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Computers and composition communities: Solidarity as a research paradigm

Richard James Colby

COMPUTERS AND COMPOSITION COMMUNITIES: SOLIDARITY AS A

RESEARCH PARADIGM

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition

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by

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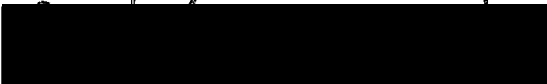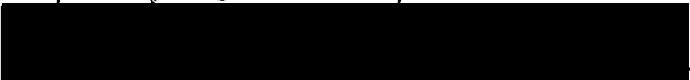California State University,

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by

Richard James Colby

September 2002

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the way in which
technological shifts have influenced composition
instruction, but very little seems to have been written
about the way in which research has been/needs to be
altered to reflect these changes. There have been several
suggestions as to why such changes have not taken place,
but most notable is the traditional political academic
structure which values value-free objectivity over humanist
subjective research. Therefore, subjects in the
humanities, including composition, tend to adapt/adopt
positivist paradigmatic research methodologies to
legitimize their findings and construct their identity as a
discipline. Yet, such adapted research methods and
reporting practices seem to contradict composition's
present, post-process understanding of writing, and
therefore are beginning to have less significance at the
sites of praxis. Information technology presently serving
a connectivity function in composition communities offers a
number of ways that can help composition research and
reporting practices better reflect current theory.

After a brief history of composition studies demonstrating a community realizing the need for more inclusive research practices, this thesis shows composition struggling with its identity as an academically legitimized discipline. To resolve the conflict, alternative theoretical suggestions from Lucy McCormick Calkins and Stephen North are revealed in Jeffrey Galin and Joan Latchow's "Heterotopic Spaces" and Johndan Johnson-Eilola's "Negative Spaces." This thesis will present Richard Rorty's "Science as Solidarity" as a more theoretically reflective means of moderating composition's research practices and reporting, with online persistent conversations and web spaces shown as a useful and theoretically informed means of research.

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To Mom and Dad

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> What do we know about the universe, and how
> do we know it? Where did the universe come
> from, and where is it going? Did the
> universe have a beginning, and if so, what
> happened before then?
>
> --Stephen Hawking

In "The Politics of Electronic Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition," Todd Taylor contends that compositionists confront the contradiction that their scholarship does not necessarily reflect their pedagogies by turning to electronic forums and publication. Taylor argues:

> the traditional system [of publication] heavily
> commodifies scholarship as a product instead of
> validating the intellectual processes of
> experimentation and dialogic interchange. (198)

Taylor continues that the discipline of composition needs to "reexamine the way it values electronic scholarship in light of the pedagogies it supports and the theories of literacy for which it argues" (198). Through electronic forums, Taylor believes that compositionists' scholarship

will better reflect pedagogies emphasizing collaborative, active, reflective participation.

The Internet, itself a creation of collaborative, active, reflective participation, shaped into a new medium, still has not supplanted traditional academic publication, but it has gained more significance as a site of scholarship since Taylor's 1997 article. Still, the changes brought by the Internet, World Wide Web, and hypertext challenge the composition community to continue to re-imagine scholarship and research practices. Composition teachers--those charged with teaching others how to communicate and think in one of our oldest technologies, writing--struggle in the liminal space of university traditions and theoretical necessities for change. Traditionally, the field of composition and rhetoric has offered up writing or textual evidence of its development from specialty into discipline. In the same way, the computers and writing community, as a sub-field of composition, offers its own textual evidence, primarily in the electronic forums of persistent conversations and hypertextual web spaces, each offering a marker of how knowledge has been made and how it might continue to be made in the future.

Composition's Contradictions

Compositionists readily embrace contradiction, partly because the discipline of composition is rife with contradictions: writing is both discovery and creation; writing exists as a process and a product; writing research is simultaneously empirical and theoretical (Bridwell-Bowles). Compositionists teach writing as a recursive process, "presenting a social-epistemic perspective that language use is a dialogue for which we are all responsible" (Rymer 180), and they read research demonstrating that writing is a series of ongoing, situated dialogues; however, some writing teachers still treat and teach research like frozen fonts of wisdom and truth.

Underscoring Taylor's argument and developing it further, this thesis endeavors to address initially a contradiction in composition studies: compositionists (teachers, writers, administrators, researchers) claim that truth is politically and socially constructed, and that its creation is a process of dialogue and synthesis; at the same time, they seem to value writing as a product of "truth," a finite and positivist discovery waiting to be unearthed and utilized. By examining certain philosophical

and theoretical systems that have informed composition, the history of writing instruction, and the use(fulness) of research on written composition, we might be able to acknowledge a source of these conflicting values, and perhaps the intersections that have led to the contradiction. In addressing the contradiction historically, we can understand why traditional research is integrated into the university politic and why an abrupt revolution of electronic scholarship is neither likely nor necessarily required, but nevertheless, more reflective of composition theory.

Foregrounding Richard Rorty's definition of "rational" criteria for scholarship as enacted in a community's solidarity, the second half of this thesis imagines a transition in which "rational" participation in electronic, ongoing dialogues can help us challenge the composition research/practice contradiction. Internet technologies, especially those already utilized by the computers and writing community, are one way to re-discover and re-imagine research methodologies and reporting. The intent of this thesis, therefore, lies in re-imagining the role of research(ers) facilitated by electronic forums so that active participation within a diverse, threaded

conversation matrix constructs a research text that informs
participants more so than traditional end-product texts.
By looking at the relatively new intersection of the
personal computer and composition research, I will propose
an alternative research paradigm involving new avenues of
community communication through persistent conversations
and hypertextual web spaces.

Does Composition Have a Beginning, and if so, What Happened Before Then?

If composition has a beginning, it is not a
straightforward one to mark. As a legitimate academic
subject, the date of 1963 has been given[1], as if composition
sprung like Sin from Satan's head. However, there is a
greater dynamic to this formation or "birth." Robert
Connors writes:

> Composition-rhetoric exists at the intersection
> of what society reads and what it feels it should
> be able to express, and there is too much
> happening, too many complex connections to be
> made between composition-rhetoric and the ongoing
> culture and society that formed it. (17)

5

While such a contemporary view of composition allows us a panoramic contemplation of the complex intersections of the terrain, a narrative of composition's history will reveal a rather simple beginning. While this history of composition is by no means a comprehensive one, it will show composition attempting to legitimize itself by pilfering from the practice of science. Since science is often given credence as the academic cynosure of modern thought, then a recap of the history of cosmology as a discipline in formation offers an interesting lens by which to view a "history" of composition.

What is known about the universe and how has it become known? Contemplating the billions of stars that inhabit space has occupied much of our human history. The stars' perceived immutability, coupled with the classical view of the earth resting at the center of it all, was proclaimed by Aristotle, and later by Ptolemy, as a perfect system that humans should strive to imitate. The Aristotelian teleological assumption, as stated in Rhetoric, was that "things that are true and just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" (152). The Aristotelian and Ptolemaic view was not opposed for over a millennium until Copernicus and later Galileo demonstrated a "truth" in

opposition to Aristotelian anthropocentric orbit: the earth

was not the center of our solar system, but merely an

orbiting inhabitant.

This second round of cosmology also saw Johannes

Kepler refute another "truth" when he suggested that there

were no perfect spherical orbits but instead elliptical

ones. Less than a hundred years later, Isaac Newton

postulated that science could be utilized in universal and

inductive ways. Newton determined that within a knowable

and predictable universe, certain laws could be held

constant. In other words, he contended that learnable

ideas could be used to create, predict, and otherwise

manipulate matters hitherto considered only *classifiable*.

But still, the view of the stars, and of physics in

general, was that of a perfect and knowable sphere, of

which our solar system existed at the center. Newton's

axiomatic view of the physical universe was unchallenged

for three hundred years. In the mid-nineteenth century,

most began to see the universe in terms of its constituents

as opposed to its bulk, and, today, the whole notion of the

perfect and knowable universe has been questioned when

Stephen Hawking applied quantum theory to cosmology.

"Quantum weirdness," general relativity, and the

incongruencies of the whole mix demonstrate a discipline,

while governed by a few agreed upon laws, in as much

uncertainty as any other community (Ferris 265).

The intersections of technology, philosophy, and

conversation have helped us realize our present view of the

universe(s). Given different means by which discourse

communities establish knowledge (Langer; North "Writing in

Philosophy Class"), what is the particular use of comparing

cosmology to composition? Like all discourse communities,

both fields rely heavily on reciprocal relationships

between technology, philosophy, and conversation. In fact,

it is through these relationships that the communities

themselves come into being, agreeing upon what constitutes

(i.e. discovering) knowledge. Writing of the university

community, Michael Joyce states:

> In shaping ourselves, we ourselves are shaped.
>
> This is the reciprocal relationship. It is
>
> likewise the elemental insight of fractal
>
> geometry: That each contour is itself an
>
> expression of itself in finer grain. So every
>
> educational institution is contoured in
>
> reciprocal relationship by the contours of each
>
> learner and teacher. (9)

This reciprocity eventually leads to discoveries, refutations, debate, and developments of new discourses and mediums for such discourses. Knowledge, therefore, becomes a result of communication; through examining a community's knowledge artifacts--that is, its discourse and textual evidence--we can distinguish the outlines of the community itself. As Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman state, "the discourse that one group of like-minded people use *defines* the community and is its product as well" (192). In other words, the discourse and artifacts of a research community develop into and out of the standards of its discipline.

This rudimentary definition of knowledge formation offers many potential avenues of exploration. Composition, like any other discipline, has had a history of shifts[2] in the way its knowledge has been discovered. While composition's discourse is fundamental as product and defining characteristic of its discipline and disciplinary shifts, negotiation and sociopolitical practice also play a part in constructing the discipline. Often a result of competition for limited resources, members of composition recognize that they:

> must consciously contend with the constraints and
>
> focuses put on their work through the habits,

standards and practices of the discipline, as

well as recognize the strain among contending

elements in the field and poachers from the

neighboring field. (Bazerman 75)

However, composition as a field dealing primarily with

language emphasizes language's principle constructing

force. As a result, it is useful to show language--the

particles in composition's quantum wave--as indicative of

the theoretical suppositions that define compositionists'

practice, as well as a practice/theory contradiction that

becomes more apparent as the composition research community

continues to develop. By examining the development of

certain epistemological assumptions via a brief history of

the composition community, sources of the contradictions

that the composition community has constructed might be

revealed.

One problem in chronicling the history of the

composition community by analyzing its textual evidence is

that before 1911, there were no scholarly journals or

research on the topic (Connors 69). The shared texts and

treatises of rhetoric teachers informed practice, hardly

academically legitimized scholarship. As evidenced by Hugh

Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1847),

rhetorical instruction was based on rules and imitation.
As Blair states:

> though rules and instructions cannot do all the
>
> is requisite, they may, however, do much that is
>
> of real use. They cannot, it is true, inspire
>
> genius; but they can direct and assist it. (11)

In one notable example on style, Blair goes to great
lengths in analyzing the tropes, diction, and syntax of
Joseph Addison of <u>The Spectator</u>, proclaiming:

> I conceive that examples taken from the writings
>
> of an author so justly esteemed, would on that
>
> account, not only be more attended to, but would
>
> also produce with good effect, of familiarizing
>
> those who study composition with the style of the
>
> writer, from whom they may, upon the whole,
>
> derive great benefit. (250)

The initial community of composition-rhetoric discovered
how to write by replicating and imitating systems they were
familiar with, just as Aristotle and Ptolemy conceptualized
a universe based on an easy-to-imagine replication of
familiar terrestrial systems.

Blair was neither the first nor the last of such
writing-through-replication rhetoricians. Richard Green

Parker, for example, argues in <u>Aids to English Composition</u>
(1851) that the student is to be introduced to composition
through "observations and illustrations as may appear to be
necessary for an intelligent comprehension of its rules and
principles" (Introduction). Composition research,
therefore, was more about the "proper" application of past
practices rather than topical inquiry. In a system of
education meant for "doctors, lawyers, and ministers," such
methods were quite appropriate (Connors 173). However,
this mode of research leaves little to build upon. As
communities developed, and the complex connections of
technology and philosophy changed the importance of what
people wanted to express, new shifts and discoveries were
set to occur.

As the German university system began to be "applied"
to the American college system around the 1860s, certain
features and disciplinary practices changed the nature of
community knowledge (Connors 174; Cohen 104). The ideal of
the German university was "higher study" and "empirical
scientific research" (Connors 174). In response to this
new system of education, compositionists started a long
trek of forced compensation by applying criteria-based
standards and practices to their inquiry in a sort of

Procrustean-bed approach to research. Just as Galileo transformed the study of cosmology through application of criteria based experimentation, as opposed to replication of known systems, so did the German system of "scientific inquiry" change the nature of academia, and eventually composition. As early as the end of the Civil War, S.W. Clark in First Lessons in English Grammar (1865) starts with, "Language as an Art has its foundations in Science," and that children should learn the "Elements of the Science" if they are to be properly schooled in language. A new "scientific method" was created to teach composition to students, one that involved not only imitation, but criteria-based application.[3]

Serious inquiry--one that involved a determined set of criteria to be matched and tested--was applied to the teaching of composition to possibly give composition equal status with its academic siblings. The criteria, however, were not initially applied to discovering how writers wrote, they were used as a means of training students how to write. The disadvantage of such a method was in its lack of conversation, negotiation, or reciprocity in writing development. These approaches were ruled by the means of tradition more than pragmatic or even empirical

concerns. Still, such a change may be argued as a transformation of a community of writers and rhetors into the discipline of composition; at the very least it started pedagogical conversations as to how to teach writing.

As the German university system began to take precedence over traditional schemes of education in the beginning of the twentieth century, the topics covered were often supplanted or altered to match more "scientific" inquiry. Because traditional rhetoric "was at best a suspect and unscientific study, one seemingly unredeemable by research, and at worst simply unscholarly drudgework" (Connors 180), rhetoric research still did not manifest beyond the traditions of belletristic or imitative instruction and it did not necessarily lend itself to alteration.

It was during the first half of the twentieth century that rhetoric and composition instruction made a drastic shift that would help both dilute and define its identity. Traditional rhetoric instructors had borrowed from literature both topic and means of instruction. As increasingly larger populations began attending universities and pursuing knowledge for knowledge's sake, literature, as a progenitor of rhetoric instruction, began

14

to secure more resources than research-identity-lacking
rhetoric. Additionally, the apparent "drudgework" of
composition, some professors during the period reading
2,000 to 3,000 essays a year,[4] gave those teaching little
time to develop any means of research inquiry past the
logistics of reading so much work. Composition, relying on
the traditions of literature and maintained by exhausted
teachers, became diluted as class size and variety
increased, yet also started to define itself as a community
that established itself on its discourse community members'
participation more than any external legitimization.
Despite this move, the composition community was still
ensconced in the university politic, and it had to
construct an identity compatible with such an environment.

     In the latter half of the twentieth century,
university enrollments continued to grow, increasing by
more than 500 percent (Cohen 196). Unfortunately, the
composition community was still too overwhelmed to develop
a research identity. Previously based on drill workbooks,
copybooks, and the like, by mid-twentieth century,
composition instruction changed. To gain status it
continually adapted "scientific" approaches to writing and
writing research to legitimize its subject. The criteria

that were being used to teach writing, as well as the

techniques for testing the results of writers, developed

into more and more complicated schemes, partly to account

for the huge increased in student populations. By 1965

Kellogg Hunt wrote Grammatical Structures Written at Three

Grade Levels, in which he constructed a schema for

assessing writing syntax of students, presumably to assess

a large influx of students. Hunt measured the "minimum

terminable unit or t-unit, which [was] simply a main clause

with all its appended modifiers, including subordinate

clauses" (Hillocks 64). Just as composition pedagogy was

marked by scientific changes, assessment of writing took on

a scientific feel. In Stephen North's analysis of "The

Researchers" in The Making of Knowledge in Composition:

Portrait of an Emerging Field, such scientific modes of

inquiry rely on positivist philosophy:

>the belief that things-in-the-world, including in
>
>this case people, operate according to
>
>determinable or 'lawful' patterns, general
>
>tendencies, which exist quite apart from our
>
>experience of them, and which are, in addition,
>
>accessible to the right kinds of inquiry. (137)

Linguistic syntactic measurement became a means by which teachers could gauge and teach writing with apparently universal results. Hunt's classification system was followed by a number of scientific analyses using the nomenclature in different grade levels, environments, and modes.

While this approach to the teaching of composition might have appeared as much needed disciplinization, it left much to be desired in the realm of composition research. As James Moffett writes:

> Teachers were trained to prescribe all sorts of good things like unity and coherence, consistency and harmony, clarity, vividness, proportion, and so on but were never shown how human beings really achieve these when authoring from authentic subjects and for authentic audiences. (22)

If the purpose of research is merely the prescription of a rubric, then composition had arrived. However, if research is the determination of why something occurs, and how it can be predicted in the future, composition research was doing very little, and therefore, lacked answers to the mystery of how writers "do" whatever it is they "do."

In the late 1960s, however, social and political

changes, coupled with the cyclical rejection of tradition

gave rise to a reevaluation of writers and their processes.

Since composition was still searching for an academic

identity, the sources of this new, "writing process

movement"[5] were quite varied; still, they brought new

methods of inquiry and, coupled with more inclusive

university admission policies that required more

composition instructors, a new group of academics in search

of a viable and legitimate topic of research. Donald

Murray, Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, Mina Shaughnessy, and

Peter Elbow all varied in their "research" methods.

