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Virtual Agency: A Hermeneutic Examination Of The Network And Actors Within The Composition Classroom

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VIRTUAL AGENCY: A HERMENEUTIC EXAMINATION

OF THE NETWORK AND ACTORS WITHIN

THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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Dedication

To Mike and Maria

VIRTUAL AGENCY: A HERMENEUTIC EXAMINATION OF THE NETWORK AND ACTORS WITHIN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

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DISSERTATION

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There isn't enough room or time to really understand all those people who impact you, from the third grade teacher who told you how to spell Wednesday for the thirty-fifth time, to the English teacher in high school who you ran into in Hawaii - where he retired, to Mr. Brooks at Chino High School who told you you'd make a great architect - all the way to the English department administration that always made sure you did things right - and filled out the appropriate paper: there are so many important people in the world that it is impossible to thank them all by name.

Family comes before everything. Even when it is hard, and you have given up on the world around you - they refuse to let you put things down. Family includes those people who ate, slept, cried, gnashed their teeth - and beamed with pride at all the things which, big and small, impacted them. Melanie, you have stood through fire with me - inspired, motivated, dragged, and cried along this journey. I owe you a debt which cannot be paid but that is very much acknowledged. To my sons, Logan, Zeby, and DJ: you watched me sit countless nights staring blankly at a screen in the dark telling you to be quiet! The staring is now over, now be quiet! Hopefully, you learned there is more to a journey than the conclusion and my contributions to your identities is one of overcoming and an iron will to accomplish your goals. To my daughter, Eve, you made me laugh - hung around and learned what I was writing about at 10-years-old. I would not have finished if I did not look over at you and saw your own dedication to working on math.

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Finally, I want to thank Dr. Gustav Verhulsdonck. Our conversations on technology, classrooms, multimodality, gaming, and this dissertation when it was just a seed in my mind helped me set out on a journey that has changed everything about how I see composition.

What kind of academic would I be without at least acknowledging the phenomenological forefathers, my four horsemen of the rhetorical, who impacted my writing - long before I found rhetoric and composition:

Hunter S. Thompson

T.S. Elliott

Ernest Hemingway

Robin Williams

And, as an academic that truly values the impact and agency of objects, I could not honestly say I would be here if it was not for the simplest object of all – the bicycle. The bicycle is both rhetoric in that it has agency, from a postphenomenological or object-oriented ontological position and intersects as a central element in composed identities that impact the sustainable nature, the environmental constructs, of communities. It is the unsung hero of the impoverished and the iconic hobby of the affluent.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the visible and invisible rhetorical choices made in, around, and through the composition classroom and its community of practice, students, faculty, technologies, staff, and other undiscovered actors, through Actor Network Theory and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The discoveries will better situate the impact of identities and actancy within composed, hybrid worlds. Students, society, the world is now collectively connected and able to communicate, acquire knowledge, and interact on a virtual world stage. The exigence for this dissertation's exploration is that Moore, et al (2016) concluded that students did not make a connection between the technology they have access to normally communicate with in their personal lives and the technologies they used to produce 'composition' as writing assignments in the university setting. An attempt to continue as a voice in that conversation begins to look at individuals, who add the value of conversational testimonials, to the quantitative data that will begin to bridge what is known about technology and composition.

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Up front, this dissertation diverges from the norm. It is still framed around chapters with alphabetic text and has all the moving parts that are associated with scholarship. It is intentionally composed with the hopes of avoiding the silent frameworks which dictate what composition should do and how it should appear. These silent frameworks are what is at the heart of actor network theory and phenomenology.

For compositions, particularly scholarly work that is put forth to be assessed and evaluated – like this dissertation – as a means to reach milestones of achievement within those scholarly worlds, it is a paradigm which we first model, then replicate in our own instructions. The five-paragraph essay becomes the five-chapter dissertation; it is merely a larger framework – no matter how contrived or inventive the composer feels they are. In that model, this dissertation fits the requirements of five chapters and then diverts to attempt to impart the thinking of the author, me, as a method of both applying my own phenomenological position – and to attempt to allow entanglement within the network to guide the narrative as it plays out.

Chapter 1 attempts to not only look at exigency – the need for this type of research – but also examines the positionality of the author, and the phenomenological interactions which helped construct the tumbleweed. This chapter also begins to lay out the methods and methodologies that will be further developed in subsequent chapters. It takes on a tone of academic and narrative because of the conversational nature of the interviews while also pointedly having undertones of Gonzo journalism. While the intention for this form of writing is to minimize objectivity – I am invoking this style as one that openly engages that, objectively, there is no way to completely eliminate bias. This is an important admission in the context of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – specifically because of the detached nature of this methodology. I think it completely embraces that there are biases and, that while academics

should be detached from personal experiences and emotions, that is an impossible endeavor any time you are researching because experiences cannot be eliminated in the rhetoric and composition/writing studies discipline.

Chapter 2 attempts to break away from traditional models of literature review. The purpose and intension are still to construct necessary knowledge about the moving parts and players within a conversation related to rhetoric and composition. It is focused on the language used for the audience, and the participating scholars' conversations related to the topic. It is intentional in the deviance from attempting to only place value on the scholarly findings associated with each author, and instead, attempts to place the value of the literature outside of the silent framework. Taking that a step further, chapter 2 and 3 work to not only provide an entangled literature review but also construct the lens by which this study is examined through.

Chapter 3 looks toward the methods and methodologies and accompanying/reassembling language that is associated/invoked to construct those methods. It takes on a more traditional model of laying out the theories and canonical thinking associated with composition as understood by the author. It then takes the method – conversational interviews – and explains the parameters for the participants and interviews.

Chapter 4 looks at each individual participant and their testimonials and offers some contextualization needed to look at both Actor Network Theory and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in the concluding chapter. The output or data is constructed through conversational interviews and the testimonials are then used to attempt to untangle and construct agency for the participants through the identities they are describing associated with their understanding of writing and technology and the non-linear nature of writing in two particular mediums. The focus for the student participants is placed on their writing within technology,

specifically, social media because of their robust interactions with different communities of writing/composing.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis built around the methodologies and then attempts to reach conclusions based on that analysis. It also looks to future research possibilities and directions for the potential thread of thinking associated within rhetoric and composition. Actor Network Theory takes up the heavy lifting of reaching conclusions about what has been discovered and how, not only conclusions are reached – but also how future research could be conducted to better illuminate the changing dynamic of hybrid and virtual composition classrooms in ways that empower and energize student identities.

Chapter 1

THINKING POST-PHENOMENOLOGICALLY

This dissertation explores the visible and invisible rhetorical choices made in, around, and through the composition classroom and its community of practice: students, faculty, technologies, staff, and other undiscovered actors. The discoveries will better situate the impact of identities and actancy[1] (Greimas, 1966; Kristeva, 1969) within composed, hybrid[2] worlds. Students, society, the world is now collectively connected and able to communicate, acquire knowledge, and interact on a virtual world stage. From personal experience, the last decade of education has stated that there is value in technology while instructors at every level have asserted that technology has no place interacting with students in the classroom. This shows up in scholarship across a spectrum of rhetors and academics within the discipline of rhetoric and writing studies/composition to include, but not limited to Berlin (1992), Bazerman (2002), Cooper (2012), Holmes (2014), Prior and Shipka (2003) and also Rickert (2013) who have all explored the connections of network theory, pedagogies, and students, technology, and composition – and how the network moves forward effectively valuing all elements within the network. Holmes (2014) directly speaks to Berlin's (1992) exploration of poststructuralism in the composition classroom and replicates that exploration through Actor Network Theory (ANT). Holmes (2014) correctly ascribes that ANT does not offer solutions or answers, but instead, offers a theoretical way of looking at the social elements within situations/networks (p. 422). He uses the concept of ANT as an antimethodology which models ways of how not to think in the

[1] Actancy is contextualized through the idea that there are tangible and abstract powers that are typically attributed to agency. By referencing the concept of actancy - or actor - I am positing that power is limiting as a term that does not incorporate the roles, identities, and acts which are constructed.

[2] Hybrid in the sense of space and place because, particularly in contemporary society, there is no space, physical or virtual, that exists or is conditionally valued in isolation.

classroom rather than a framework for instruction or pedagogical theory. This is reflected in how we rethink about actants/actors within the network of the composition classroom. This line of thinking connects to the research of Moore, et al (2016) in which they seek to look between the lines, not specifically at the application of learning but instead, examining the technology as a way of knowing and how it is employed. Therefore, the exigence for this dissertation's exploration is that Moore, et al (2016), through surveying students' use of technology, concluded that students did not make a connection between the technology they have access to normally communicate with in their personal lives and the technologies they used to produce 'composition[3]' as writing assignments in the university setting. An attempt to continue as a voice in that conversation begins to look at individuals, who add the value of conversational testimonials, to the quantitative data that will begin to discover what is known about technology and composition.

Setting up research questions as a checklist for whether I am answering or asking the right questions is a double-edged sword. Setting parameters is both limiting and revealing of what can be expected. With that in mind, I offer the following questions as a launching point, not a finite conclusion that must be reached to produce this study. The inclusion of them should not be seen as a checklist for validation but a way of understanding how I am navigating through the interviews, research, and conclusions I reach.

1. What are the rhetorical choices students make within the networks they interact with – in particular related to identity and power dynamics?

[3] A generalized understanding of composition as the writing projects required by English instructors which is based on my understanding of what it meant to compose as a priori knowledge to the graduate world of English and, eventually, Rhetoric and Composition or Writing Studies.

2. Why do students limit themselves – in this case – related to technology as a tool for composition?

3. What does entanglement look like through the various connections/disconnections made in this networked space? If visible technology is not a significant impactor – what is or, more accurately – what can be unpacked as having impact then?

To unpack the direction and grounding for this dissertation, two concepts must be touched upon early on.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, IPA, (Smith, Jarmin & Osbourne, 1999) is the examination of experiences through the interpretation of the researcher by means of semi-structured conversational interviews. IPA is being utilized in this dissertation as an attempt to afford a space for students to have agency within the discussion of how technology is used to compose by them. In other words, students use technology with a multitude of translanguaging within their communities of practice and genres and yet they await input and produce an expected output that does not use their preferred agency or identities. The use of IPA focuses on the identities: network, actor, object versus attempting to decipher the language usage of texting, gaming, and shorthand scripts which are normalized in contemporary virtual spaces.

Actor Network Theory, ANT, (Latour, 2005) attempts to prioritize the interactions between all actors within a discrete or open network - to include objects and abstractions such as the classroom, air conditioning, time of year, and even chairs in order to better understand the actors associated with the network and how all actors impact the social dynamic; it looks at impactors associated within social groups by reassembling and renegotiating agency across the spectrum of these communities.

Composition is as vital to understand as methods and methodologies for the purposes of this study. By composition, I am looking at multimodal and pure alphabetic texts and constructions which are not limited to – but include – those constructed on tangible or digital material spaces: i.e., paper and social media spaces. This could also include audio formats such as music – but that is not an element which will be explored in this study.

Also, the use of postphenomenology strictly as a point of origin for my expertise within the discipline, an examination of an object's agency, like how humanity understands the cosmos through radio signals, not actually seeing space, and object's, such as smartphones, experiences alongside individuals, groups, such as students and instructors,[4] (Ihde, 2009) as the phenomenological aspect of IPA through ANT allows for this research to be better situated to students' identities and agency as interactive and modifying/modified because these two theories take object-oriented ontologies into account as impactors at the micro and macro level of networks. This allows for the examination of layered and entangled entities are not linear or hierarchical outside of social constructs.

A comparative theoretical way of thinking about this entangled network would be quantum entanglement (Schrödinger, 1935), an abstract concept that asserts that elements that interact are always impacted by themselves and each other regardless of distance or time, meets hermeneutics but replace atomic masses with abstractions and physical entities – and their plethora of entanglements. It is the classic question of cats and boxes.

[4] I want to point out here that I am keenly aware not to construct or dissect one existing theory to use it as an element in another theory; however, I believe that with the discovery of postphenomenological positioning in the context of phenomena being human experience, it would actually be more problematic to attempt to remove technology and the post human, object-oriented ontological conversation that comes from adding a post-phenomenological definition to IPA. I only point this out as a way of explaining why it should be IpPA – but will only be identified as IPA while using no other variation on the qualitative study.

My original thought process here aimed to better understand the interactions as composed social phenomena which take place as various people, things, and ideas interact with each other and, much like a tumbleweed that is free of its roots, picks up and discards elements that it interacts with, is immersed in, or otherwise impacted with and forever altered through a variety of agents and agencies.

The conclusion of this work will attempt to make interpretations of how students understand their identities and actancy within the composition classroom network, their understanding of communication relationships and power dynamics, and technologies' compositional identity. It will also look toward future research elements that deserve attention to better understand all the actors involved in the composition process in the classroom. One aspect of education that will be addressed is how faculty/departments/disciplines/education systems facilitate opportunities for students to be stakeholders in their own education. By teaching and encouraging students to synthesize knowledge, not merely replicate and regurgitate it, they may leave our classrooms gaining a sense of self-worth, independence, and knowledge. If Moore, et al. (2016) discovered that contemporary tools are not seen as useful in knowledge production and composing in the academy, then this qualitative study will set a point in the conversation related to the testimonials of students to begin to understand these disconnections.

This study will provide insight into students' perceptions about the influence of knowledge construction, bias, and social values on their learning in a way that other methods and previous analyses have not been able to afford the academic community. Holmes (2014), for example, is exploring similar ground but uses ANT to parallel other scholarship to show gaps specifically related to composition theory where I am using ANT to attempt rethinking and conceptualize student at the center of composition.

IDIOGRAPHIC[5] POSITIONALITIES

Students in the classroom are the living embodiment of alternative points of view, and the first contact they have with college-level rhetoric and composition is contextualized around accepted practices, objects, beliefs and ideologies, such as mandated software or limiting access to technologies in the classroom, format, structure, and various community-driven values, which appear to be disciplinary, academic, and institutionally normalized. These sometimes competing points of view are complicated by the fact that faculty[6] tell them that they, the alternative, must validate their evidence academically while knowing that, in many cases, the network – the academic modeling, thinking, and design – is engaged in correcting beliefs to match the hegemonic normalized thinking of those departments, institutions, and communities which are too-easily attributed to groupthink. As a concept, groupthink is a sociological term that is illustrated in the value system of the dominant culture or community. It typically relates to how the majority intimidate or dominate minority thinking. The importance here is that it also is used by groups to bully or coerce those who do not share the same values into assimilating to the "appropriate" behavior of the group or suffer fear of isolation.

Logically, every student's position should matter, regardless of how it fits into the bigger system of thinking. However, in their writing, a student supports alternative concepts/individuals/groups, for example, then the network they participate within, the academic learning community, tries to correct their thinking although there is no singular value, such as changing the foundational beliefs of the student, that benefits all participants of one side of an argument over another. A student who supports the alternative point of view is sometimes seen

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[5] This is a tip of my hat to Windleband's (1899) neo-Kantian approach to knowledge production. It will not bring in conversations about Kant, positivism, or any other elements that would complicate the conversation. The value of the word is that it helps set up how individuals learn versus the group.

[6] This identity is inclusive of the fact that there are many moving identities and actors within this term.

to show growth if they change their mind to the thinking of the faculty/classroom/community of practice; however, I question why learning is enforced through intimidation or fear agencies versus allowing students to develop and mature through synthesis. While this is a generalization, it would be no less problematic to assert that all students feel that growth occurs organically for them in the classroom. An example of the non-organic positionality I am asserting would be an international student from the Middle East who comes with his/her own set of experiences and cultural beliefs that may not be aligned with the geographical and ideological cultural belief system in which they are receiving their education – the social constructs do not match up. I am positing that groupthink could be enacted upon this student because the hegemonic viewpoint, in this instance American, could be pressuring the student to act and behave in a manner that does not match up with his/her worldview.

Another example of this form of control would be faculty that white list/blacklist topics that can be written about in the classroom. Specifically, a former faculty member I worked with stated they do not allow for conversation related to gun control because they are a member of the NRA and will not entertain conversations that suggest they cannot be armed or have their rights violated. It would not be a far stretch to posit that there are faculty members on either side of these conversations that not only avoid these topics but also guide student's topics through these positions until the students' positions match, or at least resemble, the faculty's position on the subject.

A question of inquiry for this dissertation is to better understand hegemony in higher education and how students navigate and gain a voice in that space. While that question is cumbersome and entangled in ways that make it complicated or rhetorically unresolvable,

creating a method of exploration allows for scholarship to shed light on what future research and institutional, systemic, and disciplinary practices might better serve the students' positionality.

Digital natives

People born after the year 1980 are generally considered to be digital natives, meaning they have grown up immersed in digital technology. Of course, this concept is problematized by how much and what kinds of contact they have with technology. Interestingly, although contemporary students may be immersed in technologies before they get to college, Moore, et al.'s (2016) study found that students made few, if any, connections between how they write outside of the classroom and the technologies they use for composing in higher education. Because of the conclusion of Moore et al (2016), I wanted to know why the participants did not make the connection between the technology they regularly utilized to compose with in their personal lives and that technologies' value for academic composition. An excellent example of this form of study would be Wiggins (2009), or Bazerman and Russell (eds.) 2003 collection which "considers human activity and writing from three different perspectives" (WAC Clearinghouse). In both instances, identity is connected to audience – but audience is limited to power dynamics that are, as purpose-driven composition, always constructed around the student as directed participant. This reveals the connections I am trying to better understand, specifically related to the students' agency as both native users of technology and writer/composer/rhetor.

This is my first step toward understanding the variables needed to make these connections visible, and usable for future research. I believe that there is a definitive need to continue to explore, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the outcome of this study and Moore, et al, (2016) so that institutions can better situate technologies into the learning process for all students.

CHANGING FACE OF COMPOSITION

The transfer of communicated knowledge through discourse and composition went from being gained by word-of-mouth, such as in the oral poetry traditions found in the Finnish-Karelian-Ingrian cultures of as early as 7th Century ACE (Wikipedia), to the stone-scribed hymns of Enheduanna, a Sumerian priestess, poet, and writer dating back to 2300 BCE (Binkley, 2004), traveling forward in chronological order to alpha-numerical symbols on pulped paper scribed by journalist/novelist Hunter S. Thompson; to 0s and 1s inscribed on magnetic tapes, floppy disks, and thumb drives; to data now stored in clouds managed by multi-billion dollar conglomerates. What was once the domain of clergy with congregations, knowledge, is now the empire of teenagers with legions on YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Similarly, society has transitioned away from a construct where communication and friendships built around computers, virtual worlds, and imagination was taboo, the domain of geeks and nerds who form relationships in digital spaces, into the mainstream in contemporary society where not having a SnapChat account, 24/7 access to the Internet or lacking digital literacies is now seen as being an outlier, an outsider to the norm. Society is an ever-changing and evolving network, from the position of a community of interacting ideas and individuals which historically have functioned as institutional networks of the church, market, and early government, interconnected in the contemporary world through the digital and virtual spaces which create new paradigms and gaps to explore. Hybrid spaces, those places which are both real – such as public coffee shops, classrooms, and the abstract – such as Twitter, Instagram, or Blackboard LMS come together as a mixed space, then are important to understand, considering the immediacy of change related to society and technology. Hybridity is constructed, not simply from physical or virtual spaces, but all those locations which exist in the folds of these two

spaces. A student is sitting in a classroom while they are interacting with a computer for the course to access digitized articles in the campus library, engage in a discussion thread in their learning management system, and collaborate on a Google Doc, while they are also interacting with their smart devices to maintain a Snapchat streak, order lunch on GrubHub, and check the weather. All the while, the instructor's presentation, visual compositions, constructed realities which are being interacted with through overhead technologies, white boards and projectors for example, as the professor attempts to bridge and intersect technology: dry-erase markers, YouTube, .pdfs to extend and interact with the students.

These two elements, ontologies and technology, whether seen as abstractions or realities, must be navigated in ways that keep language and how we communicate in alignment with their seismic shifts. A clear example of this shows up in how employment looks through contemporary technology. Students are seeing the workforce begin to incorporate social media, location, and virtual identities as necessary tools to participate. One key area of concern is the reliance on the virtual which has created new social constructs and disconnected other avenues of network which have historically existed. Seeking out communities of practice in religious communities, going to the library for information and to study or going to the regional street dance to catch up with your neighbors have all been subverted by instant access to communities of practice in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

It is the composition classroom that needs to be examined as a socially constructed, hybrid space, and a hypothesis toward a better understanding of composing needs to be sought. In this context, the composed identities within this network, which must be observed as classroom, discipline, and academy, are rhetorical when examined through the entangled literacies and identities. In short, the constructed roles that persuade and impact the thinking

within students' communities of practice are not concrete and fixed but malleable and ever shifting from father, co-worker, and subject-matter expert on welding aluminum, to friend, bartender, and bandmate. The entanglement of networks creates paraleiptic persuasive structures telling us that diversity is a good thing but the institution acts in different ways. We are former students of institutions who have empowered us as stakeholders in education. As faculty, we tell students that we won't force them to comply with any accepted mode of thinking/ideas /ideologies/value systems, yet in order to progress through and beyond the curriculum, they must replicate that thinking and articulate it for them to progress. In our effort to minimize bias or embrace perceptions of diversity, we modify the learning model to include that bias through our own discourse and composition within the classroom. In this way, the learning model is still relegated to actors within the network. An important assertion for the establishment of identities of students, the participants in this study, is that identity and actancy are situated in the unfettered access to technology by modern, contemporary students.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC UNDERSTANDING

In my case, that said-but-unsaid rhetoric, the value of pop culture and abstract actors, those role models we do not see or interact with directly, but indirectly through media, became visible to me as a young man. My understanding of the world was grounded in being a latchkey kid. My parents both worked full time and the compositions that produced my understanding of the world were exclusively the domain of teachers and pop culture. Without the advantage of the World Wide Web, language, composition and identity were all tied to music, image, and socializing. I understood that "California Uber Alles" (Biafra & Greenway, 1979, Track 1) was a way of thinking and that a "40 Ounce to Freedom" "was the only chance I would have to feel good even when I felt bad" (Nowell, 1992, Track 3). My world view was not made up of a

tangible identity where I had power and control of my life and its direction; rather, it was made up of an amalgamation of music, movies, actors and social influencers, grandparents[7] and other unknown quantities of what can only be described as abstractions which produced a world where I simply identified myself as punk and accepted whatever that meant. I worked in the real world where people told me what to do and I would acquiesce to their power and identity and accepted mine: the labor, servant, server, and subordinate.

