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Deliberative Discourse in the Town Hall Meeting

by

Kristina R. Fennelly

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Kristina R. Fennelly
Deliberative Discourse in the Town Hall Meeting

_____
Dissertation Director
Barry Kroll

_____
Approved Date

Committee Members

_____
Edward Lotto

_____
Elizabeth Fifer

_____
Robin Dillon

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I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Walter Langseder, and my late grandmother, Bridget Agnes Fennelly, both of whom I am confident would have been very happy to see my completion of my Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Abstract

My dissertation focuses on developing student-writers' skills in argument writing by engaging students in activities related to rhetorical listening, deliberation, coalescent argumentation, and an ethical treatment of argument. This project explores alternative ways to craft an argument by using the model of a town hall meeting; this model is pedagogically useful in developing students' communication, deliberation, and argument skills. Beginning with a critical examination of the cultural insistence on adversarial argument, I explore the following question: How can composition instructors use the town hall meeting as a model for a "deliberative body," as a teaching method to instruct students on the process of deliberative discourse, and as a metaphor for coalescent argumentation? To answer this query, I propose five priorities of the town meeting, each of which holds particular relevance to the composition classroom. These priorities include: (1) to revive the under-valued role of rhetorical listening in composition studies by exploring Rogerian and feminist rhetoric; (2) to explore the way new media can serve as forums for students to practice community building and deliberative discourse; (3) to practice coalescent argumentation where students bring together as many productive ideas as possible; (4) to adopt the persona and voice of a moderator rather than an autocratic decision maker as a student writer; and, (5) to treat writing as an ethically-infused process by emphasizing responsibility for and commitment to one's ideas. These priorities show how this pedagogical method encourages student writers to move beyond dichotomous argumentation, and to view argument as a deliberative process rather than as a purely assertive and perfunctory act.

CHAPTER ONE

A Community of Minds: The Composition Classroom as Town Meeting

In her seminal work *The Feminine Mystique*, author Betty Friedan wrote of "the problem that has no name":

> The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—'Is this all?'

Today, in thinking about rhetoric, persuasion, and argument, we might imagine a similar scene for students, writers, and instructors:

> The problem lay buried, unacknowledged, though familiar, for many years in the minds of students, writers, and teachers. Bit by bit, a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, occurred in the early twenty-first century in the United States. Each student and writer struggled with it alone. As they perfected their thesis statements, meticulously researched their topic, dutifully wrote their papers, anticipated the opposing view, and successfully shot their opponent's point down to elevate their own, they began to ask 'Is this all there is to arguing? Is this all there is to rhetoric and persuasion?'

The alienation and adversarialism noted above is analogous to the extremes experienced by women in Friedan's work. Students and instructors alike have suffered from and identified with "the problem" in rhetoric and composition and with argument writing specifically, yet have not been able to successfully make such a problem visible. Our cultural emphasis on conflict and opposition extends to many pedagogical approaches in the teaching of argument writing. Metaphorical battles are routinely staged on talk shows, political debates, and blogs, revealing the media's preoccupation with and

perpetuation of adversarial discourse. Given these circumstances, it is crucial to examine

how students internalize agonism[1] and normalize it as part of their discursive selves. It is

important to examine the effect of the "argument culture" on student writers who are

often left wondering: what's the point of argument?

In their article "Moments of Argument: Agonistic Inquiry and Confrontational

Cooperation," Dennis Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn Cooper observe how "Students

have learned to argue vigorously and even angrily" (61). The proclivity among our

students to "fall easily into one of two camps: for or against" reveals the absence of "any

real knowledge of the issue at hand," as well as the inability to "think about alternatives"

(61). In her book *The Argument Culture*, Deborah Tannen believes argument is marked

by a cultural preoccupation with combative discourse: "In the argument culture, criticism,

attack, or opposition are the predominant if not the only ways of responding to people or

ideas" (7).   Sally Miller Gearheart, perhaps, goes to the extreme when she claims that

"any intent to persuade is an act of violence" (195). Tannen's examination of "*ritualized*

adversativeness…conventionalized oppositional formats that result from an underlying

ideology by which intellectual interchange is conceptualized as a metaphorical battle"

supports Gearheart's view [my emphasis] (1652). In other words, students recognize

fighting with words as the only form of persuasion, the only way to use rhetoric. Thus,

there are few alternatives to seeing argument as anything other than a debilitating act.

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[1] In her article "Agonism in Academic Discourse" (2002), Deborah Tannen borrows this term from Walter Ong's Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness (198). Ong defines agonism as "programmed contentiousness", "ceremonial combat". Tannen uses the term "to refer not to conflict, disagreement, or disputes per se, but rather to ritualized adversativeness" (1652).

In addition to this narrow view of argument, Daniel F. Collins and Robert C Sutton articulate the "problematic" and pervasive social belief that results from the absence of different approaches. Many students believe that "moral persuasion, rhetoric, is not an effective way to alter how people look at situations and act, that is has no bearing on the fabric of social life, and there are no bases for agreeing or disagreeing over moral matters" (45). Two extremes become apparent, then, when considering the role of rhetoric in academia and in public life today: passive alienation and active adversarialism. The first extreme, articulated by Collins and Sutton, points to a position of alienation; such alienation stems from a sense of futility among those who do not and cannot participate in the argument culture. For these individuals, it is difficult to identify a new perspective, common ground, or a course of action within the realm of rhetorical persuasion. Kurt Spellmeyer describes this extreme in terms that render a state of intellectual passivity: "By denying our students the opportunity to determine what knowledge can become in the circumstances of their own lives, we act as though it really could be transferred without change from context to context…it would remain more or less what it has always seemed—a body of 'fact' to be silently accepted, or forcibly imposed" (164). The silent acceptance of a homogenous trope eclipses other voices of difference that may offer alternative perspectives to the issue before students.

Those like Gearhart and Tannen point to the second extreme of active adversarialism in which the desire to prevail, conquer, and win any point of discussion or debate is the ultimate achievement. Although these verbs may connote engagement in the act of arguing, the firm theoretical position from which a student argues can still denote intellectual stagnation; the difference is that for adversarial debaters, they are the

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ones who forcibly impose the "facts" from their fixed positions. Such aggressive yet static arguments reveal a kind of ideological contentment masked as intellectual superiority. Pragmatically, neither extreme proves productive or meaningful. Theoretically, neither extreme offers any ground on which to stand and learn how to see the world in a different way, consider another viewpoint, or explore a new idea. Instead, both extremes render student writers inert, the result of which is particularly debilitating in communicating with and learning from others, as Tannen explains: "the pervasiveness of agonism…in contemporary western academic discourse is the source of both obfuscation of knowledge and personal suffering in academia" (1651). Conventional teaching of argument thus de-emphasizes rhetoric as a persuasive tool.

Perhaps most damaging is the diminishment of real knowledge that can result from not "understanding the roots of theoretical differences, or integrating disparate but related ideas" (Tannen 1651). Tannen cites the fragmentation of knowledge as one of the more dire consequences of agonism in academic discourse. She explains: "the experience and perpetuation of agonistic elements in academic discourse depends on the ideological conviction that the pursuit of information, on one hand, and the people who pursue it, on the other, can be separated, whereas in reality—as we know and argue with respect to other domains of discourse—they cannot" (1652-1653). Spellmeyer's chapter on "Constructionism Reconsidered: The Hidden Dimension of Dissent in Knowledge" points to constructionists as a source of such agonism since they "offer a convincing rationale for the atomized state of knowledge." By adopting this point of view, "we perpetuate a fragmentation of much more than mere knowledge—a fragmentation of the larger social word, of 'truth' from 'truth' and of person from person" (157). Such

intellectual division and demarcation silences voices of difference, functioning as "an impediment to all we might become" (160). Spellmeyer soberly reminds us that "critical awareness has indeed remained the hidden dimension of learning" (163). Tannen echoes this idea when she notes how "'critical thinking', which, in theory, includes many types of thinking other than criticizing, in practice is interpreted as synonymous with 'critique' (in itself a term that, in theory, refers to any kind of intellectual evaluation but in practice denotes exclusively negative criticism)" (1658). Obfuscating this more useful dimension of critical thinking as evaluation, de facto arguments assert a visible and powerful presence devoid of dialogue, cooperation, purpose, responsibility, and commitment to the issues at stake. Rather than focusing on the multi-layered process of writing and reasoning through various details of an argument, "a prescribed position" is offered as the primary example of good writing to students; critical thinking remains virtually absent (Collins & Sutton 50).

Such fragmented knowledge is only perpetuated by the automatic nature of the thoughts and actions that structure our daily lives. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson cite the example of "Argument is War" to demonstrate how a "metaphorical concept…structure[s] (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we argue" (5). Tannen insists that this metaphor does the most rhetorical damage to the way we communicate on a fundamental level, reflecting "the Adversary Method".[2] Lakoff and Johnson explain the power of such

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[2] Tannen cites Janice Moulton who explains, "The aim of the Adversary Method…is to show that the other party is wrong, challenging them on any possible point, regardless of whether the other person agrees." Tannen notes the erroneous assumption that confuses the Adversary Method with the Socratic Method: "In contrast to the true Socratic Method, Moulton shows, the Adversary Method is not likely to convince those

metaphorical language even further: "The metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things" (5). Though Lakoff and Johnson consider the effect of imagining a culture "where an argument is viewed as a dance," they ultimately conclude, "we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different" (5). Here, Lakoff and Johnson reveal our basic inability to imagine rhetorical persuasion in any other way given the immense academic and cultural power invested in adversarial argument.

Power exists in adversarial argument because it is viewed as a sign of competence or mastery.[3] Perhaps most importantly, such power exists because it is rooted in our ideological framework: "warring-camps dichotomies appeal to our sense of how knowledge should be organized. It feels 'natural' and 'right'. It feels right because it reflects our agonistic ideology. But because it feels right does not mean it is right" (Tannen 1659-1660). As James Berlin reminds us in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," "A rhetoric can never be innocent, can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims" (477). Though I agree that rhetoric can never be innocent, I do believe it can and

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who do not agree, because few people regard having lost a debate as a reason to give up their beliefs; they simply attribute their loss to their own poor performance or to the opponent's tactics, not to the inherent strength of their arguments" (1657). I will explore this idea of the Adversary Method and performative persuasion in the subsequent chapter on rhetorical listening.

[3] As Tannen explains, "journalists feel they need to ask tough questions not to better serve viewers and readers but to prove their competence to their colleagues. Similarly, many in the legal profession point out that what's known as 'Rambo' litigation tactics result from the desire to be seen as competent by colleagues rather than by any evidence that such tactics actually have beneficial results for clients" (1662-1663). Such examples reveal the primacy of the appearance of knowledge rather than the actual possession of knowledge.

should be used in a fair-minded and well-balanced way by those who employ it in educational pursuits. Thus, an ethical imperative exists to consider alternative ways of arguing that can afford students the ability to explore rhetoric situated within a deliberative ideology based on the ethics of mutual understanding, reasoning, and collaboration.

As Lakoff and Johnson show, the problem resides in our inability to imagine argument as anything other than a debate between two sides, or to imagine what a new ethically-minded ideology might look like, one that would afford the necessary intellectual space to reason together. Lakoff and Johnson cite the example of conceiving argument as a dance; however, this would only result in the conclusion that "we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance" (5). If we were to imagine a metaphor for a different way of arguing, what would it look like? What shape or model would it need to assume in order to serve as a viable alternative that student writers could fundamentally grasp and actively participate in? I want to propose that the metaphor of a town hall meeting could provide an alternative way of conceiving argument as a means for creating common ground, revitalizing the fabric of education and extending to important realms of social life.

Historically, the town meeting has been a prime site for members of a community to gather together, voice their concerns, work through conflict, and determine laws that affect all citizens. In the first chapter of his work *The New England Town Meeting,* Joseph Zimmerman explains: "Law-making by assembled adult males dates to the age of Pericles in Greece in the fifth century B.C., but there is no evidence that the New England open town meeting, *as an egalitarian institution*, has a direct lineage to classical

Green democracy" [my italics] (1). Though the New England town meeting did not naturally result from the Athenian assembly, the "egalitarian" aspect of the town meeting is crucial to situating it within a composition classroom because this term denotes a participatory process. Frank Bryan, in his study *Real Democracy*, notes the significance of physical space when treating argument as a decision-making process: "in a real democracy, the citizens—in person, in face-to-face meetings of the whole—make the laws that govern the actions of everyone *within their geographic boundaries*" [my emphasis] (4). Bryan's definition of democracy points us to the significance of space in providing a "locatable context" for argumentation, a term defined more fully by Michael Gilbert in *Coalescent Argumentation*. Gilbert notes how argumentation theory[4] invites us to move away from studying argumentation based on formal, deductive logic or informal logic (3). He reveals how "argumentation theorists more and more view arguments as *situated* or taking place in a locatable context that itself is liable to have an impact on both the arguments and arguers" (4). This situated-ness, "locatable context," or physical space houses an argument, structures its methods, affects its stakeholders (those who have a vested interest in participating in the argument in the first place) and can largely determine its outcomes.

Composition classrooms have been prime sites in which to situate arguments as student writers learn how to test out ideas, debate points of view, question interpretations, and ultimately construct academic prose. Yet traditional argument writing reflects only narrow ways of treating all arguments like two-sided issues. Both the process of

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[4] Gilbert notes that Argumentation Theory "has its contemporary roots back in the 1950s, but only recently has assumed a shape that is sufficiently definable so as to be considered a (relatively) independent sub-area of endeavor" (3).

argument writing and the act of arguing face to face in a classroom, then, tend to produce linear debates between two opposing sides in which the rhetorically 'stronger,' though not necessarily more reasoned position, succeeds. As Gilbert suggests, we need to change our definition of argument and pursue different methods for teaching argumentation in order to move beyond a static dichotomy of agreement versus disagreement, winning versus losing. He asserts: "When argumentation is viewed as an exchange of information [i.e., views and beliefs] centered on disagreement, rather than a straightforward occasion to change someone's mind, opportunities for agreement will present themselves" (117).

In order to improve argumentation and identify new ways to seek out agreement among difference, as well as develop agency rather than passivity for writers as they engage in argument writing, we must consider the town meeting as a "locatable context" that lends itself to the processes of deliberation, coalescent argumentation, and reasoning. Instructors in any course with a writing component—not just exclusively composition courses—could situate the model of a town meeting in their classroom as a way to practice deliberation, reasoning skills, critical inquiry, and reflection as alternatives to traditional argument and debate. John Fiske, Harvard professor and author of *Civil Government of the United States* (1890), identifies ways in which the town meeting can function as an important educational space. Fiske uses the "schoolhouse metaphor" to examine the educational impact of the town meeting: "'In the kind of discussion which it provokes, in the necessity of facing argument with argument and of keeping one's temper under control, the town-meeting is the best training school in existence'" (27-28). Given

this premise, how might we use the town meeting as a model for a "deliberative body,"[5] as a heuristic teaching method to instruct students on the process of deliberation and discourse, and as a metaphor for coalescent argumentation?

This dissertation will examine and apply the town meeting to composition classrooms as a method, model, and metaphor for pursuing alternative ways of crafting an argument. Using the town meeting as a supplement to, not an outright rejection of, traditional arguing, student writers will learn how to practice deliberative discourse by considering multiple perspectives and resisting dichotomous thought. This pedagogical space can move student writers beyond linear argumentation as they learn to re-see argument as a deliberative process rather than as a purely assertive act, thus supplementing agonsim with a figurative assembly of voices germane to the argument at hand. David Mathews, in his book *Politics for the People*, points to the American tradition of town meetings as "public forums" that have kept "public dialogue" alive in various manifestations for centuries. Specifically citing the National Issues Forums, a group of civic and educational organization, Mathews notes the purpose, framework, and value of public forums:

> Participants in the forums do the difficult work of deliberation—of moving toward a choice on each issue by weighing carefully the pros and cons of every option. The premise is that the pulls and tugs of having to make choices together will cause people to learn more about policy issues and move from individual opinions toward more shared and reflective judgments. (108)

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[5] See Neil G. Kotler in Joseph Zimmerman's *The New England Town Meeting: Democracy in Action* (1999), p.5.

In an effort, then, to move the individual toward a collective mindset, composition classrooms need to serve as a prime site for doing "the difficult work of deliberation."

Examining and implementing the town meeting might not at first seem readily applicable to the composition classroom, given the political connotations of a town meeting. Recent examples from the press depict local town meetings over the issue of health care erupting into the same kind of adversarial discourse that leads to further polarization of positions. Looking at such examples, a natural series of questions arise: How does this model serve as a viable alternative to current ways of arguing? Doesn't this context only reinforce and perpetuate antagonistic forms of debate marked by shouting back and forth, aggressive posturing, and a failed attention to listening? My response to this concern is two-fold. First, given the current state of debate in college classrooms today, it is important to honestly acknowledge the consequences of apathy (i.e., the fragmentation of knowledge and the lack of collective social action) and do our best to reverse it. In her essay, "Debate? Dissent? Discussion? Oh, Don't Go There!" Michiko Kakutani aptly describes the apathetic attitude on many college campuses: "Noisy dorm and dining room debates are no longer *de rigueur* as they were during earlier decades; quiet acceptance of differing views—be they political or aesthetic—is increasingly the rule" (59). The question is: why? Perhaps it is out of a sense of respect or politeness that students shrink from actively debating ideas with one another outside of the classroom in order to maintain ties of friendship. But this phenomena occurs in the classroom, as well, because "'Debate has gotten a very bad name in our culture,' according to Jeff Nunokawa, an English professor at Princeton University" (qtd. by Kakutani 60). Nunokawa goes on to explain how students miss debate as a crucial

opportunity for the production of knowledge by treating debate as "'synonymous with some of the most nonintellectual forms of bullying, rather than as an opportunity for deliberative democracy'" (qtd. by Kakutani 60). Deliberative democracy can be exercised by adopting the model of a town hall meeting in composition classrooms, as my subsequent chapters will show. If we do not take advantage of the model of deliberative democracy as an opportunity for reclaiming persuasion in rhetoric, we risk more than merely producing apathetic students. We risk the kind of fragmentation that Spellmeyer addresses—a point fully illustrated by Kakutani: "the reluctance of today's students to engage in impassioned debate can be seen as a byproduct of a philosophical relativism…Because subjectivity enshrines ideas that are partial and fragmentary by definition, it tends to preclude searches for larger, overarching truths, thereby undermining a strong culture of contestation" (61). Thus, reclaiming the power inherent in persuasive rhetoric and empowering students with tools of analysis—not argument—is crucial in order "'to keep democracy vital'" (Anderson qtd. by Kakutani 61).

Second, it is important to use what does not work in these portraits of town hall meetings as lessons for what current rhetorical persuasion lacks and what kinds of skills students need to learn in an educational (not political) context. This second point brings me to the pressing question: How is it possible to establish such a format in a writing course and then relate it to the writing process? To answer this question, I propose five priorities of the town hall meeting; each priority holds particular relevance to the composition classroom. Ultimately, the pedagogical method of the town meeting can function as both a literal and figurative space based on rhetorical and dialectical ideals. Through this space and these ideals, students can learn: (1) how to become a listening-

oriented writer; (2) how to practice good citizenship by treating writing as an ethically-infused act; (3) how to practice inquiry-driven deliberation; (4) how to embrace coalescent argumentation that brings together as many productive ideas as possible; (5) how to adopt the persona and voice of a moderator rather than an autocratic decision maker. These priorities of the town hall forum offer pedagogically applicable skills for the composition classroom and prove rhetorically applicable to students' lives. Though subsequent sections of this dissertation will address each priority separately and in greater detail, the remainder of this section aims to explicate how the town hall meeting can function as an alternative to traditional argumentation by re-situating the importance of deliberation and persuasion in this space.

One of the most important pedagogical moves seems to be that which guides the student writer away from formulaic constructs to a more thoughtful and deliberative consideration of a variety of competing claims. Spellmeyer acutely draws attention to this point when he notes how "teachers in our society have emphasized performative competence" at the expense of "critical awareness" (162-163). The performativity of argument cannot be underscored enough here. Students have not only normalized the act of arguing vigorously and angrily; they have also internalized the attendant belief system that debate is the best way (perhaps even the only way) to argue positions and display their intellectual dexterity. Much irony exists in this equating of traditional debate and intelligence, however. Students believe a debate allows them to clearly articulate their position, demonstrate their knowledge and certainty on a subject, and convince others to adopt this point of view or—perhaps more importantly—to convince others to reject their own position. Such is the pattern often modeled in political debates that students—and

the general public—look to as spaces and events where they can inform themselves on

the issues at stake in a given election. The danger of treating debate/argument as

occasions for the production of knowledge is that it eclipses critical questioning in favor

of fact, as Spellmeyer's critique of Bruffee's social constructionist position reveals.

Spellmeyer astutely notes that "we learn by doing" (163). In the case of students

watching debates as sources of political information, they learn by voting and following

the familiar philosophy of teachers "that we should act [vote] first and ask questions

afterward" (163).

   If, on the other hand, we abandon debate/argument as knowledge-producing

occasions, then we are left with a scenario similar to that described by Spellmeyer below.

> When the constructionists make their case [for the atomized state of
> knowledge] with such ease, they do so by withholding several crucial
> pieces of evidence: we can enlist our students' support for the truce of
> cross-curricular non-aggression only if we discourage them from
> exploring the connections between one discipline and another…and only
> if we prevent them from assuming a critical posture toward knowledge in
> general. (157)

In this context, we should read "the truce of cross-curricular non-aggression" as a

suspension of inquiry or debate among disciplines for the sake of acknowledging

difference. This acknowledgement is misclassified as "diplomacy," as Spellmeyer infers.

Yet assuming a neutral or relativist position does not automatically tender diplomacy, nor

does it reveal an authentic comprehension of difference as an effective treatment of

intersecting and overlapping subjects. Such a "truce" or "suspension", instead, has the

power to solidify the marginalization of different voices, which is perhaps why argument

seems so performative in the first place. Hot-button topics like abortion, gun control, and

most recently illegal immigration and health care seem rehearsed and staged so that the "debates" surrounding them really do not offer occasions to explore these subjects; instead, a hegemonic worldview allows the status quo to prevail.

In this sense, Spellmeyer's perspective is correct: "constructionism offers a false, oversimplified image of both knowledge and community. By reducing all things to symbolic artifacts, and all artifacts to social constructions, Bruffee apparently believes he can overcome the subject-object 'oscillation' which has prevented the emergence of any genuinely collective ethos" (159). The model of a town meeting offers the space in which to achieve a collective ethos based on deliberative discourse. Take the following scenario as an example. In a memo that gained campus-wide circulation at Lehigh University in the fall of 2008, the writer "D. Ray" detailed "several major incidents of racial oppression" on campus following the election of President Barack Obama. Titled "Reality Check!!!" this document revealed how three students were verbally assaulted with racist comments in two different incidents. The memo concludes with the resolution, "No one should have to face oppression." Here is a classic case of conflict visibly manifesting itself over racial and political difference. In traditional "argument culture" fashion, many members of the Lehigh campus gathered together for a "town hall meeting" the following week to "fight racism," according to the title of the student newspaper article. Over 300 students, faculty, staff, and administration members father in a campus auditorium. The meeting was taped and posted on Facebook.

In viewing this meeting, a casual observer might describe this occasion as a "community of like-minded peers," to borrow Bruffee's phrase (qtd. by Spellmeyer 158). The majority of the Lehigh student population appears "like-minded" on the surface;

many are white, middle to upper class, ambitious, academically well-prepared for college, and live by a "work hard, play hard" mentality. Given the 300-plus attendants at this town hall meeting, it would seem (on the surface) that the objective was clear: "to fight racism." Arguably, communities with clear objectives must consist of "like-minded peers." Yet Spellmeyer's critique of Bruffee's social constructionist position points to the tendency to reinforce hegemonic world views by believing in knowledge "generated by communities of like-minded peers" (158). As Spellmeyer reminds us, "no matter how 'like-minded' its members *seem*, these members will sometimes disagree about fundamental issues"—like racism, tools of oppression, power, and justice [my emphasis 159]. In the example of the Lehigh town hall meeting, the fundamental issue of disagreement centered on the original purpose of organizing against racism. A Career Services employee expressed disappointment in students "for taking the meeting off topic into curriculum issues and other unrelated issues," including "adding course requirements for gender and race studies, changing how the code of conduct is enforced, asking an admissions diversity question and requiring sensitivity training for groups on campus." The argument against racism, therefore, was diluted by ancillary issues that no one could seem to agree and collectively act on.

This scenario makes Spellmeyer's point visible: "By reducing self and world to 'community-maintained' symbolic artifacts, Bruffee loses something crucial" (159). The absence of "something crucial," according to Spellmeyer, is critical reflection and complexity, the result of which is "a fetishizing of community that insulates the status quo from genuine critique" and a "narcissistic appeal to the 'like-minded'" (160). In short, the "something crucial" missing in his meeting was the "difficult work of

deliberation" about a problem that a community of different-minded peers faced. The

result was adversarial argument. By conveniently imagining that everyone had gathered

in this space to achieve the same objective with the same definitions of racism and power

in mind, Lehigh revealed its own narcissism and hampered "sustainable change"—a goal

articulated by Lehigh's President. This was not the first time Lehigh had gathered

together to publicly examine this issue. According to the Brown & White article, the

meeting marked "two years ago to the day since Gast first hosted a public forum in 2006,

during which students from The Movement[6] described acts of racism they had

experienced at Lehigh" (2). The result included a campus climate survey, open office

hours with the president, and the formation of the Council for Equity and Community "to

address issues in diversity." Still, these problems—these arguments—resurfaced two

years later. Why? As Amanda Anderson notes, "'Because so many forms of scholarly

inquiry today foreground people's lived experience, there's this kind of odd

overtactfulness. In many ways, it's emanating from a good thing, but it's turned into a

disabling thing'" (qtd. by Kakutani 60). Foregrounding students' experiences with

racism on Lehigh's campus provided a sharp "reality check," as D. Ray's memo revealed.

But the solutions proved evasive because the discomfort in honestly and productively

deliberating about the issue manifested in "overtactfulness."

The commonly-held belief that argument is a means to demonstrate intellect and

understanding of the subject matter points to a gap in treating rhetoric and persuasion as

occasions for meaning-making. Spellmeyer classifies this missing piece in knowledge

production as "a dimension of dissent" (162). Dissent does not automatically mean

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[6] Lehigh student organization.

debate, agonism, or fighting. Instead, treating dissent as a process of sorting through,

processing, and testing out each claim against the other helps reveal a clear directive for

students to adopt. A seemingly simplistic, yet consequential question allows for a fuller

exploration of this dimension of dissent. If we ask ourselves, 'All things considered,

what should we do about X (X being the problem or issue students seek to address)?"

then we might achieve a new theory of knowledge—one that surpasses the mere role-

playing inherent in the former theory that "honors the regime of intellectual laissez faire

and concedes the sovereign statehood of the disciplines as they are currently arrayed"

(157). The "should" element of this question urges our best: our best guesses, for

starters, and ultimately our best choices and decisions. Starting with the premise that we

can effect social change, students move to develop what we "ought" to do about a

particular issue or situation that they might otherwise simply disagree on. The "should"

element is important because it denotes a sense of urgency not captured by terms like

"could", "might", or "would". These latter terms are more hypothetical than practical.

And yet, "should" claims are not as demanding as "must" assertions and therefore avoid

that slippery slope of lapsing back into adversarial argument statements. "Must" claims

often make an argument more assertive than deliberative, more agonistic than productive.

Realizing the potential power of non-adversarial arguments—arguments that express

"what we should do"—is a central goal in a composition course that is based around the

model, method, and metaphor of a town hall meeting.

     One of the more pressing points of this guiding question—"what should we

do?"—is the pronoun at work. The "we" invites a kind of collective action, a

collaborative effort, to gain a deeper understanding and increase participants' knowledge.

The "we" includes the personal "I" (of the student) and also functions as a collective first person "I," not exclusively the personal "I" focused on winning an argument. This ethically-minded question operates at the heart of the model of the composition classroom as town meeting by encouraging discourse that moves beyond dualistic thinking. It invites students to rise to a point of cognitive maturity that allows them to stake a commitment—not just assume a conveniently easy relativist position—within a rational framework after a serious investigation into a particular topic of critical inquiry. Concomitant with such an investigation is deliberation, which requires "some kind of commitment" on the part of the student (Cooper et. al 78). This kind of investigative practice involves a commitment both to the position they assume in their argument and to the writing, or expression, of that position. The commitment to language, then, functions as the "means [of] sorting through…the various questions and problems and values involved in an issue and coming to a decision you can stand up for" (Cooper et. al 81). In other words, this kind of commitment to language is the practice of a "questioning relationship" among the student, the issue, the stakeholders, and the decision-makers—all of which are imaginable roles in the context of a town hall meeting model.

