



# THE POINT

Summer 2009

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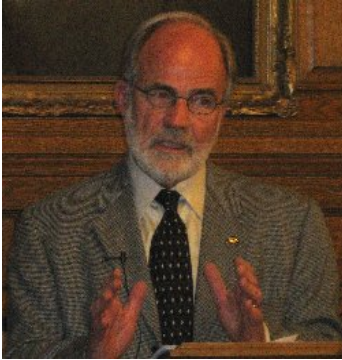


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**Jennifer Novak** -- Rhetoric Society of America's Third Biennial Summer Institute, Penn State University, June 22-28.

**Jennifer Novak, Blake Sanz, and Rebekah Shultz Colby**

-- "Cross-Curricular Partnerships in Writing: Multiple Voices, Negotiations, and Outcomes," Feminisms and Rhetorics, Michigan State University, Oct. 7-10.

## *CCCC 2009*

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**Conversations in the Disciplines**

- [Research Panel 1, featuring Tom Knecht, Ingrid Tague, and Joan Winn, April 22](#)  
*Blake Sanz*
- [Research Panel 2, Ann Dobyys, Robert Dores, Christina Kreps, April 27,](#)  
*Kamila Kinyon*





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**THE POINT***Summer 2009***Keeping Pets, Predicting Elections, Discovering CEO Practices: Three Ways of Looking at Research**  
*Blake Sanz*

On the evening of Wednesday, April 22, the Writing Program sponsored an event at Boettcher Auditorium in which faculty from different disciplines convened to discuss how they conduct research in their fields. The panel was designed as a way to show students how the skills they're learning in their Academic Research classes (WRIT 1133) align and integrate with skills used across campus.

On the panel were Ingrid Tague, associate professor and chair of the Department of History department, Tom Knecht, assistant professor of Political Science, and Joan Winn, professor from the Daniels College of Business. Each spoke briefly about the kinds of research they do in their fields, after which students asked questions.

Ingrid Tague discussed the kinds of interpretive research that she does in researching pets and pet-keeping in 18th-century Britain. In doing so, she mentioned the importance, when reading texts, in determining what's useful and what's not. She also mentioned how important it is in formulating your research question that you don't just try to determine whether it's interesting to you. You also have to strive, she said, to determine why the issue matters to people outside yourself, to people within your discipline.

Tom Knecht discussed the quantitative methods he uses. Though many think that numbers-based research is irrefutable, Knecht explained how bias can often creep into the data, despite what we might think about the "objective" nature of numbers. To demonstrate, he provided a scenario from his own work. Suppose, he said, that we wanted to hypothesize that there is a connection between the strength of the economy and the likelihood of incumbents winning elections. Depending on how a researcher measured "strength of the economy," the results might vary.

In discussing her qualitative work interviewing female CEOs of Czech companies, Joan Winn developed Knecht's ideas on bias. She told a story about an interview she conducted with a particular Czech female executive, with whom she happened to hold much in common. Throughout the interview, they spoke at length about professional matters but also about the woman's children, her family life, the world outside her job. After it was over, Winn's graduate student expressed amazement at how much information she'd received, commenting at how the subject had revealed so much to Winn that she never would have revealed to the graduate student. Winn's point in telling the story: bias can exist not only in how you ask a question or how you define a term but also simply by who you are and what the nature of your dynamic is with those you're interviewing. Ultimately, Winn concluded, it is impossible to research and write without bias. You must strive to recognize your bias and account for it in your

writing.

Following their remarks, the panelists took questions from the student audience regarding research methods and gave tips on how best to conduct and write from research. Prompted by students, the panelists weighed in on such issues as how to tell if a source is reliable and why they favor the kinds of research they conduct.

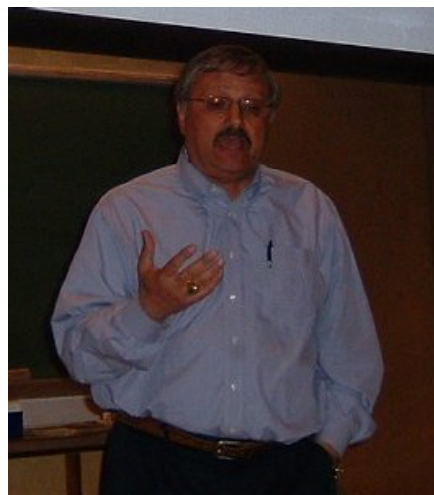
The exchange gave students a chance to see the different ways that research can be conducted at the university level and gave the panelists the chance to juxtapose their own methods against those of their colleagues.



**THE POINT***Summer 2009***Conversations Across the Disciplines: Research Panel 2***Kamila Kinyon*

This "Conversations across the Disciplines" panel was the second of two panels organized by the Writing Program. Both panels represented qualitative, quantitative, and interpretive research traditions through the scholarship of professors in different fields. The panel included brief introductory talks by Ann Dobyns, Christina Kreps, and Bob Dores. English professor and chair Ann Dobyns represented interpretive research. Associate professor of anthropology Christina Kreps represented qualitative research. Endocrinologist Robert Dores, Biology professor and chair, represented quantitative research.

Ann Dobyns described her current book project, a rhetorical study of tango. For a tango dancer, the body is a rhetorical interactive instrument, especially since tango dancers work in an improvisational form. Dobyns discussed how she is moving into a new field through this project. She is studying dance theory and the history of tango, including the problem of how immigrant populations work together. The question of interpretation comes into play in looking at how people are communicating with each other. In addition, her tango project draws on theory in cultural studies, rhetoric, and interpretation. Dobyns compared this project with some of her earlier work, which included Chaucer's attitudes towards law as well as the ways in which language is used in romance.



Christina Kreps described her training as an interpretive anthropologist. This involved acquiring literary background as well as borrowing from linguistics and semiotics. As a cultural anthropologist, Kreps does ethnographic fieldwork. She conducts firsthand studies of groups through participant observation, which involves engaging in the daily life of the people. It is challenging to maintain distance but to get into that world too. Kreps did dissertation fieldwork in Indonesia. She took a dialogic approach and used many of the methods used by sociologists, such as interviews and surveys. When collecting data in the field, she used journals and field notes. She used a typewriter rather than a laptop, because laptops in Borneo would be likely to be infected by mold. She also collected photos and taped interviews. Using what she dubbed the archaic system of index cards, she turned her Indonesian fieldwork into a dissertation and then into a book.

Robert Dores discussed his perspectives as a biologist. As an endocrinologist, he does various types of writing, including mini-reviews, grant proposals, research papers, and editing. The typical mini-review presents both sides of an issue, summarizing the literature to be explored and evaluating progress in a specified area. In writing grant

proposals to federal agencies, it is important to present a clear hypothesis and to lay out an experimental design that can, in theory, be accomplished in three years. How can the agency be convinced to fund this proposal out of 60 or 70 submissions? The proposal must be reasonable and must present a big picture. In his research papers describing what is happening to a cell, Dores' methods are not completely quantitative but also bring in other techniques. Dores also works in a group of associate editors. He must decide disputes and see things as a reader.

A series of questions followed the initial presentations. In response to the question "How do you know what is quality writing?" Dobyms replied that she looks for clear focus versus general exploration. There should be a clear thesis and development for the argument through evidence. Dores said that you need to convince people that you stumbled on something interesting. Point A must lead to point B, and the writer must make sure that people don't get lost. Kreps replied that a complex topic should be made obvious or accessible.

To the question "It takes time to do research. What accommodations do you make to students who don't have time?" Dores replied that he gives exam essay questions. He expects students to use an economy of words. Putting in filler not relevant to the question is irritating. Dobyms replied that you must take smaller chunks. You must keep in mind who your audience is and what they need to know. Kreps teaches upper-division and graduate courses with term research papers. Students must submit a topic statement and preliminary bibliography. Working in small stages ensures that they will finish their 15- to 20-page paper by the end of the quarter.

The question "What do ideal results look like in your field?" generated a lively discussion. For Dores, the best results come out as "yes" and "no." You must execute experiments properly, for example, when cloning a gene. Once you have the sequence, how much error is there in the measuring process? An unambiguous "yes" or "no" answer would be the ideal result. Kreps responded to this by describing the subjective visions of anthropology. Interpreting life is always through the lens of your culture. It is all about interpretation, and different researchers will interpret the same culture differently. Dobyms also described the role of interpretation in her field. For example, when interpreting Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the question is whether you have a good interpretation that makes sense. For example, when investigating the role of women as defective men, is this what Chaucer really thought or is he responding to the fathers in the church? Which interpretation is better?

Other interesting questions and discussion followed. The event was well attended, and a number of students took careful notes for papers and presentations for their WRIT 1133 courses. Both "Conversations across the Disciplines" panels were very productive, both in bringing together professors from different fields and in communicating differences between research traditions to students

**THE POINT**

Summer 2009

**Patricia Bizzell's "How Composition Saved the World"**

Rebekah Shultz Colby

With a bold title for his new book, Stanley Fish has declared that academics should save the world on their own time and not attempt it in the classroom. In an effort made possibly to preserve academic freedom, Fish has argued that the business of academia is solely teaching the content of the disciplines without this teaching being influenced by personal ideological beliefs or efforts to achieve social justice. With our concerns aimed at better teaching and thus empowering the educationally underprepared and socially marginalized as well as teaching students to rhetorically critique political rhetoric and engage in their own political debate so that they become better civic citizens, Fish seems to think that composition has got it all wrong.

In her talk entitled "How Composition Saved the World," titled to directly and unapologetically take Fish head on, Patricia Bizzell stated that Fish's latest critique of composition is nothing new. Maxine Hairston accused James Berlin of nothing less when she admonished him to just teach writing without all the cultural critique. And indeed, as Bizzell admitted, saving the world is never anyone's job. However, as teachers of writing, the gatekeepers of academic literacy for students, saving the world is also an activity we cannot in good conscience desist from. In fact, it is this concern for educational social justice that drove writing instruction to become what it is today in the first place.

In the '70s and '80s, classroom demographics changed dramatically. With the advent of the GI Bill, open admissions, and the opening of new universities that were purposefully priced to be affordable to the community in places like California, students from lower-economic backgrounds and more diverse cultural backgrounds, not to mention many more women, were attending college for the first time. Some viewed the strange errors that these new arrivals made in their writing as evidence that they were cognitively deficient in some way -- cognitively arrested or even retarded. In fact, some even argued that Black English led to these cognitive deficiencies. However, Mina Shaughnessy, struggling to more effectively teach writing to first-generation college students at City University of New York, brought new critical reading strategies to bear on student writing, actually spending time analyzing the patterns of error in student writing. This led to a much more productive line of thought in composition - students were not cognitively delayed but were just beginners in academic discourse. This new theory that students learn academic writing by being enculturated into academic discourse was developed more fully by Mike Rose, Kenneth Bruffee, and David Bartholomae just to name a few. And along with many others, their writing and teaching made the world a better place for classrooms. Ironically, these writing teacher-scholars were influenced in large part by Stanley Fish. For instance, Fish himself argued in *Is there a Text in This Class?* that meaning in language is culturally and socially constructed.



However, after this movement, others such as Keith Gilyard, Geoffrey Sirc, Victor Villanueva, Deborah Brandt, and many, many others argued that in solely teaching academic discourse, writing teachers were trying to change students into clones of neutered, neutral academic discourse instead of working with the cultural, linguistic, and rhetorical resources students already possess. Perhaps these discourses were nontraditional, but students could achieve more rhetorical and academic success if they could also utilize and draw from their own discourse, changing academic discourse in more socially relevant ways in the meantime.

Unfortunately, in what seems to be a contradiction of his earlier work, Fish seems to be arguing that disciplinary knowledge is objective and unchanging. While in his book he contextualizes his definition of truth by saying that disciplinary truth is an historically and disciplinarily agreed-upon truth, Bizzell contended that the act of agreeing upon knowledge is messy, not usually simply agreed upon by everyone, and always already affected by the political and cultural system of academe – an error she termed the



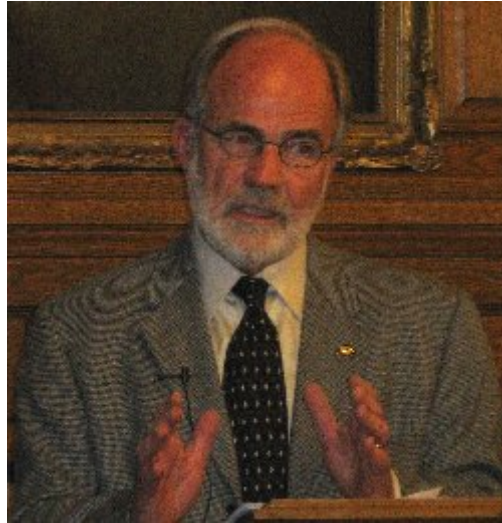
error of network. In making this argument, Fish also seems to be arguing that our job as teachers should be to simply and unproblematically transmit this transparent and objective disciplinary truth to our students who are waiting like acultural vessels to be filled up -- an error Bizzell coined the "unavailability of purity." Furthermore, Bizzell argued that if we are seriously engaged in the pursuit of truth, as teachers we need to bring up differences in political views and how these differing views would affect the meaning and construction of this truth. Political difference has brought tremendous growth to knowledge-making in the disciplines. For instance, in the field of rhetoric and composition alone, where would our understanding of feminine rhetorics be without the politics of the women's movement -- or the political "F" word for so many conservatives -- feminism? Where would our understanding of African American rhetorics be without the hotly contested Civil Rights Movement? Whether Fish wants to admit it or not, politics shape knowledge construction. So by teaching this knowledge, this truth, we inherently communicate our politics to our students even if we never overtly state our political beliefs in the classroom.

Bizzell also brought up ways that teachers implicitly communicate their political views in the classroom. In teaching, we inherently communicate our whole personality. Students come into contact with a whole person -- not someone who can neatly compartmentalize and seal off part of him or herself. In turn, the act of teaching is coming in full contact with a room full of students who also cannot help but fully communicate who they are as individuals as well. This communication comes through with tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, and the word choice used in the syllabus, as well as through what is overtly spoken or remains unspoken. However, while we cannot always choose the students whom we teach, students often can choose their teachers. They usually choose a particular teacher because of other implicit things that a teacher may teach -- things that come from a teacher's full personality that a teacher may or may not be aware of. For instance, Bizzell was proud of the fact that struggling writers at College of the Holy Cross usually seek her out to teach them writing. Although Holy Cross does not officially offer developmental writing classes, Bizzell feels that as a result of student selection, she is offering an informal developmental writing course.

Along with these logical problems with Fish's argument, Bizzell also pointed out ethical objections to it. In the objection of unworthiness, she argued that it would be a dereliction of our social duty as teachers not to try to empower students to change their lives through increased political awareness through course content. However, in teaching this political awareness, Bizzell encourages teachers to expose students to a myriad of conflicting political beliefs that may conflict with each other in uncomfortable ways. For instance, in her first-year writing reader, she brought in a range of readings about the history of the Civil Rights Movement and racial injustice, even including writing from a rhetorically gifted writer who was stridently against abolition even though she found his views to be personally abhorrent. Finally, she brought up the objection of impossibility -- even if teachers are able to divorce themselves from teaching material that is always already inherently political, it is not the material that is political but what is done with it that makes it political. And as teachers, it is our moral and social responsibility to try to influence our students to bring about social justice in the professional and social spheres they will encounter after graduation.

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**Hauser Discusses Connections between Rhetoric and Civic Responsibility***Blake Sanz*

Gerard Hauser, Professor of Communication at University Colorado-Boulder, gave a lecture on Wednesday, May 6, at DU entitled "Rhetoric, Pedagogy, and Civic Responsibility."

