I recently finished an ethnographic research project investigating racism and literacy at an all-white suburban high school North of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. I want to share some material generated from that project, as a way of introducing my response to Marlie Banning's "The Politics of Resentment," and particularly her call for more elaborated "pedagogies of emotion," a term I'll describe below, drawing on Banning's and my own reading of the burgeoning scholarship on emotion in Composition Studies and related fields. Banning's article is an analysis of how the psychoanalytic term "displacement" can help us understand the persuasive force of what she calls "anticritical sentiments"—those sentiments that seem based on feelings of ill will or anger against others and that target groups in lateral or subordinate positions in the social hierarchy. Displacement, in Banning's analysis, describes a process by which attention to larger, and largely negative, economic forces is repressed or ignored while the anger and anxiety such forces create is redirected toward more familiar and manageable targets (recipients of affirmative action, or proponents of gay marriage, to name two typical examples).
The ethnographic material I want to share involves a familiar scenario: a writing classroom, a text by a person of color that critiques racism, and a white student whose anticonscious reaction to that text generates a host of ethical, political, and pedagogical challenges. The student in question—I call her Ashley—is a senior enrolled in an writing course for college-bound students. She has read “Our Time,” an excerpt from John Edgar Wideman’s *Brothers and Keepers*, as an assignment for class. Her response to the text included the following: she had really liked “Our Time,” particularly the way “John didn’t focus on race so much.” She contrasted Wideman’s “positive attitude” with that of his mother in the text. The character of the mother, according to Ashley, “was sad….She was a happy person and she’s letting this [racism] bring her down. And it will influence her kids. Like, what if Wideman just sat around complaining about race? He wouldn’t have made something of himself, and written a book and become successful, you know? A lot of people, like a lot Black people, sometimes, and I’m not trying to be racist, but if you can’t realize that you have to see the good, then they just get stuck complaining about racism and being all hopeless about things, and they let life pass them by.” Later Ashley would tell me she hated racism (indeed, she invited an African American boy from a neighboring high school to be her prom date) but was “just really really sick of hearing about race all the time.”

In Composition Studies, and especially in education, where much recent research has focused on the difficulties of teaching white pre-service teachers about racism, there is a common interpretation of Ashley’s response to Wideman, particularly her sense that minorities “complain too much” and her frustration with having to “hear about” racism all the time. This interpretation focuses on Ashley’s identity—her whiteness, her relative privilege in relation to people of color—as an explanatory framework that provides insight into her response to the text and hence pedagogical direction for teachers who hope to teach against discourses like those Ashley voices. In recent years, this pedagogical direction has turned increasingly toward critical whiteness-based pedagogies that interrogate through readings and class discussions the work-
ings of privilege and the meanings of white identity. Banning's essay, in contrast, in its analysis of the motives for "uncritical sentiments," does not mention identity, a point for which I give her much credit—the elision allows her to explore the issue in a slightly different, and to my mind generative, way—but which I also found to be somewhat limiting, a point I'll come back to.

Banning's essay situates itself within recent scholarship in what I have begun to call "Critical Emotion Studies." CES is embodied in diverse texts—Jack Barbalet's *Emotions, Social Theory, and Social Structure*, Megan Boler's *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education,* Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod's *Language and the Politics of Emotion,* and Antonio Damasio's *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness,* to name a few—and represents various disciplinary forays into the relationship between emotion and whatever it is that a particular discipline studies, from brain chemistry to teacher education to election results. Banning uses this scholarship to understand the motives behind "anticritical sentiments" and as such her analytic method offers a different way of understanding Ashley's reaction to Wideman, and more generally, new ways of thinking about Whiteness Studies. In this sense, CES has much to say to programs of research like mine, that aim to understand how critical sentiments can be made persuasive to students like Ashley, and much to offer critical teachers who have struggled to understand such students. Donna Strickland and Ilene Crawford have recently noted that those of us working in Whiteness Studies need to make visible "the role emotions play in the construction of white subjectivity," to unveil the "emotional investments and performances that constitute whiteness" (69). I want to echo their call, but also, following Banning, complicate it: we need to unveil these emotional investments and performances as they are constituted in language. We need to understand their persuasive appeal, which means attention to the affective domain (essentially a rhetorical domain, though not one rhetoricians have, until recently, paid much attention to, as Ellen Quandahl notes). Understanding the process of persuasion involved in the performance of identity
involves focusing on the complex intersections of discursive practices, collective identities and histories, social and cultural forces, and individually-experienced but historically situated emotions. It means focusing on how these coalesce to persuade individuals of those systems of beliefs associated with broader categories of identity. Banning's essay is a first step toward the type of rhetorical analysis of the emotional pull of whiteness, though she doesn't name it as such, that we need.

