"I'm a Second-Language English Speaker": Negotiating Writer Identity and Authority in Sociology One

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Student writing needs to be viewed in its insertion into a context defined by the existence of sociohistorically shaped, asymmetrical power relations. How novice student writers negotiate these complex political relationships and develop a sense of authority and identity in their academic essay writing has been underexplored in academic literacy research. In this article I examine the discursive production of success and failure through a discussion of 2 first-year sociology essays at a South African university. The successful student's ability to construct a powerful, authoritative textual and discoursal identity for himself, and his highly developed "textual" capital, are seen as factors in his success. Systemic functional grammar is used to demonstrate how he has recourse to the linguistic features of authority as he discursively negotiates success with his marker. The student who fails struggles to negotiate an authoritative *self as author* and, relying heavily on the words of recognized authorities in the discipline, becomes a "plagiarizer." Ethnographic data, including interviews with the students and the marker, provide a *thick description* of the processes of identity negotiation.

Key words: writer identity; authority; academic writing; textual capital; systemic functional linguistics; academic success

In this article, I discuss two student essays on the same topic, one of which is very successful whereas the other fails to pass. I argue that the successful student is able to construct a powerful, authoritative textual and discoursal identity (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998) for himself, and I make use of systemic functional grammar to demonstrate how he has recourse to the linguistic features of authority within the essay-text genre as he discursively negotiates success with his marker.

His authority lies, in part, in his highly developed "textual" capital and the discourses of academic literacy on which he is able to draw, which are what his *autobiographical self* brings to the essay writing task. This self has been largely shaped by the inequitable distribution of resources in apartheid South Africa. In contrast, the student who fails, struggles to negotiate an authoritative *self as author* and, relying heavily on the words of recognized authorities in the discipline, is constructed by the marker as a "plagiarizer." Marker feedback, and the ways in which this positions students, is discussed, and data from interviews with the marker of the essays, and with the two students, help build a *thick description* of the complex processes of identity negotiation.

The setting is a large, urban, English-medium university in South Africa. In the 1960s, it was forced by apartheid legislation to close its doors to Black students. When, from the mid-1980s onward, Black students began returning to the university, the ravages wrought by decades of inferior "Bantu" education were noticeable in their significantly higher attrition and failure rates as compared to White students. In Sociology One, the student demographics had shifted rapidly, with a sharp decline in the proportion of White students from 66% of the class in 1990 to 29% in 1994. Although the demography of the class began to more closely resemble that of the country, the discrepancy in pass rates remained. At the end of 1994, only 57% of the Black students passed, whereas 75% of the White students passed. Of the White students, 35% scored over 60% as compared to only 14% of the Black students.[1] These results suggest that identities of success were harder to appropriate for Black than for White students. The two essays discussed in this article go behind the statistics and offer, through a detailed case study, a window into how these very different outcomes are textually constituted.

METHODOLOGY

The data referred to in this article are drawn from a yearlong ethnographic study of the development of student academic writing in the Sociology One course, which I carried out in 1994.[2] The data were gathered from the many different contexts in which first-year teaching and learning took place in the Department of Sociology and from a variety of sources—participant and nonparticipant observation, interviews, and written documents—to triangulate and provide the thick description advocated by Geertz (1975) that involves moving beyond mere description to interpretation. I attended virtually every lecture, many tutorials and one of the weekly adjunct, content-based, academic support tutorials aimed at students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, and made detailed field notes. Eleven students participated in the study, 9 of whom were Black South Africans, whereas 2 were White, Anglophone South Africans. I carried out in-depth interviews with these students and with all the teachers on the 1st-year course throughout the year. The

semistructured interviews provided me with "participant perspectives" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 82) on student and teacher perceptions of the requirements for successful academic writing in Sociology One. In the case of the students, biographical data were solicited in the initial interviews. Teachers were asked how the rapidly changing demography impacted on their teaching and on their expectations of students' writing and were also asked to describe what their expectations of a successful essay were. As assessment emerged as a central theme whenever academic writing was discussed, I was sensitized to the centrality of assessment in shaping students' identities as successes or as failures, and that, for them, writing was not separable from assessment. This cumulative sensitization helped focus subsequent interviews with students as well as my interviews and informal discussions with staff. More focused interviews with the students involved discussion of specific assignments. Similarly focused interviews took place with the markers of these assignments. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Additional data were collected in follow-up interviews with some of the students in their subsequent years of study. I collected and analyzed copies of each student's written assignments, observed two markers' meetings at which essay marking was discussed, and attended various other departmental meetings. Other key documents analyzed were the *Guide for Sociology One Students*, the marking memorandum for the first assignment, the *Course Readers* (key texts selected and photocopied by the lecturer, often extracted from larger texts) and recommended textbooks. Quantitative data in the form of student demographics and student pass rates were also analyzed.

The two essays that are analyzed in this article were written for the first assignment of the year and are both on the same topic (see following). These two very different essays highlight for me why it so hard for Black students from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds to become successful in their writing within an academic discipline. I argue that the textual and discursive negotiation of identity and authority in the two essays, within a context of highly unequal power relations, is central to their respective success and failure. The essays were each marked by the same marker, a White, English-speaking woman who coordinated the 1st-year tutorial program, whom I call Anne,[3] whereas the two students are known as Philip and Sipho. In interviews with Anne, I discussed her assessment of the two essays and, in interviews with Philip and Sipho, I discussed their responses to the marker's feedback on their specific assignments as well as their perceptions of assessment and their understandings of the lecturers' expectations of academic writing.