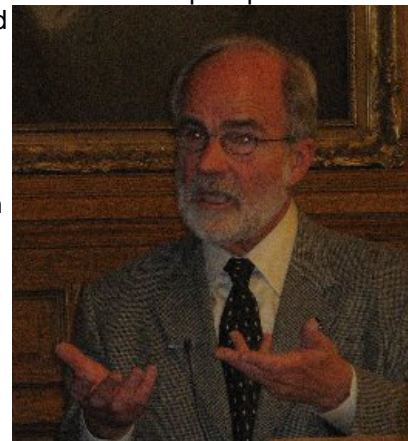
Introducing Hauser was Ann Dobyons, professor of English and chair of DU's Department of English, who underscored the value and importance of Hauser's work to the field of rhetoric. She mentioned her admiration for *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* and *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory*, which, she noted, has been valuable and useful in her own writing classroom.

The editor of *Philosophy and Rhetoric* for many years, Hauser spoke of the role that rhetoric as a discipline can play in fostering productive civic lives and creating a more civically engaged notion of academic communities.

He began with an overview of three distinct traditions of civic involvement in this country. Franklin Roosevelt's candidacy and New Deal programs, Hauser explained, elicited from the public a sense of obligated civic engagement. In those times, the public responded to government programs out of necessity – for example, by searching for government-created jobs – which created what Hauser called a "schoolhouse vision" of citizenship: paying taxes, constructing buildings, acting on the right to organize. This developed into a kind of citizenship (best represented by the '60s) that was more centered on community engagement – not just voting, that is, but doing. Emerging from this was an idea espoused most recently by Robert Boynton, the idea of citizenship as public work. This, Hauser argued, represented a different tradition — the emphasis had shifted once again away from service.

Mirroring these generational shifts in public ideas on civic involvement were certain tasks-of-an-era associated with their times: in the '40s, the task was to overcome fascism; in the '60s, we struggled against segregation. Today, Hauser said, the challenge is to "overcome the forces of radical individualism and division along economic lines, to create a new commonwealth based on public good."

Hauser then looked to demonstrate what our goals might be as publics and as academics regarding these new challenges of civic engagement. To do so, he highlighted Robert Putnam's arguments in *Making Democracy Work* regarding Italian governmental structures. He pointed, for example, to Putnam's conclusion that membership in a political party didn't lead to a more active sense of civic



responsibility -- rather, it was consistent contact with different kinds of people that tended to get citizens more engaged. This led, Hauser noted, to a more trusting relationship from one community member to another, one of the important goals of creating a more civically engaged populace.

And what, then, is the role of rhetoric *as taught in universities* with regard to civic engagement? Hauser discussed how we must strive to create spaces and structures, like the composition classroom, in which students are made to “interact with difference.” Without opportunities, for example, to “see that people in a class who disagree with you have sane things to say,” a productive level of civic engagement will not be reachable. Hauser focused on the very word we in the academy use to describe ourselves -- “professor.” We profess, and this necessitates trust. In the same way that we trust that certain fields such as law and medicine will “regulate themselves in a way commensurate with the public good,” so too must professors look to meet norms of civic professionalism.

That is, like other disciplines, we should look not only to “do no harm,” to ensure the “safety” of what we profess, but also we must question whether our field is advancing the public good. This, for Hauser, called to mind an important distinction between the Athenian tradition of education and the Berlinian tradition. In the Athenian model, civic virtue had to be apprehended, and the goal of teachers was to bring their students from an understanding of technique to a “kairos of praxis” -- that is, in this model, teachers exist for students. This, Hauser reminded us, is at odds with how education occurs today. Today, we tend to follow the Berlin school of education, in which knowledge is most often confronted via research -- in this model, teachers don’t exist for the student; students are used to achieve research goals, and it is research that is at the center of the university.

As Hauser sees it, the challenge with regard to civic engagement in universities is not to replace the Berlin school of thought but to restore Athenian values so that they can coexist with the research goals that institutions so value today. Toward that end, rhetoric has a place, and Hauser argued for three specific ways it might play a part in readjusting our academic values: (1) we must rethink the professional aspect of graduate education by reclaiming rhetoric’s ties to citizenship and identity; (2) we must expand opportunities for students to engage in public rhetoric, which might be done through classroom activities that put students in contact with communities and get them to “interact with difference”; and (3) we must pay greater attention to the canon of American democracy (striving to expose students to such works as the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” etc).

Not only this, Hauser argued, but we must also internalize these concepts in new ways, make them relevant for students’ practical realities. Early in his talk, in supplementing his discussion of Putnam’s work, Hauser discussed a midwestern focus group made up of vastly varied demographic and political backgrounds who met to discuss the issue of abortion. As Hauser recollected, very few people’s minds changed on the issue. What did change was how they spoke to one another -- those who in past times might have chastised their opponents had grown more respectful and knowledgeable of their opponents’ opinions. That is, their minds didn’t change, their behavior did -- and it is something like this that Hauser seemed to envision we might strive to achieve in the rhetoric classrooms of tomorrow.

**THE POINT***Summer 2009*

**A Conversation with Patricia Bizzell**  
*Richard Colby*

*Patricia Bizzell sat down with Richard Colby, Rebekah Shultz Colby, Doug Hesse, Kamila Kinyon, and Jeff Ludwig on Tuesday, April 19, for an informal conversation about her background as well as the state and future of composition and rhetoric.*

**Doug: What can you tell us about your background? Where did you grow up, and how did you end up in composition studies?**

My parents met in Kansas City, then moved to Chicago, so I was born in Chicago -- Northbrook, specifically. That's where I grew up. It was a typical, white, suburban upbringing. What influenced me the most was that I was a very sickly child, and I spent a lot of time in bed, alone, reading. I can't remember a time when I didn't know how to read. I was a voracious reader, and I had an ideal laboratory because I couldn't do a lot of other things. I had an older cousin who would send me boxes of books when she was done with them, so I was reading above my grade level. I also liked making my own illustrated stories, either drawing my own pictures or cutting out images out of my mother's magazines. I was a born English major.

I entered college at Wellesley as a declared English major and never looked back. It's what I always loved to do -- read stories and write and talk about them. I did minor in philosophy at Wellesley. I went on to a graduate program at Rutgers in English literature because there were no composition programs at the time, and we supported ourselves at the time by teaching freshman composition. As a result, a lot of us got interested in teaching composition. This was at the time, in the early '70s, when there just started to be some scholarship in composition, but it wasn't happening a lot in English. Janet Emig was in education at Rutgers at the time, but I didn't know her because we had no reason for our paths to cross. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* were two works that were very influential to me at the time.

In 1975, after I was finished with my PhD, Rutgers offered me a job as a non-tenured track, assistant professor who served as assistant director for the freshman writing program. My last year there, I developed a course, an elective, that was for the graduate students teaching first year writing to teach them about composition, and it was the first of its kind at Rutgers.

Writing teachers of my generation were self-educated. The first Conference on College Composition and Communication I went to was in a high school building in Philadelphia. It was small. As the field developed, we developed.

**Doug: How did you end up at College of the Holy Cross?**

I went straight from Rutgers to Holy Cross, and I have been there since. I was always what they call in composition studies an abolitionist, someone who didn't believe in a mandatory composition course. I didn't want to go somewhere and be a writing program director. Plus, I wanted to teach some American Literature; my dissertation was on F. Scott Fitzgerald. Holy Cross wanted somebody to teach American Literature and a writing specialist, and they didn't have a required freshman composition course, so the position was appealing to me.

I went there and started a writing center. The students who worked in it all had to take an upper-division introduction to composition and rhetoric course before they could work in the writing center. I also started a writing-across-the-curriculum program. People in biology and history were already teaching writing, so they should at least do it well — it's a faculty responsibility and not just the English department's responsibility. They still do not have a required freshman composition course.

I have always had a lot of freedom to teach whatever I want there, so that's why I stayed.

**Rebekah: What do you see as composition's place within English studies? What do you think of the new movement within composition to create a separate writing major around writing studies? What do you think should be the relationship between English studies and writing studies?**

I like the idea of literature and writing studies together. I think they are mutually enriching. We would welcome more writing classes at Holy Cross, with different genres and different perspectives, but right now I'm the only one who could teach many of them. But I do appreciate the way literature and rhetoric work together. For example, I recently taught a seminar called American Women's Writing where we looked at Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New York*, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's oratory; it's a mixed genre course that brings both literary and rhetorical tools to these texts.

I think there should be a balance of creative writing courses, literature courses, and writing studies courses. I like this broad approach. I think we are getting too compartmentalized and too specialized in the academy. I favor a post-disciplinary movement that breaks down the barriers between departments and specializations, where a sort of intellectual bricolage towards solving problems exists.

**Doug: Thinking of the expression, composition/rhetoric, I never heard the slash, but lately I have now, and maybe it is just a result of composition becoming more specialized. What are your thoughts on this?**

Both fields have burgeoned and proliferated, and they have developed different but overlapping agendas.

I'm over-generalizing here, but composition studies has become more practical-minded in teaching undergraduates how to communicate effectively. Everything from assignment design to graphic literacy, writing center work to writing program administration is how composition has become more diversified -- all moves to improve the teaching of communication.

Rhetoric feels itself to have much less of a disciplinary obligation to the classroom. Rhetorical studies are either highly theoretical or historical. When you go to the Rhetoric Society of America Conference, that is what you will find on the program.

**Rebekah: In the newest editions of *The Rhetorical Tradition*, you have worked to include the work of many female and minority rhetoricians. What further rhetorical additions would you include in a future edition of *The Rhetorical Tradition*?**

When we decided we were going to do a second edition, Bedford Books, which has always supported this project, surveyed 20 or 30 people who were using the first edition of the book and asked them what they would like. Nobody said throw anything out. Everybody had suggestions for whom to add. It's a powerful question. It is still the only book in its field, and it has a lot of influence.

We were on a Cs panel back when we were working on the first edition of the book that was actually called *Canons*, where we were debating with Cy Knoblauch and Lil Brannon who said that we shouldn't do it because it would create the canon and would reify the tradition. We have since been often critiqued for the title, *The Rhetorical Tradition*, instead of *Rhetorical Traditions*. Well, Bedford had already published a book called *The Critical Tradition*, and they wanted a companion book. People still critiqued us for not standing up to the publisher.

Admittedly, *The Rhetorical Tradition* comes out as a sort of a book report of rhetoric, but in some cases, we had to



reach pretty far afield to find scholarship to support some of what was included in the book. My personal favorite was Phoebe Palmer who nobody seems to be excited about except me.

I don't have the energy for a third edition, but if I were to choose what to include in the future, I would like to include more authors of color and more women. African American preacher testimonies might be an interesting addition. I probably wouldn't go global. We know a lot more about Asian rhetorics and Asian American rhetorics now, but I also understand that the book can't be all things to all people. It's enough to just focus it on the western rhetorical traditions.

**Doug: What's a rhetoric and what's not?**

Plato and Aristotle didn't write rhetoric treatises. Aristotle might be the closest, but Aristotle's rhetoric is a mishmash of stuff that is overlapping and contradictory. And Plato wrote closet drama. My interest was that anything that uses or discusses persuasive language should be considered rhetoric.

**Rebekah: Can you divorce pathos from rhetoric? What's pathos's place in criticism, scholarship, and research?**

Your own allegiances and values will relate to your subjects of study and scholarship. You can't avoid bringing the whole self into your scholarship. You cannot divest yourself. I don't think you can avoid letting pathos affect your scholarship. In fact, I think you are more responsible if you acknowledge your position in your research. We learn more if everybody brings everything to their scholarship.

**Doug: You don't have a compulsory composition course at Holy Cross, but you do teach an elective composition course. Could you tell us about that?**

I always have a reading, and we work on understanding the authors' arguments through that reading. We look at how the reading is enhanced by the moves or ornaments the writer is making. Students write in response to readings, both from the student's perspective or as a frame of reference about person A's argument and contrasted with person B's argument. Students can revise from parts of earlier papers they wrote when they read new works. I've been using a textbook called, *What's Language Got to Do with It?*, that offers a number of different discourses, genres, and perspectives about language use, and it has been very successful. I do teach some grammar, often through mini-lessons, but if they can't argue, it doesn't matter. We don't have a basic writing course, but those students who need extra help get herded to my section; I don't mind, and I actually enjoy working with those writers. But I don't spend a lot of time on their grammar.

**Doug: There's been a lot of discussion about academic discourse or discourses lately; what are your thoughts about this?**

When we first started talking about academic discourse communities, we thought we could do this anatomy of discourses and a set of characteristics that we could teach to people, but that didn't happen. The problem is that you cannot take it out of context. You cannot really teach academic discourse as an abstract entity detached from the actual intellectual work of a specific discipline or discourse. There are some general principles that I use in my courses -- writing in response to reading and the importance of argument and organization of that argument. What we realized about academic discourse is the dream of a one, overarching academic discourse wasn't possible. Even more importantly, students are bringing their own discourses with them, and they have the possibility of enriching the academy, but I have not seen a pedagogy that would enable the students to really explore and consider these individual discourses and their varieties. Some disciplines have changed, and some disciplines are using first person more, or there is some diversification and reflection.

**Assignment #2**  
**Qualitative Research Report (QRR)**  
**WRIT 1133**  
**Richard Colby**

**Introduction**

Qualitative research methods look to describe and analyze some element of culture, history, or other human phenomena through fieldwork so as to better understand that which was observed. The foundation of qualitative research is that the data the researcher collects is not “fit” into a pre-determined interpretation. Instead, the findings of qualitative research are supported by extensive description of a phenomenon that lead to patterns that can be examined within this data. There are a lot of variations of qualitative research that we will discuss in class, but this assignment will ask you to pick one predominately to look at some phenomenon. However, the most important part of any research endeavor is triangulation. Triangulation is looking at a phenomenon from different perspectives (e.g. yours, another’s) to get a better view of it. Thus, even though you will be picking one method predominately, you will need to triangulate this data with other approaches.

**Rationale**

Originating in the social sciences and anthropology, qualitative research methods are utilized by other disciplines and majors more often. The process of observation and thick description will help you not only in your major, but also in understanding different cultures and experiences than your own.

**The Question(s) (pick one):**

1. Ethnography – Using primarily inconspicuous observation, you will take field-notes and/or write up “cooked notes” after extended observation of a culture, environment or phenomenon that you have only limited experience with. After doing such an observation, you will code your notes so as to be able to look for patterns. You will then describe in detail what you observed and what meaning it may have. Besin’s “Exploitation or Fun?” or Ziffer’s “Customer Service” are a good model for this approach.
2. Participant Observer – Much like an ethnography, participant observer research relies on making close observations and recording these observations with notes that you will later analyze. The difference with participant observer research is that you are a participant in the activity. A key caveat is that you are a willing participant in the activity for the primary purpose of doing research—in other words, you cannot observe a fraternity to which you belong or a sports team you are on because your investment in the activity is greater than your investment in the research, and thus, your findings will not be significant to your audience. Ehrenreich’s “Serving in Florida” excerpt from *Nickel and Dimed* and Tibbel’s “Doing Gender as Resistance” are two models of participant observer research.
3. Autoethnography – this type of ethnography is the most difficult to research and write, and it is the most contested as a research method. However, it can be an enriching type

of qualitative research if given time and attention enough. In an autoethnography, you will “observe” one element of a personal activity, culture, or history. You will take careful notes of the activity as well as collect supporting qualitative research. For example, you might want to do an autoethnography of your writing process throughout the term. You would log how much, when, and how you write while working on another writing project. You might collect some old writing you did or maybe observe another student writing as a comparison to your writing process.

