

**VOLUME 27**  
**2000**



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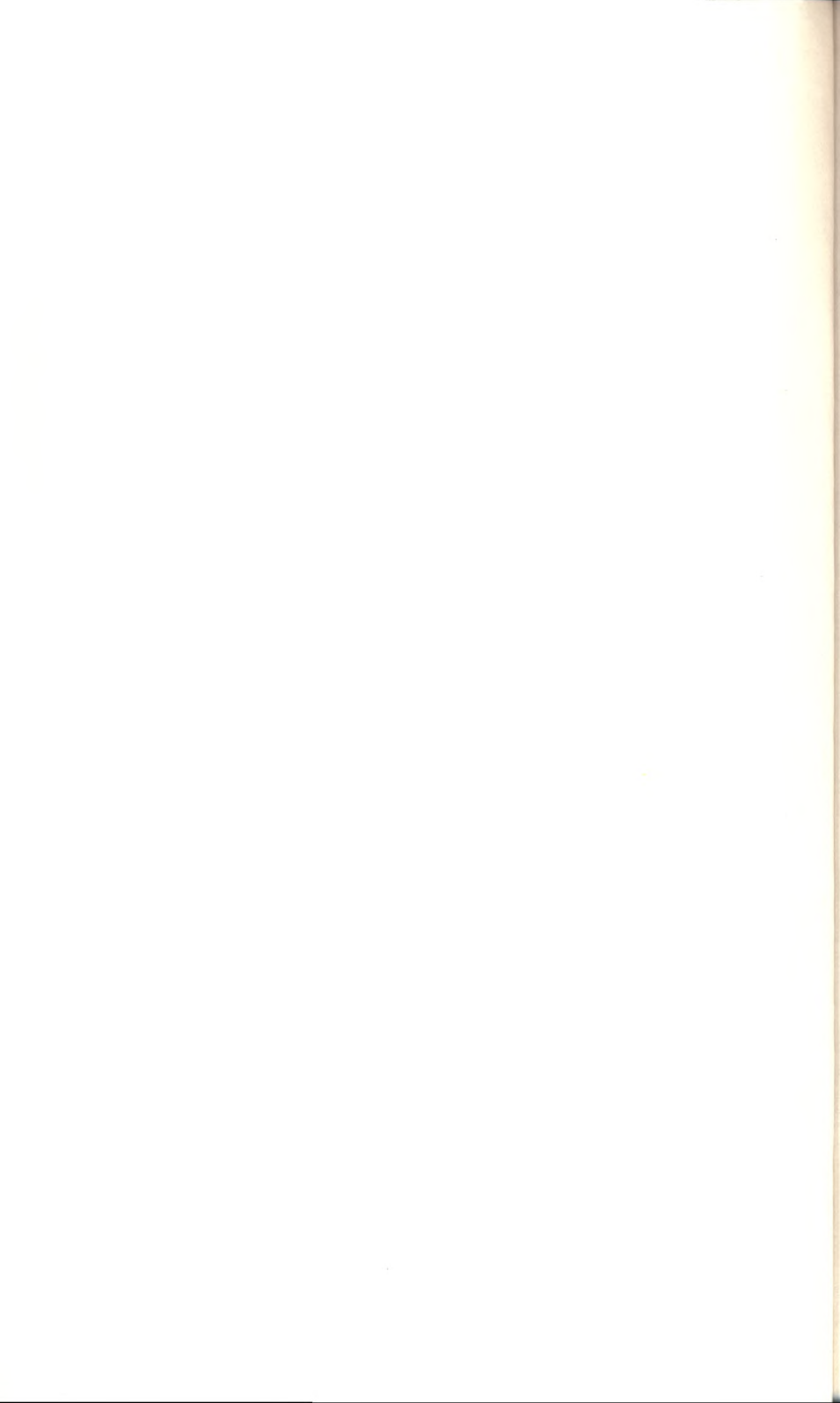
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**“The Role of the Teacher  
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**MINNESOTA**  
**COMMUNICATION & THEATER ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA**  
**JOURNAL**



# COMMUNICATION AND THEATER ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA JOURNAL

Volume 27

Summer 2000

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## EDITORIAL POLICY

The Call for manuscripts goes out in the fall of the year and the deadline for submissions is in March of the following year. Details of how to submit are given in the Call which is sent to all members and all departments, and is announced in SPECTRA and the CTAM Newsletter. Book review ideas should be queried with the editor in advance of the submission date. Book reviews are generally published if accepted and on a space available basis. All articles are read anonymously by two Associate Editors. All author identification markings are removed from the articles, and no editor reads the work of a colleague. Associate Editors may submit articles to the journal, but their work must go through the process of blind review, just as any other submitter. The Journal Editor facilitates the process and makes final decisions based on the Associate Editors' recommendations and comments. If there are any questions about the process, please direct them to the Journal Editor.

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*To publish high quality scholarship in the disciplines of Speech Communication and Theater.*

*To meet the journal-related needs of CTAM and its members.*

## **CTAMJ Call for Manuscripts**

The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal is seeking manuscripts for Volume 28, scheduled for publication in Summer 2001. The journal welcomes theoretical and applied articles and teaching suggestions from theater, communication and forensics professionals from secondary and collegiate levels. All general articles will undergo a blind review process by a minimum of two reviewers.

Manuscripts may be submitted for one of two sections: general interest research and essays, and a Teacher's Workbook. For the general section, original theoretical, critical, empirical, or applied research is desired. For the Teacher's Workbook, shorter essays focusing on pedagogical methods in communication, theater and forensics will be considered. These may include exercises or other instructional material that could be used at the secondary or collegiate level. For both the general section and Teacher's Workbook, articles that address the role of technology in communication and theater, including the use of technology in classroom instruction and evaluation, are especially welcome. Book reviews are also being sought for this issue. Contact the editor concerning book review proposals.

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## Toward a Civically-Oriented Curriculum: Undergraduate Theatre as Communicative Action and Reflective Public Space

Anne Berkeley

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The unfolding theory of collegiate theatre during the twentieth century may be understood as an enactment of generational struggles over the content and worth of higher education. Historians of higher education have argued that the confluence of economic, political, and educational forces that consolidated the features of the modern university rest on an unresolved tension between two visions of the academy, those of *humanism* and *utilitarianism* (Veysey, 113-34). The first vision sees the function of higher education to be the advancement of a liberal and secular culture. The second vision fosters development of research-based, increasingly technological knowledge, with social and economic payoffs. Scholars have drafted theatre curricula according to the two axes of liberal arts education in the modern university.<sup>1</sup> Achieving primacy during the first half of the twentieth century, the humanist axis was manifested in an *aesthetically-oriented* curriculum that has culminated in teaching the values of "art for art's sake." The utilitarian axis produced in theatre a *market-oriented* curriculum after World War II characterized by professionalism and vocationalism. In undergraduate theatre education, the priorities of liberal culture were largely supplanted, then, during the second half by those of professionalism.

These formulations mark the triumph of "Enlightened" objectivity that has afflicted our own practices with an array of dichotomies: high/low culture, rational/emotional, intellectual/artistic, academic/practical, critical/creative, and so on. The contradiction is recognizable in a theoretical and to date, unresolved debate throughout the century over whether to emphasize "craft" or "culture." Moreover, the continuing marginalization of the arts in education is demonstrated by their diminished status or elimination at all levels of education in response to the coupling of fiscal crises and the "back-to-basics" movement that has prevailed in educational discourse since the mid 1970s. From our perspective as theatre educators, we fear our survival in the academy is imperiled as departments are dropped from university curricula, and those that remain struggle with diminishing funds, smaller student enrollments, dwindling audiences, and proliferating power struggles among demoralized faculty (Neely, 57-68).

Even if the study of theatre is to become a subcategory within a larger disciplinary configuration of performance studies, we must repair a dominant curricular model that has hardened into a dichotomy of craft vs. culture. This task requires an understanding of knowledge that does not

sever into independent camps the acts of knowing and doing, theory and action, life and art. What we need is a theory of curriculum as *praxis*—a way, that is, of simultaneously understanding *and* acting upon the world. In Aristotle's notion of praxis, language, ideas, and social relations mutually support one another, making the separation of ideas and actions conceptually flawed. Praxis may be defined, then, as a dialectical act of knowing that goes from action, to reflection, to a new action, without being split apart into self-governing ventures.

A growing interest in applying praxis in theatre pedagogy is reflected in a spate of recent articles that chronicles efforts to integrate theory and practice in the design of curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Usually conducted on the basis of a single course, extracurricular project, or area of study (acting, theatre history), these studies constitute an important step in revisioning theatre curriculum. Building on these efforts, I attempt in this paper a reformulation of the *whole* theatre curriculum as a form of praxis. Toward this aim, I turn to Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse ethics to help articulate the character of, and criteria for, a more critical and engaged form of aesthetic pedagogy. As we shall see, Habermas's interest in strengthening communicative and interactive procedures within social institutions is especially well-suited to the collaborative and public nature of theatre arts. A curricular praxis of communicative action would continue to centralize students' active involvement with theatrical production, but the expectation with praxis is that students theorize what they do, and do what they theorize. This expectation, I will show, would change current priorities in our teaching. I argue, too, that we ought to undertake these revisions if we are interested in sustaining and revitalizing theatre as a subject in liberal education, and out of concern for the ethical, as well as the physical and aesthetic, nature of knowledge.

### Curriculum as Communicative Praxis

An epistemology for such an undertaking has been in the making since the so-called linguistic turn emerged during the first half of the twentieth century and taken root across a broad spectrum of intellectual pursuits. The shift entails the recognition of the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and the methods and criteria by which it may be ascertained. The reconstituted epistemology inevitably alters our view of *artes liberales*, with their disinterested, context-independent theory of knowledge, and their separation from more useful or applied forms of inquiry.<sup>3</sup> These new criteria bring into focus a contextualized, communicative picture of knowledge. The shift to a dialectical epistemology as such means reconceiving education from that of disinterested curriculum-as-product to what Ronald Applebee has called curriculum-as-conversation (1998). The ongoing shift from a positivist to a dialectical epistemology provides a powerful image



for revising undergraduate theatre curricula, that of a *communicative praxis*. Communicative praxis is the act of reflectively constructing and reconstructing the social world. In a communicative curriculum, the dominant basis of curriculum, with its focus on the *known* will shift to a dialectical basis and a focus on the processes implicated in *knowing*.

Let us move to developing curricular criteria for a communicative praxis. The first criterion defines knowledge as a kind of action, or practice, not as an accumulation of things to be transmitted, say, from one generation to the next. Who is learning, and the curricular form in which they learn, take precedence over what is learned. Second, curriculum as communicative praxis is experiential and interactive. The trajectory of pedagogical inquiry in communicative praxis begins with students' own experiences and histories and extends outward to the world that shapes these lives. The plurality of traditions and customs that assemble in a typical classroom is no longer incidental, but is the impetus for the curriculum. In the third criterion, a critical dimension cultivates students' capacities for reflective living. Curriculum as communicative praxis works to expose and understand the social organization of myths, values, and discourses by identifying the links between language, location, and history that form culture. In this scenario, curriculum as a communicative praxis aims to engage students as responsible co-producers of their world, rather than its reproducers and consumers.

As theatre educators, our task in restructuring our curricula as communicative praxis will involve applying these criteria to the particularities of theatrical art and the changing parameters of our discipline. If we hold to the metaphor of the curriculum as "conversation," we can begin by describing the conditions of a particular kind of "speech" community that would educe curricular conversation within a performative and aesthetic modality. With this aim, we can turn to Jürgen Habermas's postulation of an "ideal speech community" upon which he predicates his critical theory of *communicative action*. Before we formulate theatre pedagogy according to a framework of communicative action, let us examine Habermas's theory of discourse ethics and the transformation of the public sphere. Short of adopting the whole of his epic philosophy, we can, in theorizing theatre curriculum as an institutional practice, derive particulars of context and choice from Habermas's project.

### **Forming Reflective Space: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere**

Throughout his writings, Habermas is concerned with the question of whether or not democracy is possible in the context of advanced, global capitalism. That Habermas hypothesizes in all his works practices that will strengthen this possibility reflects a conviction that the opportunities for democratic action have not yet been exhausted, and that the En-

lightenment remains "an unfinished project." In advanced capitalist states, Habermas claims that private interests have overlapped into the political sphere, and state and social systems have become intertwined. In this situation, private interests seeking to influence the political aims of the state constrain open discussion and citizens are no longer able to participate equally in the political process. In such circumstances, he continues, two tasks must be undertaken to protect the democratic process. First, a public sphere that mediates between state and private citizens must be reintroduced. A public sphere consists of any space, or process, in which citizens reflect upon and make apparent political and administrative decisions of the state (Habermas, *Structural Transformation*). Second, communicative practices that comprise open civic discourse must be redeveloped. With these recommendations, Habermas lays the groundwork for his theory of communicative action (Habermas, *CA*, I and *CA*, II).

In order to address these distortions, Habermas proposes that we conceive of societies simultaneously as *lifeworlds* and *systems* (*CA*, II, 118). With the concept of *lifeworlds* (from hermeneutics), Habermas refers to the taken-for-granted universe of daily social living—that storehouse of knowledge, tradition, and custom unconsciously passed from one generation to next. Language is the dominant medium of the lifeworld, a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns." (*CA*, II, 124). *Systems*, on the other hand, refers to the structural features of society: institutions, bureaucracies, administrations, and formal regulations—those organizations generally derivative of government and economics. Habermas describes these arenas as "speechless" because they do not feature the communicative orientations of the lifeworld but are, instead, governed by non-linguistic media—in particular, money and power. In modern capitalist societies, he observes, systems and lifeworlds have become polarized by the pervasive application at all levels of society of teleological, or goal-directed, rationality as the mechanism of formal, means-end, instrumental reasoning. The resulting modern "rationalization" of society has been distorted, Habermas observes, by a form rational action used to dominate persons and things rather than as tools for achieving cooperative understanding.<sup>4</sup> The effect is a cultural situation in which systems categories have progressively impinged upon the communicative patterns of the lifeworld, which continue to diminish against the progressive reach of technology.

One effect of this movement is the continuing erosion of *public spaces* that allow for reflective critique of controlling actions at the systems level. Habermas attributes a continuing erosion of public deliberation to the "colonization of the lifeworld" by the apparatuses of systems (*CA*, I, 232). This predicament has lessened the need for consensus by communicative means because disagreements are resolved by established structures of power



through regulation and laws. Simultaneously, the possibilities for autonomy and mutual understanding decline with the polarization of the lifeworld from structures of decision (CA, II, 311, 317), leading to a predicament characterized by systematic dehumanization. Habermas concludes that the Enlightenment's vision of a secular life and democratic action, guided by reason, cannot be achieved without attenuating the pattern of rationality that methodically deracinates the lifeworld and eviscerates the public arenas necessary for deliberative reflection. To undertake this reversal, he introduces communicative action as a form of rationality that gives hope for bolstering democratic agency.

In contrast to teleological rationality, which is oriented to reaching success by egocentric calculation, communicative rationality aims to achieve understanding by uncoerced agreement between actors. Habermas derives from hermeneutics the central component of communicative action, that of interpretation. For each party in communicative action, "the interpretive task consists in incorporating the others' interpretation into one's own in such a way that in the revised version . . . the divergent situation definitions can be brought to coincide sufficiently" (CA, I, 69-70). The potential for communicative action depends on forming "ideal speech situations" that allow for open discourse under conditions where consensus may be achieved without coercion. Under these circumstances, all have equal rights to initiate debate, to question, to express wishes, feelings and intentions, to make assertions and recommendations, and to challenge justifications (CA, I, 287). Otherwise, for Habermas, such a consensus is prima facie neither genuine nor rational. The ideal speech situation as such seeks intersubjective understanding as rational grounds for ethical and political claims which have traditionally been sought in metaphysics or religion.

The aim of communicative action is to reach understanding, coordination, and sociation in public interaction by way of a rationally motivated agreement, among participants able to "overcome their merely subjective world and . . . assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world, and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld" (CA, I, 10). Such actions do not lead in all cases to stable, unambiguous, agreements, he adds, but are rather the exception. More realistically, participants "grope" from one problematic, momentary consensus to the next, continuously feeling their way from one commonality to another (CA, I, 101, 124).

Habermas argues for the necessity of engaging communicative action at the level of lifeworld in response to the continuing encroachment from the level of systems. As a medium of social integration expressed in language, communicative action is proper to the lifeworld where people can subordinate the conduct of systems to decisions made through open discourse. But because it exerts a greater influence than language, systemic "colonization" continues to shrink the lifeworld into fewer and smaller

spaces where disagreement about basic assumptions proliferates. But with communicative action, Habermas points to the possibility of subordinating "media-steered" systems to decisions accomplished in open communication.

Central to this possibility is *the securing of a public sphere in the lifeworld* where practical decisions can be made through public discussion and agreement, in spaces as uninfluenced by differential power as possible. Habermas's provocation is to devise real or virtual public sites where communicative action can flourish. For if communicative action can be cultivated in "uncorrupted" public spaces, then rationality, defined by Habermas as the communicative process of reaching understanding and cooperation, remains an underlying notion in our culture.