I stacked this onto my informal[8] education through the U.S. Navy's "A" School process where I was essentially a clerk typist. The military gave me contact with correspondence and the use of different lexicons with different communities. This was something that did not require higher education for many of the sailors and airmen who I worked with daily; they had innate knowledge that came from their own experiences that were adopted and valued across flight lines and commands. Composition was a model of technical writing that worked in the lexicon of the military: Zulu dates and coding that was uniform in nature but carried no correlation to academic writing to which as a student I have been taught to give so much weight to in Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

I went from being aware of writing as a process that was impacted by mechanical and, eventually, digital technologies; transitioning from taking place on a paper in a typewriter which afforded one form of composition, to compositions made through pixels that can instantly change; both offered a means to articulate meaning, knowledge, and a message outside of

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[7] We sometimes take for granted the impact of ancestry which I have not delved into heavily in this study; however, I want to say that it is very evident that our ancestry, cultural understanding, and those people whom have impacted us through their own interactions, experiences, and knowledge production are critical in this conversation as it unfolds into future studies.

[8] The institutions of education associated with the United States military are formal in nature but, by referencing informal, I am asserting those courses which would be ascribed as correspondence-format courses with rigor built in through military discipline, not academic work which required critical thinking about abstractions and theories.

academia. A key characteristic about typewriters was that, to correct an error or make changes, one had to take steps to cover or remove text from paper via White Out or other proprietary means; this made decisions about writing deliberate and, for the most part, permanent. That has changed with the simplicity of a delete/back key on computers. The virtual world has afforded even further shifts away from correctness as language and grammar have evolved online to a place where correctness is not only frowned upon[9], to the alternative language choices being valued over traditional English: the lexicon of academics and white, hegemonic America. The evolving nature of English, the transition away from 'correctness' toward 'meaningfulness' still becomes rhetorical across a variety of uses to include academic English which relies on standards or traditional meanings to invoke ethos. Journals, newspapers, those compositions which strive to be taken seriously are built around an/the academy standard, where the value of spelling and comma usage carry more weight than the context behind the words, the code of symbols which construct and compose meaning. These are the spaces of composition which ascribe the identity professional/professionalism-oriented. This was my experience which I am evaluating in hindsight twenty years later.

GAMING AS A LEARNING SPACE WITH COMPOSED OUTCOMES

In 2004, I clicked "enter world" in World of Warcraft and entered Azeroth where I felt my avatar gave me control and an identity other than inferior. I was a tank, protector of my community; a healer, someone who others protected, and damager, also known as DPS, damage per second, the weapon by which my enemies were vanquished so that my community could gain resources. These things all seem so inconsequential when put to alphabetic text, but the context in which they played out had real value and allowed me to gain confidence and

[9] I am invoking the concept of grammar police where people are more sensitive to being corrected in social media than they are to the non-standard use of alphabetic text.

understanding that carried out in the real world. Somewhere in there, my own entry into these public spaces began by co-existing across worlds of brick and mortar and the virtual spaces where I lived in another. On Azeroth, alternative Earths, and far off galaxies, I was able to create and recreate my identity and the way I interacted within those communities. My identity was framed around my ability to communicate effectively, to compose thinking in alphabetic texts exclusively while engaging through multimodal composed words outside of my creation. My agency was through my actions and words which entangled with the code of these virtual words.

Virtual world: you're in our world now

I began playing Everquest, one of the first massively multiplayer online role-playing games, in September of 2000 and was introduced to virtual worlds and their communities. This genre of gaming was the first virtual transition away from online games which were text based. Instead of describing an avatar for a person in a text format, EQ, as the game is known, helped change the face of virtual identities. This 3D realm became one avenue for the creation of language for meanings that were new or had not been defined. I played that game for about 8 years, interacting and learning how to do small tasks and then, eventually, work with up to 80 different people across the globe to accomplish large-scale goals. Then I switched to World of Warcraft, WoW, when Blizzard introduced it on November 23, 2004. WoW changed gaming, communication in games, and the way people interacted in these gaming environments. The one constant that existed across these two game platforms is that people had to communicate via text initially because the voice-over IP options that in contemporary time were not standardized then. This meant that people learned to communicate quickly and concisely to accomplish some pretty time-sensitive tasks within games that required extreme coordination and collaboration across a

community of different people: teenagers, single parents, working adults, senior citizens, and more[10].

DISCOVERING IDENTITIES

I was no longer comfortable having limits to how far I could succeed in the world without a degree, what could be described as a ceiling for promotion, being undervalued for all the other identities, veteran, journalist, photographer, gamer, so in 2001 as I was taking up the new role of father, I decided to go to school and become a student. The entirety of all previously defined identities resulted in a decision to go into higher education and in 2001 take on a new identity: student. My understanding of identity is not necessarily different than the students I now instruct and guide through their own knowledge about rhetoric and composition because my identity is still framed around knowledge acquisition and seeking to always improve what I know and how; it intersects all of these various identities with my current students where I have learned to value all the individual identities as composing from their experiences and identities – and my own – as constantly in flux. Just as my identity described here is comprised of multiple fragments, so too are the students I instruct and the participants who volunteered to compose through their identities as discourse within this study. They are made up of a multitude of roles and identities which make up a fragmented but valuable collective of other knowledges which must be weighed within the context of scholarship and agency.

EXIGENCY

Contemporary students' ontological positions are often contextualized by popular culture flotsam and jetsam: gifs, memes, video games, and online videos. While it would be simple to

[10] The entanglement of this process is more complex than this conveys, on first blush. Imagine having to move with WASD functions on a keyboard, while typing, and moving your avatar in a free-formed world. This means that typing involves remember that your keyboard is how you move and communicate; it is the ultimate hand-eye coordination of multimodal composing that could be interacted with at the time.

categorize the context of knowledge generated through these media as negative, the real epistemic value of knowledge gained in general comes from the positive learning experiences and information gained through these virtual communities as these are the sites of learning for contemporary society. Examples of gaming's value as ontological show up in Minecraft, World of Warcraft, and even Space Flight Simulator (Llanos, Nguyen, Williams, Chambers, Seedhouse, & Davidson, 2018; Mosca, 2014; Licoppe and Inada, 2006; McConnon and Vear, 2015; Blackmon, 2014). Contemporary society exists within the realities that are folded and overlapping between the physical, virtual, spiritual, and metaphysical. Games provide for a nature of being and, more acutely, an identity to exist within that space of being. Mario cannot live in a world without pipes, mushrooms, and princesses to rescue. Against the backdrop of beneficial contact with games are networks created through actors such as Logan Paul, whose celebrity is framed around the filming of constructed negative experiences on YouTube which are readily consumed by young adults. Also, new experiences that are dangerous or lethal are experimented with, such as high school students participating in viral challenges like the Tide Pod Challenge, or learning from tragic deaths associated with attempting to become viral celebrities; an example would be the fatal shooting of Monalisa Perez's boyfriend which was captured and distributed to what Perez and Ruiz thought would be approximately 300,000 viewers who would turn into followers (seventeen.com).

All these viral experiences are then experienced through the lens of observed phenomena by the viewers and occasionally replicated by modern youth. While short lived on the Internet, these objects, and their ontological value, continue their identity and reproductive viral nature through future opportunities to reassemble and reappropriate them by their audiences: students who identify with and are identified through virtual spaces: technological and digital worlds.

What this means then is that these technological epistemologies are valued by the students who are learning to compose in these spaces and to produce identities; these roles are by no means in stasis with the typical composition classroom. Harrington, et al. (2001) identified in the early 2000s that students were gaining competencies in communications through electronic platforms while the composition classroom was not advancing through the same media or experiences. That gap has continued to broaden as students have moved forward in digital literacies while faculty have continued to think in contemporary traditional models of pedagogy. This gap is not narrowing quickly enough as higher education does not have the available means to adapt quickly to these dynamic changes. I would assert that through my own experiences as a student that faculty do not always recognize these compositions, the plethora of symbols, languages, 6-second or less looped videos, etc., as having academic agency, nor are they actively valuing these compositions as a meaningful and useful tool in traditional pedagogies. I think it would not be unreasonable to suggest that there are clearly faculty that do value these elements but from my limited perspective, those individuals are outliers.

The purpose of using IPA in this dissertation is to better understand the impact of this dissonance by exploring how second-semester first-year composition students navigate their actancy, i.e. their power and positionality in the roles they take up, the characters they construct for themselves, as composers in online environments. I am invoking an actantial model (Greimas, 1966; Kristeva, 1969) as a structured concept that identifies all participants within the network-- faculty, students, technology, and any other actor which comes to light through the research--as being able to contribute as both subject and object.

I believe that a relationship between subject and object is cyclical in this space because actors as subject and object are constantly in a state of flux and transition. Students work on

composition, on objects, for faculty, but that simplifies any identities within the network; in this case, the network being all the actors which produce, navigate, and enforce the larger context of space known as the classroom.

ELEMENTS

To better frame out what second-semester First-Year-Composition students' entangled relationship means, network, agency, and actancy need to be unpacked enough to offer context. A much more robust conversation regarding network and these other points will continue to expand that understanding in later chapters.

Network

Durkheim (Segre, 2004), Simmel (Barnett, 2011), and others ascribe network as being made up of social units, individuals, that collectively work together. Latour (2011) extends that concept further by offering network as a discrete, closed unit that is dense and entangled and, in his own contextualization, assembled in a manner that makes it open and always being reassembled. This duality of network is important to understand because while we can attribute adjectives in the use of the term to lower the lens of observation to microscopic levels of intensity, it is the entangled nature of network which is being used in this study. Those units must be objectively explored as actors that participate within and outside of the network, bringing internal and external nodes of contact - and information - into the network.

Actancy

In this study, all participants, all elements within the network being described are acting in the sense that any reassemblage of the testimonials offered, any interaction would construct new identities which are acted to continue participation within the network - any network. In this

way, every element is acting - and in some cases taking on agency. In that context, actor - and the verb actancy are better suited to the interplay being examined.

Agency

The term agency has gaps which are complex enough to make the term not a direct synonym of actor or actancy within this study. While they are interchangeable in less nuanced contexts, that does not play out well in this study. Agency carries with it the weight of a structured, and by my interpretation, fixed variable of actancy. In plain language, an agency is often understood to be an organization, an entity of power which regulates or controls – has agency – over others in connection with something specific to that agency. I would use the Central Intelligence Agency as an example. The CIA is an organization; it would be stranger to understand the CIA as the Central Intelligence Power/Hegemony/Control. This creates, for me, a double entendre in that the meaning of agency is both power and an organization. In both cases, the term does not match up with the role/identity value I am wanting to place on the term agency. The double-entendre[11] creates both lexical and theoretical creases which are entangled enough to only continue to create another rhetorical situation - one of languages. To untangle this, I turn back to actors - and the usability of the term actancy.

INTERPLAY

Network involves the various actors and their understanding of the tasks assigned or required of them as nodes within a larger system that is dependent on each other to be successful, but also limited in understanding of how the other nodes work, the relevance to their own ability to function, and the overall nature of time and functions which must take place for them to have

[11] The risqué nature being one of both language and the impact of language.

agency or identity (Spinuzzi, 2008). Bandura (2001) offers the most succinct definition for agency as "... to intentionally make things happen by one's actions.

Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place" (p. 2). These two elements, agency and identity are the composed narrative which students produce on the network; they carry significant value for students to explore knowledge production through writing in any space.

Identity is being used from the lens of identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009), which is compatible with actantial and network theories because it is not exclusively framed around just the individual, but rather collective identity, that individuals work together to reach larger goals; role identity, in this case where actors accept roles within the network to have purpose and control in their lives, and futures; and personal identities, which are reflective of the experiences and, in short, phenomenological understanding that makes individuals individual. These identities, plural, are important for this study because scholars of rhetoric and composition need to understand how students' perception of identity directs what they understand, and how they produce knowledge in hybrid courses where identity exists in both physical and virtual spaces of learning. Identities are transitional from the individual to the group; they are almost always collaborative in nature. Identity is fluid and imbricated in the physical and virtual in ways that make it abstract; it transitions from object to subject, student to collaborator, faculty to student. It is the core requirement to compose because it establishes author and audience, purpose, and validity. Identity also is not something that is always tangible which means it can jump from a physical identity to a virtual one. This is important for the study as the locus of learning changes

and transforms with technology. These changes are not simply better hardware but also include more robust online environments which simulate physical learning spaces.

Redefining the real

On many campuses, composition classes are moving away from exclusively face-to-face environments, for example, The University of Texas at El Paso's rhetoric and writing studies second-semester course is between 50 and 85 percent online. Without understanding how each participant in the online composition classroom interacts and navigates composition and discourse, we are looking at students as simply another object being acted upon by faculty. As this study suggests, we need to start seeing them, ourselves, and the technology, as fluidly moving from subject to object - being acted upon, through, and by the network. Network is complex, it is made up of at least faculty, students, and technology, and deserves to be more grounded; however, it is unwieldy, and never establishes itself in a solid state. The problem is that network is not linear or patterned and that is why Actor Network Theory is the appropriate lens for this application. What I hope to better understand is how the lived experiences and contact with popular culture – being part of the network – produces knowledge that can enhance learning of composition in pre-existing composed spaces. I believe we need to explore who composes on whom.

Finding purpose in the real

Those actors, which are constructed and deconstructed through interaction within the academic and broader cultural networks within the composition classroom and beyond, are learning how to produce composition on a wide variety of genres, many of which are already organically navigated by these actors and faculty in entangled and overlapping networks which are not closed but interact in a structured, discrete network. This is further complicated by the

construction being directed by the agency of the institution and departments. Another element I hope to understand is how we help students move from compositions which are produced through the institution's perceived identities of students as opposed to compositions built around the student's perception of themselves. In effect, this research will attempt to understand how students understand their own world and how it can make them more informed about when their identities are privileged and when they are not. I don't believe that the outcome of this research will make students compose better per se, but rather, it will attempt to understand models for composing pedagogies that use all of the student's a priori knowledge and experiences to help them understand that they already have all the tools that make up writing and writers. This is not the standard model of understanding acted upon within the academy. While it is changing at the department, discipline, and institutional level, it is not the norm. In computer terms, I would ascribe this as unlocking all the cores in a processor, across a cluster, where each node is not just a student, but all their ontological knowledge given a voice through a focused collaborative and staggeringly open composition.

ENTANGLEMENTS

Richard Fulkerson[12] (2005) suggests that composition theory is fragmented in ways that cannot simply be packaged and served to new instructors of rhetoric and composition; it is an abstraction that can be explained but not solidified. Even though theory and practice are both understood, these two critical elements are not in alignment: far from it. Instead, composition classes are often firmly entrenched in an outdated-era where phones were on the wall at home, computers were input-only devices, and students sat with spiral-bound notebooks and Bic pens scribbling fiercely to keep up with the knowledge authority at the lectern. From my own

[12] Fulkerson's Four Theories of composition (1979) and Teaching the argument in writing (1996) are merely two of many conversations Fulkerson added to the compositional theory conversation.

experience as an undergraduate, I vividly remember the transition from paper and pen notes being scribbled out as the professor, with back turned to the students or standing behind the wooden academic altar, passing down information to be assessed, typically through memorization - banking - models of learning. In a contemporary classroom, an example of this might be how students rely on their smartphone technology to take notes while the rules of the course are that students cannot be on their phone during the class. The instructor assumes the students are not engaged and values their attention in ways that sets them up to be merely attending to the professor – not navigating across entangled composition and communication standards that are more organic for them. Pedagogically, Freire (Freire & Ramos, 1970) defines this as the banking model of education where the instructor is the subject while students take on passive object roles.

Yet this is not the learning model in the digital contemporary classroom where students access their peers, family, and the world, 24/7 through texts, tweets, and Snapchat posts. Computers can now offer research information on demand, and students sit with institutionally provided tablets and computers while working on assignments in the classroom. The inclusion of technology then becomes a part of critical/cultural studies (Fulkerson, 2005) that are based on interpretation (p. 660); however, his assertion related to knowledge in the classroom eliminates the student's agency in their interpretations that existed prior to participating in the course. This is a gap that when examined through a phenomenological analysis would take into consideration the student's identities and how they see themselves empowered or powered by their a priori knowledges.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPEAL

I became aware of the students' digital literacies that they gain through their membership in other digital spaces, social media platforms, Reddit, online forums, for example, particularly 'leet' speak and text-specific symbols, and, as a byproduct, experiences that are gained by members of these communities in other digital spaces. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, these languages and symbol systems appeared in a variety of games and the communication models became standardized lexicons in other digital spaces: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Ultimately, I started to see this lexicon show up in my classes as a student and then an instructor. What I knew and brought to the table was, at least to some degree, gained from my entanglement with other fluid identities in cyberspace, such as gamer, troll, academic, and it was clear that what my students started to display, the composition, reflected that same a priori knowledge of these literacies and contextualized discourses. This isn't to necessarily suggest that Logan Paul's video blogging through YouTube is the start of knowledge[13], but rather, that the digital community produced and composed in literacies which have shown up through students who have never had contact with experiences, yet possess the literacies associated with simulated experiences. In essence, what academia has defined as intertextuality and assemblages (Porter, 1986; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980).

APPROPRIATION

The connections I am positing are that students are impacted by several factors that cannot be prioritized but which include being disenfranchised, devalued as intellectuals and scholars, and having their potential mitigated. All these factors illustrate that what is being

[13] It is the start of some form of knowledge that isn't being unpacked or explored directly here.

constructed is an environment for assimilation, not matriculation and development. What follows is a cursory discussion on those factors.

Social cognition

Invoking Albert Bandura[14]'s social cognition theory (1989) offers one way of understanding vicarious learning associated with social media. Specifically, Bandura (1989) points toward "vicarious experiences for judging capabilities in comparison with performances of others, verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences indicating that one possesses certain capabilities" (p. 1179). He further points out that "foresightful conceptions of actions" (p.1181) help direct behaviors that could be constructed as acceptable which are "formed on the basis of knowledge gained through observational learning, inferences from exploratory experiences, information conveyed by verbal instruction, and innovative cognitive syntheses of preexisting knowledge" (p. 1181). This concept of material understanding through vicarious experiences ties into possible cognitive aspects of my study; however, there is still a gap in understanding the phenomena from the agency of the student.

Access to academically-privileged knowledge

Knowledge is expensive and exclusive. The social construct of higher education requires money, time, and dedication; it is not as open or public as may be perceived. Since the access of 1960s, with the G. I. Bill and other funding, more and more young adults are advised to graduate high school, apply, are accepted, and eventually attend courses in a brick-and-mortar space of higher learning. In addition to the cost of tuition, another expense in this equation is the cost of books, transportation, in some cases housing, and portable technologies such as tablets and smartphones. Historically, technology, much less educational technology, has not consistently

[14] Bandura is a professor emeritus at Stanford University in psychology. The Review of general psychology identified him as the fourth most prominent psychologist of the 20th Century (2002).

been readily available. In 1992, a Nokia 6160 sold for $900 (timetoast.com), not including any cellular plans. The phone was limited to a few games and had no word processing capabilities. Access in 1992 was around 11,000,000 cellular subscribers (infoplease.com); whereas, in 2017, there are currently 4.77 billion cellular subscribers in the world (statista.com), and, without signing up for contracts or other tools to make smartphones even more accessible, an iPhone SE can be purchased for $100 (metropcs.com), offering potentially more processing power than most computers from 1992.

Along with those advances in technology, networks have expanded from small groups of users on a fragile internet, to the current availability of free wi-fi at McDonalds, Starbucks, and Walmart. This doesn't even take into consideration projects like Digital El Paso (elpasowifi.com), or UTEP, which offers free wi-fi to all students and faculty and has guest logins available through Eduroam. As networking technology has expanded, many universities have embraced and promoted/provided access through online courses. Knowledge, or education, which originally delivered in large auditorium spaces with a facilitator and passive students has evolved into virtual worlds where scholars communicate through compositional texts about composition. Contemporary spaces of learning run the gamut from Massive Open Online Courses [MOOCs], such as the English composition course offered through Duke University (coursera.org), cloud composition software, such as Google Docs, through email exchanges with students and, ultimately, Direct Message or Instant Message platforms through Learning Management Systems such as Blackboard Learning, Kornukopia, or Intellum. The learning space has always been in a state of flux which appears to be expanding more quickly through access to technology. Students and faculty navigate these ever-expanding environments, where traditional models of learning are established through a priori knowledge of hierarchy and dualism in

primary school. Composition finds itself in the middle of these ontological positions, struggling to find solid ground in the mire of educational models that are theorized versus those which are applied. This is further compounded when instructors in higher education must contend with virtual settings that offer simulacra versus a simulation of the tangible, physical learning environment. We espouse these theories in all academic spaces to students, and attempt to ascribe them as rules, laws, or guidelines which must be followed to be successful. Students do not question these theories or, to some degree, the faculty who assert them as gospel. A question that comes up here, for me, is how does appropriation of the institution's identity impact the student's identity and agency? Are students not still being acted upon as vessels: objects which need to be filled?