### **Assignment**

1. Pick a topic that interests you. Don’t worry about the different types of questions I just posed yet—begin by selecting a topic that you want to find more about. You might consider the cultures or “humans” you come into contact with everyday, either on campus, at the coffee shop or Jamba Juice, or at a workplace.
2. Determine if you have a hunch about this particular topic culture or phenomenon. Qualitative research does NOT have hypotheses. The whole point of qualitative research is to collect data that will be later analyzed. If you have a hypothesis, then you will be tempted to ONLY look at that which you think you are going to find. In qualitative research, you might have a hunch based on repeated observation of a phenomenon or based on background research. This hunch you will begin to think about on paper as what will later become part of your introduction. But it should never limit what you are observing.
3. Research your hunch using the library or any other text-based sources. For example, if researching coffee shop culture, you might read more closely Besen’s article. If doing an autoethnography on your writing process, you might look for some writing that you did when you were much younger. You might research writing process research in the library. You will take this interpretive data and determine further what your hunch will be about the topic you will be researching.
4. Determine your research methods. You will then need to create a research plan and turn it in on **April 15**.
5. You will draft a 1-2 page introduction to your study. This introduction will integrate whatever interpretive research and your hunches about the phenomenon you will be observing. You will end the introduction with a description in 1-2 paragraphs about how you will conduct your research. You will turn a draft in **April 27**.
6. Conduct your observations. You will need to conduct 5 to 10 hours of observation of your topic. You can do this observation over as many days as you would like, and it will depend on exactly what you are researching. If you are able, you will take fieldnotes (description of what you are seeing while observing in as much detail as possible—do not interpret. These are just notes of what occurred in raw form). If the situation makes it impossible to take good fieldnotes, then immediately after you observe the activity, you will need to write “cooked notes” (notes listing as much as you can remember during the activity that might also have your evaluation or interpretation of the descriptions). Depending on your research, you may find different note taking strategies useful. You might draw pictures of where certain things are in a room, or keep logs of how long something takes or when something regularly occurs.

7. Analyze your observations. After conducting your observations, you will need to read over your notes looking for patterns. Sometimes coding, or applying a designation to an activity, might make finding something easier later on. If you find patterns, you need to write up succinctly using 50% of the description and 50% of your interpretation of the description in a paragraph or two. If you find multiple patterns of multiple instances of the same pattern, follow with summarizing/detailing what you saw (50%) and analyzing the pattern (50%).
8. Triangulate your findings. Now that you have discovered this hitherto unknown phenomenon, you will need to further support your observations with one or two additional sources. One way is another trip to the library for more text-based research. Or, you might consider observing another similar location and doing another observation to see if similar patterns occur. You could also decide to interview a participant in the activity trying to get further information about the phenomenon. The results here are the same—50/50 description/analysis of what occurred.
9. Write a separate document that does two things. First, it gives your reader a thesis (yes, in qualitative research, you are coming to the thesis at the end, after the observation of the activity). In other words, you are going to tell the reader the major thing you found after doing this research. The second part of this conclusion will describe the limitations of your study and what further research might be necessary of this topic based on your findings.
10. The most difficult step is to put this all together. Thus, the Introduction, Study, and Conclusion need to be assembled into one, coherent document. You will turn this final document in with your fieldnotes/cooked notes (they don't have to be typed), and a References page (APA). **May 18** is the deadline for the final project.

**Requirements** (these apply to ALL approaches. Thus, even if you do autoethnography, you will need to meet these requirements)

- You need to use at least one journal article from a peer reviewed source.
- You need at least 5 hours of observation and corresponding notes.
- You will need at least one interview or an additional 5 hours of observation and corresponding notes.
- This paper is to be 8 pages of text. The required References page does not count towards that page requirement.
- It should be in APA format. Remember that APA style has a different expectation as to use of sources, relying on paraphrases and command of the subject matter more than quotations. Refer to *QA Compact* ch.34.
- It should be organized into three sections: Introduction, Study and Conclusion

#### **Timeline/Due dates**

- April 15 Research Plan Due via Dropbox
- April 27 Introduction Due via Dropbox
- May 18 Final Draft w/fieldnotes via Dropbox

A Study of Busker Culture in the City of Denver

Sabine A. Fernandes

Writing and Research 1133

Professor Richard Colby

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009



## Introduction

Street entertainers, better known as “buskers” are important components of the landscapes of many of the world’s cities. Their trade, busking, is an age-old tradition, which has its roots in medieval Europe, during which small, local merchants would bid artists to perform at their store fronts, plazas and market squares to attract customers and boost sales. In the United States, busking grew out of the many travelling circuses, which made their way across towns and cities, entertaining audiences with sword swallows, acrobats, jugglers and musicians. These performers eventually established a degree of individual autonomy, creating a street culture of art and entertainment that has become an integral and enlivening part of today’s cities, generating a number of benefits. Many famous musicians started out as buskers. Musician Rod Stewart, who has recently been urging artists to go out into the streets and participate in “Busking for Cancer”, acknowledged that, “Busking is how I started, in the early 60s, on the streets of Paris. It is what music is all about – just getting out there and singing or playing for the sheer joy of it” (The Financial Times Limited, 2009, p.1).

Busking is an important and beneficial aspect of city life. Street performers draw the attentions of pedestrians, encouraging them to drift through cities and explore them, being entertained all the while. They do as such, often constitute economic advantages to stores and restaurants, as they attract crowds to these establishments if located nearby, when they draw public interest to themselves through their performances. Pedestrians and tourists on the other hand, are granted the experience of unique performances to color their visits to different cities. Finally, it is needless to say that busking benefits the performer himself because it is a means to an income.

The right to perform on the street is a constitutional law in the United States according to the First Amendment, as was famously determined in the *Goldstein v. Town of Nantucket*, 477 F. Supp., 606, (1979) case. It is a regulated activity however and the laws controlling street entertaining differ from city to city. At the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall in Downtown Denver, Colorado, where the famous Downtown Denver International Buskerfest takes place for instance, street entertainers are required to apply for permits to perform on the street. Among the many rules that they are expected to abide by, they are particularly required not to interfere “with special events taking place on private plazas nor the flow of pedestrian traffic. A minimum of ten (10) feet clear must be maintained at all times to allow for pedestrian traffic.” (DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERING SERVICES OF PUBLIC WORKS RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR Rules & Regulations: For Vending on the 16th Street Pedestrian and Transit Mall)

I, thus, decided to do a study on the busking community at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall in Downtown Denver, to establish how and why street curbs and pavements were their choice of stage and obtain an insight into the lives of buskers. I sought to determine if the often harried and sometimes listless pedestrians were the only audiences they ever desired to entertain, as well as if the profession was a profitable one alone or if it only supplemented another. I attempted to discover why busking so often entails negative associations and is even sometimes deemed pan handling by society. Finally, I wanted to present an overview of the community in the city that society might better understand and appreciate its existence as an important part of the city’s many attractions.

Studying this community is undoubtedly important because of the significant role street performers play in the identity of a city and the attractions inherent in their entertainment. Understanding their culture and motivations may lead the public and government to better

address their need, to ensure the best interests of not only the performers, but also the commercial establishments, and the public at large.

### Methods

In order to adequately address these questions and establish a fairly accurate evaluation of street performers at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall, I undertook about 8 hours of non participant observation, over a period of two weeks, of street entertainers at the mall, and supported these observations by conducting interviews with many of the performers who consented to share their experiences and views with me. My observations helped me form a reasonably informative picture of performer-audience relationships as well as grant me adequate insight into the ways in which buskers in the city operate. The interviews provided me with more detailed and personalized information on the lifestyles of the buskers I interacted with and provided me with an overarching image that represented the lifestyles of the community as a whole. I conducted my research on weekdays and weekends to comprehend as extensively as possible most aspects of the profession.

### Study

Denver has been home to buskers for many years now, especially since the Denver Downtown International Buskerfest was initiated in 1993, which has with time generated increasing popularity. Street performers are found in plenty, ranging from musicians, magicians and puppeteers to the “Robot Man”. Through my research I learnt a great deal about this community.

### The Stage: Location and Territory

My observations revealed that the street performers maintained careful distances from each other in order to ensure each entertainer earned as much as he or she possibly could without diminishing the earning opportunities of a fellow busker. Thus, they were always either located at extreme ends on the same side of a given street, or on opposite sides of the street. It is also important to note that they always placed themselves at prominent establishments, where they might confront crowds. The Robot Man for instance usually frequented the United Artists movie theatre, which the magician I interviewed also liked to perform in front of. "Children and younger people are always around the place," the magician informed me, in reference to his choosing to perform by the stairs that lead up to the theatre, "it's easy to get them interested in what I have to show them," he continued, grinning. Other establishments the performers liked to entertain by, included café's like Starbucks and the Paramount Café, stores like Sunglass City, restaurants like Maggiano's Little Italy, and the light rail station.

"Territory" was usually sought on a first-come, first serve basis, although sometimes superiority due to having been a performer at the mall for a longer period of time guaranteed right of way. None of the performers stuck to a fixed location, however, as they felt it limited their opportunities to interact with different audiences. The "Guitar Guy" who also sold the *Denver Voice*, spoke for most of his peers when he said with a shrug "I go where the wind blows". The performers claimed that they tried to avoid altercations to as great an extent as possible, and most of them were explicitly weary of getting into fights over where to perform. I observed a quarrel between a violinist and a drummer over territory, by the light rail station, following which the drummer walked away in a huff. "Dreadlock Dave" who has earned himself a degree of fame among regular pedestrians at the mall because of his Bob Marley covers, told me that many performers were prone to being terribly aggressive about territory. He also told me

that while playing in front of a store that will remain unnamed, he was told to relocate by the store manager or have his guitar broken. He responded by telling the manager he would break his neck. Thus, it is evident that while the performers are reluctant to get into fights over territory, the unspoken code of “first-come, first served” is not always easily put into practice and they do additionally, experience difficulties with commercial establishments over where they play. They also experience problems due to “spare changers”, which include individuals who simply beg for money. Some street performers highly dislike “spare changers” because buskers are often negatively associated with them, while others remain indifferent towards them for the greater part. It is when spare changers locate themselves by buskers, however, that serious trouble and arguments ensue. The “Guitar Guy” for instance, informed me that he would definitely send a “spare changer” on his way because he was not willing to compromise on any of his earnings.

While street entertainers battle their ways through the street for the right to a spot, they have different reasons for the street as a choice of stage. Some do it because they have nowhere else to go while others do it because it is where they feel they essentially belong. David, a young musician on the harp, told me very frankly that he had no other avenue to earn money through his music. Dreadlock Dave seemed to agree when he explained that he would play at gigs and clubs but that he couldn't sustain himself on what he earned at those venues, because in his opinion, “there is unfortunately no recognition for talent!” Rather vehement, he declared, “All people really want these days, is a D.J. belting out unoriginal tunes. They have no appreciation for good music!” So he played on the street because he felt he had access to a larger audience and a potentially more appreciative one that wasn't bound by the expensive constraints of commercial establishments that dictated what music people got to listen to. Scarlett, a young African American musician, who plays guitar and primarily entertains with rhythm and blues



told me that she plays on the street because she can personally interact with a far wider range of people than she would otherwise have access to. For her, the individual and personalized connections she establishes with members in her audience are the main reasons she is a busker and she is completely disinterested in perusing musical performance at any other venues. Thus, street performers at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall were primarily motivated by economic need, lack of better options, or passion, to play on the street. They all did however, seem to agree with Scarlette, that they enjoyed the unique interaction with their audiences that performing on the street granted them. Summed up in the words of a violin major at the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver, who occasionally performs at the mall, “Sure I do it because I can use the money, but there is something so cool about playing on the street and interacting with the random people who pass you by or stop to listen to what you are offering them. It’s really cool and very different from recitals or playing in the orchestra. It’s like you’re playing to a world that is constantly in motion...”

#### The Audience: Pedestrians and Passersby

The performers are not very appreciative of their pedestrian audience. While they did acknowledge that they enjoyed the audience interaction that street performing enabled them to experience, they opined that most of their audience members do not adequately recognize their talent, or appreciate the value of their performances. The research revealed that the musicians were more prone to entertaining this point of view than the other performers, like the jugglers, magician, puppeteer and “Robot Man”, interviewed. The puppeteer and ventriloquist I spoke to, told me, “It’s all good. I perform, the kids laugh, sometimes they don’t. I make money, sometimes I don’t make money.” Musicians, however, were more concerned about people not understanding the importance of their music or the messages inherent in them. “It sucks, they

don't really get what I'm about," said Jake, another guitarist and songwriter, who writes music inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's poetry; "They don't get what I'm about." Dreadlock Dave told me he didn't take it personally. Like he mentioned before, it was all accounted for by the fact that no one in the United States could discern good music from rubbish anymore. All these performers did however persist with busking for the afore mentioned reasons, implying that even if pedestrians weren't their ideal audience, they were by far the best available or most viable one, in the eyes of the busking community in the city of Denver.

During my observations, I also focused on the audience and how its members responded to the performers. Most people hurried by pausing occasionally to drop a quarter or a dime into the boxes left in front of performers. Others paused and listened for 1-2 minutes at the maximum, before dropping anything from a quarter to a dollar in the box, and continuing on their way. Only "special requesters" actually stopped to attend an entire performance and contributed 1 – 5 dollars in appreciation. I noticed that some pedestrians had built up relationships with performers and paid them in "smokes", cigarettes, which smokers like Dreadlock Dave and Guitar Guy are only occasionally appreciative of. I also observed that a lot of homeless people and passersby, begged "smokes" of the buskers.

#### Ticket Prices: Money and Earnings

Street performers, passion and idealism aside, essentially perform on the street as a means to a livelihood. Much to my surprise, all the buskers interviewed, except for the Lamont School musician and Jake who works for the Greenpeace, busk as their sole occupation. When asked about the money they made, most declined to offer a definite answer but provided ranges that included one to three hundred dollars a day. Jentry D. McCombs, a flute player, who spent the greater part of his busking career in Washington D.C., was the only performer who offered a

consistent rate, when he claimed “I make thirty dollars an hour kid, but I made way more in D.C.” He admitted that it was subject to variation however and there were days when the pay wasn’t as good. It was evident that none of the performers felt that they made enough money to sustain themselves with, but were reluctant to share how they managed to make a living alternatively. Busking seems to be monetarily unproductive in general, however. For instance, the famous musician Joshua Bell “performed for 45 minutes during the morning rush hour at the L’Enfant Plaza station in Washington. The US violinist made just \$32 (£16) while 1,097 people passed him by. Only seven people stopped to listen to him and 27 gave him money” (The Strad, 2007, p.13) While speaking to David, who plays the harp, I noticed his box had only a handful of pennies, nickels, dimes and two dollars. It was doubtful if he could actually buy himself a meal with the money he had collected and it was already three thirty in the afternoon.

I also noted that the time of the day and the day in the week made significant differences in the amounts performers earned. On weekdays more people were in a hurry and less likely to stop by and be entertained. On weekends, large throngs of families and groups paused and appeared to be able to afford themselves the leisure of a song or a magic trick. “Sure they pay more on weekends”, the puppeteer and ventriloquist told me, “More people around too.” Dreadlock Dave also informed me of the fact that people were more likely to pause and listen during the afternoons, when they were probably on break and in the evenings. “Heck yea! Couples in the evenings are always up for a serenade,” giggled Scarlett. While there might have been truth in her claim, few others seemed to share her point of view. On the whole, it could safely be stated that buskers’ incomes were highly inconsistent and unpredictable, at the mercy of far too many variables, presented by the weather, broken strings, bad timing and the like.