### **Communicative Action in the Theatre Curriculum**

For several reasons, educational sites hold opportunities for inquiry, practice, and cultivation of what Habermas calls "building up the interactive to coordinate actions" (CA, I, 223). First, Habermas asserts that the "rationalization of worldviews" occurs in learning processes (CA, I, 214). Second, the classrooms and curricula in which educational missions are carried out are both interactive and public. Third, because learning processes are institutionalized here, schools are settings where system and lifeworld directly interact. True, forms of coercion at all levels of institutionalized education obviously constrain, even prevent, open discourse. But these constraints perhaps reveal a fallibility in Habermas's formulation of an "ideal" speech community and do not constitute grounds for dismissing attempts to build curriculum from a model of communicative action. On the contrary, the conditions for communicative action comprise a hypothetical structure for public reflection by subjects acting with and among subjects, rather than upon objects. Curriculum as communicative action would advocate mutuality, require respect, invite a genuine effort to understand what the other is saying, and encourage an openness to test and evaluate opinions interactively. In establishing interpretive communities, the curriculum would attempt dialogue across widely discrepant points of view. The focus of communicative action is on understanding and reflection, the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives, and the development of kinships across cultural boundaries—worthy pedagogical aims by most current pedagogical standards.

Communicative action suggests a model for a critical form of theatre pedagogy that would promote engaged citizenship, foster participation in development of dramatic and performance cultures, and encourage experimentation with theatre forms, techniques, and conventions in developing aesthetic consciousness. The intrinsically public and interactive character of theatre and performance recommends it as a site for commu-



nicative action, for the form that theatrical practice takes is situated in the ongoing tension between the creative insights of the self and the generality of affiliations we share with a community of others. Habermas's blueprint for communicative action is already analogous to dramatic processes in many ways. As a medium of human communication, theatre is ritualistic, formal, and public; as such, it is rooted, like communicative action, in rational social behavior. Like communicative action, theatre is a praxis, capable of theoretical reflection on action. The whole process of making theatre occasions a reflexive posture. Habermas stresses, finally, that communicative action occurs in contexts where persons *publicly*, and communally, form normative judgments. Likewise, the process of making theatre "coordinates action" in face-to-face, social contexts where writers, actors, directors, designers, and eventually audiences, publicly and interactively realize some sort of collective "agreement," for better or worse.

The critical dimension of communicative action has much in common with the concept of *critical pedagogy*, first introduced by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and later carried into an analysis of American educational practices by American curricular theorists. As a form of critical theory, communicative action shares with critical pedagogy 1) its basis as a form of praxis in a dialectical epistemology, 2) the importance of helping people enter critically into the historical process, and 3) its argument in the necessity of *critique* in all forms of democratic practice. But unlike Freire's critical pedagogy, which argues for the role of schooling in objectifying culture ("conscientization") communicative action, as formulated by Habermas, gives priority to an intersubjective, communicative, and interactive basis for *negotiating* consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

So with the aim of constructing a bona fide public space to mobilize communicative action, I shall hypothesize the theatre curriculum as an especially apt setting for the realization of Habermas's project. From this perspective, we are in a position to ask what uses and forms of theatre communicative action inspires. In answering this question, let us return first to the invocation of praxis as a curricular antidote to the epistemological dichotomies that have afflicted undergraduate theatre education. The notion of praxis calls for curricular revisions not in terms of *content* (to be covered) nor *technical skills* (to be mastered), but *practices* (to be experienced). The first disposition typifies current "academic" courses in what I earlier called "aesthetically-oriented" curricula. The second typifies courses in the crafts of theatre in what I have called "vocationally-oriented" curricula. Both are examples of technicist curriculum-as-product and together, they have brought us to the dead-end of craft vs. culture.

But the *aesthetically* and *vocationally-oriented* axes could be fruitfully repaired if subsumed in a *civically-oriented* curriculum of communicative action, a praxis that would stress knowledge in action, familiarity with

cultural worlds, and democratic dialogue across multiple perspectives. A civic orientation, through communicative action, would promote, first, understanding of the cultural forces that shape the arts as public phenomena, and second, tie students' curricular experiences with those of others, and in the process, examine the intersections of social, political, and curricular concerns. The hope of a curricular praxis is that students might then act in the world on the basis of a reflective consideration of their bearing as knowledgeable persons on the human condition.

### Practicing the Theatre Curriculum as a Communicative Praxis

Let us consider in general terms what collegiate theatre pedagogy would become if it were reconceptualized according to a civically-oriented framework of communicative action. I offer here four interrelated tenets for theatre curriculum as a critical praxis, a concrete structure from which to suggest specific curricular practices. The first tenet is committed to building public communities of learning, through communicative action, toward *a dialogical formulation of knowledge*. This tenet replaces the paradigm of curriculum-as-product to curriculum-as-conversation. In this way, a communicative theatre curriculum emphasizes understanding and sociation over the individualist and instrumental preparation for careers upon graduation.

The second tenet centralizes *contextualized knowledge*. The curriculum is dedicated to building up conditions for open communication in the lifeworld. Participants make sense of themselves and their social context by exploring, and transforming personal experience in an artistic process of performance and reflection. Thus a curricular praxis stipulates that practices which inquire into the theory, practice, and history of theatre and performance be launched from the creative enthusiasms of students, rather than from those of their teachers. A contextualized curriculum as such will elevate the importance—through course offerings and production programs—of non-scripted, *student-devised texts and performances*.<sup>6</sup> I use the term "student-devised" in contradistinction to the scripted forms of theatre that prevail in theatre curriculum in higher education.<sup>7</sup> By formulating undergraduate theatre education as a communicative praxis that centralizes student-generated work, we entrust students with developing their own aesthetic sensibilities, based on perceptions and experiences to which we may have only superficial access. Though we can introduce them to our accumulated knowledge of theatrical forms, genres, conventions, traditions, and techniques, I maintain that we risk accelerating the decline of theatre's relevance to society in our attempts to define or impose upon them our own aesthetic.

The third tenet focuses on theatre study as a form of *reflective engagement* with public culture and language, providing a way of critiquing and acting upon the world through the modality of theatre—that is, its



production and reception. This aim is exercised in the reflective and interactive response to original student-based work, and through encounters with received texts and forms. In a curricular praxis, reflective engagement provides the pedagogical grounds for innovation and transformation in theatrical work as students manipulate generic conventions in response to social change.

The fourth tenet emphasizes *citizenship over skill development*. A curriculum in which communicative rationality supersedes instrumental rationality redirects the personal and private interests typical of student actors, designers, and technicians (How was my monologue tonight? Will this design help me get a job in TV?), to public and social issues raised in the process of devising contextualized performances. Through guided discussion facilitated by the teacher, a class might, for example, identify possible uses and contexts for community-based performances. Through a process of researching, preparing, and negotiating with a community partner a theatrical performance of mutual interest, students directly interact with real-life issues in areas such as health, gender, immigration, literacy, corrections, substance abuse, diversity, education, and human rights. Experimental theatre techniques are then engaged to create and stage group performances with, and for, community partners. Post-performance critical discussions are directed to the world as it is represented in the performance, not to the exhibition of skill and craft. Finally, guided reflection considers where real life situations interface with political, social, and economic conditions, and with theatrical expression.

These tenets allow us to press forward with concrete revisions of a communicative theatre curriculum, organized in a tripartite structure consisting of 1) *making* 2) *performing*, and 3) *reflecting*. Let us consider possible classroom strategies and techniques that students and teachers can use in developing original theatrical performances within a curriculum of communicative action. With these suggestions, I hope to be specific enough to give a sense of where we might go from here, while indicating the expanding variety of alternative modes and uses of performance in current undergraduate theatre education. At the same time, I wish to avoid being prescriptive, or so specific as to imply there is only one way.

Approaches to devising theatre can be found in dozens of books that introduce methods of playbuilding by drawing from the manifold theatrical tradition, as well as from tiny incidents in individual lives, accidents of imagination, and spontaneous insights. From these materials, undergraduate teachers can introduce to students techniques for writing and producing original material, and stimulating theatrical creativity through games, mime, puppetry, dance, poetry, literature, and religious texts. Moreover, new forms of devising theatre have proliferated in response to performance theory that has spurred interest in recreating into performances

an expanded array of cultural, oral, and social texts. Interrelated strategies come from at least three artistic, educational, or scholarly traditions: 1) oral interpretation/performance studies, 2) applied and interactive theatre, and 3) K-12 educational theatre. The following examples, although in no way exhaustive, suggest the range of possibilities available to teachers attempting to move instruction toward a communicative pedagogy and contextualized learning. In the first category, scholars in the field of performance studies (formerly oral interpretation) have developed Personal Narrative, Ethnographic Study, Conversational Analysis, and Everyday Life Performance (ELP) as means by which to transcribe oral, social, and aesthetic texts into performance scripts. These forms augment Readers Theatre and Chamber Theatre as interpretive techniques for performing traditional literary genres.<sup>8</sup>

In the second category, practitioners of applied and interactive theatre have introduced uses of theatre as an agent for social and personal change. Script-making procedures in this category typically incorporate collaborative strategies, experimental and immediate interaction with audience, and a consciously critical perspective. Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, Playback Theatre, Sociodrama, and a global archive of grassroots, community-based, and ad-hoc theatre practices employ dramaturgical techniques that unveil the interface of real life situations with political, economic, and cultural conditions.

Driven since the 1970s by artists and teachers in Great Britain, Australia, and Canada whose recent work is notable for its theoretical sophistication, the field of primary and secondary educational theatre once known as "creative dramatics" forms the third category. As yet unexamined in this country for use at the college level, Process Drama, Story Drama, Theatre-In-Education (TIE), and the Scottish Storyline are among the formalized non-scripted theatre forms in this domain that can enable students of any age to examine the intersections between grounded aesthetics, and social and curricular agendas.<sup>9</sup>

These approaches depart from the prevailing technicist strategies which tend to subsume the pedagogical agenda within the imperatives of the main-stage college theatre production. They supplant the idea of "putting on a play" to that of "making theatre" (Carlisle and Drapeau, 7). This idea defines theatre not as a building, nor as an accumulation of acquisitions managed by experts, but as an aesthetic arrangement of ideas put into practice with only the resources needed for communicative action: a public space and a community of performers.

An important component of a communicative action approach in theatre curriculum, finally, concerns the make-up and site of audiences. Certainly these devising approaches would function well in "black box" and classroom performance spaces. But theatre can play a vital role in forg-



ing new kinds of relationships between colleges and active communities, and we can encourage our students to discover the ways this might happen. In thinking about possible contexts for theatre, students will be obliged to think beyond the "main stage" and "black box" theatres of university-sponsored productions, and conceptualize relationships to audiences in non-theatrical spaces. These locations may include found and site-specific spaces that will accommodate performances. Schools, museums, residential communities, health centers, youth centers, libraries, and other public organizations are possible sites for performances. In this way, a communicative praxis shifts focus from the formal study of aesthetics, to active relationships with new audiences.

In sum, a communicative curricular praxis moves from a student-centered to a learning-centered pedagogy, embraces disciplinary and multi-disciplinary perspectives, increases emphasis on active and collaborative learning, and incorporates rationally-based and values-based knowledge. The emphasis on reflective engagement with the world through the modality of theatre reinstates the traditional definition of liberal education as freedom to think and learn outside any structure or dogma. But, in fostering critical consciousness within the conditions of communicative action, we define free thinking as inseparable from ethical thinking. In urging that theatre become valued for its communicative potential, we underscore its democratic value in promoting dialogue. By nurturing a critical and ethical consciousness, a communicative praxis will help prepare students to become members of a civil and democratic society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the professionalization of the undergraduate theatre curriculum after the second world war, see my article, "The Historical Account of Undergraduate Theatre Curricula's Rise in the Academy," in the Journal of the Association of Communication Administrators 2 (1997): 117-24.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Coleman and Wolf, Carlyon, Dickey and Oliva, Gagnon, Harrison-Pepper, McConachie, Wolford, and Zarrilli.

<sup>3</sup> Scientific fact and theory are not categorically separable, as Thomas Kuhn has shown, except within a paradigm, and therefore, there is no such thing as theory-free, "merely factual" data. See Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> See CA, I, 95, for a discussion of how teleological, normatively regulated, and dramaturgical rationalities become dominating actions.

<sup>5</sup> For readings on critical pedagogy, see, in addition to Freire, Apple, Giroux, and McLaren. For a summary of the major contributions of critical

pedagogy, see Aronowitz and Giroux (1985).

<sup>6</sup> In formulating the term "student-devised theatre," I am indebted to Alison Oddey whose study of the tradition of devised theatre in Britain informed many of my ideas in this essay.

<sup>7</sup> With "scripted theatre" I refer to that which is typically concerned with the single vision of a playwright, interpreted and staged according to a well-honed production hierarchy headed by a director. Non-scripted theatre is distinguished by an emphasis on developing new texts and performances in a truly collaborative process.

<sup>8</sup> For a succinct and practical summary of several of the script-making techniques that have arisen from the field of performance studies/oral interpretation, see Yordon.

<sup>9</sup> See Neelands for an introduction to the many forms, conventions, and models from educational theatre that are available to teachers in structuring non-scripted theatre work.

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**American Farm Crisis Rhetoric: 1981-1985**

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The people of the United States have long regarded the family farm as an institution representing the best of traditional American values (Danbom, 1995). Even at the turn of the millennium the nation's citizens appear to embrace Thomas Jefferson's (1787/1955) declaration that "those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his particular deposit for substantial and genuine virtue" (pp. 164-165).

Of course, since Jefferson's time when over 90% of Americans lived in a rural environment and the vast majority of them earned at least part of their living from farming, the situation has changed substantially. Now, not even 25% of Americans reside in a rural setting, and only 1 in 10 of these residents farms (Danbom, 1995). Nonetheless, since they provide essential products and services, farmers exert a tremendous impact in the United States. Not only do they satisfy domestic needs but their huge volume of exports assists other nations while helping the U.S. economy (*Statistical Highlights*, 1997). Certainly historian Richard Hofstadter's (1955) observation over four decades ago that rural America produces an influence far out of proportion to the number of farmers in the population, still holds true today (Danbom).

If farmers exercise such might in the U.S., a prolonged economic downturn for them should cause considerable concern for the public. Such a downturn did occur from 1981 through 1985, with farmers facing the worst crisis since the Great Depression (Harl, 1990; Wessel, 1983). The effects of that crisis could still be felt years later, particularly in states such as Minnesota where agriculture stands as one of the leading industries ("Farm Aid," 2000; Lasser, 1998; Melcher & Carey, 1999). In order to gain a fuller understanding of the meaning and significance of that 1981-1985 critical era, this study works to explicate the rhetoric connected to the crisis. The study concentrates specifically on the dispute regarding the advisability of government intervention as a possible solution to the crisis.

A recently proposed definition provides a simple but complete understanding of rhetoric as applied here: "The power of speech [language] and nonverbal symbols to produce assent and to shape behavior" (Logue & Miller, 1995, p. 20). This work pays particular attention to the role of the public as a key component of a major rhetorical effort. The importance of



looking at the involvement of the people in this regard has been stressed by a number of contemporary critics (e.g., Barrett, 1974; Fisher, 1987; McGee, 1975; McKerrow, 1989; Wander, 1981). According to such a perspective, rhetors and critics should view the public as a potentially capable, conscionable audience.

The project endeavors to provide a close reading of the text of the farm crisis rhetoric aimed at the public via public speaking and prominent media sources. Leff and Sachs (1990) provide a concise explanation of "close reading" when they note that it involves a critic, concentrating on evidence within the speech text, proceeding "to make inferences about what the work is designed to do, how it is designed to do it, and how well that design functions to structure and transmit meanings within the realm of public experience" (p. 256). Though some practitioners of close reading concentrate on the text of just one speech, others identify a single presentation as a textual fragment with several fragments needing analysis before useful conclusions can emerge. The fragments selected of course exert a major impact on the interpretations drawn regarding the text and its attendant culture (McGee, 1990), especially in a postmodern world where fragmentation is the norm and unity the exception (McKerrow, 1991).

In order to achieve a close reading of a constructed set, critics often turn to points of focus or identifiable units of rhetoric. Thus researchers have variously concentrated on ideographs (Condit, 1987), metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), depictions (Osborn, 1986), and spectacles (Simons, 1990) among other themes. Points of focus highlighted in this paper include characterizations and narratives, themes successfully addressed by Railsback (1984) in her key research.

The study here follows the 1981-1985 farm crisis through four distinct periods—from benign rhetorical neglect of the farm issue, to protest on behalf of farmers, to seeming complacency by key rhetors, to renewed protest. A critical survey of these periods first of all provides a look into an important segment of American society and how that segment has coped with crisis. Second, while not dealing with a formal social movement (see Cathcart, 1980; Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994), the survey sheds light on the communication patterns used in a dispute relating to an important aspect of the nation's economic and social policies. Following the analysis a final section suggests propositions regarding rhetorical methods of potential value not just to farmers but to other major societal groups as they face opposition from powerful sources.

### Approach

The paper centers on farm rhetoric aimed at the general public from 1981 through 1985. The year 1981 serves as the beginning for the investigation since authorities (Danbom, 1995; Moberg, 1988) agree that by

then the farm crisis was in full swing, with exports starting to decline and farm income going down. Because experts (Danbom; Moberg) mark the end of the crisis with the Farmers' Home Administration (FmHA) moratorium on farm foreclosures in 1985, that time stands as the concluding year for review.

Speeches, magazine articles, and television programs about farming make up the three discourse sets analyzed. All of these clearly play large parts in providing communication channels used to reach the public. Key words such as "agriculture," "farm," "food," "grain," "land," and "live-stock" became crucial in the search for samples.

A survey of the 1981-1985 indexes and speech titles from *Vital Speeches of the Day* turned up 8 presentations, all delivered by President Ronald Reagan. From a perusal of the 1981-1985 editions of *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* came 82 magazine articles, appearing in *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. The Television News Archive at Vanderbilt University proved helpful in locating television materials: 43 news segment transcripts and 8 videotaped news segments.