Access to socially-constructed knowledge

Knowledge is also cheap and readily available. This is a reality where knowledge is produced in contemporary society; where production is achieved through augmenting and networking, where technology and knowledge are readily at hand through cheap devices and unfettered access to bandwidth. This all plays a critical role in how identity, power, and agency are distributed across intertextual and intersectional boundaries. People can access this knowledge at their own discretion of time and location, and it could be posited that it is virtually free depending on how it is privileged by the individual, and society. Binging on *Breaking Bad* instead of working on the company's time, driving while texting, or trolling on Facebook are all activities which set up this point. Current pedagogies, I believe, fail to value the actancy, agency through performance, of this network, and therefore cannot see how it composes, and is composed within as subject, object, and participant.

BRIDGE BUILDING

For the purposes of this study, a tool is needed that allows for the exploration of the parts of the whole, and the whole. Actor Network Theory is the tool I will use because I believe that there is a dynamic need to rethink how social structures work and to deconstruct their concrete nature which is construed by systems. Throughout this research, I believe that the messy nature of composition will be unpacked alongside the primary goal of responding to the questions of inquiry. Actor-Network Theory[15], ANT for short, (Latour, 2005) offers a way of exploring and articulating what will be discovered through this research.

Discovery is reflected in how knowledge is gained and what knowledge already exists prior to any attempt to discover. To further focus this conversation, and the study, we need to look toward the digital phronesis, the a priori knowledge of the participants in RWS 1302, which is the second semester requirement for composition in undergraduate degree programs. This is an important concept because contemporary people could be presumed to have some baseline contact with digital experiences, even if those experiences are merely how they receive information about day-to-day activities, like when streets are out. The participants in this study all indicated they had prior knowledge about technology on a very personal level.

Therefore, if we treat students' and faculties' experiences as sites of knowledge production, then the terministic screens, all of the elements which fall under phenomena that help frame and reinforce ideas in individuals and groups, used by both groups as scholars of composition are no longer limited to the physical or virtual classroom. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Call of Duty, Snapchat, and a plethora of other entangled highly accessible public

[15] I interacted with Distributed Cognition (Hutchins, 1995) while deciding between the two theories and decided to only use ANT. With that said, DCog definitely is referential in my thinking and deserves at least a reference in this footnote so that my own influencing theories are addressed.

spaces become networks where cognition is distributed across artifact actancy in the network. The identities and power are produced through garnering followers, likes, and shares which, ultimately, seem to achieve validity.

Role of the Researcher

As a doctoral student, parent, husband, mountain biker, and assistant instructor, academic work in online environments allows me access to knowledge on an asynchronous schedule. I do not always have to be physically present to compose, assess, or be assessed. All those elements of identity are assembled and reassembled in the network, where actancy is fluid, as is my identity: text, links, intertextuality, distributed cognition in various modes of existence. I believe that this could be defined as a distributed actancy because all actors within the various modes of this network benefit from the dynamic shifts in rhetorical situations as knowledge production, and composition transitions in the rhizomatic space (Deleuze, Guattari, and Massumi, 2013). One area where actancy moves away from participants is also built into the asynchronous nature of discourse in the virtual classroom; limited contact with faculty and fellow students means that at any point in the distribution of knowledge a mode lacks agency. Kairos, that singularity of understanding associated with the 'aha' at that precise moment of clarity where persuasion has occurred, produces actancy only within that moment of composition and response in this learning environment. By identifying myself in the research through ethnography, I can explore how the modes of existence situate graduate students who are in the position of duality in identities as the instructors of record for RWS courses and, in my case, also active students matriculating in a hybrid course.

Role of the student

First-year students potentially arrive at the institution with idealistic expectations of what learning looks like - particularly from the lens of secondary education in high school with instructors of English focusing on discourse analysis and literature in face-to-face settings. In most instances, that hypothetical experience is a synchronous environment that is treated axiomatically: an instructor has access to knowledge which students engage as an authority with unfeatured agency over the students as object. They are expected to be eagerly engaged, participating in only a mostly static role of listener with the threat of detention or repeating the course if they do not accept this mostly powerless identity. Part of their identity is understood to be technocentric, socially engaged, and demonized user of smartphones which must be regulated, along with any other access to technology. Rules and regulations are enforced, not as rhetorical acts students understand and replicate through their own actancy, but as enforcement of the hierarchical position of authority of instructors as administrators. For this study, then, observation of these lived experiences being given actancy in RWS 1302, where composition is required, through technology, composing assignments and make rhetorical evaluations, is fertile ground for exploration of how students affect, and are affected by this shift in identity and the collaborative nature of distributed cognition at work.

The takeaway for readers of this study should be a movement toward finding ground, which we've already established cannot be solid, about how we navigate, compose, and influence new rhetors in the institution and classroom. While we cannot control a priori knowledge we can acknowledge phenomenological positions and, through contact with students, better relate to, and empower, their identities.

Chapter 2

DEFINITIONS, REVIEW, AND GROUNDING

This chapter lays out not only the scholarship that is relevant to this study, but also the definitions which are particular to rhetoric. How we reach conclusions about the roles and agenda-setting as agency in composition courses has been explored through a variety of theoretical frameworks that appear to privilege authority, or power, and identity at the point of their intersection (Dewey, 1899, 1916, 1938; Durkheim, 1956; Foucault, 1977, 1979, 1980; Freire, 1970, 1987, 1998; Luke, 1996; Silberman, 1970)[16]. In the case of this analysis, the goal is to privilege students' identities and agencies which are not centralized in the composition classroom as a network.

While a goal for clarity is to examine a method of inquiry to discuss and analyze answers to critical questions raised in this study, it is necessary to define and contextualize how some of these understandings are reached. Another important and necessary aspect of this clarification is built around definitions and how they influence the methodology. The overarching concept of network is so critical that it must be introduced first because it not only intersects with all other concepts and terms, it is entangled, or the other elements are entangled into it, in ways that, on some level, make this a study into the rhetoric of technology on par with Bazerman (1997; 1998). The concept of network is not new but, I believe, how we interact with it is continuously being reassembled.

NETWORK

Taking into account the earlier grounding of Durkheim (Segre, 2004), Simmel (Pescosolido, 2011) and Latour (Banks,2011) in conversation with the understanding of network

[16] This list is merely the tip of the iceberg for scholarship and scholars relevant to the study of power/authority/hegemony that correlate with composition studies/theory

as an open ended and malleable entity, we need to add the scholarship of Deleuze and Guattari (1983). Durkheim theorized network as normative through social constructs where individuals will accept limitations on their own individuality, their agency, for the benefit of the whole (Segre, 2004, p. 216). Latour (Banks, 2011) offers the most fluid and abstract construction of network in ways that, as Banks observes, allows for an intersection of cyber and physical identities and groups that form, and reform, as necessary to continue the work of the community. Two concepts of Deleuze and Guatarri (2013), the body as an assemblage and the rhizome, are valuable ideas to add to that definition. Particularly, their reference to a body effectively describes the unit of identity defined as the composition classroom. All elements within the body must function for the body to work, yet the elements within the body do not actively lift up or construct a hierarchy of purpose for the task of functioning. If the classroom is that body and all of the elements within and the actors are some of the organs, then the hardest thing to begin any conversation with Latour involved is understanding that the organs continuously change purpose and function as needed without being locked down by concrete laws. Another important factor to understand is that the network is an intersecting social space which shares all the values of the individuals as they have agreed, through a variety of rhetorics, to participate within a variety of rules, structures, and hierarchies within the social construct.

The network is so vital to this study that it will be acknowledged through reassemblages of meanings associated with the Internet; and it also must be viewed as entangled by that association. As a space of distributed information, some of which requires other information to be used or valuable, we must look at the nature of a network as a knowledge that is shared or distributed across itself.

Distributed cognition

I offer Hutchins (1995) as a way of asserting the network as a cerebrally-connected identity. He explores cognitive boundaries in a complex and potentially dangerous space: a United States naval vessel, the U.S. Palao. The space he is interested in is the networked, yet compartmentalized, knowledge which must be spread across the crew to effect mission success and keep them out of danger. His anthropological lens attempts to change how disciplines within higher education view their agency to explore worlds. Distributed cognition offers new spaces – "social spaces, in physical space, and in time" (p. xii) – to examine new theoretical perspectives of "culturally constituted human activity" (p. xii). The human mind does not exist in isolation, but rather, thinking and activity occur where "human cognition interacts with an environment rich in organizing resources" (p. xiv) such as when a baseball team has various positions with overlapping knowledges that must interact with specializations; for example, the short-stop focuses on different knowledge than the pitcher or catcher. Much like the actors on the ship and baseball fields, students, faculty, administration, and object actors all are vested with implicit and explicit knowledge which must be interacted with to accomplish the mission: the matriculation of knowledge that is useful and functional, not merely the acquisition of grades. His work is an attempt to resituate thinking and knowledge production into spaces which are acted upon, "not just influenced by culture and society, but that it is in a very fundamental sense a cultural and social process" (p. xiv).

Hutchins (1995) illustrates distributed cognition by asserting that the framework of "the cognitive unit of analysis" cannot be limited into the individual, but instead, treated as a network of thinking and knowledge production that is situated in the nodes, or individuals, as well as the complex organism or what Latour (2005) would define as the network.

Latour offers a deeper interaction of network through *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor network theory* (2005). His first step in thinking about the network involves how he renegotiates the term social. As noted above, this shift removes social from the very narrow field of definition ascribed as being together or homogeneous. Instead, social must be recognized as preexisting origins of togetherness: what Latour ascribes as associations that can be traced (pp. 7). His definition that "the social [should be seen] not as a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling" (p. 7) offers a focused view of the gaps in what and who is given actancy in online classrooms.

Latour (2005) offers a definition of social that is built around heterogeneous associations which makes thinking about group work, especially in virtual spaces, take on a different expectation. It also changes how actors in social media, and more directly, online courses navigate the network of social constructs (p. 27). The most validated form of reassembling network through Latour (2005) is one that is entangled, without permanent power structures that are hierarchical in nature.

An example of this is how the power dynamic of the online classroom is flattened by the access of information in the various identities and agencies which construct and are constructed by the social, what Latour (2005) would ascribe as lacking a visible hierarchy (p. 11). I acknowledge that the course itself has material hierarchical elements pre-assembled by the institution and, in the case of RWS and FYC - by the department as well. Where I see the rhizomatic nature I am ascribing as flat is that the student-faculty relationship is contingent on logging into a terminal, whether that be desktop, laptop, or portable devices, to the same space. Another way to see this is that there is no lectern to stand at for instructors or desks with students

attentively waiting for input in online spaces; instead, participants must navigate acceptance of roles which they must act out in abstraction; otherwise, every voice has equal value, unless regulated through technology directly by the faculty to limit or isolate power and roles. Latour (2005) fits into the conversation as this site of composition, the online classroom, requires the examination of what is reassembled in the space through the actors' understanding of roles and "wild innovations" (p. 12) because the realm of classroom is imposed upon the students while the technology is seen merely as a tool for space; this does not happen in reality, but instead, a new social realm is produced across heterogeneous actors that have not interacted or actively sought out the collective. In short, faculty has a mission, but cannot pick who is involved, and students are placed in the course by assemblages they do not have agency in other than enrolling. The technology has been produced, and then set up to communicate and be communicated through – but also participates as an actor in the reassemblage as it functions/malfunctions, modifies, isolates, and produces negotiations between all participants in the new social space. We see examples of this in the physical classrooms inhabited by first-year composition students because the hardware technology in the classroom is giving an immediate agency over the students via rules about eating and drinking in those spaces. But the physical layout produces dynamics about power across those who are participating in knowledge building assemblages fronted by an identifiable lead actor: the faculty. Asserting Social Learning Theory, this same power dynamic plays out online with students actively seeking approval for their work from the instructor. The mediation of power begins when students take on their own agendas and begin to set their own timetables in asynchronous settings that allow for them to have some movement, or lack of movement, based on the professor's willingness to not assert power or agency; also, students have the choice to be vocal, to actively participate in discussions online, or to remain

silent. It is this virtual landscape that requires further exploration. Distributed cognition acts as the model of actors within this dynamic because faculty must call upon other knowledge, student employees, IT, administrators, to tasks which are beyond the knowledge base of the instructor. They may even find that a student knows how to fix the projector/software in ways that changes the power dynamic and makes the class productive versus sitting around unable to use an element of the classroom technology.

DIGITAL SPACES

Another foundation of thinking to take into consideration is Rheingold (2000), who offers that we must understand that the changing nature of the Internet has resulted in the social, and what is society, particularly in online formats/groups/identities, being redefined. Identity, as in identifier, changes as easily as producing/deleting text in various spaces (Rheingold, 2000). The virtual communities that Rheingold is both a stakeholder and pioneer of offer insight into the rapid development of digital spaces with their own contracts. He also places a value on the psychological well-being associated with membership because of the abstract nature of identity and avatars within the networks. This plays out in composition courses as participants of the network can assume in various modes of existence within the course, including student, technology, and facilitator. Other abstract locations do not require a presence, but can also be interacted within, not based on the environmental format, but the format as environment. Beyond places. As a genre, first-year composition reflects the compulsory production of discourse and dialogue that is mandated by the institution as part of the requirements for successfully completing the core curriculum to obtain an undergraduate degree (Swarts & Kim, 2009). This space, particularly for the purposes of this study, as an online environment, is still relatively new as a genre connecting faculty, students, and technologies (Swarts & Kim, 2009).

Key to this study, “genres reflect environments and institutional structures in which readers participate” (p. 211).

Reader and writer are synonymous with participant or actant in that service of text across the network (p. 211). In this context, composition in virtual spaces requires navigation, specifically through text, as “a rhetorical space that is equal parts information and structure” (p. 212). Case in point, as a genre, RWS 1302 includes physical texts and discourses alongside those which take place exclusively in an online environment which is both the means of communication and the rhetorical space that actions occur within (p. 212).

Place is the medium by which reading and writing exist as kairotic. Defining kairoi “as places” that frame communication as sites of assemblages and artifacts that can be remixed across and through actants in the network allows for genre to not just be a medium, but a location of communication (p. 212). The term frame is used in a constructive model, designating the structure of genre, not just the boundaries of the genre; this is important because I think we have to see a space defined for the purposes of the research. Without defining a rhetorical place, there is no area for actancy to be performed in (p. 212). Further consideration is how the planning of space is required to accommodate the participants of that space – i.e. chairs for sitting, informational symbols that define what occurs in the space and how. This must exist in virtual spaces as well (p. 213). Within a network, a language must exist to communicate, to construct and compose discourse, so that objects and actors have meaning.

KNOWLEDGES AND LANGUAGE

This is a cursory list of the topics of literature that will need to be explored for this research that includes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, postphenomenology[17], and Actor-Network Theory in a brief format. They will be unpacked further in subsequent chapters.

Rhetoric

A definition and context for rhetoric needs to be addressed so that there is a scope of understanding established early in the conversation. For this project, I am invoking rhetoric as discourse, all communication that can be composed, networked and/or material-based (Gries, 2015; Rickert, 2013), which attempts to argue about empowered positions, or roles in the case of this study.

Situations

As we progress through the various levels of education, students and faculty must navigate who is privileged in the classroom. This is further complicated by what assumptions become fossilized learning, such as whether face-to-face classrooms with more traditional formats are better served models of composition over alternative spaces. Even the concept of alternative versus classical-traditional sets up agency through space – and helps replicate the identity of learning and who teaches, and who is there to learn. My research looks at exploring how the evolution of teaching spaces as sites of composition and rhetoric reassemble agency in digital spaces. The contemporary classroom is becoming a space of virtual reality where concepts like the psychobiological model are being enacted upon in new ways. Virtual online learning spaces call for instructors to examine and reflect on stakeholders and the pedagogies

[17] While I would say that postphenomenology as a theoretical framework and methodology would accomplish the task of addressing both ANT and IPA, my intention is not to include this as a method of discovery or methodology of examination; rather, I'm simply using the post-human definition of postphenomenology constructed by Ihde (2009).

used in these new spaces. There is a considerable body of literature that considers digital rhetorics, composing in the online classroom, and digital phronesis, but most of it is dated and does not account for social media and post-academic composition. I am exploring what composition and rhetoric look like in online environments, as both social and learning spaces, where Western rhetorical concepts like ethos, pathos, and logos must be renegotiated to maintain agency alongside institutional structures.

Discourse

Merriam-Webster (online) offers a number of definitions for the term discourse; however, the one that fits the purpose of composing or communicating for this conversation is "a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experiences that are rooted in language" along with another definition which ascribes discourse as "connected speech or writing" (Merriam-Webster). By putting these two definitions together, the end result connects speech, writing, and, I assert, multimodal compositions through a mode of knowledge production or informs audiences about experiences or ideas rooted in rhetoric. Extending these shallow definitions toward one framed around rhetoric as constructing "social action … aimed at specific audiences for specific reasons in specific situations" (Living Handbook) to understand "narrative elements as means" to facilitate or engage in the motivation of others. It is the network, what is ascribed as "the communicative framework" (Living Handbook) that acts as a site of knowledge production which can only be navigated through, as I am asserting, phenomenological understanding as individual and collective.

Phronesis

Phronesis is synonymous with a priori knowledge. This is the crux of my thinking as I move forward in this analysis. Aristotle (Aristotle and Banchich, 2004) speaks on this bifurcation

of wisdom, for which phronesis can be defined as "practical wisdom" (dictionary.com) to keep things less complex. This is an intricate word that deserves more attention than I can validly donate without transitioning into cognitive psychology, metaphysics, and philosophy. Instead, I will offer a brief conversation then on how the term, and its paired term, sophia, work dynamically to ascribe the wisdom I am exploring as being pre-existing within contemporary students. In the context of the sophists, phronesis was framed around the concept of intuitive knowledge, what we might call a priori, or epistemic knowledge (NE VI.7). Phronesis, as a concept, is valuable because it is how I would describe the use of technology with digital natives. The cross-platform knowledge of different programs, for example, means that knowledge of operation for one program has significant value in other programs; another example might be the knowledge and use of touch screen or keyboard input technologies transfers easily across devices and platforms.

Actancy

I am re-appropriating the word actancy from its traditional meaning of describing causal relationships in grammar for linguistics into Latour's actant/agency model. By taking actant, or actor, from a noun state and redefining it as an abstract verb, I am able to be more in line with the thinking associated with Actor-Network Theory as Latour (2005) is contextualizing it. Foucault would use agency in the traditional concept of a fluid power dynamic, but for the purposes of clarity, I am using Latour's term while knowing that we are talking about an actor's agency. It is necessary to explain one other element in the definition of actancy as action: action is not limited to the agent that takes it; it [action] maintains power and others will continue to affect and be affected by the original action (Latour, 2005, p. 45). This is important because it defines actancy as an almost kinetic response to social actions. The potential energy associated

with acting is different than purposeful agency which is framed around hegemony and power dynamics. As I indicated earlier in this study, the subtle difference is what I am invoking.

ACTORS

As the core unit of participants, not specific to humans in this conversation, actors play such a critical role in the movement of identity, socialization, and network. This single entity makes up the base unit of any network; it is this variable that is, from a qualitative standpoint, so important because each entity matters and carries with it/him/her, an element of both individual experiences and values, and the social constructs they are woven into. This is really the first step in entanglement[18].

IDENTITY

Bandura (1977) establishes humans as active processors of data, like computers in that we correlate causality through actions and the consequentiality; in short, we operate through an algorithm of behaviors as if/then statements. His identification is through modeling based around classical and operant conditioning; for the purposes of this study, all the roles that are identified, that have identity, are those which can be modeled to achieve the appropriate outcome in the if/then model. This appears to be limited in that it is both cyclical, the student becomes the instructor and repeats the conditioning - something that would point directly to some of the thinking and theories defined and challenged within this dissertation, and concrete. Behavior predicts and establishes appropriate, a challenging and deceptively hegemonic concept, outcomes for success.

[18] Actancy is contextualized through the idea that there are tangible and abstract powers that are typically attributed to agency. By referencing the concept of actancy - or actor - I am positing that power is limiting as a term that does not incorporate the roles, identities, and acts which are constructed.

In contrast, Rheingold (2000) provides a concept of identity, as in identifier, which changes as easily as producing/deleting text in various spaces (Rheingold, 2000). Even that is limiting because it implies that identity exists as a singular, when from the perspective of an individual, there can be infinite identities and avatars. This plays out in RWS 1302 as participants can be in various modes of existence within the course, including student, technology, and facilitator. Rheingold's position is that we must understand the changing nature of the Internet which has resulted in the social being redefined, as well as what is defined as society, particularly in online formats/groups/identities.

Bringing in a third concept of identity that is not less relevant, but which intersects the previous framings, Burke (Crable, 2006) takes an interactional approach to identity. Crable (2007) brings in Mead (1934) as one factor in identification that asserts identity is formed by society upon the individual, as an object that is self-aware and reactive internally by "the other's attitude" (p. 171). Burke, as explained in Crable (2006) is drawn into the conversation of the relationship between rhetoric and identity because of the correlation between identity as interactional "discourse aimed at gaining another's cooperation in the creation or defense of the rhetor's desired identity" (Crable, 2006). All of these concepts flesh out a concept of identity as actor working to both reinforce self-identification and construct other identities within their respective network.