Denver as a city for busking

When questioned on the Denver's social climate and if it was particularly conducive to street performing, viewpoints seemed to be very different. Several, like David and Scarlette who have played in cities like New York and Santa Cruz respectively, felt that the people in Denver were far more receptive to their music than in the bigger cities they had played in before. David was particularly disillusioned by New York, where people just walked by him, barely acknowledging his music. Others like Jetry D. McCombs and a mandolin player I spoke to by Starbucks on a rainy Monday morning, told me that they had much better experiences in other cities, Washington D.C. and New Orleans respectively. The audiences there were larger, more enthusiastic and paid far better too. Finally, there were those like Dreadlock Dave, who felt that the busker scene was the same all over, dismal and increasingly unproductive.

### Conclusion

“Project Save the Buskers?”

The research I did helped me draw several conclusions about the busking community at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall in Denver, Colorado. From a wide range of interviews of veteran street performers like Dreadlock Dave and Jetry D. McCombs who have been in the business for 25 and 33 years respectively, to newcomers like David and Scarlette who only have a couple of years of experience, as well as my hours of observation, I was able to infer a number of important patterns. Firstly, the busker community was not really a well knit, interconnected community that functioned as a whole, but a loosely connected one that comprised of individuals with related interests. These interests, making money through performances, actually separated them, while maintaining a reasonable status quo so as not to lead to a disruptive chaos, because they primarily looked out for themselves alone, as was evident in the disputes over territory.

Additionally they were critical of each other's performances and quite competitive, with most performers attempting to assert their own superiorities as entertainers and "crowd pullers".

Having said that, it was also significant, that while for most of the buskers interviewed their street performances constituted their sole avenues to money, they barely earned enough to sustain themselves and were reluctant to find alternative sources of employment. They viewed themselves as artists and did not think it fit to employ themselves in any other capacity. Money, therefore, while an important factor, did not seem a significant enough motivator for them to continue in the business. The lack of motivating factors was additionally highlighted in their evident disenchantment with their audiences and the city of Denver itself, as possible but failed incentives to remain buskers.

Thus, I have come to the conclusion that for the greater part, for most of Denver's buskers, street performance was an end in itself and not a means to an end. They enjoyed the freedom through art that they were able to embrace in busking. This is supported by the fact that almost all the musicians interviewed, did not want to get signed by a record label for fear of losing the creative independence they enjoyed on the street, if the opportunity arose, and many were generally contemptuous of contemporary, mainstream musicians. None of the other performers wanted to be on T.V. shows for the same reason. Several were interested in getting their music on the internet however, in order to reach wider audiences.

These conclusions reveal that the busking community merits further research into their societies, especially in cities like Denver, because, as already established, they are significant constituents of city life, and are struggling to survive. During my research to inform myself better on street performers I came across several studies on Buskers but none that gathered the opinions of street entertainers and evaluated their culture from their perspectives, as a whole.



Quite a few studies spoke of individual performers, particularly celebrities, but none captured the experiences of a significant section of the culture. This is precisely what my research project sought to do, because understanding their professions from their point of view, i.e. gaining an internal perspective, would enable society to better respect them and address their needs.

While the study proved very informative, granting me a great deal of insight into the way buskers in Denver operate, and felt about their “jobs”, it suffers the probability of a host of inaccuracies because of the short time over which it was conducted. 8 hours, over a period of two weeks, is not sufficient to learn about a community and account for all possible variables associated with it. Additionally, only thirteen buskers were interviewed, and while they were reasonably representative of their community, they were not satisfactorily so. Public opinion, admits to at least fifty odd buskers at the Sixteenth Street Mall, and while this figure may be inaccurate, it is true that there are a lot more than thirteen street entertainers at the Mall, who are either regulars or drift by occasionally to perform. Thus, in order for this study to be more effective and accurate it will require at the minimum, a year of research and many more interviewees to adequately represent the population and its interests. It would also be a more successful study if public opinion on the importance of the roles of street entertainers at cities could be secured, so as determine if the community is as purported, truly an integral part of city life.



**THE POINT**

*Summer 2009*

**Literacy Narrative Qualitative Analysis**  
*Kamila Kinyon*

- I. Formulate one or more research questions about literacy narratives.
- II. Conduct interviews to collect 3 or more literacy narratives outside of class. Each narrative should be 3-5 minutes long. Preferably, you should tape and post the interviews. (You may use either audio or video, and may borrow an audio recorder from the Writing Program office.) Alternately, you may ask your interviewees to write a brief literacy narrative, and then follow this up with a 3-5 minute interview. If you choose this option, you should take careful notes, later editing and posting this along with the written narrative provided by the interviewee. Whichever technique you use to collect literacy narratives, you will need to have each interviewee fill out consent and data transmission forms, as explained on page 3. These forms are posted on Blackboard under "course documents" and may be filled out and posted electronically.
- III. Post your audios, videos, or written narratives with edited interview notes on Portfolio, so other 1133 students can have access to them. (We will discuss in class how to post and share the audios or videos through Portfolio. I will create a larger archive, so you can have access to the audios, videos, or written narratives with interview notes from members of my two other sections of 1133.)
- III. Look for connections between the narratives you and other 1133 students collected and the narratives on the DALN (Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives) website.
- IV. Do a qualitative analysis. You may draw on selections from (1) the literacy narratives you and other 1133 students collected and (2) the narratives on the DALN website.
- V. In writing your paper, be sure to describe your research questions. Document what you have found using direct quotes from at least some of the literacy narratives you are analyzing. Qualitative research is quite flexible in the accepted formats for presentation, more so than the quantitative research format we studied earlier. For an example of how qualitative research can be presented, see Sunstein's "Getting the Words Secondhand" (pp. 449-454 Fieldworking) and Hawisher and Selfe's "Globalization and Agency: Designing and Redesigning the Literacies of Cyberspace" (available on Blackboard under Course Documents).
- VI. Extra Credit: Post an audio or video literacy narrative to the DALN archive. This may either be an interview or a literacy narrative of your own. Send an additional attachment to me, since it takes a while for the narrative to be processed and to appear on the DALN site. The extra credit will count towards the class participation and informal writing part of your grade.



Mansoor Almurar

Assignment 3

05/12/2009

### **Digital Tools: More Than Just Entertainment**

Growing up in a very conservative family, where I had to secretly download Hollywood movies and watch them with extreme care in order not to be punished, shaped the way I look at the West. The more they placed restrictions on what I could watch or do, the more I wanted to discover the secrets behind such limitations. As I grew older, the limitations diminished little by little until finally I had a chance to make my own decisions and come to the U.S. to discover the hidden secrets behind the culture I used to watch through my old Dell desktop screen.

On September 1, 2005, my KLM flight landed in Minneapolis. As I walked through the terminals trying to figure out my connecting flight gate, I was astonished by the number of plasma screens hanging at the walls of the airport. Finally after an extreme search, I found my connecting flight gate. I threw myself onto the black leather chair and stared at the hanging plasma T.V screen. It was during the Hurricane Katrina event and the news was covering the event very well. I was struck by the pictures of the devastating hurricane; however, what struck me more was something else. It was the subtitles that were appearing at the bottom of the screen reading what the commentator said. I kept reading the subtitles until I was startled by a word. It was "hurricane". I pulled out my newly bought electronic dictionary and looked up the definition of this word.

As an international student from Dubai, with limited academic background in English, I gained the most proficiency from watching Hollywood movies that I downloaded and watched

secretly, playing video games and reading English words over the Internet. Although we were taught English at school starting at middle school, it was digital tools that made the big difference. I was crazy about video games and would spend most of the time behind the screen playing Super Mario or King Kong. I loved the stories in them and would read the scripts word by word. I remember my brother would always whine at me telling me to pass the scripts. The computer has assisted me in learning English as well because I used to read English articles about the latest video games. Although I remember that I struggled in understanding the entire article, I would still get the basic message from it.

Today almost four years have passed since my arrival in the U.S. and I still wonder how vital a role digital tools played in my English learning process. In an attempt to seek an answer for such question, and to determine if my situation is unique, I have interviewed three international students and asked them how digital technology such as radio and computers etc. played a key role in facilitating their English language proficiency.

The three international students I interviewed were from China, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and all had varying levels of English expertise. Jackson from China is a freshman majoring in accounting. He was born and raised in China and had very little background in English before coming to the U.S. Sultan, a young guy from Saudi Arabia who just finished his sophomore year, was raised in a conservative family. Before coming to the U.S., he had a moderate English proficiency, mostly gained through watching TV series and surfing the net. My third interviewee was Abdulaziz from Qatar, a relatively small country with the shape of a peninsula situated at the Persian Gulf. He had a decent level of English proficiency and claims that he learned English prior to coming to the U.S. through extensive traveling, using the internet and listening to western music.

The extreme advances in technology over the past few decades have changed the way people read and write. Both computers and globalization have created a global culture where anyone can interact with, and be exposed to, different cultures. Since the English language is becoming more global, there is an urgent feeling by people to learn English in order to be successful in their lives. Schools around the world are trying to implement the English language at an early age to secure that future generations possess a strong English proficiency. However, the language is usually implemented and taught not very effectively where most people learn the language from outside sources. Jackson from China explains,

I grew up in a generation where English was a big deal. The Chinese government just had started to focus on teaching Chinese kids English in schools at an early age. I remember my parents would always push me to do my English homework. It was boring because we just learned how to memorize letters rather than fully digest the language. The humble background I had in English prior to coming to the States came from my curiosity to learn this global language. When I was a kid, I would always watch Chinese movies with English subtitles. In addition, I always listened to western hip hop & R&B music. Although it was not much, it gave me some foundations of the English language.

Sultan from Saudi Arabia had a unique situation. Although he was raised in a conservative family, he had some freedom to watch most stuff that interested him. Sultan had a moderate level of English proficiency gained through a combination of school and external digital technologies. He maintains,

I don't deny the role of school of giving me the basics of the English language. At school I was taught the basics of the language such as the alphabet and basic common English words but at home I enhanced my language through various sources. For example, I watched the *Friends* series. In addition, I used to watch the Oprah show every Friday. When I was a kid, my role models were Mel Gibson and Steven Seagal. I would always watch their movies over and over without being bored. So I would say that T.V. was a very crucial tool for my English learning process.

When I first met Abdulaziz back in 2005, I was shocked by his high level of English proficiency. Abdulaziz grew up in a bilingual family where his parents talked English pretty

**Comment [U1]:** Rebekah: I think a new paragraph should start here, but I couldn't seem to insert a paragraph indent without causing the whole document to shift.

well. He was educated in a private school with a huge emphasis on English language. I told him that he was lucky to have such access to the English language at an early age. He laughed and said,

Yes, I know that my early education was extremely important in my English learning process. However, I did not make the most of it because I hated school and I did not like academic language. I have improved my English through traveling around. I love computers and would spend most of my time in front of the screen reading articles, listening to music and even chatting with people from all over the world. Therefore, the Internet has boosted my English proficiency because it allowed me to enhance my English language without being bored with rigid academic language as I used to feel at school.

The United States is one of the leading countries in technology and media. After being here for four years, I realize how this has been important to me as an international student to be surrounded by numerous digital technologies. However, I wanted to see how this played a role in my interviewees' cases. Jackson did not have access to computers back in China due to lack of resources. Once he came to the U.S., he had more access to computers because he was able to use the university computer lab for free. He claims that the introduction of computers in his life has contributed vastly to the way he reads and writes in English. He explains,

The computer offered me a lot more opportunities to access various English sources online. For example, I can read articles and news online without having to buy books. This saved me a lot of time and money. The best part about computers is that they offered me quick translations from English to Chinese. In this way, I can learn English much faster and easier. In the writing part, software such as Microsoft Word helped me improve my grammar and spelling because it corrects my spelling mistakes and gives me hints to grammar structure issues.

Sultan claimed that his major problem with English was the lack of vocabulary he had. He said that once he started learning English at the ELC (English Language Center), he struggled with his reading assignments because he was not able to fully understand the texts. He stated that he enhanced his vocabulary through various English learning websites. In addition, he said that here in the U.S. he had more access to watch movies either at home or in the movie theater.

Moreover, he likes to listen to BBC radio where he can stay updated with current world events.

When I asked him how this has helped him improve his vocabulary, he proclaimed,

I usually spend most of my free time watching movies at home or listening to the radio station while working on my school assignment. I would always encounter new words that were not familiar to me. I would search for the word over the Internet and look up its definition. Being in the U.S. where I am continuously exposed to the English language through digital technology has significantly assisted me in evolving my English language deficiencies.

In order to conduct the interview with Abdulaziz, I went over to his place in the Cherry Creek area. As I entered his apartment, the number of digital tools playing all at once amazed me. There was an I-pod with western music playing at the corner, a Samsung plasma screen playing *Rush Hour* movie, and Abdulaziz was sitting on the couch with his laptop. I sat by him and took a peek at the laptop screen. He was reading an article about the latest Detroit car show because Abdulaziz is a big fan of cars. He spends most of his free time either reading news or watching the latest car shows on T.V. I wanted to know if he had better access to car information by being here in the U.S. and he replied,

Back home my main source for car information was the Internet. In my country, we don't have many T.V. channels that cover the latest reports on cars and that's why I do not watch T.V. frequently. While here in the U.S. I have many channels such as the Motor Sports channel. Therefore, I always watch T.V. here in the U.S.

When I asked him about whether this has helped him improve his English, he answered, "Of course! I am always watching this channel and I have improved my listening skills, in addition to the numerous vocabularies I have gained through their daily programs."

After researching and interviewing international students with varying levels of English expertise, I have reached an answer to my question. Digital technologies are not just entertainment tools; instead, they play a crucial role in assisting international students in learning English. What makes digital technologies very useful is the variety of topics they offer their

users. Although my upbringing was unique due to my family's beliefs, I see that there is a very close connection between my experience with digital tools and my interviewees' experience. Thus, based on my interviews with the above mentioned individuals, I find that digital technology does indeed aid international students in learning English.

Since the world is becoming increasingly globalized and English has become the global language for both business and politics, every tool to facilitate the learning of English is important. This holds especially true for older adults who often find learning a new language difficult. Since this study shows a close correlation between gaining English fluency and digital technology, I wonder if further study with a larger demographic might also reveal the same results.



Adrian Greenholz

Dr. Samson

WRIT 1133

April 29, 2009

### Project Homeless Connect

Project Homeless Connect is supposed to be a life changing day for not only the people it is intending to help, but also the volunteers. It is supposed to be an exchange of knowledge, an exchange of experience, and most importantly an exchange of goods and services for the homeless people who attend. Personally, I thought and hoped that I would walk from the experience feeling like I had helped someone and maybe, not necessarily connected with another person on a deeper level because that is something that is hard to do in one day, but maybe learn something about being homeless and that person's life.

The day did not begin like any other. I woke up an hour or so before my alarm was supposed to go off. This does not sound like much, but I am a very heavy sleeper. I never wake up until my alarm rings, and sometimes not even then. I am sure it had to do with the anticipation of the day. My nervousness forced me to wake up and to get out of bed finally when my alarm went off at the ungodly hour of 6:15. My routine was the same as it always was. I brushed my teeth, ate a little breakfast, got dressed, nothing unusual. I was a little tired from not sleeping as well as I normally do, so as a result I focused my energy on finding coffee to distract myself from how nervous and tired I actually was. Thinking about the day and the task I had ahead of me was just too much for my brain to handle at 6:15 in the morning. Subsequently, I proceeded to walk towards the Ritchie Center, following the swarm of yellow with my roommate on the right and a friend on the left. They were chatting about what they were nervous and excited about

and what they wanted to accomplish. I kept a smile on my face and tuned in every once in a while, but mostly all I could think was coffee. I wanted coffee so I could be awake and alert for my client.