WRITER IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY

According to Bartholomae (1985), students' progress, as they begin the process of "invent[ing] the university" (p. 135), "will be marked by their abilities to take on

the role of privilege, by their abilities to establish authority" (p. 162). How a student comes to develop an authoritative identity can be seen to spring from a multiplicity of sources that all interact to shape the resources a student has available when writing at the university.

Social and Linguistic Origins of Authority

Bourdieu (1990) referred to the different social and symbolic resources individuals possess, which are largely inherited from the family, as *cultural capital.* These resources are not equally distributed, and some will have greater legitimacy than others, depending on the particular "market place" or field in which they operate. Children of middle-class families bring to school the kind of cultural capital and *habitus* valued by schools and their schooling then further enhances their acquisition of cultural capital. The habitus is a "system of acquired dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13) such as habits of speaking, gestures, and self identity, which incline people to act in certain ways and are largely unconscious and acquired in early childhood. The verbal behaviors encouraged and developed in middle-class homes closely resemble the dominant school norms of essay-text literacy, while the literacy practices of children from working-class homes tend to differ from those of mainstream, school-based literacy (Bernstein, 1990; Gee, 1990; Heath, 1983). I extend Bourdieu's *capital* metaphor by proposing that the differing amounts of knowledge about texts, and about the relationships between texts, which students from vastly different backgrounds bring to Sociology One can be referred to as their *textual* or *intertextual* capital.

How differential access to the resources of language itself becomes textually embodied can be usefully understood through Halliday's (1994) systematic account of how social experience, interpersonal relations and social positioning, and linguistic intentions are realized in language. In this account, the smallest units of language are explained in relation to the larger social context. Any clause for Halliday simultaneously enacts the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual metafunctions of language. The ideational function represents and signifies the world and experience; the interpersonal function constitutes the identities of participants and signifies the social and personal relationships between them, while the textual function distributes information in the text to achieve coherence and cohesion. These meanings are exchanged in a context of situation, which constrains the linguistic choices speakers and writers are able to make (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Through three register variables, field, tenor and mode, the context of situation shapes how meanings are expressed. Field refers to the nature of the social action and to the institutional context and is realized by ideational choices. Tenor refers to the nature of the participants and their relationships and is realized through interpersonal choices. Mode refers to the ways the text is organized and is realized by textual choices.

Discursive Origins of Writer Identity

Ivanič (1994) claimed that those analysts who have been concerned about how subjects are positioned in discourse have mainly looked at how readers "are positioned by discourse through texts" rather than at "how writers are positioned by the discourse(s) they draw on as they write" (p. 4). These discourses shape the possible identities or *selves* writers are able to negotiate for themselves. These selves are not discrete but interact at the "moment of utterance" to shape the choices a writer makes and have been identified as an "autobiographical self"; a "discoursal self" and a "self as author" (Clark & Ivanič, 1997, p. 136).

The autobiographical self refers to the writer's self-history and sense of roots, and to the ways his or her beliefs, values, and interests have been shaped by socio-economic and political factors and by the literacy practices with which he or she is familiar. Whether consciously or not, writers convey a sense of who they are, and the discursive practices they are able to draw on, as well as their understanding of who their potential reader is. This representation is their discoursal or textual self. The self as author reflects the extent to which writers are able to project an identity for themselves as authoritative: as an authority having "something to say"(Clark & Ivanič, 1997). First-year students, for example, would not be expected to appear very authoritative in their essays, yet some students' personal histories may have located them in such a way that they can bring authority to their writing in ways in which other students cannot.

A fourth, more abstract aspect of writer identity concerns the "socially available possibilities for self-hood" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 28) within specific sociocultural and institutional contexts. Some of these *subject positions* or identities—ways of doing, being, speaking, writing, and thinking—will have higher status than others (Ivanič, 1998). For example, formality, impersonality, and codified citation practices are all aspects of academic discourse that help maintain its prestige status and set up "ideal" subject positions for writers (Fairclough, 1989, p. 49). Although the discursive practices of the institution constrain the possible selves available to students, there exists within these the possibility for challenge to the dominant practices (Ivanič, 1998).

TEXTUAL CAPITAL: NEGOTIATING ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF TEXTS

New students enter a profoundly textual universe—an academic discourse community—where texts circulate as currency and meaning is primarily textual. In this section, I further explore the notion of textual capital, introduced earlier, and unpack what I see as its key constituents. An awareness on the student's part of intertextuality, a related awareness of the *population*s of a text, an ability to posi-

tion oneself discursively and linguistically in an authoritative manner vis-à-vis the many authorities who inhabit the textual worlds the students encounter, and to negotiate the complexities of what counts as plagiarism, all contribute to the accumulation of textual capital. As argued previously, some students are, at the outset, better equipped with greater textual capital from their home and school-based literacies, which enhances their likelihood of success: "those who grow up surrounded by academic discourses have easier access to academic identities than those who don't" (Ivanič, 1994, p. 5). This familiarity with what I call the "world of texts" is grounded in intertextuality, "the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 84)—a dynamic process whereby genres and discourses from different times may intermingle in text production. For Lemke (1995), intertextuality is a resource for meaning-making that draws on the particular texts and discourses that are privileged within a community. Bakhtin's (1981) contention that the discursive universe is "populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others" (p. 294) recognizes the forces of intertextuality. A text is thus not solely the product of a unique author but a "mesh of intersecting voices of characters inhabiting a text" (Talbot, 1992, p. 176), that form its "text populations" (p. 174). Part of the successful accomplishment of an essay is the successful negotiation with authorities who populate the texts, which students have to read and respond to, all of whom are more powerful and have higher status than the novice writer (Ivanič & Simpson, 1992).

