Language: A Bridge or Barrier to Social Groups

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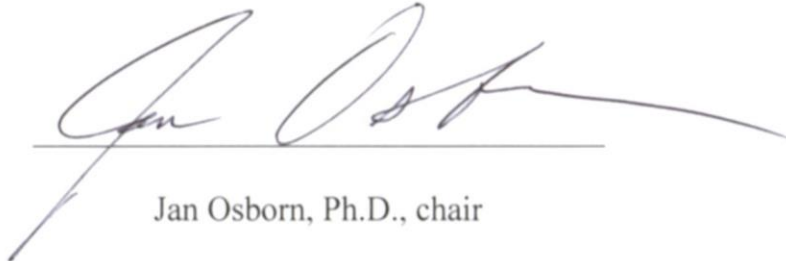
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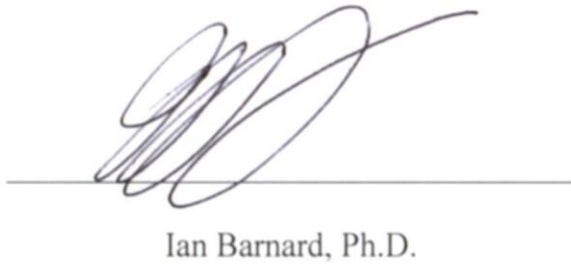## CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
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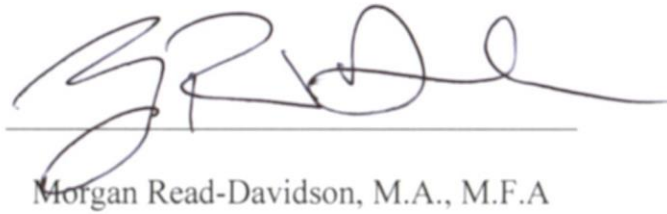**Computational and Data Sciences**

The thesis of Adina S. Corke is approved.

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ABSTRACT

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by Adina S. Corke

Language acts as either a bridge or a barrier to social groups dependent upon the individual's effective use of a social group's language. The individual uses the language of the group in order to join the group and to be understood by the group. This suggests that language is behavioral in part and can be treated as a form of social norms which delegate who is a part of the group and who is not. By utilizing the language of the group effectively, an individual is able to join the group. This group language may be temporary, and the dynamics of the group's language can be held only within specific situations, such as with inside jokes, or can be more lasting, such as the language of a discourse. Examples of group language include the use of academic jargon in the academy, key terms specific to an academic field, and the standardization of the English language.

To formulate an interdisciplinary study of social epistemic rhetoric, this thesis looks at the crossovers between two fields of study through a comparative analysis of social epistemic rhetorical theory and psychological research concerning language production and perception, the effect language has on understanding, and social mirroring processes that may be generalized to language production. This rhetorical theory now grounded in psychological science calls for experimental testing to find the limitations of group dynamics involving language.

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1   Introduction

In 2018, Randy the Australian, felt-faced, puppet comedian performed "Randy Writes a Novel" in which the puppet attempts to read his recently finished novel manuscript called *Walking to Sky* amid multiple tangents that represent Randy's avoidance of any sort of feedback regarding his novel (8:40). One such tangent is Randy's description of his adventures when buying a bookshelf from a man named Morgan. The main plotline of this sketch is not nearly as impressive as Randy's ability to play off socially established language codes that the audience is aware of and that Randy is hyper-aware of. Randy spends a good portion of the sketch going over the text message exchange of how he and Morgan met to pick up the bookshelf from Morgan's home. The sketch comes across like this:

> I sent ... the text message: "Hello, I saw your bookshelf on Gumtree. Is it still available?"

> … Morgan's response came through a couple of minutes later and simply read: "It was my wife's bookshelf."

> How do you respond to that? Aside from the fact that it doesn't answer my fucking question and that the past tense in that sentence unnerves me slightly ... I replied: "Is it still available?"

> He responded with the letter *y*, just a *y*. Is he asking me *why* I want to know if it's still available or is it a *y* for *yes* and he's so in the throes of grief that he can't manage the

e and the *s*? I assumed it was a *y* for *yes*, so I responded: "Cool, I'll take it. When's a good time to come and pick it up?"

No reply for 15 minutes ... and then when a reply actually does come through, I realize he spent those 15 minutes crafting his response because it's a fucking thesis. He must have felt so bad about only using a single consonant in his previous text that he just massively overcompensated with this one. Also, for some reason, he found that the use of punctuation entirely unnecessary. So, it's just one obscenely long sentence which reads:

"You must come pick up now I only have a short time here at house and also it wide so bring van or trailer and also there upstair but I can help you carry downstair if you come park out front walk up ring bell and I will help you carry it to trailer or van and I only accept cash and if you do not come now I will sell it someone else"

... Now I am fascinated by Morgan and I simply must meet the man. So, I drive over to his house—Oh, before I left, I sent a message that said, "Cool, I'll be there in 10 minutes." He replied, "Okay," which just fascinated me more that he'll use four letters to spell a two-letter word and one letter to spell a three-letter word. Morgan is off the fucking chain. And as I am driving over to his house, I am imagining what he is going to be like ... Maybe, and I am really hoping this is the case, Morgan is just bat-shit crazy. (49:54-53:05)

Randy's text message exchange and the complaints he expresses over Morgan's inconsistent use of any sort of rules regarding the English language when texting a stranger accurately depict the nature of language as a social norm while representing many of the nuances involved with this

topic as well. This project adopts an interdisciplinary approach to suggest that if assuming language is social in nature, then it is a social behavior that dictates the parameters of social groups. Language acts as either a bridge or a barrier to social groups dependent upon the individual's effective use of a social group's language. This means language is more expansive than just its standard form. There are codes within language that an individual must effectively use to be a part of and maintain access to a social group. Research in both rhetorical studies and psychological studies offer evidence of such an assertion.

In Randy's sketch, Morgan's failure to successfully use an appropriate code of language over text messages with a stranger is not only unnerving but leads Randy to assume Morgan is mentally unstable. The audience's laughter in the video clip that comes before Randy's explanation about the use of past tense unnerving him in the first of Morgan's texts is the consequence of both the context of the story being told on a comedic platform and the audience recognizing Morgan's failure to use a correct code of language for communicating with a stranger. As two strangers, both Randy and the audience assume that Morgan will respond to Randy's standard use of English with a standard use of English or his best approximation of that. Instead, his use of language appears to have no rules or consistency to it. He provides one text message with one letter that leaves Randy wondering what Morgan is trying to say. Another of his text messages spells out "okay" entirely, so Morgan does not simply use the least number of characters to communicate through text messages. Then he provides a long text with no punctuation and grammatical errors which baffles Randy because no conclusion can be made about Morgan's rules regarding language communication.

This use of language has no code to it that Randy and the audience would use to categorize

Morgan. Randy's fascination with Morgan comes from a need to validate or correct his categorization of Morgan as a type of person from a particular group. This need to categorize Morgan comes from dissonance in Randy's schemata about who would send text messages the way Morgan does. Just as children categorize objects by name and characteristics, such as cat versus dog, people categorize other people, and this is partially managed through people's use of language. Randy's best explanation for Morgan's speech is that he must not have a good handle on the English language, or he must be crazy to utilize so many codes in one conversation with a person he has never met.

Randy's attempt at decoding Morgan's "y" text message also represents the bottom-up top-down processing model of communication between two people. Receiving the message and recognizing that he has no idea what is meant by the letter "y" in the context is an example of bottom-up processing. It is the process of receiving language as it is without using any outside knowledge to decode what is trying to be communicated. However, Randy must use previous knowledge regarding the English language and the context of the conversation to decode what Morgan is trying to communicate. This cognitive process is called top-down processing (Samuel 1124). He comes up with two possibilities, that "y" is a letter meant to stand in for either *why* or *yes* and uses the context of the conversation to determine that Morgan must realize why Randy is texting him so *yes* is the more appropriate response given the context. This is representative of bottom-up processing and top-down processing working together to allow communication to occur.

This sort of function of social groups and cognitive processes regarding codified language exists everywhere. It's in comedy as seen with Randy's sketch. It's also in film, in mainstream culture,

in the academy both between disciplines and within disciplines. Codified language is everywhere as this project reveals, but the process to finding and proving its existence lies with an interdisciplinary approach because the knowledge of language in both psychology and rhetoric studies has remained relatively separate, alienated by departments focused on other questions of concern. This project places a bridge between the two disciplines to allow room to explore this idea.

Moving away from Randy's example of language being used to navigate social situations, the larger topic here is that the individual uses the language of the group in order to join the group and to be understood by the group. This effectively creates a specific group language and suggests language is behavioral and can be treated as a social norm. Such group language may be temporary and held only within a specific situation such as with some memes or may become more lasting when it enters a discourse such as terminology. Language as a social norm then dictates who is a part of the group and who is not. By utilizing the language of the group effectively, an individual is able to join the group. Such examples of group language include the use of academic jargon in the academy, key terms specific to an academic field, and the standardization of the English language.

For the extent of this project, language is defined as an innate, hard-wired cognitive process an individual acquires through interaction with a social group (Thorne and Henley 545-546, Feldman 230-231). This process is expressed as behavior, a social construct, and a system of signs that are negotiated in social contexts. Ultimately, language comes to represent an expression of reality which, in turn, informs and shapes reality so that it remains reflexive in nature (Saussure 65-74, Lacan 11-13, Brown and Lenneberg 454). Through a comparative study

of social epistemic rhetorical theory and psychological research concerning language production and perception, the effect language has on understanding, and social mirroring processes that may be generalized to language production, the information from the two fields cross over to formulate an interdisciplinary theory of social epistemic rhetoric. This rhetorical theory when grounded in empirical psychological science calls for experimental testing to find the limitations of group dynamics involving language. This definition gives a solid theoretical foundation to support the claims made about imitation being a key to understanding the relationship between language and group dynamics. From here, this relationship is supported with both anecdotal evidence and a case study of language and group dynamics dictating one another. Finally, a call to action is made that states how perhaps interdisciplinary study can lend itself to fill in the holes regarding knowledge of all types, but specifically concerning the effect language may have on group dynamics.

2 Language as a Social Behavior

To determine the relationship between the dynamics of language as an act of imitation in social contexts, there is a need to define the social nature of language. Definition forms a firm theoretical foundation that informs the project when comparing interdisciplinary knowledge regarding how the group influences an individual's language and vice versa. As such, an operational definition of language is provided moving along the lines that language is a behavior, a social act, and that it is socially constructed. Such a definition provides an opportunity for the audience and the writer of this project to come to an understanding about what it means when *language* is used within this text and what implications that may have with regards to this project as a whole. After defining language, this project departs from rhetorical theory and past psychological research to compare the critical theory concerning mimesis with the psychological theory concerning mirroring as a means to discuss the role of language concerning imitation of behavior, imitation of reality, and imitation of language. This section of the project lays out the theoretical framework employed throughout the rest of the project while the social nature of language is outlined further.

