduate in Portland, Oregon. Even when I was a high school student and avid teen writer in northern New Jersey, zines were a distant but taken-for-granted part of the landscape; created by friends of friends and people I met at poetry readings or music shows, they always seemed to be around, but I never made much of an effort to read them, and they had little impact on my life. It was only when I received the emailed call for volunteers that I realized I couldn’t remember seeing or knowing of any zines in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

I attended the introductory meeting for potential volunteers more out of enthusiasm for youth publication projects in general than out of a particular interest in zines. The project, it turned out, would involve assisting a teen editorial board in publishing a zine: collecting writing from their peers, selecting and editing, laying out the selected works, and having the finished product copied. Some of the editorial boards would be based at schools with teacher support and some based at the local teen center. The zines would be distributed at teen poetry events that summer. After briefly explaining the project, Anna Hirsch, the project coordinator, handed us folders that
included, among other things, Jacobi’s (2007) article, “The Zine Project: Innovation or Oxymoron?” The article, she told us, would give us some background on zines, on reasons to teach with zines, and on reasons not to. At the time, it seemed like a strange thing for someone looking to recruit volunteers to say.

Zines and Zine Pedagogy

If you look through the collection rapidly outgrowing the bin on my bookshelf, you will find zines that are handwritten, typed on a typewriter, laid out on a computer, in comic form, or, more likely, a combination. They range in size from eight pages and a little bigger than a postage stamp to over a hundred pages or so and the size of “letter” paper. There are spiral bindings, staple bindings, rubber band bindings, sewn bindings, and book bindings. Some zines look like art projects, some pamphlets or newsletters, and some magazines, while some look more like books, and others are books: collections of multiple issues of a single zine or anthologies of selections from different zines. Some have special covers: glossy, colored paper or card-stock, vellum, color-copied, or individually handmade; others are simple copy paper from front to back. My small collection cannot even begin to demonstrate the wide range of zine content, but it includes zines on: food, etymology, particular cities, women’s health, mental health, chronic illness, abuse and trauma, parenting, relationships, roommates, politics, queer and transgender issues, feminism, music, history, travel, particular jobs, other zines, and how to do various things, as well as a number of diary-style “perzines” that record stories from everyday life with no particular content focus.¹ These topics are discussed through stories, essays, interviews, reviews, poems, recipes, drawings, 

¹ See Duncombe (1997) for a taxonomy of zine types, pp. 9, 11, 13.
comics, lists, maps, letters, journal entries, instructions, and found text and images, such as advertisements, old grammar books, or photographs from magazines. Despite the staggering variety evident in even this small collection, most zines share some family resemblance: combinations of handwritten text, typewritten text, and drawings; cut-and-paste layouts; writing in multiple genres; the occasional (or sometimes not occasional) smudges or faint spots of a photocopier; a tendency to approach most topics through the lens of personal experience; and an orientation toward some version of alternative culture or politics, broadly defined.

Through these varied individual artifacts, one can begin to make out the contours of what Duncombe (1997) calls a “strange subterranean world”: networks of zine writers and readers, their motivations, assumptions, and interactions (p. 16). In Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Underground Culture, Duncombe writes:

In an era marked by the rapid centralization of corporate media, zines are independent and localized, coming out of cities, suburbs, and small towns across the USA, assembled on kitchen tables. […] Rejecting the corporate dream of an atomized population broken down into discrete and instrumental target markets, zine writers form networks and forge communities around diverse identities and interests. […] And defining themselves against a society predicated on consumption, zinesters privilege the ethic of DIY, do-it-yourself: make your own culture and stop consuming that which is made for you. (p. 2)

Zines, Duncombe argues, are more than simply a hobby, more than a neutral medium of communication; rather, they are an inherently adversarial form aiming to both critique and provide an alternative to mainstream consumer culture. They are, Duncombe writes, “a political proposal,” the meaning of which is “embedded in the lived experience of alternative culture” (pp. 103, 165). Despite their often intensely personal nature, zines act as a “space for public discussion and the development of public values” (Congdon & Blandy, 2003, p. 45).
What might this unique medium have to offer to educational theory and practice? Literacy theorists Knobel and Lankshear (2002) suggest that “anyone interested in the nature, role, and significance of literacy practices under contemporary conditions has much of value to learn from zines,” though the medium has been all but ignored by educational researchers (p. 164). In recent years, a number of researchers and literacy theorists have examined the educational value of zines through studies of adolescent zinesters (Dutro, Sinor, & Rubinow, 1999; Guzzetti, Campbell, Duke, & Irving, 2003; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Schilt, 2003); descriptions of classroom zine projects and units (Bott, 2002; Cohen, 2004; Congdon & Blandy, 2003, 2005; Fraizer, 1998; Jacobi, 2007; Rallin & Barnard, 2008; Wan, 1999; Williamson, 1994; Yang, 2010), and textual studies of zines (Brouwer, 2005; Buchanan, 2009; Collins, 1999; Comstock, 2001; Harris, 2003; Helmbrecht & Love, 2009; Hodgson, Biebrich, & Moore, 1997; Licona, 2005; Piepmeier, 2008, 2009; Poletti, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Radway, 2001; Regales, 2008; Sinor, 2003). Though the writers who have addressed zines seem to agree that a great deal can be learned from the form and those who practice it, there is still much discussion of what can be learned, who can learn it, and, perhaps most vitally, whether such learning can happen in school. Zine pedagogy, which I define here as reading and creating zines in the classroom, becomes in these works both a radical possibility and an ethical problem, representing both the power to create alternative worlds and the threat of neutralizing that power by containing it within an institutional setting. Knobel and Lankshear go on to state that they are ultimately “unclear about what direct implications zine literacy has for schools” (emphasis original, p. 184); while at times they are optimistic about zine pedagogy’s potential to demonstrate and foster young people’s critical engagement with culture, they are concerned that “zine literacy will become domesticated within the classroom” (p. 184).
Research Questions

As I read Jacobi’s article and others about teaching with zines, I found that reasons to teach with zines, and not to teach with zines, were tied up in the politics of genre, the tension between schools as institutions and zines as anti-institutional forms, and the possibilities, limitations, and risks of public writing in schools. Through these readings and conversations with friends who had taught with zines, my interest began to shift away from my initial question of whether or not zines should be taught in schools and toward a desire to understand the different ways that teachers considered and approached these issues. The space for conversation that Anna opened by including Jacobi’s article in the orientation material for volunteers was one way of acknowledging and negotiating the contradictions of zine pedagogy; other friends took different approaches, through frank discussions with students of what kind of work with zines was and was not possible in the classroom and through devising projects in ways that kept zines out of the reach of grading and assessment, for instance.

The question that guides this dissertation, then, is how educators encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy. Teachers’ approaches to zine pedagogy are intimately tied to the reasons that teachers decide to use zine pedagogy in the first place, to their hopes and goals for teaching with zines. An educator who uses zine pedagogy primarily to generate student interest in multi-genre writing (Bott, 2002), for example, may encounter and approach contradiction differently than one who hopes to engage his or her students in politicized resistance to the conventions of academic writing (Rallin & Barnard, 2008). Similarly, an educator who uses the word “zine” in the classroom referring primarily to zines’ photocopied form may encounter and approach contradiction differently from one who calls on the name “zine” to refer to a specific
medium and its cultural contexts, histories, values, paths of circulation, and so on (recognizing the multiple and contested nature of each of those constructs). Thus, the histories and social contexts of this unique form are also important to answering my research question, as it is through an understanding of zines as more than simply physical forms that contradictions may arise. Finally, broader conversations about how people, particularly students, enact public participation through writing are pertinent to both the history and context of zines and the promises of zine pedagogy. I address my research question and the associated issues I’ve identified through a narrative research method.

Narratives

Curriculum, writes Grumet (1981), “is the collective story we tell our children about our past, our present and our future” (p. 115). Narrative researchers in education have attempted to trace the links between curriculum as story and the autobiographies and life histories of teachers (Munro, 1998; Pinar, 1994; Pinar & Grumet, 1976), teachers’ experiences in classrooms (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987, 1989, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and the cultural narratives and mythologies that shape curriculum (Gough, 1994, 1998; Gough, Alexander, Beavis, Maunder, & Prior, 1991; Gough & Kesson, 1992). The project of narrative inquiry, according to Gough (1994), is to consider educational problems as forms of story, and to “read stories of personal experience within and against the manifold fictions of the world around us” (p. 63).

Following that approach, this dissertation is a story about zines and teaching. More accurately, it’s a lot of stories: the stories of zines’ history and those that zines have to tell about themselves and about the world; stories of teachers’ hopes and
challenges bringing radical forms into institutional spaces; stories of how writing becomes public and how student writing might become public discourse. All of these stories contribute to a narrative understanding of zine pedagogy, its contradictions and complexities, and what lies in its ruins. My narrative approach in this dissertation is to read these stories against two other “fictions”: the poststructural failure of foundations, and the rise and fall of the public sphere. These narratives will guide my analysis of zine pedagogy stories.

Promise, Failure, Ruins

Describing the poststructural failure of teleological history and its claims of universality, Butler (1993) writes, “terms that are understood no longer to fulfill their promise do not for that reason become useless. On the contrary, these very failures become provisional grounds, and new uses are derived from those failures” (emphasis added, p. 6). Drawing on Butler’s work, Lather (2000) asks what it might mean to situate inquiry as a ruin, facing and engaging with the limits and failures of humanism and its methodologies. St. Pierre and Pillow’s (2000b) edited collection Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education extends this metaphor to consider processes of education and methods of educational research in a feminist poststructural context. I am proposing that this metaphor, in the form of a narrative of promise, failure, and ruins, offers a productive way of thinking about the tensions and complexities of zine pedagogy. To investigate the ruins of zine pedagogy is to identify ways that zines might be significant to education through and outside of reading and creating zines in schools. It is also to ask, if we cannot create zines in school, then what can we create? How can we use the “failure” of zine pedagogy as a provisional ground?
I use the notion of “failure” not to state a final evaluation of zine pedagogy or to suggest that teachers who have used zines in the classroom have failed; rather, I believe they have done important work and raised a rich and complex set of issues. Instead, I want to use the metaphor of failure and ruins in a way that does the following: 1.) participates in the feminist poststructural project of “thinking against” the narratives of humanist science (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000a, p. 14), 2.) calls attention to failure as a charged word in educational discussions (student failure, school failure), 3.) is not dismissive—failure is not an endpoint and should not be the end of a conversation, and 4.) engages with Duncombe’s (1997) conclusion about zines and underground culture as a whole: “the underground’s search for authenticity is a failed project” (p. 195).

My sense of what it might mean to work the ruins of zine pedagogy is informed by Ellsworth and Miller’s (1996/2005) notion of “working” in their article on “‘Working Difference’ in Education.” They write:

By “working difference,” we do not mean “working through difference” or “working against conventional notions of difference,” for example. Such constructions suggest a prior difference, with meanings already in place, that is either put to use or replaced by some other oppositional or alternative difference, just as known and static. Rather, “working difference” suggests a constant kneading of categories and separations. (p. 180)

This “working,” Ellsworth and Miller write, is “like the kneading of bread [that] starts a process of transformation of separate elements into something that gives those elements new meaning and uses” (p. 180). In a 2009 lecture at Louisiana State University, Miller suggests that this concept of working provides a way to think about addressing multiple tensions in educational work, not as resolving or abandoning tension but as a kneading and reconfiguring of categories.
I see the narrative structure of promise, failure, and ruins as a type of figuration, a strategy that poststructural feminists have drawn on to create texts that produce thinking, resist interpretive mastery, and surprise and implicate their audiences (Lather, 2000). Rather than “graceful metaphors that provide coherence and unity to contradiction and disjunction,” feminist poststructuralists use figurations as “practices of failure” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000a, p. 14). In the ruins of the humanist / modernist / positivist metaphors that implicitly guide traditional science, such as the universe as a clock, feminist poststructural figurations might be thought of as alternative metaphors that draw attention to their own constructed-ness.

The narrative of promise, failure, and ruins that informs this project emerged from my earlier work on a course project on zines in schools. I found in the literature on teaching zines a field of contradictions: teachers had very real reasons for engaging in zine pedagogy, and yet the concerns identified by some teachers and researchers about bringing zines into classrooms were also compelling. I was unable to resolve this tension, and my attempts to do so made my project take on the one-dimensional quality of a pros and cons list. The metaphor of failure became a way of “working”—or addressing but not attempting to resolve—these contradictions, and it opened up questions other than whether or not zines teachers should bring zines into classrooms. One might argue that proposing “failure” is in fact siding against zine pedagogy, but I would like to pose failure here as the failure of the contradictions of zine pedagogy to be reduced to a clear position—in essence a failure of the question “should we teach with zines?” and a call for different questions about zine pedagogy. Thus, the narrative of promise, failure, and ruins also traces the evolution of my thinking about zine pedagogy. I am interested in what kinds of thinking about zines and education are made possible by this narrative as opposed to a success narrative model of classroom
innovation. However, I emphasize that this is not a narrative of my findings about zine pedagogy; rather I use it in this dissertation as an analytical tool. I recognize that this narrative structure, too, fails; I can only hope its failure is generative.

Public Sphere

Habermas’s (1999) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962, describes the historical emergence of what he calls a bourgeois public sphere in 17th and 18th century Europe, as well as the factors that led to its erosion and decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The public sphere, Habermas argues, was a social realm in which private individuals came together to form publics that debated on issues of common concern, free from coercion by the state. The fall of the public sphere, according to Habermas, was a result of commercialization, the saturation and eventual replacement of public debate by private economic interests.

This narrative of decline, which I describe in greater detail in chapter two, is significant to my project for several reasons. First, zines’ anti-commercialism and critique of corporate media point to a potential alignment between zines’ histories and purposes and Habermas’s narrative of the formation and decline of the public sphere. If the bourgeois public sphere might, as Habermas argued in 1962, form a blueprint for the emergence of future public spheres, then zines might productively be examined as a site for such an emergence. Second, as I discuss in chapter two, many of the theorists who have critiqued Habermas’s account of the public sphere have focused attention on the formations and workings of counterpublics, or publics that understand themselves to be in opposition to mainstream publics (Fraser, 1999; Negt & Kluge, 1993; Warner, 2002). Reading zines as counterpublic discourse, as I do in this dissertation, allows one to be simultaneously attentive to zines’ textual and historical dimensions, considering how the form, content, and distribution of zines contribute to their counterpublic
projects of, in Michael Warner’s (2002) words, transformative, poetic world making. Most scholarly approaches to zines either consider the medium as a type of life-writing, focusing primarily on their textual dimension, or as a type of subcultural production, which can risk “subsum[ing] zinesters under one unifying experience” (Buchanan, 2009, p. 28). Theories of the public sphere enable readings that are specific to individual texts but also more attentive to context than life-writing approaches. Further, we can consider narratives of zine pedagogy in relation to zines’ world-making projects. Finally, as I demonstrate in chapter two, accounts of the public sphere put forward by Habermas and his critics have been called on in the scholarly discourse on teaching public writing, problematizing the idea of an immediately available general public to whom students can write. Accounts of the public sphere thus provide narratives against and within which to read the narratives of zines, zine pedagogy, and the teaching of public writing.

Potential Contribution

The potential educational significance of zines has become a topic of increasing importance in the past fifteen years as teachers, zinesters, and researchers have recognized zines as a powerful medium through which people shape their identities, build communities, and enact public participation in writing. How, some have asked, can this power be utilized in school spaces without, as Jacobi writes, “schooling zines,” or containing their power (Guzzetti et al., 2003; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Jacobi, 2007; Knobel & Lankshear, 2002)? While current published work on zine pedagogy includes theoretical reflections, recommendations, and individual teachers’ accounts of their own practice, this study attempts to gain a broader understanding of zine pedagogy by
analyzing multiple teacher accounts. By documenting teacher accounts of how they negotiate zine pedagogy, its promises, and its contradictions and failures, the study contributes to conversations on zines’ significance to education. Zine pedagogy offers a dynamic site from which to consider how radical or resistant writing practices change and are changed by incorporation into classroom settings.

I document this study both in the form of an academic dissertation and a zine for current and prospective teacher/zinesters. Through this approach, in addition to contributing to academic conversations, I hope to offer a resource to the zine community and to increase dialogue about teaching with zines and related issues.²

Finally, the study contributes to ongoing dialogue in the field of composition studies on teaching public writing. As I discuss in chapter two, the scholarship on teaching public writing has increasingly moved toward recommendations that students direct their writing to specific counterpublics. Zine pedagogy both provides an example of such a practice and illustrates many of the complications that arise when classroom public writing is conceived of as writing to counterpublics. The case of zine pedagogy facilitates an analysis of these complications that could be used to strengthen existing theorizations of teaching public writing.

Chapter Outline

Chapter two reviews relevant literature to situate this project within theories of the public sphere, scholarship on teaching public writing, and existing work on zine pedagogy. Chapter three describes the methods, design, and limitations of this study.

² See “Ethical Considerations” in chapter three for further discussion of the need for such a resource and details of what the zine will entail.
narrative study. Chapter four, “Zines,” discusses the histories, definitions, and politics of zines, further examining zines’ relationships with education. This chapter also makes an argument for reading zines as counterpublic texts. Chapter five, “Teacher/Zinesters,” introduces the seven participants, called “teacher/zinesters,” and provides background information about how they became involved with zines and how they practice zine pedagogy. Chapter six, “Making Space,” examines the teacher/zinesters’ use of spatial metaphors in their narratives, arguing that the teacher/zinesters encounter zine pedagogy as creating a space for writing that may not be otherwise available in school. Chapter seven, “Publishing,” considers how the teacher/zinesters describe their negotiations of zine pedagogy as an act of publication involving a process, material product, and an ideal of sharing. Chapter eight, “Having a Conversation,’” examines zine pedagogy as a conversation emerging from DIY ethics that involves affirmation through accessibility and self-authorization, as well as oppositional “talking back” to mainstream media and consumer culture. In the closing section, I consider the “ruins” of zine pedagogy and of this study, asking what insights the teacher/zinester narratives can offer to thinking about publics and public writing.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

I situate this study in the intersections of three areas of scholarship: theories of the public sphere, teaching public writing, and existing literature on zine pedagogy. In this chapter, I provide context for the study by reviewing the literature in each of these areas in relation to my project. I begin with public sphere theory because of its usefulness for thinking about zines and zine pedagogy as well as its influence on recent scholarship about teaching public writing. In this area, the works of Habermas (1962/1999), Negt and Kluge (1993), Fraser (1992), and Warner (2002), among others, have attempted to understand how people enact public participation through discourse, a question that influences many areas of social life, from how people interact with the state to how texts can contribute to social change. I then move to literature focusing on teaching public writing, and on the possibilities and limitations of public writing in the classroom. This literature has emerged as part of what Mathieu (2005) has called the “public turn” in composition studies, a related set of initiatives that, considered together, represent writing teachers’ increasing interest in making and theorizing meaningful connections between their classrooms and the worlds outside of them. Finally, suggesting that zine pedagogy be read within the context of this public turn, I identify the goals, contradictions, and negotiations of teaching with zines in existing work on the subject as background for my study.
Theorizing the Public Sphere

In 1962, Jürgen Habermas published *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, a work that chronicled the rise and subsequent decline of what he called the bourgeois public sphere, a social realm that mediated between, on the one hand, the private economy and private families, and, on the other, the public authority of the state. In the public sphere, private individuals came together to form publics that debated on issues of common concern. The 17th century French salons and British coffee houses became, Habermas writes, “centers of criticism—literary at first, then also political” (p. 32). The public sphere, according to Habermas, emerged as a forum in which discussion was not only separate from the state, but in principle critical of it; in this forum, “private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority [the state] to legitimate itself before public opinion” (p. 25). Habermas claimed that three institutional criteria characterized all publics: first, publics claimed to disregard status so that debaters encountered each other as peers (Habermas notes that they never actually succeeded in doing this); second, they discussed matters of common concern (in the 17th and 18th centuries, these were areas in which interpretation had previously been dictated by the church or the state); and third, they were inclusive (even exclusive groups saw themselves as part of a larger, inclusive public). Discussions in the public sphere were not singular events but ongoing debates that unfolded over time; in addition to the physical sites of the salons and coffeehouses where these discussions were held, periodicals like the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Guardian* emerged as written manifestations of the public sphere in which discussions about manners and morals took place through essays and letters, extending over multiple weekly issues.
As the press became increasingly commercialized in the late 19th and 20th centuries, though, Habermas argues that the public sphere eroded: “Whereas formerly the press was able to limit itself to the transmission and amplification of the rational-critical debate of private people assembled into a public, now conversely this debate gets shaped by the mass media to begin with” (p. 188). Increasing commercialization of the public sphere led to the practice of public relations, which, Habermas suggests, creates the illusion of deliberation in the public sphere, but aims instead to manufacture consensus and shape public opinion in a manner friendly to privileged private interests. So, for Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere was a feature unique to early capitalism in which people participated in politics through discourse; though this public sphere has all but disappeared in late capitalism, understanding the history of the bourgeois public sphere’s rise and fall could provide a model for future incarnations of the public sphere. Since Habermas’s writing, corporate interests have attained unprecedented influence on public opinion, through advertising, political contributions, and media ownership. Because zine writers envision part of their project as creating a sphere for discussion outside of corporate influence and critiquing that influence, we can consider how zines function in relation to Habermas’s narrative of decline, as a contemporary incarnation of a public sphere.

Habermas’s model of the bourgeois public sphere has been appropriated, expanded on, and challenged by other scholars considering how people participate in public discourse. Theorists Negt and Kluge published one of the first thorough critiques of Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere in 1972, and it was translated into English in 1993, four years after Habermas’s *Structural Transformation* was translated in 1989. In *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, Negt and Kluge suggest that Habermas’s analysis of the public sphere is
wrong on several points. Whereas Habermas blames the decline of the bourgeois public sphere on the increasing influence of private and commercial interests, Negt and Kluge demonstrate that such interests dominated the bourgeois public sphere at its height, and that the bourgeois public sphere was based in the exclusion of those who did not own property. Whereas Habermas envisions a singular, historical public sphere, Negt and Kluge propose a notion of the public sphere as “not unified at all, but rather the aggregate of individual spheres that are only abstractly related,” but each of which exploit the idea of a single public sphere (p. xlvii). Negt and Kluge also propose a proletarian public sphere, which they call “a strategic position that is substantially meshed with the emancipation of the working class” (p. xlv), as a countercultural sphere, in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere. Negt and Kluge emphasize the importance of the language of countercultures: the proletarian public sphere, they write, calls for a “diction close to the people,” a hybridization of political and vernacular language that must develop organically and cannot be imposed by outside sources like writers or intellectuals (p. 273).

Fraser’s (1999) critique of Habermas in “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” has also become so central to discussions of public sphere theory in composition that Habermas is rarely discussed without Fraser’s “rethinking.” In this article, Fraser affirms the usefulness of Habermas’s work to progressive social movements. She argues, however, that in order to theorize the “alternative, postbourgeois conception of the public sphere” which Habermas fails to articulate in Structural Transformation (p. 112), several of his original assumptions must be questioned: first, that democracy can exist without social equality (which Habermas assumes in suggesting that participants in public debate bracket their differences in status to debate as equals). Drawing on feminist research on domination
within deliberation, Fraser notes that the bracketing of social differences usually enforces systems of domination (for instance, one thinks here of the concept of colorblindness). In a society that maintains structural inequality, according to Fraser, debating as peers in a public sphere is not possible. If “participatory parity” demands the elimination of all social and economic inequality, the project within “actually existing democracy,” then, is to “render visible the ways in which social inequality infects formally inclusive public spheres and taints discursive interaction within them” (p. 121). The second of Habermas’s assumptions that Fraser takes issue with is that one public sphere is more democratic than many, that the proliferation of public spheres is a sign of the decline of public life. Instead, she argues for the existence, and importance, of what she calls “subaltern counterpublics,” which she defines as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 123). Third, Fraser critiques Habermas’s criterion that publics discuss matters of common concern. She argues that there is no pre-existing definition of common concern: what is of common concern is decided through discourse. Fraser offers the example of domestic violence as an issue that was once considered to be private but which feminists have worked to make public through debate. Classifications like public and private, Fraser notes, are “frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others” (p. 131). Finally, Fraser addresses Habermas’s assumption that the public sphere must be fully separate from the state. She suggests that we can distinguish between weak publics, which deliberate for the purpose of influencing opinion (as in Habermas’s bourgeois model), and strong publics, which deliberate both to influence opinions and to make decisions (like the board of an organization). A conception of the public sphere that only envisions weak publics, she
suggests, “will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, interpublic coordination, and political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society” (p. 136). Fraser’s critique of Habermas has both reinforced *Structural Transformation* as indispensable to cultural theorists and called into question some of its most important points.

The final public sphere theorist I present here is Warner, whose (2002) *Publics and Counterpublics* continues to theorize this important concept. Though Warner’s relatively recent writing cannot claim the ubiquity of citation of Habermas, Negt and Kluge, and Fraser’s writings on the public sphere, I include him because his focus on counterpublics and textual publics have much to offer discussions of classroom public writing and of zines. Warner foregrounds issues of identity and discourse in his discussion of publics:

> To address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one’s disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology. (p. 10)

One of Warner’s primary contributions to the theorization of the public sphere, and a reason I find him particularly useful in discussing both zines and the teaching of public writing, is his attention to the publics formed through the circulation of texts. Such publics, he argues, are constituted through participation—they come into being by being addressed by a text, and by paying attention. But a single text cannot itself create a public; publics require the “reflexive circulation of discourse” (p. 90), meaning that a text that addresses a public understands itself in relation to a prior discourse and a responding discourse. Whereas Habermas characterized public discourse as rational discussion, or, drawing on Kant, the public use of reason, Warner argues that public
discourse is performative and poetic: “all discourse of performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address.” Thus, he writes, “a public is poetic world making” (p. 114, emphasis added). Where counterpublics differ in this regard from dominant publics is in their hope for their world-making to be transformative.

Negt and Kluge, Fraser, and Warner’s expansions and critiques of Habermas are also relevant to thinking about zines and zine pedagogy. All these accounts consider incarnations of publics following the decline of Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere, and all three examine oppositional publics, or counterpublics, a productive approach to zines with their subcultural roots and rejection of mainstream culture. Negt and Kluge’s attention to the languages of counterpublics and the need for such language to be organic rather than imposed raises questions about the extent to which formal systems of education can be involved in counterpublic writing. Fraser’s discussion of how issues of “common concern” come to be considered as such can inform our thinking about common zine topics or approaches that might initially seem more personal than public, such as body image, mental and physical health, and everyday life. Finally, Warner’s attention to textual publics and characterization of the poetic work of publics offers possibilities for thinking about zines outside the model of rational-critical debate offered by Habermas, allowing us to consider the publicness of zines that do not engage in rational-critical debate. I will return to this issue in a more developed discussion of zines’ history and context in chapter four.

**Teaching Public Writing**

The concept of the public sphere has complicated compositionists’ sense of what it means for writing to be public and ultimately how to teach public writing. In the
concept of the public sphere, Weisser (2002) writes, composition scholars have found both “a useful metaphor for how we might envision writing classrooms and [...] a site in which our students might compose more meaningful and significant work” (p. 23). An increased interest in teaching public writing, and in identifying or creating sites for students’ public writing has, according to Welch (2008), “taken on intensified exigence as teachers find that the venues in which students’ (and our own) arguments might gain a hearing have become noticeably policed and restricted” (pp. 4-5). However, as Isaacs and Jackson (2001) note, the “consistent and even increasing call and rationale for public writing” in composition studies has often failed to “interrogate the complexities inherent in such a practice” (pp. ix-x).

Halloran’s (1982) article, “Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse” is often cited as a key early piece in what has been called composition’s public turn (Weisser, 2002; Wells, 1996), a set of initiatives that includes public writing as well as cultural studies, service-learning, and attention to the public roles of composition scholars (Mathieu, 2005). Halloran argues that public discourse about public problems was the primary focus of the curriculum of 18th century American colleges, but that this focus was lost in the 19th century through, among other shifts, a change in the perceived purpose of colleges from serving community needs to promoting individual advancement. Among the scholars who have taken up Halloran’s call to revive the tradition of public discourse in composition is Wells, whose (1996) article “Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing?” drew on public sphere theory as articulated by Habermas and his critics to consider how writers enter public space. Herzberg (2000), Weisser (2002), Mathieu (2005), and Welch (2008) have all drawn on Wells’s work, making public sphere theory an important theoretical underpinning to discussions of teaching public writing. Thus,
composition studies has not only turned toward the public; it’s turned toward public sphere theory in an attempt to understand how to think about this public.

In reviewing the literature on teaching public writing, I focus here on two issues most relevant to zine pedagogy: defining public writing, which complicates the question of whether or not zines can act as public writing, and the move toward teaching public writing as writing to counterpublics, a move influenced by public sphere theory and one that zine pedagogy might be seen as arising from. Wells’s (1996) question, “what do we want from public writing?” remains a question for composition studies (p. 325). In the work of the public turn, there seem to be three broad bases on which writing is defined as public: circulation, purpose, and topic.

Regarding circulation, Isaacs and Jackson (2001) suggest that writing is public when it is circulated to anyone besides the teacher. Other circulation-based definitions might include writing that is circulated to anyone outside the class, outside the university, or writing that is published (though certainly the case of zines reveals great complexity behind that term, as readership may be 3 or 3,000). According to Warner (2002), publics are relations among strangers – thus for a text to be public, it would need to circulate among indefinite strangers: “a public must be more than a list of one’s friends” (p. 74). But this, too, raises questions as to how potential readers become defined as friends or strangers. Trimbur (2000) argues in “Composition and Circulation of Writing” that systems of circulation have been uninterrogated in the public turn. He suggests that delivery has often been seen as merely technical, but must also be regarded as “ethical and political—a democratic aspiration to devise delivery systems that circulate ideas, information, opinions, and knowledge and thereby expand the public forums in which people can deliberate on the issues of the day” (p. 190). The dominant model of the composition classroom, according to Trimbur, is that of a
middle-class family in which the teacher acts *in loco parentis*, a stand-in parental figure to the student-child. Noting that teachers have turned to “real world” or public writing projects to escape the limitations of the *in loco parentis* model, Trimbur writes, “While these kinds of assignments do begin to address the problem of circulation in interesting ways, they depend nonetheless on a dichotomy between schooled and ‘real’ writing that rejects the private space of the classroom/home in the name of an unproblematical, immediately available public writing” (p. 195). Such projects do not address the question of how to integrate composition with circulation in the writing class because they don’t approach all student writing as ‘real world’ writing with complex systems of circulation. So though public writing may have something to do with circulation, scholars and teachers must be careful not to oversimplify systems of circulation of student writing, “public” or not.

Others have defined public writing primarily through its purpose, its orientation toward change. Christian Weisser (2002) offers this definition:

> Public writing consists of written discourse that attempts to engage an audience of local, regional, or national groups of individuals in order to bring about social change. Such discourse *intends* to be free of any coercive constraints or forms of domination, and it hopes to influence what Habermas calls ‘public opinion.’ (emphasis original, p. 90)

This definition foregrounds the purpose and intention of public writing: to bring about social change through influencing public opinion. Though Weisser mentions audience, it is the audience that the writing “attempts to engage,” saying little about actual circulation. Traditions of writing for or with community partners in service learning or community literacy projects also tend to focus on purpose, such as Mathieu’s (2005) emphasis on hope.
Finally, writing might be considered public in its topics, reflecting Habermas’s insistence on issues of common concern. Halloran’s (1982) discussion of the tradition of teaching rhetoric in 18\textsuperscript{th} century colleges reflects this focus, as do attention to topics in Wells (1996), Herzberg (2000), Eberly (2000), and Mathieu (2005). Here Fraser’s (1999) critique of Habermas is important, though: “common concern” is culturally and discursively constructed and may reflect systems of domination. According to Fraser, we cannot know what topics will be public until we discuss them. Returning to Warner’s (2002) discussion of counterpublics, the boundaries and character of public citizenship in Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere, in which citizenship extends from normalized private family relationships, may be very different from the boundaries and character of public citizenship in counterpublics, in which things considered private in dominant public spheres may take on public significance. Though this may be an argument against dismissing “the personal” in zines, how that “personal” connects to the goals of classroom writing is unclear.

One thing that public turn compositionists have agreed on is the inadequacy of the standard public writing assignment of the letter to the editor of the newspaper as the sole way that public writing is presented in the classroom (Herzberg, 2000; Long, 2008; Weisser, 2002; Wells, 1996). Though such an assignment is public in its circulation, purpose, and topic, scholars have criticized its generalness and artifice. Instead, scholars have emphasized the importance of helping students find more specific venues for their public writing, particularly through counterpublics (Long, 2008; Weisser, 2002; Welch, 2008). Zines circulating among counterpublics approach delivery and circulation as ethical, political, democratic projects. Whatever their content, their approach to delivery and circulation imply a political orientation toward change.
But teaching public writing through engaging in counterpublics involves myriad problems and generally involves three key assumptions about the relationships between classrooms and publics: first, the assumption that students can participate in these counterpublics from the position of students, through requirement; second, the assumption that the purposes of grading and the purposes of social change can be aligned; and third, the assumption that participating in a counterpublic in which, according to Warner (2002), one enters at one’s own risk, is something that a teacher can fairly ask a student to do. It is indeed a risk to ask students to assume and create oppositional identities through counterpublic discourse: much of youth writing, as Hoechsmann and Low (2008) point out, is interpreted through a model of “moral panic” (p. 5). Particularly in this post-Columbine era, students’ oppositional identities may be read in schools as threatening, and even at its most benign, the self-conscious loser identity affirmed in many zines is incompatible with the successful student identities recognized and encouraged in the classroom. At the university level, risk is also assumed by measuring the success of students’ counterpublic work through how much it irritates university administrators, as in the tactical pedagogies that Long (2008) describes and the zine pedagogy Rallin and Barnard (2008) advocate. Though compositionists have worked hard to trouble flat and limiting visions of classroom public writing, like the letter to the editor, they have replaced these visions with a conception of classroom counterpublic writing that has not been fully interrogated. As I demonstrate in the next section, many of the contradictions of zine pedagogy identified in the literature can be seen as extensions of these assumptions about the relationships between classrooms and publics.
Though I am positioning zine pedagogy in relation to conversations about the public sphere and teaching public writing, discussion of zines in education has also emerged from another area of scholarship: recent work considering the out-of-school literacy practices of young people, with attention to how these practices might impact formal education (Hoechsmann & Low, 2008; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Mahiri, 2004b; Weinstein, 2009). Several studies of zines as an out-of-school literacy practice have been conducted by researchers working in the framework of New Literacy Studies, including those by Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow (1999), Knobel and Lankshear (2002), and Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004). On the importance of out-of-school literacy practices to education, theorist Mahiri (2004a) notes that through their engagement with popular culture, youth “both construct and consume personal/cultural meanings, pleasures, and desires that prefigure and inform their engagements with school” (p. 3). While all of these scholars agree that teachers’ practice would be enhanced by understanding the diverse literacy practices their students and other young people engage in and the roles those practices serve in youth lives, whether and how these practices should be incorporated in curriculum is a persistent question. While zine pedagogy might be seen as part of an attempt to connect to students’ out-of-school literacy experiences in classroom spaces, Mahiri (1996) cautions that “the premise that we can build on the lived experiences of students in schools is predicated on the notion that we can actually incorporate their authentic experiences into classrooms” (p. 229). This is a complicated question where zines are concerned: one of the things that makes zine pedagogy attractive is that one can make an “authentic” zine with easily accessible materials and few specialized skills, but zines’ authentic contexts are not so easily reproduced. On the other hand, it’s
important not to create a dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school spaces that, in Hull and Schultz’s words, “relegates all good things to out-of-school contexts and everything repressive to school” (p. 3). Making zines in school may make them seem less “cool,” as the adolescent zinesters interviewed by Guzzetti and Gamboa suggest, but I am not suggesting that zine pedagogy’s contradictions lie in a discrepancy between levels of coolness.

In reviewing the literature on zine pedagogy, I should note I focus only on pieces immediately concerned with teaching zines in formal or informal educational settings. A much broader literature on other aspects of zines exists, including ethnographic studies, textual analyses, and historical studies, much of which I will address in chapter four. Also, I am excluding literature that deals with developing zine collections in school or public libraries, though works such as Bartel’s (2004) *From A to Zine* may include brief sections on pedagogy from a library programming perspective. Literature on zine pedagogy includes eight articles that describe classroom projects and/or offer resources and advice to teachers considering similar projects and three articles that, while not primarily focused on classroom uses of zines, raise important concerns about such uses. Reconsidering the articles focused on classroom practice in light of these concerns allows us to examine the negotiations made in some of these essays in response to the contradictions and complexities of zine pedagogy.