In her essay, Banning argues that increasing economic inequality—the "restructuring of industry from manufacturing to service...wage stagnation, fewer well paid jobs, more contingent and lower paying jobs" (75)—leads to "resentment," which she defines as "feelings of ill will or anger against others." Resentment, Banning writes, percolates through most national debates over social policy; "[i]t seeps through national discussions of race, sexual orientation, immigration, and perceptions of inequities along the lines of generation and gender in issues of social welfare" (70). Although resentment can be a valid response to injustice, it is too often left unacknowledged and in unacknowledged form, discourses of resentment "combine to form a cultural politic that functions to transfer attention and responsibility from one social and economic index to another" (71). They do the political work of "deflecting public attention (and discussion) away from basic political questions such as who receives what goods in society."

The bodily experiences of bitterness, anger, and shame that give rise to resentment are experienced privately, but they have, like all emotions, "social roots," and, social import: such feelings, as Banning makes clear, are often aimed at people lower on the social ladder: "One result of this displacement—when questions about the common good can no longer be legitimately addressed and openly deliberated—is that the feelings of insecurity, fear, anger, and loss incurred in response to changing material conditions are displaced and diverted laterally onto other groups, social beliefs, and practices" (80). Banning's account of displacement is thus also an account of a particular strand of conservative discourses in the United States, those discourses clustered around
identity politics and often seemingly motivated by racism. But Banning, using displacement rather than identity or whiteness as her analytic frame, implicitly argues against race as motive, suggesting instead that uncritical sentiment around identity politics persuade people because such sentiments, although they "target those in close proximity—often in lateral or subordinate positions" actually serve a different function: they divert "attention away from and displac[e] debate about economic, political, and social policies with serious consequences for a vast majority of citizens" (81). This analysis draws from four important points about emotion:

1. Emotions cannot be seen as distinct from reason. Emotions are intertwined with rational decision-making and are central to the construction of belief. We cannot separate feeling from perception, affectivity from judgement (Kelchtermans, 996). As Laura Miccichi notes, "emotions, like reasons, move people to judge, decide, and act in certain ways" ( ) Linda Kintz puts this succinctly when she writes that "Belief and politics are rational, and they are not" (5). Kintz' analysis of right-wing Christian activists shows that beliefs about the social world are not necessarily the result of a reasoned political framework or theory but rather emerge through a process of "resonance," a term that has both emotional and rhetorical connotations.

2. Emotions are not private, individual experiences but are, rather socially experienced and constructed. Their construction takes place through language, and thus, as Michalinos Zembylas writes, "emotion is a discursive practice" (937, italics original). Emotion acquires its "meaning and force from its location and performance in the public realm of discourse" (7, Abu-Lughod and Lutz, quoted in Quandahl, 18).

3. Emotion is taught and learned at home and at school. It is an important, deeply embedded, site of social control. Megan Boler writes that "the social control of emotions is a central and underexplored aspect of education in relation to hegemony. Contradictory rules of emotional conduct and expression function to uphold the dominant culture's hierarchies and values" (xvii). We are taught how to feel as part of our socialization into a particular culture's dominant norms.
4. Emotions are structured in ways that relate to the system of values and norms that exist in a social context. To put this in Raymond William's terms, "structures of feeling" are the "organizing principle by which a particular view of the world, and from that the coherence of the social group which maintains it, really operates in consciousness" (qtd. in Banning 88).

Displacement, as a heuristic for understanding the motives behind anticritical sentiments, exemplifies some of these insights. It offers a psychological explanation for uncritical sentiments that moves us away from limiting rational-self-interest models of political belief (see #1, above). It shows how uncritical sentiments fit into a larger structure of belief and practice (see #4, above). But Banning doesn't show how displacement occurs through language—how economic issues become framed, rhetorically, as social issues concerning identity politics. Nor does she show how such uncritical sentiments are taught and learned. Thus, the harder, and perhaps more important, questions—those involving the mechanisms and rhetorical processes by which displacement occurs—remain (though to be fair, I believe they are outside the scope of Banning's project): why do individuals displace feelings in ways that end up, intentionally or not, supporting particular political projects (like ending affirmative action or welfare)? Why do these particular political projects serve these particular emotional needs? How do these needs come to be associated discursively with broader identity categories like whiteness? The questions lead us to overlapping sites of analysis that are familiar territory for Composition Studies: the infrastructure of school — what used to be called the hidden curriculum—and rhetoric.