Before students can assume a stance and make a directive argument, they must consider the ethical consequences of their past, present, and future actions if they hope to resist hegemonic worldviews based on assumptions of a "community of like-minded peers." As Berlin so pertinently questions: "What are the effects of our knowledge? Who benefits from a given version of the truth? How are the material benefits of society distributed? What is the relation of this power distribution to social relations? Do these relations encourage conflict? To whom does our knowledge designate power?" (489).

These questions highlight the timely need for the pressing question at the forefront of the town hall metaphor in composition classrooms: "All things considered, what should we do?"

Spellmeyer's review of Habermas offers compelling support for how this basic question can guide students more thoughtfully and deliberately in the construction and execution of real knowledge: "all forms of social life entail a dialectic between these two different modes of action: purposive-rational action, the activity of a group toward a shared goal; and communicative action—reflection on and debate about that activity in each of its stages" (164). Communicative action is more aligned with the "all things considered" aspect of the aforementioned question since it seeks to "clarify values and procedures and to recast them when they cease to be meaningful and valid for the members of a group." Debate, dissent, and dialogue are the key elements of this action since it is through communicative action that "individuals achieve intersubjective agreement about the practices they will undertake or have already undertaken." In other words, deliberation occupies the forefront of this aspect of the agenda. The practical end of the question—what should we do?—points to the purposive-rational action noted by Habermas since it is guided by "'cognitive-instrumental' or 'strategic' rationality." Here, persuasion functions as an expression of which consideration offers the most compelling reason. The ultimate goal, as articulated by Spellmeyer, is to fill the gap of missing knowledge for all stakeholders concerned: "Within the dialectic of purposive-rational action and self-reflective communication, each supplies for the other a sense that 'something's missing'" (164). By combining thought with action, true knowledge is created rather than constructed and packaged as Truth. When a singular Truth is

therefore not at stake, but rather the pursuit of real knowledge and the full participation in that knowledge, agonism and adversarialism diminish radically in importance. I argue that the question "All things considered, what should we do?" supports the communicative action aspect of a town hall meeting by allowing for the articulation of competing and dissenting voices. This question also supports purposive-rational action by encouraging students to move beyond mere theoretical positions and imaging their writing as a space through which to enact change. In this way, a subtle ethical component of argument writing emerges.

Fundamental elements of communication like dialogue, conversation, community, and cooperation have all been subsumed under the promise of social and cultural progress. Yet as the argument culture has shown, we have only regressed as social and intellectual beings when agonism and adversarialism largely produce the marginalization and eradication of the individual discursive self. Spellmeyer poses a timely question when he asks, "When in the history of English 101 have teachers promoted—have teachers permitted—the ethic of mutual understanding? And what would the teaching of writing become if we tried to bring this ethic into the classroom?" The first question demands a new pedagogical framework necessary for the cultural improvement of the educated student. The second question considers the effect of such an ethos. By implementing an ethic of mutual understanding, Spellmeyer suggests we will be able to better recognize the "shareable contexts, beyond—or better yet, beneath—our conceptual differences" (21). Through understanding, or as Spellmeyer describes it as "standing under" another person, we learn to "share the same ground" (21). Once a ground of any sort is available, how might we re-imagine the role of persuasion?

Bryan Garsten, in his book *Saving Persuasion*, helps to answer this question by offering a valuable and useful definition of the term "persuasion." His definition attempts to carve out some common ground between the two extremes of passive alienation and heightened adversarialism:

> Persuasion in the strict sense identifies a way of influencing that is neither manipulation nor pandering…To truly persuade people is to induce them to change their own beliefs and desires in light of what has been said. Though we speak of 'being persuaded' in the passive voice, we recognize the difference between being persuaded and being indoctrinated or brainwashed; the difference lies in the active independence that is preserved when we are persuaded. [my italics] (7)

Maintaining "active independence" signifies that we are not being acted upon in the process of "being persuaded"; persuasion is thus the primary actor, a subject, as it is adopted and employed by a reflective subject, the student writer. In this signification, persuasion does not operate as an object to be used for manipulation, nor does it objectify the student writer as a simple conduit of such "pandering." As Garsten astutely notes, though the term is often used in the passive voice, there is nothing innately passive about persuasion when achieved correctly. Persuasion as a form of "active independence" involves movement; as an actor, persuasion rhetorically moves the writer and reader from alienation to engagement, from critique to cooperation, and from debilitating dialogue to the kind of deliberation that allows for a multiplicity of views and voices. Without "active independence," one merely exchanges a previously-held set of ideas for someone else's previously-held set of ideas; new ideas or alternatives are not born or nourished. Without "active independence," little meaning—both personal and political—can be identified as tools for change. Without "active independence," the ground between the alienation extreme and the adversarial extreme does not expand but merely contracts,

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leaving less room than ever to see rhetoric as anything more than a perfunctory exercise. In the active role, persuasion becomes the voice of dissenting views, working to weigh reason against reason rather than purely employ a power game of emotional trickery. Behind these competing views, alternative ideas, and expressed reasons, persuasion serves as the driving force moving the stakeholders of an issue to a resolution and a purposeful action.

The issues, problems, and solutions that we usually ask our students to read about, engage in, think seriously about, and then respond to are rarely simple. The same holds true for agenda items that participants in a town hall meeting might consider. If these are not simple issues, why, then, do we position students in the reductive practice of making an argument by asserting one claim, choosing one side, and arguing one thesis? Why do we not, instead, encourage them to examine multiple perspectives, reconsider their initial claims, and draw on their imaginative creativity to unearth viable options and alternatives to the issue or conflict at hand? Such a process would coincide with reaching a consensus in which "the group's unity has a value for each individual greater than the value of most differences in individual preferences," according to Jane Mansbridge in her work *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (9). This process of reaching a consensus leads us to the way in which the Oxford English Dictionary defines "composition" as an action— "the action of putting together or combining; the act of being put together or combined." Gilbert's definition of "coalescence" also supports this definition of composition: "Coalescence involves the merging of two things into one…It is unrealistic to expect two diverse positions to completely meld into one, and that is neither the point nor the claim

of coalescent argumentation. Rather, the goal is to locate those points of belief and/or attitude that are held in common by the conflictual positions" (111). Indeed, just as our students begin to put together different ideas, combine various sources of information with their own values and beliefs, distill key options from a host of choices, all while sifting through "strong" and "weak" rhetoric, "good" and "bad" ideas, their identities as writers, students, and responsible citizens are "being put together or combined" in an equitable and respectful pursuit of common ground. This act of combing through ideas supports deliberative discourse as a social act, rather than as a purely individual endeavor. Gilbert cites Chaim Perelman who believes that "one does not argue in isolation. Arguments are about real things being presented to real people: 'For argumentation to exist an effective community of minds must be realized at a given moment'" (6). A crucial distinction must be made here between a "community of minds" and a "community of like-minded peers." The former can be found and nurtured in the composition classroom, and any classroom for that matter, as these are spaces which encourage deliberation and seek out the best ideas that support the best resolution. The latter, however, verges more on politics than progress and risks "the politicization of subjects like history and literature…ideological posturing that could be reductive and doctrinaire in the extreme" (Kakutani 61-62).

Perelman reminds us that arguments are inevitably about "real things" and "real people." Even though Perelman did not explore dialogic argumentation, privileging instead the role of the interlocutor in "discourse before a large audience," Gilbert insists that dialogic argumentation exists within the framework of a speaker before a large audience. In quoting Perelman, he explains: "'The philosophic significance of the

interlocutor's adherence in dialogue is that the interlocutor is regarded as an incarnation of the universal audience'" (7)[7]. The interlocutor, then, must be mindful of his audience and, in fact, explore all sides to an argument if he is going to effectively embody "the universal audience" instead of just the personal "I."[8] Thus the pragmatic aspect of the dialectic and its concern with actualizing a "community of minds" are integral to its applicability to using the town hall method in the composition classroom as a model for deliberative discourse.[9]

It is crucial to establish a clear definition of both the term "argument" and the act of "arguing" in order to avoid the familiar pitfalls of the argument culture. Gilbert cites several definitions of argument, but the meaning offered by van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans best supports the aforementioned imperative to ask, "All things considered, what should we do?" This definition aligns itself with the dialectical view[10]: "Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or the reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the

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[7] I will examine the role of the interlocutor in greater detail when I discuss the role of the moderator in the town hall meeting in chapter five.
[8] Here, we recall reader-based prose versus writer-based prose in which the former requires us to be mindful of articulating our ideas to the reader rather than assume they can intuit what we (the writer) suggest.
[9] Mansbridge notes the Greek ideal of "homonoia—unanimity, being 'of one mind.'" She explains how Aristotle's treatment of this term "meant congruence of interest on 'matters of consequence' in which 'it is possible for both or all parties to get what they want'" (14). This ideal is useful in according citizens "equal respect" and limiting the pursuit of power. However, it is not most useful to my discussion of the town meeting since students will need to learn that coalescent argumentation cannot make it *probable* for all parties to get what they want.
[10] Gilbert notes the following about the dialectical view: "One word concerning inquiry; this endeavor, sometimes also referred to as 'dialectic' is viewed as the most pure form of argumentation (Walton, 1989; van Eemerent & Grootendorst, 1988). It is in the realm of inquiry that bias is abandoned and the pursuit of truth is embraced" (116). I devote more attention to the subject of inquiry later in the dissertation when I discuss Paulo Friere's concern with the problem-posing method.

standpoint before a rational judge" (30). This definition fosters both the individual verbal articulation of each participant, as well as the social act of deliberation and reaching a consensus on the best course of action. The "constellation of propositions" supports Mansbridge's use of the term "interests," which she explains a "'enlightened preferences' among policy choices, 'enlightened' meaning the preferences that people would have if their information were perfect, including the knowledge they would have in retrospect if they had had a chance to live out the consequences of each choice before actually making a decision" (12). Entertaining, or imagining, the consequences of different choices is crucial to putting together or combining the best ideas so as to reach a consensus on the best course of action to follow. It also allows for the stipulation that we cannot imagine every possible consequence or consider every choice; such a process would be both time-consuming and unproductive. Instead, considering probable outcomes or solutions is a more fruitful endeavor. Thus, I wish to modify my earlier proposition, "All things considered, what should we do?" to read "All interests considered, what should we do?" with the understanding that "interests" refers to the probable or actual issues and outcomes at stake.

The usefulness of this question is explained best by Mansbridge who points to the analytical work achieved in this activity: "the exercise of imagining what it would be like to have experienced two or more choices suggests the kind of analysis we should conduct in trying to understand what someone's interests are" (12). Zimmerman also proposes a similar version of my question in the thesis of his study: "The major thesis examined in his study is that the traditional New England open town meeting is a de facto representative legislative body, with changing membership, that considers all viewpoints

on warrant articles and makes decisions that generally are in the best interests of the town" (11). Friends do not always agree; citizens who come together for a town meeting do not always agree; and those who are not friends or fellow citizens invite even greater opportunity for disagreement. Mansbridge notes how "'unitary' democracy, was in essence and in form directly opposed to the model of democracy that I, like most Americans, had grown up with, a model I call 'adversary' democracy" (ix). Like Tannen, Mansbridge decries the serious consequences of adversarial communication and interaction. She asserts: "The mechanical aggregation of conflicting selfish desires is the very core of an adversary system. But this idea verges on moral bankruptcy" (18). We come to understand, then, how pursuing unitary democracy via the town meeting method in a composition classroom is an ethical imperative. Situating the town meeting in composition classrooms possesses ethical implications, as well. We have a duty to listen to each other, remain open-minded, and consider differing perspectives if we hope to equip ourselves with all the knowledge pertinent to the subject at hand. To do otherwise shortchanges all participants intellectually and continues to foster "moral bankruptcy" on an academic and social level.

To return to Habermas, an idealized speech community does not equate to a utopia. In proposing the town hall meeting as a model, method, and metaphor, I do not claim it as a utopic alternative to the argument culture. Rather, I propose the town hall meeting as a normative ideal in which common ground can be identified and pursued more reasonably and purposefully than the cyclical and debilitating nature of adversarial debate. The role of the writer must become that of the moderator in a town meeting, one who takes into account a variety of voices and presents them to the reader; controls the

process of deliberation by setting boundaries; supplies critical inquiry when necessary; weighs competing claims; and finally offers a set of proposals that speak to the parties invested in the argument at hand. The ethos of the writer must then embody the ethos of the moderator whose ability to gain the participants' trust is achievable only through the accurate and fair representation of others' voices. In this way, the writer as town hall meeting moderator re-directs the energy of agonism in order to serve the interests of a community of minds, rather than satisfy the self-interests of a few.

CHAPTER TWO

The Listening-Oriented Writer

<u>Setting the Stage</u>

Imagine walking into a crowded room where everyone has gathered to address an issue of concern. Perhaps the issue is a local matter for a town, a school, or a club. Its impact has a confined effect on the immediate community, but the consequences also prove immensely important for how others perceive this community from the outside. Perhaps, even, the issue has been presented to this group once before, but recent developments have resurrected the matter again. The degree of concern varies from one individual to the next, but all participants who gather wish to express their views. As the meeting commences, several leaders—or a leader—outline the main tenets of the problem before the crowd. Tension fills the air as the audience prepares itself for a lengthy debate about a problem that seemingly has no satisfactory solution. Heavy sighs, awkward shifting, and an unmistakable unease fill the room. The floor opens for members of the audience to speak and participants clamor for their turn. At this point, familiar rhetorical structures are put in motion, much like those outlined by Richard Coe: "Rhetorical structures are prepared ways of responding, frozen in synchronicity. They embody our social memory of standard strategies for responding to types of situations we encounter repeatedly" (83). One by one, those who wish to make their voices heard take their turn with a driving thought in mind: "What do I want to say?" Other participants at the meeting are also thinking, "What do I want to say…once it is my turn to address the audience?" A pause is taken only when someone wishes to interrupt, raise a

counterpoint, or escalate their voice so as to overtake the speaker's. The wish to speak—to point out flaws or refute a point—reaches a near fever pitch. Order breaks down as voices rise, and the only sound available to listen to is that all too familiar one of argument.

The Power and Limitations of Voice

For quite some time, expressive voice has played a central role in composition studies. Within feminist pedagogy, voice has been an important heuristic as a means of consciousness raising and identifying oneself as separate and distinct from patriarchy (Fulkerson 666). As Catherine Lamb further explains in "Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition," "Current discussion of feminist approaches to teaching composition emphasizes the writer's ability to find her own voice through open-ended, exploratory, often autobiographical, writing in which she assumes a sympathetic audience" (11). Expressive voice additionally concerns itself with cultivating the "'writer's presence,'" with voice functioning as a kind of ethos (Fulkerson 668). Developing a voice is also seen as deeply connected to discovering one's self via writing (Fulkerson 668). Within a cultural studies framework, expressive voice seeks to reclaim or recoup marginalized voices of minority groups previously eclipsed by a hegemonic voice (hooks 16). Thus, the development of, identification with, and reclamation of voice has occupied a culturally necessary and theoretically sound means of supporting goals within personal writing and process pedagogy. Within the context of argument (both oral and written), however, voice has functioned in intrusive ways (i.e., interrupting a variety of voices) and in symbolic ways as a voice that explicitly and/or implicitly dominates other voices by aggressively silencing them.

Considering this very brief history of voice within composition studies, let us consider its primacy and its impact on ways of shaping argument. Why is it so culturally and pedagogically imperative to express oneself first and then (maybe) listen after? In her article "Rhetorical Listening," Krista Ratcliffe assigns "speaking" third among "the dominant tropes of interpretive invention," with reading and writing occupying the first two spots. Indeed, I would suggest that at times and in certain contexts, speaking functions as a forceful and often misguided act. Such verbal aggression is an outgrowth of the argument culture, but it also manifests itself in a variety of written contexts like blogs where the "anonymous voice" can be as aggressive and insulting as it wants without fear of any rhetorical repercussions. Debates also showcase—and often even encourage—verbal sparring whereby the dominant voice supposedly signals the truth. The speaking voice can thus be seen as concomitant with how Lamb defines "monologic argument": "the way most (all?) of us were taught to conceptualize arguments: what we want comes first, and we use the available means of persuasion to get it, in, one hopes, ethical ways" (13). Yet prioritizing speaking over listening within rhetoric and composition does not ensure using persuasion in ethical ways; in fact, subsuming the important process of listening can radically threaten an ethical treatment of rhetorical exchanges.

How differently—i.e., how much more ethically—the aforementioned town meeting scene would look if the guiding and dominant action were to listen, rather than to speak, react, make assumptions, draw premature conclusions, or anticipate the worst possible outcome. What if the basic tenet of such meetings—such arguments—was to secure a solution for the good of the whole determined by the careful consideration of as

many productive voices as possible—voices that were all genuinely listened to? Would

this approach not support argument in more ethical ways? Such careful consideration

would be predicated on attentive, active listening where thoughtfulness would precede

judgment. Is such a scene imaginable? If so, might we prepare ourselves in the

composition classroom?

'Listening Is Not a Simple Matter'

In 1951, nearly sixty years ago, *College English* published a short piece by Ken

Macrorie entitled "Teach Listening?" The question seems to suggest both the absurd—as

in, 'Why would teachers bother to instruct students on listening?'—and the possible—

'Can we actually teach listening?' Macrorie focuses on the latter by positing the

following question: "Can't we keep one ear free for the sounds that might titillate our

eardrum or inform our minds?" The latter half of his question gains ground when he

issues a call to action for communications teachers:

> train them [students] to good habits of listening so they will come to a
> discussion (which is supposed to be an interchange of ideas, not a barroom
> brawl), intending to learn with other people. They can try to take the best
> from other men, and, if the others have nothing intelligent to say, they can
> learn from listening to them what not to do and what not to say. (222)

Both the presence of opportunities to "learn with other people," as well as the absence or

dearth of good ideas (i.e., when "the others have nothing intelligent to say") comprise the

core of "good habits of listening." Anticipating the argument culture that currently

structures our ways of communicating, Macrorie captures the "barroom brawl"

atmosphere of rhetoric and persuasion today in the following description:

> I never once saw two arguing opponents learn anything. They always took home the same opinion they brought with them, only the concrete was hardened a little more in the mold. They came away with one of two ideas: either not to speak at all, and thus avoid making fools of themselves, or to speak and make fools of other people. (221)

Turning our attention away from dichotomies and binaries (i.e., "two ideas") inherent in the literal and figurative environment of a "barroom brawl" involves listening if we are to use communication as an opportunity for meaning-making. Furthermore, by depicting ourselves and positioning others as "fools," we only preclude the actualization of a community of minds. Keeping our ear attuned "for the sounds that might titillate" or pique our curiosity is essential in order to participate in a "give-and-take" or reciprocal discussion. Such discussions, Macrorie suggests, usually feature more "giving" in the form of interruption and not listening to the other. For example, we typically only give our opinion and take nothing away from the other person's perspective, and this is where we find the expressive voice most intrusive in true deliberation. Listening is a tool that readily provides two or more individuals with a more authentic give-and-take approach to communication.

Lamb cites Sara Ruddick who expounds on this idea, albeit in the context of "maternal thinking" rather than listening. Nevertheless, Ruddick's observation is equally applicable to understanding the role listening should play in rhetorical exchanges: "individuals or groups in unequal relationships do not have to resort to violence to resolve conflicts. Making peace in this context requires both 'giving and receiving while remaining in connection'" (Lamb 16). Listening can function as that connective bridge between the natural give-and-take in a rhetorical exchange. We can give our attention to

someone by listening respectfully and inquisitively; we can then take away valuable insights and different perspectives from what they have to say. With listening as the primary goal, we are more conscious of *not* simply giving our opinion and taking nothing away in return. If the other participant in the conversation returns the same give-and-take, then a dynamic of reciprocity opens up to fully pursue a free exchange of ideas.

Some attention to listening as a teachable skill appears in academic journals in the 1950s. "Can We Really Teach Listening?" appeared in the *College Composition and Communication* journal in 1956. Though it seems to swiftly yet affirmatively answer this question, it fails to detail how to develop a specific pedagogy around listening. Rather, it focuses attention on the ways in which the development of listening skills were supposedly evident: "In school, and within the classroom, are recitations, oral reports, panel discussions, oral readings of literature, dramatations, disk and tape recordings, radio and TV programs in the classroom…" (167). Other sources focus on the pairing of listening with reading and rhetoric: "Besides skill in listening and a knowledge of current news and opinion, students should expect to develop a recognition of the qualities of a good commentator and the ability to judge whether a commentator is authoritative and responsible or inaccurate, sensational and vituperative" (509-510)[11]. And still other sources seemed to construct a defense of listening, as evident by the title of Eva Moore's article "Listening Is a Skill" in *The English Journal*. These sources presumed that listening was a vital skill necessary to the development of students' cognitive and critical development, as evident by the following passage: "Listening is not a simple matter. One listens for different purposes. These different purposes call for different skills" (379).

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[11] "Critical Reading and Listening." Blance E. Peavey. *The English Journal*. 43-9, 1954.

Yet what these skills are and how we might teach them are points left unexplored and which demand our attention today.

Why Listen Now?

By the time students enter college, listening is taken almost completely for granted and subsumed under other skills like reading, writing, and speaking.[12] As Ratcliffe observes, "the dominant trend in our field has been to follow the lead of popular culture and naturalize listening—to assume it is something that everyone does but no one need study" (196). In an article that debates the merits of listening (via audiobooks) as an authentic form of reading, Stephen Towey and Helen Cota prove Ratcliffe's point well: "Human beings have been talking and listening to each other for at least 50,000 years. We've been reading and writing for around 7,000 or 8,000 years. People don't have to be taught to listen. Reading is a different, more complex activity than listening." Ratcliffe's clear distinction between listening and reading serves as an appropriate response to Towey and Cota's claim since Ratcliffe does not qualify listening as "a kind of reading." Instead, she insists:

> I am talking about interpretive invention, a way of meaning making with/in language, with two different kinds being reading and listening. For if listening is to be revived and revalued in our field, it must occupy its own niche. Rather than by subsumed by reading, it should rank as an equal yet intertwining process of interpretive invention, for sometimes the ear can help us see just as the eye can help us hear. (202)

The more pressing question with which to frame this issue is: What is lost by only speaking? What is lost by not listening? In a recent article, David Dudley observes, "We

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[12] Krista Ratcliffe. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a 'Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct.'" CCC 51.2, December 1999. 195.

tweet, we text, we e-mail. Everybody's chatting, but is anybody listening?" (63) My

students would answer "no" since many of them have remarked over the years, "No one

listens to anyone anymore." Dudley goes on to cite author Daniel Menaker who recalls

"the golden age of conversation in the preindustrial era, among the salons and

coffeehouses of 18th-century Europe" when talking helped "to hone new ideas, soothe

political passions, and generally weld together a civil society" (64). It seems almost

paradoxical and perplexing to ask: If speaking has been and continues to be so highly

prized, why isn't listening? After all, why speak at all unless someone is listening to

you? The answer returns us to monologic argument where "what we want comes first,"

and the only way (allegedly) to get what we want is to voice it.

<u>Listening and the Liberatory Voice</u>

If recent examples of town meetings and political debates have shown anything, it

is that there is nothing natural about listening, nothing normal or automatic or

intrinsically understood about this particular skill and principle. For students, the kind of

listening that takes place in such town meetings, as well as the kind of listening modeled

in the media, is deplorable and often doesn't even resemble the kind of authentic listening

taught at a young age. Ratcliffe points out how, "listening has almost ceased to be

theorized or taught as a rhetorical strategy" (196). This leaves us with a glaring gap in

the teaching and learning of such an imperative skill. Further, this absence is glaringly

obvious in the composition classroom and in current practices of communication today.

How exactly should we—and how might we best—teach listening? More

importantly, how can students learn to listen and then actively practice it as a way of

meaning-making, a way of producing more nuanced writing, and a way of constructing

arguments grounded in a more reciprocal approach? Answers to such questions appeared

to surface in the 1980s and 1990s, a period that witnessed a specific emphasis on finding

and liberating one's voice via cultural studies. Ratcliffe points to Phelan, Lunsford, and

Vitanza as scholars who explored listening as ways of identifying voice in narratives,

recuperating or reclaiming silenced voices (particularly those of women and minorities),

and "questioning the logos," respectively (196). Other efforts began to treat writing as a

way of "finding your own voice."[13] Expressing "your own voice," however, assumes a

willing audience whereby both sets of participants, both the speaker and listener, will

benefit. In *Talking Back*, bell hooks explains, "Awareness of the need to speak, to give to

the varied dimensions of our lives, is one way women of color begin the process of

education for critical consciousness" (13). Indeed, Ratcliffe's objective is to explore how

rhetorical listening "may help us to hear discursive intersections of gender and

race/ethnicity (including whiteness) so as to help us to facilitate cross-cultural dialogues

about any topic" (196). Reclaiming and situating voice within such "cross-cultural

dialogues" and harnessing voice for "critical consciousness" are genuinely important

endeavors. Yet as hooks astutely reminds us, and as I have tried to suggest earlier, the

expression of voice (i.e., persuading another to hear you) is not all that matters; what

matters just as greatly is whether or not that voice is listened to.

In the following passage, hooks demonstrates how the marginalized voice can be

misused and even misappropriated:

> Appropriation of the marginal voice threatens the very core of self-
> determination and free self-expression for exploited and oppressed

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[13] Donald Murray, "Finding Your Own Voice: Teaching Composition in an Age of Dissent." *CCCC* (May, 1969): 118-123.

peoples. If the identified audience, those spoken to, is determined solely
by ruling groups who control production and distribution, then it is easy
for the marginal voice striving for a hearing to allow what is said to be
overdetermined by the needs of that majority group who appears to be
listening, to be tuned in.

In this respect, listening functions as a performance, a mere show to appease the speaker;

when this occurs, the speaker's power via the expressive voice can be co-opted by the

hegemonic voice. The result of the purely expressive voice can be "social frameworks

that reinforce domination," and thus contribute to the fragmentation of knowledge cited

by Spellmeyer. Actualizing the "liberatory voice" is hooks's call to action: "The struggle

to end domination, the individual struggle to resist colonization, to move from object to

subject, is expressed in the effort to establish the liberatory voice" (15).[14] Unlike the

expressive, empowered, or "found" voice, the liberatory voice is an active form of

resistance that demands "we learn to talk—to listen—to hear in a new way" how to listen

to others (15). As hooks explains, "Certainly for black women, our struggle has not been

to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech,

to make a speech that *compels listeners*, one that is heard" [my italics] (6). To be clear, I

have no intention of dismissing or minimizing voice in composition studies. Perhaps,

though, we need to pay more careful attention to hooks's treatment of voice as liberatory

in order to refocus speaking as a rhetorical act whose effect is largely determined by

those who receive (i.e., listen to) it and interpret it. I argue that we need to employ the

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[14] See Lamb's citation of Bakhtin on page 15 when she notes: "In discussing Dostoyevsky's world view,
Bakhtin says its governing principle is 'To affirm someone else's 'I' not as an object but as another
subject'" (15).

framework of a town meeting as a means by which we can listen to the liberatory voice in order to "change the nature and direction of our speech."

While I do not wish to undermine earlier efforts by those concerned with voice and those concerned with listening, I do wish to highlight how my interest in examining listening as a teachable and learned skill differs from Ratcliffe's definition of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe asserts: "I want to suggest that rhetorical listening may be imagined, specifically, as what Jacqueline Jones Royster has called a 'code of cross-cultural conduct'" (196). Instead of focusing on how listening within intersections of gender and race/ethnicity can afford "interpretive invention," my interest is rooted in identifying ways for students to become listening-oriented writers.

The Listening-Oriented Writer

Though Rogerian rhetoric will serve as the central theoretical structure for the remainder of this chapter, I will draw also on feminist rhetoric as outlined by Catherine Lamb, as well as germane rhetorical theory from Chaim Perelman to unearth important commonalities. Previously, many feminists have rejected Rogerian argument as an alternative to traditional argument on the grounds that it is "feminine rather than feminist" and "has always felt too much like giving in" (Lamb 17). In other words, some feminist rhetoricians fear Rogerian argument assigns women to a weak and passive role that is subservient to a patriarchal voice or text. Others fear Rogerian rhetoric runs the risk of "giving in" to unwanted compromise.[15] However, my aim is to demonstrate the compatibility of Rogerian rhetoric with feminist approaches, as well as its alignment with

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[15] Lamb further points to Phyllis Lassner among those who cite "the difficulties of using Rogerian argument" (17).