After the walk to the Ritchie Center, we arrived to a sea of yellow. Checking in was not nearly as disorienting or troubling as I thought it would be. All I had to do was follow the line of yellow people to the appropriate stations. It really was simple, but still I had not gotten my coffee. Now I was a little disgruntled. I knew it was there somewhere. I had heard about it in the training session, and I saw people walking around with it. I had to have it, especially now that I was settled, physically speaking, and was finished with all the check-in points. Whether or not it would actually settle my mind and stomach, I was convinced it would. Finally, I decided to walk up the front steps of the Ritchie Center and found euphoria, coffee. It was delicious and it also did wake my brain cells a notch, but it did not untie the knot that was beginning to settle hard in my stomach. The knot just got tighter and tighter and tighter as the time started to approach eight, the time the buses were supposed to arrive with people, homeless people. Homeless people who had been living on the streets, who could have been there without showers, who could have been sick, who could have been mentally ill, who could have...I don't know. There were just so many random, stereotypical thoughts that were running through my head as I was zigzagging through the line, up and down the stairs. Unfortunately, coffee did not help to slow my thoughts down in the least bit.

As I approached the top of the stairs, that knot in my stomach was officially tight. It was so tight I bet a Boy Scout would not have been able to untie it. Then the moment came, the moment where I was going to be introduced and paired with a client. Strangely, that moment took all of two seconds. The person who was running it just directed a person towards me

without getting to know either one of us. I guess, how else would it be done with the amount of time given? I had a right to feel uneasy about the casualness of the pairing because the client I was paired with was not the least bit interested in me. I will admit she was polite at first. She introduced herself and said her day was “fine” when I asked and politely declined the offer for breakfast and a beverage. I thought that was fine. Not everyone would walk in hungry.

As soon as we walked past the breakfast area, her attitude changed immediately. She turned a complete 180 degrees and had a coarse tone in her voice. She wanted nothing to do with me. I know this because she said this to me. She refused to take the survey that I was supposed to do with her. She was an independent, older black woman who seemed like she had been living alone and taking care of herself for quite a while, and there was nothing a young, white girl could do to help her. That is exactly what she told me -- she wanted to explore for herself the place. She wanted to be independent and find a job at the job fair on her own. The only problem with that was that she could not get into the job fair without me being there. It was one of the rules that Project Homeless Connect had established.

I guess you could say I led her to the area where all the services were. I would, however, define it as “I followed while she tried to shoo me away.” There was one point where she was successful at leaving me; subsequently I found a staff member and asked her what I should do because I was feeling confused, hurt, and slightly angry -- angry at myself because I felt like I was not helping her and angry at her because I felt slightly mistreated. But I had to tell myself it was part of the disease of being homeless, and it is quite possible why she was out on the streets in the first place. As a result, I bucked up and found a staff member who told me to follow her and to see where she goes and to know that if she needs my help then I will be there and if she does not, then no harm done. No harm done, except to my fragile ego.

Then I followed her. I followed her around the service area for a while. She stopped at a couple stations like getting a new birth certificate, where actually my presence was needed. I did feel good that my presence there actually was a benefit to her, even if she explicitly did not want me hanging around her. Honestly, I did not know what else to do. I felt like I was aimlessly wandering around as she scoped out the area for herself. There was nothing else to do but follow, and follow I did. After my client was done with the services that she needed or at least could find by herself, she wandered some more through the Ritchie Center and then took off. She left without saying anything to me. I stood at the front steps, watching her walk away in kind of a blur. I did not know what to do with myself. My client had just left. She had only said a few things to me, a few very crude things and I had only said a few things to her. Was that it? Was there more? I felt put off by the experience and by my client. I was left feeling confused and angry, not content and satisfied. I wanted desperately to get back into line to change my feelings. I wanted to leave feeling better about the day and myself. Time was not on my side. It did not allow me to do so because at that point I had very little time to get to class. As a paying student, that was an important priority for me.

As a result, I went to class feeling disgruntled. I wish I did not feel that way about the day and the experience. I wish I had a client who would have at least spoken to me kindly, even if my help was not really necessary. I mostly wish the experience could have turned out more positive. Maybe my expectations were too high because people had told me what a great day it was and also what a life-changing experience it was. Next year I hope to volunteer again, maybe not necessarily with the client support because my experience made me apprehensive about that, but I still do want to help. I want to experience something positive and associate that with the program and with helping charity in general.

Ultimately, I do forgive my client. Even though I have never experienced the hardships of being homeless nor do I ever want to, I can understand how that kind of experience can skew her perception on life and people. I want to end with saying that I do hope that I helped her and I do hope that she was able to accomplish something beneficial that day.

Weston Meredith

4/28/09

Writ 1133: PHC Response

### Chasing Solitude

For the entirety of my young life, I have been accustomed to an abundant amount of space. I've always had as much personal space as any non-reclusive person could want. The most amount of time I've ever had to share a room with someone was a total of six months; and growing up in the mountains of Colorado, my finding new and seemingly undiscovered escapes from the constant demand of social interaction was never a challenge. This world of luxury is undoubtedly appreciated; but up until this past weekend, I am ashamed to say it may have been taken for granted to some degree. Every year the population of our world grows; and with it, so does the number of people in homeless shelters, prisons, and orphanages. Not every human being is fortunate enough to have the ability to roam free. Camping outside under the stars was one thing, but camping outside on the sidewalk would have thrown this lucky teenager head first into a world he had never truly understood. Living may be an obvious human right, but living a life unbridled is an extremely rare privilege that must be worked for every second of every day.

Volunteering at this year's Project Homeless Connect here at the University of Denver was an experience I wasn't quite sure how to prepare myself for. I went into it knowing that I could be working with literally any type of person imaginable. I could picture myself being paired up with a deeply psychologically impaired person, someone who basically refused to

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speak, or worse yet, someone who had no idea how to stop talking; needless to say I was a little nervous. This apprehension should by no means tell my reader that I wasn't willing to work with these sorts of clients, but simply that I was confused about what my tactics may be if I were paired with someone I wasn't prepared to interact with. I had plenty of ideas, but nothing could have prepared me for the roller coaster I was about to board.

Comment [U1]: Make this one line.

The actual morning of the event made me think my job would be simple. My classmate, T., asked me if I would be willing to team up with him since he had a previous obligation for another one of his classes. To me, this basically meant that together we would work with one of the many clients coming to visit; this isn't what happened. When the time finally came to be paired up with our clients, T. and I simply planned on telling the coordinator at the front of the winding golden line our situation. We told the man, but his response wasn't quite what we had hoped for. "Uh, yeah, we're a little swamped so I'm just going to give you each a client for now." It was clear that this was not negotiable; we met our clients and were quickly ushered inside.

The first twenty seconds of the day were enough to prove to me that the day might take some serious patience. The first man made his presence known immediately. He was R., and in two weeks he would be homeless for three years. This man was definitely not afraid of speaking his mind. The second man, who had long graying hair, only spoke in response to my asking of his name; his one word response was, "K." I could tell instantly that I was working with two men who could not be more dissimilar. We made our way to the tables to quickly complete the initial paperwork while listening to the interesting tidbits R. was offering about

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himself. For the paperwork, T. worked with R., and I interviewed K. This is when I actually realized how interesting my day was going to be.

I was already aware that keeping R.'s attention focused was going to be a challenge, but on the opposite end of the spectrum, K. was barely speaking. He had no problem answering the questions, but he used as few words as possible. It seemed that K. was making up for R.'s soliloquies with quiet adherence. I wanted K. to open up, but I also knew it wasn't going to be easy. This man had been divorced, hadn't spoken to his children for a year, recently became homeless, and to top it all off, had been released from prison only a week earlier. I was extremely intimidated by what I was getting myself into.

Our plan was now to start completing the services each of our clients was requesting and to figure out what to do about T.'s absence when the time came. This split away from T. and R. seemed to be just the space K. was craving. He was much more willing to talk once they were gone. What's more, the success of the first resource we sought out made the man appreciate what I was doing for him. As we stood in the long line for Colorado State I.D.s, K. told me that this simple piece of paperwork was the only thing in his way of a new twelve dollar an hour job in hotel maintenance. I couldn't have been happier. Countless people who stood around us had been living on the streets for years and were seeming to make no progress; K. was the exact opposite. He had been homeless for only one week and had already been assured a job that would help turn his life around. We were both extremely happy about his improving situation; conversation began to flow freely.



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I wasn't quite ready to risk asking K. about his recent experience in prison, but I was very interested in learning about his current living situation at Crossroads Homeless Shelter. His explanation was pretty close to my preconceived idea, but his attitude toward it seemed to follow the pattern I had already started to notice. He mentioned that he had to wait in a long line to get a number representing the bunk he would be occupying; if these bunks were full, he would sleep on a floor mat. It seemed to me that this man simply needed a break from the demands of constant supervision. He needed time to himself. Our conversation continued to blossom until, seemingly minutes after we had parted ways, T. and R. returned.

K. and I both figured that our new friend R. would be quite the ball of energy, and we were about to experience just how true this was. It seemed that before T. left R. with us, his rambunctious client had checked out the resume workshop for a minute or two, and spent the rest of his time picking new outfits from the clothing drive. He couldn't wait to show us the three different jackets he had found, the pair of white khaki shorts, the two T-shirts. K. and I just simply smiled to ourselves and let him talk while we waited in line. I attempted to keep up with R. in conversation, but it seemed like each subject spawned at least a handful more. After a few minutes of semi-patient waiting, R. decided he needed to once again explore the auditorium. I was a little nervous about letting him wander around on his own, so I made sure to ask him not to wander too far.

About ten minutes later, K. and I finally finished with our mission to the I.D. booth and moved on to find him financial help at the Colorado Indigent station. K. said he needed to use the restroom, so I offered to watch our spot in line; K. returned with some amusing information.

From the time we allowed R. to fend for himself momentarily, he had been trying on every new outfit combination he could think of. At the time I was very humbled by the fact that something as typical as trying on clothes was, for R., liberating, but failed to think about the possible outcome of such an activity.

Once our easily distracted friend came out of the bathroom, in one of his new mismatched outfits, he was ready to move on to something new. He told me he was going just outside the auditorium to smoke a cigarette, and that he would wait for us there; I literally never saw him again. This point in the day, for me, was when the biggest test of my social skills would come into play. I knew that I couldn't just ignore the fact that one of my clients was missing, and K. was clearly happy with spending quiet time alone while I searched. So, I directed K. to his next resource, made sure he would stay there once he was finished, and started my quest.

As one can probably imagine, finding a single man in a sea of brightly colored shirts and buzzing conversations was not easy; this difficulty was boosted to near impossibility when his constant outfit changes were taken into consideration. I searched the full expanse of the event about three times, concentrating mainly on the bathrooms and growing food line. R. was just a few too many steps ahead. After about a half hour of confusion, I decided that it would be best to return to K. and wait for T. to come back before continuing the search.

When I returned to my first client, I was happy to see that he was in the same area, consulting a dentist and nurse. I apologized for leaving him alone and told him R. was truly missing in action; he seemed to like this fact. For the next hour, we looked for clothing, got some

food stamps, and watched while T. returned, searched for R., and finally decided to give up and help another client. It was clear to me that as time went on, and we were truly on our own, that K. was more than happy to share. I figured that since we had completed all the things my client needed to do, it was time to go to lunch and dig in to the heart of our conversation.

Actually getting to eat after burning so much energy was amazing, but the conversation that came along with it was even more rewarding. I had spent the entire morning trying to get K. to open up to me, and this proved that he finally had. We were sitting out on the grass eating when I finally decided to ask him about prison; to my surprise, he was more than happy to share. He told me that he had been a serious methamphetamine user turned dealer since 1992. This in itself was hard to believe when simply looking at the man's character, but what was even harder to believe was that he had gotten away with it for fourteen years before finally being busted on possession charges in 2006. Since then K. has been in and out of jail constantly; his longest stay was the most recent span lasting nine months. The information about life in jail was interesting enough, but what was more interesting to me was what life was like once finally being released.

After speaking with K. about his recent experiences, I came to the realization that my new friend has been a captive in some form or another for the past decade and a half. For fourteen years he had been a slave to his drug of choice, and because of this, was constantly surrounded by people just like him; without the space to get free, quitting his addiction was nearly impossible. Of course, being in and out of jail periodically for three years was yet another large chunk of time when he lacked any sort of personal freedom. It is hard for me to put into

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words the energy radiating off of K. when I asked him how it felt to be free, free of the free loading drug addicts, free of the constant trials that come with being imprisoned, and most importantly, free of the drug that has completely dictated the past two decades of his life. I could tell weight was gradually being lifted off the shoulders of this man. It was no surprise, then, that when I asked him what the best thing that happened to him during Project Homeless Connect was, he simply smiled and said, "Losing R.."

Cody Schuyler

Dr. Carol Samson

WRIT 1133

April 30, 2009

### **Project Homeless Connect Reflection**

“You have to allow yourself to joke. Smiles are the essence of life. Why do you think I’m here? It’s because I wanted to see your smile, before I even met you. I see you smile and I am happy. Houses don’t make me happy...people do.”

- SEJ

I have seen homeless people before, or at least glanced at them out of sheer curiosity, on the occasional street corner or pushing their shopping carts full of aluminum cans, each time never really taking a moment to see what was truly going on underneath the bedraggled clothes and worn-out eyes, behind their squinting at the harshness of the world. For the longest time, they were something of a spectacle in my middle-class world of suburban comfort. It is safe to say that my parents are compassionate people, more so than many, but like any other parents that had made their own way in the world, they raised me to react to the derelict members of society with nothing short of mild callousness. As a young boy, seeing each person in the world as a story waiting to be told or rewritten, I often noticed that many of my parents’ friends held similar attitudes on the subject of homelessness: “Yes, it is a sad situation to see a person in; however, they require far more help than a few dollar bills would give them.” This was the mantra I heard every time I took a trip to the downtown portion of a city. Avoid, avoid, avoid. I never bought it. Despite the constant repetition of this idea that the

homeless were beyond help, I could never rid myself of the guilt I felt whenever I ignored a man holding out a plastic cup with a meager amount of coins within as if it were the holy grail itself. I didn't think it was right then, and I certainly don't think it is right now. No matter if their being homeless is their own fault or the result of a cruel twist of fate, not a single person deserves to be forced to sleep in a gutter. Last Friday was the first time I had truly interacted with someone who has next to nothing in terms of material possessions. It was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

SEJ.. Born in Kenya, son of a Lieutenant in the United States armed forces. Moved to Tennessee at age four. Had a fairly typical childhood, but was diagnosed with severe depression in his early twenties. Then the downward spiral came. I heard all of this within the first ten minutes I was with him. An entire novel could be written about this man who spends his nights behind a dumpster near the "Nine-Mile" Light Rail stop. I didn't know what to expect when I met my charge, but it certainly wasn't having to hold back tears after only a short time with SEJ. Here was a man who, by no fault of his own, had drifted away from his loved ones, emotionally and eventually physically, until he was living out of an athletic bag. Depression. A chemical imbalance in the brain that engenders feelings of overwhelming sadness. It does not know race nor creed and it most certainly does not know a person's economic class. As I wrote "D-e-p-r-e-s-s-i-o-n" on SEJ's paper work, under the section asking about handicaps or diseases, my pen shook, causing an untidy rendering of the word. I was amazed to find that I felt a kindred spirit manifest itself in the form of this 48-year-old man with a bad limp and a kind smile. I, too, struggle with feelings of constant depression, but at this moment in my life, "me" became "we," and I was determined to help SEJ in as many ways as I possibly could.

Any feelings of trepidation I had concerning my first intimate interactions with a homeless person disappeared the moment a big grin split his whiskered face. He was no alien that was out to steal my own livelihood, merely a man who had lived a different journey than me; and ultimately he possessed a much deeper understanding for how valuable life is. No one would ever know that he suffered from a life-altering disease, because he refused to give in to the sadness that surrounded him.