Williamson’s (1994) talk, “Engaging Resistant Writers Through Zines in the Classroom,” at the College Composition and Communication Conference (CCCC) is the earliest reference to teaching with zines that I have located. In the talk, Williamson describes watching her teenage son and his friends struggling with school writing while becoming very involved with zines outside of school. Seeing zines as offering a possibility for engaging students like her son in school, Williamson began talking to
teachers and students about whether they would be receptive to using zines in class and found that students were generally far more receptive than teachers. Though Williams argues that zines offer exciting possibilities, adopting them requires “thinking through some of the very complex political and editorial issues they raise” (para. 14). Williams identifies three key promises of zine pedagogy: “First,” she writes, “zines provide a site for resistance because they offer students a way to contextualize literacy itself as a social and political construct” (para. 15). By exposing the context of reading and writing, including whose interests are and are not represented in mainstream media, zines offer a space to “ask questions which require students to think critically about power relationships between dominant and sub-cultural groups” (para. 15). Second, zines offer students a variety of publishing opportunities, whether through submitting to existing zines or making one’s own. Third, zines offer an opening to the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies.

Since Williamson’s 1994 talk, other educators have described zine projects and endorsed zine pedagogy at levels ranging from elementary schools to graduate school and beyond (Cohen, 2004; Congdon & Blandy, 2003; Wan, 1999). The range of specific applications described by these educators includes college composition (Fraizer, 1998; Rallin & Barnard, 2008; Wan, 1999), high school English (Bott, 2002), elementary education (Cohen, 2004), college art (Congdon & Blandy, 2003), college women’s studies (Wan, 1999), and an upper-division university literacy course with a service learning component (Jacobi, 2007). Though the sites of these educators’ enactments of zine pedagogy vary widely, their articulations of the potential they see in teaching with zines often echo the themes that Williamson introduced. Zines’ ability to generate student enthusiasm for writing by employing forms and contents outside the boundaries of traditional academic writing is an important point for each of these
authors. For Cohen (2004), zines allow for efficient writing instruction because they can incorporate multiple genres and because students enjoy the personal subject matter. Other educators consider the wide variety of topics zines consider and the discussions they enable as factors that make zines promising for classroom use: Congdon and Blandy (2003) list “gender roles, religion, familial relationships, politics, sexual orientation, the environment, academic disciplines, the arts, class structure, ethnicity, generational differences, economics, and pop culture” as a few of the topics “celebrated, skewered, deconstructed, reconstructed, and illuminated by zinesters” (p. 45). For Congdon and Blandy, teaching with zines is a way for students to learn about postmodern discourse.

Other educators have highlighted the social and political dimensions of zines. Many zines are associated with left of center political causes, such as anarchism, feminism, and environmentalism, but conservative and even reactionary zines do exist. Progressive educators have turned toward zines not only for content, however, but in recognition of the political implications of their systems of creation and distribution. For Fraizer (1998), zines in the classroom can upset the hierarchical relationship between student writing and expert writing, teaching students that possible contexts for writing do not always “set the writing of a high-status group against a low-status group,” as classrooms so often do by creating a divide between student and expert writing (p. 19). Jacobi (2007) argues that a zine project implemented through a service-learning model can democratize literacy by “mak[ing] visible our assumptions and expectations about how and where language functions” and by “challeng[ing] us to consider how and why we value certain texts and certain forms of authorship” (pp. 45, 46). For Wan (1999), it is zines’ status as independent media that is important:
Zines are a perfect example of an information source that was not created by a corporate conglomerate (unlike almost all news from mainstream television and newspapers). [...] Their mere existence disrupts the monotone drone of mainstream media; they say something different and their agendas are self-imposed, rather than dictated by advertisers or corporate owners. (p. 17)

For Wan, the introduction of zines into classroom spaces can begin a discussion on the politics of information, both enabling a critique of corporate media and the presentation of alternatives. Finally, Aneil Rallin and Ian Barnard (2008) use zines to critique and resist the politics of university writing programs, asserting that their zine projects challenge and subvert the desires and expectations of university administrators (and many of our colleagues and students) who increasingly presume that the function of composition classes should be to funnel students into corporate businesses, serve the interests of the dominant classes, and preserve the political and educational status quo. (p. 55)

Like Wan, Jacobi, and Fraizer, Rallin and Barnard draw on zines in the classroom as a way of encouraging students “to interrogate how knowledge serves specific economic, political, and social interests, to cultivate a questioning relationship to their own knowledge and to dominant modes of knowledge-dissemination, and to create their own counter-practices in writing” (p. 55). These possibilities make up critical reasons for teaching with zines.

In connection with the socially and politically-focused approaches outlined above, educators have called on zines as a model of or path to public participation. Congdon and Blandy (2003) write, “zines are a DIY space for public discussion and the development of public values” (p. 45). Part of attempting to realize zines as public writing in classrooms is eventually getting the zines out of the classroom, which is a component of many (but not all) of the zine projects. Rallin and Barnard (2008), for instance, require students to identify a specific audience for their zines, distribute their
zines to those audiences, and report back on the audiences’ reactions. Bott’s (2002) students’ zines are distributed through the local public library. Zines created in Jacobi’s (2007) service-learning project are presented at an annual zine reading and celebration and then donated to a resource library at a local community literacy center. Projects like these enable participation in and discussions of processes of distribution and circulation, encourage students to be attentive to the needs of specific audiences, and potentially connect students to publics outside of the classroom.

However, despite the many promises of zine pedagogy, some educators and researchers have raised concerns about what happens when zines enter classroom spaces. For example, Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow’s (1999) study of adolescent zinesters aimed to explore these students’ out-of-school writing practices. The authors describe their concern about circulating adolescent girls’ zines in classrooms, to audiences potentially far more hostile than those the zinesters addressed: “The zinesters write for each other; they write for a sympathetic audience. Placing [the zines] on a table to be consumed by classrooms of other adolescents potentially exposes them to the same ridicule and marginalization that they are writing to escape” (p. 141). Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow continue:

We need only to look at the ways in which these girls talk about the daily abuse, violence, and teasing they receive from their peers to assess how much greater the risk would be for these authors to have their words read in the same demeaning ways their bodies are “read” every day. (p. 142)

Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow’s comments suggest that zines’ publicness is complicated: while zines are in many senses public writing, that doesn’t mean that their authors intend everyone as readers. Just as an aspect of zines valuable to teachers is their emphasis on writing to a specific audience, incorporation of zines in classrooms raises questions about the implications of removing zines from their context and disregarding
their audiences. While many zinesters may be glad for as broad a readership as possible, adolescents who feel marginalized and alienated by school culture could potentially be harmed by such public exposure; a form that is empowering for youth in one context may be disempowering in another. As Warner (2002) notes, though one expects to address strangers through counterpublic address, these strangers are “socially marked” (p. 121). Circulating counterpublic writing within the dominant publics to which a counterpublic sets itself in opposition, then, raises important ethical questions.

Knobel and Lankshear (2002) suggest that while zines are of great pedagogical significance, incorporating zines in school may neutralize some of the subversive power of the form:

[We do not want to be seen as advocating any attempt to 'school' zines: to try and make the production and consumption of zines part of routine language and literacy education in the classroom in the kinds of ways that have befallen so many organic everyday literacy practices. The last thing we would want to see is a zines component within, say, a genre-based English syllabus, or a temporary 'zines publication center' in the corner of the classroom. The best of zines are altogether too vital and interesting to be tamed and timetabled. After all, they are a DIY countercultural form systematically opposed to conventional norms and values associated with publishing, establishment views, and 'schoolish' reading and writing. (pp. 164-165)]

Knobel and Lankshear discuss zines in relation to a "pedagogy of tactics," borrowing from de Certeau (1984). A pedagogy of tactics, they suggest, might also guide using zines in the curriculum; rather than domesticiating zines, creating a situation in which “zines are produced according to the teacher’s vision and purposes, rather than according to the grassroots, personal motivations for authentic zines,” a tactical orientation would approach zines in curriculum as something to “get away with,” approaching critical literacy itself as enacting clever tricks, and recognizing that this is
“maneuvering on enemy terrain” (pp. 184, 185). While Knobel and Lankshear are not dismissing all possible work with zines in school, their article suggests that, if in zines the medium is the message, that the medium of curriculum is also a message, one that may undercut a teacher’s goals for using zines in the first place.

Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) approach questions about zine pedagogy by asking three adolescent zinesters about zines in schools. The zinesters, high school students who publish a feminist zine together, were participants in Guzzetti and Gamboa’s case study focusing on “why and how adolescents produce and consume zines as a literacy practice,” specifically zines that promote social justice (p. 411). In thinking about implications of the study for teaching, the zinesters and researchers emphasize that making zining a classroom writing assignment defeats the purpose of zining in the first place: “the freedom to write with no rules” (p. 432). In a published interview between Guzzetti and the same zinesters (Guzzetti et al., 2003), zinester Corgan Duke (pseudonym) responds to a question about making zines in school, saying “Our writing is kind of anti-school writing” (“Can or Should Zines be Done in School?”). The problem with making zines in school, suggests zinester Saundra Campbell (also a pseudonym), is that the zines are no longer fully controlled by the people creating them. However, Guzzetti and Gamboa suggest that classrooms could promote the ethic of zining by offering students increased freedom in the topic, form, and publicness of their writing.

The articles by Dutro, Sinor and Rubinow (1999), Knobel and Lankshear (2002), and Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) describe some of what I am calling the contradictions of zine pedagogy: many of the promises of zine pedagogy are tied to zines’ context, a context that changes when zines are brought into classroom spaces. The implications of this change in context are varied. While Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow are primarily
concerned with the potential risks of exposure to adolescent zinesters, Knobel and Lankshear focus on the domestication of an anti-institutional form, and Guzzetti and Gamboa caution that the limitations of writing in school settings severely diminishes the value that adolescent zinesters find in the practice. Identifying these contradictions allows us to return to the classroom practice articles to examine how some of these articles acknowledge and negotiate contradictions of zine pedagogy. I look specifically at issues of grading, setting, purpose, and content.

Perhaps the clearest example of negotiations in the classroom practice articles is the issue of grading: should zines be graded and how? Bott (2002) takes a traditional approach to grading her class’s zines:

Our zines had been a major project, and I believed they deserved a major block of points, over one-third of the nine weeks’ total. […] For mechanics, I was looking for clarity, both in expression and completeness. The most common error for most students was omitted words. Those errors should have been caught. For content, I looked for originality, creativity, thoughtfulness, and completeness of thought. Each of the teachers involved may have focused on different specifics. I chose to allow nearly total freedom in styles of work, while other teachers required a certain type of poem, a narrative, or other specific assignments. (p. 31)

Bott’s approach to grading makes little reference to actual zines: though she notes earlier in the article that “zines are supposed to look homemade and maybe just a bit weird” (p. 27), the homemade look for her does not extend to omitted words, “errors [which] should have been caught” (p. 31).³ Congdon and Blandy (2003), on the other hand, attempt to create a grading system that reflects how zines are evaluated outside the classroom:

³ In contrast, Rallin and Barnard (2008) note that “shoddy,” messy zines tend to get higher grades in their classes because “shoddiness [is] a political and aesthetic virtue” in zines (p. 53).
Grading zines, for us, is as unconventional as the making of zines. We use two versions of a zine-o-meter loosely based on how music and zine reviews are presented in some fanzines. [...] One zine-o-meter has icons that represent the following responses: painfully bad, mostly filler, basic rock n roll, worth your cash, and trance/rave. [...] We have never had a student question a grade based on the zine-o-meter. This system mirrors the fact that zines are routinely reviewed and critiqued in alternative publications and zine-oriented websites. (pp. 51-52)

Congdon and Blandy describe a hybrid approach to grading in which they assign grades but look to the zine world for the standards of evaluation on which those grades are based. Jacobi (2007), who explicitly considers zine pedagogy’s contradictions, offers the following recommendation based on her experience with a service-learning zine project:

Design an alternative evaluation method (no grades on the zines). Although assessment criteria should be negotiated by students and community partners, zines, by definition, intend to operate outside of traditional school-based evaluations. One approach is to evaluate the project, not the product, by establishing shared goals and expectations rather than genre expectations. (p. 47)

Rather than grading the zines themselves, Jacobi grades her students’ reflective writing on their experiences leading zine workshops. These three approaches to grading reflect radically different understandings of how zines can fit in curriculum.

These three grading approaches also represent three very different settings for zine pedagogy: a high school English class, a college art class, and a college service-learning class focused on literacy. It is perhaps no surprise that the most traditional grading approach occurred in the high school classroom, in which almost all activities are expected to contribute to measurable objectives and meet standards of assessment. Jacobi, on the other hand, attempts to situate her project “both in and beyond school” in order to avoid “shifting the production and consumption of zines [...] to the relative rigidity of school conventions” (p. 48). By structuring her zine project as a service-
learning project in which her students lead collaborative zine workshops and assist local youth in publishing and distributing zines, Jacobi negotiates what she refers to as the “paradox” of a zine project (p. 47). Jacobi describes her project as a “hybrid approach [which] allows teachers to introduce the genre across diverse communities, provide opportunities for students to serve as zine workshop leaders and writers, and value the ‘underground’ origins of zines by creating contexts for learning beyond the classroom” (p. 43). Far from resolving the contradictions of zine pedagogy, however, Jacobi works to develop an approach that she believes “does more right than wrong” (p. 47).

A third way that tensions are negotiated in this set of articles is through discussions of zine pedagogy’s purpose in particular contexts. Rallin and Barnard (2008) pose this question about zines’ co-optation in the classroom:

As teachers, we also wonder whether our use of zines in academic institutions necessarily undermines the zines’ subversive potentials. If zines are designed to resist institutional power, isn’t requiring them in the classroom a co-optation that decontextualizes and defangs them? (p. 55)

They answer, “No matter how zinesters may view the incorporation of their work into writing classes,” the project fulfills Rallin and Barnard’s goals as teachers. They thus separate their purposes as teachers engaging in zine pedagogy from how their actions might be viewed by zinesters. If the teachers’ purpose is to frustrate and challenge what they see as a troubling trend in composition, then that purpose is more important than gaining the approval of zinesters, they argue. Wan (1999) describes a teacher’s response to a student zinester who protested zine pedagogy as institutionalizing zines: “Zines have already been discovered and it’s up to us to do something interesting with them,” the teacher says, paraphrasing Duncombe’s (1997) justification of writing an academic book about zines (p. 19). Instead of separating teacher purposes from zinester
purposes, this response suggests it is too late to consider how zinesters feel about school appropriations of zines, as zines “have already been discovered.” For Wan, this is exactly why teachers should start using zine pedagogy. But Duncombe’s actual justification is a bit different: “alternative culture has already been discovered,” he writes, but “the more important question is who will represent it and how. [...] I’m of the world I write and my concern for the underground runs deeper than its status as this (or last) season’s cultural exotica” (p. 16). Where Wan dismisses zinesters’ concerns about appropriations of zines, Duncombe affirms the importance of aligning representations or uses of zines such as zine pedagogy with the values of the zine community, citing his status as a zinester as a guarantee that his purposes are in line with these values.

Finally, the articles negotiate contradictions through content. One frequently-noted issue for those looking to bring zines into classrooms is the potential for objectionable content or language (Jacobi, 2007; Knobel & Lankshear, 2002; Williamson, 1994). Zines have even been banned in some schools, according to Williamson. Published zines may range from “G” to “XXX” in their content, creating a question of what kinds of zines a teacher will draw on in a classroom setting and what kinds of limitations will be placed on students’ writing. Bott (2002) discusses how language guidelines were developed in her class:

We also addressed the issue of language. Because we were using the public library as our distribution center, we talked about who would be our readers. We guessed that anyone could pick up our zines and then discussed how we wanted to be perceived. “Hell” and “Damn” were deemed acceptable. Other curse words would be inappropriate; however, several of the students had fun swearing in different fonts that were unreadable such as [...] ※●✦ EXAMPLE. (p. 29)
Though Bott’s project involved rules for language use, those rules were developed in conversation with the class, considering the context in which the zines would be read. Rallin and Barnard (2008), on the other hand, have their students read and write about zines “on ‘taboo’ subjects such as I Fisted Jesse Helms: A True Story, Sex With Chickens, and The NecroErotic – For All Those Who Find Sexual Lust In Cadavers” (p. 48). The zines that Rallin and Barnard’s students write are similarly focused on the risky and taboo; a student is quoted reflecting on the assignment: “Our zine, Fuct Up, was an assignment I gained a lot from. I was elated at the very fact that I could even write about getting fuct up in the first place. […] I took off from the freedom given to me” (p. 56). While on one side, Rallin and Barnard’s approach seems to be more in line with the “no rules” nature of zines by allowing students to embrace risky topics, it raises questions about pushing students toward these topics. Is this simply creating different rules from those that normally govern classroom writing? If so, what are the consequences of asking students to enter these counterpublic discourses—discourses which, as Warner (2002) points out, “one enters at one’s own risk” (p. 121)?

As scholarship on public writing has turned toward counterpublics as providing possible venues for student writing, zine pedagogy seems to embody many of the goals of public writing. The incarnations of zine pedagogy I’ve described above are connected to public writing and to the public turn through their cultural studies focus, emphasis on social and political issues, distribution of writing outside of the classroom, and service-learning approaches. However, zine pedagogy as public writing also involves critical assumptions, risks, and contradictions that have not been addressed in the literature on student writing in counterpublics. The assumptions and risks I have identified call for further attention to the complexities of classroom public writing, specifically the issue of positioning the classroom as a potential site from which to
address counterpublics. Educators who engage in or consider zine pedagogy encounter this tangle of issues in various forms and contexts. Conversely, the contradictions of zine pedagogy are relevant to other types of classroom public writing, meaning that insights about how teachers negotiate these contradictions can contribute to the discussion of teaching public writing. From another angle, zinesters too encounter these issues through their counterpublic address, which projects versions of the troubled but vital relationship of counterpublics to institutions. My study picks up here by engaging the complexities of zine pedagogy in the context of a larger discussion about public writing.
Chapter Three: Research Design

Narrative research in education has been increasing in popularity since the 1970s; tracing back to the early autobiographical work of Pinar and Grumet (1976), narrative is now, for instance, one of the five approaches to qualitative research detailed in Creswell’s (2007) popular introductory qualitative research textbook. Connelly and Clandinin (1990), who coined the term “narrative inquiry,” provide perhaps the most commonly cited description of the relationship between education and narrative:

humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates to the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and others’ stories. (p. 2)

For Connelly and Clandinin, education is itself a narrative phenomenon, as is research. It is no surprise, then, that narrative approaches to educational research have proliferated, particularly in the forms of autobiography (see Miller, 2005; Pinar, 1994; Pinar & Grumet, 1976), biography and life history (see Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995b; Munro, 1996, 1998), teacher stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz-Lewis, 2007), and the analysis of narrative constructions of curriculum (Gough, 1993, 1994, 1998; Gough & Kesson, 1992). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) write in their historical study on narrative inquiry that the study of narrative includes a wide range of “research approaches, strategies and methods” (p. 5). My study does not fit neatly within one of the existing categories of narrative research; however, it fulfills the
four qualities of narrative research identified by Pinnegar and Daynes. I work throughout the research process to “recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship.” The study “use[s] stories as data and analysis,” approaches knowledge as “embedded in a particular context,” and embraces “narrative knowing” (p. 7). While these qualities are not individually specific to narrative inquiry, as a group they provide a flexible characterization of narrative in a general sense.

Why Narrative?

One reason for choosing a narrative study is that narrative is uniquely appropriate to a study of zines, and thus zine pedagogy. The importance of stories to the medium of zines is illustrated by John Gerken’s comment in his introduction to Stories Care Forgot: An Anthology of New Orleans Zines (Clark, 2006): “With stories, we can locate ourselves in this world just as surely as with any map. Pen to paper, [...] a lifeline to walk like a tightrope from place to place” (p. 5). Narrative, broadly defined, is perhaps zines’ primary mode, whether through traditional storytelling or through other genres that imply, represent, or stand in for stories, such as comics, letters, pictures, lists, and found material. Zine culture is, as Poletti (2005) writes, “a subculture of story telling” (p. 184). My choice of narrative as a methodology reflects in part the centrality of storytelling to zines and zine culture.

Second, narrative allows focus on and honors complexity and contradiction, which are central to my research question. Interpretation and conclusions in narrative inquiry are conditional and tentative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); studies attempt to create “meaningful analysis” (Polkinghorne, 1988) rather than absolute truth. Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou (2008) write that they engage in narrative research because it
allows them to “see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning [and] to bring them into useful dialogue with one another” (p. 1). Similarly, Dyson and Genishi (1994) write, “Stories help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the ‘real,’ the official with the unofficial, personal with the professional, the canonical with the different and unexpected” (p. 242). Given my hope to examine but not resolve the contradictions of zine pedagogy, narrative is an appropriate approach.

Third, narrative is a feature of both individual and collective experience (McEwan & Egan, 1995), relevant to both a singular teacher’s story and the histories of the zine form, both an anecdote included in a zine and attempts to theorize how public space and public writing have changed over hundreds of years. According to Patton (2002), one strength of a narrative approach is that narratives can be “analyzed for connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human experience” (p. 116). Thus, narratives can “reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of personal experience” (p. 115). As I suggested in chapter one, zines have a tendency to approach large cultural and political issues through stories of personal experience; this dissertation examines stories of zine pedagogy and stories in and about zines in relation to broader narratives of the public sphere and the poststructural failure of foundations.

Finally, narrative inquiry allows for great flexibility of research writing in terms of form (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ely, 2007). Noel Gough (1993) argues that narrative’s attention to the way stories construct reality calls for self-conscious and resistant forms of writing:

many postmodernist approaches to the representation of ‘reality’ in a text require that the text draws attention to its own structures and properties
as a generator of meaning and significance [like metafiction]. I submit that the texts of educational research and teacher education should aspire to no less [...O]ur texts should provide critiques of their own methods of construction, not only to lay their own structures and assumptions bare, but also to explore the fictionality (the textual and intertextual construction) of the ‘realities’ to which they refer. (“Reflexivity and Metafiction,” para. 3)

Such a project calls for both an acknowledgement of the ways in which researchers’ stories both begin as and become intertwined with participants’ stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and a recognition of the way in which form creates meaning in research texts. In a study concerned with the resistant potential of the zine form, such acknowledgement and recognition are critical.

I mentioned above that despite my commitment to a narrative methodology, this study does not fit neatly within any of the existing categories of narrative research. Though my focus is perhaps closest to the teacher stories work most associated with Connelly and Clandinin, there are key differences, both theoretical and methodological, between my study and their approach. Because of their focus on self, experience, and agency, Clandinin and Connelly describe narrative inquiry as being at odds with poststructuralism, political analysis, and theoretical orientations in a general sense, as these orientations tend to see experience as constructed rather than primary. However, feminist poststructural approaches to narrative are well established (see Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995a; Miller, 2005, pp. 121-123; Munro, 1996, 1998). Critiquing humanist approaches to narrative research that assume identities to be stable, Miller (1998/2005a) notes that many versions of “teacher stories [...] assume one singular, authoritative, and completed [...] version of self, identity, experience, voice and story” (p. 51) Positing identities that are made to seem “fully conscious, universal, complete and non-contradictory,” these stories set teachers, and the category of “teacher,” apart from
language, history, culture, and context (p. 51). Feminist poststructural versions of narrative research, like those that Miller advocates, begin with particular assumptions about selves, language, and autobiographical discourse, which I take as starting points for my work on this project: that selves are multiple, contradictory, and constructed in language; that language and the relationships of power it is tied to determine what is intelligible; and that autobiographical discourse (including the personal storytelling) is one way of using language that shapes the field of what we can think and understand.

Further, Clandinin and Connelly’s focus is on the researcher “in for the long haul” (p. 79), someone who spends extended time in a defined field, like a particular school, and attempts to record “life in its broadest sense on the landscape” (p. 79). These are not features of this study. Rather, I am interested in a very specific kind of story and in a study that models the dispersed, extended space and time of zine circulation. I focus on teacher narratives without observation in the field because my research question concerns how teachers think about and describe their approaches to zine pedagogy, not the implementation of zine pedagogy or student responses. In the sections that follow, I describe how I collected and analyzed data.

Data

The primary data for this study are seven teacher/zinester narratives. The participants, “teacher/zinesters,” are educators who have taught with zines in school or university settings. Many of the teacher/zinesters in this study have also taught with zines in informal or community settings, such as camps, libraries, homeless shelters, or youth centers. I solicited participants through a flyer that I distributed at the 2009 Portland Zine Symposium (www.pdxzines.com), by publishing a zine that included a
call for participants in the back, through the social networking site We Make Zines (wemakezines.ning.com), and through a panel discussion on Zines and Teaching that I organized and mediated at the 2010 Portland Zine Symposium.\footnote{I contacted seventeen potential participants who provided contact information to me at the 2009 Portland Zine Symposium. Of these, nine responded with interest, seven completed consent forms and questionnaires, and five completed the study. I received two responses to my post on We Make Zines by potential participants; of these, one completed a consent form and questionnaire but did not complete the study. Two participants were recruited through the Zines and Teaching panel at 2010 PZS, one a panel member suggested by PZS workshop coordinator Dylan Williams and the other an audience member whom I had a chance to talk with after the panel session; both completed the study via phone interview.}

Narratives were collected from participants through email letters and telephone interviews. Teacher/zinesters were offered the choice between mail, email, or telephone interviews. I incorporated written (mail or email) forms of data collection for several reasons. Letters are a common form of data collection in narrative inquiry, as they allow participants and researchers to reflect on their experiences in their own time and space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Letters also have special significance among zinesters: when people read and make zines, they interact with strangers through writing, and several zine researchers have continued this tradition in their research (Buchanan, 2009; Schilt, 2003). Third, letters involve reciprocity and responsiveness, both of which were important to me in selecting methods of data collection. Collecting data through letters and phone interviews allowed me to interact with teacher/zinesters outside of the immediate geographical area and allowed the teacher/zinesters to participate in the project in the ways most comfortable and convenient for them.

Four participants elected to be sent questions by email, which they responded to as their schedules allowed. When I received their responses, I wrote back with some
impressions and follow-up questions, as well as the next set of questions. This process continued through four rounds, involving questions about initial decisions, planning, the project, and reflections. Three teacher/zinesters participated in one or two phone interviews, ranging from 30 to 90 minutes, which I transcribed. In addition to the phone and email narratives, three of the seven teacher/zinesters participated in the Zines and Teaching panel mentioned above, and one of them attended and contributed to the discussion. Thus, I include the transcript of the panel session as an additional zine pedagogy narrative. Three more teacher/zinesters began the project (two by mail and one by email), but never completed it.

Supporting data include zines published by the teacher/zinesters and/or their students, as well as classroom materials such as syllabi, textbook excerpts, worksheets, handouts, and other student work. Additionally, I draw on other work by the teacher/zinesters, including published books and articles, online interviews (audio, video, and print), organization websites, personal website and blogs, and an online exhibit (see appendix B). I collected between three and seven types of data for each participant. For example, for one teacher/zinester, I examined her email narrative, class zine assignment, four issues of her zine that discuss teaching, and the zines produced by her students. For another, I examined the phone interview transcript, PZS panel transcript, a published article about her zine (which included several scanned pages from the zine), an online video interview, two syllabi, and the handbook from her community zine project.

To contextualize this data, I incorporate other narratives about zines, drawn from existing studies on zines, including ethnographic studies, textual analyses, and studies of zines within political movements such as Riot Grrrl. I also draw on narratives from
less academic sources, including zines,\textsuperscript{5} documentaries, published interviews, how-to books, and network zines (zines that review other zines), as well as informal sources, such as online discussions, reviews, letters, and email correspondence. Through these narratives, I examine how conversations about zines have been framed in literacy, genre, activist, and D.I.Y. literature.

Throughout the dissertation, I focus my discussion on physical paper zines as opposed to e-zines or blogs. One very practical reason for this is that the name “e-zines” seems to refer to electronic magazines at least as often as it refers to electronic zines. This dissertation takes the naming of genres and media to be important, and zines are difficult enough to define in the realm of paper. Second, one of the reasons zines are an attractive school project is that they require few materials, whereas e-zines absolutely require computer access, and making them in a class would likely require a full computer lab. Third, the circumstances of zines’ production and distribution is simply different from that of electronic forms like e-zines and blogs. As Barnard College zine librarian Jenna Freedman (2005) points out, few people are full hosts of their own websites without being subject to the potential censorship of an internet service provider or to commercial influences such as banner ads. E-zines and blogs do not rely on the distinctive modes of distribution employed by zinesters, such as trading, mail order, zine fairs, zine libraries, selling at music shows, selling on consignment at independent bookstores, or using distributors or “distros.” Researcher Poletti (2005)

\textsuperscript{5} Sources for obtaining paper zines include “distros” like Microcosm, Parcell Press, and Stranger Danger; independent bookstores like Powell’s and Reading Frenzy; the website Etsy Handmade (a website from which people sell handmade items that has become a popular way to distribute zines); by mail through listings in network zines like Zine World; through zine libraries such as the New Orleans AboveGround Zine Library; and through zine events such as the Portland Zine Symposium and the New Orleans Book Fair.
notes, “Zines also get left in public places: on trains, in cafes and pubs, and slipped between the pages of slick magazines in newsagents” (p. 185). These sites of encounter are different from how one encounters an e-zine or blog. Finally, zines represent a medium in which the physical form is itself important. Piepmeier (2008) writes:

Zines instigate intimate, affectionate connections between their creators and readers, not just communities but embodied communities that are made possible by the materiality of the zine medium. In a world where more and more of us spend all day at our computers, zines reconnect us to our bodies and to other human beings. (p. 214)

Because this sense of connection and embodied community is a critical aspect of the zine medium, as well as issues discussed above related to naming, materials, and circumstances of production and distribution, I focus this study on paper zines as opposed to e-zines.

**Ethical Considerations**

Narrative inquiries raise particular ethical issues, including those of contribution and confidentiality. In terms of contribution, narrative research is a collaborative process; both Creswell (2007) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize the importance of finding “ways to be useful” to participants. I wanted to ensure that this project offered something to participants rather than simply appropriating their stories for a single-authored academic work, focused on research questions of my choosing. Thus, I have also created, through participant narratives and contributions, a zine that will act as a resource for potential zinester/teachers, including project descriptions, advice, and discussions of issues like grading. The need for such a zine is suggested by, for example, the near-empty discussion boards of the “Teaching Zines” group at the We
Make Zines social networking website. Though the group boasts over ninety members, the idea that the group page would create a general space to “share info about lesson plans, projects, workshops, classes, good resources and books, grants, and other teaching-related stuff” has not yet been realized. Besides filling a need, the zine is better able to acknowledge and honor participant contributions than the dissertation itself. The resource zine will be sent to each of the participants, and I will make it available to anyone else for trade or the cost of postage, with the invitation to reproduce and distribute it as needed under a Creative Commons license.

A second ethical issue of importance in narrative studies is that of confidentiality. While most qualitative methods require researchers to assure the privacy of participants through pseudonyms, the collaborative nature of narrative inquiries can complicate this issue because protection of participants’ privacy can also mean not giving them credit for their ideas or recognizing their experiences. Mishler (1986) writes, “Through the routine assurance of confidentiality, interviewees are told that they will be treated as part of an anonymous mass. […] They will not be held personally responsible for what they say, nor will they be credited as individuals for what they say and think” (p. 125). Clandinin and Connelly (2000), too, note that simply assuring anonymity is not always ethical within the framework of narrative research: because the research is collaborative, participants may or may not want anonymity, or they may want anonymity at one point in the process but not at another (pp. 176-77). In light of these issues, rather than simply assuring anonymity by using pseudonyms, I asked participants to decide whether or how they would like to be identified in the study, with the knowledge that they could change their minds at any time. I believe

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this to be consistent with what Josselson (2007) calls an “ethical attitude” in narrative research.

**Analysis**

Recounting one of the more common uses of narrative in educational research, Miller (1998/2005b) writes that teachers conducting narrative research are told to “‘tell the story’ of their research processes and resulting individual changes in their classrooms as well as in their perspectives about curriculum, research, and themselves as teachers” (p. 221). These instructions often lead to narratives that Miller calls “cheerful teacher research” – narratives in which teachers “learn about and then implement new pedagogical approaches and curriculum materials without a hitch” or in which misconceptions are shattered and teachers report on becoming “fully knowledgeable about themselves, their students, and their teaching practices” (p. 221). Such narratives, Miller suggests, normalize not only teacher identities, but also narrative inquiry and educational research. So-called cheerful teacher research as a metanarrative of narrative research in education highlights one of the potential limitations of narrative methodologies in general: while narrative can be used to investigate and convey complexity, its attempt to understand the world through stories can push people to tell stories that have beginnings, middles, and ends, and that involve conflict and resolution. In attempting to create a satisfying account that makes sense of things, narrative can oversimplify. Part of the project, then, of feminist poststructuralist narrative inquiry is to employ analytical strategies that assist in resisting such oversimplification, disrupting the metanarratives of humanist educational research.
This project attempts to disrupt metanarratives of humanist educational research by imposing alternative narratives that guide my analysis, drawn from feminist poststructural theory and public sphere theory. If the “cheerful teacher research” narrative tends to focus on the successes of particular pedagogical approaches and the problems solved by such approaches, my analysis in this study is instead focused on contradictions, failures, and the responses to contradiction and failure, both in classroom applications of zine pedagogy and in the difficult work of building, identifying, and addressing publics, in and out of the classroom. This approach draws from the narrative inquiry strategy of restorying, or “reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56), as well as the feminist poststructural tool of the figuration, which hopes to create possibilities for “think[ing] against the prescribed narratives of humanist science” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000a, p. 14). Narrative restorying often entails the creation of linear chronological or causal stories; I use the strategy of figurations to explore frameworks outside of chronology and causality. Through the interpretive structure of promise, failure, and ruins and through an examination of what Warner (2002) calls the “mutually defining interplay between texts and publics” (p. 16), my project does not aim to generate confirmable truth but rather to investigate the possibilities for thinking about zine pedagogy. Thus, I in no way pose the narratives I use for analysis as a neutral interpretation of data or as the “truth” about zine pedagogy; however, I find it useful here to begin with narratives that are clearly, in Lather’s (1991) words, “contingent, positioned, and partial” (p. 1). In my analysis, I approached the categories of promise, failure, and ruins not as rigid constructs, but as flexible placeholders whose meanings were to be determined in part in the process of analysis.
After the teacher/zinester narratives were collected, I read and coded them following a constant comparative analysis method (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), using a combination of electronic and paper coding and category-building. My analysis of the categories created in coding led to the themes that organize chapters six, seven, and eight (see appendix C). Supporting data were coded according to the codes and categories that emerged from my analysis of the primary data. Though the themes and major subsections of chapters six, seven, and eight were determined in this initial analysis, continued analysis occurred through the actual writing of these chapters, in which the relationships between categories were reconsidered and rearticulated. I increased the trustworthiness of the study by using multiple methods of data collection and by conducting member checks; I sent drafts of the final chapters of the study to each participant to review.

Limitations

The design of this study entails several limitations. First, in limiting my focus to the teacher/zinesters’ descriptions of their experiences and understandings of zine pedagogy, I did not make any attempt to determine either “what actually happened” in these teacher/zinesters’ zine pedagogy work or how their students experienced or understood zine pedagogy. I did not, for instance, interview students, observe teacher/zinesters in their work, or attempt to assess student learning. Though these omissions are in line with the problem I chose to address and the methods I used to address it, they represent other types of research on zine pedagogy that could be undertaken and highlight that this is a partial account of the experiences of a few teacher/zinesters and not a final statement on zines and teaching.
I also did not narrow my study to a particular educational setting, such as middle school, high school, or college; to a particular type of course, such as focusing entirely on writing courses; or to a particular geographical location, school district, or school. I did not limit my focus on a particular type of zine assignment: for example, political zines, perzines, literary zines, class compilation zines, or individual zines. Educational setting and zine genre offer additional avenues of focus for further research.

Findings of this study are doubtlessly influenced by the seven teacher/zinesters’ particular teaching contexts, relations to zines and zine-ing, and individual approaches to the study (that they participated, whether they chose phone interview or written question sets, and what level of detail they provided, for instance). Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalized beyond these participants or translated into specific recommendations for practice. I hope, however, that this work can offer both teacher/zinesters and researchers a complicated, though partial, consideration of the promises, failures, and ruins of zine pedagogy.

Another limitation is researching and writing from the point of view of an academic researcher and writer, beginning outside the culture and practice of zining. I believe that this made it more difficult to find participants than if I identified as a zinester, though how much more difficult is impossible to say. As I discuss in chapter four, there is a tension between zine culture’s emphasis on participation, which might encourage enthusiasm for talking about zines in a variety of forums, and wariness about appropriation by interests not necessarily in-line with DIY (do it yourself) values, including academe. This tension erupted memorably surrounding the recent release of Teal Triggs’s (2010) book, Fanzines. Triggs, a professor at University of Arts London, included hundreds of zine covers and pages in the book, most of which were allegedly
without permission, and many of which were allegedly mis-credited. The book, which is available for sale at Urban Outfitters and appears more like a coffee table book than an academic volume, is the subject of a vigorous discussion at We Make Zines\(^7\) as well as a website devoted to frustration with the book: 

http://fanzinesbytealtriggs.weebly.com/. Containing a list of zines pictured in the book, this website urges featured zinesters to request a complimentary copy of the book from the publishers and asks all zinesters not to buy the book, to post negative reviews of it, to contact Triggs and the publisher with complaints, and to create informational flyers or stickers to add to library, bookstore, or Urban Outfitters copies of the book.