The project takes a diachronic route since such a procedure permits following "the *particular contents* of the *general process* of public discourse across time" (Condit, 1987, p. 3). To trace an economic-social dispute as it unfolds over a period of years may afford some distinctive insights.

Attempting a complete, general analysis of 141 documents would prove unwieldy. Certain boundaries need to be established, those boundaries in this case limiting the study to two points of focus, narrative and characterization. Rhetorical narratives help to make meanings and to justify deeds via story-telling. A compelling story, whether fact or fiction, can seize an audience and substantially affect its feelings, beliefs, and action tendencies (Fisher, 1987; Osborn, 1990; Stock, 1990).

Characterizations, culturally accepted descriptions of a class or group, in fact building blocks of narratives, can also have a notable impact on audience members (Condit, 1987; Osborn, 1976, 1986). A change in character type often means a change in the people's attitude and conduct regarding the group in question. An example appeared with the sizable drop in major-league baseball attendance following the 1994 strike in which for many Americans both players and owners became synonymous with greed.

Critics realize that by using points of focus they can more fully comprehend the role public argument plays in influencing a nation's people (Condit, 1987). This study intends to show how the employment of two focal points—in this case narrative and characterization—can aid in the better understanding of a public argument over a national crisis.

## Background

The early 1970s represented banner years for the American farmer as production increased, croplands expanded, exports tripled, and land



values rose. By 1973 farm income had reached an all-time high (Paarlberg, 1980). During the mid-1970s farmers, sensing the chance to become even more prosperous, took on high debt loads as they borrowed money to purchase fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, and land (Danbom, 1995; Paarlberg). Moreover, then-current farm commodity programs and tax policies turned out to benefit agribusiness rather than the family farmer (Nowak, 1987), and the Soviet grain embargo eliminated a major source of income for many farmers (Danbom). When the U.S. government did lift the embargo, the action benefited for the most part not family operations but the huge grain companies which had the capacity to store grain until the embargo ended (Moberg, 1988). In the late 1970s interest rates soared and prices for the farmer's products decreased, placing many farm owners in dangerous positions. The situation proved so threatening that in 1978 and 1979 farm leaders took extreme action, organizing tractorcades to invade Washington, D.C., tying up traffic and bringing attention to their cause. But significant relief did not come from the government or any other source, and the 1980s ushered in an era of economic crisis for the American farmer (Danbom).

A diachronic analysis of the 1981-1985 farm-crisis controversy follows, the points of focus being narrative and characterization. The first period for examination represents what could be termed a time of neglect or default since no major rhetor stood strongly for any kind of special assistance to needy farmers.

### **Benign Neglect**

The year 1981 stood as President Ronald Reagan's first year in office, and through his speeches during that time he left little doubt about what he felt had caused the farmers' and other Americans' recent economic problems. It was the Democrats, of course, with their control of the White House and Congress from 1977 through 1980, that had brought on the difficulties—the Democrats with their big-government programs and their lavish public spending resulting in a frightful inflationary spiral. The president wanted to save the farmers, the "men and women who raise our food," from "being singled out to pay a higher price" (Reagan, 1981b, p. 259) for their needs. He intended to enact policies that would cut down the high interest rates that were "punishing" many Americans, including "the farmer who needs a new truck or tractor" (Reagan, 1981a, p.2).

Further, Reagan (1981c) called for an end to the "mass of regulations" (p. 322) imposed on farmers and other business people. His administration would champion less government intrusion and less spending. As a consequence, taxes could be lowered, with special consideration given to "the unfairness of the inheritance tax, especially to the family-owned farm" (Reagan, p. 325).

The president was characterizing the situation in a manner undoubtedly appealing to many Americans. He was espousing the traditional Republican view that if the government got off people's backs and let the citizens, in this case farmers, do things their own way, life would be better. Moreover, his recent election, in a takeover of the White House from the Democrats, would seem to have indicated that good numbers of Americans stood ready to lend credence to his claims. But Reagan offered no specific solution to the problem. In fact a year later in his State of the Union Address he was even more vague, characterizing the farmer as simply "hard-pressed" (Reagan, 1982, p. 258) with no expectation offered for near-term change from this condition.

A characterization of farmers—subsidized—set forth in 1981 magazine articles and television programs had a definite connection to Reagan's statements since subsidies came from the federal government. Viewers and readers could not help but notice the large sums of money being tendered to selected farmers. An October 2, 1981 news broadcast showed U.S. House of Representatives member Peter Peyser declaring that his colleagues from states producing tobacco, peanuts, and sugar had again pushed through subsidies for those crops. These colleagues, in Peyser's words, "traded votes for subsidies" (CBS News, 1981). The government paying farmers to produce goods not needed by the American people, according to one writer, served "as a grade A example of waste" ("Buttering Up," 1981, p. 53). Another observer wrote of the "enormously expensive array of federal subsidy and price-stabilization programs," the "Government handouts" offered farmers. Indeed, the nation's political leaders were displaying "a growing discontent with the favored status farmers enjoy in receiving protection from the vagaries of the marketplace" (Isaacson, 1981, p. 21). Some writers (e.g., "Buttering Up"; Isaacson) expressed wonder that support programs instituted years and in certain cases decades earlier, for example during the "Dust Bowl disasters of the 1930s" (Isaacson, p. 21), still were used by individuals in an era when virtually all competent farmers had dramatically increased their production efficiency. Here then lay a characterization which under a long-ago setting (see Burke, 1969) may well have made sense, but in the 1980s to a number of rhetors the act—subsidizing—did not fit the scene well at all.

Another federal program, though not labeled a subsidy, had remarkably similar characteristics. That program, through which the FmHA offered extremely low interest rates to farmers needing financial help, also came up for consideration in news articles. One reporter noted that many critics felt that the program "subsidizes inefficiency by providing marginal farmers with enough funds so they will not have to quit the land" ("High Cost," 1981, p. 26). As a rural Iowa banker noted, "They've kept people in business who should have been carrying a lunch pail" ("High Cost," p. 26).



Despite the attention given subsidies, the media did not fail to portray the economic hardships of farmers, this portrayal really taking hold in 1982. Clearly the 1982 news articles suggested no optimism, with their characterizations of farmers as first being overextended and second producing more but receiving less. Illustrations of overextension came from *Time* writer Ed Magnuson (1982) who reported that 51% of all one-year farm operating loans were delinquent while the figure had been 23% just three years earlier. He also noted that since 1979 the value of delinquent loans had increased five-fold, and the FmHA in early 1982 had begun foreclosure actions against 2,500 farmers.

The producing more-receiving less syndrome became associated with farmers because of their great efficiency. That is, they produced so bountifully that there seemed to be an excess of everything, with resulting low prices and thus low income. Chappel Sides, a 53-year old cotton and soybean farmer from Coffeetown, Mississippi, explained the problem: "You've heard farmers bitching all your life. But when an above-average farmer makes an above-average crop and loses a pile of money, you know something's wrong" (quoted in Andersen, 1982, p. 29).

The description of farmers' economic problems played out on the air waves also, exemplified by NBC newsman Bill Schechner's report from Georgia where, he noted, each day at least one farm was going under (NBC News, 1992a). The pain involved for everyone concerned became even clearer as Schechner among other NBC reporters told of farmers selling their land and equipment yet still not meeting their financial obligations. Television then joined the print media and Reagan in reaffirming the farmer's poor economic position, but all these sources seemed frustrated in devising and/or announcing a plan to cope with the situation. Here was a kind of depressing rhetoric accompanied by no hopeful statement for the future.

The narratives employed in the farm discourse generally supported the characterizations of farming offered. The president, for instance, in a 1981 address told the story of settlers in the 1800s making the land work for them without the aid of federal officials, and he gave an account of a contemporary group of folks "who helped build a neighbor's barn when it burned down" (Reagan, 1981a, p. 6). He was offering backing for his claim that farmers could best do their work on their own, without government involvement.

Narratives about subsidies appeared in news articles, for example a story of President Franklin Roosevelt's relationship with his agricultural advisors and their successful attempts to enact subsidized farm programs, programs in large measure intact 40 years later (Isaacson, 1981). Contemporary subjects also came up for consideration, exemplified by the portrayal of a group of farmers who believed they could do better economi-

cally in the long run without federal price supports (Nicholson, 1981), and by the account of some peanut farmers and what they had to do in order to insure favorable financial treatment by Washington (Beck, 1981). Again, the public would have to judge for themselves what type of government action the existing scene called for.

In a key departure from the above 1981 narratives, television offered a story of farming as a fading way of life. That is, things were so tough for family farmers that many of them could no longer make a decent living. One news segment broadcast by NBC (NBC News, 1981) on December 15 chronicled the tale of Buck and Bob Farrier living in Hayneville, Alabama. Close-up shots focused on weathered faces as the brothers told of the small returns they received from farming. The Farriers were struggling to keep their farm. Bob said that his wife's job helped them meet expenses. He also planned to find work in town but said he would stay on the farm until he was driven away. As the segment ended, Schechner observed that time was running out for the Farriers and other farmers. Television viewers were presented with an exigency (see Bitzer, 1968) that cried out for action.

Narratives in 1982 confirmed for the American audience that farmers were going through tough economic times. While the president's speaking showed no farm narratives, news articles and broadcasts did. One of the most moving articles described Danny Altman, a second-generation cotton farmer in Texas (Magnuson, 1982). Over the years he had provided well for his family, giving them a decent standard of living. But when the price of cotton fell, his profits turned to losses and his family suffered badly. Eventually he had to sell off his machinery and tools but even after the sale stood in enormous debt. Another story, that of Edwin Lide told by ABC News (ABC News, 1982a), proved similar to Altman's. Lide had been doing just fine with his crops until high interest rates and production costs started to ruin his operation. He was thinking of selling out while still solvent.

In the first phase of the 1980s farm crisis, at least initially rhetors' characterizations and narratives challenged the notion that the federal government held an obligation to help farmers out, even when some of them were seriously hurting. Later in that first phase the narratives and characterizations put more stress on the actual hardships being experienced by farmers, laying out this condition vividly for the American people.

### Protest

Though the portrayal of farmers for the public in the early 1980s showed a group of individuals in serious trouble, no powerful national leader spoke or wrote of a comprehensive plan to help them out of their difficulties. And when the establishment appears to have little interest in



helping out a problem-laden group, that group often turns to protest (Stewart et al., 1994) as a rhetorical tool. In fact, on November 18, 1982, national television characterized farmers as protestors. Both ABC News (1982b) and NBC News (1982b) carried segments showing Illinois farmer Randall Carson's neighbors protesting the FmHA's efforts to foreclose on Carson and auction off his property. A number of the neighbors told NBC reporter Mary Nissenson that they would complain as long and loudly as they had to in order to stop the sale. The protest worked, too, as the FmHA for the time being chose not to embark on foreclosure proceedings. Thus for the viewing public some farmers had put a forceful resolve into their communication efforts, and those efforts had achieved a measure of success.

If broadcasters took a small step in characterizing farmers as protestors in 1982, they pursued this course more vigorously a year later. Farmers refusing to leave the land after the government foreclosed, local marches to federal loan offices to demand the halt of foreclosure operations, regional efforts to unify farm groups in attempting to establish a moratorium on all foreclosures—these and similar actions formed the basis for several news segments broadcast by the major television networks (ABC News, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c; CBS News, 1983b). Thus, for example, the January 14, 1983 ABC evening news audience (ABC News, 1983d) could watch as Doug and Pam Bailey's London, Ohio farm was auctioned off by the government while a large number of farmers shouted their objections.

Though the farmers protested, President Reagan appeared to pay little notice. He offered no new major program for agricultural aid, having little to say on the whole matter. In his 1983 State of the Union Address the president only briefly mentioned farmers, characterizing them as going through "tough times," a "painful period" (Reagan, 1983, p. 261). Nor, based on the materials reviewed for this study, did the print media in 1982 and 1983 have much to say about the protesting, instead just characterizing the farmers as having chronic difficulties (e.g., Bosc, 1983; "One Farmer," 1983).

Printed sources continued their previous policy of publishing sad narratives, one of them told by John Crystal in the April 18, 1993 edition of *U.S. News & World Report*. Crystal, an Iowa banker, related about his conscientious rural neighbors never missing any kind of payment until 1982 but since that date, he observed, a number of them had fallen behind on their mortgage, car, and other loans ("In Rural," 1983). At least the print media kept the farmer's impoverished condition before the American public so that public could be reminded that an exigency existed.

During the period described here the protesting farmers achieved only minor successes, likely due in some part to the president and the print media pretty much turning a deaf ear to their demonstrations. Of course one reason for the inattention could have been that the president and publishers believed the protests had no real importance for the public and thus

deserved no significant rhetorical response. On the other hand, especially with the president, a policy of "avoidance" (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 41) may have entered the picture, "avoidance" referring to the proposition that if the power structure pays little notice to protestors and keeps them out of the public eye the protestors may become frustrated and scale back or even cease their activities. Regardless, the protestors received scant attention from some key sources.

### Quiet

The next move of the protestors was in fact to go away, for a while anyway. That is, for just about all of 1984 the public saw virtually no major characterizations or narratives of protesting farmers coming from President Reagan or the print and televised media. The president (Reagan, 1984) did not feel it necessary to even mention farming in a major 1984 address.

If magazines did not portray the farmer as protestor they at least characterized for the public the misery that remained on the farm. Typical was the reporting of *Newsweek* writer John McCormick. In an April 2 issue he recorded the observations of a 22-year veteran official of an Iowa bankruptcy court: "Only in the last couple of years have I seen grown men cry on the witness stand, and it's always the farmers. Some want reorganization, when there's nothing left to reorganize. They're on the ragged edge of nowhere" (McCormick, 1984, p. 62). In Minnesota, McCormick noted, agriculture commissioner Jim Nichols said that a fourth of the state's 100,000 farmers had serious financial problems. Indeed one Minnesota banker remarked that of his 929 farm loans, 44 had to be called immediately and 107 more by year's end.

Much the same gloomy picture emerged in televised segments. Representative of such segments was a March 20 report by NBC's Jim Cummins (NBC News, 1984) who covered an equipment sale at the Iowa farm of Terry and Vickie Paris. Without the equipment sale the farm would be lost, and even with the sale hopes were dim. The situation proved so traumatic to Terry that he could not bear to talk to Cummins, leaving that task to wife Vickie.

Narratives in 1984 magazine articles continued to tell a depressing tale, such as that of Iowa State graduates Jim and Vickie Striegel who had accumulated 504 acres but were so hard pressed that their children had to trap game and mow yards in order to help service the family's heavy debt (McCormick, 1984). On televised news segments the stories also did not change. For instance, as seen on CBS (CBS News, 1984), Bonnie Mellis of Tilden, Nebraska had established a general store frequented by farmers but she would have to leave her store and the community soon because her customers no longer had the wherewithal to buy anything other than the bare necessities.



One likely reason for the failure to portray the farmer as protestor would have been that the farming community cut back its demonstrations considerably. A group fighting the establishment, no matter how strong physically and emotionally, can become exhausted after a while and slow down or halt its activities (Gitlin, 1993).

The failure of key sources to provide for the American people substantial narratives or characterizations of the farmer as a rebel might well have had an impact on those people's perceptions. A time of silence on the part of a group often indicates to the public a kind of "passivity" or "relinquishment" within the group (Brummett, 1980, p. 290). In this scenario the group is seen as giving up control over the situation at hand, as choosing not to act assertively (Brummett). Further, such a display can suggest that the view opposing the group's position is truly the right one since it is the only one remaining in the public eye (Noelle-Neuman, 1974).

Admittedly silence in selected circumstances can act as a powerful rhetorical tool (Brummett, 1980), but for the occasion studied here the depiction of farmers as quiet, as lacking in protest, does not look to be an act that would have furthered their goals.

## Resurgence

That protestors can have a quiet period in which they show little enthusiasm does not mean they cannot have a renaissance in which they return to fervent demonstrations (Gitlin, 1993). Certainly farmers were characterized in 1985 by some prominent sources as seeking confrontation. Headlines of major magazine stories provide apt illustrations: "Bitter Harvest: Reagan is clashing with farmers over budget deficits amid warnings the farm-belt debit crisis is worsening" ("Bitter Harvest," 1985, p. 52) and "Farmers Up in Arms" (Sheets, 1985b, p. 22).

Americans could learn of the 12,000 farmers who protested foreclosures during a march on the capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota and others arrested during a demonstration near Chicago's Mercantile Exchange (Sheets, 1985a). Then there were the 40 supporters of Ray Parks, who gathered in front of the courthouse in Sylvester, Georgia and joined loudly in song to prevent an auctioneer from hearing any bids on Parks' 595-acre spread (Magnuson, 1985). U.S. News readers could view a photograph of farmers at a massive rally in Ames, Iowa, one of the participants holding a large placard stating, "REAGAN TRY SAY NO WITH AN EMPTY STOMACH NOT YOUR EMPTY HEAD (Sheets, 1985b, p. 22). The photograph next to the first one showed another rally with a likeness of Reagan's budget adviser David Stockman being hanged in effigy (Sheets, 1985b). Stockman had gone on record opposing any special economic aid for farmers.

Further, as the protests grew in frequency and size, farmers were no longer characterized as acting alone. At the Ames, Iowa rally, for ex-

ample, plenty of clergy and union members joined farmers to protest what one speaker called the "ruthless" federal agricultural policies (Sheets, 1985b, p. 23). In Glenwood, Minnesota, according to CBS News (1985), Jesse Jackson showed up at a rally to protest the foreclosure sale of the farm of Jim and Gloria Langman. A magazine report told of eight Democratic congressmen getting together to plant 250 crosses in a park across from the White House to commemorate the number of farmers who went out of business each day (Sheets). News accounts noted that entertainers such as Neil Young, Bob Dylan, and Willie Nelson were in a musical way showing their solidarity with farmers demanding more aid from Washington (Cocks, 1985).