SOCIAL

Latour (2005) offers the launching point for network through Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor network theory. His first step in thinking about the network involves how he renegotiates the term social. This shift removes social from the very narrow field of definition ascribed as being together or homogeneous. Instead, social must be recognized as preexisting

origins of togetherness: what Latour ascribes as associations that can be traced (pp. 7). His definition that "the social [should be seen] not as a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling" (p. 7) offers a focused view of the gaps in what and who is given actancy in online classrooms. Latour (2005) offers a heterogeneous association for social that does not fit the evaluative model of science as there is no method of scientific discovery that can be attributed to the social; also, he speculates that by associating social to science, the elimination of what is "assembled under the umbrella of society" (Latour, 2005, p. 2). He further asserts that society doesn't really exist because it is in a constant state of being diluted through technology. The limitations then, scientifically, are two-fold for Latour (2005). First, the concept of social is too constricted and based off both outdated and preset values that no longer fit the contemporary world of virtual and physical spaces. Second, social sciences cannot account for hermeneutical aspects of social elements being explored or evaluated (p. 4).

For the purposes of this study, it is important to remember that not taking the testimonials, values, identities, and power dynamic for granted in this 'society' means that while the answers may not be what is expected, the outcome fits Actor Network Theory's purpose of avoiding expected or groomed responses and dimensions.

This thinking related to ANT and society also changes how actors in social media, and more directly, online courses, navigate the network of social constructs (p. 27). The online classroom functions as a rhizome, or horizontally-integrated series of roots or nodes, because in virtual spaces, all participants are on a horizontal plane; the space also reassembles the social as all participants have actancy alongside the technology which produces "new institutions, procedures, and concepts able to collect and to reconnect the social" (p. 11). Put simply – there is

no visible hierarchy in online spaces without people accepting and acting their roles; otherwise, every voice has equal value, unless regulated through technology directly by the faculty to limit or isolate power and roles.

Latour (2005) fits into the conversation as this site of composition, the online classroom, requires the examination of what is reassembled in spaces through the actors' understanding of roles and "wild innovations" (p. 12) because the realm of classroom is imposed upon the students while the technology is seen merely as a tool for space; this does not happen in reality, but instead, a new social realm is produced across heterogeneous actors that have not interacted or actively sought out the collective. The technology has been produced, and then set up to communicate and be communicated through – but also participates as an actor in the reassemblage as it functions/malfunctions, modifies, isolates, and produces negotiations between all participants in the new social space.

ASSEMBLAGE

Through Müller (2015), a working structure of assemblages, as both a methodology that we will incorporate into Actor Network Theory in part, and as an understanding of them as "objects, bodies and matter" will help to establish paradigm shifts which explore "the spatial dimensions of power" (27). Müller (2015) also points to assemblages as being capable of "[interrogating] the production of knowledge and expertise and the enrollment of manifold technological devices in that process" (28). Finally, for the purposes of this study, assemblages are "relational, … productive, … [and] … heterogeneous" (28); it is this last construct of thinking about these objects which frames well into the assemblage as network invoked in the compositional classroom which is made up of objects, matter, and bodies which all share power.

Digital denizens: Immigrants and natives. To establish actors as bifurcated across the digital landscape - one as an immigrant, the other as a native - I will draw upon the abstract definitions offered by Chaves, Maia Filho, and Meho (2016) to offer grounding for these two chronologically-constructed groups. It is relevant, both their article and the context of their definitions, because the participants of this study are all digital natives and I, as primary investigator, am a digital immigrant. A digital immigrant is defined in this article as an individual "whom [was] born before the advent of digital technologies" (p. 367) but who has adapted to the use of digital technologies as part of their day-to-day experiences. A digital native, then, is one of a group "whom were born in the current generation" (p. 367) and have only existed in a world where technology was normalized and an intricate part of their experiences. The distinction is important because academia is transitioning from digital immigrants as those who establish assessment and the phronesis aspect of digital natives as both student and researcher in the future. This is important because, as we progress to future generations of faculty and academics within the discipline, there is a point where all participants within the classroom are digital natives. This evolution will result in having to adapt and develop along technological limitations versus faculty limitations.

Impacting elements

There are several differing perspectives associated with network which must be addressed to better situate the definitions, theories, and choices ascribed through this study. Actionable rhetorical spaces. Potts and Jones (2011) offer a formula for examining Actor-Network Theory alongside Activity Theory as they interact with social media applications such as YouTube, Reddit, and Twitter. They focus on the space and how design works as an actionable rhetorical space for discourses which actors ascribe themselves into. The concept of a

kludge, or "an unruly mass of content" (p. 339) provides a causal relationship between participants in this virtual space.

In effect, participants engage with and become part of the network to access content that is produced by the participants (p. 339). The experience is describable through the term distributed cognition (Hutchins) which points back toward the gap in literature; specifically, how the network composes knowledge across historical and cultural artifacts. The artifacts are aggregated knowledge and information which is filtered through the composition. They are not only part of the network but have actancy as both subject and object (Kristeva) acting out agency with participants in the environment. The information, or kludge, provides an unfiltered content which is acted upon by participants in the network to define what is composed or privileged (p. 339). By mapping out how users, tools, and the network produce relationships to examine the knowledge at hand, kludge, Potts and Jones (2011) offer a matrix that can be explored through my study to see how learning management systems, and popular culture play out the "fire space" (p. 340) found in the RWS 1302 classroom.

Writing assessment is another significant impacting element in the conversation because of the value placed on what is acceptable, or passing, and allows students to be considered competent to move forward in their academic careers. Hout (2002) pointedly states that "writing assessment has been developed, constructed, and privatized by the measurement community" (p. 81) as a means to enforce composition "as a technological apparatus"(81) that is specialized in its "inner workings" (p. 81). This is further understood as scholars within composition theory who "talk about and compare practices which have no articulated underlying theoretical foundation" (p. 82). Hout points to the use of writing assessment to categorize and assign roles to

military recruits in World War II (p. 83) versus models of evaluation that show competency within composition or knowledge acquisition.

Adaptive pedagogies

Agency in online learning environments changes the playing field for students and faculty as dynamic shifts in who is privileged is continuously renegotiated in these spaces. A question directly related to this that needs to be addressed is whether the current model of pedagogy associated with the online RWS courses simply replicates face-to-face classrooms without the added benefit of contact with a professor or access through office hours, etc. The relevance is how agency and identity are produced/reproduced in physical spaces versus digital/virtual ones. Another question on pedagogy in this regard is what is normalized? Should adaptive pedagogies that take into consideration how faculty persuade and produce rhetoric alongside composing with students, or flat, one-dimensional pedagogies that are built around banking of knowledge become the new standard for how power dynamics function within the classroom setting?

The most important question concerning online learning and privilege in composition, to me, is whether students can have any agency in these virtual spaces where the structure does not reflect the virtual spaces they negotiate and navigate within daily? Lanier (2010) very explicitly states that "the most important thing about a technology is how it changes people" (p. 5). This, alongside a conversation offered by him regarding the effects of Web 2.0 fragmenting and trivializing human interaction and communication is ground zero for the ontological position of incoming students in first-year composition; particularly as we move toward online formats, this understanding of how technology and the Internet work creates problematic associations for all participants. Another important factor in how technology was assembled is found in lock-in with

the software (p. 7). The larger a program, the more challenging it is to contend with, and change, problems within that system. Lanier (2010) notes that "lock-in, however, removes design options based on what is easiest to program, what is politically feasible, what is fashionable, or what is created by chance" (p. 10). All these elements speak directly toward the agency of the technology in the ANT model. So, in effect, the gaps that we are exploring through this study require all participants to look to reassemblage to make changes in the society of the online classroom. I am troubled by Lanier (2010) not seeing the role of participant that technology plays in society directly through the programmer, who I assert is just another cog in the larger rhetorical situation. He notes that programming is open to the interpretation of the programmer – and yet he explicitly states that the programmer has no true rhetorical agency in the virtual space created (p. 6).

Systems of writing

Cooper (2010) sets up the stakes for my research around the concept that "writing and writers [are] fully engaged in social context" (p. 15). She sees the process as being similar to how other organisms interact as social communities where they shape and are shaped by the environment they exist in (p. 15). Cooper (2010) further explains that "systems of writing" (p. 16) follow patterns "driven by the same principles" (p. 16). She brings up the complexity of these systems and how they emerge through chaos, especially in network cultures (p. 16). Another avenue of connectivity with the proposed research is that she sees writing as a reactive action toward the social and cultural constructs because humans "use social forms of activity to satisfy their needs, and consciousness supplies the "internal images" that link need and goal" (p. 18). Writing and technology both extend meaning and purpose/rhetoric, as interchangeable, into social structures, as networks are defined (p. 18). Through technology, as symbiotic and

embrocated, students are able to create knowledge, through the words and images associated with the constant state of communication offered by the Internet and their ontological contact with "prosthetic technologies" (p. 19) which is organic/biological in nature. Technologies are an extension of humans and society and are engaged in the environment, not just tools (p. 22). Technology becomes a partner in the network to produce (compose), not merely to be commanded (p. 22). Composition does not take place without practice, in a vacuum. Rather, it is interactive and responsive because, without a social structure and purpose, there is no need to communicate (pp. 23-24). Ideas are composed through reassembling assemblages – the reinterpretation and re-articulation of memories to create new ideas. This is especially relevant in online formats where composition must occur to compose what is called for to assess students (p. 25). Without technology and prior knowledge, and not just the faculty's knowledge, the "naked brain" (p. 26) would lack agency in articulating complex meanings.

TECHNOLOGY

Bazerman (1997) offers the best definition of technology for the purposes of this study. Technology is defined as "a human-made object" (p. 383) that has been "always been fundamentally designed to meet human ends" (p. 383). While short and to the point, it is not lacking in contextual framing. I could say that what is being viewed as objects which have ontological position in the composition classroom include the boards, pens, papers, iPads, Apple desktops, desks, chairs, lights, overhead projector but that would begin to immediately frame out what is and isn't technology. One problem with technology being only limited to tangible materials is that it eliminates the digital and virtual space and objects, the network, compositions, discursive materials that all make up other abstract forms of technology that are real but

untouchable. With that in mind, Bazerman (1997) allows for the complete identity of technology that fits Latour's purpose of actors within a network.

STRUCTURED INTERPRETATION

Fulkerson (2005) revised his perception of composition theory as a "metatheory" (p. 655) related specifically to student writing and assessment, around a trivium of "alternative axiologies ... [including] social-construction, expressive, and a multifaceted rhetorical one" (p. 655). In the context of this analysis, his social-construction which he labels critical/cultural studies is relevant as he asserts that this theory creates "a single 'cultural studies' or critical' or feminist pedagogy" (p. 660) which establishes a singular authority of correctness built around a heavily structured "interpretation" of what is acceptable or normal and, therefore, the only theoretical model of success or failure for students (pp. 660-661). Success is really defined through Fulkerson's contention that the discipline has become obscured through the lenses of "heavy, scholarly bibliographical surveys" (p. 657). The scholarship asserts 'correct' identities associated around singular, axiomatic questions which are binaries. Fulkerson is attempting to deconstruct the lines drawn across the various networks formed within the rhetoric and composition field. It is this aspect of Fulkerson that has influenced what is construed as enforced identities within the field for the purposes of this qualitative study. Drawn into a conversation with Freire (2005), who further contextualizes the identities being normalized by the hegemonic forces at work (pp. 71-85) which is established by the teacher-student paradigm along with the banking model as a form of oppression (p. 71). There is no contradiction in the formulation of correctness by the abstraction defined as the system being asserted by these two; if anything, I assert they are in concert in calling for a shift away from empowering right/wrong binaries.

CULTURE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Van Dijck (2015) offers a launching point to contextualize and situate social media as ontological into the conversations engaged in by this study's participants. The culture of social media is an important part of the architecture of this study because it is the one site of composition which directly impacts all the participants of this study before they arrived in the college composition classroom. Sridhar and Srinivasan (2012) offers an alternative for the culture of social media which models around ontology and cultural codes, what can also be defined as social constructs, which move away from biases of Westernized knowledge and instead attempt to broadly define what knowledge production could look like if the focus was shifted to a more global gaze. It is necessary to offer that bias cannot be removed and van Dijck and Poell (2016) directly speak to the inability of knowledge to be truly horizontal in power dynamics. However, for this study's purposes, it is necessary to speak across both concepts of this culture to effectively analyze the participants' various responses during the interviews about social media, technology, and each individual.

Fish and Srinivasan (2012) notes that the current power dynamic of the digital world is "produced, designed, and built for Western (and increasingly East Asian) audiences" (p. 203) which marginalizes audiences outside of these privileged communities. While Fish and Srinivasan (2012) defines the marginalized as the "Global South," (p. 203) I would assert that spatial location does not represent a cross section of all cultures; it certainly is not the only variable at stake in the control of knowledge production and, ultimately the identities and agency which exists within the sphere of influence of social media.

Social credibility is another crucial area of discussion offered by Fish and Srinivasan (2012), where he explains that realities are shaped by algorithms and platforms that rank and

privilege sites of knowledge production; in effect, reality is shaped by the popularity of an app, platform, or the entity - not the public (p. 204). That credibility, and popularity, is enforced by the network through a hierarchy of westernized influence: from the coder, through the blogger, celebrity, and financial backing. Another important definition that Fish and Srinivasan (2012) offers is ontologies which he describes as "the modes by which knowledge is articulated, expressed, interpreted, and formalized" (p. 204). This term is crucial because it allows for a significantly more robust definition in the scope of a phenomenological analysis.

Another element Fish and Srinivasan (2012) discusses is the hierarchy which he asserts is established through "mono-cultures of Western corporations and cultural institutions" (p. 204) that includes television, new media, and I assert institutions of higher learning. I point this out because Fish and Srinivasan (2012) only points toward museums and libraries as monocultural institutions; this would be a valuable site of inquiry which I will return to in the conclusion. Srinivasan (2012) states that a rhizomatic approach (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) is the constructive model for opening knowledge production to other cultures. In some context, this study is grounded in exploring the horizontal model Srinivasan (2012) is proposing by letting student participant experiences have agency in a scholarly analysis. Ultimately, all identities in this study do share agency within the network in a rhizomatic format. However, a gap which must be addressed in the Srinivasan (2012) literature relates to the author being a site of knowledge production through language usage in his published scholarship. His lexicon is rhetorical only to an audience which has already been situated in the monocultural system he is actively trying to destabilize.

In effect, he is not valuing the disenfranchised communities which he is speaking for by not including them, and their own language, into the fray. Fish and Srinivasan (2012) illuminates

theoretical frameworks which question ontologies in ways that examine parallel questions of inquiry raised in this study. Another point raised by this author is related to access through mobile technology (p. 207). He asserts that there is no element within the network or through technology which creates global structures or equality; instead, elements within the network, actors, create local structures which are pushed by popularity, aesthetic or otherwise, and the monolithic cultural norms already identified by Fish and Srinivasan (2012). To combat the hegemony, he calls for all scholars to attend to all actors as stakeholders who look at appropriation and authorship. It is here where an alternative concept of appropriation comes into focus for this study.

Participants within the study navigate a variety of appropriation and authorship within the context of interviews which fits Srinivasan's model. This model of appropriation carries with it, not just simulation or mimicry, but the inclusion and addition of data to the medium through the composition of alternative realities that expand and alter identities and move agency away from sources of knowledge toward the actors who take on developmental roles within their appropriation as authors. Srinivasan (2012) places this into the context of television programming which he describes as "a passive medium that diminishes a community's 'social capital" (p. 208). His assertion is that appropriation occurs through integration "into daily life and environments" (p. 208); however, I assert that this has intersections across all media, active or passive, through the same mechanisms of authorship offered by Srinivasan (2012). This shows up in the continuous replication of compositional topics associated with First Year Composition course essays, such as marijuana legalization or gun rights; these topics are always constrained outwardly toward language, constructs, and cultures which all assemble and reassemble their identity through authorship and appropriation.

All of this can be ascribed as appropriation as authorship that is ontological. Srinivasan (2012) points toward the active nature of participants as fans, what I would define as actors in the language of Latour (1996), who appropriate knowledge which they focus into new directions within and across their networks. Other areas where this can be observed include music and young adult literature, both of which create identities which are remixed and reassembled by consumers. These identities and agencies push out into new networks and identities for actors within each network (p. 209).

Van Dijck (2015) offers boundaries which have not been set to frame out social media. There are perceived understandings of what social media means, but van Dijck (2015) establishes the concept not around society as social, but instead around connectedness related to "automated connectivity of platforms" (p. 1). He uses an alternative word, "connectication" to define social media which fits well into any conversation related to identities within a network connected by various platforms; this is a new idea where not only are the actors made up of individuals participating within the network, the technology is also considered across various cultures of platform, i.e. Facebook, SnapChat, etc. Van Dijck and Power (2015) expand on social media platforms as online infrastructures that consists of nodes and actors who are constantly in a state of flux as they alter identities and agency continues to morph and adapt by reassemblage (p. 1). This means that not only is knowledge continuously morphing along the lines of power and agency of the actors appropriating that knowledge, so are the various identities with which the platform and accompanying agencies use to maintain agency as the hegemonic power described by Srinivasan (2012). An important addition to this literature review is technocommercial assemblages (Poell and van Dijck, 2016). This concept negates the belief that rhizomatic power structures, those which are defined as equal and horizontal in agency, are

produced through social activist networks. The context is that control over who can be active within the network and has the ability to compose knowledge is still limited to a hegemony. This is juxtaposed against other epistemic and ontological models already acting upon and through actors across any network (p. 230).

CULTURE IN TECHNOLOGY

Through Ihde (2009), postphenomenology allows for an expansion on Smith's (1996) methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, by adding in the pragmatic nature of Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005); it indicates intersections across the method and methodology specifically related to online identities which begin to take on a patchwork resemblance of Frankenstein. The assemblage and reassemblage of purposes, identities, and transfer of power cross social and physical spaces and technologies which make up the learning network. This creates a non-concrete virtual place that is not homogenous outside of the point of view of a minority of identities and agency. In that context, the network is a hodgepodge of phenomena that no individual has authority to solidify authority over identity, nor agency to possess and dictate a final context that can be fixed. Ihde (2009) points to Heidegger as a philosopher of tools to set up the connections between technology and experiences or contexts. He explains that Heidegger attempts to produce identity and agency as concrete values established by the user; this eliminates pragmatics which are necessary to understand the nature of student, faculty, and technology as interchangeable tools. Another important term that Ihde (2009) brings to the conversation is "ontologically prior praxis" (p. 34) as a context which sets the stakes for when tools malfunction or their use changes from their understood and identified roles. In this way, an examination offered of actors within a network as tools acting as intended versus "malfunctioning" (p. 35). Through postphenomenology, I am re-contextualizing the

identities offered by the students' experiences to understand how they compose and are composed on by Rhetoric and Composition. Ihde (2009) offers that this post-phenomenological lens can offer a deeper insight into how technology is being privileged as embodied ontological values. By situating all actors within the network as various tools that take on epistemic and ontological agencies, I can better contextualize how Smith (1996) would analyze the network's experiences as their own.

PRAXIS AND EMBODIMENT

Ihde (2005) cites Merleau-Ponty (1962) for how his contribution to phenomenology through framing his work on the praxical nature of "embodiment and active perception" (p. 36) by defining the "orientation of the spectacle" as being enacted upon "as a [virtual] thing in objective space" which is really a "system of possible actions" (p. 36). In short, as objects within a network, all elements of that network, including students, faculty, institutions, computers, phones, social media, are responding only to perceptions of experiences and the constantly evolving 'fixed' "virtual things" which they expect to use based on ascribed roles (p. 36). Connecting all this directly to technology, Ihde (2009) defines the phenomenological aspect of technics as "a look at the spectrum and varieties of the human experiences of technologies" (p. 42). Postphenomenology explores how humans engage spaces through the "use of artifacts or technologies" (p. 42) which I assert would include social media as an artifact of popular culture and social construct, and the classroom, all of the technology within it and access to the Internet, as artifacts which then are embodied through composition as epistemic techne or, at the very least, praxical prior contexts.

ENTANGLEMENT

With any toolkit, there are many tools which are rummaged passed in favor of the more commonly used ones. This chapter attempts to bridge scholarly questions framed around inquiry with tools that are valuable to the qualitative conclusion reached in chapter 5. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, when coupled with postphenomenology, allows for scholars to observe the rhetorical moves taking place with student-instructor identities in composition, particularly in the light of bias and power through composing process. These tools allow us to try to put words to the reality of networks, spaces, actancy as they all are composed by and through technology.

Chapter 3

POSITIONALITY IN LEARNING

Much like the toolkit created in chapter 2, this chapter provides the raw materials for understanding how the study of participants' understanding through discursive responses is qualitatively parsed into something: how it is composed and the method and methodology being drawn upon to frame out the conversation. Chapter 1 was the cornerstone, the establishment of exigency on my part for this scholarship; chapter 2 was intended to provide the tools for how I constructed the study and attempted to provide insight into my own understanding. Chapter 3 will provide the foundational material, the raw theories, and methodologies I am navigating as I undertake the task of gathering data through testimonials to reach a conclusion.

Many theorists have taken up the call to reassemble or renegotiate assessment of knowledge in composition, for example Bourelle, Rankins-Robertson, Bourelle, Roen (as cited in McKee & DeVoss, 2013) tackle financial constraints by reassembling Arizona State University's composition classrooms as virtual spaces that lower workload and improve access while minimizing costs and Brunk-Chavez & Fourzan-Rice (as cited in McKee & DeVoss, 2013) who make strides to bring composition "into the 21st century by incorporation technology into assignments" (McKee & DeVoss, 2013) while acknowledging a need for change that spanned decades. The gap I am asserting is that students were not active agents, not because of a lack of value, but because this bottom-up approach is not normalized in institutional thinking. This study attempts to attend to that gap in a way that adds the student's voice. Through interviews of five participants who have agreed to be included in this conversation, I am attempting to better understand and unpack their identities and agencies as pragmatic. Digging deeper by looking at the network produced in the first-year composition classroom through the student's eyes, I am

interpreting a priori knowledge and how that constructs identities. Agency is analyzed through that interpretation as a rhetorical event.