Writers also construct or position their readers through the linguistic and discursive choices they make. Markers of student essays are always also readers of those essays and their feedback to students can be seen to reflect the ways in which the student writer's text has positioned the reader. Texts contain ideal subject positions for readers who will infer certain preferred readings of the text (Fairclough, 1989).

As new students undertake these complex textual negotiations, they may find themselves accused of plagiarism. Bakhtin's (1981) claim that "there are no 'neutral' words and forms" (p. 293); understandings of the richly social nature of language, of intertextuality, in conjunction with Foucauldian notions of the "death of the author" and views of plagiarism as an ideological Western construct, framed within a legalistic, punitive discourse of surveillance have contributed to the problematization of traditional views of plagiarism (Lea & Street, 1998; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995).

Alternative views of plagiarism therefore highlight the impossibility of saying something in one's "own" words, particularly when English is not the student's native language, and argue for plagiarism to be understood developmentally as *patchwriting*—a survival strategy rather than a conscious effort to deceive—as students struggle to develop an authoritative identity in an overpopulated discursive universe in which words seem to belong to more powerful others (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Howard, 1995; Hull & Rose, 1989; Lea & Street, 1998). Angélil-Carter

(2000) also found that certain students, through their prior socialization into patterns of privileged discourse, were able to challenge the strict regulation of citation, which the writing of other, less privileged students was subjected to.

PHILIP'S ESSAY: IN HIS OWN WORDS

Philip chose Topic Three, which consisted of a quote from Weber's (1930)[4] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* followed by the task instruction, phrased as a question:

> "Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation." According to Weber, in what specific ways did these features of Calvinist doctrine compel believers to work in a manner that promoted the development of capitalism?

Philip's essay received one of the highest scores in the class, an upper second class pass. Anne's end comment stated, "A very good essay. My only criticism would be that you need to develop a slightly more 'academic' style." On a separate line below, almost as if it were an afterthought, in telegraphic abbreviationese, the following comment, framed as a command, appears: "i.e. and NB—references!! [underlined twice and followed by two exclamation marks] must be included." On the line below this, she added, "Also you need to provide evidence for your assertions." These two central criteria for a successful essay as stated in the *Course Reader,* regarding referencing and avoiding plagiarism in the *Guide for Sociology One Students,* have not been adhered to by Philip, and yet the marker–reader responded positively to his essay in her final mark allocation, judging his essay successful. Moreover, his style is considered by the marker as not very academic.

How has Philip been able to successfully challenge these significant criteria? It is important to point out that Philip's essay complies with a number of significant assessment criteria set out in the marking memorandum for the essay but that this document was never seen by the students. It was prepared by the lecturers who taught the course, once the essays had been submitted, solely for the essay markers. Yet Philip complies with two of the three criteria that the memorandum listed as requirements for first and upper second class grades: his essay is coherent and well argued, and it consciously places his answer within the methodological and theoretical concerns of the theorists. He also is able to show where the quote (in the essay topic) came from in Weber's text and show how it was not referring to "the doctrine itself but to an interpretation of it" (from the marking memorandum). He is able to "synchronise student meaning with teacher meaning" (Brandt, 1986, p. 100), without the teacher's meaning having been explicitly communicated. I argue

that it is precisely in his nonacademic style that Philip demonstrates his mastery. His control over the field, tenor and mode of the discourse allows him to construct himself as an authoritative writer who almost does not need to cite authorities. His use of tenor, in particular, constructs the writer as a social equal to the reader. The marker–reader's responses in her end comments, which function more as helpful suggestions than as punitive commands, can be seen to be responding to this positioning. The marker's comment "good" appears on the first page of the essay, inserted into the body of the essay at the end of the introduction. From his opening paragraph (reproduced following), Philip clearly demonstrates the extent to which he understood the demands of the task:

> The above lines are probably taken from the writings of Richard Baxter, an English puritan. They reflect part of the doctrine expressed by ascetic Protestants whom Weber refers extensively to in his texts. (Introduction to Philip's essay)

Philip immediately signals that he has recognized that the cited words in the topic are not Weber's words but the words of a 17th century Puritan, one Richard Baxter, whom Weber cites extensively to illustrate the link between the rise of the Protestant Ethic and the development of the spirit of capitalism. Philip demonstrates that he has grasped this by his unusual opening theme—"The above lines"—which constitutes a reference back to the essay topic. He has written out the topic at the top of the page directly above the opening paragraph and has inserted a colon at the end of the topic with a thick line separating topic and introduction. The phrase "the above lines" thus referred back to the topic and is taken up in the next sentence by the pronoun "they" (usually animate) referring back to the inanimate "lines" and possibly also to "the writings." The choice of nouns and nominalizations "lines," "writings of Richard Baxter," "doctrine," "Weber," "his texts" immediately creates a context that is textual and intertextual.