2.1 Language as a Social Act

Language is the bridge between reality and expression of that reality which an individual performs. That is to say, an individual with language is either a receiver of language or a producer of language at one point in the conversation and this receiving or producing is considered performance of language (Brown and Lenneberg 454). This type of communication requires a sociality even when the producer of language is performing for oneself since the self comes to embody both social roles as listener and producer.

This project accepts rhetorician Ferdinand de Saussure's adherence to semiotics as the philosophy behind the elements that make up language. Saussure criticizes definitions of language that presume the elements of language are made up of a list of words that stand in for concepts in reality, "a naming-process only" as Saussure phrases such a notion (65). Language is problematic for Saussure because it assumes the idea behind a word, or rather "signifier," that represents reality does not exist before the sign comes into being (66). To Saussure, language consists of a series of signifiers or sound-images that represent objects and ideas found in reality (signs) or mental concepts that have come out of reality (signified) (67). The signifiers are initially arbitrary in nature since the sound of the word is not necessarily similar to the object in reality. The social agreement between humans that the sound represents the object in reality leads to the arbitrary nature of the signifiers. However, Saussure writes: "[Only] the associations sanctioned by the language appear to us to conform to reality, and we disregard whatever others might be imagined" (67). The arbitrary nature of signifiers shapes the perception of reality so that reality is perceived through a lens of signs or language. Speaking to the arbitrary nature of language with regards to its representation of reality, Saussure asserts that language is inherited always from a preceding generation with no known origin necessarily. Attempting to name an origin is fruitless according to Saussure who suggests that all we should concern ourselves with are "existing idioms" (72). However, this does not mean one should not recognize the influence the element of inheritance has upon language. Saussure also calls language a "social formation" influenced by participants" (74). Since language is inherited and evolving out of a social formation's past, language is not only a social formation, but a social formation influenced by the present social group and the past social groups. James Berlin addresses the social nature of language as well:

[Since] language is a social phenomenon that is a product of a particular historical moment,

our notions of the observing self, the communities in which the self functions, and the very structures of the material world are social constructions—all specific to a particular time and culture. These social constructions are thus inscribed in the very language we are given to inhabit in responding to our experience. ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 488)

Participating in language is then partaking in a social act with people from the individual's present culture and past culture.

However, Saussure's description of language is problematic. He assumes all sound-images must include sound. Saussure attends to the auditory and vocal components of language and the physical structure of words in a visual context, but he dismisses language that is made up of gestures commonly referred to as sign language. This project has no need to exclude sign language as a language since it remains a social construct in which participating individuals are producing language created from arbitrary but socially agreed-upon gestures that stand in for objects, thoughts, and ideas in reality. Alternatively, sign language is perhaps a better example of Saussure's semiology. It has a grammatical structure that Saussure requires of any defined language. The gestures are arbitrary signifiers in nature but come to shape the reality of those who learn to use the language. For instance, *girl* is gestured as a thumb swiping down the cheek. This gesture is taught to learners of American Sign Language as representative of blush on a girl's cheek or rosy cheeks. The sign itself is arbitrary but teaching the gesture this way shapes the representation of what it means to sign *girl* for American Sign Language learners based on all the meanings that come inherently with the gesture or signifier. The limited meanings of signifiers erase the perception of the arbitrary nature of signifiers by shaping human perception of reality around language.

Given that Saussure's definition of language includes defining language as a social construct where signifiers are socially agreed upon to represent objects in reality, an important question to ask is whether the group repeats the language utilized by the individual or the individual repeats the language formed by the group. Where do these sentences come from initially if the group has any influence over the individual? Since the individual speaks the language of their social group, there is an influence on the individual coming from the meanings of the specific language the individual utilizes while the group continues to maintain or question meanings of specific language across time. The individual does not produce language within a vacuum then, so how unique can the individual's sentences be with outside influences? Given Saussure's assertion that "the individual does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community," the individual then has very little agency over the language he or she utilizes (69). However, with mention of this, we are getting ahead of ourselves here. As James Berlin writes in his criticisms, "more of this in a moment" ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 488).

2.2   Language as a Behavior

Saussure's work came at a time when behaviorism was coming into being. Behaviorism became increasingly prevalent across the first three-quarters of the twentieth century and rose in popularity starting in the 1940s (Thorne and Henley 16). It was during this behaviorist movement when psychologists predicted they could generalize conclusions regarding the extent of experimental behavior research to unlimited aspects of human behavior, including language acquisition. For instance, behaviorist B.F. Skinner defined language in terms of verbal learning. A child is reinforced for communicating using language and learns what to say to receive rewards while avoiding words and phrases that bring on punishment (Thorne and Henley 384, Feldman 230).

Simply suggesting that language is a signifier to signified matching process people learn to become fluent in a language emphasizes the arbitrary nature of signs and generalizes the arguments made by behaviorists at the time.

However, cognitive psychologists disagreed with Skinner's pure behaviorist notion of language. For instance, George Miller's book *The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information* explains that the mind's short-term memory has the capacity to remember only so many pieces of information at once. This is an important discovery because it bridged human communication with mathematical theory and it discredited the pure behaviorist notion of learning language since it was deemed improbable for a human to remember and recall all of the signs that make up a language without some sort of biological mechanism that would aid this process of learning language (Thorne and Henley 545-546). Noam Chomsky conducted research that influenced many psychologists and psychologists, including Miller. His definition of language is the beginning of a definition of language in the field of psychology today. Chomsky's notoriety began with him blasting Skinner for his behaviorist view on language in 1959 by saying there was a "poverty-of-stimulus" in Skinner's argument (Thorne and Henley 543). Instead, Chomsky theorized the need for a language acquisition device (LAD) in the brain that would allow for language acquisition. Chomsky believed humans were born with brain structures specialized for learning a language which his later research supports (Thorne and Henley 543-544, Feldman 230). Eric Lenneberg concluded from his study that during critical periods of development, the brain has structures primed for learning language (Purves, Augustine, Fitzpatrick, et al. n.p.). This suggests language acquisition is made possible through a combination of biological structures and an environment that supports the exposure and practice of language. Such a notion is called the interactionist approach by child psychologists (Feldman 230-231).

Without exposure to language, no language can be acquired. With language exposure, the language acquired is that which the person has been exposed to. Therefore, the brain does not just have knowledge of language before exposure occurs, but exposure without the cranial structures will not lead to language acquisition either.

The cases of Genie and Victor, while unfortunate stories, are exceptional examples of a failure to acquire fluency in language. Genie was thirteen when she was found and rescued by social services. This girl was subjected to at least ten years of solitary isolation, for the most part, along with other known and unknown horrors. Professionals working Genie's case inferred from her early behavior that this girl was beaten whenever she vocalized at all which conditioned her to remain silent even after she was removed from the home. Genie's case reminded psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors of Victor's case in 1800 during the Age of Enlightenment. Victor was about twelve years old when he was found after emerging from a forest. He came at an interesting time as archeologists, doctors, and other professionals were discussing humanism or rather what elements of human nature differentiate humans from the rest of the animal world. Known as the "Wild Child" and having the movie *The Wild Child* made about his participation in Jean Itard's rehabilitation program, Victor's case greatly influenced Genie's case as it was used for the groundwork in her rehabilitation program and the tests professionals ran for the purposes of learning what role nurture has in human behavior (NOVA "Secrets of the Wild Child").

Genie's and Victor's cases are of particular interest when it comes to their use of language. Both children showed remarkable use of language given their circumstances once they were placed in a social environment with humans willing to pay attention to them. By the time Genie was receiving help with language, she was fourteen years old. She showed an interest in learning the names of objects around her and seemed dissatisfied when she confronted the limitations of the English

language such as *blue* being the sign for all shades of blue instead of having a sign for each shade of blue. While in foster care for a second time, Genie's conversations with her foster mother were recorded:

> MARILYN RIGLER: Do you remember what it was like when you lived at home? What were you sitting on when you ate the cereal?
>
> GENIE: In the pot.
>
> MARILYN RIGLER: In the potty chair.
>
> GENIE: In the potty chair.
>
> MARILYN RIGLER: Where did you stay when you lived at home? Where did you live? Where did you sleep?
>
> GENIE: Potty chair.
>
> MARILYN RIGLER: You slept in the potty chair?
>
> GENIE: Mmm-hmm. Potty chair. (NOVA "Secrets of the Wild Child")

This communication with Genie and her responses show a mimicking behavior of language. She repeats the phrase her foster mother gives her instead of continuing with her original phrase for the purposes of being understood. Her use of language represents more of Saussure's sign-to-signifier matching model and Skinner's behaviorist model rather than a biological model.

Susan Curtiss documents her findings concerning Genie's development in her book, *Genie: A Psycholinguistic Study of a Modern-Day Wild Child*:

She does not simply memorize the phonetic form of words spoken to her and mimic that pronunciation in her speech, sans analysis, sans phonological organization. Genie's language, like that of normal, includes a set of phonological rules, rules that organize and classify the sounds and sequences of her language, rules that are often motivated by universal phonological principles. What is most important is that Genie's speech is the output of a system of rules that are extracted from her input data … Her phonological competence is not transparent. It underlies the system of rules that produces her phonetic performance, and is distinct from it. (92)

Curtiss is asserting that Genie, while unable to perform at the level of a typically functioning child her age with regards to language, showed that she was capable of comprehending and utilizing some of the rules of the English language she was exposed to by those around her. By listening to the language directed at her, she internalized what was said, analyzed it, and responded to it in her own way following the rules of the language she was exposed to and creating her own rules which dictate her style of communication. Unfortunately, neither Genie or Victor came to speak any language fluently. While they could both respond appropriately to commands and communicate messages in return, it was not in line with the appropriate grammatical structures of the language. Curtiss' work on Genie's case led to the conclusion that critical periods were a facet of language acquisition. Genie's cranial structures even showed atrophy in her left hemisphere where activity occurs during language comprehension and production suggesting that the loss of exposure to language during her critical period led to the loss of cognitive activity in the language functioning part of her brain (Curtiss, Fromkin, and Krashen 23-25). Both Victor's case study and especially Genie's case study support the interactionist approach to language development since it was observed that both biological

structures and social exposure are necessary for language development. Unfortunately, with the loss of interest in the child patients, the intensity of their rehabilitation programs was lessened in each case and the patients' use of language regressed to that of a naming process where actions and nouns could be identified but not particularly manipulated to express novel ideas.

2.3   Bottom-up/Top-down Processing

The biological functions of language production and language perception are important to consider when dismissing either a behaviorist approach or a purely biological approach to language acquisition. As such, it is necessary to understand the processes that occur in the brain that allow for communication.