While I have been diligent about issues of permission in this project and have tried to ensure that my work is not exploitative and offers more to its participants than academic recognition, it is important to acknowledge that not all zinesters welcome attention from academic researchers.

My perspective as a non-zinester researcher, someone whose interactions with zines have been in primarily academic and institutional contexts, also of course influences my interpretation. And yet, though I began this work as a clear non-zinester, my relationship with zines is somewhat more complicated than that now. For example, my reading of zines now goes far beyond those that are relevant to the study. Also, during the spring of 2009, after writing a series of poems about Carville, Louisiana, the former site of the National Leprosarium, I decided to collect the poems in a zine with some other related material. I did not make this decision in order to experiment with zine writing, to build rapport with zinesters, to recruit participants, or any other reason directly related to this project; yet, my research on zines certainly affected the decision

\(^7\)http://wemakezines.ning.com/forum/topics/how-do-yall-feel-about-this?
(particularly in zine culture’s emphasis on participation) and I did include a call for participants in the zine. While writing this one zine hardly makes me a zinester, it does subtly change how I encounter and interact with participants, as well as how I understand the issues they discuss. Thus, I include brief autobiographical sections in the findings chapters as part of my work to acknowledge and examine this complex positioning as it developed in the study.

There is also certainly an irony to writing about the contradictions of bringing zines into classroom spaces when writing an academic dissertation on zines in many ways does just that. In this way, I see this dissertation as participating in the promises and failures of zine pedagogy, attempting to identify new grounds through its own ruins.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design of this dissertation project, discussing my methods of data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. In chapter five, I introduce the seven teacher/zinesters who participated in the study, and I examine their negotiations of zine pedagogy in the following three chapters before concluding the study with a discussion of zine pedagogy and public writing. But first, in chapter four, I provide a more general background of zines and the counterpublics in which they circulate.
Chapter Four: Zines

I love zines [...] I think I love zines for the same reason I loved writing in the beginning, before it got hard. The medium of zines reminds me of the point of the work: the deep and sincere need to be heard, the yearning for communion. [...] The connection people make with each other through writing and reading is as human as we get, and zinesters know this, they live it. I’m writing this now and you’re reading it in another now, which means we’re here together in a way; wherever we are, we’re both crackling with the same kind of life. Can you think of anything more incredible than that? (Haegele, 2009, p. 1)

I was struck by Katie Haegele’s (2009) introduction in Zine Yearbook 9 enough to quote it here at length, and enough to seek out her zines. I ordered three of them from her website, and they arrived three days later. Two were single-issue zines she had put together: Man is the Hero of Geography (2008a) contains photocopied pages from a 1973 geography workbook she found at a garage sale; some of the pages were filled in by the child who originally owned it, and some Haegele filled in poetically, randomly, and irreverently. White Blackbirds: conversations with women who aren’t married and don’t want to be (n.d.-b) compiles eleven women’s responses to a survey on their decisions not to marry. Both zines consist of photocopied sheets of white paper, folded in half and stapled twice in the middle. Included with the zines was a handwritten card, dated the day I made the order and addressed to me by name. In it, Katie thanks me for ordering the zines, talks about how she enjoyed working on all three of them, and updates me on her progress on her next zine issue. The third zine is “Always Already” (n.d.-a), the sixth issue of The La-La Theory, Haegele’s “crackpot serial zine ‘about’ language” (p. 26). Its construction is the same as the other two, except that the cover is just a little bit
glossy, and it is printed or copied in color. Despite these differences, it doesn’t look at all “slick”: the decorative title lettering and illustration were drawn, not laid out on a computer.

Figure 1: Cover of Katie Haegele's (n.d.-a) "Always Already," Issue 6 of The La-La Theory, cover art by Jim Tierney, reprinted with permission

Following a handwritten welcome note on the first page, two typed facing pages provide an introduction, describing how Haegele met the artist who did the cover and some of the internal drawings, and listing a few pieces included in the zine. Though the introduction may sound like that of any book or magazine, a few key differences stick
out: first, the heading is handwritten, and unlike the careful decorative lettering of the cover, this heading is simply scrawled: “Intro.” In the paragraph in which Haegele details the contents of the zine, arrows added later by hand point from items listed in the typed text to handwritten page numbers in the margins. Finally, Haegele’s story of meeting the artist at a craft fair emphasizes the relationship as one of unexpected but welcome collaboration, and not a move toward a more professional publication. She underscores that point with this ending to the story: “Has The La-La Theory found a house artist? I better not get ahead of myself, but my assistant—my companion cat, Trixie—and I are excited about what the future may hold” (p. 2). Through her playful reference to her cat as her assistant, Haegele reminds readers that even if someone is contributing drawings, her zine is not a professional operation.

I open this chapter with Katie Haegele’s words and zines to show a few of the features that make zines unique forms: Haegele’s introduction in *Zine Yearbook 9* highlights her professed joy in writing and constructing zines and the emphasis zines often have on forging personal connections between writers and readers. The two single-issue zines demonstrate creative reuse of found items (the geography book), interest in lifestyles and personal choices, and use of easily reproducible forms and accessible materials. The included note attempts to make distribution personal, and the issue of *The La-La Theory* illustrates several other common features of zines: focus on a specific subject that is made very personal and explored through multiple genres, emphasis on non-professionalism, and use of forms and genres that gesture towards those found in mainstream publications but that also mark their differences. Not all zines have these features in common, and many share features that are not present in Haegele’s zines or that I have not highlighted here. But these features—of zines’ motivations, physical forms, genres, and distribution—while not definitive, are some of
the ways that zines can be distinguished from other types of media. They are also some of the features that have led educators to wonder how zines might change writing instruction.

In chapter two, I discussed Habermas’s (1962/1999) account of the bourgeois public sphere, as well as theorizations of publics and counterpublics, or oppositional publics, put forth by Negt and Kluge (1993), Fraser (1992), and Warner (2002). In this chapter, I draw on these theories to examine zines as (counter)public⁸ writing, texts engaged in a project of transformative world-making. Zines enact this project not only through the modes of argument and discussion that we typically think of as characterizing public discourse, but also through style and the circumstances of their production and circulation. Thus, I examine the histories, definitions, contexts, and politics of zines in order to understand how they emerged and how they function as (counter)public writing. Following this discussion, I look more closely at a subset of the zine community: the Riot Grrrl zine scene, a politicized zine movement that has received considerable scholarly attention and which, Piepmeier (2009) argues, has helped to define third wave feminism.

**The (Counter)Publics of Zines**

Clear parallels emerge between zines and counterpublics, and several scholars have argued for considering zines as counterpublic writing (Brouwer, 2005; Comstock, ________________

⁸ I use the term (counter)public with parentheses around “counter” in order to highlight that counterpublics, while understanding themselves in opposition to mainstream publics, are themselves a type of public, embodying the same “contradictions and perversities” as all publics (Warner, 2002). Additionally, as both Warner and Brouwer (2005) point out, the oppositionality of counterpublics is situational: members of counterpublics may see themselves as stigmatized in one regard but may experience social privilege in other ways.
Zinesters typically see their work as being in tension with mainstream media, values, and conceptions of identity (Duncombe, 1997), and they define themselves against the assumptions of mainstream publics. In line with Warner’s (2002) characterization of counterpublics, zines use modes of address, such as handwriting and cut-and-paste layouts, that would be inappropriate in dominant publics. Zines also address “socially marked strangers,” create a discourse in which “one enters at one’s own risk,” and provide a means through which “members’ [zinesters’] identities are formed and transformed” (Warner, pp. 120-21). Unlike scholarly approaches to zines that consider the medium exclusively either as a type of life writing or as a type of subcultural production, reading zines as (counter)public writing allows one to be simultaneously attentive to zines’ textual and historical dimensions, considering their form, content, and distribution in relation to projects of transformative world-making.

Before launching into a discussion of zines’ histories, definitions, and politics, however, I must lay out a caveat that I hope is foreshadowed by the section on zine features that opens this chapter: zines are an extremely diverse form. Little if anything can be said that would be true of all zines or all zinesters, and, as zine librarian Bartel (2004) notes, it is nearly impossible to say anything useful about zines or zine culture without putting forth some kind of generalization. My discussion here is based on narratives about zines circulating in the work of zinesters and zine scholars; I do not claim a privileged perspective on zines or zine culture.

9 In her chapter “Zine Culture 101,” Bartel includes the sections: “A few generalizations,” “A few more generalizations,” and “And yet more generalizations.”
Histories

“Like those of most underground phenomena,” writes zinester and zine scholar Bleyer (2004), the origins and history of zines are “fuzzy and debatable” (p. 44). Further, zine histories are narratives of origins that reveal much about the identifications, orientations, and conflicts of contemporary zine culture. In this section, I present several narratives that zinesters and zine scholars have called on as historical explanations of zines and zine culture, both to tentatively chart zines’ emergence and evolution as counterpublic writing and to illustrate the kind of (counter)public that contemporary zinesters see themselves participating in through their competing narratives of origin. These narratives include contested histories of self-publishing, the origin of the word “fanzine” among 1930s science fiction readers, the association of fanzines with punk rock music and culture and DIY values, the “discovery” of zines by corporate interests and mainstream media in the 1990s, and zines’ continued existence in the digital age.

Histories of Self-Publishing. A common narrative in zine histories is a history of self-publishing. When zinesters and zine scholars recall this narrative, it often includes the names and works of famous dissenters whose acts of self-publication are considered important historical events. For example, some have called the Ninety-Five Theses that Martin Luther nailed to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany in 1517 an early zine (Chu, 1997; Holdaway, 1997/2008). This history also often includes the 18th century American pamphleteers, who wrote, printed, and distributed political critiques that often drew on personal experience and used personal language (Duncombe, 1997). One zinester called Thomas Paine’s Common Sense “the zine heard round the world” (Gene Mahoney, qtd. in Duncombe, 1997, p. 27). Prominent zine editor Seth Friedman has also claimed, “Benjamin Franklin made zines” (qtd. in Chu,
These histories often also cite the political self-publications of Dadaists in the early 20th century and the practice of *Samizdat* by Soviet dissidents to reproduce and distribute censored texts, which began in the late 1950s (Bartel, 2004; Wright, 1997). These narratives of zine history are often self-consciously political, emphasizing the power of self-publishing to effect major social change and the validity of zinesters as inheritors of an important historical legacy; such narratives position zinesters as politically engaged dissenters prepared to go outside the normal means of publication to make sure their voices are heard.

But these histories have also been criticized for their focus on famous figures, a focus that in some ways runs counter to zines’ DIY ethics, and which Moore (2010) alleges risks reinforcing “the assumption that famous White men did everything interesting that ever happened in the world” (p. 244). This assumption, Moore continues, “is not true. (Nor is it a helpful way of convincing people to self-publish their own work.)” (p. 244). It is important, Moore and others have claimed, to pay attention to what (and whom) these standard histories exclude. Along these lines, Piepmeier (2009) argues that existing narratives of zine history have failed to recognize the importance of feminist publications in the history of activist self-publishing. She writes:

> Although zines are often described as though they and their predecessors have always been male-dominated media, what hasn’t been discussed is the fact that these publications also have predecessors in the informal publications, documents, and artifacts produced by women during the first and second waves of feminism. (p. 25)

For instance, Boston Women’s Health Collective’s *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was first published in 1970 as a 193-page stapled pamphlet entitled *Women and Their Bodies* that was sold for $0.75. Like zines, pamphlets produced by first and second wave feminists
“were distributed informally, person to person rather than through official publishing channels” (p. 39). They were typically “created by hand, reproduced on a small scale, and shared in intimate settings,” often for free or at very little cost (p. 39). The legacy of feminist self-publishing has included the sharing of stories and information, as well as argumentative writing. This feminist history of zines, Piepmeier argues, is particularly important for understanding the phenomenon of girl or grrrl zines that emerged in the 1990s, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Though most self-publishing histories tend to focus on famous figures and large-scale social movements, Moore (2010) reminds us that self-publishing occurs in many sites that these histories ignore:

Equally legitimate histories of self-publishing can be found on early American quilts, in the lessons heard in church about reformation, written on the backs of old family photographs, crumbling in the alleyways of urban high-traffic zones, the oral histories of conspiracy theorists, or made up in your head during a long walk in the rain. Each of these potential histories have just as much to explain about who is granted power to speak in our culture and who is not; each of these potential histories provide models for exercising voice, even if the speaker hasn’t been gifted it by the privilege of skin color, economic class, gender, native tongue, sexuality, or literacy. (p. 244)

Moore argues that it is critical to acknowledge these alternative potential histories because “zines are currently one of the means by which hidden histories occasionally come to light” (p. 244). Because zines tend to focus on the local, Moore writes, and because they are “messy, nonlinear, and unprofessional,” zines “deserv[e] to have a bottom-up (as opposed to top-down) history committed to paper” (p. 249). The self-publishing histories that Moore suggests emphasize self-publishing as a potential tool for both identifying the systems of power that allow some voices to be authorized and heard over others and challenging those systems. Notably absent from Moore’s
discussion is an acknowledgment that self-publishing in general, and zines particularly, can also function to replicate and reinforce such systems, a point to which I return in chapter eight.

**Science Fiction Fanzines.** The most standard history, and the one that explains the name “zines,” links the medium to a tradition of science fiction “fanzines” dating back to the 1930s. When science fiction emerged as a genre, Holdaway (1997/2008) writes in his history section of the how-to book *Make a Zine*, publishers of sci-fi pulp novels and magazines were “inundated with reader mail nitpicking technical details in their stories” (p. 17). Publisher Shawn Granton of the zine *Ten Foot Rule* continues this narrative:

> The editors started getting sick of it, and one editor had the idea of just starting publishing people’s full addresses. What that meant was that all these sci-fi fans started writing each other, not just the actual magazines, and from that, people started making what today would be called a zine, but back then a fanzine. (Biel & Sano, 2007)

These fanzines included critiques and discussions of professionally written science fiction, as well as the fans’ own science fiction creations, in which “beloved serial stories were embellished and supplemented as fans wrote new, usually unauthorized, adventures to tide them over between installments, or to keep characters alive after a series ended” (Bartel, 2004, p. 7).

The practice of making fanzines, Bartel continues, “allowed individuals to ignore, if not destroy, the distinction between those who create and those who consume” (p. 8). Moore (2010) adds:

> To some degree, fanzines grew out of a passion for a genre fans couldn’t get enough of. But they were also a legitimate testing ground for new directions in which to push that genre, as well as a way for writers...to practice skills untaught in most schools. (p. 245)
The sci-fi fanzine narrative, echoed with more or less detail in almost every article or book about zines, is often used to make a point important to many zinesters: “zine” is short for “fanzine,” not “magazine.” On one level, this can be read as a bit of trivia that marks a border between outsiders and insiders, but I believe there is something more important at stake in the distinction. Though it may seem like a small difference, “zine” short for “magazine” implies that a zine is a deficient magazine, an attempt at a magazine. “Zine” short for “fanzine” implies an evolution of a distinctive, independent form that grows out of a particular personalized relationship with cultural products—and a challenge to who has the authority to create cultural products and for what purposes. On this point, Wright (1997) quotes Larry-bob of the zine Holytitclamps:

Zine is not short for magazine. A magazine is a product, a commercial commodity. A zine is a labor of love, producing no profit...[In a magazine,] information is just another ingredient, thinly sliced layers to keep the cream filling of advertising from sticking together. Information is the reason a zine exists. (“The Word,” para. 1)

A second function of the sci-fi fanzine narrative is that it locates zines historically in the quirky, esoteric, and obscure. Through this narrative, contemporary zinesters inherit a legacy of obsession with details that other people don’t think matter (such as the inconsistencies of sci-fi pulp novels), and a connection to each other based on a common belief that such details are, in fact, important.

The development of zines through sci-fi fanzines has some specific implications for how zines have historically created and addressed publics. Perkins (1992) describes sci-fi fanzines’ relevance to 1980s zines and zine culture with the following points:

- Fanzines are published by and for special interest groups and they provide a physical link between these communities and, equally importantly, they provide a place for networking and exchange within this community. The inclusion of correspondents’ and
contributors’ addresses establishes the fanzine as an ‘open system’, and one in which interaction and reader involvement is essential.

- The distribution of fanzines takes place principally within the community that generated it (small print runs and the uncommercial ethos mitigating against wider circulation). Aside from subscribers and contributors, editors frequently adopt a fairly idiosyncratic approach to who receives copies, with some fanzines not for sale and some for exchange only.

Though Perkins does not draw on a language of public sphere theory, we can see that his points correlate to some of its important themes: zines are created within and addressed to specific publics that, paraphrasing Warner (2002, p. 10), consist of certain kinds of people in certain kinds of social worlds drawing on certain media, genres, and languages. Zines help to create those publics through an “open system” that allows for what Warner calls “reflexive circulation of discourse,” which he writes might be accomplished through “reviews, reprinting, citations, and controversies”—all common features of zines (pp. 90, 95).

**Punk.** Another critical history of zines, punk rock music and culture in the 1970s introduced new interest in amateurism through the philosophy of “do it yourself” (DIY). With punk music, Bartel (2004) writes, “came a new lifestyle, complete with politics, dress code, and zines” (p. 8). Fans of punk adapted the format of sci-fi fanzines and began creating fanzines about bands, documenting, participating in, and even creating this underground culture. Perkins (1992) describes their creations:

The most basic ingredients of punk zines were the ubiquitous gig reviews, interviews with bands, record & tape reviews, personal rants, letters from readers and a healthy dose of undigested leftist/libertarian/anarchist tracts, manifestoes and pronouncements, all strewn together within a potpourri of collages, montages, ransom note lettering, and banal mass media images juxtaposed against assorted taboo imagery. (“Punk Zines,” para. 4)
The DIY ethic of punk and the aesthetics of punk zines have made lasting contributions to zines even outside of punk culture. Also, Moore (2010) writes, zines’ role in punk culture broadened their distribution beyond the mail exchange of early sci-fi fanzines:

This infusion of print media into a culture focused on live performance opened up previously unexplored distribution options. Suddenly, going to see music often meant picking up three or four zines handed out for free, traded for mix tapes, dropped into bathrooms, or sold very cheaply at tables set up in the backs of venues. (p. 246)

These distribution methods later became possibilities for zine genres other than punk music fanzines.

**Factsheet Five.** In 1982, Mike Gunderloy created another lasting change in zine distribution. A science fiction fan, Gunderloy became tired of typing the same information about the fanzines he was reading to send in letters to different people he wrote to regularly. “Rather than keep repeating myself,” he writes, “I typed up two pages of notes…and made copies for all of my correspondents” (Gunderloy, 1989, p. 53). His notes were the beginning of Factsheet Five, a network zine comprised of listings and reviews of other zines, and “perhaps the most influential zine of all time” (Bartel, 2004, p. 9). At this point, Duncombe writes, the “tributaries” of sci-fi fanzines and punk rock fanzines were:

joined by smaller streams of publications created by fans of other cultural genres, disgruntled self-publishers, and the remnants of printed political dissent from the sixties and seventies, [and] were brought together and cross-fertilized through listings and reviews in network zines like Factsheet Five. As the ‘fan’ was by and large dropped off ‘zine,’ and their numbers increased exponentially, a culture of zines developed. (Duncombe, 1997, p. 7)

Within just a few years, Factsheet Five was listing and reviewing thousands of zines and had a readership in the thousands as well. In the early years, Factsheet Five listings were not organized in categories or alphabetically, meaning that there was no way to see only
the listings for one kind of zine. With Factsheet Five publishing addresses and prices for zines in many different genres, it also became possible to order zines outside of one’s immediate area of interest. Through this process, Duncombe writes, “zines began to slip their moorings as fanzines of their host cultures and take their position under a wider umbrella of zines qua zines” (p. 51).

**Discovery.** By the late 1980s and early 1990s, zines began to receive some coverage in mainstream media. But many zinesters were not particularly happy with this attention, especially given the mainstream media tendency to distort zines’ messages. Holdaway (1997/2008) notes that “they tended to view zines as a novelty rather than as a legitimate form of art or literature” (p. 19). Duncombe (1997) agrees that news outlets were interested in zines’ novelty, but, he writes, “others recognized a different sort of value in underground culture” (p. 132): despite all its oppositionality, it could be sold. The early 1990s saw the mainstream discovery of grunge music, the establishment of “alternative” as a commercial music genre, and the release of corporate “zines” such as Time-Warner’s Dirt and Urban Outfitters’ Slant. Alternative culture had “transform[ed] from critique into marketing category” (p. 132). The “discovery” of underground culture and zines, Duncombe writes, became a solution for marketers struggling to “reach a younger generation that feels particularly estranged from the culture and products – factory-made, mass-produced, and phony – of the corporate world” (p. 135). Duncombe catalogs several of the strategies zinesters used to resist co-optation by corporate interests, including Riot Grrrl’s media blackout policy; zinesters sabotaging attempts to cover them in mainstream media, such as “Dishwasher Pete’s” sending an impersonator when he was invited to be a guest on David Letterman; and zinesters’ embracing irony and ever more obscure topics. By the end of the 1990s, this mainstream attention generally subsided (Brent & Biel, 2008), though academic
attention was just beginning. Also by the end of this decade, many publishers of long-running zines had stopped publishing, turning to “more mainstream creative endeavors” or to the internet (Holdaway, 1997/2008, p. 19).

**Zines in the Digital Age.** As internet access has increased, many former zinesters have turned their zines into e-zines or simply turned to blogs for self-expression. Fewer zines are being produced in the 2000s and 2010s than in the 1990s, but the medium has far from died out; the social networking site We Make Zines ([www.wemakezines.ning.com](http://www.wemakezines.ning.com)) boasts over 3,200 members,\(^{10}\) and large zine events are held each year in several major cities.\(^{11}\) Paper zines continue to be sold, traded, and given away through these events, through the mail, at concerts and political events, in independent bookstores and coffee shops, through distributors or “distros,” and through newer online venues like We Make Zines and Etsy ([www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)). Holdaway (1997/2008) suggests that new and continuing zinesters have benefitted from both the new distribution possibilities opened by the internet and the “fresh, open environment” resulting from the decrease in the numbers and mainstream visibility of zines in the early 2000s (p. 19). Brent and Biel (2008) similarly remark:

> The zines that remain, and those that pick up the torch, are producing at a much higher standard. Ideas are much more developed and elaborated on. Zine aesthetics are at an all-time high....People who continue to publish zines in the 21st century follow that pursuit because it appeals to them on a personal and individual level. (p. 130)

Another consequence of digital media is the need for zinesters who remain committed to paper to articulate their reasoning on this point—obviously, this is a question that the

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\(^{10}\) as of February, 2011, a 60% increase from its membership when I began this chapter in 2009

\(^{11}\) Large zine events are held annually in Portland, OR; Houston, TX; Richmond, VA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; and Madison, WI, to name a few.
zinesters of the 1970s and 1980s did not have to answer. Discussion of the differences between paper and digital media and the continuing importance of paper is a common feature of 21st century zine narratives of all kinds (see, for example, Bartel, 2004; Brent & Biel, 2008; Freedman, 2005; Piepmeier, 2008, 2009; Todd & Watson, 2006; Xyerra, 2010), and an issue I take up further in chapter seven. However, this is not to say that all zinesters reject the internet as an avenue of expression: many zinesters create digital media in addition to their zines, keeping a related (or unrelated) blog, website, or twitter feed.

Definitions and Context

Zines are notoriously difficult to define because their range of textual and physical forms is broad, and much of what makes a zine a zine is embedded in the circumstances of its production, which may or may not be visible in the final product. Duncombe suggests a best way to tell someone what a zine is: hand her a stack and let her decide. Pressed for a definition, he offers this: zines are "noncommercial, nonprofessional small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves" (p. 6). Another common way to define zines is through the intentions behind them. Brent and Biel write in Make a Zine (2008) that, “a popularly agreed upon definition is a periodical produced more from passion than intention to make money” (p. 12, emphasis original), which connects to Factsheet Five editor Seth Friedman’s requirement that zines be produced “purely out of passion” (qtd. in Chu, 1997, p. 71). Rebecca Gilbert, co-founder of the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IRPC) in Portland, OR, also locates the essence of zines in intention; she says, “I think a lot of it is the intention behind it, and to me, zines aren’t about making money” (Biel & Sano, 2007). Instead, she suggests, they should involve “the intention to foster some kind of community, to educate, to have fun—those are all part of what a zine is.”
To define zines through intention is to move the locus of concern away from the form and text itself or even the material circumstances of its production, and toward the values and self-identifications of the people who make zines. Despite the great variation in zines’ topics and forms, then, zines are the productions of people who see themselves as participants in a (counter)public of zine-making.

Of course there is debate about to what extent what zinesters often refer to as “the zine community” shares a set of common values, or even exists. In an exploration of the ethics of zines, Brent and Biel (2008) quote two zinesters with very different assumptions about these issues. The first, Claudia McBarron, suggests, “I think the overall values of zine makers are inherently the same…free speech, corporate-free literacy, personal power” (qtd., p. 126). On the other hand, Craven Rock challenges the idea that a zine community exists, arguing that postulating such a zine community limits the content and ethics of zines. Rock says, “The rise of the ‘zinester’ and the D.I.Y. kids’ co-optation of the culture is at the cost of the writer/artist who just uses an available medium” (qtd., p. 126). While zines are written by a great variety of people and on a great variety of subjects, their centrality to punk/D.I.Y. culture means there are a lot of zines on a few subjects: Rock cites “vegan cooking, bikes, making out, [and] polyamoury” as the most common topics (p. 127). Also reflecting punk/D.I.Y. culture, most zinesters are White, young, and have middle class backgrounds (Bleyer, 2004; Duncombe, 1997; Radway, 2011; Schilt, 2003).12 Though Rock’s resistance to the idea of a zine community may seem to contradict a reading of zines as (counter)public writing, his complaints about the field of topics in fact demonstrate that zines are not simply “an

12 See chapter eight for further discussion of this issue.
available medium,” but rather one with a particular history and, like all media, certain ideological investments.

These investments are particularly visible in discussions about intention and values following the “discovery” (Duncombe, 1997) of zines by mainstream media in the 1990s, which led to new efforts by marketers to capitalize on the hipness and cynicism of underground culture. Ironically, Duncombe writes, “the underground’s condemnation of the dominant culture was being used to package and sell that very same culture” (p. 133). Attempts by companies like Urban Outfitters, the Body Shop, Warner Music, Sirius, and Nike to create “zines” to act as discrete advertisements (Biel & Sano, 2007; Duncombe, 1997) raised concerns in underground culture about “selling out,” or producing something that can ultimately be marketed by the mainstream. The need to exclude such products explains why zines are generally defined not by their final forms but by their intentions: IRPC co-founder Rebecca Gilbert says, “When a corporation is using a zine format to market their products, to make money off of it, I wouldn’t consider it a zine anymore. The intention is not there” (Biel & Sano, 2007). For some in the zine world, the idea that something that looks like a zine and calls itself a zine might not be a zine extends not only to pieces produced by corporations, but to any so-called zine that doesn’t follow DIY ethics: zinester Missy Lavalee refers to these as “zInes”—rhyming with “mines” instead of “means” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 154).13 The threat of co-optation is one reason why intention and context are so important in defining zines—zinesters’ very world-making project is seen as being under assault. If

13 The particular choice of “zInes” to represent these so-called impostor zines could be interpreted as the privileging of individual gain and profit (signified by “I” or “mine”) over community values. “ZInes” is also a common mispronunciation of “zines” by people who aren’t familiar with the form, so we could also read the designation “zInes” as signifying outsider status.
the form of zines alone cannot signify their oppositionality, then appeals to values and intention become alternate ways to articulate that position.

Of course, defining zines in terms of intention has limitations: zinesters are not the only people who write or make art or do anything because they like it and not for money or other traditional rewards, and that characteristic alone does not suggest the existence of a counterpublic. Many people do many things for, paraphrasing Gilbert, community, education, and fun. And when things that are traditionally done for those reasons do happen to become profitable, say when a member of a loosely knit group of pottery hobbyists is suddenly able make a good living at selling pottery, no one doubts that what that person is making is still pottery. What makes zines different then, what makes zines zines, is not simply intention based in passion rather than money, but intention that is specifically adversarial. “Unlike hobbyists,” Duncombe (1997) writes, “the creators of zines consciously bestow their activity with adversarial meaning. It is this adversarial intent that elevates what might be considered just a variation on the common practice of a majority of Americans into a political proposal” (p. 103). Zines are defined, then, by their oppositionality, their critique of the systems that tie culture and money together in consumerism, and their presentation of an alternative: DIY culture.

Politics

Through this oppositionality and presentation of an alternative, all zines are tied to a project of critique and a re-envisioning, or world-making, that makes them public, political acts. However, zines’ treatment of politics differs from their predecessors in pamphlets: unlike 18th century pamphlets, which used a personal voice to articulate a public discourse, in zines “politics—like all other topics—is primarily a personal discourse” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 28). In zines, not only is the personal political, but the
political is also personal: the particulars of day-to-day life are of political significance, and abstract political forces are concretized in the minutiae of personal experience. This personalization, Duncombe writes, represents “an attempt by people to re-draw connections between everyday ‘losers’ like themselves and the politics that affect them, to collapse the difference between the personal self and the political world” (p. 31). Disillusioned with both mainstream politics and mainstream media, zinesters articulate a politics that is grounded in everyday life: decisions about what to eat, what (not) to buy, how to get around, how to conduct relationships, where to get information, and how to sustain oneself in a flawed system without abandoning one’s values are all conceived of as political choices so often made invisible by an idea of politics as voting every few years. Abstract political issues like globalization, gentrification, censorship, and the consolidation of media are made concrete through anecdotes and personal responses. These connections reflect an approach to public discourse often lost when, as Warner (2002) writes, public speech is misrecognized as only rational discussion. Zines’ approach to politics as the telling of individual and community stories is a way zines enact publicness outside of rational discussion.

Another way that zines engage in publicness apart from rational discussion is through the theme of theft. Zines approach theft in several ways: many zines present narratives of and instructions for shoplifting, breaking into buildings, and other petty theft. Second, zines often steal images and text from mainstream sources like advertisements and logos, magazines, and books, using them without permission or acknowledgment. Finally, many zines are made during work time, with stolen paper and copies. Duncombe (1997) writes, “Tales of sabotage and theft are not just represented in zines, but often by them. Stealing the materials and ‘borrowing’ the technology necessary to produce zines is part and parcel of making zines” (p. 81). The
idea of stealing time and materials from work even extends to the reading of zines: introducing a book collection of his zine *On Subbing*, Dave Roche (2008) suggests that we read it “in intervals, preferably at school or work” (p. 1). Theft and reuse of images, text, materials, technology, and time are part of the ways zinesters sabotage systems from which they are alienated; these actions symbolize, according to Duncombe, “a refusal to become part of the cycle of ‘responsible’ work and consumption” (p. 83). Though not a feature of all zines, theft is part of what makes zines concretely opposed to mainstream values, embedding their counterpublic stance in the circumstances of their production.

Even the look and style of zines can be conceived of as part of a public, political message. Duncombe (1997) writes:

> Zines, whether as a result of conscious design […] or merely as the sloppy and scruffy side effect of being amateur and hand-made, don’t allow the reader to be sucked in. Instead of allowing readers to relax and slip into the medium, zines push them away. Zines are dissonant; their juxtapositions in design and strong feelings in content are unsettling. Instead of offering a conflict-free escape from a tumultuous world, they hold up a mirror to it. As opposed to the happy fantasy world of mass culture, the purpose of many zines is to piss readers off, have them work to make sense of the bizarre world of the writer. (p. 128)

In other words, zines express their alienation from consumer culture through an alienating form, one continually calling attention to its own amateurishness. Most eschew the false authority of the “slick” or professional-looking form in favor of one that calls attention to its own making, that is, borrowing Miller’s (2005) idea, in-the-making, calling attention not only to the fact that it was constructed but to the process of its own construction and essential unfinished-ness. Zines’ styles and formats, like their focus on personal stories and use of theft, become ways of being public outside of the rational argument that we traditionally think of as constituting public discussion.
Zines as (counter)public writing not only exhibit different ways of being public than Habermas envisioned in his description of the bourgeois public sphere; the very conditions that make publicness possible are different. Comparing counterpublics to Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere, Warner (2002) writes:

The bourgeois public sphere consists of private persons whose identity is formed in the privacy of the conjugal domestic family and who enter into rational critical debate around matters common to all by bracketing their embodiment and status. Counterpublics of sexuality and gender, on the other hand, are scenes of association and identity that transform the private lives they mediate... These public contexts necessarily entail and bring into being realms of subjectivity outside the conjugal domestic family.

While in Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere, public citizenship becomes possible through a shared conception of private citizenship, it is zinesters’ rejection of certain aspects of this conception of private citizenship that motivate their (counter)public discussion. Zines, for instance, often emphasize identities and lifestyle choices in ways that challenge the normativity of heterosexuality, monogamy, marriage, and nuclear families. They may do this through the presentation of alternatives to normative constructs or through portrayals of potentially mainstream identities and lifestyles in ways that explicitly identify them as particular paths among many. Either way, zines’ world-making projects are tied to the creation of types of public citizenship that are not based in domestic privacy or enacted through rational debate. Warner’s elaboration of the work of counterpublics of gender and sexuality here might also be applied to thinking about zines in a more general sense:

A public, or counterpublic, can do more than represent the interests of gendered or sexualized persons in a public sphere. It can mediate the most private and intimate meanings of gender and sexuality. It can work to elaborate new worlds of culture and social relations in which gender and sexuality can be lived, including forms of intimate association,
vocabularies of affect, styles of embodiment, erotic practices, and relations of care and pedagogy. (p. 57)

Instead of Habermas’s vision of public rational debate grounded in the common privacy of the bourgeois domestic family, zines as (counter)publics create entirely different ways of being public, emerging from understandings of the private (or the personal) as contested and publicly relevant. A (counter)public of zining is not a space in which pre-formed private individuals simply come together to act as a public; rather, participants in this (counter)public mediate their private and public lives through their participation.

Revolution Girl Style: Girl Zines, (Counter)publics, and Literacy

These aspects of zine (counter)publics are particularly evident in histories and studies of the Riot Grrrl zine scene, perhaps the most cited and most studied zine movement (Bleyer, 2004; Chidgey, 2009; Comstock, 2001; Freedman, 2009; Green & Toarmino, 1997; Harris, 2003; Radway, 2001; Robbins, 1999; Schilt, 2003; Schilt & Zobl, 2008; Zobl, 2003, 2004, 2009). Riot Grrrl emerged in the early 1990s as a grassroots movement that combined feminism and punk rock, critiquing both exclusive, patriarchal systems in punk culture and normative versions of mainstream feminism through zines and punk music. The movement appropriated the word “girl,” replacing it with the growling “grrrl,” Comstock (2001) writes, “as a critique of dominant and punk girl images and as an alternative collective identity for young women writers” (p. 386). Riot Grrrl chapters were started in cities across the U.S. and later, as Schilt and Zobl (2008) point out, internationally. The chapters operated independently with no central leadership, and members of these chapters produced thousands of zines under
the rallying cry “Revolution Girl Style Now!” Bleyer (2004), an original Riot Grrrl member, writes of the movement’s revolutionary aspirations:

Revolution Girl Style was touted with an almost religious fervor. It seemed that if we only churned out enough zines and screamed loud enough, people would listen and society would quake. I do think this happened, in the way that small revolutions happen whenever people challenge the status quo and demonstrate alternative models of living in the world. (p. 50)

Bleyer’s comments emphasize Riot Grrrl’s world-making project, its attempt through the circulation of zines and songs to enact visions of “Revolution Girl Style” that were “alternately sexy, angry, emotional, feminine, combative, childish—and unapologetically contradictory” (p. 50). Presenting visions of liberation that sometimes clashed with those of second-wave feminism, Riot Grrrl zines, Piepmeier (2009) argues, became “sites for the articulation of a vernacular third wave feminist theory” (p. 4).

Comstock (2001) further examines the ways in which the Riot Grrrl zine scene functioned as a (counter)public:

The effects of [Riot Grrrl’s homemade network], however, have been social as well as personal, as many young women have begun to understand themselves as writers and participants within a significant, alternative public sphere. Similar to Nancy Fraser’s concept of “subaltern counterpublics,” zines such as Bikini Kill serve a dual private and public function. The zine’s rant spaces, on the one hand, offer places away from oppressive home, school, and work environments where young women can confess, receive support, and regroup (Fraser 123). On the other hand, they constitute a “training ground” for cultural and political activities directed toward wider publics (see Fraser 114). The dialectic between these two functions—private enclave and public training ground—gives these grrrl counterpublics their emancipatory potential within the stratified societies of both mass and alternative cultures. (p. 394)

Providing both a place to explore concepts like “girl love” among themselves and a place to circulate arguments ultimately destined for broader audiences, Riot Grrrl zines
take up the inward and outward address that Fraser (1999) suggests characterizes counterpublics.