There are many unique features of the writing process

movement: the emphasis of the process over the product; the

apparent empowerment of the writer to learn through writing

him or herself; the importance of developing a perspective

on writing that encouraged recursive and collaborative

interaction. Writing seemed to be transformed from a

formula that must always be followed into an expressive,

communicative, and most important purposeful act. In a

sense, composition research moved from the classification

of a text to a more inductive and useful process of

research on the acts of (and teaching of) writers. The

Newtonian revolution in writing had begun. Researchers
were manipulating some variable to see if they could
predict what would happen in an inductive way. The
products of process-based research were still marked by the
legitimating form of the sciences.[6] However, composition
researchers were beginning to take a larger theoretical
approach to writing.

While new articulations provided more diversity,
writing research did not fundamentally change; it just
shifted its focus.[7] Lisa Ede writes:

> the writing process movement thus helped to
> create and to legitimate the field of composition
> studies. It did so both by responding to a
> crisis, the literacy crisis, and by in effect
> creating a theoretical crisis of its own. (34)

While the writing process gave something more observable to
research, quantify, and theorize, and while the process
movement now had something to demonize--something to which
it could respond to--the so-called "product," composition
still lacked any research paradigm unique to the
discipline. In fact, at its inception, the process
movement invented the "product movement" to stand for
everything bad in the past, even though such a formalized

paradigm as "product teaching" never really existed. "Product" came to stand for "old practices," and, in fact, never really considered itself a "movement" (Miller 110). Composition's quest for legitimacy was still in a Newtonian transformation; researchers adapted scientific research paradigms to observe and predict writing as readily as if "process" was some predictive catalyst to teaching writing.

During the early writing process movement, there were teachers and writers who attempted to foreground the caveat of conceiving of writing as a formula. In Writing without Teachers, Elbow warns that he is "making universal generalizations upon a sample of one" (16). Elbow presents his "process" as an alternative to those traditionally taught in school. Similarly, Murray writes, "we do not teach writing effectively if we try to make all students and all writing the same" (5). These writer-practitioners were articulating an important position in the writing process--that of the writer and his or her individual negotiation with a "text," whatever that "text" may be.

Of course, the contradiction here was that the process movement, with its emphasis on spending time with the individual writer came at a time when composition teachers were still overwhelmed by the continued escalation of

student populations and increasingly haggard by new

politico-academic responsibilities such as committee

participation and publication. As a result, an unfortunate

product of process research was that it shifted from a

reductionist view of the text--what was lacking in a

product and how to add to it--to a reductionist view of the

writing--what was lacking in the process and how to add to

it. Rather than looking at, and working with, the writer

in recursive and negotiated ways, researchers began

constructing processes to follow and topics to answer, in

part to accommodate the large student populations who were

required to take first year writing courses. As with

Newton, however, the fundamental problems started to arise

when inductive reasoning began to replace more inclusive

and thorough research.

Borrowing from classical rhetoric and adapting "new"

process research, textbooks such as John Lannon's The

Writing Process state rather matter-of-factly, "the writing

process . . . is a composing process of planning, drafting

and, revising" (9). Even if research had partially shifted

to more individual-based writing instruction, the mass of

students and the need for compositionists to academically

legitimize themselves, led those involved to seek research

that could establish positivistic variables and facilitated *the* way to teach writing. Rather than, as was done in the preceding half of the century, imitate past works and record them in a workbook (Connors 99), students were to imitate a writing process and, as a result, magically become a better writer.

These problems eventually led to serious critiques of the writing process movement. To some, composition reared its ugly head into places it should not. The science it used in its work was adapted at best, hacked at worst. Writing was not a universal process that could easily be generalized, which forever eliminated positivist predictability and therefore most scientific research methodologies. The alternative, that teachers study and work with individual writers, was also seen as a waste of resources to an increasingly larger student population. As a result, "interested in separating themselves from the previous generation," contemporary compositionists began exploring social constructionist philosophy and its impact on a writer's identity, a move that eventually leads those involved to question the unique authenticity of a writer's voice or her process (Tobin 7).

Today, compositionists have reached the quantum weirdness stage. While we have increased the variability in composition discipline by being more inclusive of alternative research, we have also potentially limited the usefulness of our research as far as its ability to allow us to generalize and predict. Our abandonment of the quest for a super-string theory of composition has led us into a post-process milieu. We understand writing as a social activity that is negotiated rather than performed or "processed." Our research methods, nevertheless, may not reflect such a change.

David Bartholomae in "What is Composition?" writes, "we move furniture in the classroom, collaborate on electronic networks, take turns being the boss, but we do not change writing. It is still the same old routine" (16). This critique is also reflected in our present research processes. We have manipulated and measured variables in imitation of the sciences; we have interpreted and closely read texts in imitation of our sister discipline, literature; we have shared personal accounts, invented nostalgic stories about how much better or worse writing instruction was in the past, and given expert testimony to our own experiences as researchers, teachers, or writers.

Nevertheless, we have also learned that the application of
a strict research methodology at the exclusion of larger,
shared experience and inquiry benefits the composition
community very little.

Disciplining the Composition Community

At what point did "composition the discipline"
supplant "composition the community"? Again, trying to
determine composition's birth, this time as a formal
discipline, is almost an impossible endeavor, as witnessed
by North in The Making of Knowledge in Composition:
Portrait of an Emerging Field:

> Any date chosen to mark the beginning of "modern"
> Composition is bound to be arbitrary. One might,
> for example, consider 1873, the year Harvard
> first added an English composition requirement to
> its list of admission standards. Even more
> promising, perhaps, would be 1949, the year the
> Conference on College Composition and
> Communication, the group which has come to assume
> the power of the new field, was constituted. And
> yet, events in education generally, and English

specifically, were such that the early 1960s call

the most attention to themselves. (9)

Despite North's "arbitrary" dates, however, the composition

community has existed before 1873, and will continue in a

form most likely very different in the future. Of course,

the reasoning behind this proclamation is that the

inquirers, researchers, "practitioners" determine community

knowledge. North even cites Paul Diesing's Patterns of

Discovery in the Social Sciences in stating that a

community's "interaction is facilitated by shared beliefs

and values--goals, myths, terminology, self-concepts--which

make [its] work mutually intelligible and valuable" (qtd.

in North, Making of Knowledge 2). What North, and to some

extent Connors, call "modern" composition is a subject that

has some defined means or mode of inquiry, a subject that

may be classified as a "discipline." Such a systematic

subject fits rather nicely in the German system of

instruction.

Indeed, our perception of what constitutes an academic

discipline is one still rooted in the traditional German

university model. To some, the domains of discipline or

field or subject or specialty are one of objects and not of

the people who are the inhabitants. A physicist looks at

laws and phenomena. A mathematician concerns herself with theorems and formulae. These so-called natural or hard sciences wander the realms of the axiomatic in search of the correct, or at least more correct, answer. However, practices or even epistemologies need not meet some pre-determined "scientific" criteria to be considered useful and valuable knowledge. For example, the diverse conversation of composition has constructed a quantity of significant and useful knowledge.

Still, in charting an academic community's formation, observation of the objects in a field reveals much about its participants. For example, the field of anthropology involves not only ethnography as a means of determining social behaviors (observing the work of bodies) but it also observes the work of the past through artifacts and symbols--specifically, looking at the objects of the people as representative of their culture and social interactions. Determining the substance and breadth of a field of study as a categorical focus of one aspect of a larger domain is neither useful nor practical, as it has been established that both are most likely interrelated in inexplicable ways--the study of people is as much a reflection of objects as is the converse.

Within university culture, the objects of study are

the legitimizing functions of approved textual artifacts.

Charles Bazerman and John Paradis state the following:

> writing is more than socially embedded: it is
>
> socially constructive. Writing structures our
>
> relations with others and organizes our
>
> perceptions of the world. By studying texts
>
> within their contexts, we study as well the
>
> dynamics of context building. (3)

Bazerman and Paradis' "context building" is, basically,

discipline building. Bazerman and Paradis argue that texts

respond and construct a discipline. In light of the move

to establish the textual artifacts of practices in

composition, texts--treatises, textbooks, and formalized

inquiry--adopt legitimizing modes.

Since the discourse and artifacts of a research

community develop into and out of the standards of its

discipline, clearly, charting the history of composition

means charting the history of its textual artifacts. These

artifacts hold power in their interactions and reactions to

larger cultural and social issues into which they are

derived or applied. Even though Susan Miller suggests that

such views of textual artifacts often "have ignored the

political implications of writing as the site of power,"
(111) in a way, compositionists can imagine that such
artifacts are a result of the shared practices of the
community of composition.[8]

However, the filters of university research forums can
dilute our community diversity. Texts--research or
treatises, narratives or methods, textbooks or readers--are
modes of power in that they are a fixed representation of
the productivity of an author. Because such texts are
engendered ideologically and mostly centralized, they offer
up a significant and potentially objectively perceived
measure for the apparent productivity of a researcher or
academic (Cohen 284). Therefore, when working in the
academic fields, part of disciplinary practice is
perpetuating this mode of authorship, as it constitutes
standard procedure. Composition's disciplinary status is
based on that which is legitimized through reporting, most
often in centralized texts. Jacqueline Jones Royster and
Jean C. Williams warn us, in fact, that looking at textual
artifacts as indicative of research--or status--in the
discipline reveals a dangerously centralized view. Royster
and Williams show that when narrative "histories" of

composition are written without revealing the author's own

position or location within the community,

> centralizing their historical viewpoints within
>
> mainstream experiences, without having to specify
>
> their locations as researchers in a more
>
> diversified landscape, their narratives become
>
> naturalized within this very mainstream, as other
>
> such narratives are habitually naturalized, as
>
> universal and thereby transparent. (565)

Royster and Williams later add that the composition

community needs to recognize "the simultaneous existence of

multiple viewpoints, and the need to articulate those

viewpoints and to merge them in the interest of the larger

project of knowledge making in the discipline" (568). Any

such history based on textual evidence is maintained with

the assumption that "language practices engender a set of

ideological prescriptions" which are in "continual conflict

for hegemony" (Berlin Rhetorics 86). We can debate as to

whether our practices or our ideas have legitimate

supremacy over the other, but either way, those who

participate in composition have sought to subdue our

inherent subjectivity in the quest for validity.[9]

What happens when the ideology and/or epistemology (or even paradigm) of a field is fundamentally opposed to the yoke of external disciplinary criteria? In a sense, if we can imagine an academic discipline moving from matching and imitating standard practice of classification, as in the case of the Copernican view, into a system of induction and prediction, as in the Newtonian view, traditional composition studies have developed, if ever so slightly behind the curve, a contradiction. This contradiction is the "do as we say, not as we do" approach to research. Just as quantum theories have called into question the theories and methods of a classical system, so have the trends in composition. The present paradigm of composition theory involves a situated and critical conversation as core to writing and discovery; however, the product and productivity of a researcher or author, is still at the center of what compositionists do professionally.

In terms of knowledge production, interaction with a rhetorical situation determines the product. Bazerman reminds us that, "within perceived forums of communication, we also become aware that our utterances will be held accountable to various elements and procedures considered relevant by people participating in that forum" (12). He

goes on to suggest that in any rhetorical situation
expectations determine the "interpretative charity" (12) of
the reader, the more distant from the formulaic, the less
forgiving the audience. Yet, as in a writing situation,
the combining of two ideas or characters forces the writer
to rethink one or the other, or both. "As we work through
how two concepts . . . can be brought together in a
sentence that defines their relationship, we may end up
articulating a new idea at the intersection of the two"
(13). Bazerman continues:

> In integrating . . . heterogeneous elements,
>
> balancing the opportunities, responding to
>
> constraints, making discoveries, being excited by
>
> possibilities in progress, and solving the
>
> various puzzles that arise, we enter into a
>
> complex juggling act that absorbs all the focal
>
> attention we can muster. (14)

As writers, this recursive and inventive process helps
determine how we come to create meaning for others and
ourselves. As teachers, the process of teaching coupled
with others' reports on theory and practice of teaching
helps us do the same in that forum. However, as
researchers our process of discovery is limited purely to

the predetermined space defined by tradition and a political academic structure. The process in question, and that which compositionists seem to recommend is, as Murray states:

> the process of discovery through language. It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world. (5)

Murray's view--while bordering on the romantic--still lends itself to the process of research, inasmuch as the process of research is the process of writing. As compositionists, we have to struggle further with the paradox.

In fact, a number of researchers have tried to make sense of this paradox. Lucy McCormick Calkins points to the contradiction of the composition community in that we, as teachers of writers, tell students to focus more on the dialogues and processes rather than the product of their labors, but then we turn around and focus purely on the product of ours and others' research. Furthermore, our critique of this contradiction appears very little in

scholarship: "Although research in composition is what we do, we rarely read or write about the process of research" (Calkins 126). The disingenuous nature of "do as we say, not as we do" is echoed when Rebecca Rickly states, "we should make a stronger attempt to practice what we preach in regard to the (e)valuation of process, experimentation, dialogue, and socially constructed knowledge and texts" (28). Additionally, in "The Politics of Electronic Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition," Taylor writes, "as scholars in rhetoric and composition we have the added ethical responsibility of trying to realize within our own scholarly communities the values we promote in our writing programs" (208). Compositionists might still consider that if we start acting a particular way, that we will somehow "fix" our contradictions, but in the (post)-post-process, social constructionist, anti-foundationalist world of composition, a paradox solution cannot contain such a false uber-fix; nevertheless, we should at least strive for some measure of academic stability.

A useful composition research method, therefore, must be one that incorporates an assumption that the work in the classroom--and the theories that inform the teachers in the classroom--become the equivalent of research and the

theories that inform the researchers. The composition

community attempted to establish legitimacy not in its

topic of study but in the methodology it employed. If

composition relies on methodologies and validation from

other disciplines, it will continually feel itself lacking

an identity. A possible solution is in re-imagining

multiple, alternative, and community-based research

paradigms. In the next chapter, I will scaffold one such

paradigm at the intersections of online research

communities and Rorty's alternative definition of the

"rational" in which the solidarity of a shared space and

dialogue offer a beneficial and critical research forum.

CHAPTER TWO

PARADIGM LEGITIMACY, AND THE

CONVERSATION OF MAN . . .

ERR, HUMANKIND

As we have seen in composition's history, uni-disciplinary criteria often develop out of multidisciplinary intersections and practices. However, the ongoing narrative of any research community is constantly changing, and the distinctions between science and the humanities are blurred. One voice partly responsible for such a blurred lens, and the person who originally argued for the social construct of paradigms as defining modes of research is Thomas Kuhn in his 1962 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. To understand Kuhn and a social constructionist philosophy, it is important to construct a summary that reveals a model of community conversation as a means of composing knowledge.[10] According to Kuhn, scientific discoveries have been determined by systems of thinking or paradigms[11] that determine not only the systems of which they are a part--as Kuhn states, "law, theory, application, and instrumentation"--but also the individual parts (10). In other words, each characteristic

of a paradigm is in and of itself its own separate paradigm (Kuhn 175).

If science has been determined by social constructs and not tautological methodologies, then the apparent armor of objectivity that science holds is not beyond reproach. In fact, Kuhn suggests that any primary scientific theory is a result of popularity; he writes, "paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute" (23). Kuhn argues that if competing paradigms can exist--if there is no unquestionable "truth" out there--then once popular systems or paradigms can be shifted to marginal status. These shifts occur when a paradigm begins to break down in light of anomalies. Whether it is law or application, when a particular characteristic cannot answer a question or solve a problem that it is expected to, then such an anomaly requires the "rejection of one time-honored scientific theory in favor of another incompatible with it" (Kuhn 6).

As with most interpretive work, summaries of Kuhn's argument are most often skewed ideologically.[12] This phenomenon may be one of the reasons that Kuhn's argument

has been in and out of vogue for the last twenty years;

while Kuhn's social constructionist stance lends itself

well to some work, specifically thinking within disciplines

of anthropology and the social sciences, his ideas have

faced resistance in the natural and applied sciences, as

well as in the humanities. Social sciences readily avail

themselves of a social constructionist viewpoint, whereas

so-called "hard sciences" do not. As for the humanities,

Kenneth Bruffee writes that discovery and creation have

been perceived as "solitary," and that "the vitality of the

humanities lies in the talents and endeavors of each of us

as individuals" (404). Kuhn turns solitary acts of end-

state discovery or creation into an ongoing process of

justification, conversation, and negotiation. Communities

that have relied on the Cartesian tradition of perceiving

that an individual's struggle with reason is the primary

means of determining reality are bound to interrogate

Kuhn's challenge.

It is in the service of this interrogation that

critics have argued that Kuhn relegates the previously

esteemed objectivity of science to "mob psychology" (Rorty

"Science" 38; see also Franklin). Confrontations with

anomalies and eventual usurpations of "traditional"

paradigms by new paradigms are what Kuhn has called

"scientific revolutions" (6). Such a theory has limited

Kuhn's acceptance. After all, according to "hard science,"

things "are" and no amount of social debate will change

that; it is understandable that we, as a society or

community, may call things by a different name, but we

cannot change the nature of existence. In response to this

claim, Bruffee uses a distinction of Rorty's to argue that

"we generate knowledge by 'dealing with' our *beliefs* about

the physical reality that shoves us around. Specifically,

we generate knowledge by justifying those beliefs socially"

(777). It does not mean that something is not real until

society has deemed it so; instead, it means that something

is not real until society has to face the implications of

that reality. Under this precept, social debate and

negotiation constructs reality.

Bruffee's "Social Construction, Language, and the

Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographical Essay" explores

four core anomalies of thought and how social

constructionist thinking has allowed us to confront these

anomalies: that knowledge has a universal foundation; that

the mind is wired in a universal and measurable way; that

individual creates knowledge through the process of

creating and strengthening connections (the so-called "matrix of all thought"); and that the mind has two parts, one that reflects outer reality, and the other that "contemplates that reflection" (Bruffee 776). These assumptions eventually break down in trying to describe and predict how knowledge is created. Contrary to a positivist view that knowledge is a product of proper reasoning, Bruffee offers a social constructionist view of knowledge as non-foundational, the result of conversation and negotiation with a discourse community or communities. This shift in how knowledge is discovered, in fact, is indicative and exemplary of a Kuhnian paradigm shift.