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Another important factor in the framing of this study are the voluntary participants who were interviewed in the summer semester of 2018. The protocol for these volunteers was they had to be in their first year of attendance at the University of Texas at El Paso and enrolled in RWS 1302; they also needed to be between the age of 18-25. This age group has benefited from the interaction with technology since birth and fits into the traditional age of entering first-year students. While I acknowledge that gender, race, and cultural identification can play important roles in the responses related to identity and agency in students, I did not make these categories to decide how I picked participants. As a white, CIS male, I do not feel I have the positionality to appropriate identities that are not mine. In future studies, I believe that there could be methods for me to engage these demographics to evaluate how gender, race, or culture could impact the research questions. Initially, I sought to have 10 participants so that I could sift through a larger pool of applicants to narrow down those narratives which afforded a robust amount of interaction and input from the population sought after for this study and, fortunately, I was able to get 5 who completed the interviews after the initial conversation where some potential participants agreed but then were unable to commit to the time needed for interviews.

Interviews were initially planned at 1 hour per participant. According to Smith (1996), in this format of a phenomenological study, the optimal number would be 1 participant who would have a long-term interaction with the PI so that the individual being interviewed could be valued completely. Smith (1996) was looking to evaluate, not constrain, the identity and impact of agency for his subjects. IPA attempts to eliminate outlier concepts and instead give each

participant value. By allowing student participants to decide how much agency they want to invoke through their comments and responses, the eventual sample is organically based around those decisions, not the principle investigator. The precedence for this is layered but is limited by the constraints of time and access to the students and the nature of conversational interviews and testimonials which are constrained to the student's statements, for the purposes of this study, but rather, to begin looking at testimonials that start a bigger conversation on how to effect change in these identities and power dynamics. During a summer semester, five participants were interviewed to produce data through testimonials. Participants, of which 3 were from my own RWS 1302 summer course and the other 2 from a part-time professor's RWS 1302 summer course, were interviewed for approximately one hour each at the end of the semester, for a total of five hours, and the interviews were conducted inside a technologically-enhanced classroom and recorded digitally. I originally had the approval of 3 other courses taught during the summer to speak with their students to find my potential participants; however, only my course and the part-time professor's course had students that met my criteria. Instead of changing my criteria with the only justification being that there were not enough students or putting off the study another semester and extending the time needed to complete the study, I went with the five students that were available and willing at the time. I acknowledge that I could have waited, potentially 6 months, to gather another group of students but felt that was not productive or timely.

In an effort to make the flow natural, participants could take the conversation in any direction they sought within the confines of the question asked to attempt to achieve responses in a manner consistent with phenomenological analysis. While the interpretations are at the discretion of the investigator, IPA attempts to do more than look for evidence or causation;

instead, IPA is valuable because it attempts to understand the participants within the study without adding or qualifying what is of value for the participants. In that way, I find it valuable because while I am aware of the theories that connect to what the participants are discussing, I am attempting to only invoke what they say. There is no way to eliminate my own positionality in any methodology and IPA seems to be a valid methodology to allow for the student participants bias to be better understood. Analysis occurred after all the interviews were transcribed and reviewed. The interviews themselves were conversational in nature and the outcomes were reviewed as testimonials to construct understanding between the interviewer and the interviewed[19]. These testimonials were transcribed and then associated with potential connections, to attempt to find relationships between Actor Network Theory which attempts to look as assemblages within the network and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis which attempts to afford agency to the participants being analyzed through hermeneutics and experiences. The addition of the concept of postphenomenology within the model of IPA is an attempt to allow all actors within the network to be accounted for. This is an attempt throughout the course of this study because the value is specifically set on examining and uncovering student's identity and understanding of agency versus replication of existing and expected outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

IPA and ANT are the theoretical frameworks for this study. My rationale for blending them is the connection between the individual aspect of study associated with IPA and the networked aspect of study associated with ANT. This juxtaposition between theories constructs a space where entanglement can be examined without constraints of either mode of thinking. I

[19] The questions were prepared and approved by the IRB 1248450-1.

wanted to have a theoretical space to embrace the chaos that Latour defines while also being able to find a single point of conversation within the study: a single participant can emerge that allows for a deeper understanding related to the broad research questions I am seeking to unpack.

In that way, Actor Network Theory is the methodology I am using to observe the participants of this study and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which is further explained later in this dissertation, is the method I can offer an explanation by which we are able to see the actor's understanding of their identities and compositions within the network. The language and terministic screen constructed by the words I find important to this study include distributed cognition, identities of network, actor, object, actants, and postphenomenology. In that same line of thinking, I am discussing composition theory because it is at the root of what I understand how faculty are situated in and articulate their network performances within the compositional classroom. I designed this study in this way because I value network theory and phenomenology. The connections between individuals as groups, along many lines of thinking, is central to how we function as a society. The exploration of the network is central to composition in that you must have an audience and rhetoric in that you need a purpose within the network. There cannot be functional understanding of the network without understanding the experiences which were a priori to all individuals entering into that network. This combination means that experience and group matter across a multitude of different categories and spaces.

These methodologies then are as relevant in the forms of operations of messages in composition as grammar, particularly in light of language and academic programs moving away from contemporary spelling and sentence structure toward contextual understanding; they afford us to understand the hermeneutic position of students without asserting another form of evaluation to reach an 'appropriate' conclusion.

Disciplinary Conversation

The beginning of this study must be connected with what composition instructors know as canonical. Faculty in the discipline make contact with composition theory as a framing actor within the composition classroom in ways that are both traditional and contemporary in nature. A prominent conversation surrounding those intersecting faculty then must include the Fulkerson and Berlin conversation. It could be posited that these two scholars are both foundational for what is known within composition studies and set the precedence for action by faculty in contemporary classrooms. To deconstruct or trace elements means that we must explore, briefly, that conversation again. I specifically point to Fulkerson and Berlin's interactions in this context because they are canon for composition theory within the University of Texas at El Paso's Rhetoric and Writing Studies program. It is one of many valued conversations, but a foundational conversation which stuck with me as I matriculated in those spaces with these scholars' work.

Fulkerson

Fulkerson (1979) addressed pedagogical authority as a rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) in which compositional learning is framed and has impacts on identities and agencies for university students who are navigating the writing process. Berlin (1982) offers counterpoints to this scholarship. The relevance for readers is that this dissertation's discussion sets up how, in some part, faculty understands compositional theory which is valuable for pedagogy but potentially problematic for identity and agency in student's composition.

Fulkerson's (1979) scholarship is the launching point for composition theory as I am teasing out foundational aspects of instructor's roles and biases along with the beginnings of understanding the impact of those philosophical groundings. A critical definition that Fulkerson

(1979) establishes is offered for the concept of pragmatic composition which is built around valuing the reader and the impact of writing on the reader (Abrams, 1953, as qtd. In Fulkerson, 343, 1979). Also, a term which Fulkerson (1979) carries forth from Abrams (1953) is mimetic, which has a parallel definition in etymological ancestry with meme, which Fulkerson (1979) correlates with "an [emphasis corresponding]" associated with founding philosophies of pedagogy associated with "reality" (343). In effect, he is asserting that any pedagogically-driven bias associated with mimetics, or memes in the contemporary setting, is rooted in the production of realities. An example of this would be Harambe. As a name, Harambe means nothing to a vast swath of society - but as a meme, a mimetic of association about humanity, how we interact with animals, racism, and many other socially constructed realities, Harambe no longer requires anything but a single word. It is a mimetic unto itself.

Fulkerson (1979) produced theoretical concepts which are not student-centric in nature; rather, there is an attempt to distill the student from the process as "expressive" to the writing/pedagogy process because "the composition [philosophy emphasizes] the writer" (343). From the study's perspective, the focus should be on student's understanding of the process and their place within that process. He explained the philosophies he is espoused, expressive, mimetic, rhetorical, and formalist, as all having varying degrees of impact on how instructors evaluate writers and how production, or more accurate for this conversation – the composition of student writing – takes form (344). This is where we can see Berlin (1982) taking up the banner of bias associated with creating instructor-infused biases on worldviews that are not necessarily the student's worldviews; rather, the system and its gatekeeper – the culmination of theories – are focused through the indomitable agency of "the professor" (344).

Quad-reactive philosophies

Fulkerson (1979) posits descriptions of the philosophies as follows: Formalists value an evaluation of "internal forms" (344) and that translates into what contemporary scholars would define as grammarians. This philosophy is built on surface values which are readily available for sampling through a variety of instructors across the chasm of disciplines which emphasize or value writing to illustrate student knowledge. He further shows that other criteria which fall under formalist include "spelling, punctuation, penmanship, and length" (344). The second philosophy, expressionism, is rooted in evaluating the student as writer, not necessarily the writing as an isolated creation (345). Fulkerson (1979) pointed toward an emphasis on self-discovery which builds on "writing [which contains] an interesting, credible, honest, and personal voice (345).

The third philosophy of composition unpacked by Fulkerson (1979) is mimetics; it is defined as a conception of good writing being an associated product of "good thinking" 345). Instructors, through this lens, are charged through pedagogy to teach "enough about various topics to have [the student capable of composing] something worth saying" (345). He directly invokes the genre of propaganda its "unstated assumptions" (345) associated with "unacceptable assumptions" that go against the constructed reality of the "we" (345). This carries through logic and fallacies of logic that divert from "the truth" (345), as well. Another avenue he highlights in this philosophy is the lack of prior knowledge on the student's part which must be 'corrected' by properly-guided research; it must be as close to "the real" as is necessary to make it a 'valid' argument (345).

The fourth philosophy, according to Fulkerson (1979), has had the most attention because it is the one area of interest that directly affects the discipline of rhetoric. He calls on this element

as “a shaping discourse” (346) that is built around the formula that “good writing is writing adapted to achieve the desired effect on the desired audience” (346). Fulkerson’s (1979) conclusion is built around what he ascribes as a “mindlessness” (Abrams, 1953, as qtd. in Fulkerson, 348) developed through not treating each element as isolated pedagogies which must be maintained rigorously on the part of the instructor.

The pragmatic nature of this dissertation is framed around what Fulkerson defines as “putting the reader first” (343). Relevantly, it is the nature of rhetoric that is associated with the four philosophies that Fulkerson (1979) frames out that interests me. While the other philosophical roles, memetic in particular, show up and are entangled in the rhetorical conversation describing these intersecting and axiomatic concepts, only rhetoric and, to a lesser degree, reality, show up as elements of researchable contextualized responses with the participants of this study.

BERLIN

In response, Berlin (1982) offers commentary to Fulkerson’s (1979) assertions by recontextualizing the four elements, grounding them in historical traditions with contemporary motifs; he acknowledges that he is connecting these philosophies to their genealogical origins in antiquity (766). Berlin’s contribution to the conversation is his assertion that the process of “teaching writing [involves instructors who are] tacitly teaching a version of reality and the student’s place and mode of operation in it” (766). He goes on to charge composition instructors with the responsibility of having agency through the identity of teacher that is more significant than what Fulkerson (1979) touches on. Berlin (1982) charts his navigation of the philosophical elements by ascribing the labels Neo-Aristotelian, Positivist, Neo-Platonist, and New Rhetoric. He starts by pointing out that Neo-Aristotelian thinking is not necessarily real – but rather – an

approximation of Positivism that is enamored in being connected to the roots of rhetorical thinking and philosophy (767). Truth and deduction are central to Berlin's (1982) argument related to Aristotle (as qtd. in Berlin, 767, 1982) and are the boundaries which he limits his explanation for this philosophical element. Positivism is also rooted in truth and episteme; however, Berlin (1982) explains the divergence in the two positions as situational. Aristotle is deductive, where positivism is an inductive method of arriving at the truth (769). Berlin (1982) challenges this philosophical position because, as it is contextualized in composition, because "college rhetoric is to be concerned solely with the communication of truth that is certain and empirically verifiable" (770). The third element offered by Berlin, Neo-Platonist, is offered as expressionism by invoking the inner reality aspect of Plato's assertions on truth and the material world (771). He explains that this is driven by the concept of a truth which is gained through corrective understanding of what is erroneous or untrue; in other words, it seeks to find truth through expressions by being informed what is misunderstood (771).

Berlin (1982) posits that this is a biased-driven pedagogy where the group informs the individual when they have understood the truth, based on correctness, not experience and perception from the perspective of the writer or student. To reach self-discovery, Berlin (1982) explains that a shift must be made by getting all the non-truths out of the way by means of discourse with the class or instructor to validate what is wrong or incorrect (772). He centralized the path of knowledge as a destination which must be reached because "knowledge is a commodity" which must be gained through "enlightenment" offered through "a permanent location" (774).

Berlin (1982) illustrates how New Rhetoric moves truth to the four elements which Fulkerson (1979) associated the philosophies to initially, "writer, audience, reality, and

language" (775) by positioning truth in the rhetorical situations which are created. He then moves language to the center of the conversation, which could be seen as changing stasis with Fulkerson (1979). He illustrates the juxtaposing philosophies through the lens of language framing truth (775). This back and forth conversation continues as Fulkerson (1984) and Berlin (1984) continue to unpack truth as a point of language and the philosophical context that they are struggling to articulate which heavily deviates from the purpose of this study; however, it does illustrate that the scholarship which is considered canonic in rhetoric and composition still does not look toward the epistemology of popular culture or the discourse community that Berlin (1984) points toward. Fulkerson (1990) has an opportunity to revisit his original position which changes some of the temporary conclusions Fulkerson (1979, 1984, 1994, 2005) and Berlin (1984) reach. At this juncture, both scholars attune compositional pedagogies in ways that desensitize the social as an ontological pedagogy. Even as the theories have evolved, the emphasis is on systemic, not social philosophies.

Against the backdrop of these conversations, we can include the social turn discussed by Rhodes and Alexander (2014) as illustrative of the positioning embodied activism as a direction that has been valued in rhetoric and composition alongside collaborative writing processes (p. 482). Their premise being one of exploration of origins points back to Berlin (1996) propelled in new directions by "Bizzell's (1982) call to teach to a critical consciousness" (p. 483) still puts the social at the forefront of the composition classroom and activism as a central tenant of process. In this manner, the conversation is not linear but entangled across time as the discipline renegotiates what pedagogy within and through rhetoric and composition looks like – at least at the moment. The concept of social process as a learnable process related to composition is brought up by McComiskey (2000) as he underscores that while there is a value to social

approaches to composition as process which, for their own value, remove process and instead incorporate a model of summary and mimicry that eliminates the identity and value of the writing student. Threaded back toward composition that focuses away from the individual, Trimbur (1990) offers a response back toward pedagogies in composition that attempt to unite communities of practice, spaces of collaborative writing, where he works to separate the word social from the word collaboratively to effectively distance the activism value of these two elements (p. 699). This puts his thinking in line with Latour (2005).

Another important voice in this conversation is Horner (2010), who readily points to the attempted creation of writers as an identity of students rather than student (p. 9). He further stated that the circular and insular nature of writing within the academy produces writers out of students that are simply reflecting the modes, ideas, and values of the academy – not necessarily the self-identity of the students (p. 10). Finally, Pigg (2014) points toward composition in hybrid spaces which improve access and change identity through social identity – or at least engagement (p. 253). Collectively, this conversation across these scholars points toward a short history of reassemblage and negotiation in pedagogy related to students' identity and their writing.

Latour (2005) offers a method/methodology, through Actor-Network Theory, to be able to sensitize scholarship and degauss conversations which attempt to tease out why the student and their environmental knowledge lacks credibility or agency in the academy. What scholars are left with is a less-opaque view of pragmatic impactors associated with contemporary writing composed by students and their identities and agencies which are built through phronesis.

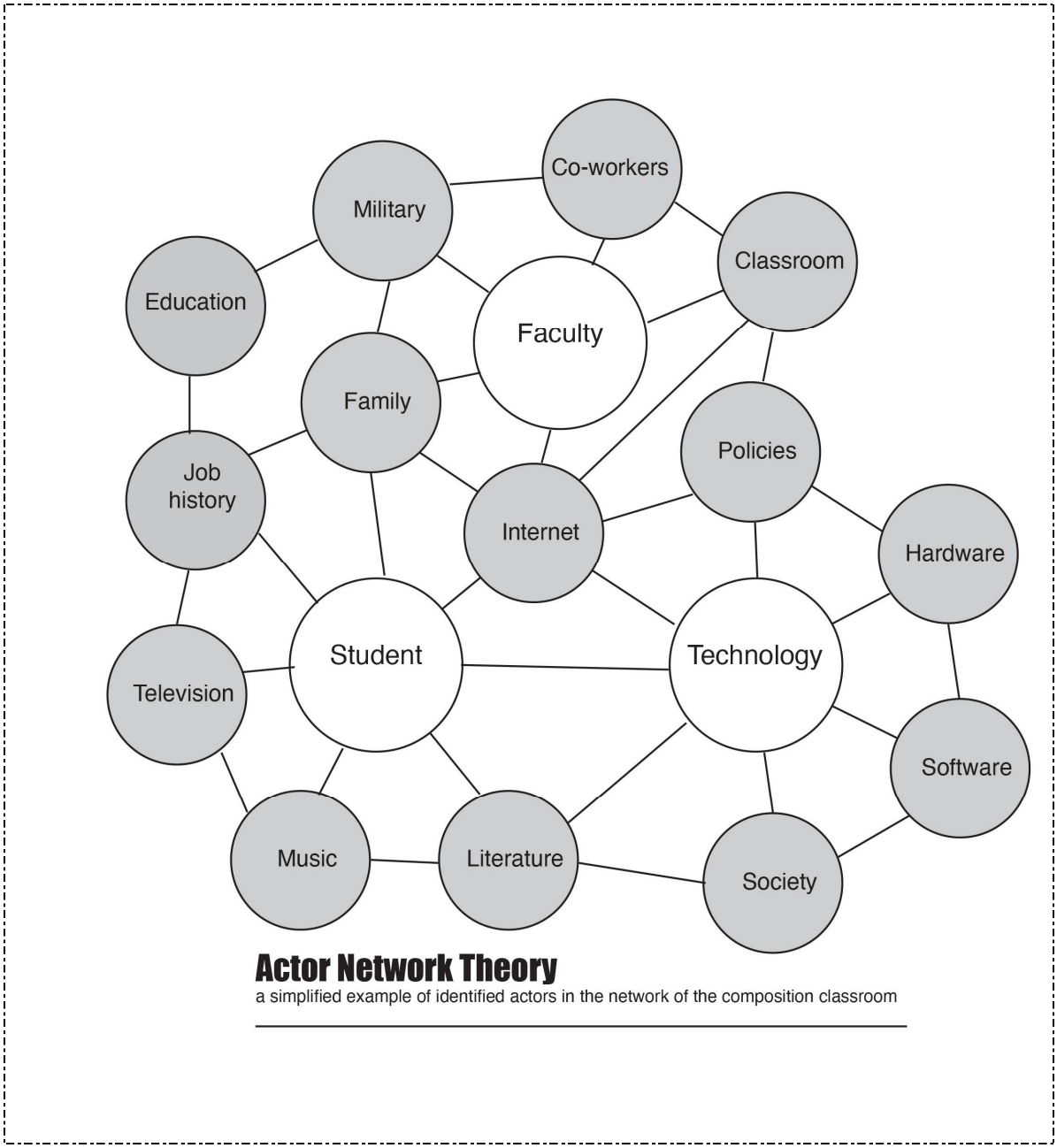

Figure 1.1: Actor Network Theory: a simplified example of identified actors in the network of the composition classroom.

ANT

Latour (2005) discusses the elements of network that make up identities and also agency/actancy in ways which are dynamic and fluid. This allows for Actor Network Theory to

be an exceptionally useful methodological lens by which to understand IPA and is complementary with phenomenological methods of unpacking the experiences being interpreted through the interviewing of participants for this study. Actor network theory allows for an understanding of how all elements, actors in all variants or forms, maintain power across social constructs and networks while thinking about each reconnection of the network as a single-serving experience that must be renegotiated through both the original network and the new network which is being reassembled. Another way to explain this more concisely is that if a class meets 2 times a week for 16 weeks, it could be construed as one long conversation between the faculty member and the students in the course; or it could be construed, applying ANT, as contextualized layers of conversations which are both replicated across the whole of the time of the course and new meetings where members are having new conversations as they change identities and accept/reflect power in each single meeting. Analytically, this impacts this study because not all five participants were from the same network, although three of the students were in the same class and two in the same social circle, yet they all existed within a much larger network, first-year composition, UTEP, higher education, El Paso, and upwardly expanding toward Texans, etc., and they all came from different spaces and demographics. These interviews were conducted in isolation from each other, and there was no actor who interacted with each other beyond me due to the logistics of time and available participants. The recordings were limited to audio to attempt to maintain the conversational nature of the interviews. This is important because, while discoveries within IPA are directly connected to my interpretation and attempts to be both pragmatic and the subject-matter expert, I am also the only reassembled actor within the social element of this study. Looking at myself in that context, ANT offers me an understanding of how all actors, visible and invisible, make up the results of this study.

This means that parts of the whole and the whole are all social, communities, actors, and involved in the network; in short, every time a group meets, it is potentially meeting again for the first time based on all the external and internal modifications that have occurred within that group. An important consideration is rooted in the pragmatic nature of learning/teaching which must adapt to the individual identities and agency in the various relationships.