Like other aspects of zine culture, Riot Grrrl was sensationalized by the media and appropriated by corporate interests for advertising. Bleyer complains that the “grrrl power” of Riot Grrrl, based in D.I.Y./feminist values, was sanitized and sold back to girls and women as the “girl power” of the Spice Girls and Sex and the City, or, in her words, “capitalism dressed up in baby doll dresses, blue nail polish, and mall-bought nose rings” (p. 51). Though the peak of Riot Grrrl’s cultural visibility was in the late 1990’s, Schilt and Zobl (2008) demonstrate its continuing relevance in the U.S. and abroad through contemporary networks of what they call “grrrl zines” (zines which may or may not be associated with Riot Grrrl and in which girls, women, and queer and transgender people write with feminist perspectives), as well as feminist festivals for music, art, and activism called “Ladyfests.” Riot Grrrl has also piqued the interest of scholars interested in the literacy practices and identity constructions of adolescent girls (Comstock, 2001; Ferris, 2001; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Harris, 2003; Schilt, 2003; Zobl, 2004), contributing to rising interest in zines as public pedagogy.

Conclusion

A study of zine pedagogy demands careful attention to the histories, contexts, and politics of zine counterpublics so that we can understand what is at stake in bringing zines into classrooms, and to ground our understandings of the teacher/zinesters’ narratives of zine pedagogy. This chapter has attempted to offer a sketch; issues that are particularly relevant to the study’s findings will be treated in
greater depth in the remaining chapters. The next chapter introduces the seven teacher/zinesters who participated in the study.
Chapter Five: Teacher/Zinesters

The 2009 Portland Zine Symposium (PZS) was held in the Smith Memorial Ballroom at Portland State University (PSU), and in 2010 the meeting was moved to a larger campus space, the Peter W. Stott Gymnasium, for its 10th anniversary. An annual free public event, the Portland Zine Symposium mission is to “promote greater community between diverse creators of independent publications and art” (http://pdxzines.com/info/faq/). In early 2009, while trying to find details of a teen zine project I had heard about at PSU, I stumbled onto information on the symposium, and I decided to go, hoping to recruit participants for this research project. Of the major zine fest events in the United States, PZS had the best timing in relation to my project timeline, and, as home to Stolen Sharpie Revolution (Wrekk, 2009), Microcosm Publishing, and the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC), Portland is an important center for zine culture. Though I did attempt to recruit participants in other ways, as I describe in chapter three, all the participants who completed the project were recruited through PZS 2009 (Ib, Blandy, Morehouse, Tama, and Valdes) or 2010 (O’Malley and Asbell). This chapter introduces these teacher/zinesters in roughly the order that I met them, presenting their stories of how they became involved in zines and describing their zines (when applicable), their teaching, and how they use zines in teaching.

I use the word “teacher/zinesters” to describe these participants, not to fix or privilege either label, but to indicate a flexible relationship between the two with the
slash signifying “and/or.” Thus, teacher/zinesters might be teachers who read zines, zinesters who teach school, zinesters who teach zines, teachers who write zines, or people who read and teach about zines, and so on. A teacher/zinester might identify primarily as a zinester, primarily as a teacher, or not really as either, though they participate in both teaching and zining together in some way. I chose the word “zinester” here as opposed to zine writer or zine publisher, for instance, because “zinester” can also mean someone who reads zines and participates in zine culture but does not necessarily publish a zine. However, there are people who make or read zines who eschew this label, such as Craven Rock, the zine writer who initiated a discussion of the term in a We Make Zines forum about “anti-zinester sentiment.”

A. J. Michel similarly states, “I am not a zinester. I make zines. More accurately, I am a small publisher. Identifying [myself] as a ‘zinester’ comes with an entire set of expectations, some of which I agree with and many that I don’t want to be associated with” (qtd. in Bartel, 2004, p. 16). My use of the word “teacher/zinester,” then, is not a reference to a fixed identity but to multiple possibilities for relationship to the medium of zines and the practice of teaching.

Teacher/Zinester Profiles

I first became involved with zines when I was in junior high. I heard about zines through a local rock n’ roll talk show on the radio. They were interviewing some fanzine writer about zines and I was very interested in the idea of putting something out in the world that is all your own. I wasn’t very good at playing music, but I knew that I could write and

\[14\text{http://wemakezines.ning.com/forum/topics/antizinester-sentiment-how-do?xg_source=activity}\]
draw. It was my way of doing something “punk.” So, I cut and pasted together my first issue. I made maybe five copies, at most, and went to the local library and used their copy machine. I didn’t know how to do double-sided copies, so I glued each page together, back to back. The zine weighed a ton with the glue. I gave it to my friend and she kind of just shrugged. For me it was a very intense personal experience, just putting myself out there.

lb publishes the perzine *Truckface*, and has also published the zines *Susie is a Robot* and *So Midwest*. The last four issues of *Truckface* (lb, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010b) have centered on lb’s experiences as a pre-service teacher, student teacher, and beginning English teacher in Chicago public schools. In the introduction to one of these zines, a section titled, “This Ain’t No Freaking Dangerous Minds,” lb writes, “This is Truckface #13, detailing an unlucky first year of teaching. All names have been changed. Mistakes have been made. Disasters were not averted” (2009, n. pag.).

When I met lb, at the 2009 Portland Zine Symposium (PZS), she told me that she had done a zine project with her ninth grade English class that year, but that it was “just because we had two weeks left and I didn’t know what else to do.” Weeks later, when I received her first emailed responses and project handout, I was amazed that she had described the project to me that way at PZS, as a filler project. Her class had produced a collaborative zine in which each student contributed a page. lb invited her students to write a first-person narrative or comic strip about their first year in high school, the record-breaking violence in Chicago schools that year, or changes they would make to education if they could. The class zine project was included in *Truckface #13* (2009) as an item in the short, handwritten list of “Good things that happened this year” near the end of the zine:
Good things that happened this year:

- Having the support and guidance of my fellow teachers.

- A thank you phone call from a parent at the end of the year.

- Making a class zine with 3rd period.

- Two of my students won a writing contest with an essay they wrote for class.

- Students trusted me enough to help them out with their personal problems.

- Teaching students how to play Scrabble. Words were 3 letter long and usually misspelled.

- Knowing that my friends were ready and waiting for me at the end of the school year.
As a high school student in the late 1960s I was associated with the creation and distribution of an "underground newspaper" in a Columbus, Ohio suburb. I later went on to study book arts in graduate school (late 1970s early 1980s) and was most interested in those that were produced cheaply and widely distributed. My interest in punk connected me with zines produced in the central Ohio area at the time. I have continued to read and collect zines since that time.

Doug Blandy serves as the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, a Professor and Program Director in the Arts and Administration Program, and the Director of the Institute for Community Arts Studies at the University of Oregon. Blandy’s research and teaching are grounded in the belief that the arts are “a catalyst for dialogue about individual and group identity; local, national, and international concerns; and ultimately the pursuit of democracy.”15 His interest in how communities create and participate in democracy through art has led to a variety of projects related to community arts.

For the last eight years, Blandy has been teaching a course at UO called “Zines and Do it Yourself Democracy.” The course began as a freshman seminar and has evolved into a workshop facilitated by upper division students, typically students who have taken the course in a previous semester or year. In this course, students “investigate and participate in the world of zines” (AAD 199 syllabus): they read widely about zine culture, attend zine or DIY events, and create 4-5 zines, which might include perzines, political zines, fanzines, collaborative zines, fictional zines, or how-to zines. With co-author Kristen Congdon, Blandy has published several articles about his work teaching zines (Congdon & Blandy, 2003, 2005).

15 http://aad.uoregon.edu/index.cfm?mode=faculty&page=dblandy, Research and Teaching Interests, September 29, 2010
Zinesters demand that you think about gender roles, religion, familial relationships, politics, sexual orientation, the environment, academic disciplines, the arts, class structure, ethnicity, generational differences, economics, and pop culture in new ways. Zinesters question politicians, value systems, eating habits, body politics, class structures, and numerous other topics through personal and controversial words and pictures. Zinesters operate outside formal political spheres and state structures. Zines exemplify a type of independent social critique and public engagement necessary to democracy.
Lucy Morehouse

When I was in high school I was very, very involved in yearbook, competing at a national level with that. Through that experience I discovered that I really love writing and editing and layout and just the whole process of creating publications. Then, I worked back and forth in various publishing capacities. But it wasn’t until I became involved in the music community that I decided to put it all together and create a publication, and that was probably about 6 years ago now, that I made my first zine, which was a compilation of nonfiction and art, and I am still doing that project. So I actually started doing zines because it was something that a mentor suggested that I do.

Lucy Morehouse is one of the editors of *Ong Ong*, a compilation fanzine of art, non-fiction, and music (a CD accompanies each issue). On the zine’s website, Morehouse states:

It’s true. We cut everything out of bits of paper and then stick it on with glue and then make photocopies. Yes. And then we staple the booklets into silkscreened covers with a CD of obscure tunes, seal it in a baggie, and send it out into the wide world.

Three cheers for print media! We work in the living room mostly! You can do it! (www.ongongpress.com)

Morehouse has been teaching 2-hour zine workshops for the last three years in Seattle Public Libraries. She has taught zines in other community settings including 826 Seattle, the Powerful Voices program, and the Nova project. Last year she was a student teacher in a Seattle alternative high school, and the students in her advanced writing course created a class zine as the culmination project for a unit focused on organization (Morehouse & Advanced Writing, n.d.). In this unit, which also included elements focused on spoken word poetry and hip hop, she hoped to have students realize that “organizational patterns exist in strong writing from all cultures.”
M. Carrol Tama

After finding out about [zines] from the Multnomah Central Library's young adult librarian, Ruth Allen, and seeing middle school and high school students designing them as well as selling them for clients at the
Portland Zine [Symposium], I decided to use them in my Writing across the Content Areas class. In addition, my co-author and I wrote about them and provided a strategy for their use in the classroom, in our text, *Write More! Learn More!* [(Tama & McClain, 2006)]

M. Carrol Tama is a professor emerita of literacy education at Portland State University; she teaches distance learning courses to middle and high school teachers in Oregon who are working on a reading endorsement through a program called “Read Oregon: Collaborative for the Improvement of Literacy.” In 2004, she began incorporating zines into the course, offering teachers the opportunity to create a zine as a final project for the course, among other options. “Not everyone chooses to do a zine, but a number do,” she says. Tama’s goal in using zines in this class is “to show teachers that if their students are given the opportunity to write about what they want, not what a curriculum or teacher assigns, the teacher is more likely to experience a student’s voice and realize much more creative as well as interesting writing.” Zines are also included as one of three possible activities in a chapter on writing projects in Tama and McClain’s *Write More! Learn More! Writing Across the Curriculum.* This book offers suggested national standards that teaching zines may support, a description of zines as multigenre publications with self-selected topics, a “procedures” section with recommended ways to include zines in the classroom, and an example zine that includes the text of a zine written by a high school teacher about traveling to the Republic of Georgia. Blackline masters of a “Zine Project Checklist” and “Zine Scoring Guide” are also included. The checklist, for instance, asks students to check off the cover, table of contents, dear reader letter, genres (suggesting poetry, essay, interview, nonfiction piece, and fiction as possibilities), a distribution plan, and reflective piece. Unique among the teacher/zinesters in this project, Tama comes to zines primarily as a teacher rather than as a zinester or zine reader.
Michel Valdes

I think it was back in 2003-2004, my girlfriend at the time sent away for some zines through a Microcosm Publishing catalog. I had no idea what they were but really admired the writing and the interest in making something and sending it out into the world via mail. My first real job was working as a teacher’s assistant at an elementary school. I journaled every day about the first year of the experience and turned that into my first zine. It was such an amazing time in my life; I was reminded of how good it felt to read others’ experiences through zines that I thought I would do it myself.

Michel Valdes publishes the zine School Daze (2006, n.d.-b), a diary-comic zine about teaching middle school, as well as a number of single-issue zines: 27 (2007), which chronicles the 27 days prior to Valdes’s 27th birthday; To Do (2008), a mini-comic about not doing laundry; and Kick, Kick, Kick (2010), a zine about learning to swim at age 30. He’s also published The Lost Diary of Astronaut Jim (n.d.-a), a space comic about an astronaut who finds himself on an inhabitable planet after a spaceship crash.

Valdes teaches sixth, seventh, and eighth grade science, math, and special education in Los Angeles, CA. He has used zines in teaching in some way each of his five years of teaching, but typically not through large-scale projects. He explains, “It wasn’t anything that was thought out the first few times I brought them up. I really enjoy reading zines and making them, and I guess that just naturally came out in my teaching.” Valdes has led zines and mini-comics clubs at lunch, created a zine about dealing with social situations with four students who had been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome in a social skills class, and drawn on zine formats for a math project.
A.M. O’Malley

I lived in a really small community, and my interests were in alternative culture, and I really didn't have a lot of outlets. I lived in rural Wisconsin when I was in the 8th grade, and then we moved to South Dakota. And I just didn’t feel connected to my community, so I started looking for other avenues, and I heard about zines through...I think it was a friend of a friend’s older brother had one. And I saw it, and I just instantly knew that it was something that I wanted to know more about and be part of. And
then I just started seeking them out and finding them, and that was when the Riot Grrrl movement was happening and a lot of zines were being made, and so I started getting them and sending away for them. And then I started making my own. And then I just never stopped making zines.

A.M. O’Malley’s most recent zine is called *Take a Picture, it Lasts Longer* (2010); it is a collection of stories which she describes as mostly true, “with some details brushed under the rug, and some brought to light.” O’Malley is the Program Coordinator at the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC) in Portland, Oregon. In operation since 1998, the IPRC’s mission is to “facilitate creative expression, identity and community by providing individual access to tools and resources for creating independently published media and artwork.” The IPRC offers potential independent publishers space to work, access to basic supplies as well as more specialized items like letterpresses and bookbinding machines, a zine library, and a variety of workshops and classes with topics ranging from the use of IPRC equipment to a year-long certificate program in independent publishing, in which participants select a focus in fiction/nonfiction, poetry, or comics/graphic novels. Each Sunday, the center hosts “Zine Canteen,” a time when all workspace is reserved for youth.

A.M. coordinates the IPRC’s outreach programs, which bring workshops and residencies into schools, shelters, and various non-profit organizations. One workshop, called “Zines 101,” involves a single session of one to two hours in which the facilitator provides some background information on zines and their importance, and then the group creates a collaborative zine. This workshop has been held in hundreds of classrooms in and around Portland over the time that the IPRC has been operating. The IPRC has also held “Zines 101 for Educators” workshops designed to teach educators to

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16 [www.iprc.org/about](http://www.iprc.org/about), “Our Mission”
lead Zines 101. A more recent program is the Media Action Project, a four-session series in which youth participants analyze media messages relating to violence and masculinity, femininity and beauty, or consumerism and conspicuous consumption. Students create individual personal zines as part of the program’s goal to encourage students to become creators rather than merely consumers of media. IPRC outreach also includes longer residencies and more focused projects, ranging from week-long summer “zine camps” to collaborations over multiple years with senior centers and organizations that serve local homeless teens.

Figure 6: Back cover of IPRC Outreach Anthology Preview zine (n.d.), reprinted with permission
I found [a zine by local poet Drew Blood] in the local independent record store, and I was sitting there kind of pawing through these little Xeroxed little books, and I found this one zine that was...really talking very explicitly about sex and sexuality and identity, and I was so excited because it wasn’t censored at all—not at all! I actually kept looking over my shoulder going, are they allowed? Is anybody allowed to do this? Are you allowed to write like this? To write so explicitly about what it’s like to be gay, and to be in love? It was really shocking and revolutionary to me... I couldn’t believe how much this writer was just speaking from his experience and being true to the way he saw the world, and it was like nothing I’d really ever read before. I’d always loved literature—I’d read books, magazines, I’d read anything I could get my hands on my whole life, and it was like nothing I’d ever read. So initially I was kind of pulled toward zines because of that idea of this being our—my literature, this being the kind of stuff, the kind of writing that felt so close to my experience, and it excited me and made me want to write, made me want to make a zine, made me want to create, and it made me really feel like I could do it. (Asbell & Knight, 2009)

In this video interview, recorded by Annie Knight for a women’s studies course at Chapman University, Angela Asbell describes herself as a zinester, a writing teacher, a community activist, a poet, an artist, and “I think I already said it, but I’m a zinester.” Asbell writes under the pen names Angela Chaos and Madame Chaos, and the title of her zine, Bitch King, serves as a fourth name that she takes on. Exploring these names in poem titled “Angela Chaos = The Bitch King,” Asbell (2004) writes, “Naming is the power and naming myself gives me power. When I define myself, I become the subject of this sentence. / Because the Bitch King does not negotiate” (“Chaos”). Asbell describes her transformation into the “fearless, take-no-shit Madame Chaos,” a title combining female authority with a tradition that is, for Asbell, associated with “questioning authority, deconstructing ‘common sense,’ overthrowing tradition, evoking anarchy, dismantling the system, changing myself, changing the world.” She continues:
The Bitch King is my surname, a doctoral degree in revolution, a suffix to make me confusing and yet perfectly understandable.

The bitch is always female. The king is always male.

The king makes the law. The bitch transgresses...

Just imagine the world if we all named ourselves. (“Chaos”)

Asbell teaches writing as a lecturer at California State University, San Bernardino. As part of her courses for basic writers, she has incorporated a research zine project. Students read Klein’s (2000/2009) *No Logo*, which features a chapter on forms of resistance to corporatization, including zines. *No Logo* becomes the introduction to a research project, in which students choose a topic related to money or the economy and create a zine that includes an annotated bibliography and research proposal, among other components. At the end of the course, students teach the class about their topic and then distribute the zines they’ve created. Asbell has also taught a basic writing course in which zines were used as a type of portfolio, and she has had students read zines and read about zines in several upper division humanities capstone courses at her university. She is also a member of a collective called ZineWorks that offers community workshops and is in the process of creating a documentary about zines and teaching.

**Zine Stories**

When these teacher/zinesters’ stories of becoming involved with zines are read together, a few themes emerge. Many of the teacher/zinesters describe a person who introduced them to zines, whether through a close connection like Morehouse’s mentor or Valdes’s former girlfriend, or through a more indirect connection: the zinester lb heard interviewed on the radio or O’Malley’s friend of a friend’s older brother. Many
of the teacher/zinesters’ first exposures to zines were related to music: a record store (Asbell), a record label (Morehouse), a music-themed talk radio show (lb), or the punk music scene (Blandy and lb). Also, many of the narratives reference zine and alternative culture “institutions” (used loosely), including Riot Grrrl, Microcosm Publishing, and the Portland Zine Symposium. Finally, two of the teacher/zinesters use pen names: lb uses a pen name instead of her given name, signaling a desire for privacy, while Asbell uses one in addition to her given name, acting as an alternate identity.

Also in these narratives, and in the images and quotations that accompany them, we can see instances of the themes that will be drawn out in the next three chapters: space, publishing, and conversation. In terms of publishing, the focus of chapter seven, I am struck by the connections the teacher/zinesters make to other literacy and publishing experiences, such as Blandy’s involvement with underground newspapers, Morehouse’s experiences with yearbook, and the comparisons Asbell makes to her other reading experiences. Also relevant to publishing, both lb and Morehouse describe the physical process of creating a zine, ending with it being sent out into the world.

In chapter eight, which focuses on conversation, I examine expressions of affirmation in narratives about zines and zine pedagogy that reflect DIY tenets of accessibility, participation, and self-authorization. Morehouse’s website description of Ong Ong is telling here: “It’s true…Yes…Three cheers for print media!...You can do it!” Similarly, Asbell says that her encounter with that first zine in the independent record store “excited me and made me want to write, made me want to make a zine, made me want to create, and it made me really feel like I could do it.”

These narratives also connect to space, the theme of the next chapter, through an emphasis on local institutions such as a local radio show, local library, and local
independent record store. The narratives also make references to the spaces in which zines are created and assembled, like in lb’s description of copying at the library, or Morehouse’s “We work in the living room mostly!” a common emphasis in descriptions of zines that I will explore further in chapter six. Further, spatial metaphors like “world of zines” in Blandy’s syllabus reflect an understanding of zines and zine culture as a type of space.
Chapter Six: Making Space

How do I define a zine? Well the way I define a zine that it's as any self-made publication made by one person or a small group, and made for the love of doing it - made for passion and not for profit, is what we say. That leaves it pretty broad, so there's a lot of room in there for people to fit, however they need to fit. (O'Malley)

In chapter four I discussed several approaches to defining zines, including the circumstances of their production (self-made) and their intention (for passion not for profit). The definition A.M. O'Malley offers addresses both of those aspects of zines, but adds an important criterion for any zine definitions: there needs to be “a lot of room for people to fit.” For this teacher/zinester, zine definitions need to leave room because one of the promises of zine pedagogy is a promise of space: that zines will offer students a space that may not otherwise be available, particularly in school.

The teacher/zinesters in this project approach zine pedagogy as making a space within school in which students can be creative, make decisions, and act democratically. Drawing on Warner’s discussion of publics for context, this chapter begins with a discussion of the different ways that zines are described as a kind of space, both in the words and narratives of the teacher/zinesters and in secondary sources. Representations of zines as space, I argue, are connected to physical spaces in complex ways and influenced by zinesters’ relationships to the space of pages as they create their zines. An analysis of these representations is important to understanding the teacher/zinesters’ use of spatial metaphors to describe zine pedagogy, as well as the challenges and limitations of trying to create zine space in school space. Thinking
about zine pedagogy in spatial terms, I suggest, allows us to understand issues like censorship and structuring assignments as matters of making, and limiting, space.

**Zines as a “Radical Space”**

In an online video interview (Asbell & Knight, 2009), teacher/zinester Angela Asbell says that one reason why she chose zines as the focus of her master’s project was that “zines were always this—for lack of a better term—radical space where you could be anything and you could say anything.” She goes on, “I really wanted to research that; I wanted to research why it was that zines made people feel so free to say what they wanted.” Tracing the language of space through Asbell’s online interview, her phone conversation with me, her zine, and her writings about zines reveals that the “radical space” Asbell describes has many dimensions, illustrating the many ways that zines connect to and are seen to function as space. After analyzing the teacher/zinester narratives and other data sources, when I returned to existing scholarship on zines to provide context for this section, I found that the brief discussions of space I could remember in a few articles were just the beginning. References to zines as space seemed to be everywhere, though these references were rarely examined, developed, or connected in any way. Thus, in this section, I attempt to map out zine space, beginning with the features of Asbell’s “radical space,” and making connections to the work of other teacher/zinesters, to zine scholarship, and to public sphere theory.

Zines’ function as (counter)publics is critical to understanding the ways that they act as “radical space” – and the way that they act as space at all. Warner (2002) notes

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17 Knobel and Lankshear’s (2002) essay is a notable exception.
that privacy and publicness have long been understood through spatial metaphors, and in relation to actual physical spaces:

Throughout the Western tradition, private and public have been commonly and sensibly understood as distinct zones. The boundary between bedroom and market, home and meetinghouse can be challenged or violated, but it is at least clear enough to be spatially distinct. Moving from one to the other is experienced as crossing a barrier or making a transition—like going from the privacy of one’s bedroom to the public room of a convention hall. In medieval thought (which inherited a notion of the *res publica* from Roman law), the public was almost solely a spatial concept, meaning anything open, such as the outside wall of a house. Modern culture has redrawn the spatial distinction, adding new layers of meaning to the term “public” but preserving the idea of physical boundaries. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century middle-class architecture, for example, separates parlors or “living rooms” from family quarters or “withdrawing rooms,” trying to erect literal walls between public and private functions even within the home. (pp. 26-27)

This tendency to describe qualities of publicness and privateness through a language of space, as Warner shows, has a long history in Western thought and influences the ways we approach these terms today. The nouns that have been used in public sphere theory, too, show this pattern: of course the word “sphere” has predominated, but also “realm” and “center” (Habermas), as well as “arena” (Fraser); Warner regularly refers to a public as a “place,” a “scene,” and an “environment.” Bringing these ideas together, Warner states that “a public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse” (p. 90, emphasis original). These conceptions of publics as spaces create a background against which to read the teacher/zinesters’ approaches to zines as space.

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18 While many theorists draw distinctions between these types of words—for instance, between *space* and *place* (Certeau, 1984; Dobrin, 2007)—I am interested in spatial language in a general sense. The word *space* is clearly the most used in the teacher/zinester narratives as well as secondary material, but I am not convinced that when the word *place* is used in secondary material that it is meant entirely differently.
Returning to Asbell’s description, then, zines most immediately offer a space for *identity play*: a space “where you could be anything.” This aspect of zines is well documented in scholarship focused on zines. For instance, Piepmeier (2009) describes girl zines as “a space for experimentation and play,” arguing that this space is enabled by the embodied communities that zines create (p. 89). Key to this concept of play is the idea of zines as a *safe space*. Regales’s (2008) study of transgender zinesters concludes that they “are using their zines as a safe space” to explore gender, sexuality, and identity through various theoretical discourses (p. 88). Part of why zines can act as safe spaces is that they circulate in (counter)publics; while counterpublic discourse, like all public discourse, addresses indefinite strangers, the strangers addressed by counterpublic discourse are “not just anybody,” Warner (2002, p. 120) writes. He continues, “They are socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse; ordinary people are presumed not to want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene” (p. 120). In other words, zines can act as a safe space because they address sympathetic strangers. Readers who would find, say, a discussion of queer sexuality or transgender identity off-putting would likely not pick up the zine in the first place.

A second feature of zines’ “radical space” is *free expression*: a space where “you could say anything.” Asbell explains the relationship between the zines’ form and the freedom of expression she sees it enabling:

[T]he form of zines actually gives you a lot of freedom. Where if you were making a book that you’re trying to get published, or you’re trying to submit an article to be published or making a website, there’s still these ways that I feel like you would have to shape your vision for the reader. Almost like, “if you want people to buy this book, think of your audience,” or “we want to sell magazines, so we can’t say that.” When it comes to my zines, it’s a labor of my own money, my own love, my own time. So the very form of it, the very fact of it that I am literally stapling it,
Xeroxing it, collaging it myself, handwriting it myself—that form itself is really freeing. And I’ve noticed that freedom of form leads to kind of a freedom of thought. And I think there’s a connection between the kind of medium that you are using to express yourself—that the medium shapes what kind of message you’re trying to send, or some would say the medium is the message. So zines really leave you a lot of space for creativity. (Asbell & Knight, 2009)

Asbell’s point here is not that she does not orient her zines toward readers; rather, it is clear that she does write to and for readers. What makes the zine form “freeing” for her is that she does not need to shape her vision for a general reader as imagined by marketers. Because the project is wholly her own, from idea through distribution, Asbell feels able to “say anything” with no external filters. Though she writes for readers, she is able to imagine and address those readers in ways that would not be possible in other media. Her comments highlight an important characteristic of zines’ “radical space”: complete freedom of expression in this space comes from having complete control over the writing and publication process.

In addition to a space in which zinesters experience freedom and control, Asbell describes zines’ “radical space” as a critical space. Asbell tells me that one of the points she wants to make through a documentary about the zine teaching collective she is a member of, ZineWorks, is that “because commercial/mass media does not represent our reality, zines create a space for subversive ideas.” Again, this connects to counterpublics as places where, in Fraser’s (1999) definition, participants “formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 123). Chu (1997), in a study of zines’ meaning to the youth who create them, argues that zinesters’ tendencies to describe zines “as a ‘place’...—and not as a commodity, interest, or activity—is critical to understanding how young publishers have defined their stakes in the media environment in the larger debates over the social conditions of being young.
today” (p. 77). To Chu, zines offer publishers a space outside of mainstream media and the institutions of work and school, within which they can critique these institutions. Similarly, Comstock (2001) suggests that grrrl zine networks act as “gendered sites of cultural production and pedagogy in critical relation to more bureaucratized high school and college writing classrooms” (p. 387). As they create alternative girl selves and spaces, grrrl zine writers use zine space to re-envision female bodies, and they use representations of female bodies, Comstock argues, to counter the disembodiment of mainstream publics. Whereas the bourgeois public sphere as described by Habermas is one in which participants “bracket” their status and embodiment to participate in rational-critical debate, Warner (2002) asserts that “movements around gender and sexuality seek to transform fundamental styles of embodiment, identity, and social relations—including their unconscious manifestations, the vision of the good life embedded in them, and the habitus by which people continue to understand their selves or their bodies as public or private” (p. 51). Thus, in counterpublics like grrrl zine networks, representations of female bodies are one way of questioning the terms of debate in mainstream publics. “The zine medium,” Piepmeier writes (2009) about girl zines, “doesn’t demand that girls and women abandon their bodies in order to experience empowerment but provides them with tools for resistance within an embodied space” (p. 84).

In her article “The Birth of Bitch King” (2004), Asbell connects these ideas to her decision to create a zine. Frustrated that the arts scene in her city included few women, Asbell notes that “the lack of participation by women in our scene was a sign that as ‘liberal’ or even ‘radical’ a scene is, patriarchal thinking is still firmly rooted in our ideology, thus making public spaces, well, ‘male’” (“Riot Grrrls and Zines”). Believing that masculine ideals formed the context of many of the shows she attended, Asbell
observes that “women many times don’t feel ‘safe’ presenting in male-created (dubbed ‘neutral’ or ‘community’) space” (“Riot Grrrls and Zines”). To intervene in this “male” space, Asbell decided to create a zine as “an alternative space for women to create.” She writes, “I picked the space I thought would work best for the kind of change I wanted to take place” (“Riot Grrrls and Zines”). For Asbell, then, zine space is not only critical, but also dynamic: it is a space of and for change, a feature that is also related to the transformative project Warner describes.

Finally, the “radical space” of zines is also a meeting space: a space that zinesters characterize as interactive, often against the common understandings of writing as a message from a sender to a receiver (Warner, 2002). Chu’s (1997) study indicated that zinesters’ representations of zines as a “place” was often related to their desire to create interactive meeting spaces: she writes, “Publishers of zines reiterate this notion of zines as a ‘place’ by variously describing their need to ‘create a forum,’ ‘build a network,’ and ‘form a community’” (p. 77). Asbell, for instance, opens her zine with the greeting, “Welcome to *Bitch King*(dom)” (2004, "Rant," see figure 12 in chapter eight). While she draws on a fairly common invitation to reading, she alters the title of her zine to relate opening her zine to entering an interactive space. That zines imagine connection through a language of space is also clear in statements like Katie Haegele’s (2009), quoted at the opening of chapter four: “we’re here together in a way” (p. 1). Similarly, introducing the “Zine Tour” issue of *School Daze* (2006), teacher/zinester Michel Valdes writes, “Hey, I’m Michel, and we first met last year in my zine *School Daze,*” as if the zine could just as easily be a coffee shop, a class, or a friend’s house. Valdes’s handwritten greeting on grade school writing paper, placed below a picture of him in a classroom reminds us that where we met in the zine was in school.
Not only do zinesters describe their zines as meeting spaces but some scholars have argued that they actually perform this work. For Duncombe (1997), zines’ function as meeting spaces is the result of the disappearance of bohemian centers in places such as Paris; he suggests that though there is “no longer one, unified and coherent geographical bohemia,” zines have arisen as one of the “virtual spaces where bohemia still exists” (p. 54, 55). As such, zines can “offer an invaluable service, acting as café, community center, and clubhouse that help connect these bohemians to one another, providing the ‘cement’ that holds together a dispersed Scene” (p. 56). Besides serving these functions, zines also often provide a map of some part of the bohemian diaspora, Duncombe argues. Zine traditions of writing about particular cities (see, for
instance, *The Zinester’s Guide to Portland*, [www.pdxguide.org](http://www.pdxguide.org) and of documenting road trips, band tours, and zine tours (for example, Michel Valdes’s *School Daze* “Zine Tour” issue [2006]) document both the institutions of the bohemian diaspora—in Valdes’s case, a list of zine libraries, independent bookstores, and comic stores across the country where he did zine readings—and what Duncombe calls “the bohemia that can be found within the everyday” (p. 58). A laundromat might become the site of a spontaneous poetry reading; an empty pool can be a skateboard park, Duncombe recounts. Zines thus create a “shadow map” in which “ordinary things are invested with different meanings” (p. 58).

In acting as a meeting space or a map, the “radical space” of zines begins to connect more clearly to actual physical spaces, like classrooms, coffee shops, and cities. Such connections are often complex and multi-layered. For instance, the sentence, “Assembled on kitchen tables and desktop computers, zines are a DIY space for public discussion and the development of public values” appears both in the syllabus for Doug Blandy’s “Zines and DIY Democracy” course and in an article co-authored with Kristen Congdon (2003, p. 45). In this statement, zines’ function as a space for public discussion (i.e. a (counter)public) is linked to the physical places in which they are created – kitchen tables and desktop computers, not corporate offices or the dispersed production of most mainstream media, in which a book or article’s writing, editing, and printing may happen in any number of different places. This link, Piepmeier argues, is part of how zines create “embodied community”: more than simply text and images, a zine might actually smell like the house it was created in. Recalling the description of Lucy Morehouse’s zine *Ong Ong* quoted in chapter five, we see another example of connection to the physical spaces of zines’ construction: “We work in the living room
mostly!” (www.ongongpress.com, “Ong Ong Fanzine,” para. 3). Again, the places in which zines are constructed are linked to the space they create.

In another connection, Asbell’s (2004) story of the title of her zine, Bitch King, describes the name emerging from a literal act of occupying a physical space. Asbell tells the story of a man following her home one night after an art show. She says “hello” and receives no response except that he walks faster toward her. She is able to get inside her apartment safely, but he remains on her porch, prompting her to close the windows, lock herself in, carry a knife around the apartment with her, and call neighbors for help.

After he was gone and my shaking stopped, I was again transformed with rage, as I always am after an episode like this: why should I be scared to be out after dark? … How can I reclaim my home and my mind from this incident? …

I went and dug around until I found some sidewalk chalk, then I went out and wrote phrases like “Beware of Angry Dyke” and “Bitch Xing” all over my front porch. Then, I sat there and enjoyed my neighborhood, the peace and sometimes chaos of it. (“Naming”)

While Asbell is sitting on her porch, a stranger approaches and asks her for directions. As he’s leaving, he misreads “Bitch Xing” (by which she meant “Bitch Crossing”) and asks her what a “Bitch King” is. By connecting this story to her narrative of beginning her zine, Asbell links her occupation of a “radical” space in her zine—a space in which she plays with identity, enjoys creative freedom and control, critiques commercial media and gender issues, advocates for change, and invites readers to interact—with her occupation of the physical space of her porch and symbolic space of her home and neighborhood.
Zine Space and Page Space

As I considered the different ways that Angela Asbell and the other teacher/zinesters represented zines in terms of space, I was struck by how central the concept of space is to making a zine in the first place. In a very important way, a zine is literally a space: it is a collection of pages, each of which offers the zinester space to manipulate and fill. The process of making a zine puts the zinester in constant relationship with the space of the pages, a relationship that entails both possibility and constraint. Even the maker of a zine that consists of continuous text formatted in a desktop publishing program must consider the number of pages and their size, as well as how to arrange pages for copying so that the zine pages end up in the correct order. But common zine techniques and conventions such as cut-and-paste layouts, collages, drawings and comics, and handwritten sections increase one’s awareness of page space. Though this awareness is not unique to zines, it is one feature in which zines tend to differ from traditional academic writing in which standardized formatting rules attempt to make layout invisible and direct readers’ attention toward the text itself.

Though this is not an issue addressed in the questions I asked the teacher/zinesters and did not come up in their narratives, some of their discussions of their own zines in other sources offer a glimpse of how space plays into their process, as in lb’s (2010a) description here:

when i have enough scattered pieces of writing on my tiny bedroom desk, i begin the layout process. & the layout is very important to me. i need to make sure that the zine as a whole flows well together to make sure that my point comes across & that the overarching issue is resolved. so i take the longest with the layout, oftentimes ripping pages out & moving them to a more convenient spot. (capitalization original)
Some of what lb is talking about here is the order of the pieces that she has written; but the fact that she describes it in terms of layout, of arranging the fragments of writing in space on her bedroom desk, speaks to the importance of page space in lb’s zine-making process.

Focusing more on individual pages, in “Birth of Bitch King,” Asbell (2004) reflects on her layout decisions in the first issue of Bitch King by taking the reader through the zine page by page. For example, she writes:

My zine builds upon some aesthetics I have carried with me for years, the most important of these being the juxtaposition of image and word. Take, for instance, the “haiku” (syllable pattern 9,7,9) that starts with a sumo wrestler “speaking,” then finishes by writing on his back. This piece plays with subjectivity, form, and political content and straddles the line between collage and poem. (“Issue #1”)

Asbell asserts here that her layout of individual pages contributes to the meanings she wants her readers to perceive. Throughout her zine, Asbell juxtaposes images and brief texts from various sources with titles, comments, and additions that are handwritten or printed on a label-maker (see sample pages in Asbell, 2004, “Stuff”). It is not the individual elements, but the way that she has combined and arranged them that gives these pages, and the zine as a whole, meaning.