Composition theory, as a hybrid searching for academic legitimacy, has found solace in a social constructionist view. With the contemporary move to social constructionist thinking, the scope and usefulness of research in the realm of writing and the teaching of writing has reaffirmed language as a topic and dialogue as a knowledge-synthesizing force. If we conceive of language as indicative instead of reflective of knowledge, then the way that language is used in a composition classroom as well as a means of research fundamentally changes.

That Kuhn and a social constructionist view have changed the way we look at knowledge within our community far more represents a paradigm shift than does a mere modification in pedagogy.[13] Research that looks to inform theory, while benefiting from the debate and the new forms of inquiry (technological or otherwise), still suffers from the constraints of tradition, specifically the "desire to find 'foundations' to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray" (Rorty Philosophy 315).

Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer allude to this search for a foundation from which "good" composition knowledge shall spring in Research in Written Composition (1963). Partly in response to composition teachers of the time favoring lore to published research, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer write, "not enough investigators are really informing themselves about the procedures and results of previous research before embarking on their own" (5). This proposal could be interpreted that, if we, as compositionists, were to just follow the correct procedure, and discover the right foundation to which the majority can agree, our research would be much more meaningful. The composition community, in turn, has attempted to answer this critique by working

to inform itself of past work and adopting positivist

research paradigms. However, such a move does not

necessarily achieve the outcome of more telling and useful

research if it only limits its inquiry to past research

much in the way previous to Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and

Schoer's critique, composition teachers would limit their

inquiry to past practice. Neither motive achieves a useful

research dialogue. By the 1990s, North responds to this

research problem in "The Death of Paradigm Hope, the End of

Paradigm Guilt, and the Future of (Research in)

Composition." North argues that we should abandon the

errant quest of Paradigm Hope--the belief that if we just

look hard enough we will find the perfect procedure to make

"real" research.

North suggests four ways that the death of paradigm

hope will revise composition research. Compositionists

will be asked to research "out of the old confines" and

into "new complexities," and then report on these findings

in new forums with new "rhythms" (North 203). Ultimately,

North writes:

> more inquiries working at a wider range of sites
>
> in a greater variety of forms--all less
>
> constrained by the cumulative weight of past

41

inquiries--will produce a greater quantity of

research and produce it faster. (203-204)

North's fourth alteration, taken as a culmination of the

previous three, suggests that research will become less

"transportable" and "disposable" (205). North writes, "The

object of inquiry, 'composition,' will have lost its

imagined identity" (205).

While North's apparent rejection of traditional

paradigms falls very much in line with thinking that meta-

narratives offer more to "truth" and knowledge than

traditional criteria-based experimentation, he seems to

leave out social negotiation and justification. North

wants individual practitioners to be guided by their own

requirements and needs for research, which seems to rest on

the assumption that a given community has enough of the

same requirements and needs that they will eventually

inform each other. Is that really what the composition

community wants? John Dewey writes:

> there is always a danger in a new movement that
>
> in rejecting the aims and methods of that which
>
> it would supplant, it may develop principles
>
> negatively rather than positively and
>
> constructively. (Experience 20)

Eradicating paradigms is an example of such negative

principles. Like a hill clear-cut for a new development,

as soon as the first rain hits, catastrophic flooding

occurs; similarly, uprooting all previous practice, and

putting nothing in its place can leave those left

floundering. There should be at least some goal in the

composition community's research practices that avoids the

transfer of some static foundational knowledge, but allows

a common forum of communication for differing research

purposes and methods. Rorty suggests such a possibility,

specifically in "Science as Solidarity."

Richard Rorty and Non-foundational Knowledge

Just as Kuhn brought social constructionist thought to

the sciences, Rorty brought an extended social

constructionist argument and a revised pragmatist case to

philosophy. The relationship or paradox[14] of discipline

epistemology and social constructionism suggests a number

of refutations to traditional views of cognition.[15] Rorty's

work seems to focus primarily on knowledge as a result of a

community's ability to socially justify its beliefs to

other communities (Philosophy; Truth and Progress; "Science

as Solidarity"). Rorty, like Kuhn and Bruffee, considers

language not as a medium by which truth is passed, but at the center, inseparable to knowledge and research (Bruffee 778).

This extended argument of social constructionist thinking offers a number of insights into academe. Because the proper application of established criteria and reasoning has been the traditional academic path to truth, a significant challenge to such a path from the discipline most indicative of it (i.e. science), fundamentally challenges those other disciplines that envy its practices. Rorty writes, "Science is thought of as offering 'hard,' 'objective' truth: truth as correspondence to reality," therefore, the disciplines in the humanities have to worry whether they are being scientific enough in making their work "worthy of the term 'true'" (Rorty 35). The adoption/adaptation of science to other disciplines in hopes of gaining status in the university limits the eventual effectiveness of research in the disciplines. Still, as Rorty writes:

> any academic discipline which wants a place at
> the trough, but is unable to offer the
> predications and the technology provided by the
> natural sciences, must either pretend to imitate

science or find some way of obtaining "cognitive

status" without the necessity of discovering

facts. (35)

In any case, the scientist is still looked at as being more worthy of knowledge and truth, and those who are not in the discipline should at least imitate it. Ultimately, imitation can limit the creation of new knowledge.

Rorty argues that some of those in the humanities have given up on trying to replicate science, and instead, have concerned themselves with "value" and "critical reflection" (35). This view, he claims, is just as problematic. This distinction constructs a false binary in that humanists-- compositionists, "literary critics," "philosophers"--are seen as being more concerned and skilled at critical reflection and "taking big[,] broad views of things" when in fact, there really is no basis in thinking they are better at such skills than any other discipline (36). James Berlin makes a similar argument, writing that all of liberal education centers on fostering critical reflection and preparing people "to become active and critical agents in shaping the economic, social, political, and cultural conditions of their historical moment" (Rhetorics 52).

If scientists, teachers, and historians alike are intended to participate in (e)valuation and critical reflection, then why are scientists still given top billing as harvesters of truth? It is, of course, their methodological scythe. Rorty sets up a distinction regarding the term "rationality," offering two dissimilar definitions: methodical versus tolerant, open negotiation. Rorty's first definition of "rational" is as it has traditionally been defined--methodical; in other words, as Rorty states, "to have criteria for success laid down in advance" (36). This definition is problematic, Rorty writes, since artistic and humanist endeavors would have little need of their activity if they knew what it was they were going to do before they do it. If we conceive of writing as a purely artistic enterprise, then there are no significantly comparable criteria to be met. If such were the case, if writers were to match some all inclusive model, then what good would writing serve both the writer and its audience? As Rorty later claims, "it is characteristic of democracy and pluralistic societies to continually redefine their goals" (37); therefore, it would little profit such societies to formulize writing, or even writing instruction.

Rorty's second definition of "rational" can benefit
all disciplines. The rational, according to Rorty, "names
a set of moral virtues: tolerance, respect for the opinions
of those around one, willingness to listen, reliance on
persuasion rather than force" (37). In fact, Rorty argues,
this "softer" definition institutes a means through which
social constructionist thinking allows all disciplines to
gain "status" from a solidarity with others in a field or
particular form of inquiry and can also help to eradicate
arbitrary disciplinary distinctions.

These "virtues" should be the new paradigm for
research; a paradigm that does not assume that all previous
work should be placed in the intellectual bargain bin.
Rorty states that scientific "institutions give
concreteness and detail to the idea of 'unforced
agreement'" (39). It is not the scientific community's
traditional, Enlightenment influenced, methical quest for
the Truth, but its "model of human solidarity" that should
be emulated. In other words, legitimacy through research
is not about the methodology, the "correct" way to divine
truth, but instead should be attained through negotiation
and by listening to "as many suggestions and arguments as
[one] can" (Rorty 39). Science as a field, even before

Baconian scientific methods or Netwonian theoretical

induction, relied on social justification to a community

for legitimacy. We, as composition researchers, should

rest our convictions more on such social virtues and

justifications rather than some invocative quasi-divining

dilettantism

Research inquiry relying on conversation and

negotiation, coupled with solidarity with a community or

communities, would inform others more in the sense that the

communities would listen more to ideas and worry less about

status or value of their truth. In addition, such a mode

of inquiry would make others outside that community more

apt to participate in their own community with less concern

that other communities legitimated them. After all, Rorty

alludes to Dewey's comment that, "any philosophical system

is going to be an attempt to express the ideas of some

community's way of life" (43). Rorty continues;

> On this view, philosophy does not justify
>
> affiliation with a community in the light of
>
> something ahistorical called "reason" or
>
> "transcultural principles." It simply expatiates
>
> on the special advantages of that community over
>
> other communities. (43)

As no community has a special "right" to the truth in a social constructionist milieu, such encounters and conversations give scientists, professors, students, and citizens more profound participation in the larger dialogues in which we live.

Presently, an interesting manifestation of these larger dialogues exists in the Internet. Academic disciplines, communities, agencies, and individuals alike all have contributed to the creation of the Internet under the implicit guidance of a shared sense of solidarity. In fact, as communities have continued to develop the dialogues that construct these spaces, they have in turn informed communities outside the medium of the Internet.

Consequently, Rorty reasons that we should "worry about the choice between two hypotheses, rather than about whether there is something which makes either true. To take this stance would rid us of questions about the "objectivity of value" (41). Methodologies are given status in our present system. As seen with composition, however, searching for legitimacy through adapting external methodologies has not always benefited the research community. What has kept composition viable has been its commitment to writing and the reciprocal loyalty of its

members.   In line with Rorty, composition too can be a
model for human solidarity and social constructionist
philosophy because of its collaborative spirit.

The Collaborative Spirit Within

It would stand to follow that our research methods
should privilege our conscious acceptance of Bruffee's
definition of social construction that "understands
reality, knowledge, thoughts, facts, texts, selves, and so
on as community-generated and community-maintained
linguistic entities" (774).   While collaborative or
cooperative meaning making is a behavior that we replicate
in the classroom under the philosophical guidance that such
collaboration is how the "real world" or at least the
"realer world" operates, our research practices do not
necessarily favor this spirit.

As the university is a community of competing agendas,
realizing a revolution in research practice is neither
realistic nor beneficial.   Some might view drastic changes
as merely reactionary or ideological, and those already in
roles to affect change have, in fact, achieved those roles
through traditional means.   To confront the agendas of
traditionally perceived legitimacy of "scientism," research

communities, such as composition, whose theory and practice do not reflect the positivism of traditional science, have had to exercise change by adapting means of research that they value into ways that external communities might value. In the words of Joyce, "sometimes change is more comfortable if we can adapt old terms for new things, old roles for new ways" (9). In composition, however, the roles and terms became standard and defining practice, and the agenda for change became more conservative. Nevertheless, the paradox of "do as we say, not as we do," that Calkins, Taylor, North, and others have demonstrated, has given us impetus to reevaluate how we envision research.

Calkins, in "Forming Research Communities among Naturalistic Researchers," writes, "we urge teachers to focus on process as well as the product of writing, but *our* focus continues to be on the topics of research, and we give only cursory attention to methods" (125). Furthermore, teachers in the field of composition encourage students to examine and interrogate "personal accounts of writers," yet in turn these same teachers do not examine and interrogate research methodologies. Instead, researchers focus on "decontextualized definitions and

rules about research methods" (125). Briefly surveying

works written on research in the field of composition

supports Calkins' point. North's The Making of Knowledge

in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field, the

bibliographic Research on Written Composition by George

Hillocks, and Methods and Methodology in Composition

Research, edited by Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan, all

contribute to the research methodology tradition.

Traditional work on research in composition is akin to

traditional work in other disciplines: it names methods,

classifies processes, and theorizes only after some

presumable objective criteria have been set. As noted

before, unfortunately, knowledge does not reveal itself

when seen through the lens of some pre-determined formula;

knowledge is socially constructed.

Calkins culminates her initial argument by suggesting

that it is time to "demythologize" research. More

importantly, however, it might be time to "demethodologize"

it as well. Because of our lack of an "ongoing dialogue"

with other researchers, it is time to shift our focus from

trying to paradigmize our discipline with enlightenment

criteria and, instead, construct a more equitable and

beneficial way in which we can share and construct new

research (Calkins 125). In other words, as Rorty argues,

it is time for researchers to abandon the rhetoric of

Enlightenment methodologies and construct a new rhetoric to

interrogate issues in all disciplines (44). Rorty, as well

as Calkins, looks to community dialogue as a means of

answering this issue. They both argue that the formation

of a community, and a new rhetoric, benefits the formation

and investigation of truth, which positivist science has

been traditionally benighted to proclaim. Both Rorty and

Calkins propose that communities, in a social

constructionist sense, return far more useful results to a

subject if they are not limited by positivistic

methodologies, and as in Rorty's appraisal, if they have no

disciplinary limits.

Calkins' effort to resolve the paradox is much less

extreme than North's argument that we abandon criteria

altogether; in fact, as with most potential paradox

resolutions, Calkins' desire is very much in contradiction

to her initial warrants. Calkins makes the claim that

positivist research paradigms do not serve composition

instruction (127); yet, she also denounces the use of

personal teaching narratives as a means of research.

Calkins' penultimate proclamation, therefore, is that

research should have "goals and examples of excellence" (129). It could be argued that such "goals and examples" are indeed merely another name for criteria and form which Calkins just determined to be of little use to writing research. She supports her argument by suggesting a taxonomy based on ethnographic research, descriptive case studies, and what North would call "practitioner" research. She names these as "naturalistic" modes of inquiry, further delineating one "form" of research into many sub-forms. Her intentions are good, but her outcome further compounds the initial paradox. If inquiry is argued to be more beneficial to a community if it somehow becomes more dialogic and less synthetic, how is a formalized research, community-based paradigm better than any other formalist model?

Calkins examines three "naturalistic" research methodologies: descriptive case studies (e.g. Flower and Hayes' "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" and Emig's The Composing Processes of Twelve Graders); ethnographic case studies (e.g. Shirley Brice Heath, as well as Dillon and Searle's "The Role of Language in One First Grade Class") and teaching case study (e.g. Calkins' Lessons from a Child). Calkins main complaint in the existing research

under her former two categories is that, "researchers simply use their data as a pool from which to draw theories and supportive anecdotes, never dealing with the data bank as a whole" (138).

Calkins' third naturalistic research category--the teaching case study--more fully approaches a demetholodigized composition research community. The teaching case study involves practitioner-researchers who "begin with tentative theories that inform their practices, and they observe the results of those practices" (131). In such a mode, the cycle of theory, practice, and observation continues on, informing not only the practitioner-researcher, but potentially other practitioner-researchers as well. This latter aspect of the teaching case study is problematic for the practitioner-researcher in two ways. First, Calkins writes that they "may not identify with one another enough to recognize similarities and differences among themselves" (140). Second, the teaching case study often fails to be as theoretically situated as a more traditional case study or other scientific mode of research. Reviews of empirical research, both methods and content, as well as predictable or theoretical hypotheses, according to Calkins, are lacking in present practitioners.

She writes, "Although it is certainly true that most teachers do not read educational research, it is wrong to assume that research in the field of composition has little to offer practitioner-researchers" (141). If such is the case, it leaves one to wonder where practitioners initially earned their "tentative theories" about teaching.

It appears that Calkins' answer to the paradox of practitioner-researchers doing one thing, but teaching another, is that practitioner-researchers should become active participants in their research, as well as active in the dialogues of their research community. Research in composition should follow our pedagogical practice of open social debate as opposed to a vain search for cognitive legitimacy or a coerced consensus. Constant, recursive, and collaborative dialogues that we espouse in our writing pedagogy and critical interpretation should, in fact, be enacted in our research as well. As Rorty would argue, it benefits a community or discipline more to interface with other people than searching for "interfaces" with Truth. Indeed, the composition research community has already turned to certain interfaces with people; in the next chapter, I will discuss some examples of the composition community's theoretical application of collaborative

dialogues as they appear in online forums, specifically
persistent conversations and hypertextual web spaces.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPUTERS AND COMPOSITION

Compositionists have been compelled to change their

research methods because these methods do not necessarily

reflect compositionists' pedagogical or epistemological

practices. Rorty's contention that research communities

develop methods of inquiry that enact conversation and

solidarity reflects compositionists' social constructionist

epistemology. However, a drastic shift in research

practices is not entirely practical. As shown earlier,

composition has been under a number of influences,

primarily those that have legitimized the discipline.

Yet, two mitigating influences are technology and

culture. A Rortian shift from interfacing with "Truth" to

interfacing with people is a reflection of both

technological and cultural change. As Jay David Bolter

writes:

> Just as our culture is moving from the printed
>
> book to the computer, it is also in the final
>
> stages of the transition from hierarchical social
>
> order to what we might call "network culture" . .
>
> . With all these, the making and breaking of

> social links, people are beginning to function as
>
> elements in a hypertextual network of
>
> affiliations. (232-233)

Computers, hypertext, and the Internet have coalesced into
a connectivity network that facilitates interfacing with
people, and in fact has become an almost ubiquitous form of
communication. In this way, significant changes in
research practices have already taken place maybe not in
response to, but at least in tandem with the new ways of
our electronic city of text (Joyce 14).

In 1945, Vannevar Bush proposed the idea of a "schema"
knowledge database in his article, "As We May Think." Bush
writes:

> Professionally our methods of transmitting and
>
> reviewing the results of research are generations
>
> old and by now are totally inadequate for their
>
> purpose . . . The difficulty seems to be, not so
>
> much that we publish unduly in view of the extent
>
> and variety of present-day interests, but rather
>
> that publication has been extended far beyond our
>
> present ability to make real use of the record.
>
> The summation of human experience is being
>
> expanded at a prodigious rate, and the means we

use for threading through the consequent maze to the momentarily important item is the same as was used in the days of square-rigged ships. (Bush)

In other words, research--constantly changing and improving upon itself, to such a degree that it makes keeping up in traditional forms nearly impossible--should seek alternative means of recording. Bush envisioned a desk-like machine that held all an individual's "books, records, and communications, and which [was] mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to [a person's] memory" (Bush). While books and records as products are static, communication is dynamic. Even what Bush knew to be a communication, a letter or memo, requires a response and interactivity.