What the American audience could view then was a characteristic of the farm protest not much seen before 1985. That is, the protest now had "legitimizers" (Bowers & Ochs, 1971, p. 19), individuals not directly associated with farming but figures who because of their prominence could command popular attention and ultimately help the cause.

While the characterizing of the farmer as protestor garnered considerable interest, it did not have exclusive hold on the public mind. President Reagan and others worked to depict the farmer as troubled but not needing more government aid. Reagan (1985) conceded that farmers were "in great financial distress" but he added that the best way to aid them was "not by expanding Federal payments" but in helping them make "an orderly transition to a market-oriented farm economy" (p. 260). In the same vein budget adviser Stockman noted, "I can't figure out why taxpayers have the responsibility to go in and refinance bad debt willingly incurred by consenting adults" (quoted in "Bitter Harvest," 1985, p. 53).

The American audience found out that some farmers agreed with the above characterizations. A grower of almonds observed, "I don't know why the government has to bail us out. Besides, it seems every time Government comes in, it makes things worse" (Magnuson, 1985, p. 39). Another farmer backed him up: "Look at what the Government did to those guys in the Midwest. They've been getting subsidies for years and they're in terrible shape" (Magnuson, p. 35). While characterizations such as these did exist, they appeared relatively rarely, allowing the spotlight to focus on the farmers protesting for more government aid.

Once in a great while the public could also see a narrative about a farmer desiring no government help. Thus readers could learn about Californian Tom Merrill who, aided by a computer, carefully arranged an efficient plan for growing vegetables on his 3,500 acres, then followed through, making a good living without asking for or receiving any assistance from Washington (Abramson, 1985).

But for every narrative audiences could find about a farmer opposed to federal assistance, they could find several heart-wrenching stories



about farmers protesting the alleged miserly federal aid programs. They could come to know Keith Schippers who worked for years in a factory so that one day he could achieve his dream of owning a farm. Finally he fulfilled that dream, securing 280 acres of prime Iowa cornland, and ran a successful operation until poor weather and bad market conditions changed things around. It was a protest rally staged by 250 angry neighbors and friends that succeeded in stopping a creditor from auctioning off Schippers' farm equipment ("*Bitter Harvest*," 1985). Then there was David Jensen who according to his wife Virginia had started milking cows when he was five years old. The Jensens, both 54, had prospered for years but now found themselves deep in debt. The creditors wanted not just their farming items but almost everything else including an oak bedroom set, a love seat, and brass candlesticks that had been in the family for generations. As the Jensens' personal property was sold on the steps of the Gove, Kansas courthouse, 150 farmers put on a demonstration, shouting insults at the assembled officials and throwing a few snowballs at them as well (Magnuson, 1985).

In the southeastern Minnesota town of Rushford a 600-acre dairy farm belonging to Delbert and Christene Kahoun had stayed in the family for six generations, beginning in 1864. With the Kahouns facing mounting debts, though, all was in danger of being lost. Debbie, a daughter, became so angry that she organized her own protest campaign aimed at President Reagan and Agriculture Secretary John Block, announcing that "I am suing the U.S. Government for bringing this evil on this family" (quoted in Magnuson, p. 34). Still another story centered on Elmer and Pat Steffes of southwest Iowa. From 1966 through 1978 they had done well for themselves and their four children, raising livestock and planting a variety of crops. Then in 1979 not only did the farming business begin to fall apart but they lost two sons, 16 and 20, to cancer. Their sons' medical costs came on top of the farming setbacks. The business got worse and worse and by 1985 the local bank called in a \$168,000 loan which the couple could not pay. At a court hearing over the loan, more than 100 of the Steffes' friends showed up to silently protest the bank's attempt to seize the family's property. When law officers did come to take the machinery and livestock, they did it unannounced early one morning and blocked off all access roads, presumably to keep potential demonstrators away (Magnuson).

By 1985 then, both in terms of characterization and narrative, protests against federal policies by farmers and their supporters had become an important focal point in rhetoric aimed at the American public. To get there, rhetors had taken that public through three other phases. First, varied sources emphasized to audiences that U.S. farmers found themselves in serious trouble— but it was in some measure due to their own actions, thus creating doubt about whether Washington should have to assist in bailing them out. Second, rhetoric more sympathetic to the farmers' hard-

ships began to appear, with some notice given to farmers staging protests in which they demanded additional help from the federal government. Third, while the protests seemed to fade away as a rhetorical theme, agents still kept vivid in the public mind the farmers' plight. Finally, farmers as protestors staged a huge resurgence, the public being inundated with characterizations of and narratives about demonstrators demanding a more generous federal farm policy. Through all these phases those individuals opposed to additional Washington aid continued to be portrayed for the American audience but the attention focused on them became less and less as time went on, until the end when protestors overwhelmed them in terms of public notice.

## Conclusion

Financial conditions gradually began to improve for farmers before the end of 1985. Moreover, before the year was over the FmHA declared a moratorium on all farm foreclosures. The nation's agricultural enterprise was on the road to recovery (Danbom, 1985).

Though hard proof is not available, it seems likely that the farmers and their friends' persistent protest rhetoric—and the public sources conveying that rhetoric to the American audience—had an influence on the FmHA's decision to halt foreclosures. After all, this stance of the FmHA represented a key change from its previous policy.

Years later farmers continue to argue about the advisability of the government getting involved in their business (Danbom, 1995; "Farm Aid," 2000; Luersman, 1997; "Presidential Hopefuls," 1999). In a sense the farm rhetoric of the 1981-1985 period is still with us though in a different setting. And the present-day circumstances, while not as threatening as those of some 15 to 20 years ago, are far from ideal. In fact, 20% of American farmers have serious debt problems (Cox, 1999). Probably because the exigency does not look to be as critical as in the early 1980s, the rhetorical response appears more muted, and key public sources apparently feel little responsibility in carrying that response to the nation's citizenry. Unless the characterizations and narratives to be used to portray a group have something of an urgent nature about them, major sources may well feel little need to discuss them, at least with any frequency.

If the farm crisis rhetoric stands as a model, that model would signal that a group claiming unfair treatment from the establishment should not only protest the alleged injustices but should arrange that the protests in some manner call attention to the decent types of people they are. The media and other important rhetors covering the protests must be able to paint characterizations and narratives that appeal to the American public. Then, in part due to that public's positive attitude, the bureaucracy may enact policies beneficial to the protesting group.



The circumstances described here also suggest that a nationally recognized leader or organization may not be essential to the progress of a group of protesting Americans. Practically all of the farmers' 1980s rhetorical efforts came on the local or regional level. That demonstrations occur on such levels evidently does not preclude the protestors from becoming known, in a possibly favorable light, to the American public.

Still further, this analysis offers an illustration of the slow, tedious process that must often be followed if protestors are to achieve success. Indeed farmers and their supporters seemed defeated for a time in their 1980s battle as they pulled back from their demonstrations—before reviving them with renewed vigor. Based on the case described above, rhetors fighting the establishment should prepare to take notable losses in the public arena but should nonetheless maintain a dogged persistence in working toward their goals.

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**And how would you like your eggs?:  
An analysis of server-customer interaction**

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During server-customer interactions the participants have particular goals and roles. As customers in a restaurant we want to receive the food that we ordered, we want to be served in a timely manner, and we want our food the way that we requested it. Servers certainly want to completed the necessary tasks in order to receive tips. All participants in this context must collaborate in order to successfully complete the task of ordering. Ordering food from a restaurant is a frequent, mundane activity. The analysis presented in this paper provides insight into the mundane task of ordering a meal at a restaurant. In this paper, I analyze the activities that occur while ordering breakfast and investigate how the participants accomplish ordering.

Two main questions guide this analysis: What kinds of activities occur in this context? How do the participants accomplish ordering a meal? In order to answer these questions, I analyze the structure of the talk in this interaction. Examining the structure of the talk highlights that there is indeed order in what may at times appear disorderly.

The interactions that occur between servers and customers are often taken for granted. Investigating the activities in this setting uncovers the interactional difficulties that can often occur. As this example illustrates, ordering a meal can be a difficult process and it is not always easily achieved. As a result, customers may not get what they ordered or there may be something wrong with what was served.

In this paper, I examine the structure of this interaction by analyzing how the participants begin the ordering sequence and how they accomplish ordering. In this example, ordering is accomplished by making requests, seeking clarification, producing continuers or acknowledgement tokens, and producing question-answer sequences. The participants use these conversational activities in order to complete the ordering process.

### **A Conversation Analytic Approach**

Garfinkel (1984) states that ethnomethodology focuses attention on commonplace activities of daily life. He uses this term to refer to "the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized practices of everyday life" (p. 11). These events are observable and reportable (Garfinkel, 1969, p. 1). Ethnomethodology focuses on everyday language. Commonplace activities that are mundane and typical make for interesting studies.

According to Anderson and Ross (1994), social actions such as expressing agreement with others or walking into a room are so taken for granted that social actors lose sight of them (p. 163). Ethnomethodologists adopt a phenomenological view of the world; the world is viewed as something that people must constantly keep creating and sustaining for themselves.

Many ethnomethodologists have turned toward the area of conversation analysis. According to Hilbert (1990), conversation analysts "have a deep interest in the distribution of conversational events across myriad settings and types of interactions" (p. 798). Conversation analysis is one extension of Garfinkel's investigation of members' methods into the domain of empirical talk (Hilbert, 1990).

Conversation analysis has developed into a prominent form of ethnomethodological work. "The initial and most fundamental assumption of conversation analysis is that all aspects of social action and interaction can be found to exhibit organized patterns of stable, identifiable structural features" (Heritage, 1984, p. 241). According to Heritage (1987, p. 226), Garfinkel focuses on the unavoidably contextual character of ordinary understandings.

Conversation analysis requires the adoption of open mindedness and the avoidance of preformulated theoretical or conceptual categories (Psathas, 1995). This approach involves discovering the order of social actions, not imposing an order on phenomena (p. 8). The term conversation analysis is a misnomer and a more appropriate term is ethnomethodological interaction analysis (p. 2). Conversation analysts are not trying to explain phenomena by drawing on some theoretical, explanatory framework (Psathas, 1995, p. 47).

Conversation analysis involves studying everyday situations and making discoveries concerning how persons engage in interaction (Psathas, 1995, p. 9). According to Psathas (1995) "the discovery of structure in interaction sequences proved to be an important finding because it confirmed what had been proposed in ethnomethodology from the onset" (p. 17). Ethnomethodology proposes that there is an order to be found in the most mundane occasions. By examining that orderliness, the analysts could discover, describe, and analyze that orderliness (Psathas, 1995, p. 17).

Pomerantz (1990) states that the purpose of ethnomethodology/conversation analysis is to explicate the methods that members of a culture use in accomplishing everyday activities. Conversation analysts routinely make at least three types of claims. One claim is that participants are 'doing' particular social actions, identities and/or roles. According to Pomerantz, a second type of claim occurs when conversation analysts offer analyses of methods that interactants use in accomplishing particular actions, roles, or identities. Thirdly, conversation analysts propose how methods work by analyzing sequential features and interactional consequences (p. 231). Ac-



According to Psathas (1995), the task of ethnomethodology/conversation analysis "is to uncover, describe, and analyze ways in which social order is ongoingly produced, achieved, and made recognizable in and through the practical actions of members of society" (p. 66)

One type of sequential feature conversation analysts analyze is the adjacency pair. In adjacency pairs, different speakers produce pairs of conversational action (Nofsinger, 1991, p. 54). Adjacency pairs include conversational phenomena such as greetings, goodbyes, invitation-acceptance or rejection, and offers of acceptance (or refusals). According to Nofsinger (1991), "when one of these first actions has been produced, participants orient to the presence or absence of the relevant second action" (p. 51). The absence of a response to a potential first pair part (FPP) is noticeable. There is an expectation that following a first pair part another speaker will complete the second action or second pair part (SPP).

Using various methods, researchers of institutional talk have explored a variety of contexts. Institutional talk studies consider that some of the interactional phenomena observed may, to some extent, be related to the particular setting. These studies also focus on how work settings are organized (Psathas, 1995, p. 54). "All interaction is thus considered to be affected, and therefore to some extent explained by the context in which it occurs" (Psathas, 1995, p. 54). Doctor-patient interactions (Pizzini, 1991), academic advisement interactions (He, 1994), service encounters (Lamoureux, 1988/1989), and employer-employee interactions (Gavruseva, 1995) have been the focus of previous studies.

Another area of institutional interactional analysis is server-customer interaction. Within this setting specific conversational activities are necessary in order to successfully complete the task of ordering a meal. For example, question-answer sequences, requests, and acknowledgment tokens are a necessity in this context.

### Data and participants

Before exploring this interaction, it is important to present ethnographic details. The data in this case study were drawn from an audio-taped breakfast at a Country Kitchen. I made a transcript of the conversation (Appendix A) using Gail Jefferson's (1984) transcribing notations (Appendix B).

The customers were sitting together at a large table at the restaurant. The participants are members of a church in the Midwest. They are between the ages of thirty and ninety and knew one another before this breakfast. The participants are Jeff, Brad, Mike, Walter, Larry, Ron, Ray, and Martin. The names of the participants have been changed. The server's name is not indicated on the audio-tape.

This encounter occurred during a "Men's Breakfast." Once a month a group of men from this congregation gather for breakfast at a restaurant near their church. The meeting is a time for fellowship and prayer. The pastor of the church leads the group in prayer before the meal. The segment analyzed for this paper occurs five minutes into the tape. The data were collected by one of the customers for the researcher. This event would have occurred had it not been audio-taped. At the time the data were gathered, I did not know the "ordering segment" would be the focus of an analysis. As a result, I did not have a research question prior to the taping. The participants were not aware that this section of their conversation would be the focus of analysis. However, all participants knew that the conversation was being audio-taped and would be analyzed.

I collected the tape because I wanted to gather naturally occurring conversations. As I listened to the tape I became interested in the ordering segment. I transcribed this portion of the tape and listened to it repeatedly. I identified conversational activities that emerged as significant and focused on how the participants collaborated in order to achieve ordering breakfast.

In this paper, I focus on the activity of ordering. Because of the setting and the number of participants, utterances are difficult to hear. There is music in the background and on a few occasions two conversations occur simultaneously.

## Analysis

This case study illustrates how the participants accomplish ordering breakfast. In this example, ordering is accomplished by making requests, producing continuers and acknowledgement tokens, producing question-answer sequences, and seeking clarification. I analyze this encounter by exploring the conversational activities in this context and the structure of the talk.

How participants begin an ordering exchange is an important aspect of ordering. In this case study, there are four distinguishable initial ordering utterances. There are two types of ordering beginnings: self selection and invitation to order. The following examples illustrate self selection.

In this example, Jeff utters his order after responding to Martin's request for hot cakes (pancakes) that are well done (line 28).

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 27 Martin: | I don't want dou(h)ghy ca(h)kes ha ha ha hah hah ha<br>[ |
| 28 Jeff:   | No: no: <u>no</u> doughy                                 |
| 29         | (.) I'll have tw two cakes an a an egg easy over         |
| 30         | (1.0)  |



- 31 Jeff:       And hot  
 32               (1.0)  
 33 Jeff:       Ho:t cakes?

Jeff does not wait for the server to ask him if he is prepared to order; rather, he takes the floor and states his request. In line 28 he comments on Martin's order (line 27) and proceeds with his request.

The following example also illustrates self selection to order. Unlike Jeff in the example above, Brad does not comment on a prior utterance.

- 44 Martin:       =Yeah but I hate when they're runny on the inside hah  
 45               hah hah ha  
               [

- 46 Server:       Not at this restaurant.  
 47 Brad:        I'd like steak and eggs  
 48 Server:        And how would you like your eggs?

Brad does not wait for a first pair part from the server in the form of a question (e.g., "Are you ready to order?"). Instead, Brad produces the first pair part in line 47, "I'd like steak and eggs" and makes a request in this utterance. The ordering sequence continues and the server responds to his request in line 48.

The other type of initial ordering utterance found in this case study is invitation to order. In these instances, the server asks the customer what he would like to order. This occurs when the server produces a first pair part in the form of a question and the customer offers a second pair part in the form of an answer. In this study, the server utters, "okay," prior to asking if the customer is ready to order. This utterance closes the prior interaction with another customer.

In the following examples, the server produces two variations (lines 54 and 102) when inviting the customers to order.

- 50 Server:       =Okay is that going to be it for you?  
 51               (1.0)  
 52 Server:       Okay.  
 53 Walter:       (( ))  
 54 Server:       Okay (.) say are you ready down there?  
 55 Larry:        °Yeah°  
 56 Martin:       Pass your menu Brad  
 57 Larry:        Trying to think about what's two (.) what's two and one.

In this example, the server asks the question, "Okay (.) say are you ready down there?" and the customer, Larry, responds with the acknowledgement token, "Yeah."





In this example of self selection to order which was discussed earlier, the customer produces the first utterance. Brad begins the ordering sequence in line 47, "I'd like steak and eggs". The ordering sequence continues and the server asks Brad how he would like his eggs prepared. In line 49 Brad utters, "Well I'd like the cholesterol free egg beaters=". The ordering sequence is brought to a close in line 50 when the server asks Brad if he would like anything else. In this example, Brad does not make any specific requests about how he would like his meal prepared, or any other requests concerning his order. In other examples in this case study, the customers typically produce request utterances after stating their order. In these instances they specify how they would like their meal prepared.