Other interpretations of ANT. Two studies, not related to student writing or academic composition specifically use ANT as a lens to examine mediated/mediating effects on communication through actors, objects, obstacles, and abstractions. *New Black Boxes: Technologically Mediated Intercultural Rhetorical Encounters on The U.S.- Mexico Border* (Pihlaja, 2017) and *Speculative usability* (Rivers and Soderlund, 2016) both offer examples of Latour's conceptualization of actors within the network and agency. As discussed earlier in this study, Holmes (2014) also specifically speaks to ANT in the classroom, directly related to composition. He recognizes that ANT offers a perspective about how not to perform or think as a means of composition as opposed to an "explanatory" (p. 423) framework. The relevance is to attempt to escape the confinement of thinking usually reserved for theories in composition. His comparison with Berlin's outcomes related to social engineering shows connections back to Latour and a way of unthinking relevant to renegotiating and reassembling outcomes that better reflect empowering students as writers with agency. Holmes (2014) also points directly to Latour's central concept of network as something which is not identifiable on a map by location but merely a construct, a concept in the moment, allows for a much more robust and flexible way of thinking about identity and power dynamics across a sea of entangled networks layered upon networks – all of which are real but unreal (p. 426). This is the how element to the application of ANT to this study because how we view who is in each role and how agency slides across the

entangled network is the most important aspect to what is posited through IPA. Through the terms *actant, assemblage, power, agency, and network*, interpretations related to the intersecting and entangled elements within a network can begin to be teased out relative to the hermeneutic positions of students, faculty, institution and discipline and discover binaries associated with agency and identity for students.

This is further connected by the ontological agency associated with phenomenology, specifically a postphenomenological position that allows for objects to be active participants, or invisible agents, within the network.

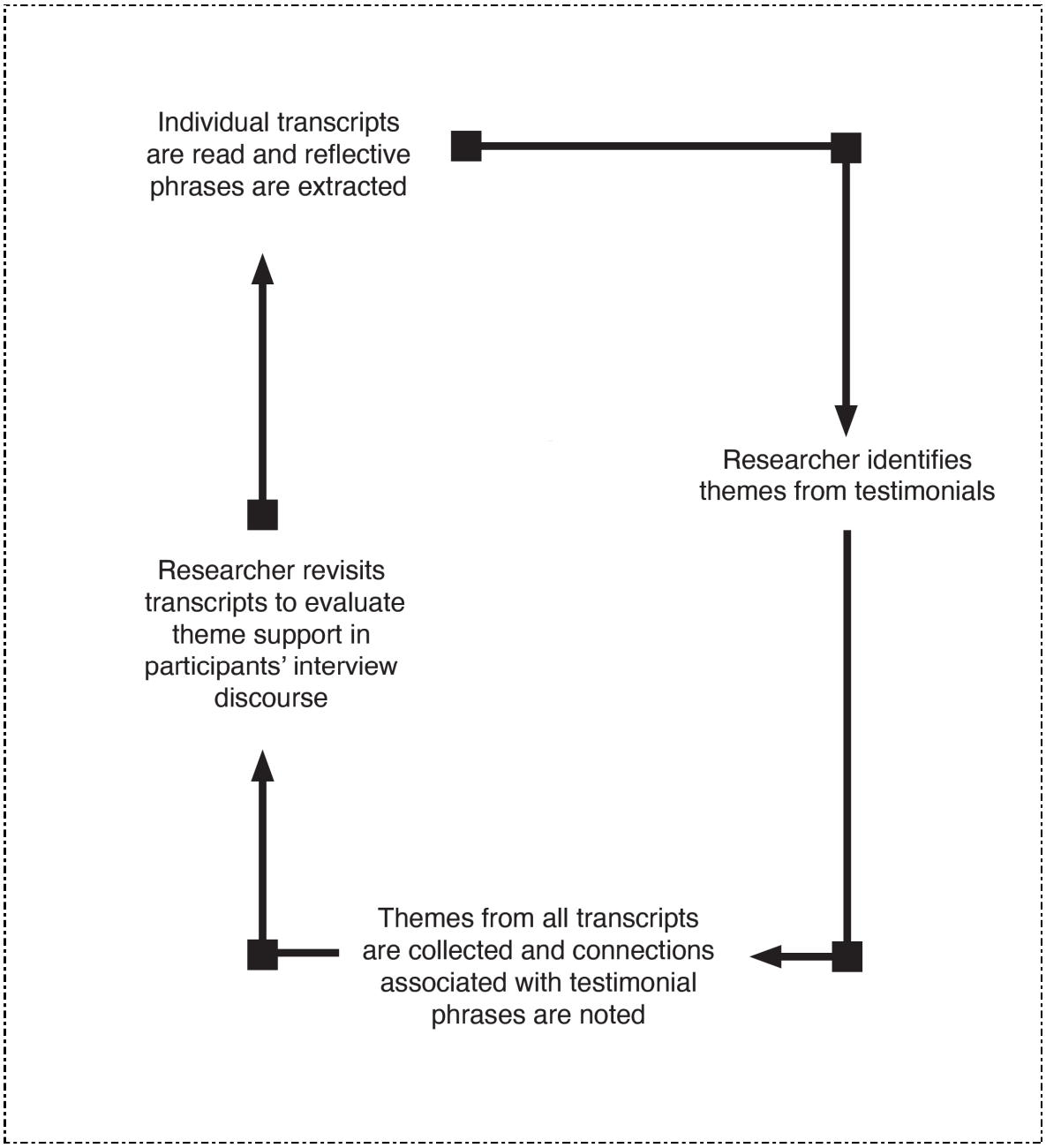

Figure 1.2: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: a visual example of the process for qualitative research associated with IPA.

IPA

Bloom's taxonomy offers language framed around creation and assessment as higher order skill checks related to knowledge acquisition for educators (Churches, 2008). As assessors of knowledge, students must provide evidence to us that what has been taught has been retained

and/or can be applied? I would assert that educators believe that students come with a priori knowledge about their specific discipline. An example of this is the rules of grammar for standard academic English. Students make contact with these rules in elementary school and, it is asserted, that they understand and can effectively use these rules. This is an important and relevant example because it is one area of assessment outside of English that is no longer weighed heavily within the English discipline. The students are not always treated with pragmatic ontologies, but rather, treated as if they all arrive with the same pre-packaged information and experiences as students by some instructors and theories. By ontology, I am invoking Quine (as qtd. in McHenry, 1995) who asserted that all points of understanding originate from experience (148). Pragmatic is also rooted from Quine's voice to be utilitarian in nature. In that context then, students are not given the opportunity to integrate composition into their identities or create their own identities that are framed around their own truths, as individuals who come with experiences their own understanding of language and power dynamics, but instead are flattened and identified as 'student': a one-size-fits-most abstract identity. In this context, there is no individual because students are a body or network of actors who all should be able to accomplish the same tasks and assignments in the same format as the rest of those students within that grouping/network/community. The students function within the classroom structure as multiple and potentially infinite networks which are interminably entangled.

An analysis of the student participants' experiences is needed to try to gain ground on what we know, what they know, and how it all comes together organically because there is a distinctive gap in how students fit into the network they are participating within; that is critically needed to take any step toward any number of contemporary moves within rhetoric and

composition to better attend to the student's identities. Right now the student's responses appear to replicate what they know to be the right answer, appropriate to the faculty's bias, or an appeasement to acquire an A in the course which holds just as much exigency, if not more, than improving critical thinking or composing communicative models that are professional and appropriate for an audience. The framing language of the current First-Year Composition syllabus at UTEP indicates that a key mission of composition is to "improve in key areas such as communication, confidence, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, social responsibility and teamwork" (syllabus template). This language and the learning outcomes associated with that key mission shows up heavily in the social norms and cultural values which are expected, even asserted as mandatory in the classroom. Smith, Jarmin & Osbourne (1999) put forth that Interpretative Postphenomenological Analysis, IPA, effectively builds an investigation into the social constructs which individuals navigate alongside, and through, their ontological positions. Smith (1996) asserts that he created IPA to conduct qualitative research within psychology to explore the phenomenological positions of participants.

As a method, IPA has an operational structure that has matured over the last decade as well as procedural guidelines to implement during data collection and navigate data produced. Data consists of testimonial transcriptions for the purposes of this study, so data does not reflect coding, but instead interpreted phenomenologically. Smith (1996) asserts IPA is an attempt to bridge the quantitative model of analysis found in social cognition and the asserted pushback that he finds to be built into qualitative methodologies such as discourse analysis. IPA is immersed in phenomenology, specifically a person's interpretation of their experiences, and symbolic interactionism (p. 262). He found this appealing as he constructed his method for the study because it allows for the researcher to avoid delving into the larger conversations, and

controversy, associated with this conversation; instead, I acknowledge that there is the potential for future research that takes a more quantitative or hybrid nature. Ihde's postphenomenology fits both the method and methodology, ANT and IPA, into a singular package with some exceptions. All three theories put the value on understanding network, without placing limitations on what actors or agents look like within that community of practice; the ability to resist fixed values of what has agency within the network is replicated across all three. Object-oriented ontologies, how objects interact and inform, is relevant for the evaluation of each theory. Furthermore, the similarities or overlap include the navigation of relationships, the social and the network, and the valuation of interaction and experience (Ihde, 1993; 1998). It would be arrogant to assert that one of the outcomes associated with this dissertation, unrelated to the study, is that postphenomenology would be more effective for this type of evaluation because it fits both IPA's analysis and ANT's value on assemblages and reassembling; however, it would also be costly, from a time standpoint, and require the restructuring of an entire dissertation to change those methods. I reached the point of connecting these three elements together at the concluding end of the composition process. The interviews and other elements of collection were not produced with the concept of postphenomenology in mind. The beginning of collecting data was based around a methodological framework that combined Actor Network Theory and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This allowed for the analysis of interviews using ANT and reflectively, to explore testimonials through the interpretations offered by IPA. It was once I began to see the need to include objects during the conversation that I introduced postphenomenology as a way to understanding that value. I recognize this as an improved methodology that would incorporate more of the elements that I wanted to value, but it occurred

too late in the process. It is part of the learning process and affords me access to further research using postphenomenology as a method to continue down the road.

I am not asserting one is better than the other - but one is more efficient when starting out this process. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I am attempting to bring Ihde into the conversation because of the object-oriented nature of postphenomenology to frame my thinking about the phenomenological concepts.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Jarmin & Osbourne, 1999) begins to attempt to move how we evaluate claims back toward the participant of the experience and away from the source of authority. Through the addition of Ihde's (2005) expansion and modernization of phenomenology, we arrive at an Interpretative postphenomenological analysis which allows for technology to take on a role as an actor.

Semiotic associations

Smith states that symbolic interactionism is rooted in an individual's interpretation of meaning associated with symbols. In this sense, IPA offers researchers access to data grounded by the subject's understanding of what they are exposed to and values their experiences and semiotic interpretation versus making assumptions or even calculated expectations. A crucial point is that "meanings occur (and are made of) in, and as a result of, social interactions" (p. 263). This is important for future research in rhetoric and composition because there is a means to start understanding success and failure in writing and the classroom, as defined by the student – not the administration, outside the numbers and what they reflect of students as an object. Furthermore, IPA can allow for all actors in the process to understand what composition means in that moment, in the learning space – not in textbooks about composition. This focus on phenomenology or networked prior/existing knowledge can situate the conversation around what

is interpreted versus what can be quantified or evaluated through rubrics or other instruments which measure versus interpret.

Working value. A similar study which offered some grounding for the use of IPA in learning environments is Building connections: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of qualitative research students' learning experiences (Cooper, Fleisher, and Cotton, 2012). This study used similarly structured-question formats for interviews with graduate students to discover relevant themes associated with "participants' experiences of learning" (1). The qualitative nature of this study means that there are linguistic markers, word choices, and statements which could be coded and analyzed. This process is reflexive in nature because it relies upon the interpretation, specifically an educated analysis which does not have an initial hypothesis to begin with but instead attempts to produce an Interpretative analysis of the phenomenological; to give voice to participants of IPA studies, and, in the context of this study specifically, attempt to better understand how students see identity and agency in the classroom as composed.

The choices of unpacking testimonials then is framed through the idiographic/hermeneutic nature of IPA which means this study cannot reach definitive conclusions but instead starts a conversation from the participant's point of view; it is the very nature of any study to attempt to categorize identities in ways that can be understood across nomothetic positions. This generalization is the gap which must be unpacked to understand the double interpretation that takes place in these interviews; specifically, the analysis must take into account both the reflexivity of the PI and the participant's explanations which are ethnographic.

Asserting our bias. My research is driven from the position of questioning why we assert existing knowledge, biases built on education, onto students whom we have attempted to presume an

understanding of their identities. Faculty cannot know what knowledge exists at all and should start by evaluating student's networks as their own launching point as a mode for discovery of student's a priori knowledges. I am operating under the assumption that students are treated like they already have academic knowledge, but then faculty/staff/society/parents/the system act/s surprised when it is discovered that they lack specific scholastic knowledge. On the other hand, society tells them the knowledge they do have is of little value or consequence "in the real world." A true hypothesis is that we do not know anything about our students, and I assert the use of IPA to explore this lack of knowledge - to learn something about them - before making assumptions/presumptions about what/who they are. Furthermore, higher education must challenge itself to not leap to rhetorical conclusions formed internally or socially about the students because these conclusions are abruptly short. There is no easy answer or rubricized model of assessment that can resolve these issues of role and power.

Entanglements. As I write the concepts associated with quantum entanglement and, indirectly, Jungian synchronicity, I have *the 5th Element* [20]playing in the background. The relevance here is that I am becoming more aware of all the actors, including the music we listen to, the movies we watch, the conversations we intersect with, all create new axiomatic entanglements which all impact hermeneutical position: how we interpret and what we interpret. These impactors all take on the agency and identity of influencer within the network in many the same ways as faculty is influencer within the composition classroom because all these elements matter.

In a faculty meeting, instructors are informed about various learning outcomes and lesson ideas they can use to achieve those outcomes. Both of these phenomena create quantum

[20] A 1997 film directed by Luc Besson, starring Bruce Willis, Milla Jovovich, and Gary Oldman. The story is a science fiction exploration of a dystopian future about perceptions, cultures, and broken glasses having cryptic meanings surrounding being alone at the end of existence.

entanglements if we use a definition of entanglement which is "a phenomenon when the physical values of two or more microworld objects correlate even in a situation when these objects are at an arbitrary distance from each other" (Limar, 2019). Actors as participants in this study do not act in isolation nor do they spontaneously exist only at the moment of entering the university and their first-year composition classes.

Each of these paragraphs attempts to describe an element of IPA being used to examine the participants' narrated/interpreted testimonials, although IPA is not being used simply as a measured instrument to categorize and define those testimonials. Instead, the hermeneutical value, the holistic interpretation constructed by the investigator, are collectively offered as an alternative to attempting to place each person in a locked-in identity.

Chapter 4

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The culmination of the terms, theories, lenses, and the way they come together to be viewed and examined in the first half of this dissertation attempts to bring about a focused image of the experiences of the students who participated in this study. If, traditionally, assessment or evaluation are the models of gauging student knowledge and acquisition of information, then this study is anything but a traditional way of exploring student knowledge because of its resistance to assessment and evaluation.

Phenomenology, and more specifically IPA, affords a view of knowledge which is internally directed toward the participant. Specifically, it looks at the entangled aspect of knowledge and acquisition from individual and social contacts/contexts. The onus is on interpreting participants' virtual identities and agency from their own viewpoint and then articulating that into language that can be coded or asserted into something that bridges the conversation between all the actors, faculty and students, within the composition classroom and beyond. Realistically, "something" is an abstract value because there is no simple absolute that can come from this form of analysis, and, I would assert, that any attempt to create or frame an absolute would marginalize and misalign the value of network, the construction of identities which participate in the classroom either directly or indirectly, in this conversation. For example, would a student texting someone outside of the class during class time indicate that the person, an unknown actor within the conversation with the student, has agency in the classroom at that moment? This kind of interaction or connectivity would most certainly be in the wheelhouse of ANT through network. The tangled tendrils of connectivity offering visible and invisible elements to discover how all these things might be interacting with actors through their

footprints. It is these traces that must be unpacked from the participant's responses in the interviews for this study. In an effort to interpret the responses effectively, I have attempted to limit the delineation between testimonials and how they are being unpacked by me. I acknowledge that, as an academic and faculty member, I am invoking biases still – but I also cannot assume that the participants had the language to explain their identities and agency exclusively through their own voices. What I have constructed is an attempt to bridge the two identities while also offering a methodology to explain my conclusions.

The biggest challenge of offering equal value through the compiling of the participants' voices, the actors within this networked conversation is to avoid falling into the social constructs which form the learned composition we typically move towards. Instead, I will attempt to weave together the fabric of the various identities as they converge and diverge along their own understanding. The participants of this study were all first-year composition students attending UTEP during the summer session 2018.

TESTIMONIALS

As has been laid out in Chapter 3, IPA follows steps of research construction, setting a methodology for interviews and interviewees, scheduling, and framing questions which all result in an interpretation of the themes that are discovered across the transcriptions. The process of transcription by me afforded reconnection with the conversations and allowed for decisions to be made framed around the individual interviews and an overall examination of the network created by the interviews. Themes were then built around testimonials. Analysis and conclusions were then made by me through hermeneutics with ANT as a lens to look toward actants, objects, and technology as they interacted with and upon the networks of the participants. Chapter 5 will offer

connections and analysis between ANT and IPA where this chapter will offer a hermeneutic interpretation of each participant's response.

INTERPRETATIVE IDENTITIES

Because IPA seeks to reveal all identities and their interactions/agencies/voices, assigning pseudonyms for the participants would be inappropriate. For that reason, I have not changed the names of those students who agreed to share them. Additionally, for the two students who asked for anonymity, no pseudonym was offered because doing so would inscribe an altered identity onto those participants. To minimize the impact of labels, I only offer these to participants as unnamed participants in chapter 5. It is understood that the interpretative nature of this research will already construct identities through reflexive epistemic knowledge, an amalgamation of course content/contact in higher education combined with years of instructing, and all the other phenomenological values/experiences/spectacles/traumas which make up the entity known as me. This means that I recognize my bias while also attempting to not enforce my bias on the participants of this study.

CONVERSATIONS

The conversational nature of the interviews combined with the attempt not to construct pseudonyms is necessary to view the resulting data without producing new identities. While that cannot be avoided within the network of social parameters, this study is attempting to reassemble any identities with the student's point of view and voice remaining as the primary source. Bias cannot dictate the labels of anonymous identities within this network. Therefore, to avoid being reductive, I will not assign labels to the participants based on my own identity.

While the interview questions originated from the same 10 questions which were constructed for all participants, the idiographic process always devolved into a conversational

format. In three of the cases, questions had to be reframed two or three times to not only create clarity but to avoid soliciting an answer that the participants felt would be appropriate. An example of this would be how the students responded to the request to define technology because all of the students responded that it was "a tool that they used to do something." Needing to know more about how answers fit into a conversation about identity or/and agency/actancy, I sought to avoid answers which were too generalized in nature and did not allow for a response that was specific to the thematical conversation. The formulation of research questions attempted to broach the open-ended questions of how and why associated with IPA (Smith et al., 1999) because of the need to maintain an open and exploratory value associated with the epistemological nature of this form of research study.

HERMENEUTICS

For the purposes of IPA, there is an attempt to avoid being prescriptive in interpretations prior to the completion of data collection; every effort should be made to not presume, and annotate from that presumptive position, the responses and analysis of the experiences defined during the interview process. However, from a hermeneutical perspective, interpretation occurs even at the moment of response or utterance/non-utterance of each participant during the interviews. So, the attempt to be unbiased is based on not taking notes during the interview but, instead, attempting to wait until the transcription process to begin to make mental notes. Extra information given about some of the participants and their conversation during the interview is based on the natural, organic flow of how they participated. That means that two of the participants offered little information which can create a message that can be interpreted based on the brevity of responses versus the students who truly engaged the experience and offered heavy feedback to questions. IPA is structured around a limited number of participants, Smith

(1996) has asserted that the optimal number is really one; however, due to the nature of this study and the time table necessary to complete the project, I was not able to establish the appropriate amount of data in the time frame set with only one participant. This will be discussed later in the project. I believe that by working through five interviewees, I was able to find enough substance to make solid conclusions about participant's positionality.

METHODOLOGY FOR SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Recruiting of participants was initially done through speaking with RWS faculty teaching in Summer I and Summer II to see if students could be approached about volunteering for this study through interviews. The selection parameters were 18-25-year-old first-year students without regard for gender or race/culture/ethnicity. The attempt was to get students who participated in composition models through social media or gaming. Students were asked in person, as a collective, if they wanted to participate in the study through interviews.

Once those that were willing to participate were identified, the filters for age and academic category were used to separate out those outside the threshold for this study. Students indicated a willingness to participate by coming to me after the class meetings where I waited in the lobby to visit with them and answer any further questions they might have had. Interviews were held in an available classroom outside of class hours with no interruption of access for other students. The interviews were conducted sitting in front of a computer which the student had access to surf the web or do anything else they felt like doing as both a way of further expressing themselves or explaining, if necessary. The audio interviews were then digitally recorded. Voice memos was the application used to capture the recordings which were stored, securely on my Apple device. Transcriptions were conducted via a secure MacBook Pro provided to the PI for academic purposes related to instruction from the University of Texas at El

Paso. The interviews conducted were scheduled at the student's requested availability, and I made no effort, beyond not conflicting with a class to guide when they transpired. Each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes in duration as an average. The length of time associated with each interview was built around the participant's engagement versus an attempt to length or extend the conversation beyond their scope. I operated under the assumption that allowing the students the agency of time would mean that I was operating within their threshold for attention to the conversation. IPA offers that depth associated with 1 individual would validate a single subject; however, due to the nature of time to have contact with the students, I conducted the interviews on available resources of volunteers and their patience to discuss these matters unreserved. Finally, after transcription of the conversational interviews, themes were parsed out around the testimonials.