Peter Elbow's "believing game" and Wayne Booth's "listening-rhetoric." By examining the values and strategies of listening available within Rogerian rhetoric and these related approaches, I wish to offer a guide for how students can become listening-oriented writers engaged in deliberative discourse. These approaches, all rooted in Rogerian rhetoric, emphasize listening and afford us a more "human perspective" that fully support deliberative discourse at the core of non-adversarial argument.[16]

I define the listening-oriented writer as reflective, inquisitive, and curious; he considers first, asks questions second, and responds last, if at all. His over-arching goal is to understand other positions and interests cooperatively, *not* to aggressively convince his audience that his position is right. The composition classroom as a metaphorical town meeting is conducive to developing these skills of self-reflection, critical and sustained inquiry, and intellectual curiosity. Listening fixes the listening-oriented writer's attention on a particular task (to accomplish something—to answer the question "what should we do?") while considering a variety of claims and sifting through them for the best possible solution, outcome, or course of action. Listening distances the writer from hot-tempered reactions, impulsive shouting, and antagonizing tactics. The listening-oriented writer practices such lessons and skills within the framework of a town meeting as an active *subject*, a co-deliberator, and then extends that model to his prose by adopting the role of a moderator.

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[16] "Responses to Catherine E. Lamb's 'Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition.' Julie M. Farrar, Laurence E. Musgrove, Donald C. Stewart, Wayne Cosby. *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (dec., 1991), 493-498. Specifically see Cosby, 498.

Wayne Booth's Listening-Rhetoric

In his conclusion to *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004), Wayne Booth poses the following query: "Can anyone really question my repeated claim that the quality of our lives, moment by moment, depends on the quality of our rhetoric?" Booth's query raises the possibility of viewing rhetoric as a social justice endeavor, where the means by which we communicate with one another determine and affect the quality of our lives as individuals and communities. Ratcliffe speaks to the potential for treating listening as a way of doing social justice: "listening, I argue, may help us invent, interpret, and ultimately judge differently in that perhaps we can hear things we cannot see. In this more inclusive logos lies a potential for personal and social justice" (203). Valuing inclusiveness by listening to other voices gives us the opportunity to advocate for ourselves and others from rhetorical positions. And while academics would probably respond affirmatively and even enthusiastically to Booth's injunction and see great value in listening as a way of doing social justice, the real question we need to ask ourselves is: How can we convince our students to genuinely believe in and commit themselves to the idea that the quality of their lives depends on the quality of their rhetoric and the rhetoric which surrounds them? How can we show them that the quality of their rhetoric depends on their willingness to become a listening-oriented writer?

One way in which the quality of our lives is diminished by rhetoric is what Booth bemoans as "rhetrickery." In the same vein as Deborah Tannen, he observes: "Rhetoric is the cheap, immoral, tricky way to change *other* people's minds and thus win the

argument, regardless of where *true* reasoning would lead" (379).[17] Changing other

people's minds—or trying to change others' minds—points to speaking (via the

expressive or aggressive voice) as the dominant action in a rhetorical exchange like

argument. Booth defines this mode as "rhetrickery," but it also coincides with his

description of "win-rhetoric." Both writer and listen are reduced to *objects* of

rhetrickery, not as *subjects* engaged in producing a shared analysis of a text or topic. For

example, if my only aim is to change *your* mind, then it will only serve *my* interests to

speak *my* mind and convince you that *my* way of seeing things is the right one. As part of

this aim, I have no interest in listening to your perspective since that might change, alter,

or threaten my own. Yet Perelman reminds us that "Argumentation is intended to act

upon an audience, to modify an audience's convictions or dispositions through discourse,

and it tries to gain a meeting of minds instead of imposing its will through constraint or

conditioning" (11). This meeting of minds is central to moving beyond win-rhetoric and

embracing listening-rhetoric, as I will show below.

Booth distinguishes three different types of rhetoric (win-rhetoric, bargain-

rhetoric, and listening-rhetoric), pointing to the inherent value systems of each one.[18]

Win-rhetoric approaches an issue from a pre-determined stance, grounded in

justifications and decorated with intentions of integrity; here, a premium is placed on

winning the argument at whatever cost. In such a scenario, listening would be feigned in

order to appease the speaker that what he has verbalized has been acknowledged. In fact,

though, no validation of the other side takes place because the speaker wants to win the

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[17] "Blind Skepticism versus a Rhetoric of Assent." *College English*, 67.4, March 2005. 378-388.
[18] *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, Booth.

argument. Though bargain-rhetoric may not appear as deceptive as win-rhetoric, it can nevertheless prove just as harmful if the rhetor submits to part of the opposing view in the spirit of compromise, or simply relinquishes a kind of power in the *hope* of producing a productive dialogue. As Booth explains, "Bargain-rhetoric will be judged bad, whether the cause is right or wrong, if the methods, the arguments, the style, are weak and the true purpose concealed or abandoned" (46). In general, I fear that our students often employ this kind of rhetoric since it satisfies the academic expectations of their teachers, yet also keeps them fixed within a particular rhetorical domain, evading the difficult work of deliberation (questioning, probing, considering, investigating, etc.). In short, bargain-rhetoric, like the aggressive voice, values writing as performance, allowing students to demonstrate stylistically sound writing skills without interrogating and relinquishing their beliefs.

Listening-rhetoric aims at a more specific method of "genuine listening that [does] not naively surrender" and thus affords the writer greater *subjectivity* (386). Booth describes listening-rhetoric as follows: "both sides join in a trusting dispute, determined to listen to the opponent's arguments, while persuading the opponent to listen in exchange. Each side attempts to think about the arguments presented by the other side…Both sides are pursuing not just victory but a new reality, a new agreement about what is real" (46-47). Paramount to Booth's scenario is the means by which listening becomes a reciprocal act: I listen to you and then you listen to me out of a shared sense of respect and in the spirit of engaging together in a "trusting dispute." The adjective "trusting" signals a certain level of vulnerability but also points to a "necessary evil" (Warren). In other words, it suggests that an element of trust must exist in any dispute or

debate if anything productive is to be accomplished. What proves useful in Booth's

definition is his acknowledgement that when both sides come together to listen, to think,

and to move towards negotiation, "a new reality" emerges—one that would undoubtedly

move more towards personal wholeness and change in perspective. This new reality

includes a new way of seeing the world from multiple perspectives, not just from a binary

perspective. This new reality emerges by employing listening-rhetoric as a means of

cooperation.

Listening-rhetoric demands a great deal of rhetoricians and arguers, as Booth

demonstrates in his own reflection on the matter: "When I'm quarreling with someone,

how do I get myself to listen, really listen, to his or her case, at its deepest levels? How

do I get my opponent to listen to me?" The immediate goal, then, is not to change

someone else's mind but to remain open to a multiplicity of voices. To achieve this end,

Booth seeks to uncover the "shared ground that would be discovered if opponents really

listened to one another" (385). For Booth, this effort lies somewhere between the

extremes of dogmatism and skepticism within the "rhetoric of assent."

In exploring the extremes of dogmatism and skepticism, Booth encourages

students to move beyond holding fast to one position (typical of dogmatists) and beyond

doubting everything (typical of skeptics). Booth defines such extremists in the following

terms: "It is the utter skeptics and extreme dogmatists who are naively gullible" (388).

We might imagine dogmatists as those who engage in active adversarialism (i.e., those

who valiantly cling to one position and strive to defend it); and we might imagine

skeptics as those who dwell in passive isolation (i.e., those who remain distant and

disengaged). Dogmatism, according to Booth, devalues authentic listening as it tells us,

"'Don't bother to listen; you know in advance that they [the other side(s)] have nothing to say worth saying'" (380). Similarly, skepticism views listening as ineffectual because, "Close listening often leads to doubt, or even hard proof that the opponent is deceptive or mistaken" (379). Yet when situated in a rhetoric of assent, listening, according to Booth, holds great power in moving beyond both skepticism and dogmatism:

> What do such classroom practices have to do with the conflict between utter skepticism and rabid dogmatism? Well, isn't it obvious that utter skeptics don't really listen because they know that no argument can really shatter their skepticism? And isn't it obvious that rabid dogmatists don't listen because they already know that the opponent is wrong? *Really listening can shatter both extremes*. [my emphasis] (387)

Great promise exists, therefore, in listening and in cultivating the ear of the listening-oriented writer because the development of listening as a skill can increase free inquiry and trust among participants. The more comfortable participants in a discussion feel about asking questions of each other and probing the issue further, the greater opportunity there is to achieve understanding.

Real listening, as Booth cites I.A. Richards, produces the kind of rhetoric that relies on "the art of removing misunderstanding" (379). Once misunderstanding has been reduced or eliminated, we might imagine the emergence of a clearer understanding. Ratcliffe defines understanding as "standing under—consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others, while consciously acknowledging all our particular and fluid standpoints. Standing under discourses means letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (205). In this context, we can re-imagine the "power relationships available to a writer and her readers" with which Lamb and other feminist rhetoricians are

concerned (11). Listening shifts power dynamics from phallocentric persuasion to the

task of gaining clarity and understanding. Further, developing the ability to listen closely

paves the way for our increased ability "to offer a response that will in turn be listened

to" (Booth 379). Listening is part of assenting to the other person you are arguing with; it

does not overtly entail a gendered subservience to the patriarchal voice. Instead, it leads

us to the question: "When should I assent to your argument, your case, your claims, and

when should I go on resisting…?" (379) In other words, when should I listen as a way to

open myself up to the possibility of changing my mind? And when (if at all) should I

refuse to listen—or not listen closely—in order to preserve or protect my current position

when I do identify an attempt at subverting my voice? In short, a "rhetoric of assent"—

supported by moves from Rogerian rhetoric—positions listening as a way to open one's

mind instead of closing it off.

<u>Listening & Rogerian Rhetoric</u>

Maxine Hairston offers one of the most compelling definitions of Rogerian

rhetoric: "the underlying premise of what we call Rogerian rhetoric is 'that we are more

likely to establish real communication with people, especially on sensitive or

controversial issues, if we give up traditional, legalistic kinds of arguments and use a

non-threatening approach based on shared concerns and common goals'" (qtd. by Coe

88-89). The term "non-threatening" may, on the surface, suggest a certain kind of

weakness; if one agrees not to threaten the other, does that increase their vulnerability? If

listening is added into the mixture, how can one possibly defend oneself and one's

argument? This approach runs the risk of placing women in a traditionally passive role

as listeners and men in a traditionally aggressive role as speakers or text producers.

However, I would like to point out that while communication and discourse are certainly gendered in some ways, the act of listening at a fundamental level is independent of gender constructs. Physical disabilities aside, both men and women have the ability to listen. In reality, neither men nor women are adept at this skill because it has been subverted to reading, writing, and speaking. The framework of the town hall meeting, however, can function as a space in which to establish "shared concerns and common goals." It functions as a literal ground where many concerns can be presented, and as a symbolic ground that keeps power from assuming a dominant, patriarchal role.

Lamb defines power "in a common-sense way as the ability to affect what happens to someone else" (15). The democratic nature of the town hall meeting coincides with how some feminist theorists "view power not as a quality to exercise on others, but as something which can energize, enabling competence and thus reducing hierarchy" (15). Aside from the role of a moderator who may organize and guide the discussion, a town hall meeting consists of relatively equal participants. This egalitarian view supports true deliberation, recalling the *polis* in classical Greece that Lamb examines in the context of Hannah Arendt's work on this subject. The central characteristic of the *polis*, according to Arendt, is "'the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together'" (15). Lamb continues by explaining, "Power maintains this space in which people act and speak: no single person can possess it…It 'springs up' when people act together and disappears when they separate. This sort of power is limitless; it can, therefore, 'be divided without decreasing it, and the interplay of powers with their checks and balances is even liable to generate more power'" (15). As noted in chapter one, the space and context out of which discourse grows is crucial to re-

imagining argument as a non-adversarial method. The town hall framework is, indeed, a

rhetorical space in which participants act and speak together, in which no one individual

reigns with supreme authority, and where participants can "check" each others' power if

necessary.

Carl Rogers' work, as Coe points out, is not concerned with strategies of

defending oneself against power maneuvers; instead, he invites a diplomatic approach

that emphasizes ethical-minded behavior as opposed to purely rhetorical behavior,

shifting our focus away from gendered discourse and more towards understanding

listening as a skill: "For Rogers, the essence of Rogerian rhetoric is its purpose, not its

techniques. He defines Rogerian communication in terms of its goals (i.e., ethically), not

in terms of its strategies (i.e., not rhetorically)" (88). Listening thus becomes an ethical

goal at the heart of deliberative discourse, whereby the end result is not to change

another's mind and not to just simply understand the other person's position; the end

result—which is still part of Rogerian rhetoric's ongoing process—is to demonstrate a

"nonjudgmental acceptance of the other person's feelings" (Coe 88). Perhaps listening is

not the only way to achieve this acceptance, but it is certainly one of the best ways that

we are capable of as humans.

The "restatement rule" lies at the heart of Rogerian rhetoric and also at the core of

listening. Coe explains: "Rogers' own expertise is as a therapist, and the model for the

crux of Rogerian persuasion is the 'restatement rule' he created for group therapy: 'you

can't state your point until you can restate your opponent's *to his satisfaction*' (Teich,

1985, emphasis added)" (87). Restating the opponent's position does not simply require

verbal articulation, however. It requires and relies on the discerning ear of a willing

listener—one who is able to identify nuance, motive, interests, and concerns in the speaker and then mirror those back accurately. It requires further inquiry, if necessary, to clarify points of confusion, request additional information, and further expand upon an idea so that the listener can restate the argument fairly and from a place of good will. This scenario, of course, assumes a willing listener. But we cannot avoid the question: How do you produce a willing listener versus a performative listener? It is seemingly easy to restate what another has said verbatim. As Peter Elbow points out, "merely listening carefully or refraining from arguing with unwelcome ideas is not enough" (392).[19] Perelman's concern with persuasion, the adherence of the audience, and the universal audience within "new rhetoric" may serve as a roadmap in how to cultivate the willing listener.

The Willing Listener & the Role of Audience

The willing listener commits himself to the multifarious processes of argument via deliberation. Deliberation does not function as a linear point/counter-point/refute method. It extends beyond viewing "rhetoric as a terminating transaction" (Johnstone).[20]

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[19] Michiko Kakutani, in her essay "Debate? Dissent? Discussion? Oh, Don't Go There!", cites an Amherst student's article titled "The Silent Classroom" which suggested upperclassmen "tend to be guarded and private about their intellectual beliefs" (59). Though a seemingly minor point, it is important to note that silence does not automatically equate to listening. In other words, we should not assume that a silent classroom is attentively listening. More often, as this Amherst student notes, it tends to point to students who are "more reticent about public disputation" (59). Listening functions as an alternative to traditional methods of disputing ideas as opposed to a relativist mindset indicative of a "silent classroom."

[20] See Julie Farrar in "Responses to Catherine Lamb," specifically page 494. Farrar cites Lamb and philosopher Henry Johnstone, Jr. to highlight the following points about argument as a process. "Lamb points out that the goal of negotiation and mediation becomes different from that of monologic argument. Argument no longer emphasizes the end but rather the means (11); the goal no longer is to win the argument but instead to engage in the process of reaching a mutual decision (18). Philosopher Henry Johnstone, Jr. has earlier discussed such a shift from focus on ends to concern for means in his essay "Toward an Ethics of Rhetoric"…He attacks what he sees as "theories of rhetoric as a terminating transaction," ones which emphasize non-rhetorical ends (308). Playing off of Kant's Categorical

The willing listener does not espouse the desire of "I wish this debate/discussion/dialogue would end with me as the victor," but is rather guided by an ethos of "I want to keep participating as a way of learning and meaning-making." The willing listener is not concerned with producing or engaging in an argument as a means to ascertain or evoke a truth via persuasion. Gilbert explains "the 'Natural Light Theory,' which holds that when two views are pitted against each other, the true one will, *by virtue of its truth* come out the better" (6). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca reject this theory, disbelieving the premise that "convincing or persuading an audience in the course of an argument means that the view adopted must be the true one" (6). In other words, rhetorically effective persuasion does not equate to a true or superior position. Not concerned with formal persuasive strategies, Perelman's new rhetoric instead focused on "the ways in which the adherence of a particular audience may be increased through reason and argument" (6). In *The Realm of Rhetoric,* Perelman explains: "The aim of argumentation is not to deduce consequences from given premises; it is rather to elicit or increase the adherence of the members of an audience to theses that are presented for their consent. Such adherence never comes out of thin air; it presupposes a meeting of minds between speaker and audience" (9-10).

I interpret the "adherence of the audience" as maintaining the interest and attention of listeners who comprise your audience. Further, I argue that this adherence also denotes gaining the trust of the audience by adopting a necessary voice of authority. Trusting an authority is essential to the act of listening in the process of deliberation. In

Imperative, he defines an ethical rhetoric as one in which the argument encourages rather than impedes the capacity of an audience to persuade or be persuaded (310)."

his article "Deliberative Democracy and Authority," Mark Warren notes the role of authority as "a necessary evil" for practical and ideological purposes. Specifically, he notes the perhaps obvious though unstated idea that "many deliberative contexts will, as a practical matter, be closed to broad participation owing to their specialized discourses…While anyone can, perhaps, master a specialized discourse, no one can master all discourses. For any individual this leaves an enormous domain of trust in authorities" (46).[21] Within a classroom, teachers and students both know that limitless time and energy cannot be devoted to an exhaustive investigation into a given subject. Thus, it is impossible to master all discourses, a fact that *requires* the willing listener to place their trust—even momentarily and albeit cautiously—in some form of authority.

Understandably, feminist rhetoricians might reject such a view in that it presupposes a male voice as the authority. But what is important to keep in mind is that even though the speaker—male or female—establishes their voice as an authority in a particular deliberative context, it does not guarantee that this voice will be listened to if the authority (the speaker) does not gain the adherence of his/her audience. Thus, the speaker as authority must build and sustain trust in his audience in order to gain a receptive audience willing to listen to his/her ideas. Lamb supports this point by asserting, "The speaker, in constructing an enthymeme, must take the audience into account since it is the audience who supplies the unstated premise. As Lloyd Bitzer says, the audience in effect persuades itself (408)" (15).

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[21] Ratcliffe cites Gemma Corradi Fiumara's claim that relates to Warren's acknowledgement of the inability to master all discourses. Ratcliffe notes: "as Fiumara suggests, listening maps out an entirely different space in which to relate to discourse: we may become 'apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse'" (203). Viewing ourselves as apprentices versus masters further dismantles a gendered hierarchy in composition and listening rhetoric.

Elbow frames the issue of trust and authority a bit differently, though in a related way, as a safety issue: "most speakers feel unsafe if they sense we are just waiting to jump in with all our objections. But we need safety just as much for listeners who are, after all, trying to learn to be more skilled at in-dwelling or believing" (395). As Michael Gilbert explains: "the concepts of 'adherence' and 'audience' go hand in hand" (6). Here is where Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are concerned with the realization of a community of minds: "That community is constructed by the speaker, and it is the adherence of that audience that the speaker seeks. Each audience has its accepted beliefs and will honor certain modes of proof and argument" (Gilbert 6). If the speaker can achieve the adherence of his listeners (their interest and trust), then they will honor—or at least consider—the modes of proof and argument that the speaker presents.

Dennis Lynch also examines the important role of the audience, the listeners, by considering Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's focus on the role of the public sphere: "'It is indeed the audience which has the major role in determining the quality of argument and the behavior of orators'" (qtd. by Lynch 24). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca point to a range of social and psychological conditions necessary for argumentation to take place. The first condition is that there must be "agreement, in principle, on the formation of this intellectual community [of minds] . . . and, after that, on the fact of debating a specific question together." As noted earlier, the directive question "All interests considered, what should we do?" affords the necessary space for an audience to broadly address an issue of shared concern, unearthing their deeply-held and often different views in the process. This first condition aligns itself well with one of the distinctive features of Rogerian rhetoric: "The subject is introduced as a problem, not an issue. Thus it can be

treated as something we should work cooperatively to solve, not as something that divides" (Coe 93). Further, the "what should we do?" aspect supports Perelman's definition of argumentation as "inciting action, or at least at creating a disposition to act" (12). Perelman reminds us that "argumentation does not aim solely at gaining a purely intellectual adherence" (12); a willingness to act after showing a willingness to listen is also an end goal. The metaphor of a town meeting supports the idea of forming and realizing a community of minds guided by principles of listening and acting cooperatively.

Considering Perelman's idea of the universal audience is also central to understanding the willing listener as part of an audience. Perelman sees the universal audience as "a construct that represents the widest and most discerning audience to which one might address an argument" (Gilbert 7). Here I would like to make the important distinction between the universal audience and the sympathetic audience, which I previously quoted from Lamb's article. Initially, we might imagine the sympathetic audience to be more fair-minded and willing to listen to our ideas. Yet it is important to note how Lamb—and many feminist rhetoricians—see the feminist writer as producing writing "in which she *assumes* a sympathetic audience" [my italics] (11). Though ideally we would like to make this assumption, in reality this assumption of receiving sympathetic treatment proves more of a hope than a guarantee. The listening-oriented writer must therefore imagine the universal audience by constructing arguments "acceptable to the widest possible group," not merely to an ideal audience (one that is favorable, enthusiastic, and responsive) or a homogenous group of supporters that already

share in the speaker's view. Instead, the universal audience must be treated as a group of people with disparate interests and potentially conflicting points of view.

Empathetic Listening

To work through conflicting points of view, the speaker can benefit by practicing dispassionate evaluation via Booth's idea of a "listening debate." In the spirit of Rogerian rhetoric, Booth uses an example of two students (Ken and Marna) with opposing views to show how a "listening debate" necessitates the question: "have you understood her, and has she understood you?" Booth explains the consequences of constructing this kind of debate:

> After Ken's second try, turn to Marna again. 'Has he understood you?' If she says no, ask her why not. After she answers ask Ken if he understands her objection. And so on. Once Ken has convinced Marna that he has actually listened to her well enough to serve as her lawyer in a courtroom, even though he may still disagree with her, turn to Marna and get her to attempt making Ken's case in the same way. (387)

The goal is not only to represent the opposing view accurately and fairly, but to demonstrate a keen understanding of the other person's position. As Coe explains, "Rogerian writers demonstrate both empathy and respect for opposing views before presenting their own" (93).[22] Such understanding, which is visibly represented in an empathetic and respectful treatment of both the speaker and issue, lies at the heart of Peter Elbow's believing game which is "a repeated attempt to believe the ideas of one

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[22] Tannen reveals the keen lack of empathy and respect in graduate and professional training experienced by Judith Friedlander in the anthropology department at the University of Chicago in the early 1960s: "'Monday afternoons were sacred in the Department, a time for everyone to come together to listen to a colleague's work and to offer a response. After listening to the formal presentation, distinguished professors—who will remain nameless—performed acts of unimaginable academic aggression, usually on a visiting anthropologist from another institution, but sometimes on one of their own'" (1663). Despite purported "listening," the aim was to verbally attack another's work, rather than consider or deliberate it as part of a fruitful exchange.

person after another—to sleep with whatever idea comes down the pike" (393).

Essentially, the believing game helps "students learn a model of nonadversarial argument that is conceptually simple and obvious: argue *for*, not *against*" (397). This practice does not merely involve the resurrection of dialogue in rhetorical exchanges since dialogue limits itself to any kind of dyad. Instead, the believing game emphasizes empathetic understanding as a community—a community of minds, in fact—to achieve "maximum differentiation" (393). Lamb also identifies empathy, which she defines as "the ability to think or feel as the other," as a central part of the process by which we recognize and honor difference. Lamb offers this definition of empathy within the context of "maternal thinking", a context that includes "attentive love, or loving attention" (16). While I believe "love" may take us outside the more formal bounds of rhetoric and discourse, I do applaud and share in Lamb's definition of empathy as part of feminist composition given its near parallel structure to the role empathy plays in Rogerian rhetoric. Empathy in both contexts invites us to put ourselves fully in the other person's position while eliding common ground as an easy end goal.

Cooperative Listening

Just as in Rogerian rhetoric and feminist composition, agreement, compromise, or middle ground are not the goals of the believing game. Instead, cooperation is at the forefront of this endeavor. As Elbow explains, "Disagreement doesn't have to lead to fighting or an adversarial process if we *cooperate* in exploring divergent views. When people are asked to believe one idea after another, this tends to maximize the warfare of competing views *inside* each person's head; in this way we reduce the amount of warfare *between* persons" (393). Similarly, feminist pedagogy emphasizes "cooperation,

collaboration, [and] shared leadership," all core values of the town hall meeting (Lamb 11). Lamb points to negotiation and mediation as "cooperative approaches to resolving conflicts", whereby antagonists can resolve conflicts, locate stability, and clarify values and priorities (18). This process of negotiation and mediation parallels a Rogerian "willingness not only to listen but to try to understand" and "the recognition and acceptance of the fact that participants may emerge from the discussion no longer exactly the same at the end as they were at the beginning" (361). Negotiation and mediation thus weaken the power of opposition and antagonism that manifests itself in the argument culture. Instead, "this non-zero-sum model of argument assumes that two sides or views that appear to be in conflict or even logically contradictory might, in fact, both be right" (397). Lamb also identifies the futility of treating argument as a zero-sum game, reminding us how "A win-lose orientation encourages narrowness and a wish to use resources only for the goal one has already identified. Deutsch notes that the outcomes of a cooperative approach are those which encourage creative problem-solving: 'openness, lack of defensiveness, and full utilization of available resources' (363)" (19). Giving equal accordance and space to a variety of competing claims through creative problem-solving is at the heart of deliberative discourse in the town hall meeting framework.

Despite our best attempts at cooperation, Elbow points out that some students simply do not apprehend another's position: "If someone tries to see something from someone else's point of view, they will often succeed. But it's not always easy with a view we don't like. What if Ken has trouble seeing things from Marna's point of view? What if his every attempt to restate her position shows that he doesn't really get it?" (394) It is quite important for Ken to "get it" because this often marks the "turning

point" in Rogerian rhetoric: "a crucial structure in Rogerian persuasion is the turning

point, the transition to the presentation of the writer's position. If this transition is not

handled well, the audience will likely decide that all the preceding fair-mindedness was

just a devious rhetorical trick" (93). Failing to experience the transition thus produces

nothing more than rhetrickery. To avoid this trap, Elbow returns our attention to the

importance of space that I explored in chapter one. Just as I argue that applying the

metaphor of a town meeting to a classroom space can support deliberative discourse, so

does Elbow concur that "the classroom is a particularly apt place to work on this process

because, despite our commitment to critical thinking, most of us do want our students to

be good at entering into new ideas—particularly ideas that bother them" (394). Very

often, a town meeting serves that purpose: to put challenging issues on a figurative table

and delve into the difficult work of deliberation.

 If the above features of Rogerian rhetoric do not appear compelling enough to

students, it is important to remind them of what is often lost in many rhetorical spaces,

including actual town meetings: a promise. Coe explains,

> The Rogerian ending is not a reiteration but a promise; it explains what the
> audience/'opponent' has to gain by adopting at least some of what the
> writer advocates. Though it is founded on pathos in George Campbell's
> sense—it appeals to 'some desire or passion in the hearers'…it does not
> emphasize what modern textbooks call the 'emotional appeal.' In effect, it
> explicitly states the mutual purpose shared by rhetor and readers. (93)

Unlike agonistic discourse which renders traditional argument as a zero-sum game,

Rogerian rhetoric promises something—some tangible result or visible shift in

perspective—can be achieved that will point the audience, the listeners, in a new

direction. Notice, too, Coe's use of the word "advocate" to describe what the Rogerian writer tries to do—not argue, but advocate by appealing to the human desire to simply understand. It is not a de facto argument based on acquiescing or giving into the speaker's position, but rather it unveils the "mutual purpose" between speaker and listener. This purpose highlights what each party, or stakeholder, has to gain from adopting—at least imaginatively—the other's perspective.