Within the field of psychology, language production and perception are viewed as two processes occurring simultaneously. One process is called top-down processing where previous knowledge is used to interpret language and to produce it. The other process is called bottom-up processing where the language itself is perceived and then interpreted. This model for language perception was formed by Arthur Samuel in 1981. Samuel used Richard Warren's 1970 experiment on the phonemic restoration effect in which it was discovered that the human brain restores improper phonemes or sounds with more appropriate sounds if a word is mispronounced. Samuel describes this effect as a process where one reaches into their lexicon to find the word that has both the heard portion of the word and a suitable replacement for the missing portion of the word (1124). An example might be that a person hears *I saw a —uck swimming at the park today* and unconsciously fills in the missing information to perceive hearing *I saw a duck swimming at the park today*. Previous information about the language from the lexicon and context of the situation allows the listener to fill in an appropriate word instead of a word like truck or puck.

This also makes social interactions easier for both the listener and the speaker.

Samuel's experiment found that context played a major role in how participants interpreted the sounds they heard, forming them into specific words. Nativist, behaviorist, and interactionist approaches regarding language along with social epistemic theory about language connect across the academic fields through this top-down/bottom-up processing model and through the idea that language is a socially constructed device to express thought. The process of perception leads to insight about the expected responses from an audience negotiating the subject matter within a discourse. Without recognizing the nature of language perception, the theory of language's social nature becomes conjecture.

The crossover between psychological theory and rhetoric leads one to David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" where he claims that writers must be aware of their audiences: "A writer has to 'build bridges' between his point of view and his readers. He has to anticipate and acknowledge his readers' assumptions and biases" (9). Being able to assume the role of the reader as a writer is a similar process to that of a speaker assuming the role of his listener to communicate effectively. Using the top-down process, the speaker analyzes the connotations of the words he is about to utilize to guess how he will be perceived by the listener. The writer goes through the same process but is perhaps more aware of this process than the speaker who does this automatically.

2.4 Schemata

Understanding schemes or schemata help to understand part of the top-down processing model of language. According to Jean Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development stages, schemes are used to understand and define the world and behavior. While these schemes do not

necessarily require language, they are shaped by it eventually. As a baby learns about the world around it, characteristics of objects are categorized into schemes which language helps to define later through a process of either assimilation (adding to a current scheme) or accommodation (rewriting the boundaries of a scheme) (Feldman 28). For example, a child can learn the difference between a cat and a dog based on the characteristics of the animals that are expressed with language, such as cats have short ears and noses with tails that flick about while dogs have longer ears and snouts with tails that whack things. When a cat without a tail or with bent ears is encountered and does not fit the description of a cat or a dog but it is called a cat nonetheless, the child adapts their scheme to match the assertion made by the group. In such a case, usually, the child changes the parameters of what it means to be a cat accommodating the scheme.

It may help to think of schemata as the brain's internal Venn diagram creation center or dictionary. The brain categorizes objects in the world surrounding the body and maps the crossovers of these objects by defining what the object is through what it is not. This idea relates to structuralism where signifiers represent the signified through a binary structure. Terms like *hot* and *cold* only exist in relation to one another based on this binary structure. However, when something is encountered that has features akin to both *hot* and *cold*, the schema for what is *hot* and what is *cold* must adapt or a new sign must be assigned to the experience such as with *cold burn* or *freezer burn*. While this seems simple enough, developing children are constantly adapting or learning new signs for their experiences, and the issue of signs becomes more complex as more schemata begin to cross over into one another their boundaries blurring. In such cases as gender continuums, even adults must adapt their schemata and learn new signs that manage the dissonance created from the binary structure the human brain utilizes.

Sir Frederic Bartlett viewed schemata in a way that relates to Saussure's description of signs, signified, and signifiers. He understood schemata as "a mental structure that organizes and summarizes a large number of related experiences. The schemata (schema is singular) allow us to combine many particular experiences—for example, our interactions with dogs—into one composite representation, our dog schema" (Thorne and Henley 535). Schemata are the signified of signifiers which allow signs to come so easily to humans for communication. The signified includes all the signifiers. What can be inferred from Bartlett's definition of schemata is that they create the boundaries of what sign can be assigned to a signifier. For instance, there are many different types of dogs in the world that we have experiences with (signifiers), but a schema would have a mental concept of one signified which has one sign (dog). This is top-down/bottom-up processing at work.

The assumption behind this theory of language comprehension is that it would be too taxing on the brain to have to translate each word coming from the speaker and heard by the listener. Instead of translating and interpreting each word heard, the brain makes presumptions about what is being said. If someone says "present" followed by "candles" most listeners would assume the speaker is referring to someone's birthday. This assumption is a form of top-down processing. This processing makes it easier for the listener's brain to translate or comprehend what the speaker is saying, especially if some words are not heard and interpreted correctly. Cultural and linguistic elements condition the brain to make assumptions about what words mean and what words are associated with others.

3 Language is Imitation

Keeping in mind that the definition of language for the purposes of this project includes viewing language as a representative system of arbitrary signs that name mental conceptions of reality and that it is a social construct and a social behavior that human biology is primed to participate in and navigate, this definition is managed through imitation. Arbitrary signs, though arbitrary, act to imitate reality while remaining separate from reality. They act as the bridge within which communication occurs to express experiences in reality and are thus representative and imitative in nature. Saussure and Berlin also state that a language is weighted with cultural history regarding the signs chosen to represent the signified, but language is also evolving all the time. Such a process comes from the repeated use of signs suggesting that this social construct is repetitive and once again imitative in nature. There are many different signs to express the imitative nature of language such as resemblance, repetition, mimesis, and mirroring. All these terms lead to the same notion that to imitate language is to participate in a social behavior. Much the same as other social behaviors that are mimicked such as shaking someone's hand before and after an interview or standing when the instructor enters the classroom, language is also a social behavior that creates and defines the boundaries of a group. Access to the group is gained through successful and effective use of this lingual social behavior which is most often managed through repetition

3.1 Mimesis and Mirroring

The boundaries between experimental psychology and rhetoric can be blurred so often that they should be entwined with each other on subjects such as research regarding composition in the classroom and social epistemic rhetoric. However, the boundaries between these disciplines have

yet to intersect frequently enough. This is not to say that rhetoricians and theorists have ignored psychologist's work in matters of interest or vice versa. It is to say that connections between information in both fields of study have not been addressed thoroughly enough. One such example comes with a comparison between Aristotle's framing of mimesis as a key term in critical studies and psychology's use of mirroring as a term describing social behavior.

While Aristotle leaves the definition of mimesis open to interpretation, its literal translation is to interpret. However, mimesis should not be seen as a product but rather as a process of imitation (Aristotle 46). Mimesis is not directly mentioned within Bartholomae's essay, "Inventing the University," but the concept is present. Bartholomae locates the role of imitation and mimicry from students within the university when they are asked to join the discourse without having any real authority to do so. He describes this process:

> [Basic writers and students as a whole], in effect, have to assume privilege without having any. And since students assume privilege by locating themselves within the discourse of a particular community—within a set of specifically acceptable gestures and commonplaces—learning, at least as it is defined in the liberal arts curriculum, becomes more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention and discovery. (10-11)

While Bartholomae's statement can have only a limited application to the students he regards in this particular discussion concerning composition pedagogy, this imitation of language can be generalized when witnessed as taking place outside of the classroom between writers as well.

This tool of imitation that Bartholomae notes as relied upon by students is also employed by theorists specifically. Judith Butler recognizes this imitation of language in the first chapter of

her book *Bodies that Matter*. While Butler's main purpose in writing this book is to expose the gendered nature of language, she manages to both practice and expose the imitation of language. Butler's first chapter covers the philosophers whose work utilizes gendered language even when attempting to untangle gender from language. She takes note of the idea of "resemblance" as used by Plato, deconstructs its meaning when Plato uses it, and then reuses the word to confront the gendered nature of her own thesis statement and conclusions (Butler 43). By stating what those before her have said, Butler can ground her authority with the knowledge she rehearses on the page. She is either quoting, paraphrasing, or commenting on the work of those who have come before her imbuing her with authority. This practice is an imitation itself and emphasizes a writing style expected from anyone attempting to join feminist critical theory discourse in an English department of the academy. Once she has defined resemblance, Butler uses the definition that has been born from her deconstruction process to make the word work for her. The similarity between Butler's work and that of a student is in the imitation process. Both Butler and the student Bartholomae describes employ successful or less successful written imitation of those in authority. This project is not necessarily concerned with the specifics of a given topic with regards to language as much as it is concerned with the mimicking phenomena of language found within all levels of the academy. However, examples such as Butler's use of "resemblance" in her chapter that successfully joins the discourse remain relevant to this topic since it exists as a strong example of what the imitation process of language looks like at one of the highest levels within the academy.

No discussion of mirrors would be complete without mention of Jacques Lacan. He suggests that language is the reflection of reality to the individual. If the individual can only see the fragmented self in reality or the whole self in a reflection, a mirror, then the self is never truly

seen as whole, even when looking at a reflection. The individual is only capable of seeing the reflection as whole, but that reflection is not the self (11-13). This reflection, however, allows the individual to analyze the self as a whole. Language functions much the same way concerning the reflection of reality. It may speak of an object but language itself is only a reflection of the object. The signifiers can never be the object itself. Furthermore, each individual experiences reality filtered through their perceptions formed by an innumerable quantity of factors including social cultural norms, experiences, language's effect on the individual, and so on. These realities are unique to each individual since no two people can live exactly the same life. Even if identical twins were to walk together through life having the same experiences and genetic predispositions, they would always be experiencing the other twin's life about half a foot to the right or left because no two objects can occupy the same space at the same time. Therefore, no perception of reality is the same or rather all perceptions of reality are unique to the individual. This is an assumption that must be made for this project to continue. Language then becomes the bridge between two individuals attempting to convey their experiences of reality with one another.

Mirroring, when utilized in a psychological context, is defined as typically unconscious social imitation whereby the person with less authority is more likely to mimic the behavior of the person with more authority in a given situation. Albert Bandura called for a new social learning model that filled in the holes left by behaviorists who asserted that all behavior was learned consciously or unconsciously through operant and classical conditioning. These styles of learning models are not efficient by themselves to explain the massive repertoire of behaviors exhibited by humans. Therefore, mimicry or mirroring of behaviors seen by an individual's social group is one explanation for the expansive behaviors within which humans participate.