Today, we see a form of Bush's "memex" in the personal computer and the Internet. Originally conceived of as a way of communication and research, not as a means of "fixing" something in space-time to be indexed later, the Internet has been at the center of the present information revolution. Even though the Internet has given rise to new ways of reporting, indexing, and selling information as a product, at its core it still is primarily a connectivity

tool. Historically, the Internet was shaped by innumerable

people constantly responding and sharing their views

through email, forums, circulated RFCs (Request for

Comments), and other electronic posts. In the same way,

today, other research forums share the open, non-fixed

nature of electronically transmitted text online. It is

this concept of sharing sans panopticonic filtering that

still allows the Internet to hold certain advantages over

traditional print-based research practice and reporting.

It has been argued that the personal computer became

the interpersonal computer around the late 1980s (Hawisher

et al. 180). A combination of easier and more efficient

computer networking technologies, the transformation of

ARPAnet into what would become the Internet and online

information infrastructure, and the continuing rise in

computer access in work, school and play resulted in mass

accessibility. While the computer had been used as an

interpersonal tool before the 1980s, it had not achieved a

mass appeal. Those who initially refined the computing

devices, such as universities, government agencies, and

private industries, often advanced their products through

use. Also, in homes throughout the world, people came

together via modem technologies to share information,

leading to the transformation of the early hacker from hardware geek into software pirate. This early communication via computer eventually gave rise to the formation of communities. The interpersonal computer would transform not only how universities and government agencies communicated with each other, but also how people connected with each other. In fact, Nobel Laureate Arno Penzias stated that computing technologies and communication technologies combined create connectivity. It is this connectivity that transformed how both private and university research would be conducted, reported, and archived.

Writing technologies, the computer as just one historical example,[16] may have changed our conception of writing surface and publishing space, but the real impact comes from these latter connectivity technologies. As Neil Postman writes:

> Embedded in every tool is an ideological bias, a predisposition to construct the world as one thing rather than another, to value one thing over another, to amplify one sense or skill or attitude more loudly than another.

This is what Marshall McLuhan meant by his
famous aphorism, "The medium is the message."
This is what Marx meant when he said, "Technology
discloses man's mode of dealing with nature" and
creates the "conditions of intercourse" by which
we relate to each other. It is what
Wittegenstein meant when, in referring to our
most fundamental technology, he said that
language is not merely a vehicle of thought but
also the driver. (13-14)

Valuing connectivity via computing technologies carries
with it a valuing of distanced community formation and
propagation. It is such an ideology that has given rise to
new methods of conceiving of research.

In "New Teaching: Toward a Pedagogy for a New
Cosmology," Joyce argues that a new cosmology shaped for
ourselves in electronic text is in fact shaping ourselves
as composition instructors (9). Aware of the community-
shaping forces of the medium, Joyce adapts the three roles
of scholar, teacher, and communicator for this new
cosmology because these are the impacted positions
composition instructors must play. Because the history
that I have presented has been primarily that of the

scholar, it is necessary to provide an overview of Joyce's argument for compositionists' scholarly roles. According to Joyce, current trends are transforming this scholarly role from "uni-disciplinary specialist" to a multidisciplinary one (10). Joyce suggests our move away from uni-disciplinary thinking creates richer and more useful connections. Indeed, while not required, this move is advanced by our navigation away from our fixed print tradition and into the new information age. In this new age, composing connections creates an important role for compositionists as scholars; composing connections suggests a shift not only in our research heuristics, but also our role as scholars as "not merely the chroniclers or custodians of, but collaborators in, a vast cultural shift" (11).

Since Joyce's 1992 article, however, we have not seen the revolution in scholastic connectivity he envisioned. Community formation, and appropriately enough, discourse analysis of such communities has taken place (North "Writing in Philosophy Class"; Langer); theoretical arguments abound about learning and research communities (Calkins), heterotopic spaces (Galin and Latchaw) and connected hypertextual spaces (Johnson-Eilola); but what

has really come of these arguments for significant change? To understand what may be preventing change, we need to first look at two proposed composition community online forums and current examples of their theoretical underpinnings. The first proposed forum is Johndan Johnson-Eilola's "Negative Spaces," and the second is Jeffery Galin and Joan Latchaw's "Heterotopic Spaces."

<div align="center">

Persistent Conversations as
Negative Space

</div>

In "Negative Spaces: From Production to Connection in Composition," Johnson-Eilola re-examines the paradox of writing instructors who proclaim writing to be a socially constructive (constructed) process, yet teach and require single voiced texts.[17] Johnson-Eilola suggests we should allow texts as products of processes to exist, but that we should also allow connection to construct the meaning of a text. Through hyperlinking text or fragments of text, we can help bridge the "extremes of enlightenment authorship and postmodern dispersal of agency" (Johnson-Eilola 31-32). Such a space may demonstrate further the ideals of connectivity espoused by a social constructivist ideology.

To delve further into Johnson-Eilola's argument is to see writing as either "completed" or fragmented--as a

product or a node. If we see writing as a product, as traditionally considered, text becomes a product of various elements, too diverse to name, combined to form an end-state. However, as Berlin argues, writing as product or even the result of a cognitive process, ignores "the larger social contexts of composing" (173). If we see writing as a node, however, then the meaning gained from such juxtaposed elements of text, identity, and environment completes a narrative nexus; still, as Johnson-Eilola suggests, we see the end-state result as a single-voiced text, when in fact such is not necessarily the case (22).

Of particular interest is Johnson-Eilola's emphasis on connection bringing with it "a corresponding recognition of deep responsibility to communities that extends beyond merely asking students to collaborate on producing a text" (26). In a sense, Johnson-Eilola's connectivity and spatial emphasis reinforces a social constructionist meaning-making-nirvana. Each connected space relies on the collective participation of members in the space, suggesting an elimination or at least decline in the traditional hierarchy and supposedly objectivistic research practices. Johnson-Eilola continues, "If information must be spatialized. . . then we need to push harder toward the

realization of information spaces as places where discourse communities can form" (27).

Even though Johnson-Eilola is aware of the entrenched nature of how "traditional" writing, and therefore research, is conceptualized, he seems to argue against it more as a matter of its apparent conflict with social constructionist ideology. As Johnson-Eilola's argues, it is not technology that has brought us new possibilities and concerns but, instead, a need to "reverse" the status quo "to bring about a more just society" (31), begging the question: more just for whom? Is it more just for a collective, for an individual, or for Johnson-Eilola? Johnson-Eilola affirms a need for change, but does not necessarily fully reveal how we would utilize such space. He gives two examples of connected, "negative" spaces: the websites The Alliance for Computers & Writing and Error 404. Both sites contain a number of links to research, texts, and people, and it is this connectivity that Johnson-Eilola suggests justifies his reversal of the "status quo." Apparently, Johnson-Eilola does not acknowledge the database function of webs. In other words, a collection of research, texts, and people serves the same function as a library or even a whole university. The

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Internet allows us to re-establish and reinvent such
intellectual connections as politically and rhetorically
motivated as an "authored" web. Further technological
changes might allow us to better develop the collective
properties of these connected spaces.

Persistent conversations are dialogues distributed as
text on the Internet. Often presented as threaded matrixes
of intersecting conversations and continuing debate without
a fixed space or end, the persistent conversation has taken
many forms. Common to the university community is the
listserv.[18] Other persistent conversations are those that
occur in the MOO/MUD community, web forums, and on USENET.
Persistent conversations as a research forum or paradigm is
not that different than considering the research role of
the threaded discussions that have helped shape the
Internet and online communities for as long as two
computers have had access to each other. If we examine a
socially situated and constructed episteme as indicative of
present composition pedagogies, then it follows that our
professional practices should somehow reflect this theory,
or at least follow it. The connectivity of persistent
conversations construct a response to a number of issues
raised in this thesis: Calkins' research community model,

the social justification and construction of nodal

relations as the creation of meaning through the use of

virtual or "negative space" through links that Johnson-

Eilola argues for, and the attainment of Rorty's definition

of rational--"tolerance, respect for the opinions of those

around one, willingness to listen, reliance on persuasion

rather than force" (37). These elements converge within

persistent conversations to construct a research

environment conducive to the social constructionist

theories compositionists value.

The characteristics of persistent conversations,

especially those of academic listservs, lend themselves to

research community building. Often writing in an informal,

self-consciously personal style, participants in persistent

conversations often delve into or report other research

findings as a means to get conversations started or

generate further inquiry. Through forwarding messages and

hypertext links, participants can establish external

matrices outside of the message thread, fostering more

intertextual connections allow for more diverse research.

In other words, even though participants talk from personal

experience or scholarship, they also are part of a larger

network of research practitioners and participants.

Persistent conversations operate as a means of connecting and constructing practitioner/scholar research communities. Specifically, Calkins' naturalistic research communities are very much realized primarily through listserv communities, but they could also succeed in other persistent conversation forums. Calkins' practitioner-teacher-scholar, in particular, is seen as participating in a cycle of theory, practice, and observation of the effects of that practice. Here, the listserv serves two functions. First, these persistent conversations allow the practitioner to report on the observation as well as the theoretical grounding and steps to practice in the classroom. This unfiltered exploration, published via threaded discussion, can reach, potentially, a large number of people. By accessing a listserv's archives, searching and reading an extended thread on the topic, or following a larger matrix, participants other than the original poster can benefit from the research. The second function is that the dialogue itself forms a "practice" that can be observed and commented on professionally. Imagine a researcher posting her theoretical grounding and plan of practice for a project. The resulting dialogue might then take on a sort of ethnographic observation with more than the

originator of the post participating. Research, therefore, becomes participation as "rational" observation. The listserv forms a valuable place to share this rich, latter cycle of theory, practice, and observation, informing not only the practitioner-researcher, but potentially other practitioner-researchers as well.

Part of the materialization of solidarity within composition's many persistent conversation communities has to do with the informal and dialogic imperative of these threaded discussions and hypertextual elements. According to Rorty's criteria, social composing through persuasive debate relies on tolerance and a willingness to listen; conversations that appear as discipline specific online dialogues allow for open inquiry with participants negotiating shared goals. The intertextual elements also allow participants to read more arguments than a filtered and finite article or book. These criteria are realized within persistent conversations without the need for a formalized methodology. In a sense, the persistent conversation is more reflective of composition's solidarity.

Even though these conversations are informal, they do hold a certain disciplinary distinctiveness. Besides the

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Rortian "softer" definition of "rational," they also

exhibit certain epistemological distinctions and

disciplinary constraints. For example, persistent

conversations in composition reveal an emphasis on the lore

of practitioners, a trait common to this community

according to North (Making of Knowledge 22). In addition,

assumptions about writing processes and conversation's

meaning-making potential are imbedded within posts from

compositionists. Overall, as language teachers,

compositionists often rely on qualitative, descriptive

exploration and inquiry as a means of discovery and

research. This detail alone can make the dialogic

participation of listservs particularly useful to

composition teachers and researchers. Additionally,

however, persistent conversations provide a working model

of social constructionist theory. If, as Bruffee argues,

knowledge and language are inseparable, then persistent

conversations provide a telling site from which to study

language in context and as a contextualizing force. The

dialogic, constructivist nature of persistent conversations

on academic listservs are a key force in constructing

identities and scholarship of participants.

The composition community participates in a number of persistent conversations, primarily in the form of listservs (for a list of current composition-related listservs, see APPENDIX A). For example, The National Council for Teachers of English currently maintains 31 listservs, including lists for new teachers, college teachers and those using technology in the classroom. The website H-Rhetor <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~rhetor/> houses a worthwhile listserv, as does the Alliance for Computers and Writing <http://english.ttu.edu/acw/>.

One of the more frequented listservs in composition is the WPA-L listserv, currently maintained by David Schwalm at Arizona State University. While WPA-L focuses on writing program administration, the list generally fields discussions on many topics in composition, including pedagogy, writing centers, computers and writing, and writing across the curriculum. Started in 1991, WPA-L currently has approximately 1,279 graduate students, professors, department chairs, and writing program administrators (Schwalm), and it averages five to twenty messages per day.

A recent set of postings[19] to the WPA-L listserv, from February 22nd to February 28th, 2001, establishes a

dialogic mode of research that not only demonstrates

Rorty's definition of "rational," but also exemplifies the

use of a listserv for the two primary research community

functions: reporting and dialoguing.[20] The discussion

revolves around the integration, administratively, of

computers into the writing classroom. Starting on February

22nd, 2001, Gordon Thomas posted the following research

question: "The upper administration here at the University

of Idaho would like us [to] describe how we might use

computer technology in some way to enhance or possibly even

replace some of out classroom instruction in the FY comp.

classes" (Feb. 22). After following his question with a

brief summary of posts on the WPA-L regarding the topic, he

formulated four primary possibilities, ordered from

students not having school computer access to students

being required to utilize computers for their writing.

Thomas made the distinction between choices and

possibilities due to philosophical or administrative

underpinnings that operate within the university. Thomas

continues to describe other ways such philosophical

underpinnings set up expectations of student writing with

computers, as either the individual working with a word

processor or as a collaborative, networked experience.

Based on his previous observation and survey of the WPA-L archives, Thomas articulated three theoretically grounded possibilities with pedagogical pros and cons: computer classrooms, web/online classroom management, and instruction, a model that involves utilizing already existing campus labs with online instruction. Because there are seemingly endless possibilities for integrating computers into instruction, Thomas limited his choices based on his context, eventually explaining his own bias for his first possibility--the implementation of computer classrooms for composition classes. He ended his post with a call for response.

Thomas' initial email in the thread was deductive and similar in form to other disciplinary research. However, his methodology focused not on trying to find a legitimate, confidently objective recipe for truth, but instead in opening up a dialogue. As with most emails of this type, an initial agent formulates a research question, similar to other disciplinary practices, but then calls for a response. The Thomas post represents such work, yet places subjectively Thomas as an agent in the dialogue. The resulting dialogue is a thread of individual responses, both from personal experience and theory, as well as

references to external sources. Figure 1 represents the
complete conversation thread visually:

```
Gordon Thomas (2/22)
         ↓
Mike Palmquist (2/26)
                ↘
         |          Gordon Thomas (2/27)
         |                  ↓       ┌→ Kurt Bouman
         |                  ↓       |      (2/27)
         - - - - - - Gregory Glau (2/27)
                                             |
                            ↓                |
   External - - - - -Gordon Thomas (2/28)  External
                            ↓
   External - - - - - Gregory Glau (2/28)
                        ↙
Mike Palmquist (2/28)
         ↓
Rebecca Rickly (2/28)
         ↓
Marcia Ribble (2/28)
```

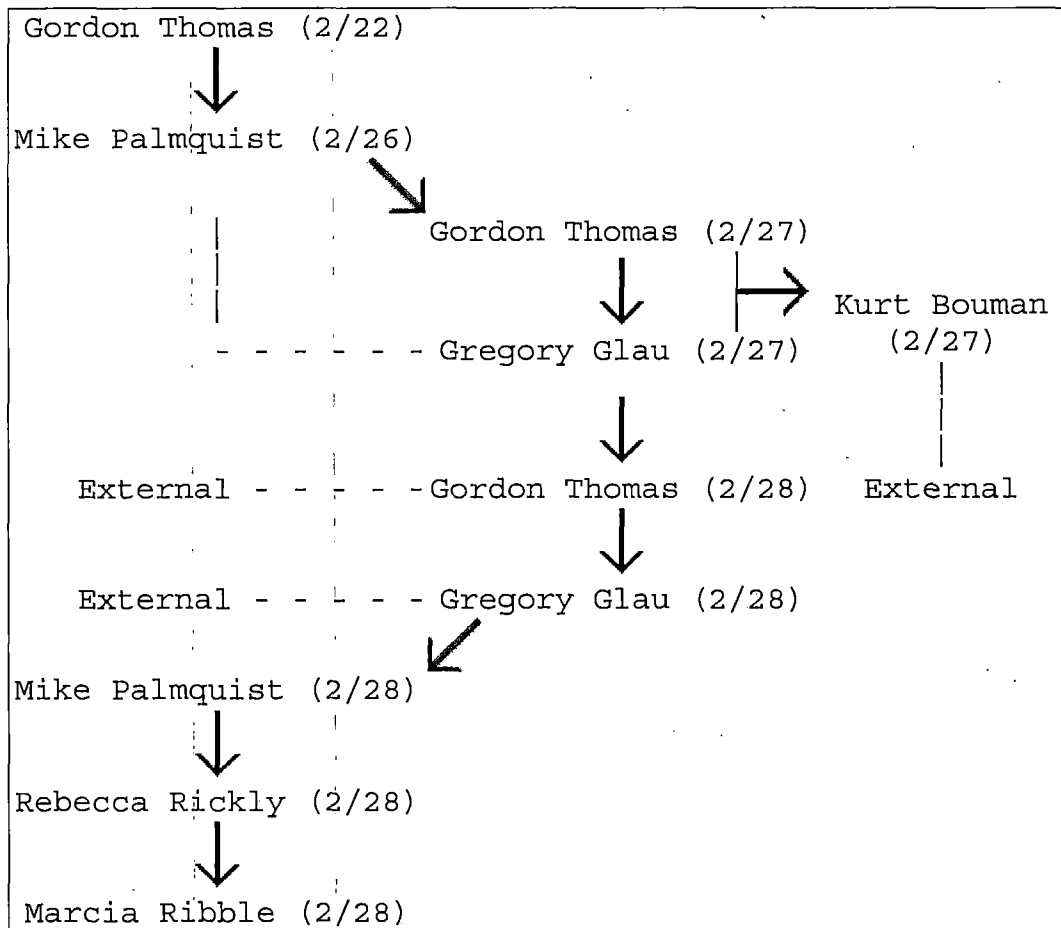Figure 1. Visual Representation of Persistent Conversation.