The questions asked were:

- How do you see composition and/or how do you understand it?
- What types of composition do you perform in your personal life?
- How do you perform composition in RWS 1302? How do you see yourself in the partnership of the classroom?
- How/What do you define as technology?
- How much control do you have of your identity through your composing practices?
- How do you compose in your personal life? Academic life?
- How do you define technology?
- What does your daily composing practices look like?
- How do you read/write for entertainment? Social media? Gaming?

- How do you see composing empowering you?
- In what ways have you changed your composing practices since starting college life?

PARTICIPANTS

Unidentified_participant_1

One participant, a 25-year-old male and first-year student at UTEP stated that he understood the differences between academic writing and writing for personal communication. He plays Fortnight and is a veteran of the U.S. Army. In short, he said exactly what is expected of a first-year composition student who has a dynamic understanding of the role because of his experiences: he presents himself as a model student. He offered no further insight or avenues of discussion through his body language. He was tense and appeared to change demeanor when asked the structured questions.

Interpretation

His answers were short and to the point and it was clear that his military identity framed how he saw himself as a student: disciplined and focused on performing well. This student sharply responded to questions about understanding the distinction between professional and personal, gaming versus academic languages and composition by stating that "the military taught me how to speak and write in appropriate situations." Other examples of this clarity of agency were based on yes/no binary answers to open-ended questions which were the pattern for this study. The veteran pointed toward his mother being an educator along with the military as critical influencers, as having agency which he did not specifically say but rather asserted through his description, in his understanding of identities, particularly as student. There was

almost a correlation between soldier and student both rooted in the same maxim of being informed by a higher authority that should not be questioned.

Themes

The themes that came out of this interview were military, appropriate writing, professionalism, Fortnight, and disciplined.

Alex

Alex, a traditional student who is completing the requirements for her first year in a summer RWS 1302 course, indicates that writing - as a verb - is defined as something you do with a pen or pencil; she stated that when it comes to writing, she "rarely ever writes anything" because of the available media of text, word processing, or other things she did not elaborate upon during the interview. Her main source of information was through the television which her mother watched daily; she indicated that she did not have any regular contact with print media formats such as newspapers. She began using SnapChat and other forms of social media and had access to a contemporary smartphone on a regular basis her sophomore year of high school. From an academic perspective, she still uses pen and paper technologies to produce outlines for scholarship required in the classroom. She indicates very specifically that she does not use her phone or other modern technology to produce outlines and initial drafts of the academic writing produced by her. Another important point she brought up is that she felt like in high school she was not engaged in learning and so, now she feels like she does not have the information afforded to her during that time. The change from involuntary to voluntary is something she states because she feels like she has made a decision to learn in college - and is paying for that experience. From her perspective, the material being covered is something she is familiar with but does not feel like she has all the knowledge she needs to be successful. Alex feels that a good

definition for technology is “helpful … we really do need it.” She juxtaposed this against the fact that she grew up being outside, playing and interacting with other children versus her experiences since she has had technology in her life where she feels disconnected and sees technology from that perspective as a negative. She indicated that “in college, everything is done online, so you kind of need it” to be successful. Technology then is made up of computers, cars, phones, and programs needed to get to school and produce work in the classroom. She says that television is a mandatory technology in contemporary life. From a point of view of identity in the tangible world versus the abstract digital, she sees a bifurcation of identities where one is not equal to the other. Alex indicates that she does not feel in control of her online identity but that she has control over her real-world identity, particularly through the academy. She indicates that the lack of control in social media is because she is not filtering what information she puts out to the public. “I post when I’m sad, happy, or mad, etc., but at school I am very professional” and the audience is only allowed to see a very small amount of what she shares through Snapchat and other social media platforms. This filtering also is built around the random nature of the audience she engages through social media versus the very selective interactions she participates in at school and in her physical life. She sees the writing associated with social media as being “like writing in a diary” in which she can say anything and everything she wants to about an experience or event. Anonymity affords her the ability to control, through the anonymous identity she feels she has in digital spaces, to filter her private thoughts in these public spaces. Interestingly, when given the definition of agency she feels she has control but no power in her identity online because of the ease of which people can control what they appear to be. Alex said that “you have 30-year-old guys pretending to be 18” and that means her control is limited to her own identity - not the network’s identity.

Alex struggled with seeing power as something that was open and reverted to power being a binary associated with gender or age. Agency has always been incorporated or "a business or industry" for her; she has only heard it described differently in RWS settings at UTEP. Composition turns the conversation into an academic understanding of essays, paragraphs, and outlines. Alex further identifies that writing for academics requires her to produce content in an analog format, i.e., through an outline with pencil and paper, rather than how she is able to compose in virtual spaces without the preparatory writing process being acted through her. This plays out in how she sees the various role identities being acted upon in the classroom versus virtual spaces.

She indicates that she feels confident asking questions and participating in dialogue in the composition classroom where she lacked that confidence in high school. In digital spaces she feels capable of always taking an active participation role in composing texts, messages on social media, or image compositions through Snapchat. Alex indicates that learning for her is framed around a volunteer aspect of writing that did not exist prior to her college experience. She says that she has a thirst for knowledge about topics which has helped her to compose essays and other academic writing in ways she did not have in high school because it had mandatory attendance connected with it. In this way, she sees the college classroom in many of the same contexts she sees online spaces like Facebook or Snapchat. Alex states that she is a gamer in one format or another but does not identify herself as good; in fact, Alex points out that she "sucks, and usually gives up because people are rude" in gaming cultures. She likes single player games which have open exploring or adventures for her to participate in.

The language of "smack talking" is normal to her in this space and she says that "people know they're good when they're good" and that age is not a factor in knowledge about the

games. She also sees it as a space where "12-year-olds cuss and stuff, and it's crazy." She says that the negatives to being online growing up would have been that she lost experiences which she values: going out with friends, playing outside, socializing. In college, she finds that everything social is done online. The process of composition is built around audience and expectation for Alex, who asserts that she approaches scholarly writing through a very controlled mechanism of columns or preparagraphing as required to produce what is "expected of her in the classroom." Prior knowledge about a topic outside of the academy helps her decide what topics she wants to research.

Academic writing makes Alex feel accomplished because "I rarely do it" so when she does write in academic settings she's impressed with her accomplishment because it forces her to take on tasks she would rather put aside for other things. SnapChat, as a writing platform empowers Alex because "she is able to get her mood across" and it does not require feedback for her to feel strong.

Interpretation

From conclusion after the interview is that feminism, gender, social or participatory composition, and knowledge production all are themes which Alex alluded to directly or indirectly. She seemed to make connections between how rhetoric worked as actancy and was clear in her identities being separate but equally divided across the various networks she engaged in her writing. The analog nature of writing deserves attention in the conversation; she did not associate the nature of a tool as something to compose with directly but, instead, asserted that it made her different to have to write out ideas and compose in a different medium. She did not recognize that there is no difference in the tool's ability to shape identities, but it empowered her. I think this would have been a difficult student to try to engage under traditional models of

composition or banking models because she already has pre-packaged ideas and writing that has been effective for her.

Themes

Her identity, successful student, affords her a position of both learner and learned within the network of FYC. She uses her virtual identity in a very rhetorical sense; for example, she said that "if I say something nasty about my boyfriend" online, it is intentional and planned for him to see it. She sees academics and a degree as being necessary for the future in the world she wants. College has had no impact on her social writing and her social writing has had little change in her academic or professional writing.

Dillon

Another student, Dillon, indicated early on that he was homosexual and thought that would be relevant to the interview or for me[21]. Dillon explains that he sees writing, as a general practice of composing, as "someone writing their story; like, uh, does that make sense? When people say, singer, I think they are telling their story through songs so to me I think writing is a writer telling his story through a book or whatever." Dillon does not use Twitter but indicated that he is a regular user of Snapchat and Instagram; he also stated that he has a Facebook account but that it goes unused. He says that he rarely uses social media from his perspective but that when he does it is "typically about like my trips and stuff so then I still think it's about, you're still writing about yourself. That's what I think writing is: you typically write about yourself. Although, in the same moment he also indicates that "I use social media every day" but felt that because he did not work nor participate in physical social activities that he may not see his own

[21] I mention this because that was not one of the qualifications I sought as a parameter for participants in this study. He freely owned his identity and I did not believe that there was any value in trying to structure questions around that aspect of his identity; instead, I allowed him to discuss that identity freely as part of the IPA format.

identities other than as son and student. Related to technology and RWS, academic writing which was discussed, he saw composing as a process by which "I do the work on the technology and then send the work to the instructor who then sends me feedback through the technology along with a grade. So, for me it's a way of communication, it's a way of communication but it's also a way of working because I have to do my work on the computer, too." Dillon quipped that he saw anything that used electricity as a technology - directly referencing "a toaster" as technology.

Dillon spoke indirectly toward academic writing being empowering if he has the choice on the topic which is not always the case in academic writing; however, he directly spoke toward a feeling of lacking agency due to his identity of being homosexual because "in my personal life I don't really push that out in social media and stuff like that so I guess there's a part of me that I'm still not showing, just because, well not because I'm like afraid to be out, I just don't feel like I always need to express, you know what I mean? That's not who I am, like I just don't feel like I have to do that. So, the only way I don't feel like I have control over myself is in terms of that. Like, I've never had a serious relationship but I don't think I would post like really intimate stuff if I did because I just don't, I'm not comfortable with like society seeing that, so I guess in that way I don't feel like I have control of my life or identity." His platform of choice is Snapchat which he explained that he used in the same way that he sees Twitter used. References to images or posts related to meals where he sends those types of compositions to his friends as a means of communication and identity - what he ascribed as "writing about me, like what I'm doing." Dillon describes Twitter as a space for "current events and celebrity news and you can post pictures and stuff and then with Snapchat you just take a picture and you, there's, like you can only write like four sentences I think, worth of stuff, and so for me, I use Snapchat as a, kind of like no one cares type of thing, And Twitter is more of a platform if you're more passionate

about it, you would post it on Twitter." There is also a temporary nature associated with Snapchat because it takes on a more conversational model where once the post has been read it is deleted. Speaking back toward agency, Dillon stated that there is now empowering nature to composition for him currently but that he believes that as he gets "older and maybe, because I just came out maybe like a year ago so I haven't been like publicly out for more but I want to learn more about the LGBQT+ community and stuff so I think as I get older, I can see myself maybe being one of those people that like starts to comment like "you're wrong and not everything is like that" in the gay community and stuff so I don't think it empowers me now because I'm not a person to post stuff like that but I think in the future I can see me doing that." Dillon has had access to social media for about 6 years, he indicated around age 12. He also indicated that he had a flip phone in the fourth grade and his first smartphone in the seventh grade. He always had access to a television, cable - which he watched a lot of when he was younger. He was not an active reader of newspapers but did read books which he had access to because "I grew up with money … my dad makes six figures a year" which he offered as important to the conversation. He grew up reading non-fiction, particularly documentary or historical books which made him "that kid." He was not into fantasy, sci-fi, or other traditional "reading associated with children."

He believes that influenced his writing because "I think it matured me a little bit faster than my peers because I read, you know like my peers were reading uh, like fantasy but I was reading kind of like real life stuff and that really, I was really interested in it, so when I wrote, I tried to sound like, I always said I wanted to sound like as smart as possible so like you know in my little one page middle school essays I tried to make it sound as smart as possible and I was really critical over my writing." He reflects on his academic composition being successful,

particularly English, as correlating to his reading history and always valuing the product so he does not procrastinate. Dillon feels that he always strives to be "as good as I can when I write." He said that he prepared for college writing through AP courses offered to him in high school but he " wasn't scared to take English in college which helped me because" he attended his first two years of high school in Alaska and "the average education in Alaska is a 3rd grade education." He believes that the school district there puts an emphasis on that demographic and that if he did not have access to AP courses which challenged him and elevated his knowledge, he would be lacking in his ability to compose at the university level. He indicated that he had friends that were enrolled in "regular classes, and I saw their workload and it was nothing compared to like what my workload looked like. And then when I came to Texas, Texas' academic standards were way higher than what Alaska's were, so it prepared me, but I did not take AP my senior year. I just took regular [courses] but it was on par with the honor system of Alaska."

Interpretation

Dillon explained that while his sexual identity was very public, he felt pressured to take on social commentary where he was driven to assert himself as an activist for the LGBTQ+ community; however, he did not want that, stating "I'm not ready to be pushed out of the closet." It was the double-identity that he was already presenting that he felt would typically be forced as a topic for himself in a composition classroom that showed his expectations of what faculty would be doing. He indicated that he was not looking to actively act on his choices because it was not a priority for him - but understood that it was a priority for discussion in his experience online and in prior composition courses. He owned his disclosure of wanting privacy against the bias of advocacy or activism which he felt was enforced or mandated. It is in these gaps discussed during interviews with the participants that IPA became the means by which these

individuals were able to express their experiences through answers without the fear of recourse or redirection toward a correct statement.

Themes

Themes include social networks, privacy, identity, and knowledge. An interesting theme that also comes through the conversation is one of actancy built around culture and location.

Amanda

Visual images, the .gif or meme, became the focal point of conversation for Amanda, who was a first-year student transitioning to her second year during the summer. She defined writing as "um, a form of expression. Pretty much, whether it be online, like typing or written out, but as long as you're expressing yourself, I feel like that is what writing is." Amanda expressed herself in non-academic settings through heavy use of text, ASCII-based SMS text messaging, and SnapChat. From a visual perspective she felt that captioning was an important aspect of Instagram compositions because "there's a lot of thought behind the captions sometimes, even through Snapchat, I feel like any written stuff you have to think about and put it out there." Continuing the conversation about images as composition she explained that she felt that an image was potentially more effective in composing a message or communicating a purpose to a non-academic audience. In some cases, she explained that the image could "express the way you feel more" than text.

Amanda pointed out during the interview that she still writes out papers for grading via longhand on paper with a pen before she transcribes them into Microsoft Word. She saw this as a way to keep herself from relying on her texting formats and habits associated with social media posting. She explained that Twitter is the most influential platform for "expressing yourself" in the current sea of social media platforms. She does not have a Facebook account and showed no

desire to compose or participate in that space; interestingly, she went so far as to delete her account to not have an identity within Facebook.

Amanda's perception of technology is framed through the Internet; it affords her and society the ability to communicate with anybody without barriers. She defined it as global - making identities much more localized on a large 'national' stage. This understanding of the network is critical for her because she sees identities and power dynamics as being a "give and take" between the various people who interact in these social spaces. She also sees that identity can be contextualized, molded, to create power as she portrays herself as a "healthy feminist woman or whatever I try to be but in reality some people maybe see me as snotty or stuck up or you know. But I could try so much to be like, to try to tell people like or advocate for something I believe in, but some people may misinterpret that" message. Amanda explained that in social spaces, the Internet, there are too many options to what you can be and that is confusing when discussing identity.

Identity isn't lost to Amanda who pointed out that when she is aware of herself, in the role of student when she's in the classroom, and does not feel like she changes - she also recognizes that she takes on an identity that is not her. She finds that she uses languages that are not normalized for her. She points out that in non-academic settings, she is very free with vulgarities and more inappropriate non-professional language but that "bad words" make her feel less intense. The weight of agency is firmly placed on academic writing which constrains her. In juxtaposition, she also asserted that the identity of student and the actancy she gains from using and growing into the academic language will offer her what she seeks: to be in "better different places" because she wants to mature and develop into a person she can be proud of. She said that she is "still growing as a person, so hopefully, I mean like me being this 20-year-old is not

talking the same way when I'm 40. I want to be a little bit more educated and feel like college teaches that – to use more higher, like, vocabulary".

Amanda does not like video games as they have no appeal to her; however, the social nature of Twitter, as a space to take control of opinion and identity is very important to her because it gives her a voice, i.e. actancy in her community of practice. Community of practice in this case is very large, she explains, because while you may make a statement to a small collective of followers, it is the power of retweeting that really empowers her words. The power of being distributed, the identity of the opinionated is very similar to getting a good grade in a class because it is self-satisfying to matter or have that power.

Interpretation

The use of images and minimal text, such as captioning on Instagram posts, sets the stakes for composition for Amanda who sees her identity as one in flux between someone who is knowledgeable through the network or discourse community she interacts with in social media spaces and the transition through higher education and the knowledge she is acquiring as ascribed to her in that space. The use of more traditional technologies, specifically longhand writing, creates a different form of agency as she is not being acted upon through the same technologies that would guide her writing in digital technological settings. Her preference for Twitter means that she has adapted to a set character length of thinking/composing that empowers her identity and lets her use her own agency to navigate the various constructions of networks she must contend with for information transfer within these participatory composition spaces. She is aware of her identity as a student and feels empowered in the academy by the rules and constraints on language use and formatting associated with traditional composition in the academic setting.

Themes

Composing in groups, social media identities, and agency. Feminism and knowledge are also themes that can be parsed from this interview.

Unidentified_participant_2

The final participant was an 18-year-old female who asked not to be identified by name. She offered answers that were to the point and limited. It was hard to understand why she wanted to participate other than a sense of obligation. She indicated that writing was important but that she did not see herself writing or having power through writing on any level beyond getting a grade to pass a class. Her social media habits were limited, and she only responded to a question of gaming with a grimace and a negative nod of her head. Her non-responses offered an alternative viewpoint on the questions.

Interpretation

She was uncomfortable talking with a figure of authority, from her perspective, and relied on me to dig out answers she was not willing to give out freely.

Themes

The lack of responses made finding viable themes challenging but it could be concluded that themes of role acceptance and culture are available from this interview.

INTERSECTING THEMES

One similarity across the five participants was that they all had access to their first phone in middle school, were raised around print journalism - specifically mentioning newspapers - and television programs. They all indicated in some way the value of serial television programs as a starting point for their understanding of communications. An interpretation of these

conversations offers some interesting insights into what students say and do not say about their identity and how they are empowered or hamstrung in the composition classroom.

Entanglement

The axiomatic positions and entanglements showed up through a variety of responses which, when coded, drew attention to social identities which reflected characteristics of themes. A significant actor in this interpretation was technology. This invisible actor altered or shaped the direction of composition for participants who expressed a spectrum of understanding about technology and its impact as an active participant in the composition classroom. This reality becomes visible through examination by ANT as a lens by which we reassemble actors and their individual and collective identities. To accomplish that task, I will attempt to take a step back from the testimonials and examine the participants as actors. This will enable me to trace the actors within the network to find their connections and thereby identify the one actor that should become visible as central to the analysis.

Chapter 5

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As is demonstrated in the fourth chapter, at first blush, it appeared that the students acted out their roles, following directions and giving "appropriate" responses, and that there was a clearly understood delineation between the two rhetorical situations. Realistically, if the students were merely an empty vessel awaiting content, then this would be the end of the discussion but also prove counterintuitive to what has been ascribed through the scholarship discussed in chapter 2. Ultimately, students are not existing in a vacuum, but rather, entwined in an endless series of overlapping networks which are entangled, assembled, and in flux. The complexity of which is both complicated by the use of ANT and, at least theoretically, simplified through IPA in that theory's focus on a singularity. This chapter, then, will attempt to better illustrate the entangled nature of actors within the network. The network is not flat, nor easily untangled - because the threads which can be traced and drawn out do not exist in that tangible model. Instead, there are so many invisible connections that cannot simply be teased apart like a knot in a shoelace. Latour's concept of social shows up in all directions because as long as there is a thread that is constructed, the social exists and, in the case of the classroom, as long as the role of professor is established simply by existing, the role of student exists. These intangibles must always be set aside in the context of the network in order to attempt to make the other roles visible. In that same way, all the actors must be viewed as entangled through an invisible thread which must be the connection back to the construct, the social center.

Degrees of separation: Bacon's Law

What transpires, or is discovered, is that to intersect IPA with ANT you must find the singularity. This may seem counterintuitive on the surface based on Latour's assertion that social

and what the nature of the network is will always in flux and should be treated with that scope of thinking. In context with IPA, and the call for a singular individual to be the focus of analysis, Dillon becomes the singularity - the Kevin Bacon - of this study. The importance of this realization is that power dynamics and hegemony do not constitute the central or core identity of the network; instead, what transpires is that an individual actor, in this instance the student, becomes valued. This is the purpose of IPA and, I would assert, the value of ANT. To decentralize easily fossilized concepts of power and, instead, reassemble local, layered, and complex networks to value the single identities within that network. The subject of the study is valued but still requires a deeper pool of participants to not only evaluate, but to examine under ANT. In other words, a student who lacks authority – and is not the constant point of focus in the classroom, I would assert, can become an integral part of not only the classroom and faculty but also the other students within that classroom. An example of this can be found in the minute-to-minute transactions within the class, where the instructor asks if there are questions, and a student begins to direct the conversation through their question. That question can have profound impacts on what other students know, the classroom experience, the instructor's knowledge of what students know – and even how the future assignments or lectures will be adapted in that singular moment. This is an example of where the breakdown begins in the sage on the stage model in ways that can be understood through IPA to privilege an individual student while also reflectively valuing each unknown actor with the same weight.

This networked intersection allows for an observation into how the constructed and accepted rules within that network reinforce the all-powerful nature of identity for non-biological actors, such as technologies, during this study. This study serves as a call for a much more robust conversation about the importance of using and understanding technology to communicate

across a multitude of genres and disciplines in and out of the academy. To accomplish that feat, I will reassemble the social through a tracing of all actors, visible and invisible, biological or not, to tease out all identities within the composition classroom's network.

Tracing the network

One of the most critical elements of this study, the catalyst for my desire to reveal what was at stake for students related to the immediate access of technology and information, virtually, at their fingertips, is whether the Internet and the network that was constructed through it mattered. When combined with being connected, globally and virtually, in ways that did not exist for previous generations, how does that access empower and identify the roles within composition, alphabetic texts, and the reliance on quick, memorable references and remixed images? To explore this through conversations, I looked toward those testimonials which reflected, directly or indirectly, images, memes, or statements made through social media: the participant's own language offered robust information that could be conceptualized as part of the answer to this query. The most critical actor that was revealed by tracing out active participants that had identity and agency within the social spaces of both composition classrooms and social media interactions was identified as an object-oriented ontology: the network.