Such an idea is a model of social learning (Bandura 213). To support his claim of the social learning model, Bandura presents his observational findings which catalog social learning through imitation. In one example, he describes the vocational training in the textile industry in Guatemala. No instructions are provided, and no questions are answered but the student observes the trainer, then takes over the cotton-textile machine and reproduces what she has seen from the trainer almost perfectly. In Cantelenese culture, Bandura observes the behavior of a female child who has been provided miniature domestic items that her mother frequently uses. This little girl imitates her mother's behaviors without direction (Bandura 213-214). Describing American culture, Bandura shows the prevalence of imitation:

> [American parents…] supply [their children] with a varied array of play materials-toy kitchen ensembles, dolls with complete nursery equipment and wardrobes, cooking utensils, food-mix sets, and other junior-size homemaker kits-that serve much the same purpose. In games utilizing such stimulus material, children frequently reproduce the entire parental role behavior including the appropriate mannerisms, voice inflections, and attitudes which the parents have never directly attempted to teach. (214-215)

According to behaviorists, this learning of behavior is called imitation while personality psychologists call this process of imitating behavior identification (Bandura 215).

Bandura's landmark research on social learning theory and imitation took place in 1961 where he experimented with young children between the ages of three and five years to see how witnessing aggression affects behavior. A cohort brought the child participant into a room full of toys and a Bobo Doll. The adult then aggressively abused the Bobo Doll even using a hammer to beat the doll. Then the children were left to their own devices and imitated the adult's behavior

just as it had been performed. Some children even improvised when abusing the Bobo Doll using other toys besides the hammer as weapons. When the genders of the adult performer and the child participant were the same, the imitation of the adult's behavior was more accurate as well. Similar results were found when the study moved to show the child participants recordings of such abuse of the Bobo Doll and just aggression in general. The children imitated the behavior they witnessed (Bandura 219-242, BBC Four "The Brain: A Secret History…").

This study was not only a valuable study for Bandura's career, but it opened the doors for social learning theory and a growing concern of access to violence through television. Numerous studies have come from Bandura's discovery of imitation; however, language development has been neglected within this context. Preschool children increase their vocabulary at an alarmingly fast rate so that by age six, the average child has about a 14,000-word vocabulary. This is accomplished through fast-mapping, a term used in the field of psychology to describe the associations young children make between signs and signifiers that they have only briefly encountered (Feldman 225). Both ideas of imitation and fast mapping stand apart within the field of psychology but connecting them could have explanatory power. Fast-mapping occurs because a child encounters a sign within a context and thus associates the signifier with the sign. It's a social action. Another human who speaks the same language the child is learning must present the sign to the child's environment. While the presentation does not have to be direct, it still must be there. What is seen with fast-mapping then is the child's ability to imitate language in order to improve social communication. Likewise, perhaps some version of fast-mapping occurs with behaviors beyond the utilization of language through this exposure. Fast-mapping is a version of imitation, but it is not described as such, yet. Just as Butler defines resemblance as imitation and Bandura gives meaning to mirroring through his social learning through imitation theory, so is

fast-mapping a type of imitation, mirroring, and mimesis. These are all terms across two disciplines that suggest language is a social behavior and a process of entering a group. They just have not been generalized to this degree until now.

Mirroring is an important social skill usually necessary for maintaining typical functioning in human societies. Social behavior is based on cultural norms that, when successfully used, allow people to be accepted into the in-group. This sort of behavior also shows respect to the individual being imitated. As the cliché goes, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. Social mimicry typically happens unconsciously, as seen with Bandura's 1961 research, unless we become aware of it and decide to use imitation to our advantage as Butler does. It is the phenomena to explain why we know the rules in society, but we cannot tell you where we heard them or who told them to us. It is the reason we know the right way to sit in a chair and physically read this text, but we also know in what situations we can bend these rules to sit in a chair the wrong way—whatever that may be—and so on.

Those who cannot mirror social behavior successfully are determined to have social developmental problems and are typically labeled with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for which treatment centers around social behavior stress management training ("Autism Spectrum Disorder" World Health Organization, "Treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorder" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Similar to the way children with ASD are trained to fit in with society and expected to function typically eventually, basic writing students are categorized as having dysfunctional writing in an academic setting which means they are deemed atypical in their ability to mimic the discourse. In consequence, they are sorted into classrooms in which schools expect the students will receive training for this deficiency. While this last example

seems hyperbolic and extreme, it does make apparent the emphasis society places on an ability to mimic, mirror, resemble, or imitate. From the way we sit to the way we write and what we write about down to the very words we use to discuss topics, we are mimicking an understanding of society, especially within the academy, that favors repetitive and imitative social behaviors.

Mimesis and mirroring intersect as ideas across disciplines when language enters the picture. Just as it is seen when Bartholomae discusses imitation as the tool students use to join a discourse, and just as it is seen when Butler appropriates Plato's word choice in his philosophy to situate both the mechanism of "resembling" and the word "resemblance" as tools academics use to add to a discourse, mirroring in terms of language is imitation and by proxy, mimesis (42-43). By imitating language either as a means for social interaction or as a means to command authority (or attempt to command it when the writer is unsuccessful), the imitation of language is then mimetic at a deeper level. The mirroring of reality through language makes language a representation of reality and thus, mimetic. To imitate the imitation is to still mimic reality by proxy and is then mimetic as well.

4 Language is Codified in Social Settings

Social epistemic rhetoric is described in relation to the topic proposed in this body of work as a means to discuss the role of codes used both within the academy and outside of the academy. Seeing that humans can and do mimic behavior, that language is a social behavior and construct, now it can be determined how language acts as a gatekeeper for access to such groups. What are the rules? How does the individual learn them, and more importantly, how does the individual use these rules to effectively navigate social settings in a beneficial manner to the individual? Language is codified and this code can be separate from a dialect or the differences between entire languages. Groups determine the code which may be cultural in nature, regional, academic, informal pop culture, and so on. The possibilities are endless. These codes can exist between just two people who have managed to create their own version of a group dynamic through language such as calling each other a nickname, or they can exist within an entire field of study such as the medical field. In any case, the codified language acts as a barrier determining the in-group and the out-group. While it is one factor that plays a role in group dynamics, it is the factor of interest discussed within this project.

4.1 Social Epistemic Rhetoric

Berlin discusses rhetorical theory as ideology that privileges a specific emphasis or prescription of ideology. Berlin comments on Göran Therborn's concept of ideology in rhetorical theory: "Conceived from the perspective of rhetoric, ideology provides the language to define the subject

(the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all of these to each other. Ideology is thus inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience" ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 479). However, one must ask how ideology can exist without language? The two seem to exist and create each other not separately but simultaneously. Ideology, specifically complex ideology formed after centuries of study and communication across texts, cannot be expressed without language. Without language, Berlin's criticism would not exist to tell the reader that language defines the immaterial and the material world that is formed through ideology so then can the ideology truly exist? Can it exist for the individual? This said, ideology places importance upon the evolution of language when new terms are coined. Therefore, ideology influences language by creating new terminology and defining old terminology again and again while language mediates ideology between people. Regarding language with this lens then places the audience in a hermeneutic circle Berlin describes as social epistemic rhetoric.

To simplify a summary of this circular logic Berlin presents, it's understanding that the material world and the consciousness of the individual affect each other and are mediated by social constructs that alternatively also affect both the material world and consciousness of the individual ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 489). As seen through both conjecture and empirical studies conducted by experimental psychologists, language affects perception of the material world (signifiers) and has been defined as a social construct. Therefore, if *language* replaces the term "social construct" in Berlin's description of a hermeneutic circle, then language is the mediating factor that influences an individual's understanding of their material world and consciousness ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 489). This relationship is also reflexive in nature since language is mediated through experience and consciousness. It would

not be socially constructed if there was not a need between at least two individuals to communicate conscious thought and experiences. The need to be understood dictates that both parties communicating, the language producer and the language receiver, must have access to the same language so they can be understood. As Saussure would put it, the sign is arbitrary, but it is a socially agreed-upon symbol of a signified.

Berlin defines social epistemic rhetoric and its parts with the following:

> For social-epistemic rhetoric, the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence. Knowledge is never found in any one of these but can only be posited as a product of the dialectic in which all three come together . . . Most important, this dialectic is grounded in language: the observer, the discourse community, and the material conditions of existence are all verbal constructs. This does not mean that the three do not exist apart from language: they do. This does mean that we cannot talk and write about them—indeed, we cannot know them—apart from language. ("Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" 488)

He goes into further depth regarding social epistemic rhetoric using Kenneth Burke's description of it as language that is symbolic action negotiated socially to form and continue discourse: "The subject negotiates and resists codes rather than simply accommodating them. . . [If] the subject is a construct signifying practices, so are the material conditions to which the subject responds" (*Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* 79). This acknowledgment of the social agreement that must be made to have discourse mirrors Stuart Hall's 1980 discussion about the role of the audience as accommodating, resistant, or negotiable. Such a successful negotiation would need mastery of

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the codes/signifiers used by the subject initially. As such, the language used in the discourse comes to have a set of signifiers specific to the topic being discussed.

As an example of this seen across professions and represented in film, *The Exorcist* released in 1973 manages to represent how codified language is treated among those within the medical community and the religious community. In this film, the audience is expected to believe that a young girl, Regan, has had her body possessed by a demon and witnesses a mother struggle to do what is best for her child when attempting to treat the affliction. Initially, the mother takes her daughter to several doctors and a psychiatrist before seeking out a Catholic priest under the direction of a team of doctors. In a meeting with one of these doctors towards the beginning of her journey to return her daughter to her normal and healthy state, the doctor explains what he believes to be the cause of Regan's strange behavior:

> Chris: Doc, what could make her jump off the bed like that?
>
> Dr. Tanney: There's a perfectly rational explanation. Technically speaking, pathological states can induce abnormal strength and accelerated motor performance. More commonly, a ninety-pound woman sees her child pinned under the wheel of a truck, runs out and lifts the wheel half a foot off the ground. You've heard the story. Same thing here. (The Exorcist)

To describe Regan's behavior as nothing more than an adrenaline rush, the doctor uses words unique to the field of medicine such as "pathological" and "motor performance" (The Exorcist). To describe what mainstream culture would refer to as an act of motherly love, he sterilizes the hypothetical scenario to fit within the audience's expectations of how a doctor speaks. The film

even puts boundaries between doctors and psychiatrists through this codified language when Dr. Tanney responds to the mother's description of her daughter as "some kind of psycho, like a split personality" when he says: "There haven't been more than a hundred authenticated cases of so-called dual of split personality, Mrs. McNeil. Now I know the temptation to leap to psychiatry, but any reasonable psychiatrist would exhaust the somatic possibilities first" (The Exorcist). This dismissal of a mental illness diagnosis represents the privileging of a "somatic" or biological diagnosis that can be found through scientific methods and treated accordingly. When this approach fails, the Clinical Director leads the discussion with Regan's mother to tell her their diagnosis of Regan:

> It looks like a type of disorder that you never see anymore except among primitive cultures. We call it somnambuliform possession. Quite frankly, we don't know much about it except it starts with some conflict or guilt that eventually leads to the patient's delusion that his body's been invaded by an alien intelligence; a spirit if you will. In times gone by, the entity possessing the victim is supposed to be a so-called demon, or devil. (The Exorcist)

With the use of the word "so-called" and the preface of "somnambuliform" to the term possession, this doctor is able to medicalize an unexplained phenomenon. He is performing the language of the social group he wishes to remain within to the point that he risks being misunderstood, something Regan's mother shows when she calls this jargon "bullshit" (The Exorcist). Beyond incarceration in an asylum, the Clinical Director defines his use of the term "exorcism" as both "an outside chance of a cure" and "a stylized ritual in which rabbis and priests try to drive out the so-called invading spirit" (The Exorcist). The Clinical Director's use

of the term "so-called" once again and the success of exorcisms he credits to the placebo effect where the power of the patient's belief that caused the illness also cures the illness represents his imitation of the group's language and belief system which allows him to maintain his identity as a man of medicine to everyone in the room. The exorcism is not called a *rite* or a *ceremony* but a "stylized ritual" which sounds more like something an anthropologist might say but a man of science would certainly use such language that trivializes the practice to maintain his access to a group that does not support such beliefs.