      Mike Palmquist responded to Thomas first by situating

his own experience within Thomas' three possibilities,

suggesting a hybrid model of possibilities one and two,

using web management and instruction within a computer

classroom setting (Feb. 26). This solution differs from

Thomas' third possibility in that the computer classrooms

are different from typical university lab spaces.
Palmquist's response expanded Thomas' original options but
stays within the constraints of Thomas' situation.
Palmquist suggested that Thomas should consider his initial
possibilities as "mutually supportive" as opposed to
"either/or" (Feb. 26). The first chartable node in the
conversation has already created other possibilities to the
initial research question, and it has also given those
reading an initial set of data. Of particular interest in
Palmquist's post is his invitation to Thomas to contact him
directly, suggesting the potential for an off-list
dialogue.

In response to Palmquist's suggestion, Thomas re-
focused his research question into one that looks at
mutually supportive computing technology roles. In a
sense, the dialogue has re-directed the research question
and increased the possibilities; this recursive move
represents something not entirely possible with traditional
research paradigms because traditional research paradigms
focus on finite, measurable variables--in a positivistic
sense, limiting variables is preferable for measurement.
Next, Gregory Glau responded to the re-focused possibility
of a hybrid model. Glau responded from personal

experience, commenting on the "high satisfaction" that students and teachers have with the hybrid model (Feb. 27). Also, Glau suggested further possibilities in considering that classes rotate between a traditional classroom and a computer classroom, adding his own curiosity in a three day instruction model. Glau's response is another node in an increasingly complex schema of research inquiry. Glau's reference to Palmquist's hybrid model within the context of the larger conversation provides more solutions and therefore more comprehensive inquiry than a conventional research model. In traditional scientific research, the constant, recursive accumulation of variables would hurt the apparent objectivity of research. Even within the confines of current composition research, the absence of constraints on the end-state (i.e. the negative space) creates a recursive and complimenting, learning space.

After Glau, Kurt Bouman responded by explaining the role that writing centers can play in supplementing class sessions (Feb. 27). Additionally, Bouman justified his model by suggesting some external sources. Bouman's external referencing serves the two functions of our persistent conversation as research inquiry: He played a role as observer and participant, explaining what he saw in

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the dialogue; yet, he also contributed to a larger research

matrix by suggesting various print-based books.

Thomas, the primary research agent, responded to the

dialogue, this time focusing specifically on the hybrid

model. Apparently influenced by the dialogue, Thomas

reveals his interest in the hybrid model and its

suitability for his university. Thomas voiced a concern

that combining Glau's cyclical model and Palmquist's hybrid

model might confuse students in that the students would

need to meet in different places during the term. The node

in the above model (figure 1) also shows an external

reference. Thomas parenthetically referred to another

thread on the topic of hybrid classes. Visually, the model

only represents the linear timeline of the argument, but

the implicit and social nodes constructed by the dialogue

through the proliferation of external references suggest a

richer, multidimensional conversation.

Glau responded to Thomas' concern by contending that

implementing the hybrid model requires significant

planning, but it works well. Once again, an external

reference is made within the dialogue as Glau suggested

that Thomas visit Glau's university website for more

information regarding how the hybrid system works. In

response, Palmquist iterates the original possibilities set

forth by Thomas in the February 22 post and suggests that

if he had to make a choice, he would prefer the web-based

instruction as opposed to a computer classroom. This re-

evaluation by the participant who invited the hybrid model

into the discussion is interesting. It could be argued

that participating within the dialogue has given Palmquist

new insight into the topic. More significant, it could be

argued that Palmquist's participation in the dialogue has

encouraged him to reconsider his positions in light of the

possibility (and not choice) of an either/or. His

observation of universities de-emphasizing computer

classrooms, suggests the potential for another tangential

thread. Palmquist's recursive re-evaluation of the

benefits of writing in a computer classroom demonstrates an

interesting meta-research reflection absent from most

current research. Palmquist constructs an analogy of

teaching writing in the computer classroom is equivalent to

teaching art in a studio, seeing great benefit in working

with the students as they compose, much like an art teacher

would in a studio. Palmquist ends his post with an

external reference to Will Hochman in saying, "we can do

anything in a computer classroom that we can do in a

traditional classroom--it's just easier in a computer

classroom" (Feb. 28).

Rebecca Rickly adds another node to the matrix. She

intoned her love of teaching in a computer classroom. Not

only does Rickly love computer classroom workshopping (e.g.

Palmquist's art studio analogy), but she also likes to

"model . . . what [students] can do" with technology in

their writing (Feb 28). She asserted that such modeling

can take place in web-based instruction too, but suggested

that students would benefit more from actual computer

classroom time.

The thread ends with Marcia Ribble affirming

positively the hybrid model set forth by Palmquist.

Ribble's subjectivity is foregrounded, yet her experience

can be taken at the reporting level, as well as the

dialogue level--she responded to previous observations, but

also added her experience as data in this "research"

project.

The connectivity of ideas through these discourse

nodes, Johnson-Eilola's knowledge mapping within negative

space via Rorty's solidarity ideal, is only one example of

a research process. Since composition's tradition has been

one in search of legitimacy from other disciplines, it

might be time to consider supporting our own solidarity,

shown here in persistent conversation, as a means of

research more indicative of our practice as teachers. The

community's shared experience and solidarity in working

with writers supports such dialogues as nodal sites for

answering inquiry, a primary purpose of research. In

addition, the connections created by each discussion node

present a useful picture of Johnson-Eilola's negative

space. Even though Johnson-Eilola considers theoretically

many elements of social connection as sites of creation, he

gives only examples of hypertext and an experimental chat

session. Yet, as Johnson-Eilola states:

> if information must be spatialized (and it seems
>
> we are too far gone to avoid that), then we need
>
> to push harder toward the realization of
>
> information spaces as places where discourse
>
> communities can form. (27)

Listservs and other persistent conversation forums have

steadily become influential in how compositionists share

personal experience, research, information, news, and

theory, to the point that they already hold a significant

position in our discourse community. It is time we start

thinking of the work we do there as legitimate scholarship

and the discussion nodes as indicative of the theory we espouse as writing teachers.

Web Spaces as Heterotopias

Theoretically, Johnson-Eilola's connected spaces rely on persistent, active participation to construct viable nodes of information. However, extant textual artifacts such as those traditionally published in print can additionally mark research. In "Theorizing the Raw Archive," Galin and Latchaw posit Foucaultian heterotopic spaces[21] in the academic world of on-line archiving and publishing in which on-line publishers reflect and subvert the power relations of traditional "brick and mortar" academic publishing. They argue that one such heterotopic space is that of the xxx.lanil.x physics research raw archive. In this web space[22], research is reflected and subverted because any and all physics researchers, regardless of tenure status, can post their findings and enter into the physics research forum. Without traditional academic checks to impede discourse, the forces of expertise and abnormal discourse regulate research naturally. Galin and Latchaw suggest a future of academic

publishing in light of the distinctive implementation of computing mediums current online communities employ.

Galin and Latchaw theorize four research publication spaces: For-profit journal model, ex post editorial board model, web editors model, and the electronic agent model. They also imagine a futuristic model in full realization of Foucault's heterotopic space. In the for-profit journal model, Galin and Latchaw remind us of the power that tradition has over our recognition of academic journals. Even as information, data, and research become further decentralized, the traditional structures of centralized disbursement of "knowledge" and intellectual property still have a familiar feel and acceptance. Since the academic journal has been the primary site of research in the disciplines, it has achieved an almost canonical reputation. In fact, Fytton Rowland argues that one of the functions of the academic journal is to hold such an absolute reputation (Rowland). As Galin and Latchaw continue, however, in the for-profit journal model, the journal's core functions remain intact, the change is in the medium and distribution. They claim that publishers of academic journals will create their own spaces and archives that will be "delineated, 'demarcated' as professional

working spaces, and serve functions in relation to the publishing houses they reflect" (Galin and Latchaw). The full realization of a heterotopic space in the for-profit journal model would require that the publishers created more comprehensive services. Galin and Latchaw suggest some possibilities such as conference proceedings, working papers and annotated and evaluated texts.

On one hand, such a model conforms closely to our present academic publication model. Its familiarity should allow for a smooth transition to online-based research distribution. However, in the context of composition's history as a discipline, it still favors traditional scientific research and reporting methods over social dialogue. "Services" added to such web spaces begin to address the move into a so-called heterotopic space, but they still are based in a traditional model.

Galin and Latchaw's second model, the ex post editorial board, is a direct reflection of the arXiv archives.[23] In such a model, raw e-print archives are uploaded to a web server maintained as a professional working space. Such a space allows researchers a forum to present their work quicker and to more niche audiences. Galin and Latchaw suppose that such e-print archives can be

reduced to "vast depositories of digitally stored text"

(Galin and Latchaw). A filtering mechanism proposed in

such a model is that of professional review of an abstract

submitted, with the research. Of course, as suggested in

previous challenges to traditional models of academic

publishing, the processes of promotion and tenure require

the recognition that print-based publication holds. The

"vast depositories" of an ex post editorial board can

quickly grow beyond a reasonable measure. In such cases,

even good research, notated, hyperlinked, and revised has

the potential to become lost as just another matrix of

bytes.

Galin and Latchaw next propose a web editors model.

In this model, an online-architect-for-hire would create a

specialized web space that served the function of an

archive but also fostered a research forum or community.

According to Galin and Latchaw, such an academic-architect

turned e-publisher would gain more recognition in the

academic arena and therefore more evident for tenure and

promotion.

In Galin and Latchaw's fourth proposed model, a shift

from human to technology occurs. The authors proposed

electronic agent model would be a dynamic hypertext

creation system that "created" on-the-fly results of linked

texts and research materials. Such a meta-search

technology would have the benefit of less subjectivity, as

exampled by Galin and Latchaw's other models, yet a more

specific resulting search than a pure raw archive. Such a

space that assists researchers in finding works would also

have the added advantage of a real-world/real-time dynamic

that might bring people together who happen to be looking

for similar texts. Galin and Latchaw state, "this process

of socially constructing knowledge in a 'professional

working space' reflects what we mean by a 'living space'"

(Galin and Latchaw).

Galin and Latchaw also imagine a future-space for the

computer and writing community. This proposed space would

be part MOO, part archive, and part information server.

They describe this "disciplinary homebase" as a result of

all four of their models--both reviewed and raw archived

monographs, electronic agent preferences, and MOO-like

spaces coalesced into one virtual place akin to the lawn of

Akademeia and the library at Alexandria combined. Galin

and Latchaw's heterotopic ideal would provide the sort of

social space argued for earlier. In its fully imagined

state, it would allow communities to communicate on

multiple user-selected levels, a sort of Rortian interface

with community. Galin and Latchaw remind us that

developments in both communities and technology have the

potential to change their models as well as their imagined

heterotopia. In fact, in the few short years since the

original publication of their article on Kairos, changes in

technology have almost realized their proposed, future

"disciplinary homebase."

Galin and Latchaw's projected "disciplinary homebase"

borrows a lot from the concept of a web portal. Most web

portals started out as websites that began to provide

connectivity tools for the users who regularly used the

sites. Eventually, technology has provided the

opportunities for these sites to provide more advanced

options of connectivity, and the ever-increasing size and

access options of the Internet have provided a space for a

proliferation in esoteric communities, some more "eso-"

than others. Popular web portals such as ESPN Zone for

sports fanatics, slashdot for computer professionals,

astalavista or 2600 for the hacker cadre, and Yahoo or MSN

for the all-around web surfer are examples of web sites

that transformed into community spaces. The National

Council of English Teachers (NCTE) website has also grown

over time. The site has elements of Galin and Latchaw's future-space, as well as connectivity elements such as the archiving and interfacing of persistent conversations with the NCTE's sponsored listservs.

Current web spaces rely on hypertext to bridge the virtual gaps of text(s) and author(s). As argued by Johnson-Eilola, the link or node offers a more significant and socially determined schema in how we conceive of knowledge and therefore research than traditional existential, positivist epistemologies. Because hypertext is schema based, the eventual use of hypertext writing, linking, and reading should offer new and complimentary possibilities for research. In comparison to our active participation and dialogue model presented in persistent conversation, hypertext highlights connections more than response. In other words, hyper-textual research is based on texts (e.g. fragments, extant articles, graphics) with unique, "reader" constructed inquiry, observation, and discussion. Web portals collect hypertextual elements and interface them with readers using connectivity tools such as searchable databases, multi-voiced drafting, chat rooms, and persistent conversations. More advanced web spaces,

therefore, offer an upgraded environment from persistent conversations.

As an academic community and as a discipline studying communication technology, compositionists readily create spaces and share research in ways that challenge traditional university systems of recognition. Early, tech-savvy writing teachers transformed MOO/MUD[24] spaces into metaphorical teaching tools, demonstrating rhetoric and communication in unique and useful ways. Eventually, early web spaces emulated successful commercial sites by giving users more useful interfaces and, especially important, more content. The primary advance in interface was the invention and mass implementation of hypertext.

Today, the composition community has developed web spaces into complex and significant web portals and forums. Of course, these web spaces will not be the only ones to increase in usability and resourcefulness, nor will they remain in their present states.[25] Presently, three useful web spaces give insight into things to come and possibly into the realization of Galin and Latchaw's future composition heterotopia: The National Council of Teachers of English, Academic.Writing, and Kairos

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

<http://www.ncte.org>

NCTE, chartered in 1911, initially added a web presence in 1995. Since that time, they have continually revised their interface and content to achieve a truly mammoth web space for things English. According to their website, the NCTE currently has 77,000 members, so it is understandable that their web space has grown to the size that it has.

While the overall site holds a more practitioner focus, it offers a breadth of information. Because it serves all levels of English studies, it focuses on providing a forum for sharing and collaborating. NCTE maintains listservs on many topics related to the teaching of writing, and allow the open upload of teaching ideas and experiences. The NCTE web also offers information on conferences, call for proposals and papers, news, research, and resources in highly structured and easily navigated pages. As traditional web portals go, the NCTE website is substantially more content oriented.

The NCTE website also offers a gateway to its affiliates, assemblies, and associations, including the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC).

The CCCC maintains their journal archive for NCTE members at the NCTE website, with a practical though dated archiving system. The college section of the NCTE website, as well as the CCCC section, offer a number of opportunities for disseminating, monitoring and connecting information, but focuses more on bringing people together face-to-face as opposed to online.

Of the three portals presented here, the NCTE website does not fit into any one of Galin and Latchaw's publishing models; it serves more as a connectivity space than a publishing space, even though its connectivity comes from information distribution. Yet, it does approach Galin and Latchaw's "disciplinary homebase" because it has many elements for enacting community agency, including searchable databases, dynamic content and, though rudimentary, connectivity tools. NCTE maintains discussions, research opportunities, and news in great numbers, and in fact, the site rivals the hits of more well-known commercial sites. The conservative interface is designed around broadcasting information and not community formation, though it has elements of the latter.

Academic.Writing <http://aw.colostate.edu/>

Academic.Writing was launched in 1999 to provide an online community and publishing space for those interested in communication and writing across the curriculum. Moreover, they also highlight the use of their space as a site of interaction among scholars and teachers who use writing. Currently, Colorado State maintains the web, designed and conceived of by Mike Palmquist.

Academic.Writing has instituted an editorial board to serve a peer review function. While only two members of the board will evaluate each piece submitted, the breadth of those involved adds diversity. Academic.Writing calls itself a journal, even though the only elements reflective of a journal on the site are the usual trappings of finished articles, book reviews and news. However, as stated in Academic.Writing's mission statement:

> Unlike a conventional online journal, which
> mirrors the volume/issue format of print
> journals, the journal is designed to function as
> an evolving, growing document (or, more
> accurately, a collection of documents) on the
> Web.

This format could allow for a more fluid space in which to read and write work, but, unfortunately, Academic.Writing does not require articles to be in hypertext.

Academic.Writing has combined all its elements into one comprehensive interface. This interface facilitates exploration by participants and readers of the site. In addition, the larger system of connectivity, archives, and resources provides an easier to visualize and navigate space for researchers. Because Academic.Writing is fairly new, and because it covers topics not necessarily native to the medium of computers, it has not established the reputation that Kairos has. However, the persistent conversation spaces coupled with articles, archiving, and other connectivity should allow Academic.Writing to continue to grow in size and reputation.

Academic.Writing offers a unique realization of Galin and Latchaw's web editor model that might contribute to a future, "disciplinary homebase." While Academic.Writing has an editorial board, the web space is also open for active participation in other ways. For example, because the Academic.Writing administrators are active readers and participants in the space beyond traditional web publication, they would be able to chart participant's work

and research, possibly leading to offers to expand

participant work for web publication or operate in an

editorial capacity. This dynamic involvement transforms

the web editor model into a connectivity space.

Kairos <http://129.118.38.138/Kairos/default.htm>

According to Kairos mission statement, this cyber-

journal would most likely not label itself a web portal or

even a web space. Early on Kairos wanted to establish

itself as an online journal, going as far as applying for

an ISSN and setting up a traditional peer review system.

Yet, the "cyber" in cyber-journal has been influenced by

technology and audience to the point that changes have

altered the final web space to appear more as a

connectivity space.

Primarily inspired by the work being done in ACW,

original editors Mick Doherty, Elizabeth Pass, and Jason

Teague started Kairos during the early web-boom of 1996.

In the first editorial, "Hitting Reload," Doherty explains:

> Our conversation, our dialogue, our collaboration
>
> will result, three times a year, in a "product"--
>
> a nod to the demands of tradition. But along the
>
> way our hyper-textual process of learning, of

communication, and of publication is the fun
part.