As we went from station to station, I saw SEJ interacting with people and functioning like any other well-mannered human being. I realized that many people living on the streets could pass for an average well-to-do American, given the chance to clean themselves up appropriately. The only things that kept me from being in SEJ's shoes at that moment were a few years and a little bit of luck. I wished that I could take all of the money I spend on a college education and give it to him, because the results would be spectacular. SEJ could then receive the medical attention he needs for his neurological disorder as well as his limp. He would be able to put his clever mind to good use, perhaps coming up with a comic strip to be published in *The Denver Post*. All he needs is compassion and some help financially to put him back on his feet. I'm not a religious person, but SEJ made me want to pray, to pray for a guide to lift him up and carry him over all obstacles that kept him rooted to the unforgiving concrete. From time to time, he would shout a jolly "Hello!" to one of his friends that also happened to come to the festival of sorts. Each interaction I witnessed held a different story, and it only served to emphasize my epiphany that a person's values don't disappear the instant their home does. People aren't defined by what they own – something I often forget in my own life and that is evident with so many other people, blinded by perceptions of

success. Success isn't about money; rather it is about human connections and relationships. SEJ taught me that, just by living his life with me as an audience member for a few hours.

What astounded me more than any other surprise I received that day was how much this man reminded me of my own father. Not only were they similar in their physical appearance, they would be considered almost identical twins on paper. They were the same age, separated by exactly 30 days. I felt an urge to hug SEJ, to feel his rounded abdomen against my own, just like my father's stomach. When I asked SEJ what his weight was, he responded with an exact quote I had heard my father utter when talking about his belly, "I'm built for comfort, not speed." I had to hide my astonishment for fear of blurting out, "Are you for real?" It was as if my father was sitting only a few feet from me, his small, loving eyes concentrated on my face. Yet another connection I had with someone whom I would have never met if it weren't for Project Homeless Connect. It seemed to really live up to its name. It scared me to think that my father could potentially end up in the same situation that SEJ finds himself in, but reassurance quickly followed when I considered what my father had that SEJ had lost, a family that still cared. I wanted to be SEJ's family so that he could rise above this lack of love.

As we said our goodbyes, I extended my hand toward SEJ, his large muscular grip enveloped my own petite fingers. Our first physical contact was also our last. His hand told the story of his struggle, palms rough and stained with the filth of street-life. What I found most intriguing, however, was the fact that when SEJ took my outstretched hand, he held it for what seemed like an eternity, all the while looking me straight in the



eye, saying, without words, just how important our time together had been to him too. An intense shiver shook my body. How could someone I had only met three hours earlier have this big of an effect on me? Before I could answer my own question, he released my hand, smiled, and then laughed, thunder rumbling through his chest. He said, "Well...I guess I'm off. Going to go exchange plasma for money! Forty dollars is a lot you know. Who would have thought I could give away gross bodily fluids for cash? It's like giving someone poop and getting gold! All hail the golden poop! See you around Cody." And with that, SEJ left my life as quickly as he had come into it like a shining star in a baggy sweatshirt, whistling as he faded away.

Jessica Williams  
4/30/09  
WRIT 1133

### Cowboy, King of the Homeless

Standing at the top of the stairs in the early morning, I watched the line quickly disappearing before me as volunteers were paired up with homeless people and sent into the Ritchie Center. As it got down to four, three, two people in front of me, I began anxiously eyeing the clients coming up the steps. There was a large woman in a bright pink shirt, and a man in a camouflage jacket walking slowly up the stairs. Then a man came around them from behind, taking the steps two at a time in his black cowboy boots. He wore tight dark blue jeans, a red, white, and blue button-down shirt with a gray wool blazer with black leather trim, and to top it all off a great big black cowboy hat. "All I need's a haircut!" he announced loudly when he reached the top, and off we went.

One of my worries about Project Homeless Connect had been what to talk about since I'm not very good at making conversation with people I don't know, but it was never a problem with Cowboy since he always had something to say. I hardly had a chance to introduce myself before he was telling me, "I ain't really homeless, only halfway homeless. Tell you the truth I ain't never really been completely homeless, I always had somewhere to camp out. I ain't like other homeless people." It would be the first of maybe a hundred times he would tell me that that day: "There ain't another person like me in all the homeless people and all the non-homeless people in the world! And I ain't never carried no backpack." He said this with disdain as we passed the coat and belongings check. I asked him what he did with his things then, and he told me he's always had really good hiding places for stashing things and no one ever finds them. I

doubted that he had never lost anything or had something stolen, but I was still struck by the thought that even though I was getting a college education, this man, who I later found out had not graduated from high school, was surely light years ahead of me in street smarts.

Cowboy did not want to introduce himself to me, fill out forms, get acquainted, have some coffee, or do anything else besides get a haircut. So we marched right over to the haircut station to get on the list. When asked for his name he said, "Charles William Weaver Jr., but you can just put Cowboy." Then we began to wait. With all the extra time (it took the haircut lady about two hours to show up), Cowboy figured we might as well get a cup of coffee, fill out those forms, and get acquainted. As we did this, I began to realize that while Cowboy may have been a bit full of himself, he was probably right. I've never met anyone like him before, nor do I expect to meet anyone like him in the future. "I'm country," he told me. "I was born country, I was raised country, and I'm gonna die country."

As we walked around, Cowboy pointed out other homeless people he knew. He said he knew them all, and they all knew him although they left each other alone mostly. He said all the other homeless people would look at him and how well dressed and put together he was and wonder how he did it and wish they could be like him. For a homeless man of fifty-two, he did look pretty good. Of all the people he pointed out, he only talked briefly to a couple of them. He said he simply was not a people person. He knew how to take care of himself and had applied for various types of aid on his own. He told me that, when he was applying for SSI, he was asked if he had any disabilities. He had responded, "Well, I don't like people." Cowboy had had a few good jobs doing

manual labor out in the fields, building, and even digging graves. The companies where he had had steady work, though, had gone out of business, often due to the introduction of technology, which Cowboy despised. He been offered some jobs such as bus driving, but hadn't taken them because he hates people. Cowboy was a true loner. He hadn't been able to keep a family together because he hates people, and he was still paying some form of child support to two children who were both over the age of twenty-seven. He particularly disliked men because as he saw it men were far too obsessed with sports and he just didn't see the point. When we started talking about this, I got angry. I was angry that so many tax dollars were put into building stadiums, and professional athletes were paid millions of dollars to play sports, while someone else could work for years doing backbreaking labor and end up penniless on the streets. There is something very wrong with that.

Cowboy had one vice; he smoked. Partway through the morning, he went over to another homeless man he knew to ask for a cigarette. Cowboy tried to pay the man twenty-five cents for it, but the man gave back the quarter saying Cowboy needed it more than he did. I'm not sure who needed the quarter more, but seeing each of the men trying to give the other the quarter made me realize that they were two men who cared about the well being of another, even though they were both homeless and a quarter could have been a big deal to them. I think it really is true that the ones who give the most are those who have the least. It makes me wonder does poverty lead to generosity, or does generosity lead to poverty? Cowboy looked like he'd come straight from an old Marlboro ad as he smoked that cigarette. While we were watching other clients and volunteers pass by, Cowboy pointed out to me which of the homeless people were alcoholics. Cowboy

hated alcoholics. He said they were unruly, uncontrollable, and he'd gotten in trouble a number of times just as a result of being in the vicinity of drunk people. According to Cowboy, he had never been an alcoholic and hadn't even drunk alcohol in years because he just doesn't like it. I believed him. Cowboy was not an irresponsible man. While waiting for the haircut, he pulled an old electronic gambling card game out of his pocket and began playing while telling me the story of his brief gambling history. He once went into a casino with twenty dollars and walked out with sixty, so the next week he went in with fifty and walked out with one hundred fifty. The following week he went back with fifty and came out with one hundred twenty. He had been very lucky at the slots, so the next week he went back with a hundred dollars. This time though he walked out with thirty dollars. That was the end of it. "I always knew gambling wasn't a good idea, but I figured I'd try it at least once, and then I got lucky, and I figured as long as I was having some luck I'd go again, but as soon as I started to lose money I thought, this is stupid, and I dropped it right then and there. I ain't gambled at all except on this video game ever since." I'm not sure how much of this story was true, but I did believe that Cowboy was smart enough not to waste his money on a gambling habit. Being homeless doesn't mean you're too dumb or irresponsible to hold on to your money. Sometimes it just means that life has dealt you a bad hand.

The haircut lady finally arrived. The waiting list was tossed since so many people had given up and left. Cowboy had definitely been waiting the longest, but he wanted to make sure that everything was fair. He let three other people go before him, and he only went after another client said, "Oh no, you've been here the longest – you should go." No one was pushing or arguing or running up to snag the barber chair as soon as it was free.

Instead it was done by, “Oh, you go ahead. No, please, I insist.” No one was in a hurry and everyone worried about everyone else.

After Cowboy finally got the haircut, he wanted to get out of there. No, he did not want to fill out the check-out form. He did not want the gift bag. He did not want lunch. He did not want any other services, and he did not want to wait for a bus. “I’ll go get on the Light Rail,” he said, “I’m better on my own anyway,” and thus, as abruptly as he had arrived, he departed. Cowboy was a remarkable person, and not at all what I had expected a homeless person to be like.

When I got back to the dorms, one of my floormates asked me how it went. I told her it was great. She said she hadn’t wanted to do it because she hates homeless people. “Did they stink?” she asked me. Well, yes, if truth be told a lot of them, including Cowboy, didn’t smell that great. “Were they stupid?” she asked. Cowboy said a few things that didn’t make him sound too smart, but in many respects he was a very clever man. “Well, I’m glad I didn’t go,” she said; but hearing her say that only made me more glad that I did go. Maybe she got to sleep in that day and stay shut in her dorm room without having to deal with anything unpleasant, but I spent a day meeting amazing individuals and learning so much about the homeless and myself.



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## *THE POINT*

Summer 2009



**Interview with Theresa Conley**  
Rebekah Shultz Colby

*Theresa Conley is a professor of marketing who has professional corporate experience as a marketing consultant for a variety of businesses. Her consulting practice focuses on product development, consumer segmentation analysis, branding, and positioning. In 2000, she was a Women in Cable and Telecommunications “Woman of the Year-Walk of Fame” recipient.*

### **Rebekah Shultz Colby: How would you describe your own writing process?**

Theresa Conley: Painful. Although I am a seasoned business communicator, I am not a gifted research writer or someone who writes easily, so I have to push myself. Bottom line: If you want your ideas heard, you need to care about writing, learn this skill, practice it, and eventually get confident with it.

### **How would you describe your research process?**

Like many, I have a lot of interests so the on-going and nagging challenge is focusing and discipline. Reading journals and books obviously are a big part of generating many of those ideas. I then think through the process and consider my timing – how will this project lead to the next, does one project use learning from another I have done, how can I be efficient and smart with data collection? Am I creating a body-of-work that ties together logically, rather than a bunch of disjointed projects? All of this goes into my thinking.

At the end of the day, I consider myself a pragmatist. It is vital to me to make sure my research has some usefulness. I believe this research philosophy stems from my 20 years in business prior to transitioning into higher education; I feel an obligation to produce something useful and relevant.

### **What writing projects are you currently working on?**

Since I am finishing my PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, I am doing a lot of writing still for class and preparing for my dissertation process. My topic of interest is study abroad and international education. Specifically, I am currently doing primary research to explore the decision process and location selection for undergraduate students to study abroad. Generally, there is a wealth of data that shows that study abroad is a positive experience for students but limited data on the decision and site selection process. I think understanding this more clearly will lead to helpful tools and improvements for students to think more strategically on their choices – thereby greatly enhancing the overall educational and cultural implications of the experience. At this point, I hope to follow this thread of research until I get my dissertation completed.



**What role does writing play in undergraduate learning?**

It should play a serious role for undergraduates. Regardless of age, experience, or ability -- being able to research, organize your ideas, and write clearly are mandatory skills regardless of your occupation.

**How do you teach writing in your undergraduate business classes? (What kinds of assignments do you teach? Why? What specific approaches toward writing do you take, etc.?)**

Since I teach marketing, I emphasize clear, succinct, and passionate writing. Most students understand the clear and succinct part – but without adding the passion, business people are far less likely to read or care about what you write and what you want to do. Business is all about influencing people to get things done. Some people think business writing should be “sterile,” and this is unfortunate. For example, take two business plans, one well organized and well written but lacking passion. The other, well organized and well written, but it tells a story and you can feel the passion for the idea – it “sizzles” with possibility for the people who need to fund this business idea, develop this business idea, and eventually market and launch this business idea. It all starts with good writing, doesn't it?



**THE POINT***Summer 2009***Miss Colorado Asian-Pacific and “Ning Jing Zhi Yaun”***Carol Samson*

The night she became Miss Colorado Asian-Pacific 2009, Sunny Xiong, who has just finished her first year at the University of Denver, focused on language and calligraphy in the talent portion of the competition. Wearing a traditional, white Chinese costume, Sunny drew Chinese words in black ink on long banners of paper. She worked slowly and precisely, demonstrating a skill that, as she says, tempers force with grace and balances the dynamic and the static in life. Sunny regards her study of Chinese calligraphy in philosophical terms: “A black stroke left on the white paper cannot be undone, even the slightest flaw cannot not be corrected. Every single character has its own spirit — the spirit has formed at the moment the brush touches the paper. Any remediation would only make that spirit fade away. It requires me to think over everything in advance, to focus not only on details, but also on the arrangement of the whole character.” The making of language symbols taught Sunny the best of lessons by showing her a way of life. She says that when she feels anxious or exhausted, when it is hard to calm down her “restive heart,” she holds the familiar calligraphy brush and watches “the paper, dyed gracefully by the black ink” and immerses herself “in the harmony of the art work,” allowing “a real peace” to return to her heart.



I did not know the wonder of Sunny’s relationship to written words when, on the first day of Winter Quarter 2009, I met her for the first time in my WRIT 1122 class. She sat in the second row; and when I called her name, she told me that, although the class list said her Chinese name “Ruofan,” I should call her Sunny. In that shift of syllables, I now see, our comparative culture and language study had begun. That day, as the class introduced themselves, I asked Sunny how, coming from Beijing, she had studied American culture. She smiled, “Oh, I knew America,” she said, “from watching TV at home. I knew ‘Desperate Housewives’ and ‘Gossip Girl’ and ‘Prison Break.’ I loved

watching America on TV.” She said she knew Denver because she loved the NBA Nuggets, and she had to move here because she was in love with Alan Iverson. Someday, she said, she wants to visit Switzerland -- because Roger Federer lives there. As winter quarter moved on, I came to see that Sunny is skilled at reading culture as text, that she is aware of the value of both high and low cultural movements, and that she enjoys the interface of Chinese and American meanings, as if she understands, like Heidegger, that a boundary is not that at which something stops but where something begins it presencing. During the class, she worked on a personal essay, a reading of a family photograph as argument. It was her mother’s 50th birthday, and, in the photograph, Sunny, an only child, stood with her parents, her mother holding a bouquet of 50 red roses and a small coffee cup ornamented with another photograph of Sunny, the visual rhetoric deepening in photo-within-photo possibilities. She told me that her mother gave her father 50 roses on his birthday the year before, and I was to learn how her traditional parents were often surprised by their 21st c. daughter, a girl who, understanding that Chinese universities admit students only on the basis of SAT scores and do not take into account any student activities, chose to apply to attend university in America. Sunny says that in the last year she has thought a great deal about the values a university promotes. She understands that Chinese systems have so many students to choose from that the SAT standard is a viable choice, but she is still sorting out the role that activities and skills other than test-taking might play, i.e. the fact that she was the founder and president of her school’s Photography Association and president of the Volunteer League made no difference. She appreciates the American university’s vision of a “well-rounded” student, and she knows that learning is a process and not merely a grade. She also appreciates the freedom of thought and the creativity of the students at the University of Denver as well as the professionalism of students working in student

government. She admits that one of the most intriguing things she found here was the friendliness and the encouragement she has received from DU professors. "It is so different from China," she said, "though the Chinese government officials are trying to improve the system." But, she points out, we must remember that the Chinese population is large and that the conditions are so different that things will take time. Sunny has chosen to major in International Business with minors in Finance and Marketing because she sees trade as a way to improve cultural communication between America and China. She wants Americans to see that the Asian and Chinese people who live in America and who come here as students are ready for challenges and wish to contribute as much as they can to the diversity of American culture even as they maintain their own cultural rituals.