When signifiers of a language have their meanings repurposed to function mainly within a specific context, it creates an in-group, or a social group separate from those who speak the language employed. For instance, a rhetorical criticism written in the English language and utilizing signifiers specific to the field of English speaks only to those who understand the meanings implied by the signifiers. Even then, these signifiers are operationally defined within a larger academic context but only by using an academic jargon that alienates those who are unable to participate in the communication style. Anyone fluent in English can technically read the criticism. It is written in English and the reader is fluent in the language. However, any meanings taken away from the criticism may be limited based on the reader's ability to assimilate to the social group that can make meanings from the text.

Language has its own subsections, subcultures or something described more akin to dialects perhaps, especially within the academy but also outside of it. The language employed in research papers from an author conducting research in a composition classroom is structured differently from research papers coming from an author conducting biological research. Certain words are never used, certain sentence structures and verb tenses are avoided, and the repetition of analysis

in the conclusion may be heavier in one paper over another based on the expectations of the social group for which the author is performing. While the language used in each paper is classified as the same, the social group the author is writing to and attempting to participate with is dictated by the style of language employed. According to the operational definition of language presented at the beginning of this project, the language between academic communities or social groups does not change as long as the same words and general syntax structure are used. Why is it then that the language produced from different departments in the academy that technically all use the same language is so alien to those outside of the social group for which the presented language is intended?

Language is codified for specific social settings which creates in-groups and out-groups of those who can successfully function within the social group's agreed linguistic negotiations. This language negotiated by the social group is not a new language, but it takes the same skill to code-switch between the styles of communication within one's own language and the language of the desired in-group. Social epistemic rhetoric is then the theoretical background that allows for the leap to describe the process of code-switching in relation to language, especially within the academy.

4.2   Code-Switching and Codified Language

When discussing the audience-awareness pedagogy Bartholomae defines, he suggests that language from a student to a teacher within the university must come from a position of authority and privilege. Students are asked to assume a position of authority over a topic to join a specific discourse. In doing so, the discourse the student attempts to join can shape the tone and presentation of language of the student when the student mimics the language of the discourse.

For instance, a student's report on the biological structures of a butterfly's wings may show an attempt on the student's part to mimic language utilized in the biology community and perhaps, more specifically, the entomology community while assuming authority over the subject matter by using active voice and avoiding statements that could be questioned.

The discourse becomes a code of speaking, and while it cannot be objectively called another language based on the definition of language given by psychologists and linguists, moving from one discourse to another requires code-switching. This phenomenon of code-switching within language cannot be fixed by calling formal language and informal language different languages when accepting Saussure's definition of language as a series of signifiers representing the signified using a set of phonemes. The same signifiers are being used with similar syntax though some words themselves may have their definitions changed enough to bend the rules of the language's standardized syntax.

This can be seen when scholars discuss *the other* and *othering*. A noun in the English language has been shifted to a verb and the presence of *the* before *other* signals to the reader that this *other* is defined separately from the general definition of other. As the use of *the other* has become more widespread across academic fields, *other* is now becoming acceptable by itself without the requirement of a the present. Therefore, to refer to Noam Chomsky's definition of fluency as the ability to create an infinite number of unique sentences within a strict grammatical structure appropriate to the language utilized (13), mastery of a language would rather suggest that the student is able to code-switch between discourses and outside of discourses for numerous social situations.

4.3   An Anecdote and a Case Study of Codified Language

On a personal note, I witnessed issues with code-switching in my students while teaching a seminar in rhetoric class titled "Writing About Otherness." My students were encouraged to use the language of their preferred discoursal community while discussing *otherness* within their written assignments. For the most part, my students' works suffered mainly from slips into an informal writing style not befitting of an academic paper. However, when providing feedback to my students, I found myself struggling over whether to correct their use of the term *the other* grammatically. Some students confused the term's importance and conflated it with *another* or *an other*. Other students always capitalized it. Few manipulated it into a verb but those that did copied my use of the term *othering* in class. It frustrated me to say the least. I did not know whether to remove points from their papers out of the five percent of their scores that went towards grammar or if I should teach a lesson about how to correctly use the term. Then it hit me that I, myself, did not know of any specific rules regarding this term. My use of the word came out of a mimicry of my professor's performances with the term. This word rarely showed up in dictionaries within the context of the term's theoretical definition and what I managed to find in dictionaries was not standardized. Even in the same entry regarding *the other,* it was both capitalized and not capitalized as a noun and not mentioned as a verb at all:

9. (often initial capital letter) the other,

a. a group or member of a group that is perceived as different, foreign, strange, etc.:

Prejudice comes from fear of the other.

b. a person or thing that is the counterpart of someone or something else:

the role of the Other in the development of self. ("Other" Dictionary.com)

Seeing as I had little more authority over the term than my students, I spent time during a class session asking them how they would prefer to structure the term grammatically. Without revealing where the suggestions came from, I provided options for my students given what I had seen in their writing and how I would structure the term in my own writing. As a class, we voted on which grammatical structures we all preferred deciding that capitalizing *the Other* made the term more distinct and using *othering* was an appropriate format for using the term as a verb. In the span of a semester, my students were able to actively dictate the codes of language within their class/discoursal community which helped me as a grader and them as writers. The code gave them a better understanding of the term as well. I noticed they utilized it more appropriately and managed to practice avoiding *other* and *another* in their writings for my class when these terms did not refer to *the Other*.

Following my experience as an instructor democratically creating codes for my students to discuss a niche topic, I found myself on a panel at Chapman University's Interfaith Council which held a Community Forum with Orange County Interfaith Network on April 11, 2019. The title of the forum series was "The More You Know, the Less You Fear" and the theme was defined as "How the 'I' Treats the 'Other'" (see Appendix A). Within the forum, eight Chapman students spoke on their personal interactions with *the other* through their religious practices. These students of varying ages and from various academic programs independently wrote out short speeches responding to the prompt: "Describe a time when you were the 'I' and interacted with the 'other'." They then read these speeches as panelists to an audience of members of the community, peers from the student body, and members of the Orange County Interfaith Network (see Appendix B). Their varied areas of study across the academy informed these students' uses of the term *the other*

but their syntactical use of the term made for an interesting case study.

One student speaker from the Baha'i faith placed "the other" in quotations in the written version of her speech the first time she used the term: "It's my strongest belief that love for 'the other' will be accomplished through a mixture of two things: empathy and equity." However, while her speech does not show avoidance of the term, she uses this term only once. Since she only uses the term once as "the other," it cannot be concluded that she is uncomfortable appropriating it to fit the syntactical structure of her writing, but her sparse use of the word might suggest this is the case.

Another speaker from the Islamic tradition used the term *the Other* without quotations but capitalized the noun of the term instead. However, while she was waiting to speak, she rewrote her sentence with the term in it so that it was no longer capitalized but within quotation marks. Her original sentence reads: By converting to Islam, I didn't become the Other…" The rewritten sentence reads: "In one sense, I became 'the other' by being a religious minority." Her speech only uses this term twice, but it is interesting that as the last person on the panel to speak, she rewrote one of her sentences that had the term in it without keeping the same grammatical structure she had initially.

The student speaker representing the agnostic tradition appropriated *the other* as her own term by hyphenating the noun to create a verb form of the term, "other-ed." She too uses this term twice, but she plays with the term more. While both the Baha'i student speaker and the Muslim student speaker only use the term "the other" or "the Other" as a noun in their speeches, the agnostic student speaker initially turns the noun into a hyphenated verb. She writes: "Indeed, I was 'other-ed' by everyone, and I didn't fit in." Then she comes back to the term as a noun by the end of her

speech placing both "I" and "other" in quotations to suggest a structural comparability as a representation of the terms' relatability to one another. She writes: "Above all, it shows me that the 'I' and the 'other' are all part of the same chain of being that modestly tries to make sense of our world." However, this grammatical structure mirrors both the prompt she was provided with and the subject of the panel printed on the program, something she had access to before writing her speech.

My own speech, since I was a participant on the panel for this event, utilized *the other* as a term without emphasizing its presence within my speech. Interestingly enough, I did not use *the other* as a noun but rather appropriated it into one of two verbs: "othering" and "othered." I write: "I didn't realize how othered this ward remained until I attended the baptism of my friend at another building whose congregation was made up of bilingual members. The surprise I felt when seeing Spanish speakers mingling with English speakers in the church forced me to confront my participation in othering Spanish speakers within the Mormon faith." Instead of using the term *the other*, I replaced its presence with "discrimination" writing: "Participants in the Pagan community have often sought out a haven from the discrimination they encountered in Christianity."

The Jewish student speaker does not place quotation marks around the term, nor does he capitalize it. He writes: "The question, how the I treats the other, has been a subject of my life I have genuinely been afraid to confront." The term is treated just as another word. This panelist does not even place quotation marks around the "I" which refers to the prompt. He also writes: "However, I am not egotistical enough to think that I truly treat everyone the same, that I have never acted like or thought of someone else as other than myself." This use of *the other* as a term is vague in this sentence since it acts as both a term to describe those treated as less than but also as a word to describe something separate from the self. There is no attempt to emphasize the term through

grammar as a means to suggest that this *other* is *the other* that is part of a larger discussion happening even beyond the discourse of the forum. This Jewish student speaker also writes: "This gives me comfort, knowing that I have somewhere to look when it comes to finding ways I can use what I have to help others . . ." In this statement, while the term *the other* may have been intended by the speaker, no syntactical clues are provided to bring forth this intention. Therefore, when hearing the use of *other* in this sentence, "others" and *the other* are no different without having been provided the context of the prompt. Alternatively, he writes: "I feel like, instinctively, we try to avoid thinking about things that make us look less than ideal, likely to the extent that we have a hard time admitting we do see some as 'other.'" This is the only place where *other* has quotation marks around it which may show a lack of continuity in the grammatical structure this panelist employs, or that this "other" is the only true reference to *the other* made by this panelist.