In other words, Doherty was committed to utilizing the
active participation of the community even if they were
establishing the appearance of a traditional journal. In
Kairos' first issue, entitled, "Online Writing Labs: Should
We? Will We? Are We?," they established a mode of
publishing a CoverWeb that entailed articles, links, and
resources with common thematic elements. This first
CoverWeb focused on the online presence of writing centers,
often referred to as Online Writing Labs (OWLs) and
presented five web-text based perspectives from OWL
administrators, students and faculty working in these
environments. Exemplifying the lack of traditional limits
on space, the first issue of Kairos also contained a
selection of five feature articles concerning composition
studies, with additional journal accoutrements such as
reviews, letters, and news.

Early on, Kairos devoted itself to publishing
hypertext and other documents that took advantage of
information technologies. In addition, the growing
computers and writing clique heavily influenced Kairos.
With the occasional nod to established scholars, non-

tenured faculty and graduate students commonly wrote

articles; in almost every case, authors would experiment

with the webbed environment and hypertextual elements in

their texts.

In 2002, _Kairos_ put together a separate, though

linked, news and resource site entitled _Kairosnews_

<http://Kairosnews.org>. This latter part of the _Kairos_

network has created an interesting space for educators to

interface with research, information, and other educators.

In a sense, _Kairosnews_ has completed the initial

connectivity space started by _Kairos_.

Because _Kairos_ considers itself a cyberjournal, it

assesses submitted works in a similar fashion to

traditional print-based publishers. The "nod to tradition"

that Doherty mentions is important in bridging the

legitimized practice of publishing with the dynamic and

fluid online space. As articles in _Kairos_ often lead to

discussions via their own web forum, as well as listservs

such as ACW, authors routinely participate, even if non-

actively, in persistent conversation. _Kairos_ represents

the traditional need for peer review assurance and adequate

and visualized presentation, while still advancing more

useful technological changes such as advanced archiving,
connectivity, and unique ways of re-visioning past work.

Because virtual space lacks traditional constraints,
Kairos, while separate in visualization, is still
integrated with Kairosnews. This latter environment offers
more connectivity options and real-time reporting of
research and news than a traditional journal. In addition
to "stimulating increased community interaction, providing
a web-based bulletin board service for community
announcements, and offering an asynchronous web-based
communication system alternative to listservs and MOO's,"
Kairosnews intends to also manage "a community built, web-
based collection point specifically for all things for
teachers of technology."

In proposing a future "disciplinary homebase"
heterotopia, Galin and Latchaw suggest that connectivity
should be primary, and interfaces with fixed texts
secondary in maintaining an inhabitable space. Even though
Kairos asserts connectivity as core to its continuing
development, it could not achieve the future heterotopic
status on its own. Kairosnews offers a supporting addendum
to this quest, and if usage and reputation increase, the
blended pair might eventually succeed in subverting

traditional mediums of research methods and reporting, as well as attaining a substantial participatory community.

In the case of both Johnson-Eilola's negative space and Galin and Latchaw's heterotopic space, the embedded social construction ideology presupposes that a research criteria is either implicitly in agreement or not needed. It could be argued that neither Johnson-Eilola nor Galin and Latchaw were critiquing research paradigms and that in fact, they were merely offering up new models of creation or disbursement of scholarship. Yet, the medium has embedded limitations and benefits for any research endeavor that will ultimately alter the space it is produced, disbursed and read in. Virtual spaces are no exception.

Research in composition has had a long history of adapting other paradigms and methods. From early shared narratives, to the cold, legitimizing embrace of scientism, and finally to our present system of eclectic social dialogues, compositionists have struggled to establish a research voice. The computers and composition community as a result of the medium it critiques has already articulated and employed a very useful research methodology through the use of listservs, MOOs, and web spaces, all interfaces of social dialogue. Imagining a future composition community

employing "negative spaces" or "heterotopic spaces" allows

us to envision research community solidarity. However,

research communities--those communities that debate

socially, our fundamental criteria or paradigm for

knowledge in the disciplines--have already established

dialogues using networked computing technologies that

facilitate academic discussions. Such connectivity

interfaces have achieved reputations, archiving functions,

and common discourses, all criteria of academic research

(Galin and Latchaw; Rowland). While print-based versions

of such conversations[26] do reflect a new social literacy,

online spaces allow more diverse and active participation.

CHAPTER FOUR

FUTURE COMPOSITION

COMMUNITY SPACES

In "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," Hawisher and Selfe criticized early computers and composition research that showed technology "in overly positive terms as if computers were good in and of themselves" (56). While compositionists have embraced new technologies, we have often been a bit too hopeful of the powers of the machine. Hawisher and Selfe argue for the need to be critical of the literacy technologies that we use in our writing and teaching. By the same measure, we should be critical of technology's force in our research and reporting too. Using persistent conversations as a research forum, though useful, may also seem to be overly optimistic. After all, the lack of a traditional filter coupled with an increase in the discussion population can make active, reflective participation in such dialogues difficult. With some listservs distributing thirty or forty messages per day, active, reflective participation might not be a realistic expectation. In fact, Galin and Latchaw contend that people are abandoning listservs

"because they are too time intensive" (Galin and Latchaw).

Nonetheless, participation in persistent conversation,

without the need of some astral editor whose criteria may

not reflect an increasingly diverse composition community,

better reflects the social and critical literacy we value

in our pedagogy; it also reflects our professional practice

as scholars and researchers.

The missing link in realizing research through

persistent conversations is, pardon the pun, the missing

link. In other words, threaded, persistent conversations

and the external matrices do not necessarily reflect

traditional textual results. Even as our practice teaches

and values the situated, nexus of recursive writing, we

tend to rely on end-state, finished research. As Johnson-

Eilola writes, "while we have come to value interconnection

and dissensus in composition as it acts to construct texts

and subjects, we often fail to reconsider the fundamental

concept of what counts as a text" (18). The lone email or

post does not necessarily equal a finished text in the

annals of legitimate scholarship, at least as it has been

traditionally conceived. However, as I have argued, active

participation within a diverse, threaded conversation

matrix constructs a research text that informs participants
more so than most traditional end-product texts.

Currently in composition research, persistent
conversations have been used either as a finished (and
sometimes finite) set of data to inform research or as
experimental explorations.[27] Such use often demonstrates
posts as finite products, without the social context we
claim constructive of our experience as researchers.
Context with such dialogues is important because persistent
conversations, observed as a participant or lurker, are
more akin to face-to-face conversations than they are to
textual records. Experimenting with threaded conversation
might take an extreme form to make a rhetorical point, and
treating postings to conversations as data dredges up a
traditional, although post-positivist mode of research. In
either case, compositionists' participation in listserv
conversation--both as readers and potential authors--
demonstrates a research methodology more reflective of our
present social constructivist epistemology.

By similar means, the reader as researcher, construing
a matrix of fragmented and sometimes contrasting elements
in a webbed environment is, by its virtual nature, an
abstract enterprise. By traditional standards, such

participation is difficult to document or report. The use

of more advanced web spaces might, in fact, be a wholly

imaginative realm that theoretically offers exciting ways

to construct meaning through inquiry, but never quite

materializes into substantial ways we can use.

Additionally, current developments in web spaces still have

elements that rely on certain traditional models of fixed

texts and merely add options for providing more timely

response or evaluation. For example, Academic.Writing and

Kairos both use a peer review process as filter mechanism.

Additionally, most online articles submitted to either

Academic.Writing and Kairos employ hypertext as indexes

rather than as constructive elements, again relying on

familiar, traditional systems for publication.

Moreover, Galin and Latchaw articulate a future online

space that garners many theoretical and practical

principles into one living space. Such centralized spaces

could be argued as yet another example of the centripetal

force of a market economy. Larger, diverse communities are

eventually consolidated into a normalized hegemony. The

normalizing force of traditional research methodologies has

already transmogrified the composition community. These

mo(ti)ves could also change the promising directions web

spaces could move in the future. For example, one of the
early spaces enacting much of what has been argued here was
the forum-based website RhetNet. Started by Eric Crump,
RhetNet was an offshoot of the burgeoning listserv
community in the early nineties. Crump states that they,
"tried to explore the shape of publishing online by letting
things evolve naturally according to the tendencies of
online communities." RhetNet was :

> designed to provide rhetoric and Internet
>
> students and scholars with the means of
>
> capturing, contextualizing, searching, and
>
> retrieving some of the intriguing and valuable
>
> conversations that occur on various parts of the
>
> Net. ("About" RhetNet)

Eventually, however, Crump, and others who worked on the
site, lacked the time to transpose and formulate a lot of
what occurred in persistent conversations into meaningful
and constructive hypertexts (Crump). In the end, more
traditionally inspired spaces for scholarship flourished;
tradition still remains a primary legitimizing force in
academic cultures. Yet, as I have argued, our theory no
longer supports our practice with regards to research. We

are still trying to legitimize ourselves with methodologies not inherent to the way our discourse community operates.

In either case, working hypertextually or participating in persistent conversations is time-consuming work. Assuming that our participation in these new technologies should count for something because it is so time consuming--even if it can be richly rewarding--could also be interpreted as a bit sanguine. Rickly in "The Tenure of the Oppressed: Ambivalent Reflections from a Critical Optimist," argues that our participation in such activities should not necessarily be rewarded. Rickly maintains that such work with technology is motivated by our personal investment in learning, and partly, in teaching--her analogy is that we do not reward a good grade to a student just because she worked hard on a paper (22). Yet, our grading criteria should somehow reflect the work a student does, just as our research methodologies should reflect our participation as scholars within our community. Participation in an online persistent conversation still reflects a larger investment in the Rortian ideal of research community solidarity. Similarly, reading and writing hypertext, actively connecting dynamic texts online, allows for more diverse and inclusive work.

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However, participation in persistent conversations, and in technology work in general, is difficult to document for an audience unfamiliar with the context of a discussion or even the technology. In other words, work in persistent conversations is hard to read, track and promote by traditional academic assessment.[28] Rickly states:

> it's impossible to codify much of what we do. And, on another level, what we do with technology often falls into the hazy realm of *process*, one which is not only difficult to document, but is often not valued as highly by the institution when it is documented. (22)

In addition, the absence of a formal editorial filter forces a reconsideration of peer review. Traditional peer review borders on quasi-priestly (Rorty "Science" 35) editorial review, interpreting what is right and appropriate for the masses. In persistent conversations, there are no means to instigate such force, and the establishment of such a convention on a website can leave us thinking of computing spaces as paper. By traditional standards, then, there are three primary problems with warranting our participation in persistent conversations and hyper-textual environments as "appropriate"[29]

scholarship: codification, presentation, and quality
control.

Codification

The dynamic nature of online spaces presents
challenges to codifying research and writing. Online
spaces, as argued by Sven Birkerts, are open-ended, fluid,
infinite, and simultaneous (43-44). Tracking textual
evidence can no longer be a sign of work and research since
the actual evidence can materialize and transform, not
constrained by system, style and forms instituted by print-
culture and tradition. The fluidity of text is represented
in our socially determined fluidity of knowledge, a precept
practiced by current compositionists.

However, our work, no matter how fluid it may become,
eventually needs some constraint and form. Traditional
methodologies often are taken as an example of rigor and
detail, and those works that were not constrained by such
means somehow are less significant. Codification, or
systemization of arrangement might help clarify work done
in online spaces and provide a means by which university
tenure or evaluation committees (as well as communities
external to composition) could measure scholastic

contributions. Two future systems for codification in composition may be a community-based point system and more technically adept web services.

A community-based point system would codify work based on popularity and apparent usefulness to the composition community. Research and conversation could be codified using a point system, similar to the system used at ShortNews <http://www.shortnews.com>. The designers of ShortNews, a website designed so that "anyone with internet access can be a reporter irrespective of origin, race or religion," created a system in which visitors to the site can submit news and then later be evaluated by other users as to the quality, interest, or relevance of the news they submit. The website claims that the topics covered on the site "are not decided by one empowered individual, but by an entire community using that most powerful and terrible directional weapon - the mouse button." The system at ShortNews allows readers to assess news based on visits to a particular story, assessment of a story's veracity, and popularity and significance of discussion in ShortNews' forum and chat section. Overall, the site keeps track of these figures and applies a point to the stories so that visitors can evaluate news based on the points and visits.

Having eliminated arbitrary methods as the sole means
of codification, we can use our Rortian commitment to
social debate and justification as means to be judged by
peers through participation with compositionists' work.
Rigor, here, can be taken to mean commitment to achieving a
research solidarity and not commitment to merely following
another discipline's recipe. Academic.Writing and Kairos
already employ forums and comment functions, and as a
result of the way web servers record access to web pages,
the designers of these sites might publish these results
and the results of activity in their forums as a means to
chart participation. The popularity and participant
assessment of web-texts an online journal normally
publishes could be a measure of where future work should
focus on as well as a means to demonstrate the value of
work to the community. In addition, compositionists could
participate within forums and online discussions, and their
work would be measured there based on the point-system
similar to that used to chart the web-texts. Kairosnews,
Kairos information distribution sister site, could easily
adapt the system used by ShortNews to easily chart activity
in the field of composition concerning particular topics
and interests. In either case, our participation, past

merely visits to a page or subscription to a listserv,

could be codified, and therefore, more warranting of

academic credit by evaluation and tenure committees.

   More advanced web services could be the second way

that electronic online participation could be codified.

The dynamic abilities of newer search engines and database

functions can help us assemble ongoing work in composition

in real time. This flexible system would be at odds with

Rowland's belief that we need an "unchangeable archive of

verified research results," but it would be more in line

with the recursive and social construction epistemology

that we espouse as teachers. Searching and archiving tools

could also be developed to establish links, revisions, and

citations in ways to help others accrue a context for the

work.

   Currently, web services reside on server computers and

provide user-defined uses to Internet users. Within the

composition community, some web services have been taken

for granted; specifically, programs such as LISTSERV by

Lsoft, open-source programs such as HyperNews, and Earl

Hood's MhonArc, are currently used to maintain and archive

persistent conversations for searching and reading. These

services have already been valuable in codifying listserv

participation by archiving such work. However, developing these services further would allow users to better interact with other users. As Galin and Latchaw speculate in their future heterotopic space, "a pop-up dialogue box that represents researchers who have accessed the same materials you examined the night before" could appear upon visiting a web space with a dynamic search system. Listserv participation is usually hierarchically structured in archive form, but systems could be developed to alter the archive by relevance or other user's like-search results.

The composition community should consider developing these, as well as other, forms of codification of online participation to help facilitate warranting the work we do in online spaces as valuable, research enterprises. While problematic in fluid online space, systems by which we can organize online work would allow for a more diverse and responsive research community.

Visualization as Presentation

By far, the most problematic in the consideration of appropriate scholarship is the presentation of the material. Recognition both to new members of a community and to evaluators outside the community would be almost

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non-existent if either persistent conversations or web

spaces were the only means used in research and reporting.

In general, compositionists would not necessarily want to

abandon rhetorically crafted, audience-aware texts, as

these texts are, after all, the topic of the discipline of

composition. It might be easier to chalk online

involvement up to professional membership participation

rather than try to determine a new visual paradigm to reify

abstract dialogues and writing across virtual spaces;

however, our new online participatory practices better

reflect our social constructionist underpinnings. We

should at least construct some way to visualize this

participation past an abstract system of online

codification. Luckily, developments in technology offer

some alternatives to visualizing online participation.

Turoff et al. suggest the implementation of a more

user or community defined, "application oriented conceptual

map" or discourse structure. The classification,

significance of participation to topic, objectives and

group elements would be charted, scaled, and validated

based on a voting process similar to a Likert scale. As

shown with the ShortNews' point-system, such a process

encourages participation as well as demonstrates how significant work may be to a given audience.

If we can imagine a common online dialogue, such as the one included in APPENDIX B, entering the discussion somewhere in the middle, or reading the discussion as someone not privy to the interests and values of the community, would be confusing. However, if a tally system, based on relevance, importance, and popularity included as part of the archive or even within the synchronicity of the conversation, we could graph the conversation in ways to visualize these elements, and therefore construct a final digest on the more important elements of the conversation, and background those posts that were less substantial. In addition, as well as in the dialogue included in APPENDIX B, external references and tangential discussion threads could be charted visually, creating a more useful, participatory environment than the traditional, hierarchical thread presented in today's archives and newsreader programs.

Still, simple graphed votes may be too subjective in some instances and for some audiences. Marc Smith and Andrew Fiore of Microsoft Research have theorized and tested more complex visualization schemes. Typical

archiving systems, as well as USENET readers often lack ways of finding out how many people are participating, how long their responses are, or how many times their posts have been read. Smith and Fiore present three visual models of persistent conversations: the thread tree, the piano roll, and sociogram; the nine subjects in their usability study determined that the thread trees offered the most useful visualization. The thread tree looks much like a cascading waterfall, with a legend of four defining characteristics and the ability to read the messages within a persistent conversation.

Nevertheless, Smith and Fiore acknowledge the limits of their study in only determining participation and the matrixes of the conversation. Objectively charting relevance of content still seems a fiction in visualizing structures. However, because most compositionists do not see themselves as engaged in an objective enterprise, this latter problem is less significant. Either Turoff et al. or Smith and Fiore's visualization schemes could be implemented to further facilitate both participation in persistent conversations and evaluation of such participation.

Concerning participants in persistent conversations, the composition community could develop a web space that would dynamically construct a conversation thread tree based on some user-defined criteria. For example, if a user wanted to find messages pertaining to plagiarism, a simple search would reveal a fixed set of messages. A visual thread tree, however, would show who has responded to a post, as well as what else these users have contributed to the conversation. Overall, the visual map of the conversation would make facilitate dialogic interaction with past as well as current discussions on the topic.