In the following examples the participants use request utterances to specify how they would like their meal. These examples illustrate how the customers "do" requests.

- 18 Server: Okay how would you like your eggs done.  
[
- 19 Jeff: Okay now we're gonna order
- 20 Martin: Can I get those scrambled (.) yeah
- 21 Server: Oh sure you could
- 22 Martin: And the and the ah (.) cakes nice and bro:wn.
- 23 Server: °You want them well done°
- 24 Martin: Yeah (.) I want them cooked or baked or whatever hah  
25 hah hah ha ha ha hhh hhh
- 26 Jeff: Sssss
- 27 Martin: I don't want dou(h)ghy ca(h)kes ha ha ha hah hah ha  
[
- 28 Jeff: No: no: no doughy  
29 (.) I'll have tw two cakes an a an egg easy over

In the example above, Martin states in line 22 how he would like his pancakes prepared. Martin utters, "And the and the ah (.) cakes nice and brown." The server replies in line 23, "You want them well done." This utterance clarifies how Martin wants his hot cakes prepared. Martin also produces bits of laughter in lines 24 and 25. However, his invitation for laughter is not accepted by the other participants. Jeff overlaps his utterance in line 28 and states "No: no: no doughy (.)" and begins to state his order.

- 27 Martin: I don't want dou(h)ghy ca(h)kes ha ha ha hah hah ha  
[
- 28 Jeff: No: no: no doughy  
29 (.) I'll have tw two cakes an a an egg easy over

- 30 (1.0)  
 31 Jeff: And hot  
 32 (1.0)  
 33 Jeff: Ho:t cakes?  
 34 (3.0)  
 35 Server: Oh (.) That sounds like a (.3) interesting phrase  
 36 maybe we should coin that.  
 37 Martin: Yeah

Following Martin's ordering sequence, Jeff also makes a request. Jeff states his order in line 29 and orders pancakes or hot cakes. Unlike Martin who requests that the cakes be well done, Jeff requests that the cakes be served, "hot." The other participants respond to this utterance, including the server. In line 35 and 36 the server comments on Jeff's utterance, "Oh (.) That sounds like a (.3) interesting phrase maybe we should coin that."

Another example of a request utterance occurs when Mike orders. In this instance, Mike requests unseasoned hash browns.

- 102 Server: Okay what would you like?  
 103 Mike: I'd like: the: a:h everybody's favorite?  
 104 Server: Okay  
 105 Mike: Over easy with ha:m  
 106 Ron: Oh I've got to get  
 107 Mike: And I don't want them - if they're gonna doctor up the  
 108 hash browns I want regular  
 [
 109 Martin: You making it okay over here Ron  
 110 Server: Oh the seasonings you mean?  
 [
 111 Ron: Yeah I've got to get over  
 112 Mike: I don't want them all seasoned up (.) I want regular  
 113 hash browns.  
 114 Server: And what kind of toast do you like?  
 115 Mike: I'd like ah (.) whole wheats fine

Mike accomplishes ordering by making a specific request in lines 107 and 108. Mike utters, "And I don't want them if they're gonna doctor up the hash browns." In response to this request the server asks in line 110, "Oh the seasonings you mean?" Mike completes this request and states, "I want regular hash browns" (lines 112 and 113). As a result of this exchange Mike orders unseasoned hash browns. One way ordering is accomplished



in this case study is by making requests. Ordering is also accomplished with the use of continuers and acknowledgement tokens.

### Continuers and Acknowledgement Tokens

In this case study, following an utterance, the server frequently produces an "okay" or "yeah." Schegloff (1982) examines the use of continuers such as "uh huh" and "yeah." He states that tokens like "uh huh" and "yeah" claim not only "I understand the state of the talk," but express the understanding that extended talk is going on by declining to produce a fuller turn in that position (p. 81).

In the following example, the server produces the continuer "yeah." In this instance Jeff explains how hot cakes (pancakes) are sometimes served cold (lines 38 & 39). In response to this, the server utters "yeah." According to Schegloff, this token "yeah" (line 40) indicates that the server understands what Jeff is saying and that he may be producing an extended turn at talk. However, Jeff does not resume his turn at talk and Ray utters "cold cakes" in line 41.

- 38 Jeff: Sometimes they come (.) you order hot cakes and they  
 39 come cold.  
 40 Server: Yeah  
 41 Ray: Cold cakes  
 42 Jeff: You get cold cakes who wants cold cakes?

"Okay" is also used by the server in this case study. In the following example, the server produces the token "okay" in lines 100 and 102.

- 97 Server: The full order has fi:ve pieces and the half order has  
 98 three  
 99 Walter: Oh you'd better give me the full order  
 100 Server: Okay  
 101 Walter: Yeah yeah  
 102 Server: Okay what would you like?

The utterance "okay" in lines 100 and 102 serves as an acknowledgement token. In this example, the token "okay" indicates understanding. The segment of talk above also illustrates how the server uses the token "okay" following a request. For example, in line 80 Walter states, "Oh you'd better give me the full order." In response to this the server utters, "okay." Following this token, Walter produces the continuer "Yeah" twice (line 101).

### Question-answer: Seeking clarification

In this interaction, the server uses the technique of repeating the last utterance and continuing the ordering sequence by asking another question during the same turn. These utterances verify the order. According to Psathas (1995) adjacency pairs such as "hello-hello" serve to facilitate interaction at key junctures. By virtue of their conventionality these adjacency pairs provide persons with ready made methods for achieving specific outcomes (p. 18). Question-answer adjacency pairs offer the participants in this interaction a method for achieving the goal of ordering.

In the next example, the server asks a question in line 67.

- 62 Server: Well that steak and eggs has three eggs and two orders  
 63 of=  
 64 Larry: =That skillet scrambled  
 65 Server: Skillet scrambled  
 66 (1.0)  
 67 Server: Okay what wha kind of toast do you like with that? (.)  
 68 Larry: What?  
 69 Server: >>What kind of toast do you like<< white wheat rye sour  
 70 dough=  
 71 Mike: =Toast  
 72 Server: English muffin:.  
 73 Larry: Just toast that's all (.) plain toast  
 74 Server: Plain toast  
 75 Larry: Yeah yeah

Successfully completing an ordering sequence can be difficult. In the example above, the server repeats the customer's prior utterance (line 64) in line 65 and continues with a question in line 67, "Skillet scrambled (1.0) okay what wha kind of toast do you like with that?" In response to this question, Larry's utterance in line 68 is a next turn repair initiator, "What?" This utterance indicates that there is a problem with the prior utterance. The server repeats the question and lists the types of toast that are available (lines 69-70). In line 71, Larry does not state what kind of toast he would like; rather, Mike utters in line 71, "toast." The server continues and states another option available, "English muffin" (line 72). Finally in line 73, Larry states what kind of toast he would like, "Just toast that's all (.) plain toast." The server produces a clarifying utterance in line 74, "plain toast." Larry confirms his request ("Yeah yeah") in line 75 and his turn at ordering is complete.

Another example of a question-answer sequence occurs between Mike and the server.



- 107 Mike: And I don't want them - if they're gonna doctor up the  
108 hash browns I want regular  
[  
109 Martin: You making it okay over here Ron  
110 Server: Oh the seasonings you mean?  
[  
111 Ron: Yeah I've got to get over  
112 Mike: I don't want them all seasoned up (.) I want regular  
113 hash browns.

In lines 107 and 108, Martin requests how he would like his hash browns prepared. In line 110, the server produces the question, "Oh the seasonings you mean?" which serves as a first pair part. Mike produces the second pair part in lines 112 and 113, "I don't want them all seasoned up (.) I want regular hash browns." Following this adjacency pair, the participants produce another question-answer sequence. The server asks the question, "And what kind of toast do you like?" and Mike responds, "I'd like ah (.) whole wheats fine." These examples illustrate how the participants use question-answer sequences to accomplish ordering breakfast.

## Conclusion

The case presented in this paper provides a glimpse into an everyday activity: server-customer interaction. Conversation analysis seeks to uncover the structure of naturally occurring conversation. This paper focuses on how the participants accomplish ordering and how they "do" ordering. The encounter may not be unique; however, it does provide greater insight into the activities that occur in this context.

"Conversation analysts are not to try to explain phenomena drawing on some theoretical, explanatory framework, but are trying to describe and analyze them" (Psathas, 1995, p. 47). This analysis increases our understanding of how participants achieve ordering a meal. This analysis investigates details of social interaction. Investigating phenomena such as question-answer sequences and acknowledgement tokens highlights participants' achievements while accomplishing the task of ordering breakfast.

Readers of this type of research can reflect on the process of ordering and their competence in this setting. In addition, it can increase a person's awareness of the importance of each utterance and the collaborative effort that must be made by all involved. This research highlights what activities emerged as relevant between the server and customers. These activities are vital for success in this setting. As readers review this type of research they can identify the types of activities that occur in their interactions and the outcomes of these conversational activities.

This context has not been explored extensively by conversation analysts. Future research should continue to investigate the conversational activities in this context and how participants accomplish this task. Additional research will include more examples of the opening utterances in ordering sequences. Analysis of additional examples will also provide further insight into this fascinating setting.

In this paper, I discuss and analyze how the participants order breakfast. I identify and analyze the activities that the participants use to accomplish ordering. In this interaction, the participants make requests, seek clarification, use continuers and acknowledgement tokens, and produce question-answer sequences. Using conversation analytic methods, I analyze the conversational activities as well as the structure of this interaction. Conversation analysis offers a method for uncovering hidden assumptions and implicit rules. The analysis presented in this paper illustrates how these utterances are truly amazing accomplishments of coordination.

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### Appendix A

- 1 Jeff: I'm still (0.5) thinking about what to order.  
 2 (1.0)  
 3 Mike: Ah he's gonna have ah he's gonna have a big breakfast  
 4 cuz' I'm buying it (.) he went up and got ah=  
 5 Jeff: =O::h=  
 6 Mike: =A big breakfast so he's gotta eat he's gotta eat a lot [  
 7 Walter: Oh oh oh  
 8 Ray: Oh I'd get one of each like I got here  
 9 Mike: Yeah  
 10 Walter: I'll get out of here in a hurry in case you run out of  
 11 money hah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha  
 [  
 12 Mike: There's there's steak and eggs there ah  
 13 Ray: Time will see if Larry leaves the table here smiling=  
 14 Martin: =Yeah  
 15 Walter: Hah ha ha ha ha ahhh  
 [  
 16 Ray: After he ate all the breakfast that day (.) you were  
 17 here  
 18 Server: Okay how would you like your eggs done.  
 [  
 19 Jeff: Okay now we're gonna order  
 20 Martin: Can I get those scrambled (.) yeah  
 21 Server: Oh sure you could  
 22 Martin: And the and the ah (.) cakes nice and bro:wn.  
 23 Server: °You want them well done°  
 24 Martin: Yeah (.) I want them cooked or baked or whatever hah  
 25 hah hah ha ha ha hhh hhh  
 26 Jeff: Sssss  
 27 Martin: I don't want dou(h)ghy ca(h)kes ha ha ha hah hah ha  
 [  
 28 Jeff: No: no: no doughy  
 29 (.) I'll have tw two cakes an a an egg easy over  
 30 (1.0)  
 31 Jeff: And hot  
 32 (1.0)  
 33 Jeff: Ho:t cakes?  
 34 (3.0)

- 35 Server: Oh (.) That sounds like a (.3) interesting phrase  
 36 maybe we should coin that.
- 37 Martin: Yeah
- 38 Jeff: Sometimes they come (.) you order hot cakes and they  
 39 come cold.
- 40 Server: Yeah
- 41 Ray: Cold cakes
- 42 Jeff: You get cold cakes who wants cold cakes?
- [
- 43 Ray: Cold cold cold order them cold=
- 44 Martin: =Yeah but I hate when they're runny on the inside hah  
 45 hah hah ha
- [
- 46 Server: Not at this restaurant.
- 47 Brad: I'd like steak and eggs
- 48 Server: And how would you like your eggs?
- 49 Brad: Well I'd like the ah cholesterol free egg beaters=  
 50 Server: =Okay is that going to be it for you?  
 51 (1.0)
- 52 Server: Okay.
- 53 Walter: (( ))
- 54 Server: Okay (.) say are you ready down there?
- 55 Larry: °Yeah°
- 56 Martin: Pass your menu Brad
- 57 Larry: Trying to think about what's two (.) what's two and one.
- 58 Walter: What's two hah ha ha ha ha hah
- 59 Mike: Order um (.) order um up ≠Larry
- 60 Martin: Call Betsy?
- 61 Ray: Two of everything
- 62 Server: Well that steak and eggs has three eggs and two orders  
 63 of=
- 64 Larry: =That skillet scrambled
- 65 Server: Skillet scrambled  
 66 (1.0)
- 67 Server: Okay what wha kind of toast do you like with that? (.)
- 68 Larry: What?
- 69 Server: >>What kind of toast do you like<< white wheat rye  
 sour  
 70 dough=  
 71 Mike: =Toast  
 72 Server: English muffin:.  
 73 Larry: Just toast that's all (.) plain toast  
 74 Server: Plain toast



- 75 Larry: Yeah yeah  
 76 Walter: (( ))  
 77 (3.0 undistinguishable utterances) ((silverware))  
 78 Server: Links or patties?  
 79 Walter: Yeah  
 80 Server: Patties?  
 81 Walter: No.  
 82 Server: Links?  
 83 (1.0)  
 84 Server: And your eggs?  
 85 Walter: Scrambled?  
 86 Server: Scrambled? (.) and do you like white or wheat toast?  
 87 Walter: Give me white.  
 88 Jeff: Well here comes Ron  
 89 (1.0)  
 90 Jeff: <<We gotta find another table>>  
 91 Walter: Can I get french toast?  
 92 Server: Ye:ah do you want ah links or patties?  
 [
 93 Jeff: He can sit right there that's where I'll  
 94 have him sit and it's all ready to go  
 95 Server: Do you like the ah the full order of the half order?  
 ]  
 96 Jeff: Hi Ron  
 97 Server: The full order has fi:ve pieces and the half order has  
 98 three  
 99 Walter: Oh you'd better give me the full order  
 100 Server: Okay  
 101 Walter: Yeah yeah  
 102 Server: Okay what would you like?  
 103 Mike: I'd like: the: a:h everybody's favorite?  
 104 Server: Okay  
 105 Mike: Over easy with ha:m  
 106 Ron: Oh I've got to get  
 107 Mike: And I don't want them - if they're gonna doctor up the  
 108 hash browns I want regular  
 [
 109 Martin: You making it okay over here Ron  
 110 Server: Oh the seasonings you mean?  
 [
 111 Ron: Yeah I've got to get over  
 112 Mike: I don't want them all seasoned up (.) I want regular  
 113 hash browns.

- 114 Server: And what kind of toast do you like?  
 115 Mike: I'd like ah (.) whole wheats fine  
 116 Walter: Hi son (.)  
 117 Ron: Hi?  
 118 Mike: Hello Ron  
 119 (2.0)  
 120 Ray: Hello Ron.  
 121 Ron: Hi?  
 122 Martin: Yeah you want a chair?  
 123 Ron: Yeah (.) yeap  
 124 Walter: I knew you'd make it  
 125 Mike: Here we go Ro:n we're ordering no:w and you can look  
 126 that over an get yourself something good go gud going  
 127 for ya and ah  
 128 (1.0)  
 129 Mike: If you can remember I want his  
 130 (1.0)  
 131 Mike: >>Slip<<  
 132 Server: What's that?  
 133 Mike: I want his ticket.  
 134 Server: O:h okay.  
 135 Mike: If you remember  
 136 (1.0)  
 137 Mike: If you don't I'll ≠wrestle him for it.

## Appendix B

### Transcribing Symbols

Jefferson, G. (1984). Transcription notation. In J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.), Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis (pp. ix-xvi). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[ ]	Brackets	overlapping utterances
=	Equal signs	continuous utterances
(1.0)	Time Pause	length of pause by seconds
(.)	Micropause	short micropause
:	Colon	extension of the sound or syllable it follows
.	Period	a stopping fall in tone
?	Question mark	rising inflection
,	Comma	continuing intonation
Ø ≠	Arrows	rising or falling shifts in intonation
o o	Degree	a passage of talk which is quieter than



-	Hyphen	the surrounding talk
<u>you</u>	Underline	abrupt cut off of sound
hhh	H's	emphasis
.hh		audible aspirations
(hh)		audible inhalations/ inbreaths
> <	"less than"	within-word laughter
		delivered at a pace quicker than the surrounding talk
< >	"greater than"	delivered at a pace slower than the surrounding talk
(( ))	Scenic details	transcriber's comments
()	Parentheses	items are in doubt
pt	Lip Smack	often preceding an inbreath
\$	Smiley voice	words spoken while smiling
hah	Laugh syllable	laughter particles

## Emerging Bodies and Cultural Bodies (In the Classroom)

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*Editor's Note: This essay introduces issues explored in the following essay.*

"I want to work. I want to find someplace to live. I want to find someone to take care of my children. What do I do? How am I going to survive in this new land?"

"What does he mean when he says that I must do this?"

"This is a strange place. They do not respect their elders. How can they allow this to happen?"

Different places, different rules, - - - different cultures. All around us in every walk of life we see the change. According to the latest report release on Tuesday from the U.S. Census Bureau, we have an increasing ethnic diversity in our nation.<sup>1</sup> This increase certainly should not be a surprise to any of us in education. The ethnic diversity of students in our classrooms at all levels – elementary, secondary and higher education – has grown tremendously with the last decade. And then I stop to think – the last decade??