The Disciples of Christ student speaker uses the term as *other* with no "the" in front of the term at times. This leads to a back and forth between definitions as he uses "other" both to refer to *the other* in the context of discrimination and *other* as in someone separate from the self. He writes:

> I was raised in an environment where we did our best to ensure [that] there was no other and that we were all just an us, a people of God… Everywhere I went other Christians were telling me about [God's] plan… That was the other for me, and that anger would consume me and just destroy me from the inside…The problem was that that form of faith did not work for me because I lived a privileged life with minimal roadblocks and living where I did constantly seeing the suffering of others… After struggling with that for years, I was finally able to live up to my teachings, journey together with the other and love them despite our differences.

He provides no grammatical emphasis in the written text of the speech and no consistency in differentiating others from *the other*; however, judging by the level of inconsistent grammatical errors throughout the entirety of the written speech, this document does not seem to concern itself with a reading audience. Rather, since the document was designed to be read to an audience that listens, the syntactical structures are not representative of the spoken emphasis present in the speaker's speech. Yet, the term *the other* is compared with "us," a unifying idea that no other speaker manages to describe in a word. *The other* as a term is described as discrimination, racism, classism, and so on. The alternative speakers all suggested an abolishment of othering practices, but no speaker beside the Doctrines of Christ student was able to compare the other with what he felt was its binary perhaps, "us." This comparison is not held up by the end of his speech however when he refers to those othered as "them" and to himself as "I." This does adhere to the prompt though.

The last speaker identified her religion as interfaith. Her appropriation of the term *the other* is most interesting. In her speech, she writes: "I have felt 'other'-ized in many settings of faith…" Beyond this one line in her speech, she had used the word "other" only as a reference to those separate from the self when every "other" came with an "each" before it. She writes: "Everything is related to each other…We impact each other in ways that we can't even perceive…We need to teach each other with common language." This last sentence is extraordinarily ironic within the context of this project and within the forum. Here, a panelist is providing a call to action by suggesting conversations be performed in a common language. Yet, as seen by this case study, a common language is not as easy to hold onto as one might think. While this interfaith speaker was referring to problems in translation between languages, the case study provides an example of problems in understanding between academic communities. No set definition of *the other* was provided to these

speakers before they wrote their speeches. As such, a religious studies/psychology double major, interfaith student appropriated the term into the verb "otherized," while a history, Doctrines of Christ student made little distinction between *the other* and "other." Some students capitalized the noun to emphasize its distinction. Other students placed it in quotations. If one were to ask these student speakers where the term *the other* has come from and what it means today, their definitions would be similar but perhaps lacking in knowledge of the historical context that comes with the term. Regardless of which academic discipline or which religious community these students come from, they are not all English majors who have taken a class that went over Edward Said's theories discussed in his book, *Orientalism,* and were then taught how the term is utilized within that discourse. Even as a student who has had this experience and as an instructor teaching students this lesson, I could not manage to find a standardized code for how the term is to be used within any discourse. These panelists do not have all the same knowledge base with regards to this term and it shows by their different versions of appropriation with this term as a verb or a noun. They seem to have the ability to recognize what othering looks like but their command of a definition of the term is not as concrete as seen by their use of the term across their speeches. However, their role as panelists and the personal nature of their speeches forces them to command authority over the topic at hand.

This case study mirrors almost exactly what Bartholomae discusses in his essay "The Idea of a University," regarding student composition when attempting to enter discourse. These interfaith student speakers are attempting to integrate themselves within a discourse without having authority. The speeches these students present are personal and suggest a command over the personal narratives they describe. However, their use of the term *the other* commonly used in academic language shows they do not have authority within the discourse regarding othering since

their language does not mesh with that of the discoursal community. These students from separate academic communities are attempting to utilize a term specific to a few academic communities all while the term is evolving to expand beyond the scope of these communities. This case study then represents an example of a failure to code-switch as well as the evolution of a term outside of its initial discoursal community. Students unaware of the code regarding *the other* is a part of use the term differently from each other and, in some cases, differently from those in the academic community from which the term was derived. However, the forum the panelists were a part of is a microcosm of the interfaith community attempting to integrate the idea of *the other* into its discourse. The speeches provided by the panelists then represent the steps involved toward evolving the term to exist beyond its initial discoursal community. If audience members took the appropriated version of the term "'other'-ized" and used it within the forum when asking questions or discussing the panels with each other, they would be understood. However, utilizing this invented verb outside of the group that involved the speakers and their audience may lead to issues of translation. The speakers misappropriated a code from one academic community but created their own coded language within the context of a separate social group.

Alternatively, within the text of this thesis are also examples of code-switching between discourses as well. For instance, *utilize* is a verb used within the discourse of psychology that is not often employed in rhetorical discourse. While proposing this project's topic and its interdisciplinary nature, it was made known that *utilize* is not a rhetoric friendly word when discussing language, but it is the appropriate word in a psychological discourse. *Language producer* and *language receiver* are appropriate terms in the field of psychology but not as welcomed in a discussion involving rhetoric. Beyond discipline-specific terms used in this thesis such as *semiology* and *fast-mapping*, the basic vocabulary that makes up this text is balanced between the disciplines, though

the English language dictates most of the words used are often synonyms.

Another example of both mirroring and code-switching can be seen with the use of academics' citations of each other to back up claims. It is a form of codifying the arguments academics make while imitating a format that is a part of the discipline the academic is a part of. Quotations can spawn new words or definitions of words utilized in a paper or lead to the fusion of words that also create new terms that may or may not remain within the discourse. Academics also create their own in-group by referencing which group of academics they are calling upon to inform their argument and by critiquing specific terms these academics use. For example, Berlin uses Therborn's definition of ideology to inform his use of the word *ideology*, which creates a foundation for Berlin to craft an operational definition of the term. This operational definition allows for clarity since words themselves have different connotations to the individual reader that a dictionary definition will not mediate well enough as seen with the problematic operational definition of *language* defined in this project. By creating operational definitions or supporting what operational definitions already exist, the language produced in particular contexts is codified by the language producer and all who respond.

Codified language is not the same principle of language's evolution, but the two are related and cross boundaries with one another. Take the example mentioned above regarding *other*. The operational definition placed upon *the other* is an example of codified language. Those with knowledge of the code can speak to this definition, question it, use the word to imply multiple ideas, discuss the prevalence of the idea the word represents now within multiple contexts, and so on. The possibilities are possibly endless. However, the use of this term makes sense only to those who have access to the operational definition of the term. Those who have knowledge of the origin of the definition of the term have an even greater authority when using the word and discussing it

within specific contexts. Therefore, *the other* is a term used by an in-group of people privy to the definition and is thus an example of codified language.

This use of the word *other* also represents the evolution of language, but separately. A word's meaning and use have been expanded to hold a separate meaning within specific contexts. When there is an expansion of the context within which this new meaning of the word can be utilized, the word evolves. Codifying language adds to the already existing definition of terms within the language that expands the language and changes connotations and uses of specific words within the language. Therefore, codifying language can evolve language, but evolving language is not necessarily codifying language. The two are related processes but not mutually exclusive with one another necessarily.

5   Concluding Statements

The purpose of this project is to bridge the gap in information left by group dynamics which exist within the academy, specifically regarding the involvement of language in social group dynamics. Psychologists have both conjecture and studies with empirical results that support some of the ideas rhetoricians are proposing. For instance, theories of immitation in both fields of study are partially supported with Bandura's research regarding social modeling. However, without access to the theories posed by these rhetoricians, the field of psycholinguistics (a subfield of psychology) fall short on experiments that could be designed and run since often times previous research in the field of psychology is the research heavily considered and expanded upon. Similarly, studies of rhetoric run through English departments are asking questions that can be answered by working together with other academic departments who unknowingly or perhaps knowingly have the same questions.

The question here is what the limitations are concerning the role of language in group dynamics. Using research from the field of psychology and rhetorical theory from the field of English, this project presents the two together to show how they connect. However, no experiment has been conducted in either discipline that reveals empirical evidence suggesting that language is one element that manages group dynamics. It has been theorized by rhetoricians and anecdotes suggest that this is the case; however, research conducted by psychologists regarding group dynamics focuses on the imitation of behaviors not including language. The conclusions reached in both fields do not have empirical evidence from experimentation that can be generalized appropriately to prove this topic's claim directly. Similarly, to suggest that language is codified within social

situations uses esoteric language found in both fields but it is an idea left unproven. It is only a theory and without interdisciplinary cooperation, the limitations of this theory may never truly be understood.

Therefore, this project, while suggesting that the effective use of coded language can grant access to groups, serves as an example that speaks to a larger issue of the segregation between disciplines within the academy and even outside the academy. The major discussion of this project could not have been made without interdisciplinary cooperation. The sharing of information between groups, in the case of this topic specifically, has not performed as readily as it can which has possibly stunted the expansion of knowledge. There are holes in knowledge concerning the relationship between codified language and group dynamics that can be filled with collaboration between the disciplines. Studies used as support and examples of the relationships between information found within mainstream culture and just two fields of study in the academy that needed to be provided to make the claim in this project are from as early as 1800 with the case of Victor, the original Wild Child in the field of psychology, and progress to as late as April of 2019 with anecdotal recognition of this proposed theory at work at the Interfaith Panel. Recognizing there are barriers and bridges built from codified language used by groups not only to understand the ideas of one another within the group but to solidify identity in relation to the group allows for a new worldview, one that is focused on inclusion and awareness perhaps.

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Appendix A. Program of Panel

OC Interfaith Network wishes to gratefully acknowledge Bryleigh Blaise, Victoria Gomez, of the Chapman Interfaith Council for their hard work and dedicated enthusiasm. We thank the administrative staff of the Fish Center, especially Jennifer Ruby, for their help and support. We thank the student panel for their thoughtful contributions. And we thank Dean Gail Stearns for this wonderful collaboration.

The mission of OC Interfaith Network is to create and support Orange County interfaith learning opportunities and present united faith-based responses to social justice issues, while encouraging respect, civility and the common good.
Learn about all our activities at www.ocinterfaith.org
FACEBOOK.COM/OCinterfaith

The Merle and Majorie Fish Interfaith Center, home of the Ray and Pauline Wallace All Faiths Chapel and the J.E. and Flora Scott Wilkinson Founders Chapel, is a unique treasure on the Chapman campus, and home to respectful dialogue for students seeking spiritual growth.