Imagining the other perspective is at the core of Elbow's believing game, as he explains: "where doubting thrives on logic, assenting or believing thrives on the imagination and the ability to experience" (395); and, as previously shown, the "ability to experience" is at the core of Rogerian rhetoric. However, we know that we cannot literally experience another's point of view; we cannot relive their actions over or even duplicate them in real life. But we can participate in a story or narrative told by the speaker. Elbow explains, "Story, narrative, and poetry help with experiencing...When students have trouble entering into a new point of view (perhaps even just understanding it), I find it useful to ask them to harness language in ways like this: tell a story of someone who believes it; imagine and describe someone who sees things this way" (395). If the audience cannot "get it" by listening to the speaker tell the story, narrative still offers the audience a chance to remove themselves from the process by imagining how someone else would engage in the issue. As Lamb advises in her review of Jim Corder's work, we need to rely less on arguments as "forms" and "more on narratives that show who we are and what our values are" (18). Through narrative, this figurative representation affords a more objective perspective that the listening-oriented writer can more readily consider.

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Other Classroom Strategies for Listening Rhetoric

When the listening audience still fails to imagine a perspective different from their own, Elbow reminds us of the importance of listening in classroom activities like working in peer groups, and playing with(in) silence and voice. First, as Elbow explains: "As Booth and Carl Rogers both emphasize, sometimes the central and enabling thing that Ken must do is simply to stop talking and listen; keep his mouth shut" (395). Methods of ensuring such listening include "the three-minute or five-minute rule," "allies only—no objections," and "testimony" (395). The three-minute or five-minute rule can be enacted by a single student who does not believe he/she is being listened to. When this rule is in place, no one can talk for a specified length of time (three or five minutes), allowing the silenced voice to speak while the audience (the class) listens but does not reply. The "allies only" method gives individuals the opportunity to speak and participate in the discussion only if they are willing to assent to the minority view. Elbow notes that such a technique is popular with the act of brainstorming. "Testimony" supports an emphasis on personal narrative as a way to communicate values through sharing a particular experience. Lamb encourages narratives within feminist composition to "show who we are and what are values are" (18). Again, no speaking can take place during testimony, only listening.

Peer groups that follow a "no-arguing" guideline preserve a non-adversarial approach to learning, while keeping student writers focused on the text and not the author of that text. I have found success with this practice in peer-review workshops where students must offer constructive criticism through posing questions only, not by attacking weak parts of a paper; such questions are aimed to encourage the writer to consider other

ideas when revising their prose. While Elbow argues to "just listen" during peer groups,
I have found evidence that listening and then asking guiding questions can move the
writer away from writer-based prose and more towards deliberation with their own
writing.

Moments of pure silence, however, can be particularly useful. Silence suspends
voice in productive ways that allow one to listen not only to the writing voice of another,
but also to listen to their internal voice trying to make sense of competing claims. We
might imagine this internal voice as part of "self-deliberation" that Perelman considers:
"For some people, at once the most individualistic and rationalistic, self-deliberation
offers the model of sincere and honest reasoning, where nothing is hidden, no one is
deceived, and where one only triumphs over one's uncertainties. Pascal speaks of 'your
own assent to yourself, and the unceasing voice of reason" (14). If we can listen to our
own reasons, we can clarify our claims and achieve greater understanding. Ratcliffe
shows how "understanding means more than simply listening for a speaker/writer's
intent. It also means more than simply listening for our own self-interested
intent…Instead, understanding means listening to discourse not for intent but with intent"
(205).

Conclusion

As Andrea Lunsford points out, "one can see the entire first half of the Rogerian
structure as a means for 'getting the audience in the right frame of mind'" (qtd. by Coe
92). I argue that the metaphor of the town meeting lends itself effectively to producing
that right frame of mind for both the speaker and listener, the orator and writer.
However, I am under no delusions: students who practice Rogerian rhetoric as an

exercise may regress back to assertive tactics. Coe shares this concern when he reveals how students "tend to be Rogerian only through the first half—then they breathe a sigh of relief, shift to an assertive tone, present their position as strongly as they can, and thus destroy the Rogerian ethos" (92). The danger in this reflex reveals an inherent gender dynamic whereby the more dominant voice (typically associated with "traditional male rhetorical practice") assumes the more "assertive tone," placing Rogerian rhetoric (typically associated with "traditional female rhetorical practice") in a subservient position (Coe 92). Yet as I have hopefully shown, the compatible goals of Rogerian and feminist approaches reveal a shared set of values that include: (1) moving the writer from object to subject, (2) re-imagining power through voice and listening; (3) developing trust in authority and building trust with one's audience; (4) treating writing as a cooperative endeavor; (5) developing empathy in rhetorical exchanges; and (6) exploring varied perspectives that can support collective and cooperative aims. This value set moves us from monologic argument to non-adversarial argument, foregrounds listening as a teachable and learned skill, and serves as a call to revive the Rogerian ethos to prepare the listening-oriented writer for engaging in coalescent argumentation, an area I will focus on in chapter four.

CHAPTER THREE

Deliberative Discourse and Social Media

The form our students' writing takes in on-line spaces significantly shapes their lives and affects their academic writing. Based on my research and observations of social media—spaces typically not associated with academic writing like blogs, IM exchanges, and Facebook discussion forums—I have found evidence that students gain "rhetorical power" via these exchanges. They learn to harness their experiences into words, however brief and fleeting these might be, and are, in turn, shaped by that exchange. They think critically, question others' ideas in relation to their own, and arrive at new ideas via social discourse. Though perhaps unknowingly, they practice such skills in these forums on a near daily basis yet they hesitate to extend these practices to their academic writing since these skills are not as concrete as form and grammar, nor are they readily embraced as of yet in many academic settings. In short, the "argument culture" imparts a subliminal insistence on the traditional five-paragraph essay. This thesis-driven form best supports an unwavering, dogmatic argument which often does not allow for nuance, perspective, and collaboration that many student writers unconsciously exercise in various forms of social media.

While many educators, parents, critics, and academics point to technology as distracting or potentially problematic for today's students, my own observations in the composition classroom confirm what Susan Blum articulates most effectively: "In some ways this is the *wordiest* and most *writerly* generation in a long while. These students are writing all the time, reading all the time. Some of what they are writing and reading does not measure up to serious academic standards, but they are writing and reading all the

same, busily immersed in a world of words" (4). This chapter seeks to explore two main questions: (1) How can we harness and tap into this "world of words" that our students are busily engaged in, fanatically attached to, and totally at ease in? (2) How can we explore that "world of words," navigate this realm of active communication, and nurture a greater investment in academic writing within social networks?

I argue that the model of a town-hall meeting, where participants come together to work out solutions and enact action via deliberative democracy, can be enacted in online writing spaces. Such a model, practiced within the realm of blogs, instant-message exchanges, and Facebook forums, produces not only academic discourse, but also fosters writing communities. Specifically, students and instructors alike can practice writing in social media networks that mimics a town-hall model of deliberation and alternative argumentation. This model moves the student-writer from a writing subject to a deliberating agent and revises the way current pedagogical situations "make no attempt to put writers or readers in a concrete social situation" by inviting "dissent, discontinuity, and confrontational discourse" (Clifford 44). My call to action for students and instructors alike is to explore the potential of academic writing in social networks in order to foster writing communities and actively practice deliberative discourse.

At Lehigh University, evidence of both a live town meeting and its recorded version on Facebook demonstrate how the town hall meeting can function in pedagogically useful ways. On Tuesday, November 11, 2008, just a week after Barack Obama was elected the first black president of the United States, more than 300 people gathered in Perella Auditorium at Lehigh University to discuss recent acts of racism committed on campus. As writer Chris Knight explained in Lehigh's student newspaper

The Brown & White, "At least three racist acts have occurred since Obama swept the election on November 4, according to students at the meeting. Two of the racist acts occurred when people from passing cars yelled racial slurs at black female students." The third act of racism took place when a male student called a black freshman female "an ignorant black bitch" after witnessing her excitement over Obama's election. The central question which directly motivated and implicitly directed the agenda of the meeting was: "What do we do? What do we do about these most recent acts of racism? What do we do to protect our students? What do we do to eliminate racism on this campus as part of a long-term effort?" As a letter to the editor of *The Brown & White* confirmed, "many students and faculty shared their views on what to do" at this special town hall meeting. The concern with both response and action occupied the forefront of the meeting. As I will show, our students need to consider response and action in the process of both writing and deliberation in order to produce more nuanced, complex, and compelling arguments.

While I will return to this example of Lehigh's town hall meeting later in this chapter, it is important to explain how this event prompted my own thinking about the purpose of deliberation in the context of composition and rhetoric; this specific event significantly influenced the ways I saw new uses for accessing student writing and argumentation in on-line social spaces and how I see such social spaces intersecting in important ways with the model of the town hall meeting. Shortly after the meeting took place, members of a student organization called "The Movement" posted video clips from the town meeting on a group Facebook page titled "Lehigh Town Hall Meeting Video Clips." It occurred to me then that by sharing these clips, the ability to continue

dialoguing and communicating with one another remained a viable option, both for those who had attended the meeting and for those who had not attended the meeting. In addition, the video memorialized the event and allowed it to serve as a lasting educational resource. Those students who would follow in subsequent years could always return and view this event if and when future discussions or acts of racism prompted them to revisit such an important issue.[23] The availability of the video also made me realize that students could more freely connect with one another by joining the discussion on Facebook and even joining student groups related to dealing with these acts of racism. A virtual community had thus been born from a series of events that had initially proved divisive.

I then began to think of how a student could write about the overwhelming topic of racism, as many students did in the days surrounding these events. Some wrote memos circulated widely around campus, like one called "Reality Check!!!" Others wrote letters to the editor like Lehigh student, Benjamin Mumma. His letter was, in part, prompted by articles he had written as Associate Editor for *The Lehigh Patriot*, a politically conservative publication on campus. According to Mumma, "we need to look to Lehigh and see how we can prevent similar incidents in the future." Near his conclusion, he declares, "We should be better than this. Lehigh is not and should not be the liberal paradise many institutions of higher learning try to be. But Lehigh does need to be a place where anyone and everyone can come to learn and grow." This call to

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[23] While there was no way for me to foresee this at the time, the issue of racism would present itself again following an incident of blackface at a Halloween party in the fall of 2010. The ability to access this town hall meeting two years later proved educationally valuable for my freshmen students who had not witnessed nor known about Lehigh's recent history with addressing racism.

action struck me as a deeply compelling argument—one which had not been entirely

listened to amid the cacophony of voices at the live town hall meeting, a meeting which

many bemoaned had split its focus by calling for a range of actions outside those directly

related to the racist behavior of a few students. Acknowledging its research-oriented and

engineering-minded student body, Mumma honestly and unabashedly characterized

Lehigh as not "the liberal paradise" many colleges espouse to be. Instead, he identified

its core purpose as "a place where anyone and everyone can come to learn and grow."

Had this letter been written in one of my composition courses in response to a unit on

race, social change, or even education, for example, I would have qualified this statement

as Mumma's thesis.

In many ways, a thesis statement serves as the basic tenet of a writer's argument;

it can also more specifically function as a statement of action, for it is in this statement

that the writer typically asserts his position and influences his audience to consider,

adopt, or respond to a particular set of ideas. After making such an assertion—or perhaps

even during this process—the writer is also placed in the position of his audience,

prompting him (ideally) to wonder: 'Would I be willing to consider this position and

follow this course of action, this line of thinking, this reason of argument?' As Mumma's

letter indicates, he had asked himself the question, 'Am I willing to practice what I

preach?' so to speak. He spoke of his own role as a writer of *The Lehigh Patriot* when he

admitted:

> In what amounts to some bad timing, I did write an article which appeared
> in the Lehigh Patriot poking fun at several courses here at Lehigh, notably
> a new class titled 'Engendering 'Black' Popular Culture.' I realize in light
> of recent events that jokes made at the expense of that class could be seen
> as inflammatory. That was not my intent and I hope that my jokes can be

seen as a continuation of friendly banter between different majors at Lehigh.

In articulating such self-reflection, the writer took responsibility for his past actions, while revising his perspective and looking towards future ways to "healing racial divides here at Lehigh." Having taught freshmen and sophomores for eight years at Lehigh, I can testify that this was no small feat or admission for this student. In this way, the "thesis," or argument, I identified in Mumma's letter was all the more supported by taking responsibility for his actions and considering ways in which those actions had affected his previous audience, the readers of his *Lehigh Patriot* articles. His call to action, then, for "an open mind and a willingness to get to know a person before you judge them" was a genuine identification with his present audience's need for tolerance. By placing himself simultaneously in the role of both writer and audience, he had produced what John Gage calls "the reasoned thesis."

In his essay, "The Reasoned Thesis," Gage defines the implications of a thesis statement more fully, aligning his definition with thesis as both a position and a question:

> The 'thesis statement' is ordinarily taught as a structural aid but it can function more basically as an argumentative principle if it is seen not as a single reductive statement of a prerequisite 'main idea' but as a multipart statement that contains not only a central claim but central reasons for that claim as well, and that evolves as a response to a 'question at issue' as mutually defined by a writer and that writer's audience. (Emmel et. al 10)

In this way, the writer—as both writer and audience—seeks to posit a claim, locate evidence and support for the claim, and practice critical inquiry as a means of investigating the topic to both the satisfaction of the writer and his audience. In short, I argue that this approach to producing "a multipart statement" allows the writer to become that "site of contradiction" that Clifford argues we rarely witness (Harkin and Schilb, 39).

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Such "sites of contradiction" are manifested in town hall meetings where participants wrestle with difficult issues, seeking resolution but often facing complicated communication. As I continued to think about Lehigh's town hall meeting and its posted videos on Facebook, I began to consider how on-line forums can also serve as virtual sites of contradiction—social spaces where students can consider and revisit issues of conflict and tension, particularly over campus issues which are most prescient to them.

Before examining how the writer might function more effectively if positioned in "the site of contradiction," it is crucial to examine what Clifford means by this term. In using this phrase, Clifford reflects the conflict—though not necessarily an irresolvable one—between the expressive idea that the "individual writer is free…to be an authentic and unique consciousness" and the structuralist idea that "writers do not simply express themselves…but rather mirror a general and systematic pattern of oppositions common to all narratives, myths, or languages" (Harkin and Schilb 40). As Clifford goes on to explain, "poststructuralism, then, decenters writing as well as the self, seeing both not only as the effect of language patterns but as the result of multiple discourses already in place, already overdetermined by historical and social meanings in constant internal struggle" (40). Viewing the writer as a source of "multiple discourses" engaged in a "constant internal struggle" is certainly a postmodern view, though I would argue not as disabling as its connotations may suggest. Though Clifford points to Lacan to show how "the stability of writing and the fixity and coherence of the writer have been relentlessly challenged" since "the 'I' is split between the imaginary and the symbolic, between desire and the social order, between the signifier and the signified," all of this can actually be seen as empowering for writers that exist today in a hyper-textualized and

intextextual world. Such "instability" yields a multiple self, and nowhere is this multiple

self more evident than in on-line social spaces where electronic forms of communication

are practiced, and at times even preferred, over verbal face-to-face communication.

Though I classify this "world" as a "hyper-textualized" one, it is in fact the only kind of

world that our students have ever known. Those born after 1990 do not know of a world

without e-mail, instant messaging, cell phones, texting, the Internet, etc.[24]

    To return to my question of "How can we tap into that 'world of words' and

produce a realm of active communication out of which academic discourse can

(hopefully) grow?," I believe the answer, in part, lies in Blum's discussion of

intertextuality, authorship, and plagiarism. She argues that "all speech—including

writing—draws in some way from other texts and speakers. This interdependence of

words and ideas on prior sources is what we call 'intertextuality.'" What is even more

compelling about her discussion, though, is the move she makes to examine exchanges

much like those we witness in town hall meetings or in on-line social spaces and

networks. She asserts, "Any detailed look at real-life speech or writing shows that people

frequently utter or write words that were first spoken or written by others,

'interanimating'—that is, enlivening and entwining—them with a selection of other

voices" (30). Blum's footnotes (which she assiduously tends to in her impressive project

on plagiarism in college culture) on these two terms—"intertextuality" and

"interanimating"—are particularly helpful when considering their application to

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[24] In her study *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture* (2009), Professor Susan Blum offers an in-depth anthropological study on how the Internet and electronic communication affect college students' lives today. She writes in her Introduction: "Contemporary students are swimming in a sea of texts. (Here I'm using 'text' as a technical term, meaning anything written or spoken that involves language, or even images, anything that can be 'read' or analyzed.) They e-mail, blog, and text message day and night…They are engaged with media constantly" (4).

composition studies within the realm of public and social spaces. As Blum explains, the first term was coined by Julia Kristeva and "inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia…Bakhtin points out in his often-cited work 'Discourse and the Novel' that 'language…lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (184). Distinguishing intertextuality from interanimating, Blum details the latter term in the following:

> At the heart of this topic is the fundamental question of what Erving Goffman (1983 [1979]) has called 'participant roles,' which in turn have a bearing on a speaker's degree of responsibility for action or words. In his brilliant analysis of what he termed 'footing,' Goffman differentiated the possible roles for 'speaker' into Principal (the originator), Animator (the one who performs the message), and Figure (the persona being animated), among others; for 'listener' there were the roles of 'ratified participant' and 'bystander'; the bystander could in turn be differentiated into 'eavesdropper' or 'overhearer.' Similarly, Dell Hymes (1972) differentiated between at least two possible aspects of a 'speaker': 'animator' (the person giving voice to the words) and 'author' (the originator of the words). (184)

Since language lies on the border between oneself and the other (and I support Bakhtin's view that it does), then the actual use of language—in all its varied forms—can never exist in isolation; it must always depend on another source. Indeed, such dependency lies at the heart of networking, the process by which we connect to other sources, people, and ideas. Town hall meetings and Facebook are both examples of "real-life speech or writing", of "intertextuality," where one idea is spurred by another who animates that idea, infusing it with a new perspective, question, or thought. Real-life speech and writing are generative and associative by nature. Take, for example, a typical Facebook status update. "Brian's" updated status may read: "Brian is going to vote today." Brian's friend "Cynthia" might then respond, "I am, too. Who are you voting for?" "Chad," a mutual friend of Brian's but not of Cynthia's, may respond, "He doesn't have to say.

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Voting is a private act." To which another friend of Brian's may add, "Yes, and besides, we all know Brian's political affiliation anyway." And so it goes on. For many, Facebook is a way of connecting with others through informal conversation. For many others, though, Facebook offers fertile ground on which language can be stretched and flexed to afford new avenues for self-expression, self-reflection, and above all, deliberation. To add to Blum's interesting consideration of ideas, I propose that intertextuality includes forms of language animated by the deliberation of ideas. As I will subsequently show, the "participant roles" referred to by Goffman are found in town-hall meetings and Facebook forums that seek to utilize these roles for the benefit of the audience.

Another example of a campus town hall meeting at the California State University—Chico campus effectively captures these participant roles at work. In the December 2008 issue of the "Bringing Theory to Practice" newsletter, Jennifer O'Brien describes the campus event in her essay "The Town Hall: Research, Reading, Writing and Engaged Citizenship." Chico's town hall meeting is the culminating event of the semester, open to the community and the public but specifically designed for first-year students in a course called "Writing for the Public Sphere," or English 130. As O'Brien explains in further detail: "English 130 is part of the Academic Writing Program (AWP) at Chico that serves 2,500 students each year, and partnering with the First-Year Experience Program, the Town Hall has grown to approximately 600 participants, including students, faculty, administrators, community members, and partners, and experts in the fields of research on which the students choose to focus." To connect

students in more tangible and direct ways with their research, the AWP sought "to give them a real audience and a real purpose for the work that they do."

Reflecting Goffman's idea of participant roles, the students at Chico "fill multiple roles as participants of the Town Hall, using their research and writing experiences in different ways." O'Brien describes three roles, including: (1) those who present to small groups before returning to lead roundtable discussions; (2) those who speak to the larger Chico community in the "free speech area"; (3) those who act as "indirect participants, serving as informed and productive members of the conversations that unfold at the Town Hall reception with community members and experts." The goal and, evidently, the reality is increased civic engagement across campus, not only for the students of English 130. From O'Brien's description of these various roles, we see evidence of the Principal, or the originator of the message, in leaders of roundtable discussions—those who reported the information gathered in the small "break-out sessions" to the larger town-hall. Goffman's idea of the Animator, the one who performs the message, can be likened to the speakers in the "free speech area," sending out messages and animating the larger crowd in meaningful ways. Finally, the Figure(s) is the one who is animated— either through further dialogue with "community members and experts" or simply via listening. Intertextuality thus abounds in this campus town meeting as students participate in a constant animation of deliberation of ideas, translating their research into practice and theory into dialogue.

As chapter one shows, the above scene appears to be the easy way to convince someone of our ideas, or so students—and certainly many citizens today—initially believe. As I have also noted, the opposite extreme is also easy. Characterized by

passivity, intellectual stagnancy, and a relativism-based refusal to engage in a complicated consideration of ideas, this state of being allows us to shrug our shoulders and lapse into a relativistic attitude of, "I guess we should just agree to disagree." Clifford accurately encapsulates both of these extremes in the following passage: "Conventions about form, for example, still appear in our rhetorics and handbooks as merely a problem in organizing our thinking." In other words, if students can simply organize their ideas more succinctly and directly, they will successfully produce an appropriate essay; they will "solve" the "problem" of their thinking. But as Clifford goes on to explain:

> form is also an attitude toward reality; it is rhetorical power, a way to shape experience, and as such it constructs subjects who assume that knowledge can be demonstrated merely by asserting a strong thesis and supporting it with three concrete points. But rarely is knowledge or truth the issue. Writing subjects learn that the panoply of discourse conventions are, in fact, the sine qua non, that adherence to ritual is the real ideological drama being enacted. (43)

This is not surprising to composition instructors, and even to many instructors across a variety of disciplines today. Students want to learn how to write well: what form to adopt, what grammatical conventions to uphold, what outline to use, which "three concrete points" to include. These, indeed, are skills they should be equipped with to pursue writing endeavors in disciplines specific to their academic interests and professional pursuits.

However, even though composition instructors do have an explicit duty to educate students in these skills, it is worth noting that Clifford raises a practical question: "What do we teachers of composition hope to accomplish?" This question remains an important and significant one in the face of an insistence on form, but more importantly it serves as

a call to action today to embrace new ways of engaging in academic discourse. Technological changes affect the methods by which we, and more importantly the way our students, communicate, challenging and loosening the strictures of form in various ways. For example, new media tools such as instant messenger, blogs, and Facebook significantly shape students' rhetorical exchanges, designating them as simultaneous creators of and participants in "digital deliberation" (Jackson and Wallin 2). The issue of traditional versus non-traditional forms (the five paragraph essay versus writing a blog, for example) reveals the consequences of writing practices. To return briefly to Clifford's extended quote, "form is also an attitude toward reality; it is rhetorical power, a way to shape experience, and as such it constructs subjects…" The form our students' writing takes in on-line spaces significantly shapes their approach to and reflects their experience of reality, ultimately influencing their academic writing.

Might these new technologically social spaces be able to serve composition instructors and students as "sites of contradiction"? And, if so, can we employ such spaces to treat "sites of contradiction" as starting points rather than as mere end points? In the following examples, I will show how the town-hall model can function as a physical manifestation of Clifford's aforementioned "site of contradiction," thus supporting my contention that attributes of the town-hall model are readily available in online forums such as Facebook. Though a virtual space, Facebook is still "peopled" by real live participants; the ability to actually see the faces (hence the name "Facebook) of the people with whom you are conversing is the closest method we currently have on

Web 2.0 to face-to-face interaction[25]. I argue that the town-hall model can be enacted in social and technological spaces in order to produce and support writing communities, but more importantly to foster new ways of academic discourse and argumentation. Specifically, these areas can move the student-writer from a writing subject to a deliberating agent; revise the way current socio-pedagogical situations "make no attempt to put writers or readers in a concrete social situation" by inviting "dissent, discontinuity, and confrontational discourse" (Clifford 44); and cultivate a knowledge base where the deliberative agent is part of a community of minds (to recall an image I previously use in chapter one)—a community more intent on coalescing than arguing. My call to action for students and instructors alike is to move toward coalescent argumentation within a town-hall model of deliberation and argument writing via forms of social discourse. Specific practices of coalescent argumentation assist in achieving these ideas, first of which is to realize the potential of on-line forums as means of persuading students and shaping their writing in more nuanced ways.

Michael Gilbert cites Quine who argues that "one's set of beliefs are connected in a web-like way, such that altering one belief has considerable impact on surrounding beliefs and potentially on the entire belief set" (103). The most immediate image that comes to mind when I hear the term "web" is a spider web. Indeed, if anyone has ever touched part of a spider web, they will have discovered it is impossible to touch one part of the web without movement radiating to nearly every other part of the web. Pull just one strand of the web down, and the entire masterpiece crumbles. But while spider webs

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[25] While software such as Skype certainly allows from face-to-face communication, it does not center on writing as do communicative exchanges on Facebook.

in nature are incredibly fragile, we know that the more popular image of a web—the World Wide Web—is much more resilient and capable of withstanding a variety of changes, mutations, and evolutions. Given its flexibility and adaptability, it is this type of web that I wish to focus on as I examine Quine's claim within the realm of writing in social media spaces. Specifically, I am questioning: How can writing and deliberation in social spaces on the World Wide Web impact the "surrounding beliefs" of other participants, as well as "potentially on the entire belief set"?

The increasing popularity of exchanging instant messages (or, IMs), constructing profiles on websites like Facebook, and composing personal blogs points to the prevalence of online texts and dialogues. These forms of technological communication have infiltrated college culture as users seek to persuade readers/viewers of their authenticity through a combination of text and image within an ambiguous public/private space (i.e., the Internet). Ethical issues related to the construction of composition and the expansion of rhetoric among college students emerge in these forms of popular technology. Such issues include, but are certainly not limited to: the student use and pedagogical value of anonymous "chatting," the negotiations of public and private space on social-networking sites, and the process of self-identification when using these forms of technology. I will examine these issues specifically within a cultural studies based first-year writing course and will question: How can these technologies best serve students' personal and intellectual selves simultaneously? Further, how should instructors of composition courses best utilize these technologies in their writing classes?

My early personal experience with these technologies is limited compared to college students today who are typically between the ages of 18 and 22. My brother, now

24 years old, has been IMing for well over a decade and updates his Facebook profile on a regular basis. By contrast, I did not engage in an actual "IM session" until a few years ago and only created a Facebook profile due to pressure from family and friends who were already members of those sites. I do not write my own blog, though I read and follow several, typically those in on-line news sources such as the *New York Times*. As a disclaimer, I must admit that I had previously held the assumption, however faulty, that such technologies were only fads or part of a generation to which I simply did not belong. (Facebook's current "population" of 500 million users, however, dispels the notion that such technology is merely a "fad.") My initial curiosity over why these "pastimes" are so popular among college students quickly evolved to an academic interest in how they have changed from mere "pastimes" to new rhetorical pursuits where common chit-chat, "status updates," heated debates, personally-revealing details, vitriolic fights, and compromise and agreement have assumed great social and cultural value outside the realm of traditional academic discourse. Social discourse has seemingly replaced, not necessarily complemented, face-to-face exchanges—or has it?

During my fourth year of graduate work in Lehigh University's English Department (in 2006), I decided to allow my first-year composition students to experience an on-line class. They rejoiced over this news since class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:55 to 9:10a.m.--the dreaded hour for all freshmen! I devised two assignments which required them to read three essays: "Is There a There in Cyberspace?" and "Private Life in Cyberspace" by John Barlow, and "Community Development in the Cybersociety of the Future" by Howard Rheingold. Then, they conversed about those essays with their classmates via Instant Messenger (IM) for the duration of a typical class

period (45 minutes to an hour). At the beginning of the project, I asked each student to e-mail me his/her IM screen name so that I could group them into four or five teams. I then individually e-mailed each classmate the screen names of the peers with whom they would be "chatting." All of this was meant to ensure relative anonymity, though some screen names naturally revealed their identity, such as "Glennfinkjr," for instance. Certain font colors, like pink or blue, also proved unavoidable, gendered-identity markers. Nevertheless, I encouraged them to do their best in not disclosing their identities. I wanted them to experience--as fully as possible--the kind of "faceless" interaction of on-line communication.

In their first assignment for this project, I asked them to log on with their assigned peers at a mutually agreed upon time and discuss Barlow's essay. I offered the following questions as guidelines for their discussion: How do you define "community"? What kinds of communities exist around you? What does it mean to be a part of a community? What intrinsic value does it possess? What purpose does it serve? What communities do you belong to? Describe the Lehigh community. Does community exist on the Internet? What is "cyberspace"? Is it a community? How does cyberspace differ from "real" space? While I advised them to keep Barlow's essay in mind, I encouraged them to draw on their own experiences as primary sources. I asked them to set the "timestop" option in order to record the length of their conversation, and then print out a final copy of the conversation for my review.