As I recognize that my own experiences, too, are part of my emerging understanding of zines and zine pedagogy, I offer here my story of making my first zine, along with a page from that zine, as further illustration of the centrality of page space in zine making. Though the story takes place before I began collecting and analyzing data for this project, my interpretations and reflections are clearly influenced by my thinking about space in the writing of this chapter.
During the spring semester of 2009, in a graduate poetry workshop at Louisiana State University, I wrote a series of poems focused on Carville, LA, a site that has, in the course of its history, gone under the names Indian Camp Plantation, Louisiana Leper Home, U.S. Marine Hospital Number 66, National Leprosarium of the United States, and the Gillis W. Long Hansen’s Disease (Leprosy) Center. The poems explore the history and stories of the Carville site, where people suffering from Hansen’s disease (historically called leprosy) were treated and, at times, involuntarily quarantined. Each poem was accompanied by a “conversation” with my assigned “ghost companion” poets (see introduction page, below). At the end of the semester, I decided that I wanted to work more with the series of poems and conversations, but I wanted to work with them as a set, something that did not fit neatly with, for example, submission to a literary journal. In my dissertation work, I had been reading a lot of zines and a lot about zines, and a zine seemed like the space that would allow me to explore the relationships of the poems to each other, to Carville, and to the ghost poet conversations. The zine form presented an alternative to the limitations of other routes of publication as well as a number of traditions that I thought were appropriate for my project: a license to play with other people’s words and pictures by creating new contexts for them, to juxtapose different genres, and to use layout as a tool for making meaning.

Once I decided to make the zine, I was immediately confronted with questions about space. An early choice I had to make was how big it would be—both the page size and the number of pages. I opted for a quarter-size zine: each page was one quarter of a letter-sized sheet. That meant that each sheet of paper, double-sided, would give me eight pages. To avoid copying blank pages, then, my total number of pages would have to be a multiple of eight. I decided to use two sheets to make each zine, which gave me the cover (front, back, and inside front and back) plus twelve interior pages.

The text of the zine was a series of six poems and the ghost poet conversations that were linked to each poem. I decided that for each two-page spread, I would place the poems and the conversations in a different spatial relationship. For example, I put one poem on the left page with the conversations on the right; another poem ran across the horizontal middle of both pages with the conversations above and below it; a third poem occupied the inside half of each page with the conversations on the outside half (see below). In each case, I cut out the text that I wanted and glued it to a hard-copy master. I used size eight font for everything but the cover; on some pages, that left a fair amount of white space, and on others, I had to cut out individual words to cram them closer together or fit them in at odd angles, and pieces of letters ran into each other or fell off the edge of the page. For all but one of the poems, I marked off the boundaries between poem and conversation with black permanent marker (as shown on the introduction page).

Because most of the text of the zine (excluding the front and back pages) existed before I decided to make the zine and because the individual poems and the zine as a whole are particularly concerned with relationships with place/space and with other people’s words, the question of how to use space was an especially key issue for me. Still, my focus on space in putting the zine together made this a dramatically different experience for me from other writing projects, particularly more traditional academic writing.

Figure 8: Intro page from Author’s Zine, Two Boats: Poems about Carville, LA, Written in the Companionship of Ghosts (deGravelles, 2009)
Creating Space through Zine Pedagogy

For lb and the other teacher/zinesters in this study, the promise of space offered by zine pedagogy is a promise of freedom, a creative space that is outside of the constraints of traditional school writing. Describing her motivation for zine pedagogy, lb states, “My end goal was to give students a creative space to share their thoughts and stories with their classmates.” Even in this brief statement, we can see echoes of the features of “radical space”: free expression and interaction (see chapter seven for further discussion of sharing). In Truckface #12 (2008b), which details her student teaching experiences, lb writes of these constraints and her frustration teaching a common genre of school writing:

And we have moved onto essay writing. The kids love the compare and contrast essay about as much as I love teaching it. Meaning both of us are trudging through it, faking it as much as possible. This is a thesis (OK). This is organization (OK!) This is where you indent (OhhhhK!!). They hate it because they struggle with writing and I hate it because I struggle with teaching writing. We are both floating in this same cursed boat together. (n.p.)

lb relates her and her students’ difficulties with their respective roles in writing instruction as they “trudge” through increasingly frustrating definitions and rules to “floating in [a] cursed boat.” The cover of Truckface #14 (2010b) picks up this image again: the front shows a sinking ship. In front of the ship are fourteen tiny figures crammed into a small rowboat; one figure’s head and hands are visible in the water off to the side. The drawing (credited to Jennifer Trok) wraps around to the back cover, where another figure, one whose features are clear, shouts, “this isn’t over yet!” as the dorsal fin of a shark slides by in the foreground. lb is out of the boat.
Certainly, the cover art of *Truckface #14* is related to lb’s overall teaching experience and not simply a representation of her and her students’ difficulties with writing instruction, but the repeated “cursed boat” imagery is worth examining. Having escaped a sinking ship, the students (and perhaps other teachers) are tightly constrained in the tiny lifeboat, afloat in a large expanse of water. The speaking figure, representing lb, is out in the water, neither on the sinking ship nor the lifeboat. One possible reading of this image is to see the sinking ship as public school (or the Chicago school system or lb’s particular school). The lifeboat, then, may be one of the solutions (testing, standards, teacher-proof curriculum) supposed to save teachers and students from the failures of schooling—but as we see in the *Truckface* cover, these solutions are increasingly constraining. A cursed boat can send one to the danger of open water or
the limitations of a lifeboat.\(^{19}\) In such an interpretation, I wonder what the space of zine pedagogy might look like.

In the remainder of this section, I look more closely at the use of spatial metaphors to describe zine pedagogy in the narratives of teacher/zinesters Doug Blandy and Michel Valdes.

**Doug Blandy: Creating a Free Space**

For teacher/zinester Doug Blandy in his college-level “Zines and Do it Yourself Democracy” course, zine pedagogy offers “an opportunity to connect zines with my commitment to teaching students about democracy, particularly radical democracy.” He hopes to create a “free space” in his classroom, a space “where people voluntarily come together to act democratically.” Evans and Boyte (1992), whose work informs Blandy’s teaching and research, describe free spaces as “public places in the community…in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue…settings between private lives and large-scale institutions…with a relatively open and participatory character” (p. ix, ellipses original). Blandy states that he sees evidence that the free space he seeks to create is actually occurring through “the willingness of students to take risks both creatively and in relationship to the content

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\(^{19}\) Responding to a draft of this chapter by email, lb offers these comments: “that is actually the drawing of the tattoo i got on my arm during the end of my first semester in my first year of teaching. i felt like i myself was a sinking ship some really bad days. and then other days i felt like i was on a sinking ship (within public education, my school) and other days i felt like i was the ones drowning in the water. my first year was awful. so i brought this image back after my second year. there is still a sinking ship, few are rescued and yes, it is me floating away (that is not part of the tattoo, i only added that for the zine). that is me floating away but not giving up. this isn't over is the constant struggle teachers feel on a daily basis. this is hard. and sometimes it feels downright impossible. but, it's not. we are fighting against the current, struggling to keep our head above water.” (capitalization original)
that they will bring to a zine.” Though the space Blandy refers to here is not the space of the zine itself but rather the classroom environment from which zines emerge, his discussion of free spaces and the conditions needed to create them provides important context to his theorizing of zine pedagogy.

Blandy elaborates on the concept of free space in his article, “Art, Social Action, and the Preparation of Democratic Citizens” (1987):

Dissident viewpoints that make for social change are sheltered in free spaces. Boyte and Evans (1986) speculate that several factors contribute to this. First, free spaces offer an independent reality and existence which are distinct from the personal and larger impersonal realities and existences. Second, they provide a forum for public debate, conflict, opinion airing, and problem solving. Third, free spaces prepare the ordinary citizen for making social change and appreciating democratic values. (p. 53)

Much like counterpublics, free spaces are public, but can “shelter” oppositional identities and understandings – they are spaces in which one can take risks, something that Blandy emphasizes in his approach to zine pedagogy. Focusing on a public art demonstration by a high school art class in Lima, OH, Blandy’s article suggests that though free spaces are not common in schools, it is possible for them to emerge under certain circumstances:

Public school systems and the individual school units within them are typically not the sites for free spaces. Their size, compulsory attendance policies, dependence on a fickle constituency for funding, and consequential administrative fear of raising the public wrath contribute to nonfreedom. However, it does seem possible that very small units within a school system can operate periodically as free spaces if given modest administrative support through active encouragement or through passive or active administrative ignorance of classroom activities. (p. 53)

Blandy argues that the conditions of public school spaces discourage the creation of free spaces within them; however, with support (or without interference), “very small units”
may “periodically” act as free spaces. For Blandy, teaching a specialized course at the college level with largely self-selecting students, conditions for the emergence of a free space are certainly more favorable. For example, the question of school-appropriate language and content that the middle school and high school teachers face is not an issue. In Blandy’s workshop classes, which are facilitated by junior and senior students who have taken the class previously, the very structure of the class creates additional emphasis on voluntary participation. Blandy notes that at least one or two students from each class ask to come back the next year to co-facilitate.

Within the “free space” that Blandy creates, zine pedagogy itself also has a spatial dimension. Blandy states, for example, that “approaches to assignments are only limited by [students’] imagination,” suggesting a space of freedom and control, like in Asbell’s (2009) radical space where “you could be anything and you could say anything.” An article co-authored by Congdon and Blandy (2005) asserts that “the form of the zine allows students to move outside of the academic space that research papers usually thrust on them” (p. 62). They continue, “A space is created when the zinester has the ability to imagine, to speak freely, to go wild. The center has moved from the artists and writers of the canon, to the student/zinester” (p. 62). Here, zine pedagogy offers the opportunity to move outside of the limits of “academic space” and into a new space in which they can “imagine,” “speak freely,” and “go wild.” Moving outside the limits of academic writing, suggest Congdon and Blandy, can give students “a new sense of exploration and freedom” (p. 62). For Blandy, zine pedagogy creates a space that is not otherwise available to students in school.

Michel Valdes: Sneaking Zines into the Curriculum

Similarly, teacher/zinester Michel Valdes considers zine pedagogy in relation to the constraints of traditional school writing. Describing his goals in zine pedagogy, he
says, “writing is such a tough thing to teach and hold engaging for kids because writing typically follows only one or two formats throughout their school life. They’ve been taught that if they don’t write that particular way that their way is wrong.” In contrast, Valdes says, “because zines are somewhat limitless, I feel like it lets kids really kind of explore and find their own voice, and I feel like it allows so much freedom for them to come up with what they want to talk about.” While school writing is limited in format, to Valdes, zines offer “freedom” and a “somewhat limitless” space to “explore.”

However, Valdes admits that creating this space within the curriculum can be difficult. Introducing himself and his work with zines at the 2009 Zines and Teaching panel discussion, Valdes tells the audience, “for the past four years I’ve mostly taught 6th grade math and science, but I’ve been able to sneak zines into the curriculum here and there throughout those four years.” He goes on to describe a project in which a zine became the form for note-taking: “we had this one where the angles lived in the neighborhood, and complementary angles shared a park with supplementary angles.”

Most of Valdes’s zine teaching, however, has been at the edges of curriculum in lunchtime clubs. He states:

As of now, the zines made apart from the academic classes have been way more worthwhile mainly because I and the students could go anywhere we wanted with them. There was a freedom there that was perhaps lacking with the more rigid curriculum in science and math. Or maybe my brain played too heavily on keeping up a plan that tried to fit so much math and science concepts into it that I forgot to give the students opportunities to explore more.

Though Valdes says there is “usually a lot of talk about what is ‘appropriate’ language and writing,” whether he’s working with a zines and mini-comics club or in a formal class, he felt that the club setting gave him and his students a lot more freedom to “go
anywhere” rather than working the zine into a “more rigid curriculum.” However, Valdes notes, “there’s always creative ways to sneak them in there.”

His choice of language on this point connects to Knobel and Lankshear’s (2002) discussion of zines as enacting a pedagogy of tactics (drawing on the work of de Certeau), which I discuss in chapter two. Knobel and Lankshear caution readers that they are not advocating any attempt to “school” zines: “to try and make the production and consumption of zines part of routine language and literacy education in the classroom in the kinds of ways that have befallen so many organic everyday literacy practices” (pp. 164-65). Rather, they argue, if zines have any relevance to the work of teaching, educators will have to “get away with it” by playing “clever tricks.” Knobel and Lankshear write:

Zines present us with a tactical challenge; an ideal learning and implementation problematic for new times. How can we get the kinds of orientations, ethos, perspectives, world views, orientations, insights, etc., encapsulated in zines into classroom education when to do so necessarily involves maneuvering on enemy terrain? If we cannot work out how to do this and get away with it—with the assistance of endless models of tactics available within the practices of everyday life, of which zines are but one—we probably should not try to incorporate zines and core zine culture values into formal learning. (p. 185)

Valdes’s attempts to “sneak zines into the curriculum here and there,” then, can be read as a type of tactic “on enemy terrain,” a quiet disruption in the science and math curriculum. Space, in fact, is important to de Certeau’s (1984) conception of tactics; he writes, “the space of the tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power...It is a maneuver ‘within the enemy’s field of vision’ ...and within enemy territory” (p. 37, qtd. in Knobel & Lankshear, 2002, p. 171). I doubt Valdes would take up the war metaphor that de Certeau and Knobel and Lankshear advance here; yet, his repeated phrasing of
“sneak[ing] zines into the curriculum” suggests movement in dominated space, something Valdes has to “get away with,” even if the only authority is what he believes belongs and does not belong in a middle school science and math curriculum.

Making Zine Space in School Space: Negotiating Freedom and Constraint

The teacher/zinesters approach zine pedagogy as a way of creating space within the constraints of school and in contrast to the rigidness of traditional school writing; however, the space that they are creating is still in school and in some ways subject to those same constraints. Arguably, many features of the “radical space” Asbell described are in question for school zines. For example, Dutro, Sinor, and Rubinow (1999) point out that to read the zines of their adolescent participants in classroom settings is to put the girls “at risk,” suggesting that zines in schools cannot act as safe spaces, limiting the potential for identity play. In this study, teacher/zinesters’ discussions of the freedom offered to and constraints placed on students’ zines—specifically with regards to censorship and assignments—can be understood as issues of space. In this section, I explore some of the different ways teacher/zinesters approach censorship, followed by A.M. O’Malley’s and Angela Asbell’s reflections on the complexities of creating zine pedagogy assignments.

Censorship: Navigating “Dangerous Territory”

Unsurprisingly, censorship was an issue that came up across the teacher/zinester narratives, with the exceptions of Doug Blandy and Angela Asbell, who both teach at the college level. lb’s handout states that her students’ zine pages should be “school appropriate.” When I asked her how she drew that line, she responded:
no writing about gang affiliation, no cursing, anything too explicit. There wasn't anything the students created that I objected to and they are pretty aware of what I consider to be appropriate. Some teachers may have found one student's page on legalizing graffiti and running from the cops inappropriate, but I thought the page was good and interesting. So, I kept it in there and the student may have checked with me before writing it.

In *Truckface* #14, however, Ib describes her second zine project, in which she does reject a student’s page in part because the student “included a sticker of a crown to show his gang affiliation.”

Teacher/zinester M. Carrol Tama, describing her work with in-service teachers, also mentioned the need to keep things school appropriate. Asked how she determined what was school appropriate, she answered, “I don’t draw any boundaries. I think teachers are fairly cognizant of what they can accept in school assignments. I leave this up to them. Each school district has its own guidelines: some are quite liberal and others are quite limiting depending on their district.” Offering advice to teachers considering zines, Tama expanded this response to highlight two considerations (among others):

1. To me, what stands out are language and topics selected. Can students censor themselves? Should they? Should teachers? These are questions to consider.

2. Since teaching occurs in many settings, I believe teachers need to be respectful of the community’s culture. Even in liberal communities, teachers and their teaching materials have been censored. However, along with this I suggest giving students as much free rein with their writing—choice with consideration of their context. I don’t advise choice in that anything goes.

Tama’s answer here suggests that school appropriateness is situational: what might be OK in one community or classroom might not be acceptable in another. For her zine project in an alternative high school, teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse took the approach of having a meeting with the principal ahead of time in order to get a specific
set of rules about language and content. These rules differed depending on the distribution of the zine – the class zine that would really only be distributed in school was allowed to have curse words written in symbols and punctuation marks, whereas the “zine”-style yearbook did not allow any curse words.

Because she works in a variety of school and non-school environments, A.M. O’Malley has encountered different kinds of censorship issues in these different environments:

Well, I have had some administrators try to censor the zines just in terms of school-appropriate content. And usually it isn't a huge problem. I've done zines with [a local community organization], and they won't allow any talk of self-harm or cutting or anything in the zine that we make. I'm conflicted a little bit about that, because I think that if those things are presented in a certain way, that they can actually be helpful to other people. But I also understand that that is a slippery slope, and it's very dangerous territory.

O’Malley’s comments highlight issues that arise when institutions sponsor zine production: the space of zines, in allowing students freedom to say anything, can become “very dangerous territory” for these organizations. Despite O’Malley’s being “conflicted a little bit” about the censoring of topics like cutting and self-harm, however, her general response to the need to maintain school appropriate boundaries is representative of the other teacher/zinesters’ responses: “usually it isn’t a huge problem.”

A.M. O’Malley: Space, Structure, and Middle Ground

O’Malley’s feeling that compromise between zine space and school space is possible and desirable extends, too, to creating assignments. She remarks:

I think that there’s a middle ground there [between freedom of zines and constrictiveness of traditional school writing], that can be found. I’ve done it both ways, where I’ve worked really closely with teachers who
O’Malley notes that for some students, the trouble isn’t not having enough freedom; it’s having too much. “I find they’re often frozen at first with so much freedom and creative space, and once you can get through that, the most amazing things can happen,” she says. After O’Malley made this statement in the zines and teaching panel, the topic came up again in her telephone interview:

A.M.O.: There aren’t very many guidelines, and I guess for some students that might be hard. I think some kids thrive with more structure.

K.H.D.: I remember you mentioning that in the panel, that some of the students were overwhelmed by it.

A.M.O.: Yeah, they can be overwhelmed by how many options they have. I think that partly is being in school and being in such a structured environment, and all of the sudden having that structure sort of taken away, some of the kids kind of feel like maybe a rug has been pulled out from under them.

For O’Malley, then, zine pedagogy as creating a space for free expression in school spaces can be disorienting at first, and can require working through students’ being “frozen.” Here the relationship between zine space and school space creates tension in terms of students’ expectations of and desire for structure: boundaries and limitations that they find enabling rather than constrictive.

**Angela Asbell: It Seems False**

Of the zine assignments created by teacher/zinesters, Angela Asbell’s research zine assignment stood out as the most structured and specific:

**Purpose:** to practice and refine the strategies associated with publishing. To teach people about your research question and answer. To consider the
rhetorical strategies appropriate for self-publishing. To practice writing with various modes of discourse.

Instructions: You will receive instruction in class about how to construct your zine. Your zine should include your proposal, an annotated bibliography, and an introduction and conclusion to help your audience understand your project’s purpose. On your scheduled class presentation day, you are required to distribute copies for each person (including me). Zines are creative and personal, so your zine should also reflect your self. Push the boundaries, so don’t be afraid to experiment! (Asbell, ENG 104A 11 syllabus)

Offering both boundaries and an invitation to push them, this assignment calls for a zine that is also a research report. And, as the last line of instructions indicates, also a zine. In her interview, Asbell tells me that one of the things that concerns her about this assignment is its mixed genres, calling for writing styles that can be quite different. She is always interested, she says, in how students negotiate these style issues in their zines. For example, she says, some students turn in zines that only include an academic voice, while others use a fully personal, informal voice, even in the more academic sections of the zine. Most students shift between these styles depending on the section.

Describing how she decided to start using zines in her teaching, Asbell says:

And then once I started teaching on my own, I thought it would be kind of cool to do, but I was never really sure how to do it, because I see zines as a pretty free or freeing activity to do, and I wasn’t sure how I’d be able to make an assignment that wouldn’t constrain, or make me feel like it was kind of ruining zines, a little bit.

Continuing the language of space through references to freedom and constraint, Asbell suggests here that the possibility of “ruining zines, a little bit” was a concern for her as she considered teaching with zines in school. I asked her to talk more about this concern, and she responded:

Part of it is that little sacred place—that the way I came into zines wasn’t any kind of assignment where I had to make one. ...So part of it is that
organic process—that forcing people to make something, I could just totally ruin zines for people. Like they could have come into something and thought it was so cool, but since I made them make one, now they think it’s just like school, something you have to do.

Besides concerns about a zine assignment changing students’ possible relationship with zines, Asbell worries about balancing the academic writing she feels a need to teach in her composition courses with the openness and freedom she associates with writing zines:

I’ve been struggling with it because I feel that with a zine, that there should be more openness to what kind of genre they want to write in, but I can’t just let them make a whole zine of their poetry, because that’s not what the class is for...It seems false to assign a zine and then say what has to go in it. That seems to be counterintuitive to what zines are. And it puts it on the same level as, say, the annotated bibliography - something that I think is very valuable, very good to learn, that I think people should do, but I’m assigning it, and I’m forcing it to be done. And I feel like it would be really strange to me if I know about zines, and I love zines, and at some point I had to make one for my writing class, and they wouldn’t let me include my poetry in it. That would be kind of fucked up.

Whereas O’Malley hopes for and believes in the possibility of a “middle ground” that serves the goals of both zine space and school space, Asbell describes a much more conflicted sense of compromise: one that entails struggle and aspects that seem false, strange, and counterintuitive, especially when she imagines the perspective of a student who is already a zinester. Despite these concerns, Asbell does assign the research zine because of her students’ enthusiasm for zines, the promises that zine pedagogy holds for her, and her commitment to focusing mainly on academic writing in order to use her basic writing course to increase students’ “access to this language of power of the university.”
Negotiating Zine Pedagogy as Making Space

[Z]ines and alternative culture mark out a free space: a space within which to imagine and experiment with new and idealistic ways of thinking, communicating, and being. (Duncombe, 1997, p. 196)

This chapter has demonstrated that one important way that the teacher/zinesters encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy is as an act of making space. Zines are frequently described as a space both in the teacher/zinesters’ writing in and about their zines and in the scholarly literature on zines. Through teacher/zinester Angela Asbell’s description of zines as a “radical space,” this chapter aimed to map the main features of this space: identity play, safety, freedom and control, criticism, and meeting. Zines’ being interpreted as a “radical space,” I argue, is related to their (counter)public nature and their relationships to actual physical spaces, both places and pages. Moreover, the zine community is often described as a “world” that one may explore and participate in. Accessing this world from the institutional spaces of schools entails unique challenges, and the teacher/zinesters grapple with how to set limits on a form that supposedly has none, how to maneuver “on enemy terrain,” how to structure assignments so that students can appreciate but are not overwhelmed by the space open to them, and how to consider the consequences of censorship (or noncensorship) for students and their writing.

Returning to the narrative of promise, failure, and ruins that acts as a figuration throughout this dissertation, if the “promise” of zine pedagogy as space is the potential to make space in schools that is not otherwise available, the “failure” is that the space created is always still school space, always subject to some of the very same limitations and boundaries that zines as radical space attempt to break. I believe that it is largely this issue of space that leads Guzzetti and colleagues (Guzzetti, 2009; Guzzetti et al.,
2003; Guzzetti et al., 2010; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004) to conclude that zines do not belong in schools. I want to suggest instead that the negotiations of the teacher/zinesters described in this chapter—Valdes’s “sneaking zines into the curriculum”; Tama, Morehouse, and O’Malley’s situational approaches to censorship issues; O’Malley’s aim for “middle ground” and recognition that the limitations of school writing can function in positive ways for students; and Asbell’s decision to embrace an approach that in some ways “seems false” to her—offer powerful models of approaches to zines as space that do not draw a sharp line between zine space and school space but do not imagine perfect compatibility either. In short, they offer ways to “work” (Ellsworth & Miller, 1996/2005) zine pedagogy as space through a kneading and reconfiguring of categories, posing multiple and fluid relationships between the spaces of zines and the spaces of schools.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I return to the implications of these approaches for both zine pedagogy and the teaching of public writing, drawing on the figure of the “ruins” to suggest new grounds. But first, in chapter seven, I consider the second theme of the teacher/zinester narratives: the teacher/zinesters encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy as publishing.
Chapter Seven: Publishing

I spent the weekend laying out a master copy and spent 60 bucks on copies for every student who contributed. I lugged bags of them to school and waited until Tuesday to unveil them to the students. Every student took hold of a zine, “This is our copy, to keep?”

“Yep, it’s yours. You are now published. Let’s take some time to flip through the zine and find a page that we really like and then as a class we will read it together.” They weren’t listening, instead spending time busily flipping through pages, reading, pointing, smiling.

We had spent the entire year reading books by other authors. We had gotten used to picking them up from the shelf in the corner, interpreting their words and writing our own responses. Now, we held our books in our hands. Now, we read our words out loud, studied our embarrassing stories and laughed at our own tales of woe.

They called it their reading class yearbooks and I called it awesome. (lb, 2010, “Published Authors”)

In this excerpt from Truckface #14, teacher/zinester lb tells the story of how her students became “published authors” through the class zine. After a school year reading books by others, lb’s students’ own work has become the reading material for the day. lb emphasizes the students’ excitement at having something they can keep and at seeing their own and their classmates’ stories printed in the zine. Describing the first zine project she attempted with students, lb told me she had never seen the room so quiet as in the few minutes after she handed out the finished zines. “I had other stuff to do in class, but they wanted to keep reading,” she said.

lb’s story of handing out the published zines in her second year of teaching contrasts with the curriculum scene she describes in Truckface #11 (2008a), at a school where she is completing preservice teacher observations. lb and the teacher she is
observing, both of whom are White, are teaching *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to a class of all African-American students as part of a mandated curriculum. lb questions not only having to teach this “white man’s book” to this group of students, but also the entire process through which the curriculum was designed, packaged, published, and made mandatory. She writes:

Bill Gates gave us the monies to follow a curriculum with lesson plans and handouts, all bound up into a book, packaged in a factory, and sent into the schools. And then Bill Gates and his money chose what teachers should teach, what students should learn all without stepping one foot near the students, teachers or schools.

[…Then in walks you, Bill Gates, and your sacks full of money to give to “failing” schools if they follow your set curriculum, read your books, take your tests. Ten other schools in the city and ten thousand students you and your cronies don’t know, have never met, never seen their neighborhoods, never heard their concerns and stories. Never thinking of them as individuals, just lumping them together as failures. (“Observations at School #5”)

lb’s descriptions of the curriculum here are passive: the lesson plans and handouts are “bound up into a book, packaged in a factory, and sent into the schools.” When she returns to active voice in the next sentence, the subject is “Bill Gates and his money,” again downplaying the role of people in the creation and distribution of the curriculum. lb emphasizes the distance and lack of physical connection between the sponsors of this curriculum and the teachers, students, and schools expected to follow it. In contrast, in “Published Authors,” lb lays out, lugs, waits, and unveils, and the students take hold, flip pages, read, point, and smile. Finally, the class as a whole holds, reads out loud, studies, and laughs: all highlighting connection to the material zine and the process of creating it, and many demonstrating a physical connection. Where lb alleges that the sponsors of the *Huck Finn* curriculum have never met the students to whom it would be taught, seen their neighborhoods, or heard their stories, the zine her students create in
Truckface #14 is about the students and their neighborhoods; it is their stories. Where the students and teachers at “School #5” must teach and learn a curriculum that originates with “Bill Gates and his money” and reaches them through a series of disembodied actions, the students and teacher of “Published Authors” engage their bodies in creating, reproducing, and exploring their publications. Where the students at “School #5” are called “failures,” the students who made the zine are called “published authors.”

lb’s zine pedagogy story, particularly read in contrast to “Observations at School #5,” illustrates some of the promises of zine pedagogy as publishing. That lb titled her piece about the student zines “Published Authors” makes a powerful statement about her perception of the role of publishing in zine pedagogy. This focus is also reflected in lb’s assignment handout, which is titled “Time to Be Published!” Her story depicts publishing as a process that enables a physical engagement with the students’ writing and that changes the students’ relationship to the rest of the “books by other authors” they have been reading all year. She emphasizes the students’ surprise and pleasure at being presented with the material zine, a copy for each of them “to keep.” In telling the students, “you are now published,” she suggests that through this project, they have experienced a permanent change.

For lb and the other teacher/zinesters in this study, publishing is a critical part of zines and one of the central promises of zine pedagogy. Their narratives reflect a concern with publishing as an important stage in the writing process, as the creation of a product, and as sharing. Following a brief discussion of publishing and publics, this chapter explores these three overlapping conceptions of publishing as they appear in the teacher/zinester narratives. Reflecting on my own experiences with publishing and distributing a zine, I investigate the ways that an understanding of zine pedagogy as
publishing spurs and shapes the distribution aspect of the teacher/zinesters’ assignments and projects. Finally, the chapter considers the teacher/zinesters’ discussions of potential consequences of publishing.

Zines, Publics, and Publishing

Most books about zines, whether academic or instructional, include some history of printing and self-publishing. However, none of them address the history of the word publish or publication – the convention by which we call a text published. “Publish” (2010) is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “To make public” (I.). Clearly, texts are published or made public in a wide range of ways: what publication means for a Harry Potter book is very different from what it means for an academic journal article; meanings are also different for self-publications like zines and for classroom publications. This general definition, then, raises many of the questions that public sphere theory contends with: what does it mean for something to be public? What public? The variety of ways that texts can be published reflects the variety of publics and counternpublics that they can circulate in, but one feature that Warner (2002) argues is common to all publics that can help our discussion is, “A public is a relation among strangers” (p. 74). Public writing, published writing, then, is not “writing that has a

20 Relevant specific uses include “To prepare and issue copies of (a book, newspaper, piece of music, etc.) for distribution or sale to the public,” dating to 1382 (3.a), and “To make generally accessible or available for acceptance or use (a work of art, information, etc.); to present to or before the public; spec. to make public (news, research findings, etc.) through the medium of print or the Internet” (3.b), which dates to 1573 (“publish, v.,” 2010). Notably, none of the OED definitions for “publish” or for “publication” (“publication, n.,” 2010) distinguish between work that is published by the author or creator and work that is published by another entity, like a publishing house, scholarly journal, or newspaper.
definite addressee who can be known in advance”; instead, it is oriented toward reaching strangers. For Warner, this condition is connected to publics’ self-organization: “A public sets its boundaries and its organization by its own discourse rather than by external frameworks only if it openly addresses people who are identified primarily through their participation in the discourse and who therefore cannot be known in advance” (p. 74). Thinking of a public as a relation among strangers helps us distinguish between a small-circulation publication like a zine and, say, a family newsletter; though they may both be distributed to 50 people, the newsletter is addressed to a defined group of family members, whereas the zine addresses indefinite strangers, participants in the counterpublic of zinesters.

Zines are publications by definition; in fact, this is one feature that remains constant through different definitions of the medium. While many types of writing exist in published and unpublished forms (such as novels, dissertations, letters, poems), zines are always published. In fact, zinesters typically alternate between “publish” and “make” as the preferred verbs to describe zine creation: one “publishes a zine” or “makes a zine” more often than one “writes a zine” or “edits a zine,” or even, simply, “zines” (though these terms are also used occasionally). For instance, a long-running section in the important network zine Factsheet Five in which zinesters discussed their motivations for creating zines was titled “Why Publish?” (Gunderloy, 1989). Similarly, the how-to book Make a Zine! (Brent & Biel, 2008) includes sections with the headings “Why Make a Zine?” and “Why Publish a Zine?” The understanding of a zine as a publication—and as an act of publishing—is central to most narratives about zines.

Certainly there can be exceptions to this, as in cases where initially private writing (such as letters or a diary) is published, but at the moment of publication, it is oriented toward strangers.

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21 Certainly there can be exceptions to this, as in cases where initially private writing (such as letters or a diary) is published, but at the moment of publication, it is oriented toward strangers.
And, as I show in the next three sections, it is also central to the teacher/zinesters’ narratives of zine pedagogy.

Publishing and the Writing Process

In his discussion of the history of teaching composition, Weisser (2002) describes a shift from a focus on written products in so-called current-traditional writing instruction to an emphasis on the writing process in cognitivist, expressivist, and social constructionist approaches beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Zine pedagogy reflects several of the tenets of these movements: a desire to make student writing the center of teaching and learning, a focus on students’ writing processes, and, particularly among expressivists, a belief that student writing should be “real” writing. For compositionists such as Elbow (1998, 2002), and Murray (1985), this means that the writing process should include publication in whatever form a teacher can facilitate (Moran, 2001). According to Elbow (2002), for instance, publication can help students to “reexperience” writing not as “an attempt to say what they don’t understand very well to a teacher reader who already understands it much better” but as an enjoyable process of communicating with others (p. 3). Elbow and others have noted that preparing a piece for publication can lead students to better awareness of audience, greater motivation during all stages of writing, and more attentive revision and editing.

Angela Asbell: Writing Classrooms Don’t Pay Attention

Teacher/zinester Angela Asbell’s narrative and assignments reflect this understanding of the role of publication in the writing process, and she grounds this understanding in her experience publishing her own zines. The description of the zine assignment included in Asbell’s “Intensive Composition” syllabus (ENG 95.29, Fall
identifies the purpose of the assignment as “To see writing as a process that includes invention, synthesis, writing, revising, and finally, publishing.” Publishing, Asbell argues, is often overlooked in writing classrooms: “we spend a whole lot of time talking about rough drafts or editing, but it seems like just once we turn it in, that’s the end. But that’s not really the end,” she says. Asbell emphasizes the importance of this part of the process based on her own experiences as a zinester:

I remember when I started publishing zines, what a sense I got of audience: how much, every time I handed out a zine, I’d think, “how are they going to read this?” and I’d look at my zine with new eyes. And ways that I was held accountable for the stuff that I wrote, that people would actually say, “oh, I liked this or that or didn’t like this or that or found this or that provocative.” And I actually learned a lot from that part of the writing process and it didn’t seem like that happened very much in my classes.

Far more than an empty exercise or a treat at the end of a writing project, publishing has been an important learning experience for Asbell, giving her new perspectives on her writing. Her account is specific to the ways that zines are often published and distributed: in person and by hand. When, instead of imagining an abstract audience, she interacts with a concrete audience and imagines it reading her work, often in conjunction with readers’ professed reactions, she is able to “look at [her] zine with new eyes”: to think differently about what she has written and how it engages readers.

Asbell suggests that one of the consequences of writing classes not attending to publishing can be a message to students that she sees as condescending: “well, the kind of writing you do won’t ever be published.” When publishing is seen as a critical part of the writing process, and when strategies for publishing and self-publishing are presented and practiced in class, Asbell argues, students are invited to think about their writing as real writing. According to Asbell, a view of the writing process as including
publication changes the way that students approach the entire process, acting as a source of motivation throughout:

I think that what motivates a lot of [writers] is the idea that someone is going to read it, and you have to have your shit together a little bit, you know? For your teacher, who cares? In the bigger sense, who cares if my teacher doesn't like it, but if your friends read it and think you're silly or you don't know what you're talking about, that kind of means more, I think.

In this view, the teacher alone cannot be a meaningful audience in the sense that friends or peers can be. Here, like in many discussions of classroom publication, the audience to whom the writing is made public is described as “friends”—in contrast to Warner’s description of public writing and speech as oriented toward strangers. But “friends” here also acts as just one interpretation of the “someone” who might read the published writing—a “someone” whose opinions the writer cares about and may be able to imagine more clearly than those of strangers.

While the language of process has become a common feature of writing pedagogy, Asbell suggests that it can act as empty rhetoric when it is not supported in the structure of the course and its assignments: “Because I've had teachers who say, 'writing is a process!' but all they assign is one essay, you turn it in, get a grade, and it's over. And that whole exploration of process - I was pretty much left on my own to figure out what that meant.” Particularly in her work with students referred to in her department as basic writers, Asbell notes that students enter her classes with beliefs about language and writing that can be obstacles to their development as writers. She continues:

If they keep thinking that whatever they write has to come out perfectly the first time they write it, then that's detrimental to them becoming and developing into the kind of writers they want to be because the truth is it's
just going to be shitty. Just let it be shitty, part of the process. Just whatever comes out - maybe it'll be great. It probably will be bad, but that's OK because writing is pretty much re-writing. So if that's what I believe, how can I create assignments that show that that's what I believe? And that's why I have assigned drafts, and that's why they get feedback, and that's why I try to make evaluation more dialogic instead of "correcting," and stuff like that. So the reason that I like assigning zines is [that] I feel like writing classrooms don't pay attention to this really important part of the writing process which is publishing, and I want to create a classroom environment that reflects my understandings of writing.

For Asbell, using zine pedagogy to engage her students in publishing projects does not only represent the completion of the writing process; rather, it affirms her commitment to the writing process as a whole and pushes students to challenge their pre-existing beliefs about writing, such as writing happening as a finished product. In this view, publishing is the final stage of the writing process, but adding that final stage can change how students approach the stages before it.