ORANGE COUNTY INTERFAITH NETWORK
in collaboration with

The Interfaith Council of Chapman University

presents

2019 COMMUNITY FORUM SERIES
"THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE LESS YOU FEAR"

"How the "I" treats the "other""
Student Narratives

APRIL 11, 2019 | THURSDAY | 6:30PM-8:00PM

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY | Fish Interfaith Center

One University Drive
Orange CA 92866

Appendix B. Panelists' Speeches

Hello and thank you so much for having me. I'll quickly introduce the Baha'i Faith before diving into the topic. The Baha'i faith was founded less than 200 years ago in what is now present-day Iran. It is classified as an independent world religion, and, despite still being in its infancy, the Baha'i faith is actually the second widest spread religion in the world, next to Christianity. One notable belief of the Baha'is is the idea of Progressive Revelation. This ~~is the idea that~~ ~~basically means that Bahai's believe that~~ throughout history, God has sent divine messengers to cultivate humanity's spiritual, intellectual and moral capacities. Therefore, Bahai's believe that many of the different major world religions all come from the same God, each religion tailored to suit the needs and capacities of the people of that time and place, but still all united with the same fundamental message of love and spirituality. Many of these messengers are still known to us today: their names include Zoroaster, Krishna, the Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, and – for the Bahai's, Baha'u'llah, who we believe to be the present-day messenger for all of humanity. A few other Baha'i beliefs include the equality of men and women, the elimination of all forms of prejudice, the oneness of God, universal education for all, the elimination of extremes of poverty and wealth, and the harmony of science and religion.

Most importantly, though, the Baha'i faith's main focus is on the oneness of humanity. Bahai's believe that the true reality is one of the spirit. Yes, we are all graced on this Earth with our beautiful diversities of identity, origin, interest, faith, and personality, and those are all things that we should celebrate. Yes, I identify as a half Iranian, half Trinidadian young woman from the suburbs of Las Vegas. At the same time, though, I also believe that my soul doesn't have a race, nor a gender, nor cares about where I was born. I'm a singer and a student, but in reality, I am nothing more than the content of my character – and I am nothing more than a soul. This is way that Baha'is celebrate unity in diversity.

I'd like to paraphrase a quotation from Abdul-Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah, the prophet founder of the Baha'i Faith. He says, consider the flowers in a garden. Although they all may be different in kind, color, shape, and smell, they are all nurtured by the same sun, the same air, the same water and the same soil. Now consider if all the flowers were the exact same in every way. How boring would that garden be? He says, in quotes, "Diversity of hues, form and shape enricheth and adorneth the garden. In like manner, when different shades of thought, temperament and character are brought together, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed. We must celebrate our diversities and see them as bonds that make us stronger rather than attributes that divide us. When we realize that we are all just souls living a human existence, what is left to divide us?" end quote.

I still remember the first time I fed the homeless. My family and a few other Baha'is took 3 vans full of food, water, and hygiene products, parked them outside of a library, and watched as countless people living on the streets came. They looked me in the eyes as I handed them sandwiches, thanked me, and smiled at me, and in that moment I fully realized how little divided us – just a small change in circumstance or birth. When we each realize that our differences do not really make us that different at all, that will be the moment when we will finally be able to lift up our brethren of differing cultures, faiths, and socio-economic statuses. It's my strongest belief that love for "the other" will be accomplished through a mixture of two things: empathy

and equity. I like to look at it like this: Love is to put yourself in the shoes of the needy and destitute, but to not stop there because that won't make a change; love is to walk a mile in someone else's shoes, notice their condition, and mend the soles, pave over the pebbled path, and change their route from one that passes through darkness to one that passes through light.

Thank you.

When have you felt like you were the "other"?

I have definitely felt like I was the other, especially actually moving to Chapman. I love Chapman, but Las Vegas is a very diverse place, so it was kind of a culture shock moving to a place that is primarily white and largely well-off. Sometimes I'll look at all of the amazing designer clothes and weekend trips that some of my peers get to go on, and feel like an outsider to my community.

I've have also definitely felt like the other because of my mixed race. Being mixed has really confused my racial identity, and oftentimes I've felt like an outsider in both middle eastern and black circles. However, every day I thank God for the blessings He gave me, and I know that whatever marginalization I have felt in my life is nothing compared to others.

What are ways that our community (Chapman, Orange, global, etc.) can foster tolerance and understanding to create harmony between the "I" and the "other"?

I think Chapman and the community in general can do a lot more when it comes to community outreach. It can be very easy to talk a lot amongst ourselves but then never actually act, and I'm guilty of this as well, but I think the sooner that Chapman students, who are largely privileged, are exposed to communities that are struggling, that's when the talk will turn into hearts and minds actually transforming. When we create bonds of friendship, love, and understanding with those not a part of our own communities, it brings us together and makes us aware of the needs of the other on a much deeper level of understanding. With this understanding comes routine community service, civic action and engagement, and the education of our young. One way I am attempting to do this is by hopefully in the next few months, initiating what Baha'is call a "children's class" in one of our neighboring communities. Not only would I get to know and love children with hugely differing lives than what I had growing up, and vise versa, but through this program I would get to teach them about spiritual values such as truthfulness, kindness, service, and so on, and by doing so, hopefully be changing the outlook of our future generations. I encourage communities to engage in programs like these, and to start the conversation of unity.

Golden Rule - the moral shared by almost every faith tradition on the planet, telling us to treat others as you wish to be treated.

The Baha'i Faith: "If thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.

Hinduism: "Do not to others what ye do not wish done to yourself; and wish for others too what ye desire and long for, for yourself"

Buddhism: "Make thine own self the measure of the others, and so abstain from causing hurt to them

Islam: "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself"

Christianity: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Judaism: "Love thy neighbor as thyself"

- We are all limbs of one body, and when one finger gets cut, or one leg cramps, it effects the state of the whole body. That's why when this happens, we make sure to take good care of whatever appendage is hurt. It's the same thing with humanity. Forsaking anybody will hurt everybody, so we must work to heal those that are suffering so that the whole of humanity will be functioning at its highest level.

How the "I" treats the Other

I didn't grow up Muslim. I actually grew up in a very liberal Episcopalian family. Converting to

Islam changed my perspective on a lot of things. When I was little, my family and I would go to

our neighborhood pool. On the way back, all bundled up in my towel, I would sometimes wrap

my towel around everywhere but my eyes, like a *niqab*, a face veil. I would do what I thought

was a Middle Eastern accent and say "I cannot be seen by the eyes of men." My parents would

always laugh when I did this, so I did it often. I thought it was a great joke, though I wasn't even

aware of who I was making fun of.

Fast-forward to me converting to Islam as a teenager, a religion where the majority of believers

are people of color. Many of whom come from or whose parents are from countries that have

been torn apart by colonialism and war. Being part of the Muslim community provided me with a

perspective I had never seen before--people who were politically liberal but criticized liberal *certain policies*

leaders like Obama. I grew up in a very liberal household, and I knew that conservatives would

criticize Obama, but I had never heard another *liberal* criticizing Obama. I became more

aware of the effect of America's foreign policy. I realized

that there *amount* of conflict our government fuels,

amount Bombs dropped on civilians in Middle Eastern countries.

I became more aware of world conflicts that I didn't consider, that I didn't feel like affected me

before I became Muslim. Suddenly, because I was Muslim and wearing a hijab, I had to have

opinions on the Israel-Palestine conflict. On Muslim countries laws and policies. By converting

in one sense I became the 'other' by being a religious minority, however in another

to Islam, I didn't become the Other, as I could never live the experience of people of color, of *sense*

By converting to Islam,

people living in postcolonial societies, but those people stopped being the Other. I joined a global

Muslim community which gave me so much in common with people all over the world, even

those who aren't Muslim, as Islam promotes the protection, the preservation of all human lives,

regardless of nationality, skin color or religion. As it says in the Quran "Whoever saves the life

of one person, it is as if he has saved the whole of humankind."

Interfaithing Panel

11 April 2019

The (Mestiza) Agnostic Consciousness:
In Defense of Straddling Multiple Worlds and Expressing Tolerance for Ambiguity

Growing up, religion only appeared in the background of my life. I knew people practiced it, but never really understood why or how or in what way. I have memories like... reading a children's book called "Jesus Loves You" filled with religious poems and sayings. I remember feeling both comforted and confused by this 'Jesus' person who had given his life for me. It definitely seemed like a pretty big deal.

My mother is an immigrant to the United States from Mexico. Her family is all Catholic, and she was raised going to church regularly. My father was born in the U.S. and his family was Jewish. But both my parents did not really follow their faiths, and consequently they were never pushed on me.

I am now personally grateful for having had the freedom to be raised in an environment outside of an organized religion. However, I have often reflected on how lonely it was to grow up outside of a faith community, and have even felt jealous of some of my friends who had closer relationships to their family and culture.

The process of living is marked by an insatiable thirst for self-identity, and association. We are always trying to fit ourselves in to the world we see. In addition to my lack of belonging to a faith institution, I also struggled with my racial identity. As a Mexican-American woman, I have always referred to the *Selena* biopic in which Selena so iconically expressed the struggles of being too Mexican for the whites, but too white for the Mexicans. Indeed, I was "other-ed" by everyone, and I didn't fit in.

I would later learn that this was a classic syndrome of *mestiza double consciousness,* as described by Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldua, and that it was actually not a vice but a virtue to think from a mestiza point of view. As Anzaldua says, the mestiza "learns to juggle cultures" and she "operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out... nothing rejected, nothing abandoned."

Around middle and high school, although I was still mostly a non-believer, I remember many nights of praying as I was dealing with issues over anxiety, friendships, family, and love. During prayer, I always addressed God in a very colloquial manner. My understanding of Him was that

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if He existed, he *must* be all-loving, and that he would be okay with me not being fully committed to his existence. I never felt he blame me, but I knew others disagreed.

Around last year, I started thinking more critically about my religiosity. This, by no coincidence, came at a time in which I became obsessed with peacemaking, and concerned by the fragility of the universe. When I travelled to Israel/Palestine last summer with the Olive Tree Initiative to analyze the region's conflict, we visited many beautiful religious sites including Dome of the Rock, the Western Wall, Via Dolorosa, the Church of Nativity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Sea of Galilee, and so many more. I couldn't help feeling so moved and connected to these places.

However, I also witnessed tremendous suffering in the region. All of this forced me to dwell in so many jarring thoughts about existence, identity, ethics, and justice. I found myself trapped in huge philosophical questions—ones I still don't have answers to, and may not ever.

Today, I consider myself spiritual because I feel an undeniable connection to the cosmos. However, I am also a proud agnostic. To be agnostic is to believe that *nothing can be known of the existence or nature of God or divinity*; it claims neither faith nor disbelief in God.

Now, when you take, like 5 hours to decide if you want sushi or pizza for dinner—first of all, I hear you, and I'm here for you. But that's called indecisiveness. Agnosticism is *not* indecisiveness. I want that to be clear. Being 'agnostic' is not a cop-out, or 'playing it safe.' Agnosticism is a full identity, not a lack of one—not a lack of theism or atheism. It is part of my *mestiza consciousness,* of straddling multiple cultures at once. In Leslie Stephens work, "An Agnostic's Apology," he says this:

Quote. "The Agnostic is one who asserts—what no one denies—that there are limits to the sphere of human intelligence…. You tell us to be ashamed of professing ignorance. Where is the shame of ignorance in matters still involved in endless and hopeless controversy? Is it not rather a duty?" End quote.