Their second assignment required them to post on our class's discussion board through Lehigh's Blackboard program as a response to the first assignment. For this "class period," I asked them to read Rheingold's essay, as well as Barlow's "Private Life

in Cyberspace." In these posts, I asked them to specifically respond to the following questions: How anonymous were your IM sessions? Did you ultimately determine who you were talking to in the class? What clues did you and/or your peers offer, either inadvertently or obviously? Prior to this experience, have you ever "chatted" with someone you did not know at all? Describe that experience. Do you prefer the actual classroom environment to an online course? Would you want to take an on-line course--specifically in writing--for the duration of a semester? Why or why not?

The results of this experiment yielded interesting and surprising results--so much so that I decided to conduct the online classes again the following fall in English 1. Only one student in the entire class of 21 preferred the online class, revealing:

> I enjoyed the on-line class because it was a change of atmosphere. This was my first time engaging in a class discussion over the internet, and I somehow felt the same 'community' feeling that a classroom possesses. Although I enjoy spending time with my classmates, I thought that this discussion was just as effective [as one in class]. I would be interested in taking an on-line writing course because I enjoyed our online discussion so much. I liked how I got to choose when to 'attend' this class, and was able to express my opinions and feelings without being stared at by twenty peers. I think the 'anonymous' aspect of online class helps remove judgment and allows for the students to fully express themselves in a way that a classroom does not.

I wrongly assumed that this student's evaluation was indicative of her shy and often quiet disposition. But other equally shy and quiet students wrote opposite reactions. Stephanie admitted to her shyness, but noted:

> I feel that an actual classroom offers more of a community than an online class does, although I was able to say more things since I didn't feel as shy, and felt more comfortable because it was anonymous. But I like it better when we interact in person because there wouldn't be any

misunderstandings, we can read their gestures and see what they really feel about the topic, and it's also more personal. I just can't take a computer seriously even if I know that I am actually talking to my classmates. That's the same reason why I wouldn't want to take an online course for writing for a whole semester. I just wouldn't take it seriously and be distracted by other things on the computer.

Other students cited similar problems over misunderstandings from lack of visual signals or intonation, the absence of formal structure and authority guiding the discussion and the lessons, the skepticism and mistrust that some felt in talking with "classmates" who they could not see or hear, and lack of equal contribution from all participants. Regarding this last point, many students admitted to not being able to type fast enough to convey their points, missing key moments when they wanted to interject a comment during the conversation; they also admitted to feeling distracted by other activities going on in their dorms as they tried to work, and to simply getting off track or off topic.

Prior to this project, I had been convinced that they would unanimously demand to finish the semester with on-line classes in order to avoid the 7:45a.m. trek to class. Yet I was proven wrong. Why were they more than willing to engage in the normal environment of the classroom instead of online, which for all of them is an equally normal and familiar environment? In their study on this subject titled "Instant Messaging, Literacies, and Social Identities" (2005), Cynthia Lewis from the University of Iowa and Bettina Fabos from Miami University support this view of the normalcy of online spaces: "when technology [like IM] becomes 'normal'…it is no longer complicated, nor is it notable to its users. It is a fact of life, a way of being in the world, a producer of social subjects that find it unremarkable--so unremarkable that it seems 'everybody does it,'" to quote one of the subjects in their study (470). If students viewed

IM sessions as normal, why then did they prefer the physical classroom environment?

Lewis and Fabos point to a "generational anxiety" over these new forms of "adolescent

and childhood identity." Perhaps my students had actually experienced a loss of agency

in these on-line conversations—an understandable, and certainly not unusual, loss for the

student as writing subject. Not knowing who they were communicating with may have,

in fact, contributed to self-censorship, while also fostering fears of how they projected

themselves in a faceless environment. Evidently, my students also experienced a kind of

crisis over their perceived loss of a normal classroom environment. Replacing it with an

online experience only furthered that loss of familiar expression and engagement with

texts and ideas.[26]

    Despite the drawback of changes in the "classroom environment," the second

student previously cited, as well as Lewis and Fabos's study, point to the construction of

students as deliberating agents and the creation of community in on-line social spaces.

As the aforementioned student noted: "I somehow felt the same 'community' feeling that

a classroom possesses." Thus, even though the classroom environment proved more

familiar and comfortable to most students, the availability of this IM session as a

community proved possible. Lewis and Fabos maintain (and I would agree) that: "In

light of its popularity among youth and the fact that reading and writing are central to its

practice, IM seems an important form of literacy for researchers and educators to

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[26] Another concern with online literacy is rooted in a perceived loss of print literacy. However, given the important value at work here in identity formation, it is our duty as educators to follow Lewis and Fabos's concluding statement: "if we let our 'generational anxiety over new forms of adolescent and childhood identity and life pathways' get the best of us, if we mourn the loss of print literacy as we think we once knew it, then we may find ourselves schooling young people in literacy practices that disregard the vitality of their literate lives and the needs they will have for their literate and social futures at home, at work, and in their communities" (498).

examine. IM motivates young people to engage in decoding, encoding, interpretation, and analysis, among other literacy processes" (473). Indeed, there is important academic value located within such exchanges, though I would not endorse a class that relies exclusively on instant-messenger sessions. Supplementing these with e-mail exchanges, discussion board posts on a program like Blackboard, Moodle, or Course Site, face-to-face conferences between instructor and student, and frequent peer interaction are, in my view, all integral parts that comprise a whole classroom experience--particularly at the freshmen level when students are still adjusting to college life, orienting themselves to a new social climate, and grappling with their own changing identities as college students. As Lewis and Fabos show: "the hybrid nature of textuality in IM contributes to performative and multivoiced enactments of identity" (494). Such "multivoiced enactments of identity" are particularly important to and reflective of the kind of coalescent argumentation at work in town-hall meetings. As participants' perspectives change and (hopefully) evolve, it is necessary to enact this changing identity through a multiple sense of one's own voice. As Brian Jackson and Jon Wallin note in their study, "Rediscovering the 'Back-and-Forthness' of Rhetoric in the Age of YouTube" (a study which I will devote more attention to in subsequent sections of this chapter), writing publics can foster a sense of agency:

> We celebrate the idea that our students can listen to public conversations and enter them with their own arguments, 'suspending,' to use [Gregory] Clark's word, their essays in a dialectical network of other arguments that represent contemporary, crucial tensions in public discourse as it moves along its wobbly way through history. As composition teachers, we have no quarrel with this approach. In fact, we endorse it as one of many ways we can make writing significant to students as professional and public agents, engaged in deliberation about issues that matter to us all. (4)

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While my students' IM exchanges may have urged them to retreat back to the more comforting space of the classroom, their active engagement in such an activity revealed the potential for such "dialectical networks" to emerge. Making writing "significant" to students is certainly no easy task. And as my subsequent example of deliberation in my courses' Academic Groups on Facebook will show, infusing students with the democratic and diplomatic ideals of argumentation is even more crucial when guiding them from passive writing subjects to active deliberating agents.

Greg Weiler's essay "Using Weblogs in the Classroom" from the *English Journal*, explores the potential of blogs as sources of learning and knowledge producers. He contends: "Weblogs can become an extension of the classroom, where discussions and collaborations continue long after the bells have sounded and students have left for home. This makes Weblogs an excellent vehicle for student-centered learning" (74). I concur with Weiler's positive reading of blogs as useful tools in the classroom. Though not exactly a blog, Blackboard's Discussion Board offers students a similar experience since they can post their response to a particular prompt or text, view others' responses, and then respond back. This back-and-forth nature mimics a face-to-face conversation that we see in classroom and town-hall meetings. As Weiler explains, "this [technology] allows students to reference and comment on the work of peers in their own blogs. Peers no longer need to be in the same physical classroom, but can be located anywhere. Classrooms from around the world can collaborate, build knowledge, and build communities" (74). Indeed, these ideas of community building, student-centered learning, and collaborative learning most effectively engage students in the construction of texts—a move that fully supports coalescent argumentation.

While Weiler admits to the criticisms of this kind of technology as "'disruptive,'" he still maintains that great potential exists for educational use, "both on their own and as extensions of the traditional classroom" (75). I would tend to support its use as an extension to the classroom experience rather than encourage an exclusive reliance on it. Perhaps the argument that convinces me most of its pedagogical value is Barbara Granley's claim:

> the asynchronous nature of the discussions allowed the writers the time to slow down their thinking, to consider the contributions of their peers and to respond thoughtfully and reflectively. Students began almost immediately, as a result, to make more interesting observations online than they had in class or in their papers: in collaboration with their peers and team of teachers, they were extending their analyses beyond the obvious; building their arguments carefully yet succinctly, often with help of postings of others; synthesizing the postings preceding theirs; responding to their peers respectfully and seriously, and making real attempts at communicating something about which they felt strongly. (42)

Granley's work through Middlebury College's Center for Education Technology is at the forefront of studying Web logs in the classroom, and one can certainly see why. While these weblogs can function as diaries, they are also gaining increased value as legitimate tools for journalists whose current "warblogs" provide on-the-spot coverage (39). As the title of Will Richardson's essay (from which the above is taken) reveals, "Web Logs in the English Classrom [are] More than Just Chat."

While Weiler is right to insist that "using technology for technology's sake or for its novelty is not best practice," there is great value in instructors' willingness to experiment with these technologies in order to determine which one works best as supplementary tools to the classroom experience. To date, I have had much success with

using instant messenger as a way of leading students to question community and build community through collaborative learning in the process. Since I first conducted this experiment, I have also encouraged students to read articles on the popular use of MySpace and Facebook and dialogue about those issues related to identity construction and public vs. private space. Discussion Board, for now, has functioned closely to a blog and has allowed students--particularly those who resist competing to be heard in class--to contribute to or extend the conversation from the classroom, often with more reflective considerations. While I would not advocate for an exclusive reliance on these resources, I do locate much pedagogical value in these technologies and will continue to explore incorporating them into my teaching practices, learning alongside my students in this increasingly virtual space for composition.

Facebook proves, perhaps, the most popular and flexible social space through which to practice deliberation and coalescent argumentation. The appeal of Facebook to college students today is understandable given its seemingly endless options for social connections, personal identity markers and makers, and expression of hobbies, interests, and activities. What is not entirely visible as of yet is the appeal and uses of Facebook to college students and instructors in composition courses. While several colleges and universities have adopted Facebook into their business and computer science courses (i.e., Boston College and Stanford University, respectively), few composition programs have featured this tool in their course designs. This absence may not seem readily significant since some professors had never heard of this social networking site as of a year ago, and even fewer willingly embrace it. Yet what should appear obvious is the untapped potential of Facebook in composition courses. Specifically, Facebook can

serve as a pedagogical ground on which composition courses stimulate the formation of a class community, develop reflective thinking skills, engage students in expressionistic writing that is uncensored, and ultimately persuade students to pay greater attention to how they conceive of and write about their ideas. In short, the greatest value in using Facebook in the composition classroom is its persuasive ability to foster dialogue among a community of writers.

At the University of London's Institute of Education, sociologist Neil Selwyn conducted a systematic study of the Facebook pages of all 909 undergraduate students at the Coalsville University School of Social Sciences during the 2006/2007 academic year.[27] In his study, Selwyn notes the importance and value of Facebook in the classroom: "In particular the conversational and communal qualities of Facebook […] feed into the wider recognition over the past two decades or so that students learn from informal communication and interactions with fellow students" (4). Selwyn goes on to cite R. Smith and B. Peterson who assert that "'knowledge is not constructed in an individual vacuum, but in the communication and exchanges embedded in social networks'" (4). Whereas students in decades past often gathered on campus quads to wax philosophic, now academic and extracurricular demands have increased the average student's schedule, leaving them less time to exchange knowledge and engage in academic discourse in social settings. The communal aspect, then, of college life is often

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[27] Designed as "a non-participant ethnographic study, with the researcher positioned half-way between research-as-insider and researcher-as-analyst," Selwyn's project amassed data over a period of five months to determine, as part of five main themes, the exchange of academic information. For more information, see Neil Selwyn's "'Screw Blackboard…Do It On Facebook!': An Investigation of Students' Educational Use of Facebook." Paper presented to the 'Poke1.0-Facebook Social Research Symposium', University of London, November 15, 2007. Available online: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/informationSystems/newsAndEvents/2008events/selwyn.htm.

compromised or lost, even in college libraries, which are playfully referred to as "meet markets" rather than as study spaces.

Facebook, however, is always available at any time, day or night, regardless of space limitations on campus.[28] As Selwyn notes, "the ease of education-related interactions and exchanges between students" is part of the appeal of Facebook (4). Unlike libraries, the designation of a Facebook group as an "academic" space also wards off mere socializing. The immediacy of engaging with the academic group makes it a convenient and indispensable tool for many courses, not just composition courses. Selwyn's study affirms such use when he notes, "Facebook offers the opportunity to re-engage students with their university education and learning – promoting a 'critical thinking in learners' about their learning" (4-5). Students can post on the group wall when they have time; they are not bound to issue an immediate response as is the case with Instant Messenger, allowing them to practice thoughtful analysis. Of most importance is the conversational quality of Facebook to which Sewlyn refers. Since I left discussion forums open for the entire semester, students were free to refer back to previous posts and add new insights; they were also invited to revisit topics and offer new perspectives. Thus, students were able to effectively practice self-reflection that would often lead to new insights about class readings.

The group wall often prompted the most reaction and response among students. Selwyn acknowledges that the wall is "perhaps the most revealing and most used feature of many students' Facebook page," as well as "perhaps the most conventional computer-

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[28] I speculate whether such Facebook Academic Groups may also be helpful in bringing together students on a community college campus where dorm life is virtually non-existent, thus limiting opportunities for socialization and discussion outside of class.

mediated-communication feature of Facebook" (4). Interestingly, students initiated these

wall posts, totaling 57 by the semester's end; as the instructor, I only devised discussion

questions and posted them on the discussion board. To this end, my class demonstrated

what Sewlyn astutely observes: "Facebook has been heralded by some commentators to

offer 'the capacity to radically change the educational system…to better motivate

students as engaged learners rather than learners who are primarily passive observers of

the educational process' (Ziegler 2007, p. 69)" (5). Rather than respond to "assigned"

discussion questions as one might traditionally do with a tool like Blackboard, students

can willingly continue discussions from class, introduce new topics from the readings,

and converse with each other as they would face to face. For more reserved students,

both features—the wall and the discussion board—were particularly beneficial in

allowing such students to freely express themselves without fearing immediate opinion or

censure in the classroom. As one student noted in her end-of-the-semester evaluation, "It

was a very good discussion place for some people in our class to share their thoughts

without worrying about other students' judgments." Though I had posted 30 discussion

topics and 24 news stories, some students expressed a desire for additional topics to allow

even greater freedom of expression. Others noted the pragmatic value of the site: "it was

useful to just add notes that I may have missed in class. It made me fill in the blanks."

Another student added: "If I didn't get a chance to bring something up in class I could

post it there and get a response just as I would in a class discussion."

As students grew increasingly comfortable with expressing their ideas in a non-

judgmental, non-graded environment, they quickly grew ambitious in analyzing course

texts. Often, in conferences with students, I would encourage them to include such ideas

in their formal papers. In instances where further development was needed, I would pose a question in my reply to their post that students had the option to consider when revising their papers. This pattern of considering, questioning, responding, and revising proved integral to discussions both in the classroom and outside the classroom on Facebook. Both spaces sought to cultivate and nurture a dialogic exchange where students felt increasingly confident, curious, and capable of composing their ideas. With an overwhelming response to keep this tool as a feature in future courses, my English 2 class proved the pedagogical value of how persuasive Facebook can be in the composition classroom. Given the facilitative nature of guiding students through the writing process with the aid of Facebook, I argue for its applicability in any writing-intensive course, not just exclusively in composition courses. Upper-level courses that also require critical thinking and analysis can find value in this persuasive tool, as well.

Students are not the primary audience in need of convincing that Facebook possesses real pedagogical value; they almost intuitively accept its value given the prevalence of technology in their lives. My students were more than willing to use Facebook regularly in their required English 2 course and earn substantial credit towards their class participation grade. Often, professors and instructors need to be convinced about the value of such a ubiquitous tool. Recently, in the blog "center and periphery,"[29] the blogger posts on "How Facebook Changes the Classroom." As a first-year composition instructor, he notes how Facebook intensified a sense of community within his classroom: "they [his students] had all friended each other on Facebook […] They wrote messages on each others' walls about my assignments." Despite this sense of

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[29] http://periphery.wordpress.com/2007/12/28/how-facebook-changes-the-classroom

community, however, the group proved limiting in one regard: "as a community that excludes the teacher, it seems to work against the goals of the classroom rather than complement or further them."

The post seems to suggest a prime opportunity for the instructor to create an academic group on Facebook, one which would fully include the teacher and all students regardless of race, class, or any other marker. Thus, the blogger considers, "The question is how to turn this around to the advantage of the classroom community." Though my focus is on composition classrooms, I think it is necessary for instructors in all courses to consider: how might Facebook function as a beneficial extension of the classroom community? How might incorporating this technology into college courses allow conversations and discussions to continue long after official class time has ended? How might it serve as a prime space available to all participants with no exclusionary cliques forming as might occur in a physical classroom space? Rather than explore, even momentarily, the inherent promise in such a function, the blogger finds fault with incorporating Facebook into the class dynamic: "Facebook would not only muddy the boundary between teacher and student, but it would also encourage the attitude that sees composition teachers as doctors who are on call for every crisis of comma and thesis." While this particular instructor sees potential for unwanted intrusion on his personal space and an increase in his students' expectations of his duties as a teacher, his overarching concern is on the issue of "friending" these students, which would compromise his authority. Friending students, however, is not required when forming an academic group through Facebook. Privacy settings ensure that teachers and students need never access each other's profiles; and, in fact, many of my students chose to keep

their profiles private even after the course had ended and they had received their final grades. Others were unabashedly open about their "activities" outside of the classroom, but I insist it is the responsibility of the instructor to remain mindful of appropriately viewing such profiles. Just as an instructor would not dare to intrude on a fraternity party, a dormitory, or any other campus space exclusive to students, instructors should also remain equally respectful of students' online social spaces.

Though equally as important as privacy issues, what remains most crucial is the way in which Facebook actualizes one of the primary goals of composition courses—a goal which the blogger, in fact, articulates: "to extend the writing community beyond the boundaries of the classroom." In previous semesters, I have had some success in extending the writing community to blogs where students engage in peer reviews, to IM chat sessions where students anonymously converse about readings and then analyze their masked- identity experience, and to the Blackboard Discussion Board where students dutifully posted responses to questions and readings but rarely read and responded to each other. Facebook, instead, offers a fresh and exciting pedagogical ground on which instructors can encourage students to engage in expressionistic writing that proves liberating and builds confidence in constructing academic prose, particularly when students receive credit for their consistent on-line engagement, rather than grades for the content of their posts. Rather than resist such technology for fear of further intrusion on one's time and energy, composition instructors should embrace this tool as a way to dialogue with students who are not always comfortable speaking in front of the class, as well as with students seeking greater understanding and encouragement to excel. While students may selectively tune out in class, they are always hooked on Facebook.

Getting hooked on writing, thinking, analyzing, and engaging in academic discourse is thus equally possible and particularly promising when incorporating Facebook into the composition classroom.

Brian Jackson, the associate director of composition at Brigham Young University, and Jon Wallin, a graduate instructor of composition at the same institution, recently explored the value of Web 2.0 applications, specifically YouTube, in their essay "Rediscovering the 'Back-and-Forthness' of Rhetoric in the Age of YouTube." Their study confirms the need for both instructors and students alike to tap into the potential of online writing spaces, as evidenced in their following observation: "As our students spend more time on Web 2.0, we can anticipate new argumentation literacies that will undoubtedly emerge from the hours logged by students when they're off the academic clock" (7). Indeed, their study answers the call issued by Kathleen Blake Yancey at the 2004 CCCC conference in which she directed attendees to heighten their awareness of how "students' out-of-class writing extends 'beyond and around the single path from student to teacher' in ways that create 'writing publics'" (7). Yancey's term "writing publics" is of particular importance to my concern with town hall meetings as models of deliberation, particularly because of its connotation with "community," a term which Jackson and Wallin see as a precursor to Yanccey's term: "More recently the word public has replaced community as the metaphor that describes the way students write within conversations to create what W. Michele Simmons and Jeffrey T. Grabill describe as a 'robust civic rhetoric'—a place where 'no document is singly authored, no speech a solo performance' (442)" (4). Just as Blum describes the absence of a single author due to intertextuality and interanimating, Simmons and Grabill identify these multiple voices as

central to a "robust civic rhetoric." Such rhetoric is what we should be witnessing in town hall meetings today, if not in public venues where dialogue grows quickly politicized than most certainly in academic settings where a cooperation of ideas and a pursuit of greater understanding should occupy the forefront of any educational institution. Certainly, as Jackson and Wallin's study as well as other examples show, the kinds of conversations students are enacting in these public domains of the World Wide Web reflect intertextuality and deliberation at work in students' lives.

Increasing evidence of such writing publics abounds in both formal and informal examples. As a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* shows, the City University of New York (CUNY) has now established a network to connect faculty, graduate students, and staff in a social network akin to Facebook. Writer Travis Kaya explains that CUNY's Academic Commons allows members "to write and share blogs, join subject groups, and participate in academic discussions." Though the group may, at first glance, appear exclusionary in its stipulation that only CUNY affiliates are allowed to join, the Academic Commons actually serves a pragmatic objective in trying to connect members of the university's many campuses. Matthew Gold, Director of the Academic Commons, explained that given the number of campuses, CUNY "'started to feel less like a university and more like individual silos'" (1). Jackson and Wallin show how Web 2.0 transcends physical boundaries by citing Gregory C. Clark who "advocates a written dialectic as the essential modus of rhetoric for democracy. Through the 'constant, collaborative exchange' of socially situated writing, aided by the way writing lets us go beyond 'the immediate boundaries of time and place,' we 'revise and refine what we know' (26)" (4). The need to strengthen the sense of dialectic in an academic

community is evident in this project, as I show earlier in my argument for the inclusion of Facebook in college composition courses. In addition, CUNY's Academic Commons functions like the kind of "writing public" described by Yancey, as evidenced in the response from Monica Berger, a technical-services and electronic-resources librarian at the New York City College of Technology: "For Ms. Berger, Academic Commons has been useful for finding colleagues with similar interests and getting involved in projects across the university. 'It's a way to see what your colleagues are involved with, what they're doing, what they're interested in'" (1).

Facebook and LinkedIn have allowed alumni to connect with each other, as well, taking off from the idea initially set forth by earlier sites like Classmates.com. Kaya is quick to note that "Academic Commons is not the first social network to spring up around academic life." Indeed, as education-technology consultant Andrew Shaindlin confirms in the article, "a number of universities have purchased premade software packages to host alumni networks online." However, the idea of an Academic Commons site is particularly central to the needs of a "writing public"—a group interested in more scholarly and institution-specific pursuits. Furthermore, "Academia.edu—a social network that connects researchers to others in their fields—has also attracted a larger online user base." Still, Shaindlin applauds the CUNY project: "For a closed social network like the Commons, Mr. Shaindlin said, 'the most fertile ground is somewhere that has the scale and the need for users to do something online that it's hard for them to do offline'" (1). While this point may seem obvious, it is worth repeating again: the success of online social spaces is, in part, due to the relative ease involved with (and

accessibility of) such a community, the participatory nature of that community, and the potential for coalescence through such participation.

Brendan Koerner speaks to these issues in his essay "How Twitter and Facebook Make Us More Productive" in *Wired* magazine. In response to the critique that social sites prove distracting, overstimulating, and a mere waste of time, Koerner retorts that such criticism "betrays an ignorance of the creative process." He argues:

> Humans weren't designed to maintain a constant focus on assigned tasks. We need periodic breaks to relieve our conscious minds of the pressure to perform—pressure that can lock us into a single mode of thinking. Musing about something else for a while can clear away the mental detritus, letting us see an issue through fresh eyes, a process that creativity researchers call incubation…According to Don Ambrose, a Rider University professor who studies creative intelligence, incubation is most effective when it involves exposing the mind to entirely novel information rather than just relieving mental pressure. This encourages creative association, the mashing together of seemingly unrelated concepts—a key step in the creative process. (2)

This argument to muse as a way to "clear away the mental detritus" recalls Peter Elbow's directive to practice freewriting: "You don't have to think hard or prepare or be in the mood: without stopping, just write whatever words come out--whether or not you are thinking or in the mood." I often encourage my own students to freewrite as a precursor to drafting. By treating writing as a meaning-making process, freewriting allows one to determine what, in fact, they may be interested in writing about and then pursue that train of thought in a more focused format. Though classified as 'freewriting,' this kind of generative and partly expressionistic writing mimics what many non-academic writers produce in blog posts, Facebook status updates, etc. As my example of peer reviews on my course's Facebook Academic Group will show, students can engage their writing in

online social spaces, responding to others' ideas that will in turn shape their own thought process.

In other words, online social spaces provide not only writing opportunities, but also serve as fertile ground for "incubation"[30] which can lead to "creative association, the mashing together of seemingly unrelated concepts." As students begin to make stronger connections among their own ideas and others', they practice the kind of creative association integral to coalescent argumentation. As one commentator noted in the "Comments" thread of Koerner's article, "If only more schools taught kids about the value of social media, of how best to spend time on the Web, then students could actually use Twitter/Facebook for good instead of blahblah garbage." The kind of pedagogical and social good inherent in online social spaces invites us to further access "writing publics" which Yancey calls on us to embrace. As I will show, Jackson and Wallin's study answers this call to action, reinforcing and extending my own argument about the need for instructors and students to realize the potential available in Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook and other online social spaces.

Jackson and Wallin examine "the procedural, critical, and progressive qualities of dialectic as a means of accounting for what makes public deliberation effective and how we can teach students to deliberate" in online communities. Their study begins with the example of a YouTube video the captured the arrest and assault of Andrew Meyer, a

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[30] In her article "Writing as Inquiry: Some Questions for Teachers," Janice Lauer notes: "Good inquirers deliberately explore questions, guided by heuristic procedures that help them vary their perspectives, scan their memories, and create new associations. This conscious activity prepares the inquirer for incubation, the unconscious mulling from which illumination springs" (91). I argue that writing in on-line spaces serves as an example of this kind of unconscious mulling which renders illumination, or insight.

University of Florida senior, at a town hall meeting with Senator John Kerry. As they

explain:

> On September 17, 2007, near the end of Senator John Kerry's town hall
> forum at the University of Florida (UF), Andrew Meyer, a journalism
> major, demanded to ask a few questions after the moderator had nearly
> closed the forum…Meyer asked three sort of long-winded questions about
> the 2004 election, the war in Iraq, and Yale's secret society Skull and
> Bones before his microphone was cut off. As soon as his mic was cut off,
> the UF police began to muscle Meyer out of the auditorium…As Meyer
> was being carted away, Kerry himself encouraged the police officers to let
> him answer Meyer's questions, but the back and forth was cut short two
> minutes later when Meyer was tased for not complying with his arrest. (9)

Jackson and Wallin focus on this particular incident for several reasons, but specifically

because the videos provided "an opportunity for ordinary citizens to make arguments

about free speech, police force, civility, ethos, and the normative standards of public

forums" (9). Thus, Jackson and Wallin analyzed the first 500 comments and arguments

on the YouTube thread, reading and analyzing these responses "much like a content

analysis" (9). Their discoveries proved particularly valuable in revealing the promise of

online writing: "even in a casual, anonymous, often frivolous venue such as YouTube,

adhocracies can emerge, constituted by the rhetorical back-and-forthness of users who

push against each other in a stichomythia of deliberation open to all."[31] My interest in

Jackson and Wallin's content analysis, and in their larger project as a whole, is rooted in:

(1) the example of this town hall meeting that was captured on video, much like Lehigh's

town hall meeting on racism; (2) their emphasis on deliberation and argumentation

evidenced in new media technologies that change "the way common citizens meet and

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[31] Dictionary.com defines an "adhocracy" as an organization with a very simple structure or lack of
structure; opposite of bureaucracy. An adhocracy is devoid of rules and regulations, a hierarchy, or
standard procedures for problem-solving; rather, it is flexible and responsive.

deliberate"; (3) their call to action to "analyze public discourse not only as a descriptive exercise but also as a prescriptive exercise that helps us engage in our own back-and-forths about what, how, and why we should teach students as future public actors"; and, (4) their revival of back-and-forth rhetoric "as a means of fostering civic education" that invites the "synthesis of critical thinking, tolerance, listening-rhetoric, answerability, and reason giving." These four aims coincide well with my project on offering the town hall model as a normative ideal for deliberative discourse—a model that connects and applies to writing in online social spaces.