In my work with the materials I collected from Ashley's school, I began with questions about race—how whiteness is performed around particular acts of literacy, how white students read and respond to texts about race, how whiteness is constructed through the terms and rhetorical structures of multiculturalism and through the cultural practices of literacy. But increasingly, thanks in part to work like Banning's, I have come to see that if we want to
understand how whiteness is taught, learned, and practiced in school, and how it might be disrupted, we need to ask different questions. Thus I have recently begun the process of rereading the material I gathered during my study through the following lens: What emotional rules were taught and how were they taught? How were emotional rules performed? How were they applied and policed across situations and contexts? How did emotional learning participate in the development of racial, cultural, and social identity, and in the construction of persuasive social beliefs?

Using these questions to construct my interpretation of Ashley's responses to Wideman yielded the following analysis: One of the most prominent "emotional rules" taught at Ashley's school was the importance of "toughing it out." This rule was taught via exhortations about focusing on the positive, avoiding complaining about aspects of school that students didn't like, and focusing on the larger economic gains that a diploma or admittance to college would provide for students. "Toughing it out" was taught through a variety of elements of what we once called the "hidden curriculum" of schooling. In this case, being tough was linked to instrumentalism: students were encouraged to "focus on the positive" as they faced school tasks that they found meaningless, pointless, or boring. Discourses of instrumentalism were used by teachers, parents, administrators and often students themselves to justify and rationalize academic practices that otherwise appeared useless, and to give an energy and sense of purpose to activities that were routinely characterized by students as a waste of time. Indeed, motivating students appeared to be a full-time job. "Cheer up!" Ashley's teacher often said at the beginning of a class period, as student slumped in their desks. She did her best to make the room cheery as well: three bright yellow beanbags with smiley faces sat along the far wall of the classroom; she kept a bucket-full of candy near the computer terminals on the side of the room. This effort to motivate was also reflected in the school: the hallways were often adorned with encouraging posters made by various student groups; the student aid who read the pledge of allegiance over the PA system each morning always ended her recitation with
an upbeat "Have a great day!" Students were taught to avoid conflicts with each other and with teachers, and they were reminded that what appeared difficult or boring or frustrating now would pay off in the future. "I know you don't want to do it," the assistant teacher would say when a student complained or slacked off. "But think how happy you'll be when at the end of the day you've got that college degree and can make something of your life."

Being tough, perhaps not surprisingly, structured Ashley's response to "Our Time" (indeed it structured many of her and her peers' responses to many of the texts they read, including those that didn't address race). She compares Wideman, who didn't "sit around complaining about race," to his mother, who "let[s] life pass her by," and who got stuck "complaining... and being all hopeless about things." Ashley's deployment of these anticritical discourses is in some sense the final performance of a persuasive process like that articulated by Kenneth Burke, where persuasion takes place not through "one particular address, but [through] a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to rhetorical skill" (26). This is a persuasive process that acquires its force simultaneously from the institutional and social practices of daily life in school, in this case, via school, from the practices of multiculturalism, and from the realm of emotions that is both constructed by these and shapes responses to them. It is an example of Boler's assertion that schools exercise emotional-social control and of Lynn Worsham's evocative definition of emotion as "the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual to the social order" (216). Most importantly, for me as a researcher who studies the persuasive pull of anticritical sentiments for white students, it is an example of the psychosocial and rhetorical nature of belief, and of identity itself.

Banning concludes her essay by calling for the elaboration of pedagogies of emotion—what she defines as alternative curricula and classroom practices that address the affective component of experience, situate emotion historically, and account for emotions
both as sites of social control and of political resistance. As Banning notes, such pedagogies, because they present feeling as political, social, cultural, and historical phenomena, and, I would add, because they address the emotional roots of "anticritical sentiments," will inescapably be critical (91). But as Quandahl writes, "it is scarcely yet imaginable" how insights into the relationship between emotions, pedagogy, politics, and rhetoric ought to alter writing pedagogies.

Indeed, Banning notes some of the difficulties of inherent in pedagogies of emotion in the writing classroom. She mentions several different pedagogical approaches that attempt to take emotion into account: psychoanalytic perspectives, deliberative knowledge, a reliance on authority, and the validation of student beliefs. Banning points out problems with each approach. "Reliance on authority" (defined by Banning as pedagogies that rely on the teacher's authority to "demand that students rationally know about the politic—to accept the master discourse on it") runs up against familiar problems of resistance and abuse of authority. Validation of student beliefs, or "affirmation of student identities, particularly those identities who have felt their social standing slip in recent years," (93), is a crucial part of any sound pedagogy, but as Banning argues, "affirmation of the discourses of resentment translates too readily into an endorsement of them and constitute a professorial breach of faith toward those—designated as others by these discourses and targeted by their resentment—who may be literally or figuratively present" (94). Banning cites me as a proponent of identity-affirming approaches, a citation that is partially accurate but that also requires some clarification. Those of us who have argued for an exploration of students' identities, particularly white identities, as a way of understanding "anticritical sentiments" in the classroom, are, I believe, aware of the danger Banning points to (indeed, much of my own work follows Virginia Anderson's powerful essay about this danger and her attempt to come to terms with it). It should be pointed out that such approaches do not advocate affirmation of anticritical discourses themselves, as Banning implies, particularly those that target
racial, ethnic or socioeconomic "others." To paraphrase Anderson, we must continue to struggle to open ourselves up to the mystery of others, with all of the challenges that entails, and we must find ways to do so that do not end up supporting discourses we would "prefer not to honor, even with [our] gaze" (458). This is a point that needs to be made, since confusion here might lead to precisely the situation Banning fears, where teachers, in the hope of reaching out to resistant students, abrogate their ethical responsibility to those, present or not, who are victimized by discourses like Ashley's.