Philip has understood that successful academic writing inserts itself within a textual or intertextual universe and with this recognition come power and authority. In his opening paragraph, Philip has recognized some of the many texts and characters who populate this textual world—"the writings of Richard Baxter, an English puritan"; "the doctrine expressed by ascetic Protestants" and "Weber and his texts." The choice of verbs reinforces this sense of reality being textual: "are probably taken from" (modalized just to cover himself in case he got it wrong). The two other verbs used in this opening sequence of the introduction—"reflect" and "refers to"—are also verbs semantically linked to textual borrowing. The use of a passive construction with the agent suppressed ("are taken from") is interesting as it allows for some ambiguity over the agent—obviously Weber took the lines from Baxter, but at the same time, the assigner of the topic (the lecturer) took the lines from Weber's text in which Weber himself is

citing the writings of another writer. This is one of the key tasks that students have to learn to do to be successful. In this short paragraph, Philip has demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of academic textual and intertextual worlds and their complex citation practices. The comment "good" at the end of the introductory section may be an indication of why the marker does not censure Philip's failure to adopt recognized referencing practices: she has recognized that he is "at home" in the textual world.

Philip's opening paragraph also indicates his recognition that the entire topic can be seen as relating to theoretical arguments put forward by Weber. He has also understood the importance of responding to the topic as an initiation or instruction and signals this by directly responding in his opening sentence. I illustrate his lexical and thematic compliance with the lecturer's following instructions.

Philip also understands that a key part of the focus of the essay is to examine the relation between Calvinist doctrine and the development of capitalism, and the second paragraph of the introductory section introduces capitalism and Calvinism as key participants in the essay, both structurally and semantically. He develops this throughout the essay to arrive at his conclusion: "So, as we have seen Calvinism overlaps with capitalism. The Calvinist doctrine states that. … Similarly, capitalism says that. …"

Midway through the essay, Philip signals his discoursal self's presence in the text, his understanding of the illocutionary force of the topic (comparison), and the approaching conclusion in the sentence—"Thus we can see the uncanny similarity between Ascetic Calvinist doctrine and modern capitalism as far as their features are concerned." He does this through his use of the textual theme, "thus"; the use of the solidary "we" as topical theme; the nominalization "similarity," and the somewhat unexpected use in academic discourse of the mood adjunct "uncanny," clearly expressing his own opinion. Despite the absence of explicit instructions to this effect, Philip has understood that his task is, in part, to compare these two "isms."

Most intriguingly, Philip uses the first person plural pronoun "we" three times in his introduction: "we will look at," "we look at" and "we need to look at." This use of "we" directly inserts a writer into the text—a writer who includes his reader and will take him or her along with him through the text—jointly "looking at" "Weber's argument for his theory," and "Calvinism and capitalism themselves." Philip is using the familiar cadences of the lecture theater—adopting a lecturer persona. All the uses of "we" are collocated with a restricted set of modalized mental or behavioral process verbs emphasizing his authority: "we will look at"; "we can look at"; "we have to look at"; "we can see." The "we" is immensely confident, constructing a powerful, authoritative discoursal self, which can challenge the traditionally unequal identities constituted by academic genres for student writers and marker–readers. It is this complex structure, the taking control of his text pronominally, directing it, setting up clear writer and reader subject positions, signal-

ing his text's relation to previous texts, his use of textual organizing themes such as "before," which evoke the feedback "good."

An examination of the thematic organization of the essay (part of the textual metafunction) reveals that his choice of theme, "hyper-theme" and "macro-theme" reinforce this. Successful student essays reveal their organizational structure or "predictive scaffolding" explicitly through the extent to which the introductions or macro-themes predict the hyper-themes (main ideas) of each paragraph and the degree to which the hyper-theme of each paragraph can be seen to predict the rest of the paragraph (Prosser & Webb, 1994, pp. 130–131). The introduction to Philip's essay serves as the macro-theme for the whole essay. Philip, in fact, takes up the key concepts as set out in the topic's instructions and uses these as structuring devices. Following, I list several of the hyper-themes from the "Calvinism" and the "capitalism" sections to illustrate the extent of his predictive scaffolding. The italicized words repeat the topic's lexis and highlight the extent to which Philip structures his essay as a response to the topic:

1. In this case study, *Weber* saw the relationship between economic structure (*Capitalism*) and other social organizations (*Calvinism*) as fundamental to understanding them.

2. Before we can look at the *specific ways Weber* claims *Calvinism* influenced society it is useful to have some background and understanding of the society of the times and to look at the actual *doctrines* and definitions of, firstly, *Calvinism*, then *Capitalism.*

3. *Calvinism* has a number of essential *features.*

1. Now to modern *capitalism*

2. Modern *capitalism, Weber* claims, differs in that it is *featured* [sic] by a "disciplined obligation of work as a duty."

3. Thus, we can see the uncanny similarity between Ascetic *Calvinist doctrine* and modern *capitalism* as far as their *features* are concerned.

In Philip's essay, the only theorist to occupy subject position in a sentence is Weber. In fact, no authority is referenced or cited in the text itself, though the *Course Reader* and Giddens[5] (1971) are listed in the reference list. When compared to Sipho's text, where we find "Giddens" and "Haralambos" functioning as actors and both cited in the text and named in parentheses, it is perhaps surprising that Philip's essay is so favorably received. Philip has mastered a range of quasi-synonymous verbal process verbs to introduce Weber's words: "claims" and "says" are used several times, but "acknowledges"; "refers to"; "explains"; "mentions"; "makes the point that"; "dismissed" and "argues"—all in the structure Weber + verbal process verb are also used. Similarly, Philip uses a number of different mental or behavioral process verbs to convey Weber's views: "saw";

"looked at"; "showed"; "believed"; "found." This contrasts with Sipho's limited range of verbs to convey Weber's, Giddens's, and Haralambos's words and thoughts: "Max Weber had argued"; "he demonstrated"; "Weber noted (twice)"; "Weber believed"; "Giddens noted"; "He noted." Whereas Sipho has access to only a limited range of the nonfield specific lexis, which has been identified as being necessary for academic success to express the relations between technical concepts, Philip can access a much richer linguistic resource.