Concurrent with Blum's aforementioned observation that students are writing now more than ever, Jackson and Wallin admit that while "the World Wide Web may have been designed as a tool for reading, it is now more than ever a tool for writing, thanks to new media literacy and the bottom-up, participatory, and literate cultures that use emergent technologies to form publics through the back and forth process of online exchange" (2). The interest in this town hall meeting captured on YouTube, Jackon and Wallin argue, "should matter to anyone concerned with free speech and public deliberation." As my example of Lehigh's town hall meeting shows, students are most concerned with free speech and deliberating their ideas with others when faced with issues of immediate and local concern—and understandably so. After all, it is of much greater consequence to students when they must confront acts of violence, aggression, and racism in their own community versus engaging in town-hall meetings on national health care, for example, a topic that may prove too amorphous and displaced from their daily lives. Their concerns are more immediate, and their voices heard in distinctly different ways in a town hall meeting on their college campus. In short, as Jackson and

Wallin note, the town hall offers a participatory structure with the potential for engaging in and contributing to a writing public. Interestingly, the thousands and thousands of comments this video generated signify the appeal of this topic to others (presumably college students and non-college students alike) based on the value we place on free speech in our culture.

As Jackson and Wallin's study shows, the YouTube comment thread affords individuals the opportunity to practice that very kind of free speech denied to Andrew Meyer when he was tased by UF police. The contribution of this study to the field of rhetoric and composition is quite simple yet radical, as proven by Jackson and Wallin's succinct summary: "Rediscovering the back-and-forthness of rhetoric [as evidenced in online public deliberation] could help students understand that we analyze so we can argue, and we write so we can be read and responded to" (2). This kind of "civic literacy" appeals to students, I believe, more than the kind of literacy we often ask our students to engage in: reading essays in an anthology or literary text, writing arguments intended for a narrow audience (i.e., the instructor), and perhaps engaging with other sources in a figurative dialogue. Jackson and Wallin point out how, "This kind of argumentation can be more engaging for a writer than inventing audiences and assuming a dialogue with sources frozen in academic print" (8). The only kind of response students typically receive in these situations is their grade and, hopefully, facilitative comments from an instructor. Though these kinds of writing exercises are obviously important in shaping students' understanding of academic discourse, perhaps they are too limiting for several reasons. First, when students know that virtually no one else will read their writing, they are held less accountable and feel a minimum sense of responsibility to treat

ideas fairly and equally. Even if their ideas prove mildly offensive, undeveloped, or

simply banal, it is of little consequence since their writing is not exposed to a vast

audience that could potentially critique and challenge them. As Jackson and Wallin note,

"The excitement of seeing your writing appear online is surpassed when someone

responds with agreement or challenge and a back and forth ensues with each turn at post

calling on a writer's ability to understand, analyze, and invent 'next action in response'"

(Drew 168).   Second, because students do not have to engage with others' responses,

they fail to see the larger value of their ideas and arguments; the back-and-forthness of

rhetoric is virtually non-existent in this context. Finally, students cannot expand or revise

their own perspectives when traditional academic essays invite them to produce a linear

thesis that proves their point and their point alone.

Jackson and Wallin are particularly sensitive to these limitations of academic

writing and call for the practice of informal dialectic, which they define in the following

terms:

> We suggest, then, that one way we can anticipate and complement
> students' online literacies is to teach the back-and-forthness of rhetoric—
> the often informal, messy process of exchange that takes place when two
> or more people argue with each other over public issues. To be clear, we
> are not talking about the dialectic students assume when they write an
> essay in the school genres. We are talking about an actual dialectic that
> requires students to write to other students, respond to other students, and
> write yet again in an argument that could potentially go on forever, like
> the comment thread of a YouTube video. (2)

YouTube, Facebook, blogs, IM, Blackboard, Course Site, Moodle, and Twitter all

function as examples of what Jackson and Wallin term "digital deliberation"—the

process by which ideas are produced, transmitted, and responded to in online, virtual

spaces. The reciprocal exchange of such ideas mimics the "back-and-forth rhetoric"

championed by Jackson and Wallin, bringing argumentation as a process more to the forefront of writing publics, as opposed to mere argument. Jackson and Wallin are careful to distinguish between these two concepts given the former's clearer alignment with procedural deliberation and the latter's emphasis on disputation and agonism. Heeding Richard Fulkerson's call to revive scholarship on argumentation, Jackson and Wallin acknowledge that the difference between argumentation and argument "is in the level of direct engagement with one or more interlocutors in a process that resembles the classical dialectic, if only in its back-and-forthness…A procedural argument, on the other hand, 'proceeds' dialectically between or among individuals in a more intimate method of proposition, question, and answer, often in real-time, to arrive at, or at least approach, secure positions" (5).

Digital deliberation is, perhaps, the most important idea with which to conclude this chapter since out of deliberation grows a nascent sense of democracy. Democracy offers the best institution through which to work through complex ideas, allow for all voices to participate, and arrive at those secure positions that move us from theory to action. And whether we are prepared or not, Facebook and other social media are forcing us to examine the effects of democracy as played out in digital realms. As Jared Cohen, an author and a former member of the State Department's critical Policy Planning staff, asserts: "Facebook is one of the most organic tools for democracy promotion the world has ever seen…I call this digital democracy" (Kirkpatrick 290). Facebook allows us to see social justice enacted more directly and clearly than ever before because of its visibility to the masses. As David Kirkpatrick explains in *The Facebook Effect*,

"Facebook has now become one of the first places dissatisfied people worldwide take their gripes, activism, and protests. These campaigns on Facebook work well because its viral communications tools enable large numbers to become aware of an issue and join together quickly" (290). Indeed, the kind of digital democracy at work in social media spaces sharply recall the images of the town hall meeting—an image I will more fully explore in chapter four on coalescent argumentation, but one which rests most firmly on the idea of individuals coming together over "an issue and join[ing] together quickly." While the significance of the availability of digital democracy cannot be underscored enough, it is equally important to remember how the advent of such technology marks a crucial point in history for us to hone our skills in civic rhetoric. As W. Michele Simmons and Jeffrey T. Grabill note in their revealing study "Toward a Civic Rhetoric for Technologically and Scientifically Complex Places: Invention, Performance, and Participation": "Without the ability to invent and produce usable knowledge from available information, active participation in decision making about policy and other civic issues becomes almost impossible" (439). Given how readily the model of the town hall meeting—both in real life and in social networks—lends itself to this process of inventing and producing "usable knowledge," we must now turn our attention to determining the most effective way by which we can actualize civic rhetoric as a transformative source of power. Coalescent argumentation offers one such way to do this.

CHAPTER FOUR

Coalescent Argumentation

"All students in a democracy need school experiences that are participatory, critical, values-oriented, multicultured, student-centered, and research-minded. Anything less denies the promise of our nation's constitutional guarantees."

—James Berlin, "The Teacher as Researcher: Democracy, Dialogue, and Power"

"Screaming constituents, protesters dragged out by the cops, congressmen fearful for their safety — welcome to the new town-hall-style meeting…" So begins Alex Isenstadt's article "Town Halls Gone Wild" featured in *Politico* on August 3, 2009. Isenstadt describes how "the once-staid forum" of public deliberation is "rapidly turning into a house of horrors for members of Congress… members are reporting meetings that have gone terribly awry, marked by angry, sign-carrying mobs and disruptive behavior." Police arrests, the use of mace, ripped shirts, and racial slurs also, unfortunately, characterize many contemporary town hall meetings. How, in less than a century, have we moved from the Normal Rockwell ideal captured in *Freedom of Speech* (1943) to a picture of American citizens at their absolute basest? How have we moved so far away— both ideologically and literally—from Rockwell's portrait of Arlington, Vermont resident Jim Edgerton, who stood up during a town hall meeting to voice an unpopular opinion and yet was still respected by his fellow citizens during World War II?[32] (see Appendix A) The painting, as the Saturday Evening Post writer Booth Tarkington so eloquently describes, captures *The Freedom of Speech*:

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[32] http://www.best-norman-rockwell-art.com/norman-rockwell-saturday-evening-post-article-1943-02-20-freedom-of-speech.html

The central figure stands above the rest. He is dressed in working clothes that have a slightly rough quality. He has a determined look on his face. In his pocket is a rolled up program for the meeting. All eyes are on the speaker. Seated around him are his neighbors. All are holding the same program. The men whose clothes we can see are all dressed in suits. We assume they are businessmen. Mild disagreement crosses the face of the man on his right. He is smiling upside down. His program is clenched in his hand. Yet *no one* interrupts the speaker. Rockwell aptly captures the essential character of free speech with this painting.

Not only does this portrait capture rhetorical listening at its best since "no one interrupts the speaker" and "all eyes" remain on him, but it also demonstrates the clearest difference between the kind of debate and argument we see modeled in politics today and the kind we should strive to model and inculcate in our students. This difference centers on the important and often unobserved intersection of language, listening, deliberation, and coalescence.

While the media and political institutions may serve as sites of information, and more often serve as sources of entertainment, they rarely model how language can best be used to educate and empower the public in ethical ways. Deborah Tannen asks an important question to this effect: "Why does it matter that our public discourse is filled with military metaphors? Aren't they just words? Why not talk about something that matters—like actions?" Indeed, I have often heard my students bemoan the act of "reading into something too much" or "overestimating" the effects of a speech or text. But as Tannen insists, the answer to such claims and protests is simple: "Because words matter. When we think we are using language, language is using us…It invisibly molds our way of thinking about people, actions, and the world around us. Military metaphors train us to think about—and see—everything in terms of fighting, conflict, and war. This perspective then limits our imaginations when we consider what we can do about

situations we would like to understand or change." Recalling the question set forth in chapter one "All things considered, what should we do?", it is important to keep in mind Tannen's last claim with its focus on moving from what we "consider" to "what we can do" as a means of enacting "change." When students can begin moving from conflict to deliberation to action, they visibly see how best to use language, thereby actively shaping discourse rather than allowing it to unconsciously shape them. They can fully engage in the best practices that freedom of speech affords them without succumbing to their baser instincts of incivility and social unrest.

When I talk about the argument culture with students, they are quick to point out its drawbacks. They intuitively see it as antithetical to cooperation, dialogue, and knowledge. Its costs far outweigh the benefits. Yet eventually in our discussion of the drawbacks associated with traditional argument, vitriolic debate, and polarized discourse, a student will raise the obvious questions: "If this method doesn't work, then what is the alternative? How do we get beyond the argument culture?" My answer is a bit disappointing to them, at first. I honestly don't think we ever fully get beyond the argument culture. I see it as a deep and noxious swamp that we are always capable of slipping back into if we do not carefully walk around its edges towards a clearer pool of understanding. Media outlets and politics are two particularly poor models of dialogue and debate. As I concluded in my second chapter, we must heed the call to embrace an ethics of listening in order to most successfully pursue knowledge.

As composition instructors, we have a rare opportunity to guide our students through the often unchartered waters of clarity and understanding. Our field is not one that can ever solely rely on theory, truth, or facts. We are often mired in the muddy

waters ourselves, so to speak, of finding ways to communicate more effectively with one another. At the same time, though, composition is one of the few courses often required of all students in a given institution. Thus, we have an opportunity to help students begin to practice alternatives to the argument culture. We have the chance to move them away from polarizing and politicized discourse to one, instead, that offers fresh perspectives, new options, and unexplored intellectual ground. While it may not always seem this way, we should feel excited about the prospect to show students new and more effective ways to process information, build knowledge, and communicate their ideas.

Brian Jackson and Jon Wallin recall a scence in the Protagoras in the following passage:

> we find Prodicus trying to mediate between Socrates' staccato questions and Protagoras' unanswerable monologues by telling Protagoras that he 'must not let out full sail in the wind and leave the land behind to disappear into the Sea of Rhetoric' (Nienkamp 338b). The 'Sea of Rhetoric' metaphor condemns the sophist's unilateral speechifying because Plato did not trust monologues. Without the ability to question, challenge, and refute a speaker, an audience is left with the minimal role of either assenting to or rejecting an argument…On the 'Sea of Rhetoric,' speaker and spoken-to are as two ships passing in the night. (3)

This tale raises several questions: How do we avoid the pitfalls of dichotomous thought, offering up only two choices—"either assenting to or rejecting an argument"—that occupy extreme positions? How do we avoid the speaker and audience moving past each other "as two ships passing in the night," sometimes even moving at cross-purposes with one another? Is it even possible to return to a more civilized treatment of the town hall meeting, recapturing its purest democratic ideals of free speech, inquiry, and community building?

Coalescent argumentation provides the kind of rhetorical ground necessary to move beyond monologues, beyond speechifying, beyond mere dismissal of arguments, and beyond the vitriol that characterizes modern-day town halls. Instead, it gives us the chance to tap into the normative ideal of merging disparate positions to a common ground on which commitment to action can take place. This ground is not necessarily a steady one, either. It is marked by a great deal of effort, commitment, and self-awareness, all of which are needed to pursue multiple modes of argumentation simultaneously in an effort to accomplish the following: (1) to recognize all represented positions; (2) to explore potential options; (3) to remain mindful of the importance of empathy, respect, and civility; (4) to pursue the dialectic collaboratively; and (5) to ultimately commit to act, not just pontificate. This chapter thus aims to put forward coalescent argumentation as a clear and viable process by which writers can practice deliberation through the model of the town-hall meeting. By specifically situating coalescent argumentation within the town hall model, students can enact democracy and move closer towards greater academic ideals of inquiry and knowledge. In short, we can move closer to civic rhetoric.

As I have shown previously, the "problem" in argumentation today—both verbal and written—is characterized by behaving too aggressively, too forcefully, shoving our thesis statements down our readers' throats, so to speak, and forcing them to accept our ideas. We have seen evidence of this breakdown in civility in real-life town hall meetings like that in Lebanon, Pennsylvania in August of 2009. Reporters Ian Urbina and Katherine Seelye describe the scene as follows: "They got up before dawn in large numbers with angry signs and American flag T-shirts, and many were seething with frustration at issues that went far beyond overhauling health care." Another article,

published only a few days before this one, described a more general chaos in cities where

"noisy demonstrations have led to fistfights, arrests and hospitalizations." Urbina

describes the scene in terms that would make any reader cringe:

> The bitter divisions over an overhaul of the health care system have
> exploded at town-hall-style meetings over the last few days as members of
> Congress have been shouted down, hanged in effigy and taunted by
> crowds…'Become a part of the mob!' said a banner posted Friday on the
> Web site of the talk show host Sean Hannity. 'Attend an Obama Care
> Townhall near you!' The exhortations do not advocate violence, but some
> urge opponents to be disruptive. 'Pack the hall,' said a strategy memo
> circulated by the Web site Tea Party Patriots that instructed, 'Yell out and
> challenge the Rep's statements early. Get him off his prepared script and
> agenda,' the memo continued. 'Stand up and shout and sit right back
> down.'

Presumably, these town hall meetings appear to have taken the argument culture to a

whole new level. Or have they? By name, these forums are town hall meetings, but by

nature they stray so far from the original purposes of town hall meetings that it is difficult

to see any similarities between the two beyond a group of people gathering in the same

place over a particular issue. It is important to note that this chapter does not necessarily

seek to recover the "democratic" qualities of the town hall meeting that have been

eclipsed by loud, dominant voices of vitriolic attack and dissent. Michael Zuckerman's

claim that "the town meeting was an instrument for enforcement, not—at least not

intentionally—a school for democracy" (532) suggests that community, inclusiveness,

and above all, social cooperation were at the core of the original town hall meetings, not

democracy for the sake of democracy. Such elements and ideals fully support the kind of

coalescent argumentation that I hope to resurrect in my examination of the town hall

meeting as a model for argumentation.

In his seminal study "The Social Context of Democracy in Massachusetts,"

Zuckerman seeks to examine "the social context" of democracy in "provincial

Masschusetts" (524). He reminds us that "In application to such a society [as that of

provincial Masschusetts], a concept such as democracy must always be recognized for

just that: a concept of our devising," suggesting that present recollections and depictions

of the town hall meeting have lapsed into a sentimental and inaccurate portrait of early

American life. Instead, Zuckerman draws on the work of reputed historian Perry Miller

who points out how, "Their leaders, in that first generation [i.e., the founders of the

settlement at Massachusetts Bay], proudly proclaimed that they 'abhorred democracy'"

(525). What propelled them, then, to enact social practices that so closely resembled

democratic procedures? Zuckerman explains:

> Their situation, quite simply, was one that left them stripped of any other
> sanctions than those of the group…Consensus governed the communities
> of provincial Massachusetts, and harmony and homogeneity were the
> regular—and required—realities of local life. Effective action
> necessitated a public opinion approaching if not attaining unanimity, and
> public policy was accordingly bent toward securing such unanimity. (526)

It seems the founding fathers understood what politicians and many citizens today do not:

that in order to accomplish any sort of goal, it is imperative to work together. Much like

the idea of the commonwealth where participants worked together for the good of the

whole, the town meeting solved the problems of conflict, shouting, agonism, and near

rioting (like we see today) by insisting on "moral community" (527). As Zuckerman so

aptly explains, "the common course of action had to be so shaped as to leave none

recalcitrant—that was the vital function of the New England town meeting" (527).

Today, almost all participants leave town meetings "recalcitrant" and little "action"

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results. In early Massachusetts, by contrast, democracy was secondary to the functionality and sustainability of community.

Part of the reason that few participants in these early town hall meetings were intractable is due to the goal-oriented nature of these meetings that insisted on "effective action." Similarly, Gilbert reminds us of the importance of stated goals when employing coalescent argumentation: "Coalescent argumentation is the implementation of methods and techniques that increase the heuristic element and decrease the eristic element while at the same time maintaining a realistic attitude to the essentially goal-oriented nature of most argumentation" (106). Gilbert goes on to examine the function of goals as necessary to the best outcome of any dispute: "The awareness that both parties in a dispute have goals is an essential ingredient to coalescent argumentation. That is, it is crucial to determine what a dispute partner wants out of an argumentation in order to allow for the possibility of meeting those goals…Uncovering the goals of the arguers is the first stage of coalescent argumentation. This answers the question, 'why are we arguing?'" (107) As Gilbert implies, if such a question cannot be adequately answered, then positions must be revisited. Otherwise, one or more parties is arguing for the sake of arguing, not to achieve any real and tangible goal. While our students may enjoy arguing for the sake of arguing as part of a verbal exchange in a provocative class discussion, we know they must equip themselves with far more specific skills when engaged in argument writing. It is therefore important to realize that the town meeting was not an empty ideal of building a "moral community," but rather a "functional imperative" designed to get things accomplished much like the challenges our students face in their academic and professional lives (Zuckerman 528).

As Zuckerman argues, most historical accounts and images of town hall meetings erroneously mimic and sentimentalize the Rockwellian portrait of Jim Edgerton. Such a literal and figurative portrait places democracy at the center of social organizations. Zuckerman's inquiry, however, affords us a more objective perspective on the role of the town hall meeting. By understanding social organization (not democratic ideals) at the core of these early Americans' lives, he shows how democracy was an unintentional outgrowth: "The democracy of the Masschusetts towns was, then, a democracy despite itself, a democracy without democrats" (535). The value of Zuckerman's study here is that it affords us a greater understanding of how important coalescence was to the original town hall meeting.

Zuckerman's descriptions, taken from the Massachusetts Archives, fully illustrate coalescence at work and provide a necessary roadmap by which we can employ coalescence in argument writing. The difference between town hall meetings in the eighteenth century and town hall meetings now in the twenty-first century should be obvious yet nevertheless significant:

> The town meeting had one prime purpose, and it was not the provision of a neutral battleground for the clash of contending parties or interest groups…Conflict occurred only rarely in these communities, where 'prudent and amicable composition and agreement' were urged as preventives for 'great and sharp disputes and contentions.' When it did appear it was seen as an unnatural and undesirable deviation from the norm. Protests and contested elections almost invariably appealed to unity and concord as the values which had been violated...differences had no defined place in the society that voting could have settled, for that was not in the nature of town politics. Unanimity was expected ethically as well as empirically. Indeed, it was demanded as a matter of social decency, so that even the occasional cases of conflict were shaped by the canons of concord and consensus… (539-540)

How different the scene of town hall meetings appears today compared with those of the

eighteenth century, when civility and effective governance were the norm and not the rare

and surprising exception.[33] The "rare" occurrence of conflict should signal the need to

reexamine how the town hall meeting worked in its prime: as a means by which

"'prudent and amicable composition and agreement'" preempted "disputes and

contentions." This first term about "'prudent and amicable composition and agreement'"

particularly resonates with Gilbert's estimation of coalescent argumentation.

　In his attempt to define argumentation, Gilbert offers several views, the first of

which stems from Informal Logicians such as Ralph Johnson, J. Anthony Blair, and

Trudy Govier. He claims:

> The definitions offered by these scholars narrow the notion of
> argumentation to a procedure that is precise and contained. The approach
> appeals to rules and procedures, relies heavily on the analysis of
> components, and invariably winnows arguments down from complex,
> sometimes heated exchanges to sets of premises, conclusions, moves, and
> counter-moves. Indeed, this refining of arguments from rough and tumble
> discourse to their distilled logico-rational essence is the raison d'etre of
> this approach. I refer to the definitions offered by this group as the
> Dialectical view. (29)

As we recall from my previous chapter, Brian Jackson and Jon Wallin support the

dialectic, which "leads to more secure positions because of the answerability

factor…dialectic picks up where rhetoric leaves off and advances the cause of

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[33] This "norm" did not exist, as Zuckerman points out, because of voting; indeed, when we apply the model of the town hall meeting to argument, writing, and the composition classroom, there is little room for voting since it would have no authentic or pedagogical purpose. The fact that consensus and civility—not majority rule—occupied the forefront of the town hall meeting returns us to the importance of resurrecting the ethos of civic rhetoric. Civic rhetoric affords us the opportunity to pursue coalescent argumentation in the composition classroom today.

discovering whether arguments are reasonable and their warrants justified" (4). Jackson and Wallin draw on Gregory C. Clark who champions "a written dialectic as the essential modus of rhetoric for democracy. Through the 'constant, collaborative exchange' of socially situated writing, aided by the way writing lets us go beyond 'the immediate boundaries of time and place,' we 'revise and refine what we know'" (4). Jackson and Wallin support "dialectical exercises," or exercises that mimic "immediate and answerable deliberation" like that which exists in town hall meetings.

As outlined in Michael Gilbert's definition of coalescent argumentation, I am calling for the recognition that "arguments are human interactions that occur between people using a multitude of forms of communication" (102). As shown in the previous chapter, this "multitude of forms" extends to social spaces where students dialogue and converse on a frequent if not daily basis. Viewing such "multi-model argumentation" as "a basis for commonality as opposed to criticism" helps us move away from the grips of the argument culture and allows us to view it as a "normative ideal" in which "a joining or merging of divergent positions [forms] the basis for a mutual investigation of non-conflictual options that otherwise have remained unconsidered" (103). This last part is at the core of coalescent argumentation and is therefore worth repeating: the goal is to bring together divergent positions as part of a joint examination of those options which had not been considered. Compromise and sacrifice are not the central goals; no one is giving something up that is vital to their position. To do so would prove deleterious and antithetical to such a cooperative effort. While Gilbert structures his chapter around three elements of coalescent reasoning—argument, position, and understanding—I wish to examine the actual practices of coalescent argumentation. In other words, I do not wish

to proceed in such a fashion that privileges theories before practices. Rather, I wish to uncover how current practices related to argument, rhetoric, and writing can sketch a broad pedagogical theory about the viability in constructing students as deliberating agents in sites of contradiction. Thus, the theory exists within the practice rather than the practice existing outside and detached from the theory. The theory of the town-hall thus exists because of the practice and activities of coalescent argumentation that lend themselves to a model of effective deliberation.

The type of dialectic of which Jackson and Wallin speak, and the kind of writing that takes place in on-line spaces like Facebook where students write, respond, and write yet again, mimic the "back-and-forth" exchanges of free speech that originally characterized town hall meetings. I propose to revive the dialectic in town hall forums (both live and virtual) through the resurrection of coalescent argumentation as a normative ideal. In Gilbert's chapter "Coalescent Argumentation," he classifies arguments as "human interactions" that rely on "a multitude of forms of communication." Given this broad definition, we see how much control and influence we as humans (i.e., the direct participants in such exchanges) can enact in shaping communication "with an eye to improving it" (i.e., argumentation). Since arguments are driven by humans, we can resist traditional pitfalls of argument as outlined by Tannen and others. We can also resist traditional and limiting outcomes to argument that Gilbert details, including: (1) winning the argument by converting your opponent to your viewpoint; (2) compromising, whereby differences are settled on, but not necessarily resolved; (3) complete and total agreement, which proves rare and elusive, particularly in 'hot-button' topics like abortion, gun control, or health care; (4) lapsing into relativism

whereby we shrug our shoulders and say, 'I guess we should just agree to disagree';

(5) giving up altogether; (6) accepting an alternative that neither party is particularly

supportive of; (7) continuing to disagree; (8) forcing reluctant compliance on all invested

parties. None of these options proves satisfactory or even feasible. Keeping in mind

Jackon and Wallin's definition of argumentation as a process that involves procedural

deliberation, we can apply this framework to Gilbert's idea of coalescence in order to

cultivate investigation, well-developed positions, and a specific course of action. These

features work to support deliberative democracy that allows for a shared world view and

commitment to act on behalf of such views.

Part of Gilbert's goal in seeking to expand argumentation theory resides in the

limitations associated with practices typically offered in textbooks. These practices,

according to Gilbert, rely on "idealized Critical-Logical (C-L) interpretation" which

values the production and defense of linear arguments over the procedural qualities of

deliberation and coalescence. For example, in the textbook *Acting Out Culture: Reading

and Writing* (2008), which I currently use this semester in my freshmen composition

course, the section "How We Talk" includes the following writing prompt in its section,

"Putting It Into Practice." The directions advise students to:

> Pick a current events topic that is a source of recent public debate and
> write a persuasive speech in which you argue one view over the other.
> Your speech should not only state why your view is correct, but should
> also name the opposition's points and explain why they are wrong.
> Perform this speech for your class. (659)

The insistence on stating, not explaining, "why your view is correct" and your opponent's

is "wrong" should seem readily indicative of the argument culture. Of further concern is

the way in which this textbook characterizes such an exercise as a "persuasive speech,"

conflating argument with persuasion. Often, "argument" and "persuasion" are used interchangeably and erroneously. The only time "self-reflection," or any kind of reflection for that matter, is encouraged in the aforementioned prompt is when the editor directs students to write "a brief reflective essay in which you discuss how writing your speech was different from delivering it in front of an audience" (659).

Coalescent argumentation does not seek to eradicate the processes associated with argumentation. Indeed, the "groan zone"[34] is a popular space and method for venting, ranting, and giving in to any other kind of behavior typically associated with traditional argument. By remembering the need to return students to the question, "Is this all there is to arguing?", coalescent argumentation affords us a richer opportunity for exploration and investigation—two processes at the heart of education in virtually any discipline. According to Gilbert, coalescence involves the merging together of "two disparate claims through recognition and exploration of opposing positions" (102). Two questions are important to ask when considering this claim. First, how does "recognition" occur? Second, what should "exploration" entail? Recognition occurs in the groan zone whereby participants can identify points they agree on and points they disagree on. Flushing out the emotional responses that are often impinged on others in an argument is a crucial catharsis; without it, one cannot proceed or get past the anger, disappointment, and frustration that often characterize traditional conflicts. Recognition involves the validation of positions, not just a feigned interest in those positions. Validation involves the acknowledgement of a point as sound or just; it does not automatically signal a

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[34] Cited in *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Editor Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger.

confirmation or approval of that point. Instead, recognition allows participants to clearly

acknowledge and identify the points under discussion.

Often, many participants in a debate or argument believe that once emotions have

been expressed, the issue has been resolved, a compromise has been reached, or the terms

of the fight have been settled. In fact, as Gilbert points out, "In pragma-dialectic terms,

sometimes opposers 'settle,' as opposed to 'resolve,' a dispute" and only find themselves

mired in a similar fight later on. While recognition of others' positions is a start, it is

only among the first of many steps towards actualizing coalescent argumentation.