**Publishing as Product: “You Win Something at the End When You Make Zines”**

Approaches to writing as a process are often set against those that emphasize written product, as in Murray’s (1972/1997) essay, “Teach Writing as Process Not Product.” But besides seeing publishing as a critical part of the writing process, teacher/zinesters encounter the publishing aspect of zine pedagogy as creating a *product*—specifically, a physical product. Teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse states that for her, one of the goals of zine pedagogy “is that there’s a product that the person can take home and revel in its glory themselves or share it with community members.” She continues, “It’s kind of like a prize, you know? You win something at the end when you make zines.” Michel Valdes suggests that his students’ physical interaction with their zines changes their relationship to the work: “By creating, producing, putting together,
stapling, printing the work with their own hands, they recognize the value in the work so much more because they put so much of themselves in it. Their voice and vision is truly theirs.” Discussing why she has students create zines as handouts to go with their in-class research presentations, Asbell says, “they seem to really like that they actually have something to carry away. I tried [telling them,] ‘post your project to Blackboard so people can see it and get information if they want,’ but nobody ever seems that interested as much as getting this little magazine they can take with them and read later.” The teacher/zinesters regard publication as a process that creates a physical artifact—an artifact that engages both its creators and its readers in particular ways.

Though technological advances in recent years have greatly increased the scope of what teachers, students, writers, and readers with access can produce and share electronically, zinesters continue to insist on the advantages, flexibility, and permanence of paper, and of distributing their writing and artwork in a physical rather than digital form. In Piepmeier’s (2009) study of girl zines, she writes that:

Zines instigate intimate, affectionate connections between their creators and readers, not just communities but what I am calling embodied communities, made possible by the materiality of the zine medium...In a world where more and more of us spend all day at our computers, zines reconnect us to our bodies and to other human beings. (p. 58, emphasis original)

The materiality of zines, Piepmeier argues, “activates bodily experiences such as pleasure, affection, allegiance, and vulnerability” through characteristics like messiness, use of found or unique materials (the cover of teacher/zinester Michel Valdes’s School Daze “Year One,” for instance, is a page from a grade book), references to the physical making of the zine, and personalized distribution, perhaps in person, in a handmade envelope, or with a handwritten note (p. 79). These characteristics can serve as
reminders that the zine was made by hand and can forge a connection between the
body holding and reading the zine and the body that created it. As physical products,
zines are not only vehicles for text and images, but manifestations of care, connection,
and bodily memory. Though as publications they involve impersonal address to
indefinite strangers, the physical products that arrive in the mail can feel remarkably
personal: it is hard to describe the experience of receiving a zine in a carefully hand-
decorated envelope with a handwritten note from someone you have never met.

In her work with Paper Trail Distro (which shut down in January 2010), Ciara
Xyerra conducted a series of interviews with zinesters titled The Paper Trail Interviews
(Xyerra, 2010). Among the set of questions Xyerra asked each zinester was “Why do
you continue making paper zines in the age of internet?” Here are a few of the
responses she received:

- When I put out a zine there is an immense sense of tactile reality to it: folding, sorting,
stapling, holding. Turning the pages. Handing it to someone. Carrying it in my pocket.
Stuffing envelopes. I think that this visceral quality changes the way you feel when you read
the text, and that’s why I put out print zines. It can enable a more intimate connection
between reader and writer. (julian, 2008/2010)
- i like the physical process of putting together a zine, making photocopies, laying everything
out, typing everything. i like that, after i’m finished, i have something that i can hold in my
hands and give to someone; i have a memento of all of the hard work that i put into making
it. (Allen, 2010, capitalization original)
- i love paper and making things and pasting stuff together and i will put things out there on
paper that i would never, ever throw up on the internet. i like having something i can give to
people, that they have access in a concrete and immediate way. i like having a piece of
myself i can give people as a gift. zines are romantic & visceral. (Colman, 2007/2010,
capitalization original)
- I like things that people have made with their hands and I like to make things with my
hands, I like being able to smell the ink and look at the bindings and think about who made
what I’m holding, what their story is. I love books, I like old things, and I like obsolete
technologies. I have loved books my whole life, and there is a historicity to tactile objects that
I love as well. I like rereading things, I like just looking at my books and zines and knowing
they are there. (Contrary, 2007/2010)
- Paper zines are tangible. / When you finish a good book or a good zine, it’s taken on a life of
it’s own. It has a personality, it has energy. You can hold it in your hands and remember
what that felt like. / In the case of zines, you can hold it in your hands and know that the
author most likely has held it in their hands, has folded and stapled it. Human connection.
(Georges, 2009/2010)
Examining the dozens of responses to this interview question, one reads again and again about practical issues like the accessibility and portability of paper zines and many zinesters’ preferences for reading paper rather than computer screens. But many of the zinesters are also motivated by the immediate physical pleasures of zine creation: layout, copying, folding, stapling, holding a completed zine, the feel of the paper, the smell of the ink, and the sense of memory they attach to physical objects. These physical components, for many zinesters, enable more personal connection in both the writing and reading of zines than would be possible in electronic formats. Whereas electronic communication boasts efficiency, zinesters see the time and effort required to work with paper zines as one of the medium’s benefits. Teacher/zinester lb, for instance, answers, “i continue making paper zines because it is something solid. it has heart and effort” (lb, 2010a).

In both my research with the teacher/zinesters and reading of books about zines, instructional and academic, one consistent trend has been enumerating the possibilities for the construction, distribution, and consumption of paper zines, highlighting those either not possible or substantively different with electronic media. I pulled some of these from the teacher/zinester narratives and wrote them out by hand, and teacher/zinester Doug Blandy asked his spring 2011 “Zines and Do it Yourself Democracy” class to contribute their own ideas, which they wrote out on a shared piece of paper. In figure 10, I use a common zine technique to represent these possibilities visually through a collage that I created on paper and scanned. I present them this way to create a space that is based in a physical creation in what is really an electronic document.
Figure 10: 32 Things You Can Do with a (Physical/Material/Paper) Zine
For Nicole Georges, who publishes the diary-comic zine *Invincible Summer* and teaches zine workshops in a variety of school and community settings, it is zines’ materiality that makes them so powerful in schools. At the Portland Zine Symposium Zines and Teaching panel, she comments:

[T]here are so many things that [students] see, like computer-wise or all the books they’re given, that have never touched a human hand – they’re made by computers, they were printed by computers. Teacher takes them out of a big box, *here you go*, and then I come in with a basket full of zines that are obviously like hand-pasted, hand-printed, this and that, you can tell that a human has touched it. (Nicole Georges)

The texts that students interact with in schools are so often mass-produced and increasingly digital. Publishing zines and interacting with published zines in school settings promises active engagement, enjoyment, and connection, all of which are linked to zines’ existence as physical products, and specifically as physical products that have clearly involved a person’s physical body at some stage in their production.

This attention to zines as physical products, then, also calls into question some of our assumptions about school written products and mass-produced written products, like that writing should be perfect, professional, or clean. Teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse, for instance, created a zine for her workshops and teaching titled *Everything Looks Better Xeroxed* (n.d.). The zine combines text designed to inspire new zinesters with images of pages and covers from zines by her students and friends showing different zine-making techniques, such as comics, collage, and backgrounds. The main narrative of the first few pages reads:

It’s true. You can use a copy machine to publish a magazine. Fast. / It will not be perfect & shiny. It will probably not be ALL in color on glossy paper with computer effects. / But it can still look REAL good. It can still be alive. / It can still tell people. It can still be yours. (capitalization original, slashes indicate page turn, n. pag.)
Morehouse’s layout choices make interesting use of page breaks, with lines of text and sometimes even individual words breaking across many of the two-page spreads. She does not introduce the word “zine” until the last page, instead relying on “magazine” when necessary, but mostly “it” before providing a definition on the last page where she reveals, “This booklet is a zine and the pictures in it are all from zines.” Morehouse’s text challenges “perfect & shiny” and “ALL in color on glossy paper with computer effects” as goals for publications, offering instead that “it can still look REAL good” without those attributes, and that, more importantly, “it can still be alive,” “tell people,” and “be yours.” And, returning to Morehouse’s quoted comment at the beginning of this section, the product created in zine pedagogy is something that can be shared.

**Publishing as Sharing**

With summertime moving increasingly fast towards school time, I share my stories with an ever-present sense of hope, love, perseverance and criticism of being a public school teacher. (Ib, 2010b, "Notice!")

Ib’s “Notice!” defines her zine’s project as one of sharing complex stories of teaching. The zine assignment she presents to her class, too, is oriented toward sharing: “Share your insights with us,” the assignment implores. Ib and other teacher/zinesters hope that zine pedagogy will encourage students to share their talent, voices, stories, ideas, information, and insights—and, of course, their actual zines.

Understanding the promise of sharing in zine pedagogy requires some attention to how sharing is used both in the contexts of teaching writing and in the zine community, recognizing that teacher/zinesters draw on both sets of meanings when
they refer to sharing. In *Writing with Power*, Elbow (1998) describes sharing as exchanging writing without the expectation or requirement of feedback. School conceptions of sharing generally follow this definition, and might include reading aloud to the class or to a small group, or passing one’s notebook to a peer. In classrooms with greater technological capabilities, students might share by posting their work to a website or blog. Sharing could be voluntary or mandatory, depending on the teacher.

Sharing in the context of zines, however, implies a subversion of the economies of consumer culture. Though zines are typically sold for small amounts of money, most zines are priced near what they cost to make, and most zines lose money in the long-run (Bartel, 2004; Brent & Biel, 2008; Chidgey, 2009; Duncombe, 1997). The common practice of trading zines means that in many zine exchanges, no money changes hands. Further, because zines rarely include paid advertisements, they exist outside of the economic cycles in which audiences are sold to advertisers and products are sold to consumers. Making and distributing zines involves sharing one’s time, material, ideas, and stories in ways that are not common in other media. Piepmeier (2009) characterizes the circulation of zines as a “gift economy, at a small but profound remove from the capitalist marketplace and the operations of the consumer culture industries”; zines, she writes, “feel like something ‘for me’” (pp. 197, 83). Piepmeier attributes the gift economy of zines to the pleasures involved in making them, suggesting that zines are created “as acts of pleasure and generosity, and they are received in this way” (p. 81). Regé’s (2006) “Here’s a Little Peptalk about Zine Trading” (see Figure 11) demonstrates, in comic form, some of the connections between zine sharing, materiality, and gift economy. Sharing in zine culture is presented as a consequence of zines’ relationship to punk culture, and zines’ materiality makes sharing a zine not just communicating but giving a gift.
Beyond the physical exchange of zines, many zines are published in a way that is oriented toward the sharing of intellectual property: instead of copyrights and trademarks, many zinesters rely on alternative licenses that invite people to borrow from, reproduce, or redistribute the work more freely than is allowed under traditional copyright law but still provide some protections to the creator. Creative Commons licenses (http://www.creativecommons.org), for instance, allow publishers to select the
criteria they want to govern sharing so that readers and users can “share, remix, reuse – legally.” All six Creative Commons licenses require attribution to the original publisher; beyond that, publishers can decide whether they wish to restrict use of their work to non-commercial purposes, whether or not “derivatives” are allowed (whether others can “remix, tweak, or build upon” the work), and whether the redistributed or derivative versions have to be distributed under the same license as the original, called “share alike.” Copyleft is a type of license that has been used by software developers since the late 1970s; it offers the public permission to “use, modify, extend, and redistribute a creative work” under similar terms (The Linux Information Project, 2006). Options like Creative Commons and copyleft that reflect changing conceptions of creative ownership allow zinesters “to disseminate our work further and share it more fully,” writes Haegele (2008b, p. 107). “Maybe,” she continues, “it will ultimately break the back of the ownership structure that the mainstream publishing world is built on, too. Wouldn’t that be nice” (emphasis original, p. 107).

Sharing forms a critical link between zine culture and the promises of zine pedagogy. Asked to comment on the relationship between teaching zines and the overall goals of the IPRC, A.M. O’Malley states:

We value the importance of human connectedness, and we feel that the sharing of personal stories, artwork, and self-publications is a really important way of fostering community. So encouraging young people to do that is one of the best ways we know how. [...We also value] the exchange of ideas and narratives and alternative viewpoints.

Teaching zines, in this view, becomes an extension of zine sharing: teacher/znesters share their knowledge of how to create DIY publications, and by doing so, they potentially increase the sharing of ideas and stories by inspiring new zine readers and publishers who can participate in zine publics. Because “sharing” exists in the
discourses of both teaching and zines with somewhat different meanings, it can represent a sense of compatibility but also difference between the facets of “teacher/zinester” identities.

Lucy Morehouse: You Have to Be Willing to Share Your Voice

“Strong writing will take you places […] but you have to be willing to share your voice” (Morehouse & Advanced Writing, n.d.)

Teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse places sharing at the center of both her zine pedagogy and her own zine-making practice. In the introduction to OngOng 5, “In Which the Editors Set it Up,” Morehouse and co-editor Scott Davis (n.d.) explain the reason that this issue has been only minimally edited: “Because the being of this fanzine is the joy of SHARING. On all sorts of crazy levels, all our mad geniuses” (n. pag.). It is this joy of sharing that, Morehouse says, led her from making zines to teaching zines:

Part of the whole purpose of my zine is community building and also inspiring, giving artists and writers a forum to share their work. So I really see myself more as an editor than as a writer… I became involved with teaching zines because it was a natural extension of that mission, and there was kind of a vacuum – people wanted zine workshops and there wasn’t anyone around teaching them, so I thought, “I could do that. I could do zine workshops.” Also at the time I was considering whether or not I wanted to make a career switch and become a teacher, so it seemed like kind of a natural progression – try out teaching zines, see if I liked teaching, and share the wonder of zines with more people.

From her experience working on a zine oriented around sharing creative work, Morehouse saw teaching zine workshops as a “natural extension of that mission,” a means of sharing the medium with others. In her student teaching position at an alternative high school, she found another role for sharing: “students who were unmotivated by any carrots I could dangle,” she says, “were really interested in sharing with each other.” Though the project acted as the culmination of a unit on organization,
Morehouse describes her goals as focused on sharing: she says, “My main goal is that students recognize that their voices are powerful, and therefore worthy of being shared with others...The main goal is sharing – sharing those voices with the community, valuing voices enough to share them.” Continuing to draw on this language of sharing, Morehouse describes zine pedagogy as teaching a disposition of “being unafraid to share one’s work with the greater world” and of “valu[ing] the process and experience of sharing one’s voice with the outer world.” Morehouse, beginning with her students’ motivation to share with one another, pushes them to consider sharing in broader contexts: the community, and greater or outer world. This shift from sharing within the classroom to sharing with a larger community that may include strangers happens through zine pedagogy as publishing.

“I made this. You can have it.”

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I thought I would have plenty of time to put my zine together, but here I was, the night before my flight to Portland, trying to figure out the right direction to put the single-sided copies back into my husband’s desktop copier for printing on the second side. Stacks of paper everywhere. Realizing I had put the page numbers too close to the margins and they were being cut off in the copying. As I cut the full sheets into half sheets, I wondered how I would assemble the zines right without page numbers. My initial two pieces of paper were now eight sides – there were at least 6,143 wrong ways to put it together. And assuming I could get the pages right, who would buy these strange little booklets with cut-off, handwritten numbers and jagged scissor cuts? The fold and cut lines I had lined up so precisely on the master copy seemed to end up everywhere but where they should have, the top of page X bleeding into the margin of page Y. When I ran out of staples, I decided that it was the copying that was important – I would find a place to staple when I arrived in Portland.

I had signed up for a table a month before, but decided that a whole table was too much space for my single little zine. By posting a request on the event’s online discussion page, I had managed to arrange to share a table with a zinester from Chicago, Ramsey Everydaypants, who publishes List. When I made my way to the Portland State University student union and found our table in the front row, she was there already with four issues of her zine laid out in neat stacks, each covered in a different color cardstock and featuring one of her beautiful drawings. My slim quarter-size zine with its plain paper, black-and-white cover looked so flat on the white table. I arranged and rearranged the thirty copies again and again, but nothing seemed to make them look particularly appealing. I scribbled in ballpoint pen on the back of a spare sheet: “Two Boats: $1 or trade,” laid it in front of the two fanned stacks, and pushed the half-sheet “Zines and Teaching” flyer I had made to the very front of the table. Why hadn’t I brought a tablecloth, made a real sign, or done something nicer with the cover of my zine? As Ramsey chatted with the woman next to us, Kate Haas, who publishes the mama zine Miranda, I realized I had just read one of her essays that morning on the train in Mamaphiles #1. The first visitors to the zine symposium were beginning to filter in and slowly make their way around the room, some walking straight down the line, pausing to peruse each table, others hanging back a few feet and stepping in only when they saw something that interested them. I smiled uncomfortably as people...
picked up my zine, flipped through it, and nodded to me as they put it down and moved on. Some stopped to read the flyer, drumming their fingers across the table as they leaned in over it. “I’ll give this to my friend,” one woman told me, slipping a flyer in her pocket as she rounded the corner of the table.

Somehow, the list of names and email addresses of potential participants in my notebook grew, and the stack of zines in front of me grew smaller as more zinesters asked me to trade. My first sale was to a ten-year-old boy whose father had allowed him to choose a zine to take home— I was afraid he’d be disappointed when he learned the zine was not a story about boats and ghosts, but both he and the father paged through it before handing me a crumpled dollar bill. Occasionally, I would pick up a few of my zines in one hand and push a few dollar bills into my pocket to walk around and see what I could buy or trade. One trade was a quarter-size monster coloring book that came with a set of homemade crayons. Back at the table, I colored in the drawing of boats on a lake on all the remaining zine covers and set to work making a new, in-color sign. Besides improving the look of my side of the table, it gave me something to do besides making the perfect “buy my zine please (but it’s ok if you don’t)” face to people filing past. I traded for other poetry zines, for zines made by high school students at the IPRC’s “Zine Camp,” for a comic-style zine about physics by another first-time zinester (this one a little more adept with margins than I was), and for a life-size drawing of a fat Persian cat sketched in orange-brown pen on newsprint. I bought piles of other zines, striking woodblock print cards, and a small, red, perfect-bound notebook with a bird silkscreened on the cover. I was denied a trade by a zinester who examined each page of my zine before handing it back to me and shaking his head smugly: “no thank you, but if you go to the website printed on this card, some of my poems are on there for free.”

After the symposium, I sent out a few copies of my zine through the mail, in response to zinesters’ requests for trades on my We Make Zines page. Some of these zinesters have simply sent their zines with encouragements to keep writing or keep publishing, while others have sent engaged responses with questions about the experiences that prompted the zine and about my writing process. I’ve sent out other copies to poet friends, even though I would never just send them a printed or emailed copy of a poem, nor would I send a literary magazine with a poem I wrote. I write publicly or at least with the intent and hope of publication all the time in academic work, but my zine has been the first piece of writing that I could and have wanted to just give to people I know, casually, without some predetermined framework like a class or writing group, and without feeling like I was asking them to commit to reading it and getting back to me with comments or worse, parading some accomplishment: instead, simply “I made this. You can have it.”

Publishing and Distribution

Thinking about zine pedagogy as publishing pushes teacher/zinesters to consider how they will handle distribution. The teacher/zinesters’ approaches to distribution vary widely and speak to the range of possible meanings of “publishing” and “public” for both zines and classroom publications generally. They also represent some of the possibilities and limitations of the promises of zine pedagogy as publishing.
Some of the teacher/zinesters encourage or require their students to distribute their zines outside of class. The project that M. Carrol Tama details in *Write More! Learn More!* (Tama & McClain, 2006), for instance, includes a distribution plan in the project checklist (p. 161). Describing the difference between a zine and the multigenre project also included in that section of the book, Tama and McClain state that zines are “meant to be shared, either passed on to other like-minded readers...or sold” (p. 153). Distribution, for Tama, is one reason why she believes zine projects are successful: she says, “I believe students like the publication factor. They can leave these at coffee houses or libraries; they can read them at coffee house readings,” suggesting that it is the possibility of addressing public audiences that makes zines exciting for students. The zine projects in Doug Blandy’s “Zines and DIY Democracy” course, likewise, all include specifications for how many copies are to be made and require distribution plans for some number of copies to be distributed outside of class. Blandy confirms that this is not simply an exercise; the students actually distribute the zines according to these “distro plans,” in addition to providing copies for Blandy’s personal zine library and, on occasion, for the University of Oregon Library’s special collections.

Other teacher/zinesters focus on in-class distribution rather than asking their students to distribute their work outside of school. Ib and Lucy Morehouse, for example, have students create whole-class collaborative zines for which distribution means that each of the student contributors gets a copy. Both Ib and Morehouse keep copies for their own collections and to show future classes, and the zine created by Morehouse’s class was also given to guest speakers from that unit, and copies were placed in the school’s front office. In Morehouse’s workshops in which students make individual zines, she tells participants about possibilities for selling their zines or donating to libraries. Ib keeps of copy of class zines in her classroom for students to
read, but says that for the zines to be distributed outside of class, she would want it to be the students’ idea. Asbell’s students’ individual zines function as the handout for their research presentation, so each student in the course receives a copy, and Asbell keeps a copy of each zine for herself to show to future classes. In these cases, the zines become public in a very limited way, to the strangers who might make up future classes or who flip through magazines in the front office of an alternative high school.

Teacher/zinester A.M. O’Malley describes some of the ways that she approaches distribution in her work with schools through the IPRC, even when school budgets rarely allow making a lot of copies:

I really like to introduce a public component to these longer projects, where they have a reading, and they get to at least show the public, even if they can’t make a lot of copies. Or you know, get donuts and juice and go crazy with reading these zines in the classroom. And then a swap is always really fun, and they’re always invited to donate their zines to the IPRC zine library. I like to tell them about how many people come to the library and could potentially check their zine out; that’s always really exciting. And then, as part of the zine camp and some of the larger projects, they’re invited to be a part of the Portland Zine Symposium, too. And, because there are limited resources with schools, I try to encourage the students, to let them know how they could distribute their own zines and bolster them in that. Also to let them know that they can donate their zines to the public library, too – the Multnomah County Public Library has a really great zine library, and they really are supportive of zinesters.

Though O’Malley cannot always provide the funds for extensive public distribution, she focuses on strategic ways that student zinesters can distribute their zines at minimal expense. Donating copies to the IPRC zine library and Multnomah County Public Library puts the zines in relatively central places where people come to look for zines—making them accessible to a zine counterpublic.
The Consequences of Publishing

An understanding of zine pedagogy as publishing, especially for K-12 students, also demands that teacher/zinesters attend to the potential consequences of making their students’ work public. Students’ revelation of personal information in a publishing project may have different consequences than in a piece of writing only seen by their teacher. Teacher/zinesters must also consider how to navigate publishing student work that doesn’t conform to the conventions of Standard Edited English, and the potential legal consequences of their students’ publications that appropriate images, slogans, or trademarks. This section briefly reviews the issues teacher/zinesters identified as possible consequences of publication.

Asked about anything unexpected that has happened in her teaching, teacher/zinester A.M. O’Malley says “I think some unexpected things have been, for me, how honest the kids get sometimes in their zines. There have been a couple of cases where they’re writing really private, disturbing things - about cutting or about depression or about stuff that’s going on with their parents.” When O’Malley is teaching at a school or community organization, the host school or organization typically handles such issues. O’Malley says that if she were to encounter an issue like that at Zine Camp, which the IPRC hosts, “I think what I would end up doing is just to have a conversation with the student to make sure that they knew that their zine was going to be seen by a lot of people, and were they comfortable with that, and just make it clear to them the ramifications of the content of their zine.” Lucy Morehouse, too, recognizes complications when students reveal private information, but emphasizes that this is an issue for all school-based publication projects: “newspaper editors and yearbook editors have dealt with [these concerns] for millennia,” she says. Zines’
traditions of diary-style, extremely personal writing, however, may make this a more frequent concern when teaching zines than in something like a yearbook.

Another potential consequence of publishing that came up in the teacher/zinester narratives was the issue of conventions. While many of the teacher/zinesters see zines’ relative tolerance of mistakes as a benefit of the form, publishing student writing with conventions issues makes those issues permanent and public. Teacher/zinester Angela Asbell, for instance, reminds her students when discussing evaluation and grading that, while she is not concerned about typos, “when you’re publishing something, that it’s kind of stuck there. You may feel like an idiot if none of your sentences have punctuation.” Lucy Morehouse, working with students at an alternative high school, reports some concern about these issues in her reflections on the project. In response to my question about how her student teaching zine project went, Morehouse says:

The one thing that I’m not really sure about is that, the focus of my unit was on organization, but some of the students still have really poor sentence control. So I have these little mini-essays in this zine that reflect that - poor grammar, run-ons, fragments, "there" mixed up with "their," those sorts of holes that alternative students often have. So that's on display for all the world to see. Which I'm kind of two minds about - part of me doesn't want the students to be embarrassed if someone gives them a hard time about that, or the teachers or the school to be embarrassed. But another part of me is like, you know, they worked really hard on this stuff, and the organization is great. So that's plenty for now.

Morehouse continues on this line of thought to offer advice to potential teacher/zinesters:

That's something, though, for people considering this to know. That you could make into a bigger production and include editing as part of your process. That could probably have solved that problem, we just didn't have time. And teachers often don't have time. So I guess that's one thing to think about ahead of time - realizing that some of your lower-skilled
students are going to submit a piece of writing to the zine that's reflective of their skills. And you kind of have to be OK with that. Either that or you have to include a rigorous editing process as a part of your project.

Morehouse’s comments point to the need for potential teacher/zinesters to plan their approach to editing in advance. Concern about students’ mistakes extends beyond the sentence level, too. The page with a gang sticker that teacher/zinester lb rejected from her class zine (mentioned in chapter six) was also rejected because of a misused word. As lb writes in her emailed response to an early draft of chapter six:

the page read: "stop immigration" when he meant to say "stop deportations." i could have just ripped off the crown sticker and still given the student a talking to, but the confusions in language combined with the sticker prompted me to ditch it. it might have been embarrassing for everyone to see his obvious mistakes when he titled the page "stop immigration" but wrote a muddled pro-immigration paragraph below.

Such an error may have been a minor misunderstanding in class, but to lb, including the page in the zine to be published with that kind of mistake would have been worse for the student than rejecting it.

Finally, publishing can involve students in legal issues of copyright and trademark law, which became a subject of discussion at the zines and teaching panel. An audience member asked a question about whether the teacher/zinesters discuss copyright and allow their students to use other people’s works or expect them to create entirely original content. Here is an excerpt of the discussion that followed, engaging teacher/zinesters Lucy Morehouse, A.M. O’Malley, and Michel Valdes as panelists:

L.M.: I bring a whole lot of black and white patterns and borders and clip art, because I find that some people just really don’t like to draw. It’s intimidating enough to make any marks on paper, so I definitely bring that. Realistically, none of your students are going to get sued for cutting a picture of a skateboarder out of Thrasher magazine and pasting it with a thought-bubble that says, Right on – skateboarding is the coolest! [laughter] So, I tell them that. There’s the kind of [standard advice]: avoid Disney; if
you use a character, don’t send your work to the character’s creator, saying look at what I did; and be respectful. I find that those guidelines have been plenty. I use the [criterion]: you don’t have any money, and you’re not making money off of this. Until you have something that the other person wants, it’s not going to be an issue.

A.M.O.: I generally bring a lot of clip art as well. We have a very brief discussion about, do they know what copyright is, or what copyright free and fair use is? And we just have a very brief discussion about it and then move on. It’s not usually an issue.

M.V.: Again, the stuff I’ve done just mostly stays in class, and if not, it’s just all their original work, so I don’t worry about that. I’ve yet to be sued. [laughter]

L.M.: I’ve had students print song lyrics from their favorite [artist] or illustrate song lyrics, and I personally feel comfortable with that.

The teacher/zinesters generally agree that students realistically will not be sued for a class zine that they are not making any money from, and they pass on their knowledge and advice about copyright issues gained as zinesters. Disney is notorious among zinesters for their aggressive protection of trademarks and copyrights. A few minutes later in this discussion, teacher/zinester Angela Asbell joins in as an audience member. She provides brief background on the research zine project that she assigns her students, and then says:

A.A.: We spend some time talking about that idea, that if [student zinesters] are critical of a big corporation – I mean, we’ve already read all this stuff [in No Logo (Klein, 2009)] about what happens to people who are critical. So we talk about that a little bit, and we talk about intellectual property, and we talk about copyright, and it pretty much comes down to the same thing: if you go out in the streets and start selling this McDonalds zine, they might come after you—or Disney—Disney is the example I use because they are infamous. If you’ve got a Disney zine that’s critical of Disney, and you’re going around passing it around at Disneyland, they are probably going to come get you. But as long as you’re not charging, and as long as it’s within the guidelines of fair use,

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22 For example, Disney’s 1978 suit against the Air Pirates underground comics collective prompted the writing of Levin’s (2003) The Pirates and the Mouse: Disney’s War on the Counterculture.
you’re probably going to be OK, because that’s literally [what] fair use means: the ability – one of the portions of it is the ability to critique.

In *No Logo*, Asbell’s students read about activist self-publishers who were sued by McDonalds, a Riot Grrrl zine called *Hey There, Barbie Girl!* shut down by Mattel, and a group of New Zealand parents who were forced to remove Pluto and Donald Duck from their playground mural (Klein, 2009, pp. 182, 177). Conversations about copyright and trademark as they relate to zines in Asbell’s course, she says, lead into broader discussions about how research and writing work as conversation, the topic of the next chapter, as well as important student realizations. Asbell continues, “once you talk about it, students are always like, yeah, what the hell? How come you can’t draw a Disney character and then satirize them?”

**Negotiating Zine Pedagogy as (Practicing) Publishing**

A zine is something that’s built to *do* something to the world, whether that’s to get other people to talk to you or to inform - it’s not just "the book of our class and our semester." It’s a communication with the world at large. (Morehouse)

In addition to making space, a second way that the teacher/zinesters in this project encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy is as publishing. This chapter began by defining publishing as “making public,” specifically to strangers. Through approaching zine pedagogy as publishing, the teacher/zinesters call attention to a stage in the writing process often left out of school writing instruction, one that they argue can motivate students and change their approaches to writing as a whole. They also emphasize publishing as creating a physical, material product, something that zinesters continue to do despite the availability of more efficient possibilities for communication through digital media. Finally, they approach publishing as a way of facilitating
sharing—of ideas, writing, talent, and voice, as well as zines. Besides being a word used fairly regularly in writing instruction, “sharing” is an important word in zine (counter)publics, indicating a rejection of corporate models of media communication and relying instead on what Piepmeier (2009) calls a “gift economy.” After exploring these three promises of zine pedagogy as publishing, I turned to the teacher/zinesters’ practice to examine how the zines created in their classes are made public (or not) through distribution, and how they negotiate the potential consequences of publishing, including personal revelations, conventions issues, and legal matters related to copyright and trademark.

The “promises” of zine pedagogy as publishing—process, product, and sharing—are not always delivered. The status of classroom zines as publications is more often tied to zines themselves being publications and the illocutionary act by which we call things published (as in lb’s saying “you are now published” in the “Published Authors” story that opened this chapter) than to their being addressed and distributed to a public that includes strangers. Students’ writing process and ability to create a product they are happy with may be limited by the time constraints of school classes, and despite the particular history and associations of “sharing” in zine culture, the “sharing” they experience may seem just like traditional school senses of “sharing.” Even when teacher/zinesters arrange or educate students about distribution possibilities outside of class, their projects raise the question of whether a class zine that only reaches future classes can be, in Morehouse’s words, a “communication with the world at large”? Can it “do something to the world”? Many classroom zines ultimately act as publications that are not really public, reaching classmates, teachers, friends, and family, but not strangers.
In light of these issues, the teacher/zinesters often use the word “practice” to describe publication in zine pedagogy. Angela Asbell, for instance, identifies part of the purpose of her research zine assignment as “to practice and refine the strategies associated with publishing” (ENG 104A 11 syllabus, 2010). A.M. O’Malley reports telling students who do not feel that they have enough time to make the zine they want to make that “the zine that we’re making is just a practice zine. It’s just to show them how to do it, and that they can perfect something later.” These ideas of practice highlight a tension between conceptions of zine pedagogy as creating a real thing and conceptions of zine pedagogy as creating a substitute for a real thing—a practice version. While one of the draws of zine pedagogy is that the skills and materials needed to publish a basic zine are within reach for most students, limitations of time and distribution can lead to understandings of zine pedagogy that shift between publishing and practicing publishing.

One of the issues that can be seen as separating classroom zines from other classroom publications (like, in Morehouse’s words, “the book of our class and our semester”) is zines’ embedded politics. As discussed in chapter four, zines are inherently political because the medium itself acts as a critique of consumer culture and an alternative to that culture. The next chapter investigates the messages of zines through the teacher/zinester narratives and the ways the teacher/zinesters see students entering conversation with and through zine pedagogy.
Chapter Eight: Having a Conversation

As we start to look at the zines, [we see] that people are communicating with each other and having conversations with each other in these zines. Somebody will say in their zine, "I just read this or that zine that said this and this and that, and I disagree," or somebody would even say, "I just read this book, that I totally liked, but I disagree with this part and that part." And then by virtue of it being kind of a pen-pal situation, all of these things show that writing is part of this big conversation and that these zines are part of this big conversation. It seems like zines are a really good metaphor for this thing that is otherwise really hard to describe. Underlying assumptions about language and the way that knowledge is created are usually based on this very old school idea that only certain people are authorized to make knowledge, and only certain people are authorized to write, and to teach, and to speak. And these ingrained assumptions do a lot of damage for the way that I'm trying to teach writing, so I need ways to give examples of how writing is more like I'm seeing it, like a conversation. (Asbell)

Teacher/zinester Angela Asbell teaches zines because zines help her to show her students that writing is a conversation, and it is a conversation that they can join. She uses this sense of conversation to counter dominant assumptions about knowledge, authorship, and power, and to shift students’ writing from a model of academic writing that she describes, in a sing-song voice, as, “this is wrong - this is right - proof, proof, proof - here's my proof - I refuse to listen to you,” and toward one that is “definitely making assertions and using proof for it, but it's also understanding it's part of a big conversation.” Zines model conversation not only in contrast to some types of academic writing, as in Asbell’s description, but also in contrast to mainstream media. Unlike corporate media, Brent and Biel (2008) write, zines are “not just another product to be consumed but […] unique contributions to a vast conversation which everyone [is]
This chapter explores teacher/zinesters’ descriptions of zine pedagogy as engaging in conversation.23

The third central promise of zine pedagogy in the teacher/zinester narratives is a promise of conversation – both as a concrete way for students to see their writing as engaging in conversation and as enabling a conversation between the medium itself, the teacher, and students that not only differs from the ways that students interact with school and mainstream media discourses, but calls attention to those interactions and invisible conversations. For the teacher/zinesters in this project, making space and publishing act as both affirmations and interventions. Zines say “yes” to students through their promises of accessibility, participation, and self-authorization, promises that are based in zines’ DIY ethics. But zines also say, and provide a space for students to say, “no” to mainstream media and consumer culture. After examining the “yes” and “no” of zines as a medium through the teacher/zinester narratives, I turn to the teacher/zinesters’ roles in zine pedagogy conversations in their classrooms. Specifically, I am interested in how they respond to their students’ zines through evaluation and grading, as well as how and why they engage the word “zine” in their teaching. Finally, I consider how teacher/zinesters negotiate the limitations and failures of zines’ “yes” message of accessibility and self-authorization: though zines promise to say “yes” to everyone, the majority of zinesters are White and culturally if not economically privileged.

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23 Following the teacher/zinesters’ wording, I use “conversation” in the singular throughout this chapter.
Publics and Conversation

Conversation is a fairly common metaphor for public discourse; however, Warner (2002) argues that its “poetic function...is misrecognized” when public discourse is understood as conversation. He writes:

The circulation of public discourse is consistently imagined, both in folk theory and in sophisticated political philosophy, as dialogue or discussion among already co-present interlocuters...I have already noted that this folk theory enables the constitutive circularity of publics to disappear from consciousness, because publics are thought to be real persons in dyadic author/reader interactions rather than multigenre circulation...Here the point is that the perception of public discourse as conversation obscures the importance of the poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics. The public is thought to exist empirically and to require persuasion rather than poesis. Public circulation is understood as rational discussion writ large. (p. 115)

For Warner, a conception of public discourse as conversation misses two important points about publics: that they are self-organized by circulation, rather than being fixed speakers sending and audiences receiving messages; and that public discourse is poetic in the sense that it “must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address” (p. 114), something that happens not only through the content but through style and affect. To misrecognize public discourse as conversation, for Warner, is to flatten publics’ world-making function.

But Warner’s argument here depends on equating conversation with debate or rational discussion, drawing on Habermas’s association of the public sphere with
deliberation. The “conversation” of zines and zine pedagogy, rather, is more like Oakeshott’s (1959) description.\textsuperscript{24}

In a conversation the participants are not engaged in an enquiry or a debate; there is no ‘truth’ to be discovered, no proposition to be proved, no conclusion sought. They are not concerned to inform, to persuade, or to refute one another, and therefore the cogency of their utterances does not depend upon their all speaking in the same idiom; they may differ without disagreeing. Of course, a conversation may have passages of argument and a speaker is not forbidden to be demonstrative; but reasoning is neither sovereign nor alone, and the conversation itself does not compose an argument….

Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure. [Conversation] is impossible in the absence of a diversity of voices: in it different universes of discourse meet, acknowledge each other and enjoy an oblique relationship which neither requires nor forecasts their being assimilated to one another. (pp. 10-11)

Far from the model of rational debate proposed by Habermas and contested by Warner, the “conversation” of zines is one in which not just claims but “speech genres, idioms, stylistic markers, address, temporality, mise-en-scène, citational field, interlocutory protocols, lexicon, and so on” (Warner, 2002, p. 114) are all extremely important. It is a conversation in which “thoughts of different species take wing and play around with one another, responding to each other’s movements and provoking one another to fresh exertions” (Oakeshott, 1959, p. 10). Thus, this chapter not only examines the teacher/zinesters’ descriptions of zine pedagogy as conversation, but attempts to investigate some of the terms and ideas that give this conversation its distinctive character.

\textsuperscript{24} Oakeshott’s discussion of conversation also forms the basis of Pinar’s (2004) theorization of curriculum as “complicated conversation.”
Zine Conversations

In her interview for The Paper Trail Interview Series with Ciara Xyerra, lb (2010a), responding to Xyerra’s question about what she likes best about the zine community, says, “i make zines to have a connection, to start a dialogue with a complete stranger” (capitalization original). This statement, of course, fits with Warner’s (2002) claim that “A public is a relation among strangers” (emphasis original, p. 74). But lb’s assertion of her goal of starting dialogue, not necessarily a debate about a particular issue but conversation itself, reflects a different approach to addressing strangers than most public speech takes up. Warner writes that “Counterpublics are ‘counter’ to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity” (pp. 121-22). The connection among strangers that lb posits is one of intimate dialogue rather than rational debate. While lb addresses strangers, her goal, like that of many zinesters, is that the connection forged through writing and reading zines will change stranger relationships into those of pen pals or friends. In her zines, lb invites email comments from readers, and she signs her zines and emails “love, lb,” both examples of ways that zinesters imagine stranger sociability differently than mainstream publics do.

Describing zines as “deeply engaged in conversation with many discourses appearing in the surrounding culture,” Radway (2001) argues that zines create conversation not only between people but between discourses. She continues:

Indeed they are so engaged with them that they cite, reference, and even ventriloquize a multifarious range of discourses precisely in order to respond to all of them. Thus, they re-circulate cultural discourses at the very moment that they alter them by juxtaposing and combining them. (p. 11)
This sense of conversation between discourses can characterize the voice and style of zines as well as the content. “Zine writers,” Radway contends, “portray themselves as if in constant conversation with imagined others” (p. 18). In this conversation, “virtually every utterance and every representation is staged as a response” (p. 18). Describing a common but hardly universal quality of zines, Radway may overstate a bit here. But returning to Asbell’s discussion at the beginning of this chapter, these common features of zines can show students, and ultimately engage them in, an accessible example of writing as conversation, with the “reflexive circulation of discourse” (Warner, 2002, p. 90) that characterizes writing in a public.

Teacher/zinester Doug Blandy, too, finds these aspects of zines helpful in teaching. He and his co-author (Congdon & Blandy, 2005) argue:

Zines assist learners in clarifying their own beliefs while discovering the points of views of others. Zines function to create, enrich, and sustain dialogue for the purpose of developing dialectical thinking. Creating and responding to zines assists students in locating congruencies and incongruencies in the thinking of themselves and others. (p. 62)

Being, as Radway suggests, in “constant conversation with imagined others” means that zinesters must consider multiple perspectives in relation to their own. For Blandy, this aspect of zines is appropriate for his critical pedagogy approach to teaching. Because, Congdon and Blandy write, “all zine activities encourage dialogue about postmodernism and democracy,” zines are the “central activity, instead of term papers” in Blandy’s “Zines and DIY Democracy” courses and Congdon’s philosophy and art history courses (p. 62). Besides acting as a concrete example of dialogue and a space that might be a forum for dialogue, zines, for Congdon and Blandy, facilitate conversation for students by removing some of the obstacles to students’ communication: zines “liberate the maker from issues of copyright and academic
format” (p. 63)—issues which, while obviously important for students to learn about, can impede their ability to engage in complex conversations.

Connection, conversation, and dialogue, then, are key themes in narratives of zines and zine pedagogy. The next two sections explore the character of that conversation: specifically, its focus on saying “yes” and saying “no.”

“Zines are such a ‘yes’ thing”

Asked about the benefits of teaching with zines, teacher/zinester A.M. O’Malley says, “seeing kids build their self-confidence through making zines is...really rewarding. Because zines are such a ‘yes’ thing – like, yes, you can do this; you can do whatever you want; it can be whatever you want.” The word “yes” and the characterization of zines as a “yes thing” resonate through the teacher/zinester narratives, other narratives of zine pedagogy, and other narratives of zines more generally. IPRC director Justin Hocking similarly states, “So rather than saying ‘no’ to people, we say ‘yes,’ – we empower them to publish their own work, and sort of subvert the normal conventions for getting their ideas and work out there, and show them how to do it themselves” (Robare & Independent Publishing Resource Center, 2009). “Yes” is repeated again and again in many zine pedagogy narratives, like zine librarian Bartel’s (2004) report of the questions she is asked when she introduces zines to a group at the library or in a school:

“Can I do a zine about animals?” Yes. “What if I just took things from my journal and made them into something else. Is that a zine?” Yes. “Is it all right if I just draw pictures and cut things out of magazines?” Yes. “Do there have to be words?” No. “Can it be any shape that I want?” Yes. (p. 2)
Certainly, one reason for all the “yes” talk is simply that zine form and content are quite broad. But it is not the only reason. Zines embody three overlapping themes of do-it-yourself ethics, all of which are oriented toward affirmation: accessibility, participation, and self-authorization. Each of these themes plays a role in the teacher/zinester narratives.

Accessibility

In their introduction to Zine Yearbook 8, Angel and Kucsma (2004) write:

Written zines are still one of the most accessible forms of self-expression. You don’t need any specialized equipment to broadcast over the airwaves or record your ideas, and you don’t even need a computer to create or view zines. All you need is a pen, paper, and a couple of dollars for the copy machine. (p. 5)

Zines’ accessibility makes them appealing for teachers whose classrooms have limited technological resources, for students may not have computer or internet access at home, and for students who are not confident that they can create a polished written product. Asked at the Zines and Teaching panel about the possibilities of having students create paper zines and then scan them to pdf files, O’Malley responds, “The great thing about zines is that they are so accessible. So, so accessible, and anyone can make one – it’s really easy. So creating a pdf and doing all those things is great, but essentially, I think that one of the beauties of it is that it’s a pretty easy process.” Zines’ material accessibility differentiates them from the digital so-called DIY media studied in recent literacy studies work (Guzzetti, 2009; Guzzetti et al., 2010; Knobel & Lankshear, 2010), which require specific technological capabilities that are often “facilitated by
commercial products” (Guzzetti, 2009, p. 44). Zines are also accessible in terms of the expertise required: another important thing about teaching zines, O’Malley states, is the opportunity to say to students, “yes, you can make mistakes; it can have spelling errors; you can just express yourself.”

**Participation**

Zinesters’ and teacher/zinesters’ insistence on accessibility is part of a commitment to a broader sense of public participation and authorship. Zinesters’ work creates and circulates in a participatory culture, which Jenkins, with Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) define as one:

1. With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
2. With strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations with others
3. With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices
4. Where members believe that their contributions matter
5. Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). (p. 7)

Participatory does not simply describe zine culture, though; it is at the base of the zine medium. As Duncombe (1997) states:

[U]nderground culture proposes something more [than the idea that “the medium is the message”]. The medium of zines is not just a message to be received, but a model of participatory cultural production and organization to be acted upon. The message you get from zines is that you should not just be getting messages, you should be producing them as well. (p. 129)

25 Unlike the “DIY” of zines, which is rooted in a political and ethical approach to media and consumption more generally, the “DIY” of these discussions seems to refer mainly to technological possibilities available to consumers. Ketcham Weber (2010) points out that this focus has the function of “emptying [DIY culture] of its political roots” (p. 11).
Thus, in reading zines, there is an “implicit challenge to turn around and write them” (Brent & Biel, 2008, p. 48). And in writing zines, there is a challenge to encourage others to write zines, too: “do-it-yourself entails helping others to do-it-themselves – if for no other reason than you have someone to trade your zine with” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 180).

Zines urge participation, leading zinesters to take up myriad out-of-school educational projects to encourage the creation, distribution, and reading of zines, such as zine workshops, libraries, resource centers, symposia, and festivals. Teacher/zinesters Morehouse, O’Malley, Asbell, and Valdes, for instance, all teach zines in extracurricular and out-of-school settings in addition to their work with zines in classroom settings.

Often, the “implicit challenge” to write zines that Brent and Biel refer to is not so implicit. In Asbell’s zine, *Bitch King*, for instance, Asbell poses a direct invitation to her readers to create a zine: “I know you write. I’ve seen you. Or you’ve read it to me. Or your friends. So what are you waiting for? Huh?” Asbell implores, ending the section with a list of six reasons why “self-publishing is so rewarding!” (see figure 11). By devoting most of her introduction to a call for more zines in her town, Asbell exemplifies the participatory focus of zining. Notably, Asbell’s list of reasons why self-publishing is rewarding does not include what she states as her own “ulterior motive for self-publishing”: the desire for more people to participate.

The teacher/zinesters describe the role of this participatory focus in their teaching practice in different ways. Zines’ emphasis on participation can translate into reasons to teach zines, as in Morehouse’s comment, discussed in chapter seven, that teaching zines is a “natural extension” of the community-building mission of the zine she edits. This emphasis can also provide support for established teaching goals. Asbell suggests that the “participatory culture of zines can give me a lot of insight into how to bridge this gap between what students think writing is and the ways I’d like to
teach them to engage with themselves and the larger community through writing.” Here, participation becomes a model for how Asbell sees and wants to teach her students to see writing. Blandy states that the participatory emphasis of zines is congruent with his participatory teaching approach. “Other genres,” he continues, “would probably not be as congruent.” Zines’ participatory nature, then, is called upon by teacher/zinesters in the “why,” “what,” and “how” of their approaches to zine pedagogy.

Figure 12: Introduction page from Asbell’s *Bitch King*, reprinted with permission
Self-Authorization

Whether responding to an implicit or explicit invitation to participate, in the absence of authorization through traditional means (academe, mainstream media, commercial publishers), zinesters self-authorize. Interestingly, this self-authorization is commonly described as an affirmative spoken statement. Bartel’s (2004) discussion of the relationship of self-authorization to DIY reflects this trend:

Underlying [the genre of DIY how-to zines] is the powerful concept at the core of zine culture: that anyone has the ability and everyone has the right to create meaningful content. With zines, the question is not just “why not do it myself?” Zines take it further by asking, “why does someone else’s work deserve more recognition or legitimacy than my own?” What makes one person’s work more valid than another’s?...Why should the power to publics be controlled by a small group of the rich and powerful when the means to get my voice heard are so easily accessed? My perspective is unique and important and I want a piece of the dialogue—I want to be involved and I want to do it myself. I don’t think it’s overstating the importance of this idea to say that zine culture rests squarely on the shoulders of DIY tradition, that it takes most of its meaning and all of its power from that principle. (p. 22, emphasis added)

Asbell, similarly, says that when she defines zines in her course, she incorporates, “that idea of self-authorizing, that zinesters are basically people who self-authorize and say, I have the right to print this, and my writing is good enough to be printed, and I get to decide how it’s printed.” Similarly, teacher/zinester Morehouse says, “the fact that [the zine form is] something used by people who want to share their thoughts and opinions unfettered by another party is kind of a cool you can do this on your own kind of a moral lesson.”

While zine pedagogy says “yes” to students, its goal is to convince students that they need not wait for someone to tell them, “yes”—that is something they can do for themselves. But the promise of zine pedagogy as saying “yes” also points to a failure:

26 This part of Morehouse’s narrative is explored in more detail in the “Saying ‘Zine’” section of this chapter.
Asbell and Morehouse have to tell students that zinesters self-authorize because the students in their classes are not self-authorizing when they create their zines; they are relying on authorization through a teacher, even if the teacher’s end goal is for them to self-authorize.

**Saying “No”: Zines and Opposition**

Another move in zine pedagogy’s promise of conversation is that of saying “no”: specifically to corporations, mainstream media, and consumer culture. In fact, the emphasis on accessibility, participation, and self-authorization are, Duncombe (1997) explains, part of zines’ embedded politics:

> Having readers become writers and writers become readers circumvents a fundamental tenet of the logic of consumer culture: the division between producers and consumers. This division is normally reinforced by the professionalization of cultural creation, which divides the world into those with the talent, skills, and authority to create, and those without. (p. 124)

Zines’ DIY ethic of affirmation in which zinesters claim for themselves and offer to others the “talent, skills, and authority” to create, is then also an act of opposition and subversion, challenging the cultural logic that positions some people only as consumers.

In *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Naomi Klein (2000/2009) examines the process through which global corporations’ creation of a marketing landscape with (quoting the section titles of her book) “No Space,” “No Choice,” and “No Jobs” has also led to a responses of “No Logo”: anticorporate activism. Among the strategies of this activism, Klein argues, are culture jamming, defined by Sandlin and Milam (2010) as “the act of resisting and recreating commercial culture in an effort to transform
society” (p. 250), and self-publication. Klein’s treatments of both include zines: the culture jams of many Riot Grrrl zines and zinesters like Carly Stasko, and the London Greenpeace-created pamphlet that began the UK McLibel trial. For Asbell, who introduces zines in one of her classes through Klein’s book, this “no” aspect is also very important in defining the medium:

When we talk about zines, the way that they’re introduced in No Logo is an important definition to me, too - that they are in opposition to mainstream media, in some ways considered a reaction to it - that when people don’t see their realities presented in mainstream media, or when they violently disagree with the realities that are presented in mainstream media, they create their own media in order to critique the media.

Asbell holds that people write zines as a way of exploring their identities and expressing unique points of view. She continues:

For some people--for a lot of people--that is in opposition to what they see in mainstream media, which is so pervasive, and hard to escape. And that’s kind of what Naomi Klein is saying in No Logo, too - that it’s everywhere and it’s hard to escape. So [making a zine is] not just a personal way of making your own space in the world, but it's also an intentionally subversive act, to challenge a lot of the values that are presented in the mainstream.

For Asbell, affirmation and negation are linked together in the act of making zines: “learning to articulate our beliefs, values, and identities,” she states, “is a critical act of resistance and a strategy of empowerment.” By using zines as a way of “talking back,” writers, artists, and activists create the circumstances they need to “have a conversation.”

In her introduction to Zines!, a collection of interviews with zinesters, Vale (1996) asserts that zines’ significance is as a “grassroots reaction to a crisis in the media landscape. What was formerly communication has become a fully implemented control process” (p. 4, emphasis original). Vale continues, “If communication can be viewed as
food, then everything the mass media serves has been depleted of nourishment by corporate self-serving agendas...zines directly counter the pseudo-communication and glossy lies of the mainstream media monopoly” (p. 5, emphasis original). A reflection of this view, one of the ways that O’Malley teaches zines in her work with the IPRC is through the Media Action Project, which has the goal of promoting media literacy and students’ critical approaches to media. The project ultimately hopes to “encourage youth to become creators of media rather than consumers.” O’Malley explains:

We go into an institution – it could be a school or a shelter or teen drop-in, and we do four sessions about deconstructing media, reading media, becoming literate in media. And then the participants create a zine deconstructing a piece of media usually, or representing themselves, as opposed to how they’re represented in mainstream media. (Robare & Independent Publishing Resource Center, 2009)

Here, zines act as a way to talk back to media, to shift back from a control process, or in Klein’s (2000/2009) words, “one-way dialogue” (p. 178), to communication and conversation through the act of saying “no.”

In fact, in O’Malley’s narrative, it is the word “no” that often begins students’ reflections about media, particularly for students who initially identify with mainstream media, as shown in this excerpt from our conversation:

A.M.O.: I think it’s important to stress that zines are a way to tell your story, that they are an alternative to mainstream culture...

K.H.D.: Do you find that that resonates even with students who, say, really identify with mainstream culture, who don't feel like they need an alternative to mainstream culture?

A.M.O.: That's a really good question because I have had students who are just like, "this is what I like. I like mainstream culture. This is what I want.” But then when I press them a little bit further and ask them if they feel represented in the mainstream culture, the answer is "no.” And at that point, that kind of wakes them up to the fact that there is value in other stories besides the mainstream. So basically that generally just opens up a conversation. Because I think very few people that I work with feel
represented by mainstream culture. If we’re talking about looks, or socioeconomic status, or the level of masculinity or the level of femininity or whatever, there always seems to be a gap or something missing in terms of them being represented. And often that gap is huge.

In O’Malley’s description, the students’ “no” answer begins a process of reflection that “opens up a conversation” about the omissions of mainstream media and culture. Their answer of “no” places them in a position not only to talk about media and culture but with it, through zines.

In thinking about teaching zines, it cannot be ignored that one of the sources of the values that zines hope to challenge and subvert is schools, which in many ways reproduce and support, and are supported by, mainstream and corporate culture. Many zines focus on unlearning the lessons of traditional schooling, particularly those of cooperating with the systems of capitalism. At its most virulent, this unlearning might take the form of the approaches to school advocated in the zine Theft of Our Youth: Radical Ideas and Thoughts [sic] on the Treatment of Children, such as trash fires, anarchist graffiti, and always carrying a screwdriver to “dismantle the school one bolt at a time” (n. pag.). But zines themselves are a form of unlearning professionalization and the processes of becoming recognized within the system. Moe of the zine Xtra Tuff (Biel & Sano, 2007) notes:

In college, one of the things that they teach you that is that there’s a certain protocol to becoming the thing that you are being taught to be. So, if you want to be a writer, then you have to go to the Iowa Writers Workshop. Or you have to become an unpaid intern at Harpers. With zines, it’s like you write the shit down, you figure out a way to copy it, you staple the shit, and you’re a writer.

Just as zines disrupt the relationship between producers and consumers, they disrupt the rules about who is allowed to call themselves what and who is qualified to do what that are reinforced by formal education. They critique how knowledge is created, who
can create it, and what kinds of knowledge are seen to matter. Self-authorization is both an affirmative intervention and an oppositional one; part of what it opposes is the very process by which schooling divides people into those qualified to create and those who are not.

Saying “No”? Context and Content

In practice, the extent to which zines produced in schools (or any zines, for that matter) actually stand as individual statements of resistance certainly varies. Asbell, for instance, by introducing zines through No Logo and having her students focus on topics related to economics, ensures that her students’ zines are political. But other teacher/zinesters have different experiences, as lb’s account of her students’ finished zine pages suggests:

Daniella wrote about how the drug war in Mexico was caused by the closing of the borders, and people couldn’t make any money for their families in Mexico. Adrian wrote about the upcoming World Cup. Jessica wrote about fake friends. Yessica wrote about supporting gay marriage. Deandre wrote about the status of our high school football team (not good). Stephanie and Maria wrote poems about their boyfriends (brave, I know). Omar wrote about using contraceptives in order to prevent teenage pregnancies (I was grateful it didn’t include personal experiences). Juan wrote about how Obama has turned his back on immigrants. Eric wrote about playing guitar and how you shouldn’t be intimidated. You should just do it and rock out! (Best rock n’ roll advice ever!) Amir wrote about Palestinian liberation and his most embarrassing moment when he accidentally knocked over a display case at Target.

lb’s list of her students’ topics includes important issues facing them, both personal and public. But at this point, there is a notable shift. She continues:

Well, most students wrote about an embarrassing moment. I think my examples from other zines had seriously skewed their idea of what to write about in a zine. Vanessa split her pants at school one day. Javier’s bookbag broke in the middle of the hallway. Thalia accidentally knocked over her dance classmates on stage with her bad dancing. Kieran wanted to impress some hot ladies with his boxing skills but his older brother
knocked him into some bushes. And many, many students wrote about slipping on some ice when someone was looking. Tragic! (*Truckface #14, “Published Authors”*)

At the beginning of the assignment, lb gave her students a handout with a variety of questions they could think about answering in their zine page or that might help them develop a topic. These questions ranged from national public issues to issues related to their city and school to questions about personal incidents like embarrassing moments. Through this set of questions, lb hoped to give students a choice between “sharing personal stories with their classmates or making a broad commentary on social issues,” depending on their comfort level. While a few students did take up social and political issues in their pages, “most students wrote about an embarrassing moment.” lb reported being somewhat disappointed that “some of the pages weren’t my cup of tea, but,” she writes, “I had to get over that fact and realize that it was what they wanted to create.” While I suggested in chapter four that a person who makes a zine makes a political statement whether or not the content of the zine is political, I’m not sure that holds for the student who makes a zine as a school assignment. In zine culture as a whole, saying “yes” is tied to saying “no”; zine pedagogy, however, may focus on one at the expense of the other.

**Zine Pedagogy and Grading**

lb’s reflection that “some of the pages weren’t [her] cup of tea” raises an important component of zine-making and zine pedagogy as conversation: response. While a zinester might expect responses to his or her work in the form of letters and emails from readers and reviews or mentions in other zines or zine-oriented websites, the response a student expects to receive to a school zine is often a grade. As I
discussed in chapter two, grading is one area in which the relationship between zines and schools can seem the most tense. Zines often break the expected conventions of school writing, such as neatness, standard spelling and grammar, and citations; but even if grading does not focus on these features, assigning a grade to a project based in DIY culture and ethics can be problematic. At the same time, a demand for evaluation and assessment make it hard to separate zines from processes of grading, or can limit their relevance and usefulness to teachers. The teacher/zinesters in this study take several different approaches to grading, including grading that attempts to incorporate both teacher and zinester perspectives; grading that focuses on effort, participation, or completion; and rubric grading.

Angela Asbell: Reading as a Zinester, Reading as a Teacher

In teacher/zinester Angela Asbell’s basic writing course, English 104A, the zine project is worth 100 points out of a total of 750 for the quarter; this project incorporates a previously graded research proposal (worth 50 points) as well as an annotated bibliography that is graded as part of the zine. The zine also serves as the handout for each student’s research presentation, which is itself worth 100 points. In talking about how she approaches grading for the zine project, Asbell emphasizes that she wants grading in general to be as transparent as possible. She says she is very detailed in her discussions of evaluation with students, so that she’s “not just saying, write this particular type of essay and see what grade you get.” So when I asked her about grading, she framed her answer in terms of what she tells students about grading. Asbell describes grading the zine projects by first considering what she calls engagement and rhetorical positioning:

So basically when I’m grading it, I tell them that the design is important, and how they engage the reader, and make it into a magazine, in the sense
of something that somebody would look at and go, *oh, what’s that?* and pick it up and become interested and want to read it - it’s kind of the style and the readability, and that there isn’t one way to do that, that those decisions are all up to them. How are they going to engage people, if they pick a really harsh topic that they feel like, once people find out what they’re writing about that they wouldn’t want to read about it—it would upset them—how do you deal with that? How do you make a piece of art that engages people like that, the way [the students] felt engaged by the writing that they’ve seen in the zines that they’ve seen? So I say, *a big part of it is the way that you design it, the way that you’re trying to rhetorically position yourself and speak to your audience.*

It is these issues that Asbell considers in her first reading of students’ zines:

> I tell them honestly, when it comes to grading it, that the first read is enjoyment and engagement - when I look at your zine, when I look at the cover, when I’m flipping through it, is it interesting? Is it engaging? Can I tell that you care about the subject? Can I tell that you spent some time designing it?

After this first reading, Asbell assigns a provisional grade; then she turns to the requirements of the assignment: “you have to have your introduction and your conclusion, you have to have your annotated bibliography and it has to have this many sources, you have to include this kind of annotation, and the proposal needs to have your methodology in it, and all that kind of stuff,” she says. Ensuring that these technical requirements are met involves a second reading: “And then I go back and I read it again, but this time, I’m trying to pick out those requirements, those elements, like do they have their six sources? Does the proposal make sure to include their thesis? And so then I go and I look for the requirements, and then I adjust the grade based on that.” Asbell’s two-reading approach to grading, in which she says she weights engagement relatively equally with meeting the assignment’s requirements, helps her to determine whether students are “actually approaching it like writing instead of like doing an assignment.”
While Asbell is grading based on her level of engagement with the zine, she is trying to determine how engaged the student is with the research: whether they are seeing themselves as being in conversation with the research topic. Taking an example of the privatization of water in Bolivia as a research topic, she says:

[If the students are] only just recounting the facts of like when that happened and who the company was, kind of recounting it like a history, then it seems like maybe they haven't spent that much time thinking about it. But if they are recounting it in a way that, they’re evaluating the situation, they’re looking at the significance of it, they’re building an argument or a perspective surrounding it, they’re sifting through all the material and seeing all these points of view, then making these educated decisions, like I agree with this source, I think that it’s credible, I’m going to take some of this as what I’m trying to say, [then that indicates] they’ve spent time thinking about this topic enough to start formulating their own position on it.

Though Asbell’s first reading is focused on her engagement and enjoyment, aspects that a zine reader would likely focus on, these features serve as indicators to her of the kind of thinking her students are doing about their topics and whether they are, in fact, using the zine form to enter a conversation about these topics.

**Effort, Participation, Completion**

In chapter two, I discussed the “zine-o-meter” approach to zine grading described in Congdon and Blandy’s (2003) article, “Zinesters in the Classroom: Using Zines to Teach about Postmodernism and the Communication of Ideas.” This approach is based in the idea that a classroom zine should be evaluated in a way similar to how a zine might be evaluated in a review. “Students often use the zine-o-meter to evaluate their peers’ work,” write Congdon and Blandy, and “Responses registered on the zine-o-meters form the basis for in-class critiques” (p. 51). Asked about this approach in emailed question sets, however, Blandy notes that he does not use the zine-o-meter for grading. He writes:
I have tended to give full credit to zine assignments if the zine is produced. I build a community environment that encourages students to be responsible to one another and thus to not take an assignment seriously lets the community down. Because the students in the classes are self selecting I rarely have students who are not fully engaged.

Grading for completion, for Blandy, is possible because of the motivating community environment of the course. It also avoids the damage that valuing some contributions over others could do to the community environment.

Lb, too, focuses her grading on completion, participation, and community responsibility. In the class zine project she described, students received full credit for completing their zine page, as well as participation points for the days that they worked in class. “If they did not turn in their page, i took away their previous participation points for class work” (capitalization original) she says. Lb emphasizes: “The real focus was on making an end product. Without the individual pages, we would have no class zine.” Here, again, the quality of students’ work is not graded; participation is considered, but all credit is dependent on the students’ successfully completing their pages to contribute to the class zine.

In Lucy Morehouse’s class zine project, she invited students to either write something new (her assignment offered several prompts for poems) or start with a previously written and graded mini-essay (the main graded project of the unit) that they could decorate and prepare as a zine page. The zine pages themselves were graded on a pass/fail basis: “I personally don’t believe in grading student artwork,” Morehouse says, but she suggests that teachers could grade on effort, offering students credit for each class period in which they work diligently. Valdes, similarly, focuses on effort in his grading, saying:
I pretty much have given students free range to go as far out as they’d like with their stuff. So if the effort is there, that’s a passing grade for me. If a student really isn’t into it and just churns out something not of great quality just because they don’t feel like it then I dock points. I think the evaluation comes more from their peers. Peer editing is super useful and often means more to their wanting to always be better.

Here Valdes notes that his concern is effort as far as grading is concerned, but that evaluation can happen in other ways, like through peers. In this, he echoes Blandy’s use of in-class critiques and the “zine-o-meter” for zine evaluation, but a separation between grading and evaluation.

M. Carrol Tama: Grading with a Rubric

Teacher/zinester M. Carrol Tama uses a rubric to grade the zines that teachers produce in her course, a rubric that they can then use in their own classrooms. In her book for teachers, *Write More! Learn More!* (Tama & McClain, 2006), the section on zines includes a checklist and scoring guide with rubric. Criteria include “Dear Reader Letter,” “Zine Content,” “Creativity,” “Presentation (Cover, Table of Contents, Contents),” and “Reflection,” and each is rated on a scale from one (“Let’s talk about it!”) to four (“You’ve got it!”). Tama says that her rubric has evolved over time: reading the rubric she used for her 2010 summer course against the one included in *Write More! Learn More!* reveals several changes. In the later version, Tama dropped the “Dear Reader Letter” category, incorporating the descriptions of quality levels in this category, which had focused on the student’s topic and the interest demonstrated in that topic, into the “Content” category. The “Content” category in the 2006 version includes the number of genres included in the zine (e.g. 5 genres represented for 4 points, 3 genres represented for 2 points), a consideration that is absent from the 2010 version, which instead offers four points for zines in which the “genres represent passion and feeling for theme/topic.” Tama also replaced “Reflection” with “Personal Essay,” though the
descriptions of quality levels within this category remained basically the same. The descriptions in the “Creativity” category are substantially different; for example, the highest ranking changed from “Exceptional originality of presented material” to “‘Wow’ factor evident. ‘Pay attention to this!’ blasts off the written page.” Tama says she changes her scoring guides as she learns more about zines. “I’m also thinking about asking teachers to design their own in light of their idea of what is critical,” she adds.

In Tama’s “Writing Across the Curriculum” course, teachers choose one major project from a number of options, and many choose to make a zine. Because, like in Asbell’s course, the zine project is a main component of the class, Tama’s grading processes reflect that status. The teacher/zinesters’ approaches to grading across their narratives reflect their zine pedagogy priorities and goals in terms of research development and engagement, community building, and developing writing projects that are useful to teachers. Asked whether teaching with zines is like teaching with any other genre, lb answers: “since zines give more creative freedom, i feel like you don't want to give a rubric or any sort of writing restrictions. well, you could, it just depends on the purpose of writing your zine.”

Saying “Zine”

One question related to the conversation of zine pedagogy is what role the word “zine” plays in the teacher/zinesters’ approaches to zine pedagogy. Why do the teacher/zinesters use (or not use) that word with their students? Given all the differences between “real-world” zines and school zines, and all the similarities between school zines and other kinds of school publication projects, what do the teacher/zinesters hope to convey by using the word “zine” in their classrooms? Here
are the responses from teacher/zinesters lb, A.M. O'Malley, Michel Valdes, and M. Carrol Tama to the question below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do (or did) you choose to use the word “zine” in this project (as opposed to book, pamphlet, compilation, or any other name)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I chose the word zine, but alternated it with booklet a lot. I guess I wanted to expose the students to the world of zines without fully throwing them into it. And so in the future, if they ever hear or see a zine they will be able to recognize the word and realize, &quot;hey, I made one of those with my classmates!&quot; but, I alternated the words so the students would recognize how they are essentially similar. On the handout I wrote class zine (I think) and I kept on showing them copies of zines and just explaining how they were similar to a little booklet. (lb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I think it’s important to stress that zines are a way to tell your story, that they are an alternative to mainstream culture. I think that’s a really important thing to stress, to stress the element of empowerment. Because I think that’s one of the most important things about teaching zines. (O’Malley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s a little fuzzy right now but the angles project, and I don’t think I called it a zine when the class and I did it, had to do with basic identifying and classifying different typed of angles. We made a kind of “graphic organizer” to save the students notes in about the angles. Every angle had a role in the “neighborhood” and how they interacted with the other angles. As far as the personal connection with the social skills zine, which I did preface by calling it a zine project...I felt [there was] more benefit because of the subject matter. Dealing with what you feel inside and sharing that with your classmates can be really powerful. Taking notes and more memorizing facts as with [the] math project doesn’t really go under the skin. I think because I felt closer to the social skills project, I probably sold it more and spent more time on it as a teacher. (Valdes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The zine allows a wider range of genres. Students can choose to write poems, do interviews, develop podcasts and essays to go with them, brief memoirs, etc. A book to me has a definite orientation: a book of poems, a book of short stories, a novel, a non-fiction book. I think what I’m saying is the zine comes closest to the range of writing students can explore. (Tama)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In my interview with Lucy Morehouse, this became a more extended discussion, which I present here in full:

KHD: In your project, do you use the word "zine" with the students?

LM: Yes

KHD: Why do you use that word?

LM: That's a really good question. I think I use that word because it's connected with...It's a form of media, so it's connected with a history of its usage as well as certain techniques of printmaking. So that's why. But I usually don't have time to get into that with kids, or I don't all the time. But the fact that it's something that's been used by people who want to share their thoughts and opinions unfettered by another party is kind of a cool "you can do this on your own" kind of moral lesson.
KHD: And something that gives that message even if it's not something you get to talk about explicitly?

LM: Yeah. I always bring an example of zines. So they get to see that it's something that other people value, and that other people have used it as a medium to share things that they feel are important.

KHD: Do you see particular ways that this has been different from other types of classroom compilation projects, or do you see this as a different project from other compilation projects?

LM: There's a really blurry line there. I think that in my own head, I do. But when I explain it to other people, I don't. It is a classroom compilation project. A zine is, by definition--I'm a very linear thinker--a zine is a classroom compilation project, so it is that. If it is that and a zine, then I describe it as a zine. Does that make sense?

KHD: Yes. Do you think that teaching with zines is like teaching with any other form or genre?

LM: No, because you add in that history element, and you legitimize it as a medium for people to register their voices with the larger group. That's kind of a big deal [laughing].

Ranging from historical significance to personal connection, empowerment to genre freedom to simply exposing students to the name and form, the teacher/zinesters discuss a variety of ways that the word “zine” is important to them in teaching.

Who Says “Yes”? Zines, Zine Pedagogy, and Privilege

Though zines promise to be an accessible form of communication for all, to extend an invitation to participation to all, and to allow people who have been marginalized in various ways an opportunity to self-authorize, the actual population of people who makes zines has historically been mostly White and middle-class (Bleyer, 2004; Brouwer, 2005; Duncombe, 1997; Radway, 2011; Schilt, 2003; Wan, 1999; Zobl, 2009). Bleyer, for instance, notes that the efficacy of Riot Grrrl was limited by its class and racial exclusions. The relative homogeneity of Riot Grrrl, and of zines in general, is partially due to its ties to the also mostly-White punk subculture, but also related to the connections between zining and class privilege. Bleyer writes:
Participating in a girl zine culture requires that one have the leisure time to create zines, a life generally uncluttered with the rudiments of survival, access to copy machines and other equipment, money for stamps and supplies, and enough self-esteem and encouragement to believe that one’s thoughts are worth putting down for public consumption—all marks of a certain level of privilege. (p. 53)

Though the material barriers to participating in zining are relatively low, it is an activity with little or no monetary rewards and on-going costs. Making, distributing, and even buying zines is time-intensive. And while owning a computer is not necessary, free access to a copy machine helps: in Biel and Sano’s (2007) documentary, *A Hundred Dollars and a T-Shirt*, for example, several of the zinesters interviewed made references to using copy machines at their parents’ offices to copy their early zines. Zines created by zinesters of all racial and economic backgrounds do exist, and many zinesters and zine culture institutions are explicitly anti-oppression. The Portland Zine Symposium Safer Spaces Policy, for example, stands against oppression in the forms of “sexism, racism, ageism, speciesism, classism, religious intolerance, sizeism, ableism, transphobia, [and] heterosexism.” However, privilege is a major factor in supporting zining.

Guzzetti and Gamboa’s (2004) study of three adolescent feminist zinesters supports this idea; the researchers cite racial and economic privilege as one of the factors that enables the girls in their study to break with stereotypically gendered writing and instead write critically about gender issues. One of the zinesters in their study offers this comment:

> The middle class-ness of all three of us has definitely facilitated our production of the zine. We were able to copy the zine because we had money. We also used my mom’s office to copy it once. I think a lot of

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zinesters have a pretty middle-upper class mentality and many zines are from that perspective. (p. 428)

This theme of privilege speaks to a tension in the politics of zines (and in many left-wing political projects): for all their criticism of dominant systems like capitalism, zines are launched most often from privileged places within that system (though many zinesters reject many signs of privilege connected to money and consumer goods). In Brouwer’s (2005) study of zines by gay men with HIV or AIDS, he cautions against valorizing zines or counterpublic discourse generally, offering this observation:

Regarding zines generally, White middle-class people who comprise the majority of zine creators might perceive themselves as marginalized and alternative, and so their zines might constitute counterpublics. However, such people generally benefit from race and class privileges; failing to recognize this, they might fail to interrogate more tragic systems of domination that do not seem to involve them directly. (p. 364)

While the DIY culture is in theory open to everyone, participation requires lots of time, some money, and access to technology, requirements which ultimately limit who can participate. The politics of zines, then, can be unexpectedly contradictory, proposing, on one side, a DIY approach to culture and critique of capitalism but implicitly reinforcing, on the other side, cultural creation as an activity of the White middle and upper classes. In this way, zines challenge but in some ways simultaneously reinforce societal exclusions.