Philip's essay contains a number of features that are closer to spoken than written academic discourse, but, as I have argued, they paradoxically give him more, rather than less, power. His tenor, the use of "we," which implies a "you"—"a reader," seems to draw the marker into a relationship of solidarity rather than of expert to novice. Two clauses, in which the reader is directly addressed, punctuate the essay, signaling transitions to those sections that carry the discussions of the features of the two doctrines. These are again atypical and draw on the spoken register: "Well, what is this Calvinist or Protestant 'ethic'?" and "Now to modern capitalism." "Well" is a textual adjunct, which functions to indicate that a response is about to be provided (Eggins, 1994). "Now" is a conjunctive adjunct (Eggins, 1994) that emphasizes (as does "well") the present time of the essay and the writer's (Philip's) presence, not only in the moment of production, but in the moment of interpretation too. These clauses, which again mimic lecturers' classroom talk, almost function as section headings and could be interpreted as indicating that Philip has not fully mastered the ways written language would signal such a transition and impose cohesion. The marker is possibly addressing this when she responds to the second clause with a "not very clear" comment as well as her end comment about developing a more academic style. Despite this transgression of discourse modes, Philip is not penalized by his marker, but further constructs his authorial self as on a par with the reader–marker through this familiar register.

In the penultimate paragraphs of his essay, Philip gives his own opinion, transgressing the explicit instructions of the essay brief not do so. In a modalized, hedged paragraph beginning "my initial response to Weber's argument about capitalism is that surely …" Philip nevertheless issues a challenge by daring to put forward his "initial response"; ideas that he says "could still be a criticism." That this hedged comment is a challenge is recognized by the marker in her comment: "What is your evidence for this statement?" In the next paragraph, through the interpersonal theme, "perhaps" and the use of the modalized verbs—"would have to have"; "would demonstrate"; "could show"; "could only have promoted"—Philip mitigates his challenge to the received view of Weber's theory. The marker responds with a further request for evidence: "Again—this assertion needs to be backed up by specific evidence." Despite the modalization, Philip has presumed *too much* authority—that he does not need to provide evidence. The marker responds to his challenge to the student subject position ("this assertion"), but with what can be considered a rebuke and not a direct sanction. Through modalization,

an interpersonal theme (perhaps), the first person pronoun (my), Philip inserts his self-as-author identity powerfully into his text and it is to this authoritative self that the marker is responding. She becomes Philip's ideal reader.

The marker's discussion of Philip's essay with me helped throw some light on the construction of his success in writing. Anne values Philip's essay because it has

> got an argument … even though I said in this essay that he needs to be more academic, what's quite nice about it is that he really has thought about it … he has engaged with it and tried to come up with a very convincing argument. (Interview with Anne)

This evaluation seems to recognize the strong authority emanating from his essay and to respond positively to it. Philip's successful appropriation of the words of others is legitimized by Anne:

> Philip didn't take anybody else's exact words. He just had ideas that he could have picked up in his reading, but then he didn't note down exactly where he picked them up from and then he put them down in his essay. (Interview with Anne)

When discussing why Sipho's "plagiarism" was penalized (see following) while Philip's failing to "note down exactly where he picked them up from" was not, Anne reflected:

> I suppose being more punitive towards this student [Sipho] does also come from a sense that he [Philip] understands what he's writing. He's thought about it, whereas maybe this student tried to understand this, but by just putting down somebody else's exact words, and not having kind of digested it at all for himself and giving it back in some sort of a different form, it just shows that he really didn't, doesn't understand. Which is the whole point about why plagiarism is a problem. It's not just that it's like academic cheating or whatever. There just isn't understanding being displayed, and that's the whole point of doing an essay. (Interview with Anne)

The relative informality of his tenor is, in fact, a sign of Philip's engagement and in combination with the clear predictive scaffolding and clear grasp of the field, conveys his authority. He is also able to successfully mask what he told me were his "objections to a lot of the sociology that we have been given to read … it's biased to present a particular person's point of view." His attempt, in his first essay test, to put forward some of his criticisms, "did not get very far" so he decided, "I am not really here to criticize at this stage because I haven't got the ability, so what I must do is follow the line as such and criticize maybe afterwards." Overt challenge having not suc-

ceeded, he pursues a more subtle form—challenging the forms of academic discourse. Responding to initial feedback, he takes on the subject position of the novice, but he cannot mask who he is: "A first-year student … shouldn't question. I have decided they are absolutely right. I shall actually play the line simply because it's the best line to play." This statement itself reveals once again the discursive resources that Philip has at his disposal. Being able to choose a textual self to project is yet another indication of Philip's advanced academic literacy.