When Sunny won the pageant held May 16, 2009, she e-mailed me the photographs and the YouTube site. I watched fragments of the competition, seeing her create the drawings of the Chinese characters during the Talent competition and watching the brief segments of the evening gown and swim suit competition until, at last, there it was — a photograph of Sunny in her long black evening dress and wearing a bejeweled crown, a radiant Miss Colorado Asian-Pacific with her Filipino Princess and her Vietnamese Princess beside her. In June when I talked with her, I could see her joy and her classic "sunny" disposition. She was honest in her assessment of the pageant and of her decision to participate. She said that this pageant placed more value on talent and interviews than on "beauty" per se. She said that she did not tell her mother until after it was over. She needed to give her mother a context, to frame the pageant as more than a shallow event. She said that in China many of the beauty queens are thin, if not skinny, young women. "In China, they only judge on size," she said. "I like the way Americans look at people. I am a healthy girl." During the pageant, in an onstage interview, she spoke to the audience of her decision to spend the summer of 2007 working on her SAT skills and college applications rather than attending a summer camp in Italy based on international communication skills. The camp was important to her as the same 15 students had attended camp in various countries each summer over a period of years, but this time she knew she had to look beyond the moment to the future. In her talk she said, "I do not regret it at all. . . I got into the University of Denver with a score I did not regret at all. So that gives me the opportunity to stand here confidently representing myself and the Chinese culture as well as the University of Denver."



To put Sunny into words, to create a Chinese character that holds her spirit, I might draw a collection of black ink images to show you that her last name, Xiong, means "bear," and she is called "little bear", that she has a bronze medal in taekwon do, that she knows how to say "I love you" in nine languages, that she listens hard to English-speaking friends and responds with quick passion and empathy, that her eyes tell me that she is one of those people on whom nothing is lost, that she loves China, that she may live in Switzerland where Roger Federer lives, that she is beginning her presencing here in Colorado, that I see a beautiful young woman who accepts the challenges of interpreting American culture even as she continues to work to understand her Chinese traditions. I might try to find the calligraphic form to hold all of that, but perhaps I might best borrow from Sunny herself and from traditional Chinese calligraphy. The night of the pageant, the night she became Miss Colorado Asian-Pacific, Sunny chose to draw a special word symbol on a long banner of white paper using thick black stokes. It was the Chinese idiom, Ning Jing Zhi Yuan, which, she tells me, means "a peaceful mind may lead to deeper and further thoughts." It is a symbol that allows peace to come into the heart. Certainly, that fits Sunny. And, as a writing teacher, I shall keep the idiom in my head, too, so that next year, when my first-year WRIT 1122 students arrive, I plan to tell them that, in some cultures, writing is spirit, that a black stroke on white paper cannot be undone, and that spirit has formed the moment the brush touches the paper. I'll explain that last winter a wise friend from Beijing, who is now Miss Colorado Asian Pacific, taught me that "every single character has its own spirit."



***THE POINT***

*Summer 2009*



**“Making Waves” in San Francisco: CCCC 2009 Panel Summaries**

- [Jeff Ludwig's Panel Summaries](#)
- [Jennifer Campbell's Panel Summaries](#)
- [Kamila Kinyon's Panel Summaries](#)
- [Rebekah Shultz Colby and Richard Colby's Panel Summaries](#)







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## *THE POINT*

Summer 2009



### Jeff Ludwig's Panel Summaries

#### **Chair's Address from Charles Bazerman, "The Wonder of Writing"**

Bazerman's address to the field was interesting and provocative for a couple of important reasons, some of which resonated very closely with my conference experience this year. Bazerman made it clear from the start that the realm of our discipline is the very nature and connectedness of reading and writing and how these are interconnected in how we have a stake in literacy, with all roads leading to and connected with social action, participatory democracy, and the establishment of common knowledge for our field. While, as Bazerman points out, rhet-comp has had its "ambivalences" about asserting its place as a discipline, he urged his listeners to move beyond models for the field provided by English departments and to push for practical, student-focused, collaborative, activist, pedagogic, and (what I feel is most important) interdisciplinary models. Further, he argues that the field needs research into itself to know itself with greater specificity and confidence and to be persuasive publicly; we have a "responsibility" to know ourselves and our discipline because we study and use the "very medium in which knowledge is made and distributed."

#### **Session B1: "We Have Been Here Forever: Towards a History of Composition(ist)s of Color Rewriting Rhetoric within and beyond NCTE/CCCC"**

This session featured four speakers – Joyce Rain Anderson (Bridgewater State), Samantha Blackman (Purdue), Cristina Kirklighter (Texas A&M), and Victor Villanueva (WSU Pullman) – and one discussant – LuMing Mao (Miami of Ohio). All four speakers took on the state of CCCC as an institution as it relates to the perceptions of and practices toward scholars of color at the conference, in caucuses, or in its history. Anderson focused on ways of "infusing" Native American rhetoric into the field and argued that the inclusion of native rhetorics must go beyond "special issues" of CCC or College English. Blackman analyzed the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual identities from critical race theory to address the pragmatic concern that CCCC special interest caucuses demarcated by identity are scheduled at the same time during the conference and therefore do not address any kind of multiple identities of its participants. Kirklighter then discussed a particular moment of CCCC history where the contributions of Chicano/Chicana scholars has gone overlooked. Clearly, however, many people were there to hear Villanueva's talk he modestly nicknamed "Strawman Argument: A Case Study of CCCC." Essentially his talk was a critique of Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, where he not only identified how North's book does not recognize the contributions of scholars of color in its description especially of "social constructionism" but also argued that the continuation by the field in ignoring and rewriting this history is emblematic of structural racism and that we have not realized the bias and white gaze with which the field sees itself.

## **Session H12: “New Media and Writing Program Administration: Reconfiguring Administrative Discourses and Practices Around New Media”**

This session featured four speakers – Melinda Turnley (DePaul), Amy Kimme Hea and Anne-Marie Hall (Arizona) who spoke together as a pair, and Marvin Diogenes (Stanford) – who discussed the various ways they have programmatically included the composing of new media in their first-year and advanced writing classes. Since theirs is an administrative perspective, their talk focused also on instructor training. Turnley discussed how the department of “Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse” – a newly formed program that split from English – has had to find ways of collaborating with other programs on campus (namely Communication, Art History and Architecture, and Digital Media) to lay claim to forms of new media and negotiate the “turf” of “writing” in the school’s new configuration. She argues that writing should lay claim to technology in many ways and that the investments of programs into digital literacies converges with and helps to expand our field.

Hea and Hall spoke together as two representatives of how Arizona is working to incorporate discussions of new media in the professionalization of the program’s instructors. After spending time defining new media and identifying the fact that incorporating new media “from the top down” in programs simply isn’t effective, Hea and Hall discussed how training instructors to see new media as literacy development in itself (versus text-based literacy existing as primary and new media literacy as secondary) is critical in its incorporation into programs. They then moved on to showcase projects that have been underway in their program at both graduate and undergraduate levels, showcasing in particular students’ translation of their work into new media forms. Essentially Arizona holds “installations” every year, where faculty and students present their work in various forms and invite faculty and administrators from across campus to participate. Hea in particular discussed a graduate course where her students used formations of new media to analyze how to train program instructors in the use of new media forms.

Finally, Diogenes discussed his revised program for Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford, particularly focusing on the second-level (sophomore year) course students are required to take. Interestingly, Stanford offers similar courses as DU does, but one course during the first-year and a research-writing and oral presentation course during the second year. Diogenes identified how the “oral presentation” requirement was lumped into the course that focuses on research and the “translation” of research and writing into other formats. He discussed how instructors were especially anxious about their ability to “teach the technology,” and identified a danger in courses that leave behind “writing and speaking” to focus on the media. The lesson, he explained, is that with the incorporation of new media must also be an analysis of its rhetorical functions.

## **Session J1: “Riding a New Wave: Towards the Writing/Composition/Rhetoric Major and Minor”**

This session featured three speakers – Sandra Jamieson (Drew University), Kathy Yancey (Florida State), and Irwin “Bud” Weiser (Purdue) – whose focus was on various ways of looking at the formation and implementation of a major or minor of “writing,” which led naturally to discussions of the field’s identity based from the variety of ways writing is packaged in the university. All three speakers seemed clear that a writing major/minor, or some combination thereof, is the future of rhetoric and composition but to what extent and how best to situate this identity is where differences lie. Sandra Jamieson discussed MLA’s recent report on the status of the “Undergraduate Major in Writing and Literature,” trying to get a “picture” of what it means to major in writing, only finding that while majors and programs are increasing, there is little commonality and little to no patterns of “prototypical development.” Most majors have first-year courses, a methods course, advanced courses, capstones, and a sequence to build and develop skills encountered in the introductory course.

Yancey discussed Florida State’s newly developed major with three “tracks” within the major: 1) writing (which stems from creative writing and its partnerships with English but also has to do with rhetoric), 2) editing (which includes publishing and the history of texts), and 3) new media (both the rhetorical study of and composing in new media). Yancey discussed how Florida State’s program takes a kind of cultural studies approach to the major, in the sense that students study the rhetoric of writing but also the “ways” writing is done and in the sense that this approach maps the content of the major itself as what she called “foundational, modular, and programmatic.” In essence, students follow tracks as they choose their way through the program, and Yancey pointed out that these tracks stemmed from creating with faculty iterations of what a writing major would look like and then developed curriculum from there.

Finally, Weiser argued that a writing minor is a better way to begin the development of rhetoric and composition for administrative and curricular reasons. Essentially Weiser raises a lot of questions: Can a first-year course be an intro to the Writing Major? What is the balance between writing courses and courses that study written discourse? How do we blend this to move beyond using writing as an assessment of the content? Do we have the faculty to teach courses in the major? Is there a demand for the major? Without “good answers” to many of these questions, Weiser argues that a minor instead of a major is the best option for many programs.

  
*THE POINT**Summer 2009***Jennifer Campbell's Panel Summaries****Research Network Forum**

The Research Network Forum is a full-day event held on the Wednesday preceding the conference, and I found it to be an informative and productive experience. The day began with two plenary speakers. Paul Kei Matsuda discussed the need to integrate multilingual perspectives into writing research, for example by including ESL "outliers" in larger quantitative studies and conducting more small-scale qualitative studies of multilingual writers. Rebecca Rickly discussed graduate education in research methods and the need to embrace failure in learning how to conduct effective research. After the plenary addresses and Q&A, we divided into 29 pre-arranged groups, with each table consisting of three to four works-in-progress presenters and a discussion leader. We had lively discussions of each presenter's project and found it very difficult to keep on schedule. After a break for lunch, we reconvened for the Editors' Roundtable. David Blakesley, from Parlor Press, discussed current challenges to scholarly presses and offered a practical list of ways we can support scholarly presses, such as reviewing their books and writing letters to administrators. Michael Spooner followed with a less optimistic talk about the current state of affairs for Utah State University Press, which may very well be cut later this year. He echoed a lot of what Blakesley said about challenges in the industry and explained how the press would react to the possible scenarios. After Q & A, participants had the chance to meet with editors from over a dozen journals, ranging from well-established publications like Pre/Text and The Journal of Basic Writing to brand new journals like Technoculture. The day concluded with a second breakout session where we had the chance to share our works-in-progress with another group and discussion leader. Having two rounds of discussion was very useful; time for each was limited, but I was able to cover a couple of big questions of scope in the first session, then ask the second group about more specific aspects of my design in the second session. I highly recommend the Research Network Forum. It was a great way to kick off the conference by meeting new people, hearing several good speakers, and having energetic discussions. RNF is also an attractive option because its deadline is later than the rest of the CCCCs proposals, so you can apply if your first effort doesn't get accepted. If you are on another panel, however, you can still participate in RNF, which doesn't count as a speaking role for the CCCC program.

**Digital Technologies and Multimodal Composition**

I attended several sessions related to technology and multimodal composition, and I was struck by the wide variety of content that was being grouped under similar titles and area clusters.

For example, **session D.31 Digital Currents: "Best Practices" in Composition during the First Two Years**, tagged as Information Technologies, focused primarily on electronic tools for accomplishing traditional tasks. Kip Strasma, from Nova Southeastern University, discussed "Performing Distributed Peer Response in Internet and Digital-enhanced Composition Courses." Strasma has three to five "spotlight students" post their drafts to a discussion board utility for each assignment, and all students respond to that smaller group. Thus, each student gets a chance to receive comprehensive feedback, but not for every assignment. The class works together to create a review checklist, and then they post comments. The spotlight authors then synthesize the comments they have received in a write-up that is emailed to the instructor. The instructor then confirms, challenges, or adds more comments to the student responses before the author revises. The author also has the chance to rate the usefulness of each response they received from their peers using a Likert-type scale. All students complete a meta-analysis of the review process and how it affected their revision process. I can certainly see the value of having students synthesize and reflect on the peer review process, and it seems that the electronic format facilitates response and feedback, though the same goals could be achieved without integrating technology.

I was rather disappointed with Xiao Wang's "Constructing E-Portfolios in Composition Courses Online," which highlighted the uneven definition of E-portfolios. She described her practice for online courses of having students generate portfolios, but the only thing electronic about the process is that students submit papers to smarthinking.com for feedback and turn their final portfolios in by email using zip files or a flash drive. Everything else Wang discussed, and the examples she showed, were pure old-school text portfolios.



Suzanne Labadie, from Oakland Community College, did deal more with intrinsically digital phenomena in “Revising Research in the Age of Wikipedia.” Labadie discussed how the critical and purposeful use of Wikipedia and class wikis can help students overcome problems with academic tone and objective reporting, teach students about plagiarism and documentation, and challenge superficial research methods. Wikipedia, especially with its addition of warning icons about style and citations, can demonstrate effective research and writing practices, while having students create well-developed wiki research sites can challenge the assumption that digital writing is all casual and superficial like texting or emailing. A lively discussion ensued about the benefits and drawbacks of wikis, and questions demonstrated that the audience was more interested in the analysis and production of these digital texts than they are in technology tools that add little to traditional instruction.

D.31 was uneven and didn't offer much from the cutting edge, but this was a trend I noticed at several sessions. Even worse was **session J.31 Taking It to the Web: Digital Writing in Composition Classrooms**. The session was tagged as Composition/Writing Programs, but the speaker I was really interested in hearing speak about Kent State's transition to a Multimodal and Digital curriculum wasn't there. A second presenter was also absent due to a family emergency, so her husband read her paper about the need to mentor online instructors and then talked about his own online class. The talk digressed so far from the purported topic of the session that an audience member interrupted and asked if he would skip going over the content of his syllabus and explain how he “takes it to the web.” The other speaker, Alexandr Tolj, discussed “digital essays,” which were primarily traditional written compositions with graphics and links added to enhance the content for oral presentations. The results were interesting, but not exactly web-based or interactive, and had nothing to do with larger programmatic issues.