Exploration provides a useful continuation of considering the unconsidered. Skills

associated with exploration such as critical thinking, inquiry-driven analysis, and research

support an "investigation of non-conflictual options that might otherwise have remained

unconsidered" and, in fact, unknown before the invested parties committed themselves to

this first step of procedural deliberation (103).

Exploring and recognizing positions, the second component of coalescent

argumentation, is perhaps the most complex and varied. Gilbert defines a position as "a

matrix of beliefs, attitudes, emotions, insights, and values connected to a claim."

Typically, when we ask students to structure their arguments with key claims, we are

encouraging them to focus on the key aspects of their argument. As Gilbert explains,

"Normally arguments begin with an assertion which is commonly referred to as a claim.

Claims are best taken as icons for positions that are actually much richer and deeper."

Unearthing the intricacies of such positions allows us to focus on the big picture of an

argument. By doing so, we can ask: "What is at stake? What are the large and small

goals at work here? What does a dispute partner want?" Until these questions are

answered through the exploration of positions, we cannot possibly move to deciding on a course of action. Annihilating a position, or dismissing it, is not a goal, Gilbert reminds us. Such moves only reinforce the argument culture and return us to the aforementioned outcomes of traditional argument. "You cannot move anywhere else in argumentation until you understand the position," Gilbert instructs. Indeed, glossing over the exploration of positions results in rhetorical gridlock. Part of uncovering positions involves Rogerian rhetoric by which participants place themselves in another's position. Exploring all available modes of argumentation, including logical, emotional, visceral, and kisceral, is also crucial. Working through these modes allows us to ask and satisfactorily answer, "What are we arguing about?" Finally, itemizing the complexities of each person's position falls to the role of the moderator who sets a specific course of action to follow, a role which will be more fully defined in chapter five.

Informed by Patricia Bizzell's approach to rationality and real-life arguments, Mary Juzwick's work on Bakhtin, and Jackson and Wallin's study, I will explore the ethic of answerability as an act of empathy and the dialectic as a "back and forth" exchange. The ideal of empathy can, in fact, help students hone their role as a writer situated within a moral community—a community intent on treating actual arguments in more complex ways than simply as a "win, lose, or draw" situation. While empathy and coalescence are admittedly ideals, they are still attainable ones that deserve more attention than resistance in order to best prepare our students. These ideals will show the power of coalescent argumentation.

In his discussion of empathy, Gilbert defines the term simply as "an attitude and an act of will." Like listening, the idea of empathy seems foreign to composition studies,

yet the two are unsurprisingly connected: "the quality of listening and observation required for the empathetic comprehension of another's position is no mean feat; it demands, at least temporarily, the suspension of the drive to persuade or convince, i.e., to win, in favor of the desire to agree" (111). An empathetic understanding of the stakes involved seeks to uncover and identify more common ground, not just winning ground. As a preface to my discussion of empathy in coalescent argumentation, it is important to note that both Gilbert and Bizzell stress that arguments are not often theoretical or even academic pursuits; instead, our students confront real challenges that they must learn to navigate. As Bizzell argues in her essay "Rationality as Rhetorical Strategy at the Barcelona Disputation, 1263: A Cautionary Tale," "it's difficult to teach argument in ways that represent the complexities in which real-world rhetorical contentions are conducted" (13). Gilbert also insists that "real arguments are those that involve a conflict between arguers' needs, goals, ideas, and outlooks" (111). Too often, however, we frame writing about arguments, or we consider various arguments, much in the same vein as the argument culture: "we present these debates as simple 'for' or 'against' situations, in which the interlocutors are presumed to combat on a rhetorically level playing field, and the 'winner' is he or she who can argue most logically and fairly, present himself or herself most trustworthily, and invoke the audience's emotions most poignantly" (Bizzell 12). Treating arguments or debates as "real-world situations" allows for students to approach the outcome of such exchanges pragmatically and reasonably, seeking "incremental," not radical, results.

The basis of my discussion on empathy as part of practicing coalescent argumentation is its emphasis on the writer as an ethical being. In her essay, Bizzell uses

the 1263 disputation at Barcelona between Rabbi Nachmanides and Friar Paul Christian

as a case study for how power exists in disproportionate amounts in real-world conflicts.

Her aim is to better prepare students for seeking "incremental" change or "the kind of

more modest goal an individual can achieve in real-world unequal debate situations"

(26). Bizzell imagines of the Rabbi as he beseeches his Christian listeners to, "'Please,

see that because we are rational, we are human; allow us to follow our preferred spiritual

path without my having to assert our humanity in so many words'" (20). Bizzell explains

the significance of this rational rhetorical move: "Nahmanides surely does not think he

will persuade his Christian interlocutors to abandon their religion, no matter how many

contradictions he points out in it. His goal is more modest: simply to convince them that

the Jews, though resisting Christianity, are fully human with good reasons for believing

as they do" (20). It is difficult to dismiss the recognition of a particular group's humanity

as a desirable goal, yet such is the case witnessed today in many town hall meetings

where debates reveal the cruelest of human behavior over far less important issues than

that which concerned Nahmanides. The expressed desire to "see that…we are human"

reveals a desire for empathetic understanding, the core of coalescence. Nahmanides is

not asking for the Christians to agree with or support Judaism, but to recognize Jews as

equal to and worthy of the same rights as Christians with regards to their humanity.

While Bizzell applauds his rationality, she does not fully endorse rational

argument as the best approach to use: "Understanding what happened at Barcelona, we

should be careful how we teach rational argument and what claims we make for its

efficacy. I always say that I 'believe in' rational argument; that's not the same thing as

being compelled by it. Often, people aren't" (28). While rational argument may not

always prove the most compelling, the empathetic recognition of basic humanity does

extend a long way in terms of guiding divisive parties towards some middle ground in

which they can explore areas to come together on. As Gilbert reminds us, "It is

unrealistic to expect two diverse positions to completely meld into one," much like

Bizzell points out that often rational argument does not completely sway one side from

abandoning its positions altogether in favor of another side's view. Yet Gilbert shows

how "that is neither the point nor the claim of coalescent argumentation. Rather, the goal

is to locate those points of belief and/or attitude that are held in common by the

conflictual positions" (111). Asking, "What can we agree on?" therefore becomes just as

important, if not more so, as asking, "What do we disagree on?" Indeed, as Gilbert

shows, the former question must be the guiding question of any dispute:

> Beginning with these points of agreement, one can then work down
> toward areas where disagreement lies. By focusing on agreement, the
> third stage, the stage of coalescence, aids in answering the question, 'How
> can we come to agreement?' Or, focusing on the positions, 'How can our
> positions accommodate each other?' The key is the empathic awareness
> that certain beliefs, attitudes, situations, and intuitions are held in common
> by the dispute partners. (111-112)

Part of the challenge, which may seem obvious, is the act of coming to agreement in the

first place. One such approach to take towards achieving this end, however, can be found

in Bakhtin's theory of answerability which "focuses on the everyday process of becoming

a certain kind of person and the good or harm that comes to oneself through responding

to others in certain ways" (Juzwick 553). In other words, our level of accountability and

the extent to which we are willing to take responsibility not only for our ideas but also for

our actions (which can have far greater consequences) determines our own humanity.

As Mary Juzwick argues: "answerability explores the role of individual consciousness and its responsibility within this process" (549). The ability to function as "answerable selves" or "selves as positioned consciousnesses" requires the ability to recognize the self in relation to "the different value-field of another," or, as Gilbert more simply states it, "to project oneself into another's position" (Juzwick 550, Gilbert 111). This process may sound quite similar to Rogerian rhetoric whereby we imagine and rearticulate the position of another as if we fully occupied their perspective. Bakhtin also speaks to the "act of empathy," referring to it as "consummation," an idea that suggests a "merging of selves." Juzwick goes on to show how "Bakhtin clarifies that for ethical acts to occur, boundaries between bodies and selves must be recognized as acting from distinctive vantage points in relation to one another" (550). This "relation to one another" arguably forms the foundation, or common ground, from which those in dispute can arrive at "some common understanding of each position, why it is held, what it means to the holder, the importance of the position in the holder's world view, and what sorts of needs the position fulfills" (Gilbert 112). The ultimate result, ideally, is "convergence as opposed to divergence" (112).

This valuation of convergence may prove problematic, I imagine, for some students and instructors who wish to, or are simply used to, identifying a clear winner in argumentation. Indeed, coalescent argumentation sounds more like a starting point rather than an end point…and it should be. Again, Jackson and Wallin's study reveals the inherent value of the dialectic in terms of increasing answerability: "Dialectical participants are prepared to listen carefully to someone else's reasons, pose concerns about another's argument, give their own best reasons, take turns talking or writing, and

be answerable to others" (5). Here I return to Bizzell who acknowledges how the Barcelona disputation rendered "mixed" results, but results nonetheless "with participation by a great leader and accomplished rhetorician not guaranteeing unequivocal victory for the 'side' upon which the better part of social justice appears to lie" (28). It is this model of the rhetorician as a "great leader" which I hope to impress upon those skeptical of coalescent argumentation. It is this kind of leadership which we often wish to imbue in our students as that individual who can effectively lead a group of people with disparate points of view towards some collaborative exchange followed by purposeful and effective action. It is this kind of leadership that recognizes the hard task of seeking social justice "incrementally" but does so anyway because it is better than not pursuing social justice at all (Bizzell 28). It is this kind of leadership that apprehends how "words become acts in the dialogic world performing social functions that cannot be undone, that carry moral heaviness" (Juzwick 552). Indeed, the concluding chapter of this dissertation now turns its attention to the role of the moderator, the rhetorical leader who can guide divided parties through the delicate complexities of argument with the aid of rhetorical listening, deliberative discourse, and coalescent argumentation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conversation and Collaboration: The Student-Writer as Moderator

In the most basic sense, a moderator is an individual who presides over a body of participants as they seek to accomplish a specific action or task. Moderators typically function as facilitators or guides within the complicated process and procedure of deliberation. Featured in Mark Warren's article "Deliberative Democracy and Authority," we might imagine the following as the moderator's mantra: "democratic authority supports robust deliberative decision making by enabling individuals to allocate their time, energy, and knowledge to the issues most significant to them" (46). Situated within rhetoric and composition, the moderator serves as a metaphor for how the student-writer can mitigate adversarial discourse, promote community and deliberative decision-making, and arrive at the best course of action in response to the question, 'All things considered, what should we do?' As noted in the conclusion of chapter four, the moderator functions as a leader who draws on rhetorical skills such as listening, deliberation, and coalescence. The purpose of the writer as moderator is mainly to exhibit leadership qualities and encourage the tenets of academic discourse, but the role extends to reinvigorating writing as an ethical act. To understand the role of the moderator, the goals and values of the moderator, and how occupying this role as a student-writer supports the ethical treatment of writing, this chapter will focus on the role of conversation and collaboration in the model of the town hall meeting. Concurrent examination of the moderator as a figure of authority and trust, as well an evaluation of

applicable feminist rhetoric and writing center practices, will further show the

significance of conversation and collaboration as part of the moderator's duties.

Within the last few years, the English Department at Lehigh University has

fostered an emphasis on Literature and Social Justice, offering the following mission

statement (partially quoted below) as its guide:

> Like the university as a whole, the department is committed to cultivating graduates who will be engaged citizens and community members, in addition to successful professionals and passionate life-long learners. This focus on literature and social justice in the English Department comes from a shared sentiment among department faculty that we all have obligations to our fellow human beings, to our students and colleagues, our families and neighbors, and to strangers we will never meet in places we will never go…this ethical and philosophical perspective envisions the world as a place where people are bound to one another in a network of mutual responsibility, where the fundamental rights of all human beings must be recognized.

Approaching rhetoric and composition from a social justice perspective assigns new

meaning to student writers who are and will be called on as "engaged citizens and

community members," "successful professionals and passionate life-long learners."

These roles will not come easily or naturally to our students. The challenges before

them, both personally and professionally, will require careful examination, critical

understanding, delicate handling, and successful execution. If we are to prepare them to

meet these challenges with confidence and skill, we must reevaluate the fundamental

ways they communicate and act on behalf of themselves and others. We must equip them

as leaders for the twenty-first century with an ethics of accountability. Casting the

student-writer in the role of a moderator offers one way to achieve this goal.

The role of the moderator is often described as akin to that of a facilitator, yet its import within a rhetorical exchange carries much more responsibility and significance. Nevertheless, in light of this project's focus on the town hall meeting as a model for deliberative discourse, it is helpful to briefly consider the role of the moderator in this particular setting first so as to better understand its applicability to the student writer. The popular image of the New England town meeting allows us to examine the duties of the moderator in a Vermont town meeting. Vermont Secretary of State Deborah L. Markowitz offers a short publication devoted to "Vermont's Town Meeting Day, its history and how it works today." On the first Tuesday of March, most Vermont towns "hold a meeting to elect local officials, approve a budget for the following year, and conduct other local business." Markowitz describes the Vermont Town Meeting as a "floor meeting…when people gather together at a public meeting place like the town hall or local school to discuss and vote on issues." As was the case in the late 1700s when such meetings first began to emerge in public politics, town meetings offer citizens the opportunity to "address the problems and issues they face collectively…Town meetings also served a social function (as it does today). It brings people together who might not otherwise know each other. This can strengthen social ties within a town and help people work together to tackle community problems." According to the website created by Markowitz, Vermont law stipulates that the moderator should follow "Robert's Rules of Order" so as "to help the moderator keep order and ensure that the meeting is fair." (See Appendix B for a "Typical Procedure Using Robert's Rules of Order")

The role of the moderator in the context of a town hall meeting appears similar to that of an administrative role where the work of the meeting is accomplished in a timely

and orderly fashion. As the website further explains, "He or she calls for votes on each item of business and announces the decisions of the voters. The moderator must also interpret and apply rules governing how the discussion and votes proceed." For example, in Simsbury, Connecticut, the town's website details the duties of an elected town meeting moderator, which include: "the development of rules and procedures" and "developing programs to encourage and promote citizen participation." The website also notes the moderator's responsibility in maintaining order and time during such meetings. While these tasks may seem relatively basic, they actually belie the value of the moderator's role in such an important rhetorical exchange. As Frank Bryan notes in *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How It Works,* "the office [of moderator] is the town's most prestigious" (145). The moderator must remain focused, attentive to the most pressing tasks at hand, and knowledgeable about procedures in order to ensure the preservation of democracy and community enacted through the town hall meeting.

The preservation of democratic principles and community ideals hinges on the process of deliberation. While I have examined various definitions of deliberation within the scope of this dissertation, one particular definition refocuses our attention on the role of conversation that is central to the town hall meeting. In his study "Forms of Conversation and Problem Structuring Methods: A Conceptual Framework," author L.A. Franco asserts that "the need for action is the main motivation for deliberation." Recalling my guiding question in chapter one, 'All things considered, what should we do?', it is important to keep in mind the practical outcome of such deliberation that we ask our students to practice. Remember, we are preparing them as future leaders, as

"engaged citizens and community members, in addition to successful professionals." Our

students may only practice writing about ideas in our classes, but they will one day be

called on to put those ideas into action. Hopefully, those actions will have a firm basis in

deliberation. Thus, Franco defines deliberation as:

> a form of conversation [in which] participants collectively seek to reach agreement on how to carry out an action which is of concern to them. Each party exposes their preferred courses of action and priorities. These provide the grounds for discussing the possible future consequences of particular courses of action. This type of conversation may (or may not) have well-organized rules of conduct, and may involve debate, persuasion, dialogue or negotiation as part of the process. The goal of deliberation is to act on an informed and thoughtful base. (814)

As evidenced by this quote, conversation is crucial to the successful outcome of any

deliberation. While my interest in coalescent argumentation as a desired outcome of the

town hall meeting model differs from Franco's interest in "agreement," I fully support the

need for the expression of multiple views and perspectives on "preferred courses of

action and priorities" in order to reach a collective determination on the best course of

action. While Franco acknowledges that "this type of conversation may (or may not)

have well-organized rules of conduct," I believe that the most successful deliberations

emerge from forums with effective leaders. The moderator offers a prime example of

this kind of effective leadership.

While the duties of a moderator vary from context to context, it is helpful to step

outside of its political function for a moment to examine an example of a moderator in a

business setting, which similarly emphasizes the value of "mutual responsibility."

Although the source of this example may appear somewhat unusual, its qualities align

exceptionally well with previously mentioned skills, including critical inquiry, rhetorical

listening, Rogerian rhetoric, and collaborative learning. Taken from the Kentucky Real

Estate Exchangors website, the following list of duties focuses the role of the moderator

around a group dynamic since "groups are more effective than individuals in problem

solving" given their access to "more information" and their ability "to think in a greater

variety of ways."

The first point stipulates an emphasis on inquiry: "The objective of the Moderator

is to ask questions that will bring out the information permitting the group to understand

the problem and suggest possible solutions to the problem." Inquiry, as Jason Kosnoski

points out, can "draw attention to alternate aspects of the larger situation" that

participants may not have previously considered (667). The second point marks a crucial

distinction between the role the moderator should play in problem solving and the role

participants should play in problem solving: "The Moderator's function is to stimulate

problem solving behavior of others rather than try to solve the problem as the

Moderator." The result is to promote a sense of shared agency. The third and fourth

points deal with pragmatic issues related to keeping time and ensuring the productive use

of the forum; these points will be explored more fully when taking a closer look at

Kosnoski's treatment of the teacher as moderator. The fifth point extends the first point's

interest in inquiry: "The Moderator's questioning technique encourages the Presenter to

remain flexible and open to new ideas and even to accepting a redefining of [the] client's

problem." Framing and reframing an issue to consider secondary and even tertiary

interests can be helpful in reaching common ground about the main issue. The sixth

point raises issues of authority and power dynamics: "The Moderator must have an

awareness of the power that is exercised in front of the group. The Moderator has the

ability to influence the direction of the solutions and the response of the problem."

Examination of issues of authority and power in light of feminist rhetoric will also speak

to this point in subsequent sections of this chapter. The seventh point is suggestive of

Rogerian rhetoric in which participants must signal understanding of others' views before

proceeding: "The Moderator must make sure the problem is understood before asking for

solutions." The eighth point warns the moderator against functioning as an evaluator or

judge of participants' views, but instead encourages a synthesis of ideas: "The Moderator

should not listen to evaluate—look for weaknesses and instances in which ideas would

not be appropriate. The Moderator should listen to summarize or focus attention on

grasping the meaning the participant is striving to express." The ninth and tenth points

reveal the Moderator's interest in fostering a climate of "brainstorming" without "attack"

or participation in adversarial discourse.

Although the duties of a moderator vary within and among political, business,

community, and academic contexts, many of them converge on the following points: (1)

to facilitate cooperation among participants; (2) to make good use of resources, including

time, effort, and attention of participants; (3) to present opportunities for participants to

voice their concerns and to be heard by other members of the meeting; (4) to establish

and maintain a non-hierarchical sense of order and community; (5) to bring together as

many disparate voices as possible to move towards common ground; (6) to encourage

decision making and collective action that satisfies the needs and interests of participants.

Other duties may seem worthy of inclusion in this list, but I do not wish to get mired in

the purely practical aspects of the moderator's role. Rather, I now wish to examine the

goals and values of the moderator situated within an ethical and rhetorical framework.

These goals and values align themselves explicitly with conceiving the town hall meeting as a metaphor for deliberative discourse.

Attention to conversation and collaboration is particularly important when occupying the role of the moderator. The figure of the moderator in a deliberative or community context de-centers any kind of organization where one individual functions as the primary decision-maker who is unaccountable to anyone. Further, it challenges notions of power and patriarchy that have traditionally reflected the idea of the text where only the author's voice is represented. In his article "Artful Discussion: John Dewey's Classroom as a Model of Deliberative Association," Jason Kosnoski examines "Dewey's understanding of classroom discussion to construct a model of democratic deliberation" (654). Part of this model involves the necessary roles of conversation and collaboration. What distinguishes Dewey's approach from my own is that Dewey treats the teacher, not the student, as a moderator "who regulates the spatial and temporal quality of the entire deliberation" (654). While my ultimate proposal focuses on the student-writer adopting the role of the moderator to produce more nuanced and deliberative discourse in his/her own written work, I find Dewey's approach—and Kosnoski's critical examination of it— particularly helpful in more fully understanding the role of the moderator. Since our students naturally look to their instructors as models of critical thinking, perhaps looking to the teacher as moderator first may make adopting this role less intimidating and thus more accessible for students.

The role of the moderator is marked by a position of authority, power, and trust; these are very complex and consequential issues that require diligent examination when considering how the teacher, and subsequently the student-writer, can and should embody

the role of the moderator. As Kosnoski points out, "Although some might claim the presence of such an authority figure endangers the deliberators' autonomy, Dewey stresses that good teachers assist students in constructing their own solutions to their own problems, and therefore a moderator could actively intervene and respect the normative principles of deliberative democracy" (654). In this way, the teacher serves as an authority figure who guides rather than dictates, who works as a co-learner with her students rather than as an all-knowing lecturer. In her essay "The Politics of Tutoring: Feminism Within the Patriarchy," Meg Woolbright acknowledges the issues of power and authority at work within composition, specifically within the realm of tutoring. Her approach—rooted specifically in feminist rhetoric—is important to keep in mind when considering the teacher as moderator. Woolbright asserts: "On the level of feminist pedagogy, the issue is one of power. Negotiating the uses of power is even more complex than the issue of rhetoric. bell hooks says that as feminist teachers one of the issues we need to contend with is that of using power without dominating and coercing our students" (19). Kosnoski reminds us of Dewey's "non-hierachical pedagogy" which Woolbright herself cites as fundamental to teaching methods advocated by "both feminist and writing center commentators" (18). These methods that are "non-hierarchical, cooperative, interactive ventures" support the process goals that Woolbright cites from Nancy Schniedewind. Woolbright explains:

> The conflicts that result at the boundary between feminist rhetoric and pedagogy and the patriarchal values of the academy are manifested in our conversations with student writers…As Nancy Schniedewind asserts, in these conversations students learn at least as much from our practices, what she calls the 'hidden curriculum' as they do from our theories. In order to determine if our 'hidden curriculum' suggests feminist values, Schniedewind suggests five process goals against which we can measure

our interactions with students. These are the development of an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and community; shared leadership; a cooperative structure; the integration of cognitive and affective learning; and action. (17-18)

In order to effectively model how conversation can work as a method for deliberation, teachers must remain mindful of their 'hidden curriculum' and how it supports the same elements within Schniedewind's process goals that we find within the town hall meeting. These goals parallel the aforementioned goals of the moderator situated within a business environment; they also reinforce my own proposed set of duties attributed to the moderator. In short, these goals are endemic to and reflective of the model of the town hall meeting. Among the moderator's varied duties, gaining trust of participants is of primary importance. Since the moderator must embody a leadership role without promoting an insistence on hierarchy, the moderator can actively promote shared leadership as a core value. Further, the attention to time, agenda items, and the effective flow of the meeting entrusted to the moderator ensure the town hall model as a cooperative structure. Allowing for multiple and conflicting voices to be heard also actuates the learning process. Through this process, participants can arrive at some kind of consensus or equip themselves with the ability to make well-informed decisions that necessitate action.

In her analysis of the way we practice feminist rhetoric within tutoring exchanges, Woolbright highlights how both "feminist and writing center commentators advocate teaching methods that are non-hierarchical, cooperative, and interactive ventures between students and tutors talking about issues grounded in the students' own experience. They are, above all, conversations between equals in which knowledge is constructed, not

transmitted" (18). This idea of learning as "conversations between equals" is further reinforced by Amy Shapiro's model of the feminist classroom, "one based not on the traditional paradigm of knowledge as power, but on understanding as power," according to Woolbright (17). As Woolbright further explains, "With this model, the classroom becomes not an arena of confrontation and debate focused on winners who 'know' more than losers, but a place for conversation among equals" (17). Similar to the feminist classroom, the town hall meeting serves as a normative ideal, not as "arena of confrontation and debate" but as "a place for conversation." In light of these considerations from feminist rhetoric and writing center practices highlighted by Woolbright, Kosnoski's use of Dewey gains credence, specifically on this point: "teachers can easily be thought of as deliberative moderators who encourage general interest in discussion, *not specific goals or values*. Teacher-moderators also expand the context of deliberative solutions as they stretch the students' (or citizens') understanding…to facilitate the growth of moral outlook and political perspective" [my italics] (655-656).

What should be clear from these perspectives on authority and deliberation is the fact that the role of the moderator is deeply embedded in a position of power. In his essay "Deliberative Democracy and Authority," Mark Warren explores the tricky but necessary role of authority in deliberative democracy, urging participants in such a democracy to treat authority "as a necessary evil" (46). One of the main reasons Warren urges us to identify yet still invest an "enormous domain of trust in authorities" is out of practical necessity (46). His preceding claim that "no one can master all discourses"— and perhaps modifying this statement to read "no one *should* master all discourses"—is

reflective of feminist rhetoric which invokes us to dismantle patriarchal and hierarchical approaches to learning. A shared and collective approach to deliberation and discourse allows for multiple perspectives, as well as an ethics of accountability.[35] Warren astutely points out that an ethics of accountability remains largely absent from other alternatives to deliberation, such as "coercion, manipulation, acquiescence, unthinking obedience, or decisions left to markets"—all of which are steeped in patriarchal and/or hierarchical organizations (47).

The question before us then is: how can and how should the moderator best use such power and authority? Warren answers this question, in part, in his general argument that "authority has a necessary and symbiotic relationship to deliberative democracy" (47). Of most interest to the town hall model I am proposing here is the word "symbiotic." By first viewing the teacher in the role of the moderator presiding over the "meeting" (i.e., classroom), we must acknowledge a symbiotic relationship between that teacher and her students. Amy Shapiro offers a compelling portrait of this kind of symbiotic learning relationship when "the student becomes the text" (74) and when "we create a conversation in the classroom" (72). In this non-traditional approach, "the authority of the teacher as a 'knower' is altered. The teacher becomes a model in the sense that she must be the ultimate learner" (79). Just as the moderator guides the discussion or meeting along a productive path, so, too, does the teacher as co-learner "assist the students in articulating the texts to themselves and each other. Her work,

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[35] Warren explains the functional reason for authority in the following passage: "Limitations of time, expertise, and attention (that is, political participation is only one of many goods, and a good life would not be consumed by politics; Dahl 1970, Shapiro 1994) converge to limit radically individual participation and, conversely, to induce pressures for other kinds of decision making (Sirianni 1981)" (46).

therefore, is not to tell the students the meaning but to create an environment through her choice of works and classroom activities in which the student is reminded of her efficacy as a member of the classroom environment" (79).

Warren expounds on this symbiotic relationship by offering a helpful perspective on how we might structure the role of the moderator. He claims: "deliberative democracy requires authority but of a specific kind, an authority that simultaneously complements and reinforces deliberative decision making" (51). The "deliberative teacher, or democratic moderator," as Kosnoski describes this role, represents this kind of authority which our society entrusts to produce thoughtful, inquisitive, and active students. Indeed, Kosnoski explains that "with so many general linkages between education and democracy…it seems logical to examine how Dewey's specific educational techniques and the figure whom he sees implementing these techniques, the teacher, might be translated into deliberative association" (665).

Four areas best support the case for looking to the deliberative teacher as a model for the student-writer to follow in his/her own role as a moderator. These areas include: (1) "regulating the general aesthetic form of the deliberation"; (2) supporting a "definite direction" of class discussion through "acute observation of the students"; (3) maintaining "dialogic rhythm during classroom inquiry"; and (4) guiding the "spatial perspectives" of students to allow for sufficient breadth and depth on a particular topic (665-667). I argue that a paired exercise, specifically set within a writing workshop on close reading and analysis of literary texts, can achieve these aims and support the deliberative teacher. This exercise not only allows "the student to become the text" but

also fosters the symbiotic relationship between teacher and student as co-learners where "knowledge is constructed, not transmitted" (Woolbright 18).