In her critique of psychoanalytic approaches, Banning notes that psychoanalytic pedagogies "still tend to frame emotions as individual" phenomena and do not adequately embrace sociocultural perspectives on emotion. This is a critique I generally share, but there are exceptions, such as Elizabeth Ellsworth's *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address*. Ellsworth advocates alternative pedagogies that draw on the insights of psychoanalysis in order to "address" or "position" students differently, in ways that allow more complex and nuanced responses to social and cultural issues. Still, Banning's larger point—that we need more elaborated emotion-based critical pedagogies—is well taken. Quandahl suggests that "deliberate emotional education" ought to include "deep thought about how institutions teach and manage emotion, and broad opportunities to learn and reflect on what happens when people feel in certain situations" (20). "Deep thought' on how institutions manage emotions takes us to questions about how the hidden and tacit aspects of our pedagogy inadvertently teach emotional dispositions that run contrary to the more explicit political and rhetorical work we are trying to accomplish, much in the way I am uncovering in the material I gathered during my study of Ashley's school.

As we embark on the classroom work Quandahl, Banning, and others are calling for, we might begin with the following questions: what emotional rules do we teach, intentionally or not, and what political projects do those rules, again intentionally or not, support? how we can begin to teach different emotional rules? Can we make our own performances of emotioned positions—our commitment
to justice, for example; our enthusiasm for difference and complexity—more salient so that they might serve as alternative models for students? How can we make space for what Julie Lindquist calls "students' emotional labor in scenes of literacy learning" (189)? It is by now clear that moving students toward critical sentiments will require more than rational argument. Banning writes, in her conclusion, that understanding the "emotional force and coherence of a structure of feeling that underpins a cultural politic such as resentment...is a key element in educating the emotions" (94). Per Banning's analysis, this understanding will come when we uncover the displaced roots of resentment in larger social forces at work. For Ashley, this might mean understanding her own and her family's anxieties about their economic futures and survival within the context of this particular school.

Indeed, Ashley was part of the rural segment of the high school's population. She lived in a mobile home with her working-class parents (neither had a college degree), and despite receiving high grades in advanced classes (the school had a self-tracking policy so that students could choose whether to take college-prep courses or not), she had no college plans herself. Many of the rural families like Ashley's that the high school served had felt in recent years that the high school was too focused on middle class children and middle class aspirations. In the school's questionable but understandable mission to raise the ambitions (and the test scores) of all of its students, the principal told me, it was crucial to get students like Ashley to see that there were opportunities beyond their neighborhoods and the working class townships that they and their families had lived and worked in for generations. Ashley had other ideas. "I don't want to leave my mom," she told me repeatedly, during discussions of her post-secondary plans. She wasn't going to college, even though she had all A's in school. Other students more explicitly rejected the school's imposition of middle class values and goals. "We don't need this shit," one student said pointedly, referring to a handout on MLA citation conventions for the Senior Project research paper. Ashley concurred.

If we are persuaded through the everyday, through repetition
and ritual, rather than through a specific address or argument, then Ashley has been persuaded by racism, convinced by her performance of it in the self-persuading way that Burke writes of, not through direct address but via a processes of repetition and the ritualistic social practices of school. She has been persuaded via a discourses of instrumentalism repeated and embedded throughout her education, discourses with ties to larger forces in the community and culture, as Banning suggests, but with a particular manifestation in the local school practices Ashley encounters and navigates every day. She applies these discourses, or misapplies them, as the case may be, to Wideman’s text and thus we get the racist-inflected anticritical sentiments so familiar to composition teachers. Anderson’s definition of rhetoric as a “tangle” suggests that those of us working on the currently separate but highly overlapping areas of whiteness, political rhetoric, critical pedagogy and resistance, and emotion, have got hold of separate strands of the same knot. To grapple fully with the knot itself returns us to rhetoric, where identity, emotions, schooling, and politics coalesce and persuade.

Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

Works Cited