Another information technologies session, **E.15 Blogs: Understanding the Potential and Challenges**, included an interesting mix of projects. Derek Boczkowski's “The Defective Yeti Dustup,” aka “When Writing (and Teaching) Goes Public: Blogging and the Wall-less Classroom” was an entertaining anecdote about the perils of asking students to engage with public bloggers without preparing them for blog etiquette and public response. Unfortunately, Boczkowski said basically the same thing about these problems as Charles Tryon's 2006 Pedagogy article “Writing and Citizenship: Using Blogs to Teach First-Year Composition” but without the focus on the real benefits of the pedagogy. Michael J. Faris read a paper that challenged the common conception of blogs as online journals or diaries by emphasizing their more public ancestors – zines. He outlined several similarities between the genres as multimodal, circulated public writing with a content or scope that is specific but not fully defined. Both are often personal and political and challenge traditional notions of authorship. Pamela Gay provided an interesting example of place-based writing in her discussion of blogitorials. She described a course devoted to debates about zoning, housing, and neighborhood culture in the communities around her campus in Binghamton, New York. Each student created an individual blog that was linked to a course blog. The students conducted research that enables them to write from an informed, situated perspective. Assignments consisted of 750-word informative blog entries that concluded with critical reflections and questions intended to generate ongoing online discussion. Gay noted that students found it difficult to conclude with an opening to dialogue rather than a definitive statement but found the project successful as a way of integrating an alternative genre that functions as an environment for learning.

This array of presentations demonstrated very different conceptions of technology and multimodal composing. I found some inspiration for my own classes and for our program, but I found greater inspiration to explore how our field is defining technology in the classroom, digital writing pedagogies, and multimodal composing. Ultimately, I'm wondering how we can get beyond treating superficial use of technology tools as innovation and embrace the rhetorical possibilities of newer textual forms that are truly multimodal, interactive, and situated in online spaces that foster an engaging and expansive distribution of knowledge.

  
*THE POINT**Summer 2009***Kamila Kinyon's Panel Summaries****Session C.27 Visualizing the New Writing Center: Integrating Verbal and Visual Rhetorics**


Chaired by Douglas Hesse, this panel included talks by Corinne Hinton, John Tiedemann, Eliana Schonberg, and Sue Mendelsohn.

In her talk, "Theorizing Visual Rhetoric in the Writing Center," Hinton referred to "making waves" as a metaphor for change. She discussed different uses of images, from the use of illustrations as aids to the visual to the "wave of the future" in website design and digital comics. She discussed the division of literacy into visual, aural, kinesthetic, textual, and digital. In the theoretical perspectives she provided, Hinton emphasized differences between activity theory, semiotics, and new media studies. In activity theory, activities result in an end goal. Internalization allows people to try out potential interaction. Semiotics distinguishes between linguistic systems and pictorial systems. According to Gunther Kress, semiotics must be changed to a pictorial or digital focused system. New Media Studies focuses on networkable systems which can be manipulated and compressed. In conclusion, Hinton called for a new theoretical construct drawing on an intersection between new media studies, activity theory, and semiotics as rhetorical and cultural lenses that can enable us to embrace creativity and avoid stagnation.

In the second talk, John Tiedemann discussed rhetorical theory and humor in his teaching. In teaching the analysis and creation of visual texts, Tiedemann reverses the conventional approach. Instead of using the verbal to explain the visual, he takes visual rhetorical concepts as primary and then applies these to the verbal. Tiedemann described several of his pedagogical experiments in translating between the visual and the verbal. In "Write this Picture," Tiedemann gives his students several pictures and asks students to compose a sentence describing them. In connection with this assignment, Tiedemann referred to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as a philosophical framework for how language represents the world. Grammatical form is central, trumping lexicon. Language as logical form behaves like pictorial form. For each image that students are given, they must compose a sentence whose grammatical form recreates the image's pictorial form. For example, elongation of figures in a visual image may result in the elongation of a sentence. In another assignment, Tiedemann asks students to turn the ideas of their argument into a pictorial story. To explain this assignment, Tiedemann referred to Scott McCloud's ideas for understanding and making comics. Forms of transition may include, for instance, moment to moment, action to action, or aspect to aspect. Tiedemann explained the pedagogical value of his teaching assignments in making students consider questions of linguistic form, creating a concrete analogy to visual materials, and freeing students from formal rules.

In "Training Writing Center Consultants to Be Visual Rhetoricians," Eliana Schonberg discussed a study at the University of Denver in which 766 first-year students were surveyed about the role of visual rhetoric assignments in their classes. 540 (70%) had to make PowerPoint presentations. A high percentage of sophomores had to make PowerPoints. Schonberg stressed the importance of marketing and of establishing best practices in multimodal composition. She quoted David Sheridan, who stresses the need for writing centers to pay attention to multimodal instruction. Schonberg discussed the theoretical approaches that are needed in writing centers concerning such issues as planning for hypertexts, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and blogging. We shouldn't get caught up in media without embracing research. Training must depend on a rhetorical approach beyond the process-centered model. In discussing visual and verbal rhetoric, we can't easily distinguish higher- from lower-order concerns. Schonberg referenced Joseph Petralia's statement that process no longer offers much insight into the visual and the multimodal. She then urged that we should learn from post-process theorists. Discourse moves may offer a more useful framework than process. We should focus on how readers interact with texts, relying on a rhetorical model.

In the last talk, Sue Mendelsohn began with reference to the difficulty and complexity at the heart of the scholarly endeavor. As Heraclitus said, we can't step twice into the same river. Mendelsohn discussed how we should see visual and verbal rhetoric holistically. She stressed the importance of re-branding, discussing traditional metaphors such as "borderlands" and "margins" and referring to marginalization as a tired horse. The talk then moved into re-institutionalized topography. Mendelsohn discussed her influence by Harvey Keel's notion of writing centers. It is important for writing centers to become multiliteracy centers and multimedial centers in which digital media studies plays a more prominent role.





### **Featured F Session: Becoming Ecocomposition**

Chaired by Marilyn Cooper, this featured session had two speakers, Christian Weisser and Sidney Dobrin. Weisser, professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, is the author of six books and numerous articles on ecocomposition. His talk, "Towards the Ecology of Writing," addressed the relationship between composition, theory, and pedagogy and recent work in ecocomposition. Weisser discussed the history of ecocomposition and the interest in the field by social constructionists, ecofeminists, and scholars in cultural studies. He criticized those who use environment as a tool for activism and as a subject for raising ecological awareness. According to Weisser, no real insights into the activity of writing can emerge from this. Instead, Weisser urged that more attention should be paid to the ecology of writing. One can use the term "ecology" for how discourse operates as a cognitive system. Writing is an activity engaging with a socially constituted system. Weisser sees concepts of ecology in terms of complex systems theories. In *Geographies of Writing: Locations of Composition*, research is seen as an ecological activity. This book, however, had little impact on composition as a whole. In order to shape the field, we need more than a recasting of social-constructivist models. Weisser called for the use of complex systems theories and network theories, which include a focus on the ways knowledge spreads and on the properties of information.

The second talk was by Sidney Dobrin, director of the writing program at the University of Florida and author and editor of more than a dozen books about writing, environment, and their intersections. Dobrin drew links between ecocomposition and post-composition. In the binary between writing as spatial versus temporal, ecological writing focuses on the spatial. Dobrin discussed several reasons for the failure of ecocomposition to become central as a field. Few people have taken up ecology as a subject of research. We need to draw on complexity and network theories and think about pedagogy from a post-humanist perspective. It is important to embrace writing as a system. Ecology is the study of the relationship between organisms and their environments. Complex ecology looks beyond the individual and species. In ecocomposition we must not look at subject formation but, rather, should consider writing as a system. Dobrin outlined the connections between ecocomposition and the post-humanist theoretical frameworks of Foucault, Adorno, Guattari, and Deleuze. Ecocomposition, he concluded, is the locus of interaction and relation.

**THE POINT***Summer 2009***Rebekah Shultz and Richard Colby's Panel Summaries****A.01 “Sixty Years of CCC History: Some Pivotal Moments”**

There were six speakers in “Sixty Years of CCC History: Some Pivotal Moments,” a retrospective of how far rhetoric and composition has come as a field in 60 years and how CCCs has represented that progress – or, in some cases, lack of progress.

Jeffrey Sommers – in “Writing Placement: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?” – talked about some issues we still have with placing students. For instance, we still don’t know definitively what makes a piece of writing college level. Writing standards shift from institution to institution, and there is rarely complete agreement on what college-level writing standards should be even within the same institution. We should be able to identify with precision when a student’s writing is no longer basic, yet we still can’t do that either. To make the matter even more complex, students often revert to pre-college writing strategies when faced with more challenging writing tasks even if they have learned how to use more complex writing strategies for simpler writing tasks.

In “The Matter of Multimodal Composition,” Cynthia Selfe described how as a profession we have made rapid progress toward better understanding a fuller range of semiotic texts and the communicative practices they entail. However, English departments still don’t value these same multimodal texts for tenure and promotion. Fully 62% of Research I institutions require the publication of a print monograph and progress toward a second book. In other words, as Edward Tufte might say, we are limited to flatland in our scholarship. This is particularly unfortunate because multimodal texts are more complex and can more fully embody a wider range of meanings and purposes. They also take more time, thought, planning, expertise, and effort to produce.

Charles Schuster, in an argument entitled “An Argument on Behalf of Aesthetics,” lamented how the field has lost the teaching of style and aesthetics in writing.

The CCCs editor, Deborah Holdstein, described the career of a largely unknown, mid-century rhetoric and composition scholar named Wallace Douglas in “The Flagship Journal: CCC.” Douglas is largely unknown because he saw CCCs as preaching to the choir, so he instead published in other venues often outside of the field. This illustrated Holdstein’s point that to be published in CCC means that the writer has something to say to the entire profession.

In “Students’ Right,” Keith Gilyard discussed the 1974 manifesto, “Students’ Right to their Own Language,” which was published in a special issue of CCCs. Since then, no liberal-minded academic has dared to speak too harshly against “Students’ Right to their Own Language,” but they only embrace it in theory and not in practice. However, Gilyard pointed out that even in theory, “Students’ Right to their Own Language” is not clear. CCCs made a statement that “Students’ Right to their Own Language” is not affirming the student right to write poorly. However, this has meant that instead of affirming a variety of student dialects such as African American Vernacular English, as

a profession, we instead have embraced a pedagogy of code-switching.

Patricia Bizzell discussed the Bartholomae-Elbow debate in ways that were humorous yet insightful. She exclaimed that her talk had to be humorous because she counts both Bartholomae and Elbow as friends. She noted how they both graciously conceded to each other and pointed out areas of commonality in their debate; however, they were never particularly interested in exploring these areas of agreement or concession further. She also noted places in the debate where Bartholomae was more Elbow-esque and giving towards students and places where Elbow was more like Bartholomae, more concerned about upholding writing standards than being a compassionate and caring teacher.

### **Featured Session B. “Acquiring Advanced Writing Skills: A View from Cognitive Science”**

Ron Kellogg offered a brief overview of the study of cognitive science and described the paradigm as a way of studying writing. After updating the audience on trends in research since Flower and Hayes and Bereiter and Scardamalia, Kellogg focused on studies of executive or working memory (WM) in writing processes. When someone is writing, the limited capacity of WM is saturated with the processes of planning, translating, and reviewing. In studies where tasks were interrupted, writers and chess players were shown to exert the most cognitive effort in working memory and reading the least amount of effort – Kellogg used these studies as evidence that processes of recursive planning, translating, and reviewing of a given task need to be routinely practiced so as to make them more routine (why the reading task showed such little effort was a result of our immense amount of practice with this activity). However, the interesting moment in Kellogg’s talk came when he discussed the importance of imitation of expert practices rather than practice in and of itself – watching writing’s effect on readers or watching chess has a greater impact than practicing either in isolation. Imitation of expert practice can help to internalize and lessen the impact on WM.

### **Session C.15: “Riding Writing Assessment’s Fourth Wave: Examining the Efficacy of FYC as Writing Studies Pedagogy”**

Elizabeth Wardle, David Slomp and Andrew Moss, with Kathy Yancey as chair, discussed the Writing about Writing (WaW) movement and how it can be most effective in practice. Wardle split WaW into three approaches: the study of literacy and discourse (i.e., community membership), the study of writing studies and rhetorical theory itself, and the study of writing and writers practicing. In any case, she mentioned the importance in metaknowledge in each approach and discussed how any approach could lead to transfer throughout the curriculum. It was argued that transfer occurs if such practices were replicated throughout that curriculum as later argued by Slomp, Moss, and Yancey. Slomp and Moss both emphasized that, in assessing the impact and effectiveness of WaW approaches, what became most important to learning was a vertical curriculum – one which was throughout the student’s academic career; they covered WaW at a metalevel. If we want writing transfer, Wardle, Slomp, and later Moss discussed that vertical approaches also allow writing studies a surer footing in its disciplinary relationship with other departments.

### **Session D.09 “From Validity to Validation”**

Michael Williamson, Norbert Elliot, Les Perelman, Doug Baldwin, Nancy Glazer, and Ed White offered an interesting discussion of writing assessment, namely, the use of the five-paragraph essay. Baldwin, who works for ETS, offered a defense of the five-paragraph essay as a well-practiced form and thus useful as a means of assessment because students can focus on evidence in argument and content and not arranging or other writing processes. Williamson, Elliot, Perelman, and Glazer all followed with admonitions that the five-paragraph essay misrepresents writing to students (Williamson), that it was used in testing because it could be easily quantified (Elliot) or used to phase out human readers in favor of machines (Perelman), and that it offers very little data for any sort of assessment (Glazer). White followed with a more nuanced approach, arguing that the five-paragraph essay was, in fact, very useful for students who didn’t know how to write an essay, much less a sentence, and that it was a teaching tool (and a very useful one at that). He clarified that an essay he wrote for an Interchange in CCCs was more satire than parody, in that he was an expert writer, and yet got there by learning the five- paragraph essay at one time in his life as both writer and teacher. However, as an assessment tool for college-level writing, the five-paragraph essay is not sophisticated enough to showcase the writing strategies that college-level writers must have in order to succeed in college.

### **Featured Session G. “Walking the Talk: Teacher Response and Best Practices”**

Andrea Lunsford, Patrick Ewing, Dana Ferris, Chris Anson, and Paul Prior offered updates on large-scale studies of teacher response to student writing. Patrick Ewing, using the Lunsford and Lunsford Archive of College Writing, found that the majority of the 5,400 comments that he studied were sentence-level direct/indirect comments, that is to say, focused on grammar and syntax. Given the emphasis in previous studies and teacher training, this finding was interesting as the Lunsford and Lunsford study of the corpus was focused on errors originally. Thus, we focus a great deal of our time and energy on error as teachers and scholars. Ferris followed by talking about comments on ESL writers, finding in her study that even though 42% of her study population were ESL writers, the teachers of those writers claimed very few of their students were ESL or had ESL errors. More interesting in her study was that

in many ESL writing cases, teachers would refer students to somebody else or claim they “weren’t ESL classes.” Ferris argued that teachers shouldn’t overlook ESL errors and that these students do need to be told basic and more advanced grammatical rules in the teacher comments. Anson followed by discussing how the most recent National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) has included questions about writing for the first time and shared some findings, one of which was that students seek their peers’ feedback on writing more than the professor, and only a very small percentage actually went to the writing center. Prior completed the talk by interrogating Freedman’s early studies on teacher commenting. Prior found it interesting that, in Freedman and other cases, such studies are referred to as “grading” even though in most cases, teachers were only responding or commenting on drafts.