Where did this authority originate? Philip is a White, English-speaking man, in his mid-30s, with a tertiary diploma, world of work experience, from a middle-class family. His father was a university professor, his brothers all successful professionals, his wife a medical doctor, and he was working toward a bachelor of science degree. Sociology was his only nonscience subject, and he found many of the social theories discussed rather outdated, at times disagreeing vociferously with his tutors. Nevertheless, he enjoyed his year in Sociology One, participating actively in tutorials, where the tutors soon got to know him, and remarked on him to me in my interviews. Interestingly, he was able to establish an identity both in the textual world and outside of it—setting up social relationships in which the usual anonymity of 1st-year students was challenged.

All the different facets of who Philip was, in terms of his habitus, his cultural and textual capital, what his home and school-based discourses had enabled him to bring with him—his autobiographical self—gave him the social power to authoritatively enter and succeed in carrying out the writing tasks of Sociology One. Philip's cultural capital put him on a par with most of the lecturers. When we talked, he used an analogy with the McCarthy era in the United States of America, told me ornithology was his particular interest and generally displayed the attributes of the White middle classes. He recounted with relish that he had recently been mistaken for a lecturer by his squash partner.

SIPHO'S ESSAY: IN WHOSE WORDS?

Sipho answered the same question as Philip. He, however, scored 45%, with 10% being deducted for plagiarism. "I would have given this essay 55 but have subtracted 10% for plagiarism" is the marker's final comment. Comparing the success and failure of their respective essays, which I have already begun to do, helps to understand the role authority and identity play in negotiating success in writing.

Sipho's first failure is to not answer the question. Like Philip, he begins his essay by copying out the topic at the top of the first page, yet he only copies out part of it, and then not accurately, revealing a fundamental misunderstanding of the function and source of the quote and of the role and functioning of citation practices in academic essays, which will culminate for him in the sanction of plagiarism. In fact, he reorganizes the topic by attributing the quote to Weber:

> According to Max Weber, the loss of time through sociability, idle talk, even more sleep than is necessary for health, 6 to at most 8 hrs is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. (Sipho's version of the essay topic)

By attributing the quotation directly to Weber, and omitting the remainder of the task instructions, he indicates that he has not understood that the citation is intended to be *illustrative* of Weber's methodology. As pointed out previously, it is important for the student to realize that the cited words are not Weber's but Baxter's, and it is also vital that the student understand the nature of the task—the relation between Calvinist doctrine and capitalism. At the heart of Sipho's lack of success is his failure to grasp that the topic's cited words were not the words of 19th century Weber but of a 17th century Puritan.

To further situate Sipho's textual failure, I would like to examine the original context of the quotation, before its extraction from Weber's text, as well as the changes it undergoes when it is inserted into the essay topic. The cited text is part of a three-page extract from chapter 5 of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* which appears in the *Course Reader* under a large, boldface, capitalized heading, which is not part of the original text: **"C. THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM, READING 3."** The first paragraph is situated at the bottom of the left-hand side of the page with a large chunk of white space above it, suggesting that the extract has been extracted from a larger text. The opening words signal this too: "Now, in glancing at Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest,* or his *Christian Directory,* or similar works of others …" (*Course Reader,* p. 73). Almost two pages from the beginning of Weber's chapter, in which Richard Baxter, his writings and his times are introduced, have been omitted. Philip is able to retrieve this context, whereas Sipho cannot. Weber's written text is complex, citing a number of 17th-century Puritans, and their beliefs, to illustrate his thesis. It is easy to see how a novice writer and reader of academic discourse could interpret these words as Weber's own. They do not appear in quotation marks, yet the entire text constitutes, in fact, a paraphrase of the writings of Baxter and other Puritans (signaled by "according to Baxter …" and "Accordingly, Baxter's principal work …"). In the body of the text, which has been extracted to the *Course Reader,* four superscript numbers refer to endnotes. These in turn refer to Baxter's *Christian Directory,* but the *Course Reader*'s cut-and-paste style has led to these endnotes themselves being left out, so that the student has no way of knowing whose words these were. When Baxter's words become part of the essay topic, the superscript numbers themselves disappear, removing the signal that might prompt a student to question their significance.

The written models of the authorities, to which Sipho was exposed would not necessarily have been helpful in enabling him to make sense of how academic texts draw on the writings of previous authorities. The *Course Reader* contained Weber's words, but Weber himself could be either citing or paraphrasing the words

of others and this might be more or less obvious. Sipho also read Giddens (1971) and Haralambos (1980) and they too cite and paraphrase Weber. Reading a portion of Weber's text together with Giddens's reading–interpretation of Weber helps one to comprehend the complex textual worlds peopled by authorities from different eras that a student is negotiating when writing their way into a discipline. Much of Giddens's text can be read as a sophisticated paraphrasing of Weber's. In the *Protestant Ethic* (p. 71 of the *Course Reader*), Weber (1930) writes,

> two principles, mutually connected, types of pastoral advice appear. On the one hand it is held to be an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts as temptation of the devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace. (p. 111)

Giddens (1971) wrote,

> came under pressure on the level of pastoral care. Two related responses developed. Firstly, that the individual should consider it as obligatory to deem himself one of the chosen: any doubts as to the certainty of election are evidence of imperfect faith and therefore of lack of grace. (p. 129)

Can Giddens be said to be using his own words? Giddens, a highly respected sociologist and authoritative writer on Marx and Weber, is unlikely to be accused of plagiarism or copying. As a socially legitimated commentator, he has earned the right to paraphrase, which Sipho, as his textual negotiations with his marker reveal, has not.