I find the most security, warmth, love, and honesty in the label 'agnosticism.' It is something that challenges me to be understanding of all people's faiths, values, ethics, and reason. It also challenges me to to love despite, and because of differences, and encourages learning through dialogue. Above all, it shows me that the "I" and the "other" are all part of the same chain of being that modestly tries to make sense of our world.

Thank you.

Interfaith Speech

8 April 2019

Prompt: Describe a time when you were an "I" and interacted with the "other"

I've had a colorful religious past. Growing up, I was raised to be a Christian and a Mormon by my divorced parents. After being asked to leave my children's Sunday school from my mother's non-denominational Christian church, I began attending my father's Mormon church only.

With respect to my father's Mormon church, there were two wards in our building: the one I attended and the Spanish-Speaking Ward. Even as I describe these wards now, I recognized the ward I was a part of to be the *normal* ward, the ward that was without accommodation for those who spoke another language. I didn't attend the English-Speaking Ward and we never called our congregation that. The two wards were completely separate in every function. It was uncommon to encounter those in the Spanish-Speaking Ward. Somehow, I always missed them so it was as if they existed only as a concept and less as another group of people learning the same lessons I had just debated against.

I didn't recognize how othered this ward remained until I attended the baptism of my friend at another building whose congregation was made up of bilingual members. The surprise I felt when seeing Spanish speakers mingling with English speakers in the church forced me to confront my participation in othering Spanish speakers within the Mormon faith. While I had knowledge of Mormonism's spread across the world, the reality that these Mormon's might not speak English broke down my conception of what it meant to be Mormon.

My time in the Mormon church was wrought with contention. Soon after leaving, I declared myself as a Wiccan and began my studies within this religious context only to later claim the label eclectic pagan, a term I found more representative of my beliefs. Eclectic Paganism allowed me to cross religious boundaries in order to practice a worship that recognized the unifying nature of deity. However, this label is rather isolating from a community since many view any form of paganism to be akin to devil worship. At Chapman, I joined the Chapman Wicca club and attended lessons with the former president of the club which led us both to a

community. While the Pagan community does not endorse the othering of anyone, it is inherent in the community nonetheless. Participants in the Pagan community have often sought out a haven from the discrimination they encountered in Christianity. My story is no exception to this. There is a general distrust of Christianity and those who practice it. The same can be said concerning men who can be othered within Pagan communities by being denied access to temples or by being regarded as lesser than since their bodies do not represent the life-giving power women's bodies represent. There's a maturing period, especially for newly converted Pagans, as they cope with the emotions that come from being othered before their conversion. When you're standing in the Pagan circle looking out at the Christians or the men or anyone else who you feel has beaten you down, you other them because they othered you. Since the community is so small, this presence of othering is nearly unavoidable. Once I recognized this, I felt it was time I move on. Currently, I am looking into a new community with the hopes that othering will be less prevalent.

My religious exploration can be defined as an attempt to escape participation in the othering of any peoples. Whether it be my own participation or that of the community's, it is something I cannot abide by. When I see it now, I attempt to either remove its presence through conversation or remove myself from its presence if a conversation cannot be broached. As such, it is my hope that one day I will find a community able to recognize and correct the othering of peoples if and when the problem arises.

My name is ██████████, thanks so much for being here and being so willing to have an open interfaith discussion. The question, how the I treats the other, has been a subject of my life I have genuinely been afraid to confront. I feel like, instinctively, we try to avoid thinking about things that make us look less than ideal, likely to the extent that we have a hard time admitting we do see some as "others". I know that I believe that everyone deserves to be treated the same, everyone deserves respect, and a good amount of that lesson was taught to me by my faith, and the rest was drilled into me by my parents. However, I'm not egotistical enough to think that I truly treat everyone the same, that I have never acted like or thought of someone else as other than myself. I definitely have, and that is a hard thing to spend time thinking about. I would like to focus on a specific group of people I notice myself feeling the most uncomfortable around. Those on a different socio-economic level than me. The fact that my life looks very different from that of someone living on the streets is mere chance, I was born into a family that does not struggle financially, and admittedly that privilege makes me uncomfortable because I don't always know the best ways to use it. In situations where I need guidance I tend to turn towards my religion and see if there happens to be some answers, and, because it's Judaism, there are always at least three answers to any question I could ever come up with. I love this about it, I have so many sources from which I can learn. Judaism says "When you [plural] reap the harvest of your land, you [singular] shall not reap all the way to the corner of your field,

or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger; I the Lord am your God. You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another," Leviticus 19:9-11. This comes very close to where it talks about not putting out pe'ah, which is technically a bit of the corner, however it goes even further as to say not the corner but rather the end so those who come and benefit do not have to feel uncomfortable. About not putting out the pe'ah it says it's the same as stealing, it is that important to take the time out of our day to do something small in order to help others. Judaism encourages me to take that time and do as much as I can for anyone and everyone who needs it. On Purim there is a mitzvah, matanot le'evyonim, which translates to gifts to the poor. Tzedakah is a fundamental aspect of Judaism. And to have a timely reference, the Passover seder begins with a whole statement about the importance of bringing those who don't have somewhere to go, or food to eat, into your own home. This gives me comfort, knowing that I have somewhere to look when it comes to finding ways I can use what I have to help others, it makes me feel like what I sometimes don't feel like I deserve is also something I can use to do good, and to help people, which is one of the most important parts of my life. This question has been really hard to think about, focusing on the negative aspects of my life and personality has not been easy, but I genuinely encourage everyone in here to take the time to do so, it's been incredibly rewarding for me. Thank you.

I was raised in an environment where we did our best to ensure the there was no other and that we were all just an us, a people of God. There was no this is wrong, and that is right except for when it came to one thing, and that was love. For the Christian church Disciples of Christ, love is a hard thing to do. The Disciples are formed around the idea that we all don't have to believe the same thing, that it is our job is to journey together and to love one another despite our differences. I was taught that love is never exclusive and should be given freely to everyone no matter who they are. As I grew up, I learned quickly that across Christianity there are different interpretations of love and God. I struggled immensely for years with the idea of Gods plan. Everywhere I went other Christians were telling me about gods plan. This was foreign to me because to me I was from an economically challenged small town in the midwest next to a prison where I could not see the evidence of Gods plan. To this day I do not believe that there is a master plan. I would get angry whenever people would even mention the idea of Gods plan because I could not believe in a god that would deliberately put people in harm's way as part of a master plan. That was the other for me, and that anger would consume me and just destroy me from the inside. As I grew and got out into the world, I made it my mission to understand why so many people have so much faith in Gods plan. After a few years of hard conversations and

theological breakdowns, I found the value in Gods plan. The problem was that that

form of faith did not work for me because I lived a privileged life with minimal

roadblocks and living where I did constantly seeing the suffering of others. I could

not see the value of Gods plan because I did not need comfort. Gods plan brings

comfort to those who need it, rich or poor, and that was a new kind of love to me.

The faith that God is working things out behind the scenes brings immense comfort

to those who have no control over there lives. After struggling with that for years, I

was finally able to live up to my teachings, journey together with the other and

love them despite our differences.

prayed in cathedrals, experienced Darsan a temples.

Intersectionality Panel *I've found community w/ open & accepting people of faith. I ~~attend church~~ still participat in the UCC/DOC, ~~and~~ I've begun attending Bahai events. & celebrate various cultural holidays!*

Hello, my name is ████████████. i grew up a progressive Christian. When I was in eighth grade I went through confirmation; instead of learning about Christianity- which we had learned about in Sunday school for YEARS, we learned about the other faiths. The idea was: you cannot baptize yourself in a faith if you don't know all your options. This is where my passion for religion took over. The way I looked at it was that they were one in the same. You can easily say I'm pluralistic. I feel at home in many religious settings. I feel spiritually fulfilled when I talk about faith to others in faith. I have made it my goal to try to educate people about other faiths. I think it is really important for people to become more understanding to one another, to see across parting lines. Especially to me there shouldn't be parting lines, they are very permeable.

One thing that is in commonality is the Oneness of the world. To me the soul within me is the same as the holy spirit, the spirit of Christ, the breath of life that God blew into Adam & Eve, the Atman within me - which is the same as Brahman, the non-self, the source of love and life, the energy that within atoms that keeps the electrons spinning around. There are just different words we use to describe it. Everything is related to each other; more than just the butterfly effect. We impact each other in ways that we can't even perceive- like vibes and energy. God is everywhere and in everything. So what makes you so different than me? Deep inside we both have this God-spark that is life itself. What makes me so different than a flower? Or you much different than a tree? Creation is the body. Creation was made to live in community. There is no other in my eye. You may see me as another but I don't see you as an other. The I is all of us.

When have you felt like an "other"?

I have felt "other"-ized in many settings of faith. I, as an interfaith person, feel that I can worship and feel the presence of the divine anywhere and everywhere- but ESPECIALLY in houses of worship. I enjoy visiting houses of worship or temples because I believe they have the best architecture and artwork of a culture. I appreciate being able to experience other cultures and to be included in the rituals and the community as a whole. However, sometimes I have struggled to feel like I belong. Many religious communities feel very exclusive. I felt awkward when I was unable to take communion at a more conservative protestant church. I felt awkward when I was glared at for my non-assimilated outfit. I have felt silenced or discredited when speaking my thoughts at religious groups- or even in classes with more conservative minds. In fact, I have had my faith labeled for me. In middle school friends condemned me for not wanting to listen to the sermon at their youth group because I didn't agree with the ideology. My sister always questioned my religion. My family labeled my as agnostic. My mother told me that I wasn't a Christian when I admitted to not feeling the same way about the trinity as I was thought in Sunday school. People warned me against majoring in Religious studies because they either assumed I was studying to become a conservative preacher or because they thought learning about other faiths was gonna harm my ow faith in God. It is the opposite: I've opened up to a broader view of faith in God, I've opened up to have everyone in my community.

What are ways that our community (Chapman, Orange, global,etc.) can foster tolerance and understanding to create harmony between the "I" and the "other"?

1. EDUCATION 2. EXPERIENCE. I cannot stress enough how much faith traditions have in common!!! The two biggest misunderstandings I think are language and aesthetics. Language: people speak different cultural languages in services. and when spoken in english terms and concepts are foreign to those who are not of a faith tradition. We need

to teach each other with common language. Aesthetics: art is different, dress is different, sacred objects are different, the kind of music that is played is different. But, they all serve the same purpose. basic teachings are the same. Don't judge something that may look a little strange to you. Don't let differences stop you from learning and seeing the commonalities.