The failure of zines to deliver on their promises of accessibility, participation, and self-authorization leads some to argue that zines are an inadequate form of public writing if public writing is to be oriented toward change. In Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World, Welch (2008) writes:

[W]hen we go no further than considering with our students the alternative publics of independent media, food coops, or do-it-yourself
zines, we hit the limits of these rhetorical means, alone, to take on what seem likely to be the biggest issues ahead... [The] majority of this society—including most of our students and also most of their teachers—will need more than the individual and largely middle-class rhetorical solutions of the electronic town meeting, blog punditry, or (equally individualistic and suited primarily to the ethos and autonomy of the middle class) scattered, spontaneous, cultural interventions. (pp. 110-111)

Arguing that zines are an individualistic and middle class form of public discourse, Welch dismisses them as serious political intervention, suggesting instead that teachers and students attend to the “rich history of in-the-street working-class rhetorical action” (p. 90), including sit-ins, soap-boxing, and strikes.

For lb, the relative Whiteness and class privilege of zinesters was something to consider in teaching. Responding to my question, “Are there any drawbacks to teaching with zines?” she writes:

I think that zines are predominantly written by white middle class individuals. I think that the exclusive community of zines is in general a drawback because it doesn’t show a diversity of experiences or voices. I found zines to show my students that were not only focused on white middle class mid-twenty-something experiences. I think if I brought in more examples that were more reflective of the zine community at large, my students would question the legitimacy of zines if mostly white people are involved in the process.

lb mediated this drawback by selecting zines to show as examples that included work by diverse zinesters that she thought her students would find relevant. When I asked her how she balanced a need to show the students diverse experiences and voices with the relative exclusivity of the zine community, she responded that the “end goal of the lesson was not to analyze the zine community.” Similarly, teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse talked in our interview about the importance of tailoring the group of examples to different audiences. After giving some examples of how she does this for different age levels, Morehouse adds:
But not everyone responds in the same way to the same kind of seeds of ideas, so it’s good to have a variety.

And especially if you’re working with students of color. Like if you have a bunch of stuff by White punk rockers, and that’s all you have, they don’t care. Zines are made by all different types of people, all over, on all different kinds of topics, so if you make the effort, you will find things that will resonate with the group of kids that you’re working with.

Here for Morehouse and lb, while the field of zines is broad enough to find examples they do think their students will relate to, finding these examples means deliberately avoiding offering examples they believe are representative of zines created as a whole. And while this practice means that students of color may be more likely to find zines a useful form of communication, if they pursue it, they may be frustrated to learn about the skewed demographics of zinesters.

**Negotiating Zine Pedagogy as Having a Conversation**

The third major way that the teacher/zinesters in this study negotiated zine pedagogy was as having a conversation. This chapter opened with a discussion of conversation as a model for writing in a general sense, and with Warner’s critique of conversation as a model for public discourse. Drawing on Oakeshott’s conception of conversation, I argued that conversation, unlike rational debate, can account for the “poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics” (Warner, 2002, p. 115). I went on to discuss the role and shape of conversation in zines and zine pedagogy. Descriptions of zines by the teacher/zinesters and others often involve the word “yes,” a trend related to zine (counter)publics’ emphasis on accessibility, participation, and self-authorization. But zines are also seen as a way of saying “no”: a medium that itself opposes mainstream media, corporatism, and consumerism, and an ideal vehicle for oppositional messages. Zines’ inherent
oppositionality, however, may be one feature lost when zines are created in school settings. I then examined the ways that zine conversations are framed in schools: the responses students receive in terms of grading and whether, how, and why teacher/zinesters use the word “zine.” Finally, I considered the failure of zines’ “yes” message in the sense that, while offering accessibility, participation, and self-authorization for all, zine (counter)publics have historically over-represented the voices and experiences of middle class White people. This section considered two teacher/zinesters’ responses to that issue in their teaching.

Zine pedagogy as having a conversation promises that zines can help students see writing in general as a conversation; that zines can invite students into that conversation by emphasizing accessibility, participation, and self-authorization; and that zines can help students critique the cultural logic that positions them as consumers of media and culture rather than creators. But these promises also point to several questions: how can you authorize someone to self-authorize? If it is the context of the zine medium that makes zines oppositional, what is oppositional about zines in school? And if zines offer accessibility, participation and self-authorization to everyone, why are they so often created from positions of racial and economic privilege? Ib and Lucy Morehouse’s strategic selections of zines for examples can be read as making use of zine pedagogy’s failure to replicate the context of zines in classrooms. Ib and Morehouse use that failure to contextualize zines in their own ways. By showing students examples that correlate to their experiences but that are not representative of, say, the zines students might find on a zine rack in a record store, Morehouse and Ib engage in the poetic world-making of public discourse. They characterize the world they hope to address with the zines they offer as examples, and they attempt to realize a world of more diverse zinesters through circulation.
In the concluding chapter to this dissertation, I place zine pedagogy in a larger context of “zine studies,” summarize the work as whole, interpret the implications it could have for teaching public writing, and describe its limitations, as well as where those limitations might lead to possibilities for future work.
Closing: Ruins

By looking for cultural and individual solutions to what are essentially structural and societal problems, and locked into the contradiction of being wed to the society it hates, the underground inevitably fails. (Duncombe, 1997, p. 194)

The zine, then, is a medium that captures flux, contradiction, and fragmentation and uses these things not as problems to be resolved but as sources of creative energy. (Piepmeier, 2009, p. 91)

[T]he preoccupation with what zines do and how they do it has become central to the burgeoning literature on zines, a literature that has, in effect, created something that might usefully be termed “zine studies,” an intellectual discourse about zines and zine-ing that is not limited to the academic sphere. (Radway, 2011)

In “Zines, Half-lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change,” Radway suggests that we can identify an intellectual discourse we could call “zine studies.” This field includes the work of scholars in the fields of English, sociology, education, communication, and women’s studies, as well as that of zinesters, librarians, and teachers. Beginning in zines themselves and migrating to mainstream magazines and newspapers, popular books, and eventually academic books and journal articles, this discourse, Radway says, continually returns to “the question of the political effects of zines and zine-ing” (p. 145), the outcomes of a politics that Duncombe, above, argues is doomed to failure. But Radway suggests that the literature on zines “is in practice itself a political intervention, an effort to import zines into new social and institutional venues, to extend their lives and augment their rhetorical effects, to garner for them a new, perhaps larger audience capable of extending and building on their radical claims” (p. 145). In addition to the expanding literature of zine studies,
according to Radway, “zines themselves live on in transmuted social contexts—in archives and circulating collections, in classrooms, on Web sites, and in the writings of former zinesters, zine fans, and zine analysts” (p. 148).

Radway offers a powerful and provocative answer to the question of what individual zines can do, even with limited circulation and short circulating “lives.” Her idea of “afterlives” acts as an illustration of how the ruins of zines might work: zinesters’ and scholars’ anxious assessments of the political effects of zines become an effect in themselves, bringing the voices of teenagers, outcasts, and anarchists into, well, places like _PMLA_, where Radway’s article appeared. Just during the time that I have been working on this project, a surprising number of academic books, book chapters, and journal articles about zines have been published, including Piepmeier’s (2009) _Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism_, a special issue of _Signs_ containing a “Comparative Perspectives Symposium” on feminist zines (see Zobl, 2009), Helmbrecht and Love’s (2009) article in _College Composition and Communication_, and Moore’s (2010) chapter in the _Handbook of Public Pedagogy_. In the same period of time, some indicators within zine culture also suggest increasing interest and support: the 2010 Portland Zine Symposium organizers’ decision to move the event to a larger space than was used in previous years, the 60% growth in the membership of _We Make Zines_ (www.wemakezines.ning.com), and the publication of _Stolen Sharpie Revolution 2_ (Wrekk, 2009), for example. And zine distributor Microcosm Publishing released a second edition of Duncombe’s _Notes from Underground_ in 2008, marking an instance in which an academic work on zines was adopted by a central institution of zine culture. Clearly, whatever the “afterlives” of zines in schools, libraries, and academic writing,

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28 The first edition (1997) was published by Verso.
the life of the practice of zine making is far from over. And yet, even those of us who believe that “the larger world of knowledge production should be altered by the active presence of zines in it” (Radway, 2011, p. 145), may still be a little troubled by a phrase like “zine studies” and the new social contexts of zines, including this dissertation. If, as Duncombe (1997) writes, “the meaning of zines is embedded in the lived experience of alternative culture” (p. 165), we can raise the question of what new contexts are possible without leaving zines “an empty husk” (p. 168). On the other hand, though shifting zines into new social contexts like schools may involve contradictions and failures, zines themselves offer models of how, in Piepmeier’s words, “flux, contradiction, and fragmentation” can be used “not as problems to be resolved but as sources of creative energy” (p. 91). Perhaps, removed from the immediate context of alternative culture, zines are not an empty husk, but a generative space of ruins.

**Zine Pedagogy in the Ruins**

Asking how educators who teach with zines encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy, this study has attempted to understand some of the complexities of one of zines’ new social contexts: schools. Though the literature on zines and teaching describes many potential benefits, it also describes contradictions and failures, with some researchers even going so far as to claim that “zines do not belong in classrooms” (Guzzetti, Elliott, & Welsch, 2010, p. 71). Through this dissertation, I hoped to investigate and complicate these claims by examining the stories and perspectives of teacher/zinesters. I have explored the promises and failures of zine pedagogy as making space, publishing, and engaging in conversation. I now briefly consider the
“provisional grounds” and “new uses” that can be found in these failures (Butler, 1993): the ruins of zine pedagogy.

The teacher/zinesters in this study encounter zine pedagogy as promising to create space that may not otherwise be available in school. Zines are imagined as “radical space,” a space characterized by identity play, safety, freedom and control, criticism, change, and meeting. I suggested this phenomenon is related to their (counter)public nature and their relationships to the actual physical spaces of both pages and places. The space that zines and zine pedagogy can potentially create, however, is set in contrast to the spaces of school and school writing in the teacher/zinester narratives. Zine pedagogy fails in that it cannot create a free space that is both within and separate from school spaces.

In the wake of this failure, in the metaphorical “space” of the ruins of zine pedagogy, educators and researchers might question some of the traditional limitations of writing in school spaces, and might begin to examine the unseen limitations of writing in zine spaces. They might ask what historical and discursive processes shape our understandings and imaginings of these and other kinds of writing spaces. They might interrogate the binaries of “radical”/not-radical, institutional/noninstitutional, free/unfree, and public/counterpublic in understandings of writing spaces, and they might explore zinesters’ desire to create spaces that are “radical,” safe, and free within and alongside spaces that they understand as limited and limiting.

The teacher/zinesters also describe promises of zine pedagogy as publishing. Their narratives emphasize publishing as a stage in the writing process that has profound consequences for the stages that precede it; as creating a physical product, the materiality of which engages zinesters and readers in particular ways; and as sharing one’s work, thoughts, and ideas through a gift economy that subverts the economies of
This failure, however, offers new grounds in drawing our attention to the possibilities, limitations, and requirements of publishing. The publishing of zines in classrooms sits at the intersection of tensions in both classrooms and zines regarding publicness. Classroom publications are often limited in audience and are often isolated acts—lacking the prior discourse and responding discourse that Warner (2002) argues are necessary for speech to be public. Zines, despite their potentially small circulation, are addressed to and circulated within zine (counter)publics that include strangers who cannot be known in advance. But, unlike mainstream publics, the “relation among strangers” (Warner, 2002, p. 74) of zines is generally imagined as a relation among friends, an exchange of letters and gifts. The strangers in zine (counter)publics are not strangers at all, marking a tension in zines as publications. Publishing zines in classrooms, then, asks students to imagine their friends/peers as strangers but to imagine those strangers as friends. It is not just to blur the line between public and private writing, (imagining there were such a line,) but to dance back and forth over it.

Finally, the teacher/zinesters in this study encounter and negotiate zine pedagogy as promising conversation. Their narratives reflected a view of zine pedagogy as an example of and invitation to conversation, and also as a model for understanding writing in general as conversation. Zine pedagogy was posed as a way to say “yes” to students through three themes of DIY ethics: accessibility, participation, and self-authorization, as well as a way for students to say “no” to some of the dominant influences in their lives, including corporate marketing and media. However
zine pedagogy as conversation fails in that despite zines’ promises of accessibility and self-authorization, most zines are created by White and middle class zinesters.

In the ruins of zine pedagogy as conversation, we can excavate some of the entrance requirements of zine conversations. Who is invited and excluded, and by what means? What does it mean to have a (counter)public that promises accessibility to all, but offers it to only a few? This issue is by no means unique to zines; rather, it is a central failure of the public sphere in general—one of Habermas’s (1962/1999) defining elements of the bourgeois public sphere was the claim to disregard status, and his critics have relentlessly pointed out that this claim has never been realized. Further, the issue of accessibility extends to teachers and students: are we invited to the conversation, too? How can we approach this conversation in a way that allows our students to value and make use of the promises of accessibility, participation, and self-authorization while at the same time critiquing their failures and exclusions?

Narrative in the Ruins

I want to turn, too, to examine this study’s own ruins. In terms of methodology, this project involved many of the challenges of any long-term qualitative project—recruiting, selecting, and maintaining contact with participants; struggling to make meaning from piles of data in a way that is consistent with methodological considerations but leaves room for thought and insight; and attempting, in writing, to balance my participants’ perspectives, my own, and those of defined and potential readers in a way that assumes a responsibility toward all. The project also involved some specific challenges, like negotiating ethical standards that were sometimes quite different between academic and zine communities, trying to make something that was
both recognizable as a dissertation and creatively satisfying, and managing a continual slippage between words’ meanings in everyday language, theory language, zine language, school language, and so on: public, narrative, share, failure, ruins. These last two words, especially, seemed so powerful as theory, but were so difficult to write in the draft chapters I sent to participants for fear they would be read differently than I intended.

And, in a text so concerned with genre, I have come to ask myself again and again, what is this writing? Is it narrative? Is it something else? Does my calling it something make it that? What part of it is mine? I decided to undertake a narrative study in part because I wanted a methodology attuned to complexity that would help me create a text with more openings than closings; however, I quickly saw that narratives—particularly standard narratives of teaching—already shaped both my questions and the teacher/zinesters’ responses. I attempted to disrupt these “cheerful teacher narratives” through the promise, failure, ruins figuration used throughout this dissertation. But this alternative narrative is just as predetermined and no less limiting. Here, in the “ruins” of narrative, I am left wondering how narrative can use the considerable power of story to disrupt itself.

Public Writing in the Ruins

Finally, I believe this study can offer several insights to public writing theory and teaching. To date, Weisser (2002) offers the most comprehensive theorization of teaching public writing based in theories of the public sphere. He defines public writing primarily in terms of purpose as “written discourse that attempts to engage an audience of local, regional, or national groups or individuals in order to bring about
progressive societal change” (p. 90), and he describes five aspects of successful public writing grounded in theories of the public sphere. Two of these aspects are supported by and resonate with the findings of this study, including the need for students to help students to “recognize the that culture, politics, and ideology shape public conversations” by “highlight[ing] the ways in which material forces shape what gets said, who gets heard, and how these forces have structured public discourse throughout history” (p. 98). In fact, zines could be a key component of such an exploration. Also, Weisser points out that public writing need not mean writing to “the public” at large or “the general public,” arguing instead that a view of multiple publics can help teachers think beyond a letter to the newspaper. He writes: “Public writing is never a matter of simply writing clearly and effectively in order to persuade or inform. […] Compositionists should work to create spaces for public writing if they don’t exist or aren’t readily entered by students” (p. 107). The teacher/zinester narratives show zines as one way that teachers can do that.

This study, however, enters dialogue with the remaining three aspects that Weisser describes, and indeed with his definition of public writing. The first concerns Fraser’s (1992) criticism of Habermas’s (1962/1999) bourgeois public sphere: in a society plagued by structural inequality, the bracketing of differences required in the bourgeois public sphere, rather than making status irrelevant, can in fact exacerbate the inequalities in social status of participants. Instead, public spheres within “actually existing democracy,” Fraser writes, must “render visible the ways in which social inequality infects formally inclusive public spheres and taints discursive interaction within them” (p. 121). For Weisser, this means that teachers of public writing must work to help their students understand “the degree to which their social status and differences from others will affect how their writing is evaluated,” as well as the ways
in which “differences themselves are often labels that are used to justify the dominance or subordination of certain classes or groups in public settings” (p. 103). Teachers must also “enable student writers to examine the ways that they themselves often evaluate the public discourse of others in similarly biased and unproductive ways” (p. 103). Zine pedagogy in this sense can be seen as an attempt to extend zines’ “yes” messages of accessibility, participation, and self-authorization beyond the boundaries of underground culture. However, zinesters and zine scholars have had to recognize the racial and class-based exclusions that have characterized the history of this formally inclusive sphere as failures of zines’ “yes” messages. Teacher/zinesters lb and Lucy Morehouse are both critical of the lack of diversity in zine (counter)publics. Rather than criticizing it in the classroom, though, they instead took the approach of finding, highlighting, and circulating zines that do reflect racial and economic diversity. On one side, this is a game of pretend – a selection of zines designed to reflect a particular image of zining and zinesters that they felt would resonate with their students. On the other, though, publics happen through pretend, through address and circulation. While critiquing the workings of racial and economic privilege among zinesters is important, we must also be attentive to the ways in which those critiques themselves may freeze a fluid public into a rigid race/class location. Rendering the effects of social inequality in public spheres visible, their experiences suggest, can sometimes itself exclude or discourage people affected by such inequality from participating in publics.

Next, Weisser says the topics of discussion in these publics do not necessarily need to be matters of “common concern”—one of the features of Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere. As Fraser (1992) has argued, we cannot know in advance what is a matter of common concern and what is not. Until we discuss them, all issues are potentially public. Composition, Weisser writes, “needs to take a more critical look at
what we have determined are matters of public or private interest, and we must be willing to engage with issues that are often disturbing and unpleasant” (pp. 109-110). Zine (counter)publics certainly highlight the fuzzy and shifting boundaries between private and public by framing the personal decisions of day-to-day life as public issues. Particularly because consumption is typically understood as a private decision, even if one’s so-called private decisions are often put on public display (as with an expensive car, brand-name handbag, or coffee cup with logo), zines’ power to say “no” to consumer culture is lodged in their ability to recast decisions about consumption as publicly significant. But zines further point to the extent to which public storytelling may be political in unexpected ways, as well as the importance of the medium in determining what “attempts...to bring about progressive societal change,” in Weisser’s words (p. 90). Though zines produced in classrooms may not have the same political intent as other zines, zine pedagogy calls attention to the importance of the context of public writing not only in shaping how public discourse is constructed and interpreted but what counts as public or oriented toward social change at all.

Lastly, Weisser suggests that students direct their public writing toward what Fraser called “strong publics”—publics that not only deliberate, but also decide and act, such as self-governing institutions. While this is one function of some publics, and it is certainly beneficial for students to experience direct action as a result of their public writing, Weisser’s emphasis on deliberating, debating, and deciding reflects a particular tradition in public sphere theory. As Warner (2002) notes, though, this understanding of public discourse can miss the poetic world-making projects of publics, oriented not just toward specific decisions but toward the whole range of conceptions of goodness and ways of being, thinking, and communicating—projects that zines often illustrate. Zine pedagogy as conversation asks teachers and students to consider public writing as
multidimensional interaction, one that may be much more complicated than taking sides in a debate over an issue. Further, it asks them to consider possibilities for social change that may not lead to the direct action of a group.

Epilogue

In the final stages of this project, I contacted Ciara Xyerra to ask for her permission for and comments on the section in chapter seven in which I quote from the Paper Trail Interview Series. When I got home that day, I realized I had her latest zine, a split zine of her Love Letters to Monsters #3 and Ailecia Ruscin’s Alabama Grrrl #9 (Xyerra & Ruscin, 2010), sitting on my desk unread. Picking it up, I read Xyerra’s account of the factors that led her to close her distro, Learning to Leave a Paper Trail, in 2010 after seven years—a long time in the life of a zine distro. One of the two final causes, she writes, was her frustration at having a college instructor assign his students a project in which they not only had to make a zine but submit it and have it accepted to a distro. “so suddenly,” she writes, “i was fielding a half a dozen bizarre requests per day from novice zinesters just in it for a grade, asking me to buy their zines sight unseen for my distro.” She continues, “i will be frank: this was an insult to me, & it was an exercise in delusion on the part of the teacher…while it is not uncommon these days for teachers to use the zine medium as a teaching tool, i in no way consented to having my distro used that way” (n. pag., capitalization original). Though this was far from the only reason Xyerra closed the distro, her comments serve as an important reminder for those studying or considering zine pedagogy: zine (counter)publics are living things, created in and sustained by the circulation of discourse. The ways that and purposes for which
they are taken up by teachers and scholars can affect them, sometimes negatively. There are no easy rules for preventing such harm.

When I asked teacher/zinester Lucy Morehouse, near the end of our follow-up phone interview, what advice she had for educators considering teaching with zines, her answer was simply to “know what a zine is.”

“Good start,” I said, laughing, thinking, who would want to teach zines if they didn’t know what a zine was?

She answered: “Well, it’s an old thing! You know? It’s not what they’re writing about in the newspaper nowadays.” Thinking about it now, I would offer the same advice to anyone thinking about teaching with zines. Know what a zine is: where zines come from, who makes them, what zines attempt to do, how they succeed and fail at those projects, what they might look like, the values they champion, and the great diversity of possible answers to any of those questions. Prepared with this information, approach zine pedagogy above all ethically and responsibly, with knowledge and with care.
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Appendix A: Consent Form and Research Instruments

This appendix contains the consent form and research instruments submitted to and approved by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board as part of an Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight.
1. Study Title: A Narrative Study of Zine Pedagogy

2. Performance Site: Online, email, letter, and telephone correspondence with participants at a number of sites in the United States. Thus, the central site of the study will be Karin deGravelles’s office in 327 Peabody Hall at Louisiana State University.

3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions, M-F, 8:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M.
   a. Karin deGravelles, 225-578-6879, karinde@tigers.lsu.edu
   b. Dr. Jacqueline Bach, 225-578-6879, jbach@lsu.edu

4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to investigate how educators describe their motivations for, decisions about, and experiences with teaching with zines in formal or informal educational settings.

5. Subject Inclusion: Participants will be educators who have used zines in formal or informal education settings (including schools, universities, workshops, books, and films), as well as educators who are zine publishers and do not use zines in the classroom.

6. Number of Subjects: 20-30

7. Study Procedures: Participants will complete a brief questionnaire concerning their experiences teaching with zines. Following the questionnaire, interested participants will correspond with researcher via letters and emails, further developing their responses. Researcher will conduct in-depth interviews with 5-10 participants who express interest and availability, by telephone if necessary.

8. Benefits: Participant responses will be compiled into a zine that will act as a resource for educators considering teaching with zines in formal or informal educational
settings. The zine will be distributed to all participants at no cost and made available to other interested parties for the cost of postage. Further, the study is expected to contribute to scholarship on the teaching of public writing and cultural studies.

9. Risks: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

10. Right to refuse: Participants may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Participants may choose whether or how they would prefer to be identified in both the zine and the dissertation resulting from the study. If participants prefer anonymity, then no names or identifying information will be included for publication, and participant identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Participants may change privacy options at any point during the study.

12. Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.

13. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Printed Name: ____________________________________
Participant Signature_________________________________ Date___________
Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Ph: 225-578-8692
F: 225-578-6792
irb@lsu.edu
www.lsu.edu/irb
QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____________________________________

Please select a privacy option for the study. Your privacy option can be changed at any time. You will have the opportunity to review any sections of the study that include your responses before publication, whether or not you choose to be named.

☐ Use my name
☐ Do not use my name
☐ Use this pseudonym:______________________

Mailing address:
_____________________________________
_____________________________________
_____________________________________

Email address: ____________________________

Do you prefer mail or email for correspondence about the study?

☐ mail
☐ email
☐ other ________________________________

Do you make zines?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Do you or have you taught with zines?
☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, in what kinds of settings? (check all that apply)

☐ K-12 school – what grades? _____
- college level
- K-12 extracurricular (for example, after-school activity or club, local writing project associated with schools)
- informal (workshops, events, etc.)
- other ____________________________

Are you a full-time educator?
- Yes – please describe_____________________________
- No
SAMPLE LETTER/EMAIL QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this study, and I look forward to talking with you about your experiences with zines and teaching. I am sending you some questions regarding these experiences now and ask that you send your responses by mail or email in the next month or so. If I haven’t heard from you in a month, I will check in. When I receive your responses, I will write back with interpretations, reflections, or more questions, possibly asking you to clarify parts of your response. We’ll continue corresponding until we agree we have a full account of your experiences, or until you want to stop. I have four areas of questions, concerning your initial decisions to teach with zines, how you planned the project or lesson, what happened during the project or lesson, and your reflections on the teaching experience.

Initial decisions

1. Tell me about how you first became involved with zines.
2. Tell me about how you decided to teach with zines.
3. How do you define a zine?
4. What are your goals in teaching with zines?
5. Do you think there are other benefits to teaching with zines?
6. Are there drawbacks to teaching with zines?

Planning

7. What was the setting for your teaching like?
8. Can you describe the students you were working with?
9. Tell me how you planned your project (or lesson).
10. Was there anything else you considered in planning the project?
11. Did you encounter any conflicts or difficulties in the project?
12. How did you negotiate them?
13. What kinds of guidelines did you give the students?
14. How did you deal with issues of grading or evaluation?
15. Have you read anything about teaching with zines that influenced your thinking?

The project

16. Tell me about how the project went.
17. How did the students respond?
18. What, if anything, happened that was unexpected?
19. You said your goals for teaching with zines were __________. To what extent did you feel like those goals were fulfilled?
20. What happened to the zines after they were turned in?

Reflections
21. Is teaching with zines like teaching with any other form or genre?

22. What kinds of special issues, if any, do you think need to be considered in teaching with zines?

23. How do you feel about teaching with zines now?

24. What, if anything, would you change about your project if you were to do it again?

25. What advice do you have for someone considering teaching with zines?

26. Has your interest in or knowledge of zines affected your teaching outside of the project(s) we talked about? If so, how?
Appendix B: Data Sources

Angela Asbell
- Phone Interview Transcript
- Email follow-up
- Portland Zine Symposium “Zines and Teaching” Panel Transcript (audience member)
- ZineWorks handbook and resources retrieved from: http://www.iheartyes.com/zineworks/
- syllabi: ENG 95, ENG 104A

Ib
- Emailed question sets
- Zine assignment

Doug Blandy
- Emailed question sets
- “Zines and DIY Democracy” Syllabus
- homepage: http://aad.uoregon.edu/index.cfm?mode=faculty&page=dblandy


Lucy Morehouse
- Phone interview
- Follow-up interview
- Student zines from library workshops
- assignment from school project
- PZS Panel Transcript (panelist)

A.M. O’Malley
- Phone interview
- PZS Panel Transcript (panelist)
- Zines 101 workshop outline (and she will send Media Action Project materials)
- www.iprc.org

M. Carrol Tama
- Emailed question sets
- Website: [http://readwritecontentareas.com/](http://readwritecontentareas.com/)
- Zine Rubric, 2010

**Michel Valdes**

- Emailed question sets
- PZS Panel Transcript (panelist)
## Appendix C: Analysis Categories and Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Propositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Radical space</td>
<td>Zines are a kind of space with particular properties and relationships to other kinds of space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making space</td>
<td>Zine pedagogy is making space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom and Constraint</td>
<td>Zines offer freedom, but schools have limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>Assignments set limits and provide constraints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Teacher/zinesters must decide how to handle censorship issues with student zines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Publishing is a stage of the writing process that zine pedagogy emphasizes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Creating a product is an important part of zine pedagogy accomplished through publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>A primary purpose of zine pedagogy is sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Teacher/zinesters must decide how to handle distributing the zines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>It is important for teacher/zinesters and students to be aware of the consequences of publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Zine conversations</td>
<td>Zines encourage and are like a conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zine pedagogy conversations</td>
<td>Zines can teach students that writing is like a conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying “yes”</td>
<td>Zines are associated with affirmation, saying &quot;yes,&quot; a &quot;yes&quot; thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Zines can be made without specialized equipment or skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Zines' emphasis on participation is important to teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-authorization</td>
<td>Zinesters are people who say &quot;I can publish&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying “no”</td>
<td>Zines are associated with critique and subversion of consumerism, corporativism, and mainstream media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grading</td>
<td>Teacher/zinesters must consider how to handle grading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race/Class privilege</td>
<td>Teacher/zinesters should ensure that the zines and zine materials offered in class reflect student demographics, not racially and economically privileged zine culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Permissions

Figure 1

Subject: Re: Zines and Teaching
Date: Wednesday, February 23, 2011 12:32 PM
From: Katie Haegele <katie@thelalatheory.com>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Zines and Teaching

Hi Karin,

Thank you for writing, and for sending me the Katie portion of your dissertation. I was touched by it, and frankly found it really interesting to read about my own work from that perspective. It was unusual. And your writing is insightful. Of course, you certainly have permission to use the image of Always Already. […]

Talk to you soon, best wishes,
Katie

Figures 2 and 9 and excerpts in chapters seven and eight

Subject: RE: Permissions Request
Date: Sunday, April 24, 2011 8:27 PM
From: l. barry <lbj4prez@hotmail.com>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Permissions Request

you got it dude!
permission granted!

> Date: Mon, 18 Apr 2011 11:49:28 -0600
> Subject: Permissions Request
> From: karinde@tigers.lsu.edu
> To: lbj4prez@hotmail.com
> > Dear lb,
> > I am writing to request your permission to include several images and passages from your zine _Truckface_ in my dissertation on zines and
teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include these selections:
- "Good things that happened this year" (scanned) from _Truckface_ #13
- the cover of _Truckface_ #14, front and back (scanned)
- "Published Authors" (retyped, in several excerpts) from _Truckface_ #14
- an excerpt from "Observations at School #5" (retyped) from _Truckface_ #11

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation.

Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles
Ph.D. Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice
Louisiana State University

Figure 3

Subject: Re: Permission Request
Date: Monday, April 18, 2011 4:39 PM
From: Doug Blandy <dblandy@uoregon.edu>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Permission Request

Karin, You have my permission. D.

On 4/18/11 3:27 PM, "Karin deGravelles" <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu> wrote:

Dear Doug,

I am writing to request your permission to include a screenshot from your online exhibit in CultureWork in my dissertation on zines and teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include a screenshot from the section subtitled “Zines do not mince words or shy away from controversy” (attached).

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation. If there is someone else whose permission I must seek to use this screenshot, would you please let me know?
Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice  
Louisiana State University

Figure 4 and excerpt in chapter eight

Subject: Re: Permission Request  
Date: Monday, April 18, 2011 3:44 PM  
From: Lucy Morehouse <lucy@ongongpress.com>  
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>  
Conversation: Permission Request

go ahead!  
On Apr 18, 2011, at 3:34 PM, Karin deGravelles wrote:

> Dear Lucy,
> 
> I am writing to request your permission to include an image from the
> _S__________ High School_ zine and some of the text from your zine
> _Everything Looks Better Xeroxed_ in my dissertation on zines and
> teaching,
> titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching
> with
> Zines." This dissertation will be openly available
> online
> through LSU Library’s Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as
> well
> as through UMI Proquest database.
> 
> Specifically, I would like to include these selections:
> - the welcome page from _S__________ High School_ (scanned)
> - _Everything Looks Better Xeroxed_ "It's true. You can use a
> copy...It can
> still tell people. It can still be yours" (typed)
> 
> I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my
> dissertation.
> 
> Thank you,
> 
> Karin H. deGravelles  
> Ph.D. Candidate  
> Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice  
> Louisiana State University
Figures 5 and 7

Subject: Re: Permission Request
Date: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 12:24 PM
From: Michel Valdes <schooldazezine@yahoo.com>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Permission Request

of course. I am on my honeymoon in Nicaragua right now, but I intend to read through everything and get back to you this weekend.
Michel

From: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
To: Michel Valdes <schooldazezine@yahoo.com>
Sent: Mon, April 18, 2011 4:38:14 PM
Subject: Permission Request

Dear Michel,

I am writing to request your permission to include two images from your zine _School Daze_ in my dissertation on zines and teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library’s Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include these selections:
the cover of School Daze #1
the introduction page to School Daze “Zine Tour”

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation.

Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles
Ph.D. Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice
Louisiana State University

Figure 6
Subject: Re: Permission Request
Date: Monday, April 18, 2011 3:34 PM
From: AnnMarie O’Malley <annmarieomalley@gmail.com>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Permission Request

You have my permission!
Dear A.M.,

I am writing to request your permission to include an image from the IPRC Outreach Anthology Preview zine in my dissertation on zines and teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include the scanned back cover of the zine, including the IPRC’s contact information and hours, with the handwritten list of verbs to the right.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation.

Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles
Ph.D. Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice
Louisiana State University
April 19, 2011

Karin H. deGravelles
4756 Bennett Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Dear Ms. deGravelles:

This is in reply to your e-mailed request of April 18, 2011.

We are pleased to grant you permission for use of material, as cited in your request of April 18, 2011 from the book, WHATCHA MEAN, WHAT’S A ZINE? by Todd and Watson for use in your dissertation entitled, “In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines as Public Writing”. Our requirement is that you cite the source as a footnote or in your bibliography.

The permission applies to all copies of your dissertation made to meet degree requirements of Louisiana State University, and to University Microfilms editions, which produces copies on demand.

Please re-apply to this department if your dissertation is later accepted for publication and you wish to retain our material.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your work.

Sincerely,

Ronald Hussey
Subject: Re: Permission request, take 2
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2011 4:45 PM
From: Angela Asbell <madame.angela.chaos@gmail.com>
To: Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu>
Conversation: Permission request, take 2

Of course! CAN’T WAIT to see it when it’s finished! :)

A

On Mon, Apr 18, 2011 at 1:15 PM, Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu> wrote:

Dear Angela,

I am writing to request your permission to include an image from your zine _Bitch King_ and a selection from a video interview in my dissertation on zines and teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library’s Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include these selections:
* Introduction page from Bitch King #1
* An excerpt from your 2009 interview with Annie Knight, available on YouTube ("I found [a zine by local poet Drew Blood] in the local independent record store...and it made me really feel like I could do it," my transcription, 238 words)
* a second excerpt from the same interview (my transcription: “The form of zines actually gives you a lot of freedom...So zines really leave you a lot of space for creativity,” approx. 196 words).

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation. (I have also contacted Annie Knight regarding the interview).

Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles
Ph.D. Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice
Louisiana State University

Excerpts in chapters five and six

Subject: Re: FW: Permission Request
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2011 2:56 PM
From: Annie Knight <knight.annie@gmail.com>
Hi Karin,

You have my permission to use anything you like from the interview! I really enjoyed reading the excerpts of your chapter! I would love to read the whole chapter when you're finished.

[…]

Take care,
Annie

On Mon, Apr 18, 2011 at 1:07 PM, Karin deGravelles <karinde@tigers.lsu.edu> wrote:

Dear Annie,

I am writing to request your permission to include a selection from a video interview with Angela Asbell (Angela Chaos) in my dissertation on zines and teaching, titled "In the Ruins of Zine Pedagogy: A Narrative Study of Teaching with Zines." This dissertation will be openly available online through LSU Library’s Electronic Thesis and Dissertation database, as well as through UMI Proquest database.

Specifically, I would like to include these selections from your 2009 interview with Angela Asbell, available on YouTube:
* "I found [a zine by local poet Drew Blood] in the local independent record store...and it made me really feel like I could do it," (my transcription, 238 words)
* "The form of zines actually gives you a lot of freedom...So zines really leave you a lot of space for creativity," (my transcription, approx. 196 words)

I would greatly appreciate your permission to reprint this work in my dissertation. (I have also contacted Angela Asbell regarding the interview).

Thank you,

Karin H. deGravelles
Ph.D. Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice
Louisiana State University
Vita

Karin Hamlin deGravelles grew up in Long Valley, New Jersey. She attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where she studied English and wrote an undergraduate thesis that considered Audre Lorde’s (1982) “biomythography” as an out-law genre of life writing (Kaplan, 1992). Her master’s work in English and doctoral work in curriculum theory and English education at Louisiana State University have been motivated by a desire to understand how uses of life writing in the classroom encourage different kinds of thinking about selfhood: how our generic boundaries shape who we think we are, and how we reproduce or challenge these boundaries through curriculum. She has pursued a variety of interdisciplinary projects considering ties between language, selfhood, and the space of the classroom; her work has been published in *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education, The Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy,* and *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture.* She was awarded the LSU Graduate School Dissertation Fellowship for 2010-2011, and she has twice been honored for the Best Peer-Reviewed Curriculum Theory Article by a Graduate Student.

While at LSU, Karin has worked with the Louisiana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (LA-STEM) Research Scholars Program in the Office of Strategic Initiatives, where she has served as Assistant Program Manager, Program Manager, and Graduate Assistant. She has taught courses in research, education, and mentoring; composition; and has assisted with the teaching and research supervision of
undergraduate English student teachers and English Holmes MAT interns. She has also been a student representative to the Graduate Student Leave Policy Committee and the professional development co-chair for the Curriculum Theory Graduate Collaborative. In August, she will join the English department of Episcopal High School of Baton Rouge.