Evaluation of online participation in these dialogues would also be facilitated by visualization schemes. Hiring, tenure and evaluation committees could easily chart online participation in persistent conversations if these schemes were readily presented. For example, beyond merely reporting that a person was an active participant in an online community, a committee could visit the archives or web space of that community and click on a participant to see a thread tree or graph of the person's participation and potentially an evaluative measure of the posts.

As further developments in technology, including XML
and Java, alter our Internet activity, visualization
schemes will probably develop more to facilitate this
activity. As the composition community grows, hopefully
they will develop schemes beyond what is suggested here to
facilitate our research participation.

Quality Control

In "Print Journals: Fit for the Future?", Rowland
critiques the present push towards online academic
publication and discussion, positing a dichotomous split
between "academic debate" and "scholarly publishing,"
arguing that the latter is "sacred," which immediately
brings to mind the priestly function of editor or editorial
board (Rowland). Peer review has traditionally served the
functions of quality assurance and a publisher's financial
limitations. However, our model of solidarity coupled with
almost infinite virtual space, does not require the
seemingly divine function of editorial boards. The
financial limits imposed by traditional publishing models--
not everything can get published due to space constraints--
are not as significant in online spaces. In addition, the
ideal of solidarity as research paradigm establishes

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community dialogue and the critical filters of participants as primary to recognition of quality, reducing the need for a traditional editorial system.

In our new online model of scholarship, peer review becomes truly peer inclusive, as members of a given community not only evaluate the work but participate in its completion. To serve this critique in the future, online academic forums, for example ACW, could offer persistent community space with both open moderated forums.[30] The moderated listserv, one in which each post must be approved by the list administrator, might serve the more specific function of quality control that a university assessment committee might require. The discussion would still rely on social debate and justification as opposed to some end-state sacred text, but it would identify the work of an author in a more recognizable way. For example, simple inquiry on the open forum, collecting participants and observation, could lead to a more substantial dialogue, eventually manifesting as a formalized discussion on the moderated forum. This dynamic would benefit both community collaboration and the need by some of more formalized recognition.

We could also establish further theoretically defined ways to publish and collaborate. In "The Future of Electronic Journals," Hal Varian hypothesizes a space in which research is submitted, and then reviewed ex post; eventually, each article would be given a cursory review and rating, those with a higher review being given more recognition. Such a system might not perfectly reflect our theoretical values in that it still relies on tradition filtering model for establishing academic worth, but it may serve a bridge function between publisher based and community based review. In fact, Galin and Latchaw argue for Varian's system as their second heterotopic model, a short-term bridge between traditional and future publishing spaces.

Because our three web portal examples serve different functions, the goal of establishing a single system of value assurance would be difficult. Nevertheless, web portals and archives could establish a similar system of dual, dynamic spaces—moderated and open. Once again, fluidity between each forum would be at the discretion of the community. Researchers could upload initial questions or work in progress, participating in observing and revising. The portal administrators could then, based on

hits, participation counts, or other set means, highlight various works.

More theoretically acute and technologically advanced forms of codification, visualization and quality control would allow the composition community to better present the work they do to an unfamiliar audience. Whether this audience is that of a tenure, promotion or hiring committee, or that of a discipline outside the composition realm, better presentation of the ongoing community dialogues that compositionists have relied on to share pedagogy and theory would demonstrate a more systematic and cohesive method to our research practice. Rather than try and warrant research compositionists do in these online environments on an individual basis, it might be useful for the community to develop means to present such work in useful and understandable ways.

Final Thoughts

Critiques of composition as a discipline and community help us realize the following:

> social reconstruction of knowledge cannot be
> realistically accomplished simply by wishing away
> existing social arrangements and material

experience but only by understanding the way

disciplinary practices bring the material,

social, and linguistic resources into active

relation. (Bazerman 119)

Rorty contends that "interfaces" required when dealing with

distinctions of subject-object, language-fact, or mind-

world should be dropped (41 "Science"). As is prevalent in

social constructionist thinking, these distinctions do not

truly exist. The distinction, then, between proper method,

and the language required therein, and truth is no more

than part of a controlling mythology. Kuhn and Rorty,

along with others, have demonstrated this myth in our

traditional ways of doing things in academia--ways that

required adapting particular "scientific" methods and

language, and therefore more deserving of the term Truth,

at the expense of the community's native discourse.

As composition is an amalgamation of interdisciplinary

discourses, it then poses the question: what is

composition's native discourse? It is, in fact, the

discourse of amalgamation. Consequently, it is not that

composition should abandon paradigms, discourses, or any

other version of sharing and constructing knowledge through

research, but that it should be comfortable with itself, as

well as be willing to explore alternative paradigms, discourses, or versions of academic discourse. After all, composition is the study of writing in all its guises. As a result, it is important to remember that the examples of solidarity as a research paradigm do not preclude the use of whatever means a researcher would feel appropriate in his or her research. Rather than "either/or" in considering a system of inquiry, it might be better to consider what best represents the work the composition community will do. For example, when considering web spaces as modes of research, Sosnoski "sees hyper-reading whether exploratory or constructive, as another form of reading (and writing) which is not likely to supplant the ones we already have since they accomplish different objectives" (172).

What influences can composition expect from technology in the future? Based on current trends, I can imagine the tablet PC beginning to replace the laptop and the PDA. I can imagine WiFi (802.11b) beginning to replace hard-wired LANs. I can imagine electronic texts, stored in personal virtual data lockers. I can imagine connectivity tools increasing in complexity to the point that face-to-face versus online distinctions might seem less important.

Eventually, I can imagine people with tablet PCs that will allow them to access their personal music, book, and movie libraries in cross-linked, user-defined patterns; they would be able to buy, sell, interface, and read, wherever they were, without the need for a bulky box and umbilical-like Ethernet cable. In this future space, the technology of connectivity would, in fact, define communities by interests and shared purposes.

In envisioning the computers and writing heterotopia, Galin and Latchaw write that their future space "will likely emerge only if members of this community and academic publishers perceive the value of this new model and support its development." There is little way in knowing if the changes that are taking place in our culture or academia will ever fully revise the way we conceive of research. Five years after Taylor argued for using electronic online discussions to help the composition community enact research forums better representative of their theory and pedagogy, compositionists still do not have a significant realization of such a forum. The once popular RhetNet, which Taylor argued was the "only one serious, truly online forum for publishing original scholarship," is now defunct. Other once popular and

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useful spaces such as Megabyte University, later subsumed by ACW, have also disappeared. Nevertheless, the composition community should continue to cultivate its research identity online. As a community that believes in the recursive, socially constructed, and contextually situated writer, composition teachers and researchers should continue to develop and discuss more recursive, socially constructed, and contextually situated research methodologies. I hope, in the future, the composition community's solidarity would become a more defining means of research, and the Internet, itself an example of what solidarity can achieve, would become a conduit in the construction of more reflective research dialogues.

ENDNOTES

[1] The date 1963 is significant due to the publication of Research in Written Composition by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer. The authors' approach to the subject involves bibliographical meta-analysis, theoretical speculation, and suggestions for the future of composition research. This work, then, was an imitation of scientific methods espoused in other disciplines. Its impact on the formation of composition as a legitimate discipline was great, as Hillocks argues in Research on Written Composition. Nevertheless, almost thirty years later in 1992, Lester Faigley writes, "composition studies has only recently considered itself as a discipline" (13). It would seem that even now, composition still suffers from an academic identity crisis; this is most likely the result of the lack of any defining composition paradigm.

[2] Shift as a division or arrangement, the original sense of the word, is implied here. However, mainly, the word shift is used in reference to Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Kuhn defines "paradigm shifts" as changes in epistemology as a result of some anomaly that a previous mode cannot explain or account for.

[3] Berlin has labeled the milieu, "current-traditional rhetoric" (Berlin "Contemporary Composition"). According to Berlin, this move was a direct result of the scientific meritocracy of the middle-class (Rhetorics 28-29). I add this view to demonstrate the increasingly complex impact of composition studies, as suggested by Connors. However, the primary purpose of my narrative is to examine the intersection of academia and composition.

[4] See Berlin's Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges and Connors' Composition-Rhetoric for further evidence of these teaching loads.

[5] I borrow this expression from Lad Tobin and Thomas Newkirk's Taking Stock: The Writing Process Movement in the '90s. The deliberate political impression provided by "movement" gives the new found focus on process rather than product a particular association with drastic and inclusive change. Politically, there is more to the process movement than merely the defining characteristics of new research expressions; however, this thesis focuses on textual evidence of research as a means to show why research methodologies that lend themselves to text legitimatize the disciplines that they belong to.

[6] The case study and resulting theoretical synthesizing of Janet Emig's The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders still had an objective ring to it. Linda Flower and John Hayes, as well as Nancy Sommers and Sondra Perl, borrow a number of conventions from scientific research to analyze the writing processes of subjects. Research still adapted scientific paradigms to achieve validity in the university hierarchy.

[7] Different approaches such as the narrative style of the expressivists (Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow and Donald Murray) and the close reading akin to literary analysis began to gain discipline legitimacy during this time, but the end result lacked an apparent awareness in the larger disciplinary struggles that composition was involved in. In a sense they were either purposefully rebellious or predictably familiar, but never articulating new methodologies for research.

[8] This is not to suggest that such a view is inclusive of all voices either. Examination of textual artifacts reveals a number of voices that are left out for political or social reasons. Cheryl Glenn examines gender differences in Rhetoric Retold, and Berlin has examined

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social influences affecting the community of composition

(see Rhetoric, Poetics and History of Composition).

[9] It seems, on one hand, that such a move would diminish the

validity of research in the field. However, as Miller

reminds us, "content, the body of knowledge within a field,

also implies a human subjectivity, a characterization of

those who learn and profess its methods, solve its problems

and take seriously its most prominent issues" (84). Any

such work has a subjectivity, whether science or humanity.

Highlighting this subjectivity should not diminish its

usefulness.

[10] Compositionists have often used Kuhn for this purpose.

Not only does his work provide the legitimacy of the

scientific community, but it also bridges the gap between

the sciences and the humanities. Patricia Bizzell was one

of the first to look at Thomas Kuhn's potential impact on

composition with her College English article, "Thomas Kuhn,

Scientism, and English Studies." Maxine Hairston later

argued for a Kuhnian paradigm shift in composition in "The

Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the

Teaching of Writing." This was followed by Richard Young's

"Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical

Invention." In addition, Miller presents a critique of the

product-process "paradigm shift" in Textual Carnivals.

[11] Kuhn has often been critiqued and has, himself, critiqued

the many ways he and others have used the term paradigm.

He claims it is presently "overused" in the academic

community, and he attempted to redefine the word in

"Postscript" to his later editions (Horgan 45). He prefers

the idea of a "disciplinary matrix" and "exemplar" as

indicative of his ideas, but these never caught on (Kuhn

182; 187). I use paradigm here because of the context:

Rorty and compositionists refer to defining roles of

paradigms and not a "disciplinary matrix."

[12] In the second edition of The Structure of Scientific

Revolutions, Kuhn writes a postscript in response to the

critiques of his argument as "relativistic" (Rorty's

assessment of the critiques). Kuhn cites Margaret

Masterman, "The Nature of a Paradigm," and Dudley Shapere,

"The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (qtd. in Kuhn,

174). For other critiques, see Arthur Young's "Has There

Ever Been a Paradigm Shift?" and James Franklin's "Thomas

Kuhn's irrationalism."

[13] Kuhn's idea of paradigm shift was applied to the compositionists' shift in pedagogy from rhetorical imitation to process theory, an argument that Hairston introduced in her 1982 "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." Pedagogy that shifts focus from product to process allows research to follow suit, and therefore opens up new modes of inquiry. Just as other disciplines use multi-modal models of inquiry (e.g. quantum and classical physics, cognitive and behavioral psychology), so too has composition been given legitimacy from paradigm theory (Miller 106). Such an adoption of Kuhnian paradigm theory in light of the product to process move also puts composition on par, even if implicitly, with the sciences. Some critics (most notably Crowley and Miller) have called into question Hairston's lens, which sees a Kuhnian paradigm shift in composition's move from product to process teaching. In each case, the critique has focused more on Hairston than Kuhn.

[14] Rorty writes at length about the epistemology/hermeneutics distinction. Rorty argues that epistemology relies on the searching for common ground

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("foundations") with others. The pragmatists (e.g. Dewey, Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars) who offer anti-foundational theories, looking at knowledge as socially constructed, justifiable and interpretive would be in direct contrast to such foundational searches. While I use "epistemology" as the study of how knowledge is constructed, Rorty argues for a more limited definition. See Rorty <u>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.</u>

[15] See Kenneth Gergen's "The Social Constructionist View in Modern Psychology" and Clifford Gertz's <u>The Interpretation of Cultures</u>; works on social constructionist thinking and its impact on liberal education by Bruffee and works on linguistics, rhetoric and justification by Wittgenstein also display the differences between social construction and enlightenment philosophy. Of note in this thesis is Rorty's <u>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</u> in which Rorty demonstrates how the use of social justification is more indicative of knowledge formation than any sort of search for "secular" truth.

[16] Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer's seminal work on research in composition queried whether typewriters had an impact on writing. Yet, writing technologies have had a

larger impact on research in composition. One small example is Denis Baron's "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy." A more significant example would be Jay David Bolter's <u>Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the history of Writing.</u>

[17] Johnson-Eilola cites neither Stephen North nor Lucy McCormick Calkins in looking at the end-state paradox. Instead, he focuses on attempts by John Trimbur and Lester Faigley to show composing "dissensus" and community disintegration.

[18] List servers (listservs) were originally part of BITNET. The concept migrated to the Internet and has since taken on a number of guises very different than imagined by its originators. Nevertheless, list servers are basically mass-mailers designed to allow an Internet community automated communication without having each member maintain a large email address book. Technologically, they still rely on the standard RFC822 for their formatting and delivery.

[19] The complete, threaded discussion is included in APPENDIX B.

[20] Other threads can be just as appropriate, and some even lead to more diverse forums. For example, in 1998, the Alliance for Computers and Writing listserv (ACW-L) sustained a significant debate regarding intellectual property and copyright issues due to the infusion of the World Wide Web. This dialogue eventually led to a cover web in the cyber-journal *Kairos* in which various authors published traditional or hypertext articles inspired by the ACW-L discussion.

[21] In 1967, Michel Foucault gave a lecture in which he describes two external, historical "spaces" of interest. Foucault delegates "primary perception"--our inner-space-- as being not in the realm of these two historical spaces. In addition, Foucault talks of the general space in which we live, one "inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (23). What is left are two sites or spaces: the utopia and the heterotopia.

The first spaces, are the utopias; they exist in a "direct and inverted analogy with the real space of Society" (24). The second spaces are that of heterotopias; these places are the spaces that "have the curious property

of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (24). Such places as fairgrounds, libraries, theaters, and cemeteries exist as Foucaultian heterotopias--at once reflecting society, but at the same time disrupting the boundaries of space and time.

[22] "Web space" and "web portal" are used synonymously here. Web portal has shifted in meaning and conception, becoming more of catchall for any website that offers original content as well as links to offsite content. Web spaces are websites that serve more than merely disseminating and interfacing with information. While distribution of information is one significant function, a web portal also focuses the vast amount of information and data contained on the web, provides connectivity tools for its members, and highlights and organizes community specific discourse and archiving functions. A significant web space can serve the functions of library catalog system, community center, outreach program, publishing house, water fountain, newspaper, and personal assistant. The versatility of virtual space allows for these functions to operate in a

large schema more substantial than merely the sum of its parts.

[23] The arXiv archive was formerly known as the xxx.lanl.gov archive. Effectively, this is the same site Latchow and Galin refer to in "Heterotopic Spaces."

[24] One of the original, international composition and rhetoric MOOs was LinguaMOO, sponsored by the University of Texas, Dallas. Started in 1995, LinguaMOO is still maintained and visited with great frequency, as the administrators have continually developed and expanded their space (http://lingua.utdallas.edu/).

[25] During the course of writing this thesis, ACW has become less active, whereas Academic.Writing and NCTE have grown increasingly more comprehensive and useful.

[26] See "Interchange: A Conversation among the Disciplines" by Michael Abbott, Pearl Bartlett, Stephen Fishman, and Charlotte Honda. Yet, on a less formalized level, the increase in interest in published letters, counterpoints, and responses to articles in composition journals has changed to reflect a social constructionist milieu.

[27] See Carol Peterson Haviland, Carmen M. Fye, and Richard Colby's "The Politics of Administrative and Physical

Location" for an example of using threaded discussion as fixed data. For an example of the experimental, see "Petals on a Wet Black Bough: Textuality, Collaboration, and the New Essay," by Myka Vielstimmig--the online writing partnership of Kathleen Blake Yancey and Michael Spooner.

[28] Rickly might be overly critical in assessing how much our participation in learning should count towards promotion and tenure, but her argument is more about working within the system to gain extrinsic credit for work we do eventually do, demonstrating that the rhetoric of our own assessment is as important as whatever goals we may think it serves. She summarizes Glassick, Hubor, and Maeroff's articulation of university rhetoric for assessing what should count as "scholarship":

- Clear Goals -- define purpose, objectives, and relevant questions
- Adequate Preparation -- understanding of scholarship in the field, appropriate resources
- Appropriate Methods - methods appropriate to goals, modifying procedures in response to circumstances

- Significant Results - add to the field, opens

  additional areas for exploration

- Effective Presentation - appropriate forums, style,

  and organization for audience

- Reflective Critique - critical evaluation and evidence

  to support argument

Rickly argues that, in reporting our work with technology,

we should bend our justification to reflect the university

rhetoric for assessment.

[29] There are potentially conflicting senses of "appropriate"

here. On one hand, "appropriate" could mean traditional or

established, such as legitimized, deductive scientific

methods. On the other hand, and more suitable to the

composition community, "appropriate" can be defined as

supportive and harmonious with the philosophy of the

community.