I think back to my elementary education, and while we were all white in my classroom in rural Minnesota, we were certainly not of the same ethnic background. Mark Stencel was Polish; Helen Harper was English; Duane Staufenburg was German; Larry Roberts was French; and of course, there was Ron Johnson, Susan Swenson, Rick Johanson – all Swedish, not to be confused with Thor Johnsen, Emar Jorgenssen, and Bridget Swenson, all Norwegian. Ethnic diversity was alive and well back in those days – at least in our minds and in our homes – but in school? Never. In school our ethnic backgrounds never surfaced.

Vanderbilt University historian, Hugh Davis Graham, states that the trend is leading to a time when "everybody's a minority."<sup>2</sup> Yes, we are a nation of minorities – not only in terms of the various ethnic backgrounds that comprise our growing population, but also within our culture as well. Perhaps we should say that we are a "nation of cultures" as opposed to minorities. For the question can be asked, just what is our culture? Is it the culture we have in Minnesota, or is it the culture that exists in New York, or the culture in Texas, or the culture of California? Culture, as defined in



most dictionaries, is a particular form or range of civilization, as that of a nation. It is the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another. As world populations shift from one location to another, these "cultures" mix and in the mix, change. Since the end of World War II, one of the largest mixing grounds of culture as defined above, has been the United States.

What we may really need to consider is what might be called "Culture of Place" as it varies across the nation, within cities, and in some cases, even within neighborhoods. Roderick Harrison, of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington think tank, says, "We've seen race relations as a black white issue. Clearly the size of the Hispanic population and the Asian population turns it into a multicultural issue."<sup>3</sup> We could add the growing Eastern European and African populations to his statement. However, we also need to add to this the other cultures and subcultures we have within our surrounding. We do indeed need to have an understanding of how the performance of culture is a factor that has an impact on our educational system.

I became very aware of this when I escorted my granddaughter to her kindergarten class last year. It was grandparent's day – and naturally I went as the proud grandparent. I am not sure what I was expecting, but when I walked into the classroom, the first thing that I noticed was the different colors. No, not the different colors of the walls – or of the furniture – but of the faces. Of the faces and of the clothing being worn by those with faces. It was then that I realized her class had many different cultures represented. All of the students were living in the United States, but they were not all from one nation. Later in speaking with her teachers, I discovered some of the issues facing educators today – but let me tell it to you in their own words:<sup>4</sup>

"Most of the activities I've done in the classroom are to address the language barrier rather than addressing the cultural differences. I try to give more visual and less/or in addition to the auditory directions. Many of the students lack English skills and even if they do speak English; they do not understand the nuances and slang of our language. I also find I'm doing more role playing, acting out stories, music and creative dramatic activities."

"It has been a joy to have children of all cultures in the classroom. The kids themselves are not a problem, but yes, there are problems. From my experiences, I've seen the Hmong families play an active role in their children's education. With the Somali families, the biggest problem is communicating with the parents

encouraging their participation in their child's learning. We've been trying to send important letters written in the language spoken at home, but we are still not getting much response from parents."

"Many of the Somali children have had such varied experiences – from living in refugee camps to seeing members of their families killed. The kids do not – or can not share these backgrounds. Their family structure is different from ours. Many do not have dads in the home. From what we understand, Dad may have several families living in different areas."

"It seems that rather than bringing different cultures to the classroom that we are teaching our culture, regardless of right or wrong, and I'm not sure what else to do . . . "

"We had a dog for show and tell. The Somali culture thinks dogs are dirty and should not be touched. All of the Somali children chose not to pet the dog – except one little guy. The others were trying to tell him not to pet it, but he did? The others then turned their backs on him. I was unsure as to what my role as a teacher was."

"A certain gesture may be very bad in one culture yet not considered bad at all in another. Unknowingly, when we make gestures ourselves, we may be insulting."

"Our already full curriculum does not leave as much time as we would need to fully address the various cultures in the classroom. The biggest struggle is how to teach our culture – and should we – and at the same time teach about other cultures – blindly at times because most of us do not even really know our own!"

Frustration was clear in the voices as we visited. And they are not alone. Think of the problems, the frustrations that exist in the minds of those that are new to our shores. When we feel ill, we make an appointment to see a doctor. For the Bosnian families however that is not the case. "Many are used to going to the doctor without appointments and can't comprehend why they need to call in advance. Shouldn't they see the doctor when they hurt? they reason. When they are convinced to make appointments, they might not go if their symptoms subside and often don't call to cancel."<sup>5</sup>



New refugees from Iran are often panicked over routine letters. The same for the families from Somalia. In their country, receiving something in writing meant a dire emergency. They come from a place where they paid cash or used the telephone – but did not send letters. We, however, often refer to our culture as one being supported by paperwork.

Consider the condition of the refugees from Laos, Somalia, Bosnia, Russia and Tibet – they struggle to live in a strange land, pushed ever faster into jobs by welfare-to-work requirements. They desperately want their children raised in their traditional ways, ways which they hold dear, but they find that any attempts to understand our culture are at best mysterious and at worst, insoluble.<sup>6</sup>

In "The Spirit Catches you and you fall down: A Hmong Child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures," author A. Fadiman tells us a bit about the culture of the Hmong.<sup>7</sup>

"The history of the Hmong yields several lessons that anyone who deals with them might do well to remember. Among the most obvious of these are that the Hmong do not like to take orders, that they do not like to lose, that they are not intimidated by being outnumbered, that they are rarely persuaded that the customs of other cultures, even those more powerful than their own, are superior, and that they are capable of getting very angry."

Consider then the plight of the teacher, the facilitator and guide in the classroom environment. What this individual faces every day is the most important, but most subtle task, to decode what every member of the class says when he or she speaks, a task made all the more difficult by linguistic and cultural differences.

In a paper presented at the 1995 Central States Communication Association convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, Melissa Beall addressed the use of stories to increase awareness of gender issues.<sup>8</sup> She acknowledges that storytelling as a form of teaching is being explored as an option for teachers at many levels. According to Beall, "Communication instruction has gained immeasurably since narrative and storytelling has become recognized and respected as a pedagogical strategy for the classroom teacher." In her closing remarks she states "When I invite students to share their own stories, or stories they've heard or seen, we tend to get a greater variety of contributions in light of the stories and our discussions of them."

Just as Dr. Beall suggested in her paper the use of stories, of performance, to increase awareness of gender issues, I am suggesting the use of stories, of performance, to increase the understanding of the differences and similarities between the cultures that are present in the classrooms of our schools today. The use of stories, the use of performance, is not limited

to the communication classroom. Performance is a pedagogical tool that can be used in any academic area, in any avenue of instruction, to help all gain in the understanding of the subject – and of the “Culture of Place.”

In his book, “The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination,” Robert Coles reminds us that:<sup>9</sup>

“The whole point of stories is not “solutions” or “resolutions” but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles – with new protagonists and antagonists introduced, with new sources of concern or apprehension or hope, as one’s mental life accommodates itself to a series of arrivals; guests who have a way of staying, but not necessarily staying put. (p. 129)

The performance of culture in the classroom invites each of us to have guests – guests that will contribute to the growth – to the understanding – to the appreciation – of the “Culture of Place” – and then move on to allow even more and more guests to make their appearance. The mixing of cultures within our nation, within our education system, has been what has contributed to the strength of our unity. It is my contention, and that of my colleague, Dr. Bryant Alexander, that this mixing should not come at the expense of cultures disappearing, but rather from the celebration of the differing cultures present within our society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mankato Free Press, September 15, 1999, Page 3A, “Census Reveals Growing Diversity.”

<sup>2</sup>Page 3A

<sup>3</sup>Page 3A

<sup>4</sup>Personal interviews with elementary teachers in Owatonna, MN population approx. 12,500.

<sup>5</sup>The Fargo Forum, June 13, 1999, Page E6, “Bridging the Language Gap.”

<sup>6</sup>Minneapolis StarTribune, August 31, 1999, Page B1, “Child care Search Doubly Difficult for Refugee.”

<sup>7</sup>Fadiman, A. (1977). The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. 339 pp.

<sup>8</sup>Beall, M. A. “Using Stories to Increase Awareness of Gender Issues,” paperpresentation at the Central States Communication Association Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 21, 1995

<sup>9</sup>Coles, R. (1987). The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



**Performing Bodies: Student Bodies  
(In the Classroom)**

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The notion of linking performance, pedagogy, and the body is a given. Performance is an act of engagement, pedagogy is a question of what and how to teach, and the body is the primary site of experience. Through performance in everyday life we learn, define, and maintain our cultural, racial and gender identities. Schooling whether acknowledged or not, is always involved in the process of reinforcing, mandating and transforming social forms. Peter McLaren states: "Critical theorists see school as a form of cultural politics; schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimization of particular forms of social life" (Life 168). Whether that be in the distantiated and intellectualized realm of ideas, or the more specified regulation of bodies and behaviors—which are often separated but are always and already intertwined—schooling is linked with performance. Performance in this sense is equated with enacted, crafted and engaged activity.

Traditional education has always sought to control the bodies of students in the classroom. The traditional cage-like desk controls posture. Lines and rows direct focus and discourage antisocial interaction. Raised hands mediate, signal and sanctions proper teacher-student interactions. Bells and whistles regulate eating, playing, and walking. The expression of other bodily functions is placed within time frames of appropriateness. Students always play by these rules. Those who do not play, perform a kind of resistance.

The concept of resistance as applied in critical pedagogy is most commonly associated with theorists such as Henry Giroux (1981, 1983a, 1983b) and Paul Willis (1977). In addition Aronowitz and Giroux, state that resistance reflects how "school as cultural and social terrain organizes, legitimates, sustains, and refuses particular forms of student experiences" (Postmodern 88). This is inclusive of their learning and expressive styles. The result is oppositional behavior on the part of the student. Resistant behavior has "symbolic, historical, and lived meaning, which contests the legitimacy, power and significance of school culture in general and instruction in particular" (McLaren Ritual 86).

Contemporary education models continue to rely on language-based approaches to learning. These methods favor specific forms of knowledge and the display of understanding. This article is interested in foregrounding the unique articulation of student voice in the classroom. Connelly and Clandinin define the nature of voice. "Voice is meaning that

resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community . . . Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process" (4). I link the notions of "voice" and "body" as expressive modalities. In this article, I am not interested in foregrounding a pedagogical strategy, making this another teacher-centered pedagogical experience, but to focus on a humanistic pedagogical practice leading to the active process of student expression. I offer a brief description of specific classroom assignments then frame and showcase student work.

I use the word "work" very strategically to reclaim the spirit of focused energy, thought, and skill that students engage towards specific ends and that, which is often critiqued by critical pedagogical theorists. The specific end of work is not just the reward of good grades, but the personal rewards that come in focused attention, the excavation of lived experience, and the validation of enfleshed knowledge as a filter for articulating intellectualized knowing. McLaren suggests that students often resist educational settings, inclusive of teachers and curriculum, because they see schooling as denying their lived experience. Their resistance is a form of assertion and a method of recovering and validating a form of *enfleshed knowledge* and self-expression that is being repressed and oppressed.

"Enfleshed knowledge is not the matching of information to external reality but rather the building of discursive positionalities and economics of affect from the discourses and material practices available and the histories and regulatory practices of their operations" (275). Enfleshment speaks to the lived and somatic experiences of students that serve as filters and frames for their learning. Using enfleshed knowledge as a facilitative part of the educational experience is at the core of performance methodology.

Performance Studies scholar Elyse Pineau offers the definition of performance methodology as "a deep kinesthetic attunement, developed through a rehearsal, that allows us to attend to experiential phenomena in an embodied, rather than purely intellectualized way" ("Re-Casting" 46). Performance methodology should not be equated or exclusively reduced to "moving bodies." The bodies in these examples are not moving in that traditional sense of dance or kinesthetic activity. These student works feature the body, that living/thinking/ storehouse of experience, the body as voice. These performance texts feature what are called "theories of the flesh," lived experience translated as tools for living, knowing and engaging the process of sense-making (Madison 213).



### **A Call to the Body, Memory, Expression and Creativity**

In this section I outline two assignments that I have used to engage students in the presentation of material and understanding, the two-voices assignment and the focus on performance final.<sup>1</sup> The courses in which I use these assignments vary, but most are classes that use performance as a critical method of exploring culture, pedagogy, race, identity, gender and the multiple intersections of these descriptive positionalities. While I use these assignments in performance-based classes, they may be used in any class where students are required to offer critically responsive presentations of theoretically complex information.

Two-Voices Assignment: The assignment is used as one of the major engagements in the class. It is designed to force students into gaining both a theoretical/analytical understanding of the material, and then to apply or translate that understanding through their own personal experience. The student is directed to choose one article in which they present the major ideas of the article in two "voices," a written abstract and a performative presentation. The reading materials in these classes range from a traditional textbook to a compiled Reader. Students are required to read all articles. The articles are scheduled within the syllabus based upon how the issues of the article enter into the organizational plan of the class. Students choose articles based upon their interests and the date when that article must be presented.

Voice in this assignment is described as an expressive modality. Students are required to present their understanding of the article in two expressive modes: First, a written abstract of the article (1-2 pages) that captures the major thesis, method, argument, and conclusion of the article. The abstract is typed, copied and distributed to the class before the performative presentation. All other students are asked to read the abstract before the presentation in order to focus on the student-performer's interpretation of the article in relation to their own reading. Second, the students are required to offer a performance or installation that communicates primarily through sound, personal narrative, images, graphics—or an embodied and displayed representation of the article. In this way performance is used as a method or metaphor for displaying their understanding.

In this sense students are engaging the performance of scholarship, thereby reminding them that even written scholarship is an expressive display dictated by form. The presentations which range from solo performances and group performances to engagements requiring full class participation—are orchestrated by individual students to display their understanding of the article, as well as drawing the class into a deeper understanding. I have received presentations that have been personal/autobiographical narratives, choreographed dance movements, and interpretative readings of found and created texts—just to name a few. The perfor-

manances range from 10-15 minutes. The performative presentation is graded on the clarity and specificity of the engagement and the articulate correlation between the performance and the particularity of the article from which it is drawn or responds. Through post-performance discussion, the class explores not only the embodied activity but also the critical content of the article using the performance as a point of entry.

The performance can either be an expression of the article (content, method, arguments, theory, and philosophy) or it can be the student's articulated response to the article. This may take the form of a critique, celebration or parody. The primary limitation is that the performance is not allowed to explicate the article in a literal way, using the specific language of the text. The performance must present the material in a different voice, in a different language. Students are thus forced to realize that language is a system of symbols used to communicate. The assignment requires them to use a differing arrangement of symbols than the ones expressed in the article. And more specifically, the assignment requires that they find a mode of expression that best represents their thoughts of the article.

Focus on the Performance Final. This project is designed as a capstone experience in the performance studies classroom, but it can be used in a wide variety of communication classes. The project is centered on the use of performance as either a metaphor for human interaction, performance as a subject of study, performance as a mode of inquiry, or performance as a method of scholarly research.

In the project the student chooses a primary issue, focus or concern in which performance is either the focus or method of presentation. Based upon my classes, many students choose issues that focus on the social construction or performative nature of race, culture, gender, and identity. Others focus on the rhetorical strategies used in certain campaigns, movements, or the relationship between social influence and individual action. The project can culminate within a written or embodied form. The written paper is a 20-30 page, carefully cited scholarly document accompanied with a five minute oral presentation. The embodied method is a 20-30 minute performance with an accompanying 5-10 page critical analysis of the argument that undergirds or guides the project.

In any class situation students enter with varying skill levels. The classroom becomes the intersection between where the student stands in her knowledge, skill and experience, and where the teacher would like the student to move. These assignments become the tools to challenge students to think in new ways. They also allow the student to express her understanding in ways that best fits her voice, while still meeting the critical demands of the classroom. While the notion of "performance" might be intimidating for some students—the construction of performance in these



assignments can be reframed as *any strategically enacted and crafted behavior projected with an intention to share and or display meaning*. Hence, issues of student readiness to the performative component of the assignment may be allayed. But because of the traditional ways in which students have been expected to act in the classroom, specifically in terms of displaying their knowledge, which in some cases is more a validation of teacher knowledge—they would need to be encouraged to explore the vast potential of their expressive modalities. In the following sections I offer excerpts from three examples of the “two-voices” assignment, and an excerpt from one example of the “focus on performance final” assignment.

### **Student Responses: Engaging Thought/Translating Understanding**

Addressing the “Two-Voices” assignment the student, Mikomi Fairley, a young African-American woman,<sup>2</sup> responded to the article by Soyini Madison entitled, “That Was My Occupation: Oral Narrative and Black Feminist Thought.” The student’s abstract paralleled, in more specific detail, the abstract provided by the author.

Black feminist thought supports the interdependence of what are called “theories of the flesh” and “specialized knowledge.” Theories of the flesh reflect the distinctive interpretations of the world carved out of the material realities of a group’s life experiences. Specialized knowledge infuses elements and themes of black women’s culture and traditions with critical interventionist thinking to provide black women with new tools of resistance. The oral narrative of Mrs. Alma Kapper, who worked as a domestic and sharecropper in the black belt of Mississippi, is illuminated through the joining of black feminist thought and the performance paradigm. As a result, black feminist thought and the performance paradigm augment each other as analytical constructs in unveiling the many ways people “lettered” and “unlettered” theorize themselves. (213)

Mikomi’s performance translated her understanding of Madison’s article. Sitting on a chair with the audience enclosed in front of her and the lights slightly dimmed, she engaged the following autobiographical performance. The performance served as both a critical articulation and an emblematic representation of Madison’s article. More specifically, Mikomi’s presentation was an application and translation of the meaningfulness of the issues in the article, as applied to her personal experience.