Sipho references frequently in his essay: on each page of his essay, there is a least one referencing convention. Although he has very few direct quotations in inverted commas with specific page references, he has numerous references to either Haralambos or Giddens, usually taking the form of "according to Giddens (1992)"[6] or "according to Haralambos (1991)." He also references the *Course Reader* several times, usually in parentheses, after a fairly long sentence or paragraph as "(1994 Reading pack)." This caused the marker to comment, at the top of page four, with lines drawn across Sipho's essay down to each reference: "Give the specific (marker's underlining) reference." Sipho does not appear to see the *Course Reader* as a collection of extracts from texts by different authors but rather as one book. In his conclusion, Sipho has a long quotation in inverted commas that is accompanied by the correct page reference. He is therefore aware of the various citation conventions used in academic writing. His text does not lack evidence of referencing. On the contrary, and in contradistinction to Philip's essay, Sipho's essay has *too much* referencing. The repeated use of referencing conventions signals to the marker that Sipho has not "made it his own"—he has borrowed and copied—fairly skillfully at times, less so at others—and his downfall is the reproduction, without his usual use of an authority's

name in parentheses, of a largish chunk of Giddens in the final sections of his essay. The marker, up to this point, has merely queried some of the referencing practices. She now has a clear instance of plagiarism—no quotation marks, no acknowledgments—and she comments, "Are these your own words? This is not clear." She then answers her own question (she has probably checked)—"No—It's from Giddens page 130." This is the direct cause of Sipho's failure. However, less obviously, it is his constant failure to develop his own authority, instead to hide behind and mimic the authority of others, that brings him to this pass. Anne acknowledges that Sipho's plagiarism was most likely inadvertent: "I think he probably thought he was doing okay, that it was enough to say that. I would doubt whether he was consciously trying to cheat. I think it was a lack of understanding."

Unlike Philip, Sipho is unable to voice even a tentative criticism of the authorities. His tenor, largely because of his patchwriting, stays close to the formal tenor of those authorities he borrows. Most clauses are categorical, with little use of modalization or modulation to signal relationships between Sipho and his reader–marker. In the concluding paragraph, Sipho uses "we," however, on closer examination it, too, is borrowed from Giddens. Giddens's sentence reads, "It is to this ethic that we may trace the unique qualities which distinguish the attitudes underlying modern capitalistic activity." Apart from being prefaced by "According to Weber," Sipho's sentence is identical. Sipho's concluding remarks are presented tentatively, which may well be appropriate for a 1st-year student, but where Philip proffers "my initial response," Sipho's pronominal choice is a distant "one may say"; "one could say."

His content or ideational meaning draws negatively phrased comments from the marker such as "No—the point about predestination is that you are either saved or not saved" and "The capitalists were not influenced by these ideas." Despite his repeated referencing of authorities, Sipho's choice of information is incorrect, further revealing his own lack of authority. The end comments return to this issue: "The initial part of this essay shows misunderstanding although it is corrected later. Furthermore—your argument about how the PE [Protestant Ethic] promoted the spirit of capitalism could have been more explicit." Whereas Philip developed the features of Calvinism and capitalism to illustrate the relation that Weber saw between them, Sipho is unable to accomplish this successfully, leading to the previous comments. The absence of predictive scaffolding in his thematic development illustrates this. Even though his introduction (his macro-theme) reproduced in the following text suggests that he will pursue this relation, his hyper-themes show he has not been successful:

This essay will discuss the specific ways in which these features of Calvinist doctrine stated previously compelled believers to work in a manner that promoted the development of Capitalism. (Selection from Sipho's essay)

Only two of the essay's hyper-themes deal with capitalism. All the other hyper-themes expand solely on the Protestant Ethic. Sipho is also not able to use the cues in the essay topic as a prompt to structure his essay. It is only in his conclusion that capitalism is referred to for the second time and then in a substantial (but fully referenced and in quotation marks) quote from Giddens:

Giddens (1992, p. 131) noted that the main accomplishment of the work of M Weber was that "it shows the moral instrumentality of the spirit of capitalism is an unintended offshoot of the religious ethic of Calvin, and more generally of the conception of the worldly calling whereby protestantism broke with the monastic idea of Catholicism." (Selection from Sipho's essay)

Why not borrow such authoritative words when one is concerned with one's own ability to express oneself in English? For as his final sentence reveals, Sipho has understood the task: "In the light of what is stated above one could say that, there is a relationship between Calvinism or certain Calvinism beliefs and the economic ethics of the modern capitalism." These words sound much more like his own words, slightly hesitant ("one could say"), afraid to use "I" to take up a position, so choosing the generic "one," a couple of grammatical errors, a misplaced comma. Yet, he has spent so much time hiding himself in the words of others that he cannot accomplish success. It is important to recall that plagiarism may be a learning strategy. My discussion with Sipho on this issue revealed that he did not believe he was plagiarizing because he had prefaced the paragraph with "Weber analysis";[7] "I know these are Weber's perspectives, not mine," he stated. However, plagiarism, in whatever form, was viewed in a very serious light in the Department of Sociology. One of the lecturers told his class it was a "capital crime" and the *Guide for Sociology One Students* stated that students "guilty of plagiarism" would be given "0 percent."