[30] The Moderators Homepage: Resources for Moderators and

Facilitators of Online Discussions

<http://www.emoderators.com/moderators.shtml> offers a

number of good articles and resources for listserv

moderation.

APPENDIX A:

A SELECTION OF CURRENT COMPOSITION-RELATED LISTSERVS

ACW-L (Alliance for Computers and Writing)

Focus	Association of teachers and researchers interested in the intersections of information technologies and writing.
Subscription Address	listproc@ttacs6.ttu.edu
Message	subscribe ACW-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Fred Kemp <ykfok@ttacs.ttu.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://english.ttu.edu/acw/>

ATTW-L (Association of Teachers of Technical Writing List)

Focus	Association for teachers and practitioners in the field of technical writing.
Subscription Address	lyris@lyris.acs.ttu.edu
Message	subscribe ATTW-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Sam Dragga <sam.dragga@ttu.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://www.attw.org/default.asp>

CCCC-IP (CCCC Intellectual Property Caucus)

Focus	Intellectual property issues
Subscription Address	listserv@vm1.spcs.umn.edu
Message	subscribe CCCC-IP YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	
Archive/Web	<http://www.ncte.org>

COMPOS01 (The Composition Digest)

Focus	Moderated weekly newsgroup for the study of computers and writing, specifically writing instruction in computer based classrooms.
Subscription Address	listserv@ULKYVX.LOUISVILLE.EDU
Message	subscribe COMPOS01 YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	
Archive/Web	

CPTSC-L (Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication)

Focus	Scientific and technical communication
Subscription Address	listserv@clvm.clarkson.edu
Message	subscribe CPTSC-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Johndan Johnson-Eilola <johndan@clarkson.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://cptsc.org/>

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Crewrt-L (Creative Writing and Composition)

Focus	Originally, a list for discussions about the intersections of creative writing and composition pedagogy. The list evolved into a community of writers that has thrived for more than 10 years (<http://wwwinteristy.org>).
Subscription Address	<http://www.interversity.org/lists/crewrt-l/>
Message	
Contact	Eric Crump <eric@interversity.com>
Archive/Web	<http://www.interversity.org/lists/ungrading/archives.php>

H-RHETOR (History of Rhetoric and Communication)

Focus	History of rhetoric, communication, and related disciplines
Subscription Address	listserv@msu.edu
Message	subscribe H-RHETOR YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Gary Hatch <gary_hatch@byu.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~rhetor/>

OWCC (Online Writing Center Consortium)

Focus	Using computer technology in college and secondary-level writing instruction
Subscription Address	<http://www.interversity.org/lists/OWCC/>
Message	
Contact	Nick Carbone <nick_carbone@hotmail.com>
Archive/Web	<http://owcc.colostate.edu/>

TECHRHET (Technology and Rhetoric)

Focus	TechRhet is devoted to exploring tech teaching, learning, communication, and community.
Subscription Address	TechRhet-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Message	
Contact	
Archive/Web	<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TechRhet/>

TECHWR-L (Technical Writing)

Focus	Technical writing and communication issues
Subscription Address	lyris@lists.raycomm.com
Message	SUB TECHWR-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	
Archive/Web	<http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/index.php3>

WAC-L (Writing Across the Curriculum)

Focus	Writing across the curriculum as teachers, researchers, and program administrators
Subscription Address	listserv@postoffice.cso.uiuc.edu
Message	subscribe WAC-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Gail Hawisher <hawisher@uiuc.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://listserv.uiuc.edu/archives/wac-l.html>

WPA-L (Writing Program Administrators)

Focus	Primarily for those involved in college writing program administration. Discussions regarding pedagogy and professional activities also are sustained.
Subscription Address	LISTSERV@LISTS.ASU.EDU
Message	subscribe WPA-L YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	David Schwalm <DAVID.SCHWALM@asu.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://lists.asu.edu/archives/wpa-1.html>

WCENTER (Writing Centers)

Focus	Writing centers, tutoring pedagogy, and writing administration.
Subscription Address	listserv@unicorn.acs.ttu.edu
Message	subscribe WCENTER YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	Fred Kemp <ykfok@ttacs.ttu.edu> <fred.kemp@ttu.edu>
Archive/Web	<http://www.ttu.edu/wcenter>

WHIRL (Women's History in Rhetoric and Language)

Focus	
Subscription Address	listserv@psuvm.psu.edu
Message	subscribe WHIRL YourFirstName YourLastName
Contact	
Archive/Web	<>

APPENDIX B:

WPA-L LISTSERV EXCHANGE CONSIDERING THE IMPLEMENTATION

OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

We facing a question in our writing program that I'm hoping some of you
can help me with. The upper administration here at the University of
Idaho would like us describe how we might use computer technology in
some way to enhance or possibly even replace some of our classroom
instruction in the FY comp. classes. We have approximately 50 to 65
sections of these courses at three different levels each semester (more
sections in the fall), taught by a mix of TAs, lecturers, and
professors (mostly TAs, very few professors).
There are many computer labs all over campus (we have a very good ratio
of lab computer to total number of students); the residence halls and
even the Greek houses are completely wired with network connection for
the students to use their own computers. However, we have no computer
classrooms for which it is practical to teach comp. classes.

I've spent quite a bit of time looking through the WPA-L archives to
survey how people use this technology, and it appears that our use in
general falls into these categories. (I know all this is pretty
obvious to many of you.)

1. Some schools do not use computer classrooms directly, but just about
everyone seems to assume that students are using computers to produce
their writing.
2. Some have a relatively small number of computer classrooms which
they use in two ways: (a) some sections of big required courses use
these classrooms exclusively and (b) all (or a large portion of all)
sections spend at least a little time in a computer classroom,
sometimes sharing it with another section, sometimes only once or twice
in a semester
3. Some schools have enough computer classrooms for all sections of FY
comp to be taught there all the time.
4. Still other schools require students to own their own laptop, which
can be used in a variety of different situations.

By this point, most of us do not see these possibilities as choices
exactly, since many of our programs are heavily committed to using
computers a certain way.

Those of us who teach in computer classrooms appear to two general
approaches to handling software: on the one hand, the students can be
encouraged to learn word processing skills, Web design, word processing
skills, email exchanges, and Internet browsing (the argument being that
students then have skills they can use when the computer course is
over). Or the emphasis can be on using the computers to exchange ideas
through something like Daedelus Interchange or to exchange texts easily
through other specialized software.

Given this background, I'd like to list some possibilities to how I might respond to the administration's recent request.

Possibility One: We really ought to have at least some computer classrooms that could be shared among two to four sections. A good goal would be to have enough computer classrooms so that all sections of a particular course (say Engl 101) could be taught regularly in such an environment. Pros: pedagogically and even theoretically, this is the best way to use computer technology. Cons: high cost, but the UI is about to start renovating a big classroom building in which we teach most of our writing courses. We could make a play for outfitting some of these new classrooms as electronic classrooms. If it turns out to be too expensive, we might just end up saying politely that we're interested in computer technology, only on these terms.

Possibility Two: We could request money to enhance our composition Web site and perhaps beef up our Writing Center so that students had more computer-based resources, such as synchronous and asynchronous communication packages designed for their Web classes. Students would be expected to use either their own computer or the ones in the existing labs. Pros: this would be cheaper and it probably is more what the administration has in mind (more on this below). Cons: can we really expect students to carry out sophisticated tasks on a computer (even if good computers labs are widely available) when they have no hands-on instruction with computers in the classroom?

Possibility Three: This is pretty much like Possibility Two, except that we make these activities available through the Web from the various large labs around campus and even from the student's own dorm room or even from off campus through increasingly popular DSL connections so interesting and substantive that we can actually diminish the amount of time that students have to be in a conventional classroom. Pros: This would make the administration very happy; they hope to cut down on "seat-time" in the conventional classroom and still keep the credit level unchanged. Cons: it really amounts to teaching part of a writing course on a residential campus as people were involved in distance education. It might work, but why do it? A three-credit writing course is supposed to involved three hours of classroom instruction of some sort. It's a pipe-dream to think that this would really result in more effective instruction and possibly an lower cost in facilities.

There are of course other possibilities, but I don't think they're practical at UI (I don't think we can get everyone to buy a laptop, for example). And as you can tell, I'm personally in favor of Possibility One (above). What you could help with is to let me know if this thinking pretty much makes sense, given the type of computer environment we already have. Or is there some major aspect of all this that I'm overlooking?
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University of Idaho, Moscow 83844-1102 |
http://www.its.uidaho.edu/thomas
==

Date: Mon, 26 Feb 2001 12:10:30 -0700
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Mike Palmquist <Mike.Palmquist@COLOSTATE.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
In-Reply-To: <NEBBLPOPMLLGIHHOPBILAEAICFAA.thomas@uidaho.edu>
Content-type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

Hi Gordon,

This sounds like a great opportunity and you've clearly put in a lot of
thought about the issue. Based on my experiences, I would suggest that
you go with a combination of options 1 and 2 (which, in fact, would
allow you to make some progress toward the activities you discuss in
option 3).

We've been doing something like possibilities one and two (computer
classrooms, plus a strong online presence via the Web and a course
management system -- SyllaBase, out of the 3GB Group in Login, Utah).
Our composition program makes extensive use of our two computer
classrooms for many of our upper-division writing courses and for
several sections of introductory composition. We're in the process
(it's a never-ending process) of obtaining funding for one or two more
classrooms. This would allow us to schedule the majority of our courses
in the computer classrooms.

In addition, we have had reasonably good luck with students using our
course management system's chat rooms, threaded discussion forums, and
file sharing groups. The interface for SyllaBase seems fairly intuitive
and the students seem to pick it up well. It's easier to get students
using this system in the computer classrooms, of course, but it's also
been used effectively in courses offered in our traditional classrooms.

As a result, I don't see possibility 1/possibility 2 as an either/or
proposition. You can purchase a fairly powerful server for relatively
low cost these days. Or you could simply use your university's main
server as the host for a Web site. The key issues you'll want to
address, should you pursue option 2, is the cost of content creation,
programming, and upkeep. We are fortunate to have a full-time
programmer, plus a small amount of funds to continue developing content
for our Web site (http://writing.colostate.edu). But creating content
for the site and updating it up nonetheless takes up a great deal of
our composition faculty's time. Still, I think that you'll find it best
to view these two options as mutually supportive rather than as
either/or. Because we have a strong Web presence, and because we can
support both traditional classroom and computer sections via the Web
site, most of our instructors are seeing the Web as a logical way of

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supporting writing courses. And, as a result, there has been growing interest in teaching writing courses in the computer classrooms.

Best of luck with your planning. Feel free to contact me if you'd like.
Mike

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Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2001 13:35:08 -0800
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Gordon Thomas <thomas@UIDAHO.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
In-Reply-To:
<BDEBLHKALPLEOFHLAOEBCENECFAA.Mike.Palmquist@ColoState.edu>
Content-type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

Thanks for the advice, Mike. I think you're right about the idea use of computer technology would be to provide a strong Web presence AND instruction in computer classrooms. The question now might be which area is the most critical. My general impression is that computer classrooms used to be more important than they are now: students already have a fair amount of computer experience, so to justify itself a computer classroom really needs to provide special software and interactive experiences of the type you describe.

I'd like to stay out of the computer support business as much as possible. I used to direct our department's computer writing lab more than 10 years ago. I learned a lot about Unix (we used dumb terminals and a Unix server), and we could do some pretty neat things in the lab itself, I grew concerned that not much that we did in that lab would apply to anything else the students did with computers. We have a centralized IT staff who run our other student labs; it would be best, it seems to me, if these people did all the computer work.

Another question is whether a strong Web presence can be used to create a kind of modifed distance learning approach to courses that are taught right on the campus. My impression now is that it can. And if a campus is under pressure to have students spend less time in traditional classrooms (we will face a severe classroom shortage for a couple of years during a major building renovation), perhaps it would be wise to use computer technology for this purpose. But another part of me resists this, since it seems most beneficial in a residential

campus for students to have as much face-to-face instructions as
possible, even if it does require us to schedule classes at
odd times in order to fit everything in.

--Gordon Thomas
  Univ. of Idaho, Moscow

Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2001 14:43:06 -0700
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Gregory Glau <gglau@ASU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
Content-type: MULTIPART/ALTERNATIVE;

Gordon, one thing you mentioned--

pressure to have students spend less time in traditional classrooms (we
will face a severe classroom shortage for a couple of years during a
major building renovation)

--can be helped with a hybrid model class, which someone might have
already mentioned in an earlier post.

We're in our second full year of using this model--classes meet one day
a week in a classroom and the other day online, so one classroom serves
for two classes--and while we're still in the process of assessing
their use, anecdotal reports from students and teachers indicate a high
degree of satisfaction. I also want to try (but haven't yet been able
to) a MWF model with three classes cycling through two classrooms (a
regular one and a computer-mediated classroom).

Best,
Greg

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Co-Editor, BWe: Basic Writing e-Journal, located at:
http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/composition/cbw/

Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2001 18:17:53 -0800
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Kurt Bouman <kbouman+@PITT.EDU>

Organization: UPJ
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
Content-type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii

Greg, Gordon, and others--

Writing centers can also be used to supplement (supplant, too?) regular
class sessions--with the cooperation and permission of the WC director.
Writing centers are great spaces--physical as well as intellectual--to
extend formal talk, teaching, and learning about writing. Consider,
too, in addition to Greg's hybrid model, a model built on a scientific
lab course: some classroom time, and some lab time (which, for
writing, could certainly be online).

Eric Hobson's _Wiring the Writing Center_ and James Inman and Donna
Sewell's _Taking Flight with OWLs_ (online writing labs) may be useful
books to look to for ways to extend teaching and learning about writing
into networked and web-based writing center environments.

Kurt Bouman

Date: Wed, 28 Feb 2001 10:25:41 -0800
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Gordon Thomas <thomas@UIDAHO.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
In-Reply-To: <B6426E926476D411B8E800B0D03D5C1A3C93D6@mainex2.asu.edu>
Content-type: MULTIPART/ALTERNATIVE;

RE: Computer TechnologyYes, thanks, Greg. We're considering the idea
of those hybrid classes (I know that there's a whole thread on this).
When three classes share the same computer classroom (and you want to
save classroom space by this method), it seems to me that you're faced
with a situation in which a particular comp. class would have to meet
in a different place each day (there would be a Monday classroom, a
Wednesday classroom, and then the computer classroom on Friday, for
example). Sounds possible--but complicated.

Date: Wed, 28 Feb 2001 11:38:59 -0700
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Gregory Glau <gglau@ASU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
Content-type: MULTIPART/ALTERNATIVE;

Gordon, you're exactly right in that the logistics take some planning.
Especially problematic is the first week (we allow students to register
and to move classes all that first week, so there's some confusion).

We have a Web page, though, that explains things (see
www.asu.edu/hybrid) and as long as all the teachers know ahead of time,
it's simply a matter of listing where the class meets on any individual
day, right in their syllabus. Some planning is required, but its
doable. And the students and teachers love the approach.
Best,
Greg

Hi Gordon,

I would agree that, in general, computer classrooms are being de-
emphasized these days. I would even agree that, given a choice of one
over the other, I'd go with a Web-based approach and sacrifice the
computer classrooms.

However, I think that the benefits of the computer classroom as a
writing environment / learning environment are often overlooked. When
someone asks me what the primary benefit of a computer classroom is, I
respond that it is the opportunity to work in a classroom where writing
is done (and taken seriously as it's done) is the primary benefit. I
view teaching in a writing classroom as similar to teaching in an art
studio. You get to work with students as they write, and even if the
writing they're doing is something along the lines of responding to
classmates' posts to a Web forum or working on a brief response to a
reading assigned for that day, students can benefit from discussing
their writing with you or their classmates as they do it. In other
words, I think the computer classroom provides more "teaching moments"
than is the case in many traditional classrooms.

To extend the art studio analogy a bit further, I tend to see the
computer classroom as a place where writing is done (like an art
studio) and the traditional classroom as a place where writing is
discussed (like an art history course). In my observations of teachers,
I see more connections to students' writing in the computer classrooms
than in the traditional classrooms.

One caveat: We've begun moving more writing into our traditional
classrooms (as a direct result of our experiences teaching in the
computer classrooms).

I'm sure, as my friend Will Hochman will surely second (and as he's
often said), that we can do anything in a traditional classroom that we
can do in a computer classroom -- it's just easier in a computer

classroom. And, of course, the teacher is the most important element in the equation.

Thanks,
Mike
****
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Date: Wed, 28 Feb 2001 14:18:49 -0600
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Rebecca Rickly <rrickly@TTACS.TTU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
Content-type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

What Mike said.

I still teach in a computer classroom (because I am lucky enough to be scheduled in one when I ask), but it's because I absolutely love the workshop atmosphere that such a lab fostered. I also like being able to model for students what they can do--but this can be done online as well. Here, students have access to our web-based applications in their dorms, in the library, in the English building, and many other places on campus. But there are always one or two folks who commute, or who work and go to school and find scheduling difficult--and it's for those people that meeting in the computer classroom, even a day a week, is a boon.

--Becky

Date: Wed, 28 Feb 2001 19:10:41 -0500
Reply-To: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
Sender: Writing Program Administration <WPA-L@ASU.EDU>
From: Marcia Lee Ribble <ribblema@PILOT.MSU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Computer Technology
In-Reply-To: <NEBBLPOPMLLGIHHOPBILEEEKCFAA.thomas@uidaho.edu>
Content-type: text/plain
   AT SVSU this term I have the best of both worlds. My day classes meet twice a week 1 1/2 hrs per class, and on Monday we're in a computer lab and on Weds. we meet in a wonderful windowed room in the library.
My students have no problems with finding the room we're in.

   Marcia Ribble

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