When I introduce students to the process of close reading and analysis of texts, I do so with the understanding that many of them assume they are paying adequate attention to the text already. Often, however, the kind of attention they devote to the text translates as plot summary or a cursory treatment of the text's significance. Introducing them to a step-by-step process, first as individuals, then in pairs, and finally within a larger class discussion, proves helpful in guiding them into an academic conversation where their writing voice reflects multiple perspectives, not just their own. In this particular writing workshop, I ask students to practice working with quotes from Arthur Miller's play "Death of a Salesman." Choosing from a list of quotes they could potentially use in their essays, students are then instructed to establish the context of that quote: to tell the reader exactly where this quote is situated within the larger plot, which characters are involved, and to include any other pertinent information about the scene. Next, students are instructed to circle or underline key words or images that appear significant. The third step of this process asks students to generate a list of these words' meanings and connotations, understanding that all of these associations may not pertain to "Death of a Salesman." Once students have generated this list, they must determine which meanings or connotations best apply to "Death of a Salesman," and to their specific reading of a particular theme in this play. This process aids in generating an analysis of a particular passage. They must write at least four to five sentences of analysis, highlighting their chosen words from the passage.

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When students attempt this exercise for the first time, they do so entirely on their own in class. I do not interfere, their peers have no say, and no other resources (i.e., critical essays) are made available to them. In this part of the exercise, students practice brainstorming, expressive writing (i.e., what the passage means to me), and generative thinking—all of which are helpful and valuable practices, but which should not be treated as end goals. By writing on their own and sharing that prose with others as a finished product, students risk attempting "to convince others concerning particular points of contention" by exclusively expressing "their individual experiences" with the text (Kosnoski 665-666). As Kosnoski goes on to explain, "Focused on single speech acts and the attainment of individual goals, the discussants cannot always monitor the general aesthetic dynamics of the conversation; whether it is proceeding with the proper rhythm to inspire interest or covering wide enough semiotic breadth to allow for adequate sympathy" (666). Here is where the teacher as moderator may enter to ensure that students stay invested in their ideas, but open to others' points of view "as they undergo transformation of their views and interests" (666). Often, we see such transformation in one-on-one conferences with students about their drafts, and especially in peer tutoring sessions. Within the classroom environment, peer feedback is essential, as well.

In the next stage of this exercise, I ask students to choose a different quote and to work with a classmate. Student A reads his chosen quote aloud and then goes on to specify which words/images he will focus on in his analysis. Student B then serves as a scribe who diligently takes note on whatever thoughts, ideas, and meanings Student A generates about his chosen quote. The rationale behind this exercise is to allow Student A to engage in generative thinking uninterrupted and undistracted by the simultaneous act

of thinking and writing. Student B can then pose questions or offer additional insights that Student A may take into consideration. Students A and B then share the outcome of their paired exercise with the rest of the class and the teacher, who supply additional feedback. This part of the exercise reinforces the latter three aspects of Dewey's model of the deliberative teacher. Once Student A and Student B share their work with the rest of the class, the teacher provides "genuine attention" to the "mental movement" of both students' thought processes. By inviting additional voices in from the rest of the class, the deliberative teacher "harmonizes it all…so that it leads consistently and consecutively in a definite direction" (Dewey, qtd. by Kosnoski 666). Maintaining "dialogic rhythm during classroom inquiry" proves additionally important whereby "the teacher draws attention to alternate aspects of the larger situation under discussion" and "modulates between the perspectives of what he [Dewey] calls the 'far and the near' and the 'old and the new,' and simultaneously the 'for what' and the 'to what' of the students' goals" (667). Working with critical essays can also allow for the presence of an additional voice to bear on students' writing-as-transformation process.

The final part of this process when Student A and Student B share their ideas with the rest of the class and the teacher points to the importance of "rhythmic modulation" in a class discussion. Kosnoski observes how "the teacher can once again involve herself and ensure that students slow the conversation to a point where an adequate rhythm can be reestablished or the proper semiotic width can be developed" (667). Kosnoski demonstrates such modulation by using Dewey's model of the "ideal classroom"—a classroom structured by different activity rooms, where the library and recitation room remain at the center. Kosnoski explains how "Dewey's classroom ensures that when

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moving between the different activity rooms, students must pass through the recitation room and the library, visually stressing the reiterative nature of classroom discussion" (668). We might imagine the library/recitation room as a town hall meeting whereby participants (i.e., students) revisit ideas continuously, even though they move in and out of different perspectives afforded by the other "rooms" (i.e., texts). As Kosnoski explains, the deliberative teacher "rhythmically encourages the class to alternate investigating and discussing the 'old and the new' aspects of their common problem", or text (668). Once students have practiced this process on their own, they are better equipped to tap into conversation as a collaborative learning tool. Enacting such conversation in their own prose allows them to fully embody the role of the moderator whose writing reflects "internalized conversation re-externalized" (Bruffee 641).

The role of the moderator offers the student-writer an alternative to traditional political and pedagogical situations since the moderator operates from a more collective mindset as he/she seeks to evaluate issues that range from academic to professional to personal. The role of the writer as moderator aligns itself with the Lehigh English Department's mission statement, specifically, "this ethical and philosophical perspective [which] envisions the world as a place where people are bound to one another in a network of mutual responsibility." The student-writer as moderator thus prepares himself to approach the world in a similar fashion. In his study, Bryan offers a pointed yet illuminating definition of the town meeting that highlights the significance of mutual responsibility: "Above all else, town meeting is public talk—common people *standing* for something" (139). Bryan's emphasis on the term "standing" is meant to recall his example of Carl Hess, the figure in Norman Rockwell's portrait "Freedom of Speech"

who stands before the crowd speaking. As Bryan notes, "it is in the speaking, the direct face-to-face link between talk and power, that real democracy transcends nearly every other definition of democracy issued since the Greeks" (140).[36] The idea of "public talk" and "speaking" falls within the realm of conversation, an important feature to consider of any debate, discussion, or even argument. Just as individuals stand for something, so, too, do they stand *with* others and are therefore ultimately accountable *to* others.

Although we talk of inviting students into "academic conversations" or dialogues as a way to familiarize them with the tenets of academic discourse, we sometimes fail to consider the ethical implications in doing so. For example, in their book *They Say, I Say*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein offer students a series of templates or models to introduce rhetorical moves that are part of academic conversations; these rhetorical moves allow students to integrate their ideas with other sources so as to participate in an academic dialogue. Specifically, they claim that "this book invites you to become a critical thinker who can enter the types of conversations described eloquently by the philosopher Kenneth Burke" (12). Burke writes:

> You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about…You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you…The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress." (qtd. by Graff and Birkenstein 12)

The main value of Burke's passage for Graff and Birkenstein is to show students the rhetorical move of entering into the conversation by "putting in your oar." As they insist,

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[36] In a footnote that appears a bit later in this chapter, Bryan cites David Sally who argues, "'No other variable has as strong and consistent an effect on results as face-to-face communication'" (142).

this "can only be done in conversation with others; that we all enter the dynamic world of ideas not as isolated individuals, but as social beings deeply connected to others who have a stake in what we say" (12-13). But what happens once students do 'put in their oar'? While I applaud Graff and Birkenstein for this emphasis on conversation over argument, I do find myself pausing at the way Burke concludes this imagined scene "with the discussion still vigorously in progress." Our students are not always completely aware that the discussion of a topic or the exploration of an issue continues long after we have ceased to discuss it in class or long after they have written about it in a five-page paper. Part of the reason students gravitate to the thesis-driven essay that follows itself neatly along the lines of "argument, counter-argument, rebuttal, conclusion" is that it offers a sense of closure and completion; it reads as direct, confident prose. Any deviation from or alternative to this traditional five-paragraph essay format threatens their role as writers who must complete an assignment.

Yet imagining that the discussion continues on without them is an essential part of academic discourse that we must teach them. It is crucial to frame this discourse as an extended conversation that we can contribute to but which we cannot and should not wholly and exclusively shape as individual authors. Herein lies the challenge with teaching students that the best academic writing is not one driven by pontificating, debating, and slamming others' ideas. Rather, the best academic writing signals ways in which the writer has carefully 'put in his oar' to contribute to the further understanding of a particular issue. This reflects an additional emphasis on the role of collaborative learning, which I will examine shortly in light of Rebecca Moore Howard's and Kenneth Bruffee's extensive research on the topic. A key task for the moderator then, and more

specifically for the writer as moderator, is to facilitate conversation to stave off

adversarial discourse and to reach more productive common ground. As Warren

observes, "politics emerges when common ground is lacking" (47). The role of the

moderator shows students how to more securely approach common ground by

functioning in a "supportive relationship to democracy" (Warren 48).

Bryan's study returns us to democracy as an ideal through his analysis of the town

meeting as "an American conversation." In fact, he devotes an entire chapter to exploring

the criticisms often leveraged against this form of what he calls "real democracy." Not

only does Bryan shed historical light on the romantic and sentimental view the town

meeting has garnered over the years, but he also explores the promise inherent in this

image of democracy. Bryan adamantly professes his belief in the town meeting as a form

of "real democracy—where the people make decisions that matter, on the spot, in face-to-

face assemblies that have the force of law" (x). Perhaps it is difficult to find such value

in contemporary town hall meetings that seem to move away too easily from reasoned

conversation and a rational exchange of ideas. Yet this crisis in 2011 is not the first

moment in history that "the institution has fallen on hard times"; A.G. Sedgwick, a writer

for *Nation*, used this phrase in the article "The Decay of Town Government" in 1897 to

describe the decay of the town meeting. Bryan himself notes how "many of my students

have pointed out over the years [that] some of the arguments made at town meeting are

downright silly" (141). The same assessment can often be made of views expressed in

town meetings today. Bryan charts the progress, or perhaps lack thereof, of town hall

meetings since that time, citing problems with corruption, "ignoring the will of the

people," fixed elections, voting taking precedence over deliberation, decline in

participation, dominance of special interests, efficacy of local governments, and many more (28-54).

If the town hall meeting suggests an unstable democratic function in our history, why examine it within the realm of the humanities, specifically rhetoric and composition? What value can we find—rhetorical, ethical, or otherwise—in this hallmark of American politics? As noted simply and succinctly by Bryan, the town meeting functions as a space "where the people make decisions that matter." Our students will be called upon to make such decisions in whatever discipline they pursue, whatever profession they follow. While I am not advocating for the town meeting as a model governed by "the force of law," I do think qualities of the town meeting can be reexamined and revitalized to further hone students' deliberation skills. Specifically, both conversation and collaboration prove essential to the success of any moderator, whether that moderator is presiding over a town meeting or business meeting. Embodying the role of the moderator allows the student-writer to successfully navigate adversarial discourse using conversation and collaboration as techniques that encourage inquiry, develop shared agency, focus on problem-solving rather than divisiveness, support a non-hierarchical power structure, and move towards common ground by synthesizing disparate points of view.

Rebecca Moore Howard examines the role of conversation in her essay "Collaborative Pedagogy," citing Kenneth A. Bruffee's three principles of collaborative learning:

> 1.[B]ecause thought is internalized conversation, thought and conversation tend to work largely in the same way. (639)

2. If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized. (641)
3. To learn is to work collaboratively to establish and maintain knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers through the process that Richard Rorty calls 'socially justifying belief.' (646) (Tate et. al 54)

Not only does Howard's examination of collaboration denounce the kind of hierarchical power structure at work with the "solitary author," but it also focuses on the reflexive and discursive forces of thought and talk that I have highlighted previously in my discussion of the peer review workshop on close reading and analysis. The first principle points to the writer coming to consciousness for the first time about a particular subject, interpreting and apprehending various sources and ideas, and trying to sift through them and determine his own perspective in relation to others. Indeed, many students experience those "aha" moments whereby they reach an important insight or make a specific discovery that is new to their experience. Yet these are never solo endeavors, as the second point shows. The assertion that "writing is internalized conversation" points to ways in which the writer, the text, the teacher, and peers all influence and shape an internal thought process before those ideas are "re-externalized" in the student's prose. Erika Lindeman describes this process as participating in a discourse community, a community which reflects process-centered writing: "To portray writers as solitary individuals is to divorce them from the social context in which language always operates. Language is a form of social interaction, a process of shaping our environment even as it shapes us. We write to make meaning, but we also write to make a difference" (254-255). Not only is this view in line with goals of feminist rhetoric, but it also points to the

ways in which student-writers participate in writing as a social act, creating "knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers."

Understanding the social context of writing is crucial to understanding the role of the writer as moderator. Even though they appear to act as independent leaders, the moderator is much more collaborative, navigating others and themselves through the intricacies of a complex web of ideas. As Lindeman elaborates: "Because many students have learned to be individual competitors, the teacher deliberately fosters collaboration so that students must help one another learn and may share in the group's achievements" (255). In this way, the teacher models the role of the moderator as a facilitator of meaning-making.[37] The responsibility of this role can and should eventually shift to the student, as Lindeman explains: "In this model, students are always members of a stable writing group, working together for the entire term so that they develop trust in one another, accept responsibility for one another's successes and failures, and come to appreciate the diverse abilities they bring to the community" (255). In other words, students must learn that as moderators of their own writing, they are accountable to and responsible to others who may read and benefit from their work. Once the writer embodies the role of the moderator, this model extends to the writer gaining the trust of his audience and fairly representing the diverse perspectives that he has been dialoguing with in his research and study. Thus, this role offers no room for adversarial discourse.

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[37] Rebecca Moore Howard explains more on this point: "The teacher's role in small-group pedagogy is again that of facilitator. Part of this facilitation may involve teaching students effective pragmatics: if they sit close to each other and make eye contact, they will talk more freely and sincerely (Bell-Metereau)" (59). Howard also cites the importance of encouraging productive debate: "To employ small-group pedagogy is to decenter the classroom, opening it up to difference and dissent, and teachers must welcome rather than squelch such responses (Roskelly)" (59).

The best example I can offer of this kind of thought as internalized conversation re-externalized is from my experience witnessing the culminating town hall meeting at the Mid-Atlantic Writer Centers Association Conference in March, 2009. The theme of the conference, "A Firm League of Friendship," aimed to "build upon the spirit of collaboration and dialogue that led to" the first U.S. Constitution, the Articles of Confederation. Throughout the conference, individual participants volunteered as scribes who gathered the ideas of their designated panel. Typically, these panels were comprised of three to four presenters. The task of the scribe was to accurately record and reflect not only the formal ideas of the presenters, but also those which emerged from subsequent Q&A discussions. While these scribes did not embody the qualities of a moderator during the actual panel presentations and discussions, they did in effect mimic the role of the writer as moderator in accurately representing the multiplicity of voices at work in the group. Near the end of the panel, the scribe would read aloud his/her notes. Other participants would then offer additional remarks or comments that the scribe may have overlooked or neglected to record. The scribe then revised his "proclamation," or collection of ideas, which he later read aloud during the town hall meeting to all conference attendees. This method proved invaluable for participants who could not possibly have attended all panel sessions of the conference. Listening to the scribes' proclamations, however, allowed participants a glimpse into the content of each panel.

From these proclamations emerged an extended discussion of topical issues, such as alternatives to the first-year writing program, writing across the curriculum, portfolio writing, and digital writing, to name a few. Keynote speaker Muriel Harris functioned as somewhat of a moderator, guiding the discussion along, making sure all voices were

heard, and offering her expertise in mitigating these issues. This town meeting

demonstrated what Bruffee aims for in his article "Collaborative Learning and the

'Conversation of Mankind'" when he explains that what distinguishes collaborative

learning in its various manifestations from "traditional classroom practice was that it did

not seem to change what people learned…so much as it changed the social context in

which they learned it" (638). Given that the aim of writing centers is to empower the

student writer with a tutor as his guide, the town hall event reflected writing center theory

and practice at its best.

Indeed, collaborative learning serves as a widely-encompassing term that captures

academic work like peer tutoring, small group work, writing center work, peer review,

etc. The success of these kinds of collaborative learning hinges on the social aspect of

learning first and content second. All aim towards the goal of moral conversation[38] that

Kenneth Bruffee cites from author Michael Oakeshott: "'we are the inheritors, neither of

an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information,

but of a conversation…It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each

of ourselves…in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to

conversation'" (638). Of greatest application to the writer as moderator is Bruffee's

reading of Oakeshott:

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[38] Cited in Kosnoski's essay, Seyla Benhabib defines "the normative core of deliberative democracy as the 'construction of the 'moral point of view' along the model of a moral conversation' governed by the norms of 'universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity.' Through stressing that deliberative democracy constitutes not simply a decision-making procedure but also a 'moral point of view,' Benhabib emphasizes that effective political dialog alters not only individual interest but also moral perspectives and self-interpretations" (657). Similarly, my aim in exploring deliberative discourse in the composition classroom is to encourage students to examine and reflect on their own individual interests within a framework that encompasses other points of view. "Universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity" are crucial aids in that process.

Oakeshott assumes what the work of Lev Vygotsky and others has shown, that reflective thought is public or social conversation internalized…We first experience and learn 'the skill and partnership of conversation' in the external arena of direct social exchange with other people. Only then do we learn to displace that 'skill and partnership' by playing silently ourselves, in imagination, *the parts of all the participants in the conversation.*" [my italics] (639)

When a student approaches a writing task, he must consider a multitude of ideas: those of the text, those who have written critically and extensively before him about the text, those ideas which have emerged from his peers and teacher in class discussions, and finally those which he himself has grappled with along the way. Other analytical "lenses"— feminist, historical, psychological, scientific, sociological—might also bear on this process. To embody the role of the moderator, the writer must engage in an imaginative enactment of all participants' viewpoints, drawing on all available rhetorical skills but specifically Rogerian rhetoric and deliberation. As Bruffee explains, "The range, complexity, and subtlety of our thought, its power, the practical and conceptual uses we can put it to, and the very issues we can address result in large measure directly from the degree to which we have been initiated into what Oakeshott calls the potential 'skill and partnership' of human conversation in its public and social form" (640). This skill and partnership hinges on the writer as moderator practicing deliberative discourse by considering a range of ideas before presenting his own "proclamation" in the form of an academic argument. Such an argument is strengthened by the awareness and recognition

of multiple voices at work, voices which the writer must ultimately coalesce or synthesize[39] on his own, but which also reflect the disparate ideas of all stakeholders.

Howard aptly devotes an entire section of her article to acknowledging that collaborative learning does not automatically equate to consensus or conflict-free analysis. Instead, she warns her readers to "prepare for dissent within the groups, and prepare to manage it in two dimensions: the teacher and the students. Neither should attempt to suppress dissent or enforce consensus" (65). And, indeed, the role of the moderator (as noted above in my examples from the Kentucky Real Estate Exchangors, my peer review writing workshop, etc.) is to explore disparate views as a way of identifying what common ground they share. Howard cites Linda Flower in this respect who asserts: "'Conflict, embedded in a spirit of stubborn generosity, is not only generative but necessary'…From such conflict can emerge 'a joint inquiry into thorny problems, opening up live options that let us construct a language of possibility and a more complicated ground for action'" (65).

Warren also intimates that conflict is a healthy and natural result of any kind of deliberation (50). He astutely notes that "it is not necessary for individuals to have a confidence that deliberation can produce consensus. It is only necessary for individuals to believe that talk is better than the alternatives, such as fighting or coercive imposition, and then design institutions in such a way that recourse to these alternatives is difficult for…deliberation" (50). Indeed, the town hall serves as a viable model to more fully access deliberative discourse. It staves off adversarial discourse, invites students to

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[39] Howard cites Lunsford and Ede who include "synthesis" among the goals of collaborative writing assignments: "'synthesis' tasks demand that divergent perspectives be brought together into a solution acceptable to the whole group or an outside group" (62-63). Such is also the role of the moderator.

participate in meaningful collaborations, and joins teachers and students together as co-learners. The model of the town hall meeting can serve as an exciting pedagogical ground on which to enact listening rhetoric, Rogerian rhetoric, feminist rhetoric, deliberation and cooperation, coalescent argumentation, and perhaps most importantly conversation. This, above all else, has been absent from our classrooms and democracy for far too long.

Appendix A

Freedom of Speech (1943), Norman Rockwell

Appendix B

Typical Procedure Using Robert's Rules of Order

a) The Moderator reads the article: "Shall the Town give $2000 to the ice rink for their youth hockey program?"

b) A voter raises his or her hand to be recognized (called on). The moderator recognizes the voter and the voter stands up and makes a motion to adopt the article: "I move the article."

c) The moderator asks if there is a "second to the motion" (another voter who wants to discuss and vote on the article): "Do we have a second to the motion?"

d) A second voter "seconds" the motion: "I second the motion." If there is no second, the article is "passed over" (not discussed or voted on.)

e) After the "second", the moderator asks for any discussion on the motion: "Would anyone like to begin discussion on the motion?"

f) Voters raise their hands to be recognized by the moderator. When a person is called on, he or she speaks to the moderator. Voters may make statements in support of or against the proposal. This discussion is called debating the motion. At any time, a voter can move to close the debate.

A motion to cut off debate needs a two-thirds majority to pass. The moderator ensures that everyone who wants to speak has a turn before anyone is allowed to speak a second time. This prevents the debate from getting personal, and makes sure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.

g) A voter may move to amend the article: "I move to amend the article by reducing the proposed amount to $1500." An amendment can be rejected by the moderator (ruled "out of order") if it is not germane (relevant) or if it is hostile to (against) the article. For example, an amendment that proposes to take the $2,000 for the ice rink and use it instead for repairs on the town pool would be rejected as hostile.

Amendments must be germane because voters can only make decisions about topics that were included in the town meeting warning. For that reason amendments cannot propose an action that was not warned.

h) After an amendment is made, the moderator asks for a second, and if there is one, the moderator will see if people want to discuss the amendment. At the end of discussion

there will be a vote, first on the amendment, and then, if discussion is complete, there will be a vote on the original motion, as amended.

i) Each article on the warning can be amended only twice. The votes go in reverse order.

j) There are three ways for the town meeting to vote on an article:

> 1. For a "Voice vote", the moderator will say "All in favor indicate by saying Yea." followed by "All against signify by saying Nay."
>
> 2. If the moderator cannot tell the outcome of the voice vote he or she can ask for a "hand count": "All in favor of the motion, please raise your hand."
>
> 3. If seven voters move to "divide the assembly", the motion is voted by "paper ballot": "I move to divide the assembly." The moderator asks "Are there six more voters who 'second' this motion?" If so, paper is passed out to all voters and they indicate their vote by writing yes or no. The votes are usually counted by the clerk and board of civil authority (local officials who help run the election) and are then reported to the moderator.

No matter which voting method is used, a voter must be present to vote at town meeting. A person cannot go home early and ask a friend or family member to cast his vote for him.

k) After the vote is announced, the moderator moves to the next article on the agenda by reading it to the assembly. If a voter interrupts this reading by moving to reconsider the prior vote, the moderator must stop his reading and ask if there is a second to the motion to reconsider. The meeting may only reconsider a vote once before going to the next item on the agenda.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Kristina Fennelly   1858 Mansfield Street
Lehigh University   Hellertown, PA 18055
35 Sayre Drive   201-527-5388
Bethlehem, PA 18015   krf2@lehigh.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. English, Lehigh University, May 2011

- Major Field: Rhetoric & Composition
- Minor Fields: British Modernism & American Modernism
- Graduate Certification in Women's Studies

M.A. English, Lehigh University, May 2004

B.A. English, Skidmore College, summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, May 2002

DISSERTATION

Title: *Deliberative Discourse in the Town Meeting*

Advisor: Dr. Barry Kroll

AREAS OF TEACHING SPECIALIZATION

Composition & Rhetoric
Writing Pedagogy
American Modernism
British Modernism
Women's Studies
Feminist Theory

PUBLICATIONS

"Found & Bound? Redeeming the Fallen Woman in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite
Runner.*" *Crossing Over: Redefining the Scope of Border Studies*. Eds. Antonio Medina-
Rivera and Diana Orendi. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lehigh University, English Department   **August, 2002-May, 2009 &**
                                                      August, 2010-May, 2011

- **English Instructor**
  English I: Composition and Literature I

  Coursework includes cultural analysis of contemporary topics with an emphasis on formulating claims, sustaining an argument, and revising prose for cogency and clarity. Particular attention is devoted to close reading and analysis, as well.

  English II: Composition and Literature II

  Coursework includes analysis of the specific theme of work, with sub-topics devoted to its intersection with identity, family, and other cultural institutions. Texts include expository and literary selections, including work narratives, plays, and novels.

  English 187: Work & the Self—How Work Narratives Shape the American Self

  Literature course focused on work's impact on the construction of the American worker as detailed in texts such as *Working*, *Bread Givers*, *Of Mice & Men*, "Death of a Salesman," and *Nickel & Dimed.*

Lafayette College, English Department   **August, 2009-May, 2010**

- **English Instructor**
  English 110: College Writing

  Coursework explored expository and literary accounts of work, as well as the changing nature of work in the post-industrial United States. Students practiced writing personal narratives, textual analyses, and cultural critiques, which were revised for final writing portfolios.

DEPARTMENTAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- **Graduate Student Representative**, Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, 2009-2010
- **Women's Center Intern & Volunteer**, Lehigh University's Women's Center, 2008-2009
- **Assistant to the Writing Program**, English Department, 2006-2007
- **Writing Center Consultant**, English Department, 2003-2009
- **Graduate Representative**, English Department Graduate Committee, 2006-2008

- **Research Assistant** to Professor Elizabeth Dolan, English Department, 2005-2008
- **Co-Organizer**, *Feminisms* (Graduate Student Group), Lehigh University, 2007-2008
- **Graduate Student Mentor**, English Department, 2003 and 2006
- **Judge**, Williams Writing Prize, English Department, 2003-2009

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"'A World of Words': The Value of Academic Writing in Social Networks." *University of Connecticut's 6th Annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing*. Storrs, CT, March 2011.

"The Listening-Oriented Writer." *Pennsylvania College English Association Conference*, Bethlehem, PA, April 2010.

"Deliberation and the Town Hall Meeting." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, Louisville, KY, March 2010.

"Feminism and Writing: Who Wants to Talk About That?" *Northeast Modern Language Association Conference*, Buffalo, NY, April 2008.

"The Search for Female Identity in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns.*" *The College of Saint Rose Women's Studies Second Annual Regional Conference*, Albany, NY, March 2008.

"Blogging, Instant Messaging, and 'Friending': The Ethical Implications of Technologically-Constructed Texts, Spaces, & Identities." *Popular Culture/American Culture Association Conference*, Boston, MA, April 2007.

"Necessary Handrails: The Importance of Patience and Dialogue in Tutoring Learning Disabled Students at the College Level." *18th Annual Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association Conference*, St. Davids, PA, March 2007.

"Stupid Girls? Feminism under the Guise of Celebrity Imitation." *The College of Saint Rose Women's* Studies First Annual Regional Conference, Albany, NY, March 2007.

"Telling Our Stories, Healing Our Selves: An Analysis of Coping Mechanisms in Lucille Clifton's *The Terrible Stories.*" *The Society for the Study of American Women Writers Third International Conference*, Philadelphia, PA, November 2006.

"The Ethics of On-line Tutoring." *17th Annual Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association Conference*, Annapolis, MD, April 2006.

"Locating Personal and Intellectual Value within a Cultural Studies Composition Classroom." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, Chicago, IL, March 2006.

"Found and Bound? Redeeming the Fallen Woman in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*." *Crossing Over: Learning to Navigate the Borderlands of Intercultural Encounters Symposium*. Cleveland, OH, October 2005.

CONFERENCE PANELS ORGANIZED AND CHAIRED

"Inventing an On-line Writing Center: A Study in Progress." *18th Annual Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association Conference*, St. Davids, PA, March 2007 (chaired).

"Twentieth-Century American Women Poets." *The Society for the Study of American Women Writers Third International Conference*, Philadelphia, PA, November 2006 (organized).

"Creative Writing Exercises Roundtable." Northeast Modern Language Association Conference, Cambridge, MA, April 2005 (chaired).

"Latino/Chicano Hybridity." 20th-Century Literature Conference, University of Louisville, KY, February2005 (chaired).

CONFERENCES ORGANIZED

Feminism in Practice 1st Annual Conference. Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, November, 2008.

> As part of a semester-long internship in Lehigh University's Women's Center, I organized and chaired an interdisciplinary conference with two fellow interns. We secured funding from ten university offices (including all four colleges in the university), issued a formal call for papers, developed a web site, and attracted over 100 participants to comprise 20 panel and roundtable sessions.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- **Lehigh-Lafayette Teaching Fellowship**, Lehigh University & Lafayette College, 2009-2010
- **Inaugural Women's Studies Graduate Student Award**, Lehigh University, 2009
- **Senior Teaching Fellowship**, Lehigh University, 2008-2009 & 2010-2011
- **Dissertation Fellowship**, Lehigh University, Fall 2007
- **Distinction on Ph.D. comprehensive exams**, May 2006