Who was Sipho? A Black student studying social work, whose low University-entry scores had meant that he had to take his 1st year over 2 years of study. English for Sipho was an additional language, his primary languages being sePedi (his grandmother's) and isiZulu (his mother's). He had spent his childhood between a rural environment with his grandmother and the urban life of a township with his mother. He was particularly concerned about his English competency and asked me to give him feedback on his written English. Near the beginning of our first interview, he defined himself to me, saying "I'm a second-language English speaker. … So I find it difficult writing essays in English but I think I'm getting better." In his final year at high school in 1991, strikes and boycotts had led to his nonattendance at school from early in the year, and so he had studied by himself at home and managed to pass. This solitary success did not translate easily into success at university.

At school he had never written anything resembling a university essay. When contrasted with Philip, Sipho brings few extra-textual and textual resources that

will allow him to succeed. He can respond only by "mimicking … the 'sound' of academic prose" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 158), hoping to gain approving feedback by masking his second-language status with the words of authorities, but this is challenged by the marker. The reader that Sipho's writing constructs is negative and punitive as Sipho is seen to transgress the codes of accepted referencing practices. He becomes a plagiarizer. His reader–marker challenges his attempt to borrow authority and strips him of power. Adopting the institutionally available subject position of *second language English speaker,* he accepts his failure.

NEGOTIATED AUTHORITY: SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Success does not reside outside of the interaction of the processes of interpretation and production, and of the sociopolitical contexts in which these take place, in the fulfillment of a preexistent set of norms and conventions, but is negotiated anew in each instantiation of student interpretation of the task. In the course of the unequal exchanges, which constitute the essay-writing process, identities of success and failure are discursively constructed. Success and failure are complex outcomes in which students' social identities and the social relations they develop textually and intertextually as they claim authority are engaged. Moreover, students' prior life histories, the socially structured opportunities, and the more or less privileged discourses they have had access to, affect their engagement in the essay-writing process. Cultural capital and habitus, I would argue, play a large part in shaping who will become successful. The progress of all the students in my study would seem to bear testimony to the weight of the past in their academic performance. Sipho did manage to pass Sociology One, but his end-of-year average mark was 55% (just above the 50% pass mark), and in his 2nd and 3rd years of sociology he never managed to score higher than this. Philip did not continue with sociology, but his end-of-year average in 1994 was 72%, making him one of the top students in the class. By the end of 3 years of study of sociology, only one of the Black students had succeeded in improving his final 1st-year marks by more than 10%.

The accomplishment of success also resides in the interaction between writer and reader that the text constructs. Writers with authority seem able to construct positions for readers, which the readers accept. The latter become their preferred readers. Students whose meanings are already more legitimate, who speak and write the legitimate language, have a greater likelihood of becoming successful; their writing appears to be subjected to a lesser degree of scrutiny. These students also have greater access to the linguistic realizations of authority, and more easily mobilize the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions to contribute to the construction of their textual authority.

Philip's discursive and extradiscursive authority stands in stark contrast to Sipho's. Sipho was unable to develop either an authoritative self as author or a

discoursal self able to negotiate with the text populations he encountered. His auto-biographical self was not endowed with much authority either. He told me that he had never consulted his tutor about his essay as he found consulting "very much diffi-cult" as he was shy. If the marker had not deducted 10% for plagiarism, Sipho would in fact have passed. If, for instance, he had been allowed to resubmit his essay, having corrected the referencing, he, too, would have passed. Although Sipho was very con-scious of his poor English language skills, his shyness or perhaps a reluctance to adopt the institutionally available subject position of *disadvantaged second language speaker* and seek help with his essay writing compounded his lack of success.

It is perhaps not surprising that Black student organizations' demands for the anonymous marking of examinations to protect against perceived bias in assess-ment on the part of the overwhelmingly White faculty grew during the year. They could perhaps be interpreted as an attempt to efface the restricted subject positions available to Black students within the institution.

ENDNOTES

[1] In terms of the university's grading conventions, 50% was a pass; 50% to 59% a third class pass; 60% to 69% a second class pass; 70% to 74% an upper second class pass and 75% and above a first class pass. In the South African tertiary context, upper second class passes are rare and first class passes are exceptional.

[2] It is important to note that although this study was carried out in 1994, the educational inequalities that shape the academic literacies of the students in my study, still structure the postapartheid educa-tional landscape. A recent newspaper article commenting on the poor performance of students in schools in historically African areas states that "the overall performance on tests has declined in the 5 years since apartheid ended. In 1996, 54.4% of high school students passed the graduating exams. By last year [1999], that figure dropped to 49.3 percent" (Schuler, 2000, p. 1). It seems likely that the "leg-acy of apartheid education" (Schuler, 2000, p. 1) will prove difficult to eradicate.

[3] Informed consent was obtained from all participants and all names are pseudonyms.

[4] I have used the 1930 translation of the *Protestant Ethic*. The original text appeared in German in 1905.

[5] The works of Giddens and Haralambos were both recommended to the students.

[6] The only copy of Giddens that I have been able to find, and the one recommended to the students, was the 1971 version. Sipho uses a 1992 reference. My copy of Haralambos is the 1980 version.

[7] Unfortunately, Sipho's 'plagiarism' was itself inaccurate. Giddens's sentence began, "It is crucial to Weber's analysis that ..." with 'analysis' as a noun. The sentence was picked up by Sipho as "Weber analysis that ..." using analysis as a verb followed by an exact reproduction of Giddens's sentence, leading to a "verbless" sentence. Here we have an insight into how a student whose primary language is not English may be reading academic discourse.

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