## Mother Tongue

by Mikomi Fairley

When I was twelve or thirteen I had the privilege, or the burden of living with my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. It was a privilege because I was submerged in their constant love and concern for me. It was a burden because sometimes I thought I would drown in it. But really it was quite convenient. If I needed straight answers to serious questions like, "*What do boys like?*" or "*When would I grow some boobs?*" —I would go to my mother. When she was a girl, she couldn't talk to my grandmother, (as my grandmother could not talk to my great grandmother) about anything of a slightly sexual nature, so my mother was always eager, not only to answer my questions but to let me know that asking was okay.

If I was feeling less than pretty or smart, which I often did at that age, I would go to my grandmother. That's what I called her. I'm not being polite or formal for your sake. She wasn't having granny or grandma or any derivative of the full title-with emphasis on the *grand*. Nothing else so finely reflects the esteemed position she holds in my life, and I couldn't dream of calling her anything else.

She's the artist of the family; the writer, the poet, the sculptor, the creator (small "c" so to speak). Whenever I expressed any doubt in myself or if I just felt knocked down by the world, she would speak beautiful words to me; words full of pride that proclaimed with authority that "*I was the best thing walking.*" I knew in my heart that she was shamefully biased. Not only because I was her grandchild but also because the family agreed that our resemblance (both physical and psychological) was astonishing. Nevertheless, listening to her I could feel my head and chest swell and my legs grow longer. To this day, our conversations always end in a mutual standing ovation. See, over the years I have learned how to swell her head and chest too!

My great-grandmother, who I called Nanny, was a different story. I loved her and I knew she loved me, but we didn't really talk, like regular conversations. When she spoke, I simply listened. She told me stories about her life in Alabama, about the women in the church, about the hardships and good times in her life. She told me stories about poverty, child rearing, men, backbiters and their inevitable ends. She told me about spirits, love, faith and family. I listened to her stories. Some were more interesting than others, and some seemed to have no real point at all, but I loved to listen. It was better than TV, and I always felt privileged that she chose to share her stories with me. The way she stared into the distance forced me to follow her into that long ago place



where the world was different, and my Nanny was a young woman, a young lady, or a little girl.

I knew the stories were important because she would never stop in the middle to check on the greens, or run an errand, or even answer the phone. Once she began I knew we would sit there together until the story was through. These sessions were characterized by her looking deep into the past, and me looking deeply at her—reading her expression, drowning everyone and everything else out except for the tone of her voice. It was through her voice and her expressions, or lack thereof, that I came to an understanding of the experiences she shared with me.

Listening to her made me feel connected. She reminded me I had a past and people who fought and struggled to get me here, and I figured that made me pretty important to them—if no one else, and that they were enough for me. But even though I grasped this grand notion as a child, I failed to recognize just how deep the seeds she was planting had gone, or how grand the tree of her knowledge would prove to be.

Now at twenty-three, I am beginning to reap the second harvest; and a deeper understanding of her stories. Lately, more and more often, it seems that her stories were foreshadows to my own life. She gave me the benefit of what she had learned about the nature of people, and the cycle of life as she had come to know it in all her years. She knew that I would extend my hand to a friendly face and would barely retrieve it with all my fingers intact. She taught me to “feed them type of folks with a long handled spoon.” She knew I would love a man not much worth loving and she taught me to love my Creator first, and then even a man I loved couldn’t move me from the right path. She knew I would be lied on; she knew I would grow tired; she knew I would see the day when I would realize my responsibility to myself and my life, and she taught me from whence to draw my strength. She did not just tell me her stories, she taught me about her life, through her experiences—exactly as she had learned it. I guess she knew she could “show me” in a sense, better than she could tell me, *Alhamdu Allah*.<sup>3</sup> I remember! And now, all I have to do is remember to know what would have been otherwise unknown to me.

Nanny didn’t give me all the answers, but she gave me so much more than stories. She gave me guidance; she gave me my history; she gave me herself in a very personal way. She smiles inside of me whenever I remember her stories.

Now that I have a child of my own, I have to remember to teach and show through this telling. These stories are seeds of wisdom that you think you’ve forgotten until your life forces you to reflect, only to find you were given a gift of immeasurable worth. Your own little tree of wisdom will be nurtured to grow through your own experience.

Now that she is gone, I realize that: (sung in performance)

*I have the ho  
And I take it everywhere I go  
Cause I'm planting seeds so I reeps  
What I sow—ya know  
Oh on & on & on & on my cipher  
keeps movin' like a rollin' stone  
I can't control the soul flowin'  
Ooh wee! <sup>4</sup>*

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In her engagement of the two-voices assignment, Dorothy S. Gruett, an Anglo-American woman responded to an article by Sally Harrison-Pepper entitled, "Dramas of Persuasion: Utilizing Performance in the Classroom." The student's abstract offered more specific details than my own reduction of the article. The essay offers a specified pedagogical approach "utilizing performance and other active examinations of theory as a fundamental strategy" (116). For Harrison-Pepper, the strategy is used in a semester course with the topic *Ritual, Play, and Expressive Behavior*. The course examined "how people express and understand themselves and others 'through creating and maintaining the behavioral and physical environments in which they live'" (116). Borrowing from her most recent essay dealing with the subject Harrison-Pepper describes her work: "I employ a series of classroom techniques that I've come to call 'dramas of persuasion'—a performative and experientially based methodology that integrates theory and practice as well as the cognitive and emotional components of learning" (Utilizing Performance 142).

Dorothy's performance translated her understanding of Harrison-Pepper's article into the following performance text. During her performance, she sat in a desk—a desk designed to control student bodies and focus thought. She sat in a desk as she reflected and expounded on the politics of recess, the empowerment of play, the legislation of bodies, and the link between schooling and socialization. The irony between her seated body, and her celebration of recess reinforced the social influence of schooling while she critiqued it.



**Recess**  
**by Dorothy S. Gruett**

June 21, 1999

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of time." I think Dickens may have been reflecting on early school days when he wrote those lines. It seems like everything important that I ever learned in school I learned at recess. Okay that may be an exaggeration, but I know that I have used Algebra about three times in the last ten years, while the politics of the playground have stayed with me. They have taken new shapes that's true, but they are still here. Instead of negotiating time on the swings with my friend— *"If I push you a hundred swings, then you push me for a hundred"*— Now I am negotiating time on the computer, dinner plans, foreign trade, and Wall Street.

There's a certain echo from our childhood in the things we do today. Recess was not only our playing field, it was the place where we decided and developed the DNA of our future: Sharing experiences, bonding in discovery, dividing and uniting. When I think back on school, most of my memories, I mean the ones I can still see in my head like a photograph, are the things that happened at recess— philosophical discussions on the monkey bars and hikkus over Twinkies and milk. Recess was the human experience of the educational process.

I remember one time in Kindergarten when I brought a little recess into the classroom. Okay, I may have been a little hyped up. But who came up with the idea to have quiet reading time right after we came in from playing soccer? Little bodies still shaking and sweaty expected to sit and be still. And while I'm on the subject, who came up with soccer? *"Hey, I know, let's have a game where it's okay for boys to hit girls with a big plastic weapon that's hurled at light speed leaving a big red mark on your leg. Talk about your gender struggles within the patriarchal structure."* Anyway, back to reading time.

*"Sssshhhh . . . okay class, settle down. Everyone sit down on the carpet, its reading time."*

*"Yes, Miss Bunny."*

I was shy and introverted even at age five, but I found her. She was my human Barbie doll. She was my only hope for getting through the battlefield of the playground, an ally. She was little and cute and she had really great headbands. She was my next door neighbor. She was in my class. She was like a sister, a goddess. She was my best friend in the whole

world, and she hated my guts. She wanted nothing to do with me. I had been trying for weeks to win her over, but she didn't like the way I said her name . . . An-dra, was all I could get out.

*"Hush now, settle down children. Dorothy, find a spot and stay there."*

*"Well, I would, Miss Bunny, if An-dra would just let me sit next to her."*

She would move to one side of the carpet and I would follow. She got up again, and so did I. She just wanted to get the hell away from me and I thought she was playing a game of tag. Back and forth across the room we continued the match; a match of wills and strength; a test of worthiness; the Olympics of human experience; the fight for a friend. This was the beginning of who we would be, when we grew up and got bigger. I lost all track of Miss Bunny, until I felt the pull on my pigtails.

*"Owwwww!"*

Miss Bunny was dragging me by my hair to the other side of the carpet. This woman who made me want to be a Kindergarten teacher when I grew up. I even thought the mustache on her face proved my theory that she was somehow related to the Easter Bunny. I thought it was fur! Did she know the kind of loyalty she was betraying? Did she know the adoration she was dragging across the floor while a room full of gaping mouths and bulging eyes stared?

*"Recess is over, Dorothy! Andrea doesn't want to sit with you. Stay here!"*

Recess I hated it and I loved it. We proved our strength and realized our weaknesses. We made friends, enemies, had first crushes. We had wars and celebrations. The playground was a microcosm. After all, handball was much more than just a game. We were creating a forum for peaceful and sometimes not so peaceful negotiations between opposing teams. We gathered as a group to engage in this ceremony that spoke volumes about us as individuals: creating our own rules, having respect for the rules set by others that came before us. We deemed some rules valuable. We changed those that seemed unfair. We learned what it meant to have our respect violated and how to protect our rights. *"Out of bound . . . do over!"* This exploration we were conducting, created the maps of our personalities that would continue until high school. But suddenly, in high school we were too old for recess of any kind. Kids lined up in bleachers in the gyms. Perfect rows. Principal Hack said,



*"No talking! We're preparing you for the real world."  
I thought, "Shit! What have I been living in so far?"*

This was a daunting discovery. The real world is the adult world? Well once, Miss Bunny said. *"No recess in the classroom!"* Now it is no recess at all. Principle Hack said, *"We're preparing you for the real world."* In high school—ditching, tardies, and absences flourished—students were going to get their recess one way or another. I remember hearing that high school dropout rates were steadily on the rise. I had two close friends who dropped out of high school while I was there.

In high school I saw fences go up around the school and more and more fights broke out. A pregnant teenager was stabbed after a football game and her baby was killed. There were bomb threats, suicides, drugs, and guns. The politics of the playground turned into bloody battles. Faculty took self-defense classes. Out of touch administrators just put up more fences and used metal detectors. Things were always reactionary and never precautionary. No more recess, no more direct experience. Strangers, enemies, criminals—lost kids on the playground.

I'm not here to lay everything on the absence of all that I've termed recess. We may not understand why something like this happens, but we're smart enough to know that it isn't any one thing. Not just parents, or schools, or religious organizations; not just the media, the movies or music—but when we don't allow an informal forum in which we teach each other tolerance, enlightening each other to our struggles and strife, our wants and needs and free expression—these lessons are learned in hard ways with sometimes terrible consequences. When recess was taken away we were striped of an essential organic awareness about ourselves. We were deprived of the nourishment from sharing the human experience. Recess allowed us to learn by doing. It was an informal legislation of desire and an active engagement of humanity.

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In this two-voices performance the student, Renee Sohn, an attractive, dark haired woman of Asian decent wore an apron and a blond wig. She situated the large teacher's desk in front of the class as a kitchen counter and oven. While she prepared her performance space, she circulated a tray of "brownies" and encouraged the audience to eat. During the performance she mixed all the ingredients of a simulated recipe. When she reflected on being in grade school, she left the kitchen space, grabbed a knapsack, and entered a classroom space where she took a seat. The knapsack was layered over the apron. Later, she returned to the kitchen. At the end of the performance she offered the class a tray of "blonde" brownies and encouraged them to eat.

Her performance was a response to the article by Shannon Jackson, "Ethnography and the Audition: Performance as Ideological Critique." The student's abstract paralleled, in more specific detail, the abstract provided by the author:

This essay documents an experiment in the performance of ethnography based on research collected on the audition process. I used a variety of scripting and performance techniques combined with insights from cultural theory to evoke, dramatize, and critique a practice within the institution of theatre. Additionally, I describe the entry of other actors into the process, our rehearsal, the experience of performance, and the evaluation and reflection of post-performance "aftermath." Along the way, critiques of "objectivist" ethnography resonate with critiques of the brand of objectivism reified in the audition process. Finally, this essay argues in a more general way for the performance as an alternative mode of scholarly representation. (21)

Renee's performance was less a performance of ethnography, as much as it was a creative autoethnographic performance. She used performance as a method of ideological critique. The performance critiqued the social construction of beauty, gender, racial inequity, and the social consumption of culture. She also implicates the classroom as a specific site of social indoctrination and bias.

## Making Blondies

by Renee Sohn

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup insecurity
- 1 tablespoon desire
- 2 cups media or deception
- 1 pinch favor
- 1/3 cup illusion
- 1/4 cup imitation beauty

Today, we're going to learn how to make blondies. This recipe is my own. I can't get a hold of the original recipe. I've eaten blondies since preschool and the more I consumed, the more it consumed me. But during high school, I started eating brownies—that's another story. We can learn how to make brownies next time, but, we've all eaten blondies before. So, let's get to work.



You start out by mixing half a cup of insecurity with a third of a cup of illusion and 1 tablespoon of desire. Then you combine that with 2 cups of media or deception; same thing, both will work. One fourth cup of imitation beauty; real beauty is too expensive—priceless. Add a pinch of favor (that's where the essence of the flavor is). Now, we must beat this good . . . beat it . . . beat it! Don't stop beating it. That's good enough. Then we want to put this beating under immense pressure and heat . . . and wait.

I grew up in San Marino, a small city known for its affluence and Caucasian influence. So, when I was a young girl I wanted to be white. I WAS WHITE—almost. I wanted to be a blonde because Cinderella was blonde. Alice in Wonderland was blonde. Barbie was blonde. My best friend, Kelly was blonde, and so was Holly, Sara, Katie and Colleen. Blonde was beautiful. In school, boys liked blondes and teachers like blondes.

I remember in physical education class, when it was time to play sports we had to pick teams. It always seemed that blondes were the first to go, even if they couldn't hit the ball. In class when I raised my hands to answer a question, I would get picked only if blondie, who sat next to me wasn't raising her hand, and she would only get picked if a boy next to her wasn't raising his hand. The thing is, I wasn't a boy or a blonde back then, but I'm blond now. I eat blondies now, and I even know how to make them.

In the social context of San Marino and high school—I guess it didn't always have to be blonde, fair was acceptable—light shades of browns were okay, too. It was okay, even if they were overbaked a little. Anything would do—just not black or brown. And so it went with eyes—blue eyes and green eyes and gray eyes and BIG eyes were fine. Anything would do—just not small and black or brown eyes.

And when I read a woman's magazine—I saw Claudia Schiffer, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Pamela Lee—with their luscious locks of golden corn hair. And "they" love them. They as in "we." I'm not talking about just Americans, but Japanese, Chinese—you name it. They draw cartoons figures with alien sized eyes and platinum hair. Blondies are international icons. Crazy isn't it?

Now, I eat brownies, pinkies, peachies and more. But, I'll never forget the taste of blondies. Oh my! They smell delicious and you know what? The smell seems to follow me wherever I go. I think our blondies are sizzling. Let's indulge!

### **Addressing the Final Assignment:**

In her final presentation the student, Alysia Robbins approached the issue of increased violence in high schools, with particular emphasis on the murders in Littleton, CO. Her arguments were grounded in how these acts of violence send reverberations throughout the lives of those effected, inclusive of parents, students, teachers, and how they should serve as a warning for television viewers and members of the larger society.

In the performance, Alysia displayed shocking media captured images of the family and friends of those directly involved in the Littleton massacre. She stood center-stage encircled by the audience. In front of her was a music stand in which she placed a representative narrative of those effected. She flipped nameplates of those, whose stories were being narrated, ending with her own. This performative choice presented the mourners in a rolodex of broken hearts and effected lives.<sup>5</sup>

She interspliced segments of the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into that Night" by Dylan Thomas. The intertextuality of the narratives, the poem, and the images was both a critique on the violence, a call for resistance, activism, and awareness of the issues that impact the lives of our children and our communities.

### Gentle Rage by Alysia Robbins

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

David's Mother: I didn't know. I didn't see it coming. We didn't talk much, lately. He was busy; I was busy. I tried to get involved in his life. I would ask him how things were going, but you know how boys are. Fine, Mom. Then the door slams shut in your face. I didn't really think of it, he was a teenager, they do stuff like that. But you are right. I should have tried harder, should have known something wasn't right. Especially when those trench coats showed up. And now it's too late. I see him, you know. When I close my eyes, I can see him. He's right there, the sweet little boy he used to be. Not the killer he became.

*Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

Cindy Johnson: We were laughing at some stupid joke or something. And then we heard screaming. Bullets were flying by our heads as we ran for cover. And then there was silence. All you could hear was the clock ticking ñ tick ñ tick ñ tick—and the footsteps. Every once in a while there was an explosion and then footsteps. I could hear whispers and crying. And then more silence. I looked up and there he was, just looking at me. He pointed the gun at me and asked if I believed in God. I closed my eyes and answered "Yes." *Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*



Jennifer Cluse: There was blood everywhere. I didn't know what to do. I was so scared. Everyone was going crazy. I mean, you see stuff like this on TV, but you never think of it as real. You know it because it's on TV, so what do you do when it's for real? We tried to stop the bleeding, but it was like a river. I was holding him and it was like I could feel his pain. I had as much blood on me as there was on him. I couldn't tell where he stopped and I began. We were like one person. I didn't know there could be that much blood. Do you know what the color of blood is? It's not that bright, pretty red, like nail polish. It's darker, almost black. And it's all over the place. I don't want to die, I don't want him to die. Please, Mr. Jones don't close your eyes. Keep talking, just don't close your eyes

*Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

Tammy Mitchell: I know we should have been in class, but God, biology is just so . . . boring! So we got bathroom passes. We were going to go to the cafeteria for a snack. We did go to the bathroom first, cause I really did have to go, so we were right there when we heard the explosions. I thought it was the kitchens or something, but then I saw Mr. Jones running up the stairs and then everyone was running. And then I saw them, Aaron and David. They had guns—real guns, and they were just shooting, shooting everyone. They were coming down the hall. I could feel them getting closer. And then I saw the bullets just slam into Mr. Jones and we just watched him fall, almost like in slow motion. We knew—both of us that we were next if we didn't hide. We ran back into the bathroom and hid in one of the stalls. We both stood on the toilet seat so our feet wouldn't show. I was praying that they didn't actually test any of the doors to see if any were locked. We just held onto each other. I closed my eyes and held onto her as we whispered prayers in each other's ears.

*Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

Alysia Robbins: Every morning, I turn on the news. I listen to it while I get ready in the morning. I listen while I do my hair and makeup, while I get dressed and eat breakfast. I listen for the weather and traffic, I watch channel 5 because they have so much fun while they are working. But on this day, April 20 I was actually looking for something on the Oklahoma bombing memorial. It was the 3rd or 4th anniversary and they had been doing stuff on it all week, but not today. Today was another tragedy.

The Columbine High School Massacre. I couldn't believe what I was hearing or seeing. Kids coming out of the building. Just a stream, a river of young people with their hands above their heads, and flashing lights, and police with guns. And the news that 15 people were dead, no 25, the number would get higher, and many more were injured, some critically. How could this happen again and again? I closed my eyes and cried.

*And you, my (father) friends, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

I dedicate this to the friends, families and loved ones of Littleton, Colorado.

## Conclusion

I have selected these four student presentations out of many that have been presented for three primary reasons: First, they resonate with the clarity and specificity that all teachers expect from their students. Within these responses the students articulate their understanding of intellectual, political and social issues by translating it through their body, their lived experience and their sense making modalities. Second, in this pedagogical approach their performing bodies usurped the authority of the pedagogical experience. It transformed the classroom into a place where lived experience became the tender of negotiation—a place where enfleshed knowledge was presented as a *way of knowing*, and as *evidence of knowing*. They not only displayed their understanding of the article, but the performative engagement also served as a means of informing and engaging the class. Thus performance methodology is not exclusively a pedagogical strategy used by a teacher, as much as it becomes an expressive mode for students.

Third, each of these presentations foregrounded the link between performance and pedagogy, between action and reflection: Mikomi situated the pedagogical process in the intimate engagement of the narratives of her "mothering" guides. Dorothy theorized on schooling as a microcosm of the larger society, focusing specifically on recess as a metonymic trope for experiential learning. Renee commented on the social construction of beauty, and the culture and gender politics of the classroom. Alysia foregrounded schooling as a battleground of competing needs, while calling for a performative resistance against rage.

To use performance as a method in the classroom is to explore social and cultural issues or more specific content areas, and to deconstruct and magnify the performative nature of culture, of learning and pedagogy. Following Pineau and Pepper, using performance as a pedagogical



strategy encourages a physicalized engagement of materials. It is the articulate enactment of intellectualized understanding translated through lived/felt experience and made manifest through an aesthetic act or artifact. Using performance as a pedagogical strategy offers students alternative ways to express *what they know* and *how they know it*, which is the very nature of pedagogy.

Teachers who use performance as a pedagogical strategy in the classroom invite and require their students to translate information in meaningful ways and not to simply regurgitate information. They ask and demand that their students display an *intellectually embodied understanding of content information*. Performance as a method is about doing. It activates the felt senses, body memory, lived experiences, and the intellectual and creative abilities of students. Students present their understanding through performance. They present their understanding through the body.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> These assignments are drawn from similar assignments used by Dr. Elyse Lamm Pineau. Dr. Pineau teaches in the Department of Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She has served as my graduate advisor-mentor-teacher-friend.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper I use broad references to each student's ethnic heritage, but only to place them in context to arguments they make in their performance and their orientation to the content and function of the articles.

<sup>3</sup> Is a Muslim phrase that means, "All praise to God."

<sup>4</sup> These lines are from the song, "Appletree" recorded by Erykah Badu. On the CD cover Badu says that the song was inspired by her "ganny" (her grandmother).

<sup>5</sup> In constructing the narratives Alysia consulted newspapers, magazines and media sources. She then constructed composites of the articulated experiences. The names presented in this performance text are pseudonyms for actual people and articulated experiences related to the Columbine High School Massacre in Littleton Colorado.

### Student Biographies

Mikomi Fairley and Renee Sohn are seniors majoring in Communication Studies. Alysia Robbins is a senior majoring in Theatre Arts and Dance. Dorothy S. Gruett is a senior majoring in English. All students are enrolled at California State University, Los Angeles.

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## **The Role of the Teacher With Regard to Institution Size and Mission**

**Jim Schnell**  
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This paper will examine the role of the teacher with regard to institution size and mission. Such considerations will include the effects of size, community, cohesiveness, curricular continuity, financial constraints, quality of academic life, collegiality, proximity, religious mission and related concerns. Awareness gained from this inquiry provides understanding of how institution size and mission affect the role of the teacher.

A brief review of the author's academic background provides insight into the foundation of his perspective. He is on the faculty at Ohio Dominican College. Ohio Dominican College is a small liberal arts college (roughly 2,100 students) operated by the Dominican Sisters of the Catholic Church. The mission statement of the college is based on the Dominican motto: "to contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation." He came to Ohio Dominican College from the University of Cincinnati.

The University of Cincinnati is a large comprehensive research university (roughly 36,000 students attend the main and branch campuses). It is owned and operated by the state of Ohio and is comprised of 11 separate colleges (each college has individual curriculum requirements). His transition from large research university to small liberal arts college was made easier because he had attended a small liberal arts college as an undergraduate. A combination of personal and professional reasons resulted in his relocating to Columbus, Ohio (his hometown) and accepting a position at Ohio Dominican College.

Discussion of differences between the large research university and small liberal arts college environments will focus on three primary areas: 1) institution size, 2) institution focus, and 3) institution ownership. These three areas are interrelated and affect the role of the teacher.

Institution size is the most concrete area. The physical size of the large university and proportionate number of students, faculty, administrators and staff evidences a striking contrast with the small liberal arts college. This factor creates a number of sub-factors that affect the role of the teacher. The author came to a department comprised of two full-time faculty from a department comprised of 18 full-time faculty. Thus, discussions about curriculum and classroom procedures occur much easier with the smaller department.

The smaller student body provides a framework for a more cohesive college community. Students know each other and the faculty. The sense of familiarity benefits the classroom and the social atmosphere of the

campus. Classroom cohesiveness rarely needs to be built, it can generally be assumed. This enhances student responsibility for their behavior (attendance, participation, quality of work, and dedication to group membership during group assignments). Similarly, ethical concerns receive more attention because of the size (and resulting familiarity) and the religious nature of the college.

Proximity, as a consideration, is commensurate with student body size. Classes at Ohio Dominican College are taught primarily in three main buildings (one of which houses the main administrative offices and dining hall). This perpetuates considerable interaction (in and out of the classroom) among students with different academic majors. Thus, the smaller (but diverse) student body means a typical classroom will be comprised of students with varied backgrounds and academic interests. The heterogeneity of such a classroom does not suffer from homogeneous familiarity, or "academic blindspots", frequently found in classes comprised of students majoring in the same subject area.

A benefit of teaching at a smaller institution (for the author) is being able to consistently teach in the same classroom. This generally leads to faculty members taking ownership for the classrooms they teach in. Classrooms are rarely littered and vandalism is very rare. When the author taught at the University of Cincinnati, furniture in some classrooms had to be chained to the wall to discourage theft.

One might think a small college population would lack diversity. The extent of academic diversity is limited compared to large research universities (because of faculty size) but student body ethnic and racial diversity is similar to that of larger universities. The percentage of minority and international students parallels that of Ohio State University (which boasts over 50,000 students). Fortunately, the aforementioned variables of cohesiveness, size, proximity, and familiarity create an environment that encourages open exchange of ideas among culturally different students in the classroom. Cross-cultural relations are far less strained than what the author experienced at larger universities. Thus, teaching style can build on this cross-cultural appreciation.

Reports of race related violence in the U.S. are commonly conveyed in the mass media. The following is a purely subjective observation but it can be used as an indicator. In his eleven years of teaching at Ohio Dominican College the author has never known of an act of violence at the college that was racially motivated, nor has he ever heard a racial slur directed to or about anyone. This cross-cultural tolerance allows for more genuine classroom discussion regarding cross-cultural differences.

Institution focus is affected by a number of variables. The mission statement of the institution can be such a variable. The author has been a faculty member at three large state universities. He never saw an empha-



sis on university mission statements (if they existed) at these institutions. Ohio Dominican College frequently refers to its mission statement (stressing the contemplation and sharing of truth) in its literature and the mission statement is clearly recognized as a referent in curriculum development and campus governance. The mission statement, possibly perceived by an outsider as vague and irrelevant, is commensurate with a recent survey of Americans that conveyed 81% of respondents rated critical thinking skills as very important compared to 50% who rated computer skills as very important ("Ways and Means," 2000).

Related to the Ohio Dominican mission statement is its emphasis on the Humanities. All students take two basic courses in the Humanities curriculum. These two courses trace the development of western civilization from the Greeks to present. The Humanities Faculty is comprised of faculty from various academic departments within the college. Since all students take these courses, faculty can prepare lectures with the assurance students have studied (or are currently studying) primary individuals who have affected the development of western thought. This factor is enhanced because the Humanities Faculty is relatively small and there is considerable continuity among curricular objectives stressed. This continuity is paralleled in the common core course requirements all students must complete.

Curricular continuity at the University of Cincinnati is far more difficult because of the size of the institution. The university is comprised of 11 separate colleges, each with its own curricular emphasis. The colleges are linked (students can take courses outside of the college of the major) but each college has a considerable degree of autonomy.

Institutional focus is also affected strongly by the religious orientation of Ohio Dominican College. Meetings frequently begin with prayer and some classes begin with prayer. Student organizations and the campus atmosphere reflect a Catholic emphasis. Artwork and artifacts clearly evidence Christian beliefs (i.e. some classrooms have crucifixes above the chalkboards). Religious emphasis in public universities is very rare. The author speculates such emphasis is rare because of the separation of church and state.

Ohio Dominican College is tuition driven. The college is supported primarily through tuition dollars. This affects the organizational culture as we are all aware we cannot afford to be wasteful. Unproductive employees are rare. The author's experience in the state system exposed him to a more liberal fiscal approach. State universities are supported primarily by the state. In 1999-2000, state appropriations to state universities in Ohio increased over 6% from the previous year (Schmidt, 2000). As with any public bureaucracy, unproductive employees and unproductive programs can be more easily sheltered from scrutiny. In private colleges, wasted

financial resources equates to (among other things) smaller financial reserves, which equates to smaller salary increases. Waste affects all employees.

There are negative factors that indirectly affect teaching style when one moves from a large research university to a small liberal arts college. Such factors generally include smaller salaries and fewer benefits for faculty, less academic diversity among faculty (due to smaller size), and less monetary support for research and convention travel. One often hears nobody enters a career in education to get rich. This is especially true in the private college sector. In 1998-1999, the average salary for a full professor at the University of Cincinnati was \$75,400 while the average full professor salary at Ohio Dominican was \$54,900 (Magner, 1999). The sense of purpose and quality of life index can counter balance this lack of economic remuneration however.

Another consideration affecting institutional focus is the concern with teaching and research. Smaller colleges generally have more concern with quality teaching and less concern with research. Subsequently there is less expectation of faculty research. Large public universities generally value research over teaching. Subsequently there is greater expectation of faculty research.

Institution ownership is the third area that was highlighted earlier as a primary category for consideration. Institution ownership, in this case, deals with how faculty relate to the institution (rather than who literally "owns" the physical property). The author has seen examples of faculty ownership at private colleges and public universities but feels faculty ownership is much stronger in private colleges.

Public universities are more likely to have unionized faculties. Thus, rights/responsibilities are directly outlined. Private colleges are less likely to have unionized faculties. Secondary responsibilities are generally implied. Faculty are motivated more by "good will" (good of the order) than by "legal" responsibilities. Unions obviously have strong points but the author feels faculty unions inhibit trust and genuine concern.

As one of two members of the communication arts faculty, the author teaches a wide range of courses in the communication arts curriculum. He taught far fewer courses while teaching in the state system. He was more of a "specialist" in fewer areas than a generalist in many areas. As a small college faculty member he is less inclined to say "I don't do windows".

A result of this type of ownership in the small college is that the faculty member is less an "affiliate" of the institution. He/she is the institution. The faculty member in the large public institution can be more of an academic subcontractor, whereas the small college faculty member can be more of an all-around role model. The author has a picture of each class he has taught at Ohio Dominican.



An overall benefit of the small college is the stronger sense of community. During his years in the state system the author never met a university president. He doesn't fault the universities for this. Institution size simply does not promote such interaction. At Ohio Dominican however, the author and other faculty/staff informally eat lunch with the president and other administrators on a regular basis.

Senior administrators in large public universities can seem distant and out of touch with faculty concerns. Again, institution size almost guarantees this situation. However, informally eating together and similar informal activities in small colleges help perpetuate a "trickle down" of trust. The author is reminded of one evening when a university president spent a night in a dormitory to evidence his empathy/understanding with students. There was an upbeat story about it in the newspaper the following day. The president of Ohio Dominican is a Dominican Sister. She lives in a dormitory room (year round).

This paper is not intended to be a conclusive "last word" on the comparison between small liberal arts colleges and large public universities. The author intends this to be one person's perspective on how institution size, institutional focus, and institutional ownership affect the role of the teacher. His interaction with colleagues from both types of institutions support the positions stated but there are obviously going to be exceptions. Still, even in general terms, the aforementioned effects are thought provoking.

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Crowley, D., & Heyer, P. (1999). *Communication in history: Technology, culture, society*. 3d ed. New York: Longman.

Today's students of mass media need a knowledge of media history, more now than ever. Why? Because in a world of new technologies, producers and consumers of media can easily be lured into a mental sleepiness, creating a class of somnabulists dreamwalking ("sleep-clicking?") their way through the internet and through an array of complex moral and ethical issues. I think Crowley and Heyer anticipated this when they put together this set of readings a few years ago, and their third edition indicates a full realization of the need filled by their text.

Most mass media overview texts have themselves become products of newness, with shrinking sections on print history, expanding multimedia supplements, and new editions almost every semester. In so doing, they mirror the media's obsession with immediacy over accuracy, with glossy appearance over in-depth analysis. *Communication in History* is clearly a different kind of media text produced by editors who are not oblivious to today's changes, but clearly aware of the need to set media processes in their historical and cultural contexts.

The book is an anthology of forty-four essays about the media broken into the following sections: The Media of Early Civilization, The Tradition of Western Literacy, the Print Revolution, Electricity Creates the Wired World, Image Technologies and the Emergence of Mass Society, Radio Days, TV Times, and New Media and Old in the Information Age (this last section greatly expanded for the third edition). Each section is clearly introduced and grounded by the compilers. Most importantly, the sections are incredibly well balanced, providing pragmatic details for the burgeoning journalist, and theoretical grist for the developing critic. Here are the great stories of media history, co-mingled with pivotal theoretical essays. So articles analyzing the history of writing are placed next to an article on the Incan quipu, an *alternative* to writing. And historical overviews of Greek and medieval communication are juxtaposed with articles by Walter Ong and Umberto Eco which analyze the changes in the essence of human existence brought about by the print revolution. James Carey and Michael Schudson, culture critics, kick off the wireless world section, which ends with a fascinating analysis of the development of expositions and department stores in the article "Dream Worlds of Consumption" by Rosalynd Williams. An essay by Susan Sontag heads the section on the history of images and photography; the section on radio blends overviews of the golden age with an intelligent analysis of Edward R. Murrow's documentary style. The TV section is graced with a wonderful dialogue between Neil Postman and Camille Paglia; again proving that this is no ordinary media text. Finally, the expanded section on new technologies seeks



to provide students with practical understanding as well as the vocabulary they need to think critically about those changes.

From a teaching standpoint, the book's modularity is a definite plus. In my upper-level media course, I have the students report in teams on some of the articles, work in groups to understand others, and have the entire class read and discuss others. I have little resistance to the text from students, except for the occasional complaint that some of the articles are too short! Of course, the authors have not achieved perfection and I think the students may in part be responding to a lack of contextualization for some of the articles; the book would benefit from an annotated timeline that explained and justified their article selection and the reasons for their topic choices. But maybe they thought- "that's what teachers are for."

This book works well when interlaced with units on popular culture analysis, as the students come to understand the connection between "old" and "new" cultural products; sometimes they are finding out that what they perceive as new is not as innovative as they once thought. And that is an important lesson for today's students. The context of today's media practices are almost completely mysterious if approached from an ahistorical vantage point. Ethical and legal issues in the media, public and private tensions, and frets over media's impact are part of a vast historical framework from which they cannot be separated. Texts like this one help our field embrace the liberal art of interpreting mass communication, a noble endeavor for teacher and student alike.

Donald Rice  
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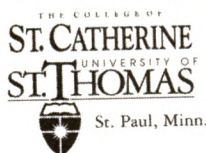
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