Findings

Beyond the impact of network or communities, rhetorical awareness became evident through the testimonial data that was illuminated through the participants' responses during the interviews for this study was multiliteracies and the value of idiographic understanding of social standards, expectations, and finding identities for the students. The participants put a value on lingo, memes, gifs, and their roles in and on the Internet. It would be beyond the scope of rhetoric and composition or at the very least to try to assess the internal reasons why these

identities emerge but, it would not be hard to understand that every generation had/has their own language and identities produced through those elements/symbols. One fact that becomes visible is that learned behaviors about the assemblage during the interviews existed. The participants were not able to be placed in a vacuum where my identity, and the biases associated with the network and actors within, could not be impactors.

A priori knowledge played key roles in interaction, from student to faculty, to cultural and class identities which seemed to assemble and reassemble the moments of social networking that transpired. Examples of this were threaded through a variety of actor models: veteran, male, white, adult, student, instructor, graduate student, undergraduate, father. Also, just as validly, the classroom/institution/faculty/student dynamic played a role in the responses. Dillon's response to my appearance by asserting his father's rank and military career was an example of how he believed, without prompting, that I was a veteran based on observation of visual artifacts associated with me, in particular, that I am heavily tattooed.

This asserted new network connections which he did not have prior to this interview. His further assertion that I would be interested in his gender/sexuality is indicative of his attempts to use expectation, a priori knowledge about how other white CIS males interacted or valued him, along with expectations of how the institution valued that identity showed up in his attempts to assert agency and ask for agency. The trained ontological model of faculty-as-mentor limited the conversational aspect of how each participant interacted with me during the interviews and, in some cases, had stereotypical outcomes: input was driven by hegemony. The veteran responding with appropriate responses taught through boot camp and the structured expectations; the male student talked about his father during the interview with another male of approximate age to his father; the woman spoke about expectations of being a professional woman and feminism. This

is significant because it made me think about the direction this research goes and, more importantly, how future research can be shaped or reassembled to limit or reduce these elements. New questions came to mind about who would be appropriate for future research as participant; should interviews be conducted in a third-party location unrelated to the institution and should those interviews be facilitated by a non-faculty member, perhaps another undergraduate student. I assert that ANT applies to this dynamic because these could/should have been seen or valued by the students as new networks, the student participants actively responded to stimulus as if it were a known network: academic/classroom/lecture.

While I actively sought to avoid following established and hegemonic lines of connectivity between myself and the participants, their own intersectionality and communities of practice continued to establish hierarchical relationships within the testimonials. An observed conclusion is that no matter what bias I invoked or revoked, I was not in control of the network any more than the participants, even if I felt I was asserting actancy through the questions - I was merely reassembling, temporarily, the tertiary power dynamics within the social. Dillon becomes the one individual that was sought in an effort to centralize a conversation around the voice of a student, which was to be interpreted. Dillon provided a singular individual actor who had both a priori and active networks within networks. His connections to other students within the study as classmate, fellow student, high school friend, son of a veteran, outsider and insider, all meant that Dillon was the connective tissue that entangled the network and was traceable across the phenomenological analysis. His experiences and identities throughout the various networks helps to begin to see how Dillon sees bias related to identity and power/agency/actancy, whichever term he would ascribe to that controlling value, and how he sees the interaction of agency within the composition classroom. His stated desire not to be categorized or be required to be an activist

or spokesperson for the queer community, the reflection on how he was a top performer in a network that had lower academic standards versus the current model which makes him feel less valued as a scholar, and other testimonials all can be seen as tracing through all the interviews and themes which became visible.

This means the phenomenological aspect played a critical role in how the participants responded based on their individual and collective experiences dealing with instructors or education systems. I think the alternative would be for students to continue to actively remain silent and only be reactive to input for valued experiences from the authority figure in the classroom. Students do not seem to value their roles beyond a letter grade and satisfactory completion of a course without modes of communication within the classroom, a direct statement and actions that indicate the instructor wants a community of practice based on the identities of all students, because that is the only experience they have to base their expectations on. I think that ultimately, phenomena will always play a critical role for students – regardless of how the model of education or thinking: the academic Zeitgeist.

Network as active

Parsing out the axes of intersecting topics allows for a tracing of details about this network and how power dynamics shift through compositions. All of the participants did not originate from the same region or cultures, and they all showed different aspects of cultural social norms. I did not specifically ask nor seek out any participant with culture or race in mind. My expectations on this were to focus on the identity student because that was the common variable I could find between myself and the student participants. I mention this specifically because race and culture were not variables discussed by Amanda nor the veteran. While there were statements about upbringing, parents, and where people lived, no answer was framed

around the visible social structures of border, race, or ethnicity that might be expected at a Hispanic-serving institution such as the University of Texas at El Paso. Instead, social interferences associated with renegotiation and reassembling of human actor identities were limited to veteran, student, LGBQT+, and feminist. The recent push toward awareness in social media and the academy has resulted in a very visible presence for these factors. The location of the study, the institution, border, and racial identities are readily available for the students and are systematically highlighted through rhetorical pushes to embrace or utilize and value these elements so the lack of awareness or dialogue related to them illustrates a need for these things to be evaluated from the idiographic position of the students as actors, based on this study's outcome. Potentially I was intimidating because I was a white male, bearded, with tattoos – and that could have limited responses or particular references. However, another perspective might be that I did not appear academic at all – and that made the students not feel compelled to give answers. I acknowledge that there are a number of interesting variables, including what questions were asked to start conversations, that could have had an impact on the responses. In some ways, I also wonder if the very act of renegotiation I am exploring would mean that all variables could result in different responses or reactions to the questions regardless of who, when, where, or how they were asked or posited to the participating students.

Non-active identities

Two of the participants took on a limited amount of agency or power in their own identities based on their statements. One participant saw their military identity as framing their agency while the other participant I am grouping as non-active[22] took on a demure identity, quiet and reserved, which also served to frame their identity. As a group then, this community was

[22] This isn't to assert that they were not in active roles, but rather, that they took on non-agency/activity when it came to how they defined their agency.

made up of participants who saw no need to compose actancy through their identities. Instead, they awaited input from the researcher for identity within the interview.

STRUCTURED-INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

The unidentified male in this study provided a trace of the traditional military actor who understands rigorous details and performance that is non-actant: he responded in a manner that suggested his social position was that of student. This identity would be constructed by the decision to attend school, acceptance to the school, financial aid, and other actors within larger networks that structure identity and roles. Prior experiences, the phenomenological aspects, play roles as well and have a fossilized association with not only the act of student but the learned expectations of student/faculty/man.

These cementing identities are structured around rules, regulations, and expected performance. Through training, repetition, and enforced uniformity, military service members are composed as roles without needing agency because a soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine does not question orders. While this model of thinking is very efficient in battlefield management of assets or the seaworthiness of a fleet, it lacks the agency of critical thinking found in higher education. An artillery crew has many members that must work together to accomplish the goal of firing the weapon, but only one person on that crew has the agency to adjust aim, fire or not fire, and both praise and punish the other actors within that physical network. This institutional model is replicated in higher education while also asserting that students have the agency and should all make decisions about where, what, when, and how activities inside the entangled networks they compose within while the institutions control what available means exist in that decision making process. Only identities which are authorized will be permitted. Another structured way of thinking associated with the military is the concept of "staying in your lane."

What this translates to is not to do another person's job or question how they do their job; instead, roles are very constructed with distinct barriers between them. These barriers include rank, time in service, and commissioned versus enlisted status. This is important to conceptualize through tracing out roles which must be acted upon both synchronously and asynchronously. This veteran student identified technology as a tool for composing as a student which was different than technology which was used for gaming and the communication required to play across virtual networks. This structures technology as a non-human actor within the participant's network which composes both academic work and participation in gaming compositions. His statements were focused around authority he saw being a veteran. I recognize this because I did not pro-offer my own veteran status in the conversation because that would change the social relationship established with me as a doctoral student conducting an interview. He did not react toward me as a professor or a veteran which allowed him to own the identity - and accompanying agency in that social network. He was not intimidated by being recorded and seemed relaxed but rushed. The answers he spent the most amount of time explaining were those related to his playing online video games but, as he stated, being very aware of the languages between his real life, gaming, and school. It was this multiliteracy identity that both showed him to be aware of the entangled nature of composition and the place where he verbally stated his position in a way that came across as defensive. He did not want to be identified in ways that asserted technology was an active participant, a non-human actor, which impacted him in the same manner that technology impacts all participants in this study.

Analysis of power dynamics

Rhizomatic power dynamics, as a horizontal model of networked agency, did not show up in the above-mentioned segment of participants; rather, hierarchy and power structures were still heavily valued and given agency over the student participants through their statements. Creating change. Two options come from this analysis. One, an enforcement of the existing structured thinking, exhibited by middle and high school pedagogies, would work in the manner of learning, identity, and agency already being performed by these participants. What would seem to be lost, however, is extended thinking, critical assessment of ideas, and an understanding of the entangled nature of network for the individuals by continuing to participate and enforce thinking which constructs distinctions of hierarchical power between roles and not allowing for the give and take associated with entanglement thinking and the reassemblages of social networks found through the lens of ANT.

A secondary thinking would reject the first structure and help create and embrace structured chaos. Beginning to see that roles can not only overlap, but that roles must be interactive and phenomenological means that participants in this group would change paradigms. An interesting change in pedagogy, to offer a limited option, might be to show the veteran that no single language or identity requires the denial or removal of another to compose in the academy. Instead, thinking through writing across curriculum practices would look like engaging a variety of audiences in one composition piece or scaffolded learning experiences across several interrelated multimodal compositions. How that happens or what lesson plans could be enacted goes beyond the theoretical nature of this study. There is a valuable wealth of future research in this segment of research from a pedagogical standpoint.

Alternatively, to the other female participants, the unidentified female participant was non-committal in her responses other than body language with short, one- or two-word answers and appeared frightened. I will expand on this shortly. Furthermore, she never indicated anything that would appear as having agency, and she did not respond in an engaged format. Instead, she remained silent, disengaged, and crafted short answers. She said that technology was something for school and that she did not see a connection between writing in the academy and writing she was participating in through social media. She said she was using Twitter but did not delve into any avenue of conversation that would open up about her identity there. She indicated that she wrote for classes only and was not comfortable writing in any venue. My impression was that she did not have the self-confidence to make affirming statements about any writing she participated in because she did not see herself having agency or control over her writing. She was timid and avoided eye contact which illustrated that she did not see herself as having a voice or identity other than student during the interview. She indicated she knew I was an instructor in the English department and that limited her interactions with me because I do not think she saw me as student/researcher. All her responses had the yes, sir, no, sir variant attached to them. A trace indicates simply that she would not shift from that social construct with me and the potential for an open conversation guided by her was not a reality. I took on the outside influence that was shaping her identity at that moment.

In this instance, it appears that lifeworlds (Ihde, 1990) potentially were showing up as conflicting social structures for this student. The participant was introverted in her personality. She was not entirely unique in that positionality as having an identity which was empowered in the conversation; rather, she was reflective of many students in the composition classroom who await a prompt or required que to respond to. From the point of view of interviewing

participants, in future research I would more clearly define the parameters for participation or attempt to find formats which would allow for less vocal participants to still have agency and weight in their identities through the interview, transcription, and analysis process. While the focus for this forward thinking is related to introverted personalities which are hard to engage in these very unstructured formats, both participants reacted in a manner that was reflective of binary thinking.

Neither of these two participants indicates that they were white which is the positionality the other three participants stated indirectly or directly. They did not speak to being Hispanic or about second languaging in their multiliteracies. These two were composed by their networks by taking normative identities within the system and in how they used technology. They are outliers in the network based on interpretation of the research questions and are disconnected from their agency to compose. They show up as different in the assemblage of network constructed by the study and yet, they both bring critical thinking of traces which show up through the ANT lens. Both could better be informed as actors within virtual spaces because it would allow them to compose without the conforming limits of identity. The need to mediate their identities across the brick-and-mortar spaces and those pixelated realities is required to understand the interdependency associated with reshaping identities is critical for change. The decision to participate is an enrolling behavior that established or mediated a social space for these participants; however, they are counter that engagement through unenrolling from critical thinking in exchange for acceptable answers. The entanglement nature of the reformation of identities and roles is complicated by the participant's assertions that only certain language was acceptable for composing in any genre because the network is not flat or mappable in structure. It is always changing and reforming as students engage and rearrange the network. A form of

network that was constructed through these actions was that participants reinforced and recycled their identities within the network while acknowledging their own need for power and control within that network.

Active identities

As engaged and active participants, this group is juxtaposed against those participants who took on a passive role to their identities. This resulted in coding two separate groups based on whether they were active or passive in their responses and how they saw their agency. Most of the participants interviewed for this study indicated that there was a separation from their identities in their personal lives and their academic ones. They also indicated that television, social media, and gaming were impactors on their understanding of society - and what was expected of them in college. Two of the participants, Alex and Amanda, both indicated directly that they had contact with television as part of their regular day-to-day activities growing up. Three participants, Alex, Amanda, and Dillon specifically identified social media, Twitter, as having a major impact on their lives and knowledge which was framed around identities they had in online spaces. All participants stated that they believed language and identities associated with social media did not have a place in professional spaces.

Latour speaks to tracing all the relevant actors within the network, those both visible and invisible (2005). He also calls for the stabilization of social/network to understand these traces. The television takes on the role of object with agency in this conversation based on what the participants indicated thematically. Social media, as a technology, has intersectional agency along with the student and network, as in discourse communities, in and, along with the instructor/faculty/professor, all form and reform assemblages as different networks that are a part

of the original network and b. redistribution of the local network which changes - is in flux - as something that is social.

These actors constructed their own cluster within the network, a network of actors which were created through non-human actors, rules and directives which carry their own phenomenological origins and identities that are assemblages of the individual's identities which are spoken and unspoken by the participants discussed above. These non-human actors then are given actancy over the network because of the identities which must be imposed or accepted in this part of the network of interviews. This paradigm can be and is renegotiated between the different questions as participants decided how or what they wanted to say around the construction of the rules they were weighing their answers by. Rhetorical awareness carries on throughout all interviews.

The remaining participants, Amanda, Alex, and Dillon, intersect in a trace at the space of identity and social. They either know each other prior to enrollment in the university or all place a high value on how they are perceived and valued in all aspects of their professional and private lives. That idea, that entanglement between many elements found through trace, is already renegotiated through ANT, specifically through the active recognition of entanglement that decentralizes authority within all networks, and, while the application of social is simply global or group - it fits as a non-human actor with agency and identity in the conversations of the majority of interviews. All three of these participants within the network indicated they were embrocated within social media and that they had identities which had agency in that public space. They all indicated that composition was a means of gaining agency in the academy and eventually the workforce. This group also has common connection between their knowledge and the non-human actor, technology; while they had varying understandings of what they

understood technology to mean, they indicated that one actor in this network had an impact on them early on in their knowledge acquisition: the television. This iconic object takes on an ontological position, an actor with a strong identity and clear agency[23]. With that said, in juxtaposition to this at-home[24] tool, none of the student participants in this study indicated or spoke to access of museums or libraries in any capacity[25] (Srinivasan, 2012): There was never any direct question related to these cultural institutions, meaning there could be an opportunity to expand on this research to look at physical sites of knowledge from a postphenomenological position.

Communities of Practice

Rhizomatic communities of practices, as a horizontal model of power sharing, was highly sought after and engaged by the active participant segment. Students expressed that they were most comfortable through composition in communities where they were seen as equals with other members of their community. Hierarchy and power structures were able to be looked beyond by most of the participants and they instead placed value on themselves as empowered by their compositional identities. The participant students never said they understood that they had or needed to negotiate power dynamics; instead, they said they needed to be able to compose in a manner that was illustrated for them to follow and model.

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[23] I will concede that the television has become a dated technology that doesn't have the centralized power and rhetorical agency of yesteryear. In this context, I acknowledge that the Internet has superseded that technology as the dominant tool for all things digested mentally.

[24] This is an interesting paradigm because television is no longer attached via coaxial cable to a wall which is the center of attention in the family room. Instead, this has become a changing technology that shows up in our 4-inch smartphone technology, computers, tablets, and many other form factors.

[25] I recognize this is a deadpan way of introducing this fact and, while it could be given much more appeal framed around setting this up as a strangely kairotic point, I also believe that it is only evidenced from an analytical position - my own.

Environments and embodied interactions

I think that Cooper's (2010) assertion that "writing is an embodied interaction with other beings and our environments" (p. 18) fits into this conversation because if we apply the proposed theoretical framework, then all participants in the composition classroom are necessary to reassemble that virtual realm; all of them have actancy and an important function brought on, not directly by the number of years in the discipline – but rather – all of the participants have experiences and an ontological position, including those artifacts produced through popular culture, social media, and technology, that makes them valued and necessary for the entire virtual space, as both a mode of existence and a network of distributed cognition, to exist as subject and object as well. Cooper (2010) further offers to the exploration of this space and the agency within it because she sees composition as a biological function which functions as a technology assembling and reassembling the social agency alongside the Internet which provides assemblage. If all this is true, then her most profound statement in this conversation is framed around the understanding that "neither language nor technology is foreign to our nature; tools and words are us, not things we create and use" (p. 18). Ultimately, all participants reassemble and share agency across the learning space. As an answer to the research questions' general conversation about technology, I think this ability to value technology on a variety of levels means that isolating one form of technology, smartphones, limits the idea of technology as a tangible only. The answer is that the bias toward one format of technology constructs a non-answer because the student participants were not limiting their own definition of technology and how it impacts their understanding of shared power dynamics and relationships in the classroom. I this instance, only I was.

Reaching conclusions

Technology has significant agency in the lives of the participant's compositional world. How this comes to be is framed around more of what is not occurring in the composition process for the participants. To start to wrap up and reach a point of both conclusion and an opening toward future research, an understanding of how technology was an impactor for the students is necessary - especially if the goal is to eventually continue exploration through a purely postphenomenological lens.

Tools of the trade

Only one of five students indicated that writing on paper with a pencil still qualified as a technology and, more importantly, one they used as a method of composing before taking notes and drafts to a computer. But even that individual indicated that the computer was where the heavy work of composition in both academics and social media existed. Computers mediated the compositions of all students as they relied upon grammar and spell-correction features to navigate and frame what the participants understood to be important facets of academic writing. However, they were only mildly empowered to correct or use Standard Academic English in their social media compositions. In fact, the majority of their multiliteracies were framed around non-standard language and vulgarities which were combined or excluded in exchange for graphic images or meme (Dawkins, 1976) compositions which imitate or posture another idea through a very condensed composition; they do not require text-heavy composition to frame the identities being constructed, assembled, and remixed by the students or participants in this study. This means that many visible and invisible actors compose in and are composed by the network.

The participants, and all of their ensemble of actors, along with the technologies, their creators, handlers, and manipulators; all of these actors, combined with the faculty and all of

their support systems, staff and technological all impact the network composition that exists. Nothing can ultimately be eliminated, especially all the social traces associated with disturbing and recreating the local and global; instead, everything is accumulative. Yet, the students still indicated a need to remove or disassociate from those social/virtual worlds and languages that framed all their identity and agency outside of the sphere of the composition classroom. One interesting variable associated with the invisible nature of composition is the realization that participants all had a different understanding of what technology was, how it impacted and composed, and how they might be composed upon by the technology that we discussed.

'Good' writing

There is one term that keeps popping up in a variety of writing studies paradigms, 'good writing,' which Fulkerson (2005) defines as "writing that [is] rhetorically effective for audience and situation"; yet, I find myself asking significant questions in this study: foremost, I am asking how we can stand by and justify the claim that we are teaching a language to people who already have a functioning language, and secondly, how we cannot see that the semiotic language being employed by the student's discourse communities and society, as a whole, are already readily available and, more importantly, successful for them. The participants were able to effectively navigate their audience, in the case of this study, the interview process, in a manner that was reflective of acceptable standards of language - particularly the language used when speaking to a professor. How is it then that we believe what we are offering should not be examined to better incorporate the language which is undiscovered or delegitimized through the hegemony?[26] Fulkerson (2005) discusses the continued centripetal nature of composition theories away from reductionist scholarship, particularly those he appeared to espouse in his 80s and 90s

[26] In this instance, hegemony is all the actors which make up the network: faculty, software, rules and assessments within higher education.

conversations where he originally called upon philosophical themes (1979). Fulkerson (2005) now identifies the "social turn" (654) in writing studies pedagogies. He points toward his thinking related to axiological questions associated with the quality of writing (1990). A critical link to my study is his question related to epistemic evaluations of "how do you know that" (658) which is at the heart of my research interest for this project because of the guided and reinforced identity of student upon academics[27]. This role and the agency that is lost through this identity continues to show up far from this point of impact.

For example, several students begin their academic careers being guided in ways that limits or invalidates their need for a compositional identity. Instead, they take on agency through asserting that composition, English, and writing are all unnecessary skills for their discipline. In other words, an engineering student who values social media and their ability to both publish and compose their identities in that public space may not have incentive, or worse, has been impacted by biases, to value composition as part of a professional future where employers will not suggest that writing has no value. From that perspective, there is something gained from looking early in the process to better understand how that identity is composed and attempting to look toward changing how identities are valued.

Compositional discoveries

An area that is critically in need of attention for students to better participate through their agency and establish identities that are not docile and submissive is visual rhetoric. Meme and .gif studies need to gain more place in modern composition because these are the a priori knowledge the students have and value; they will become tools used by future academics to support and expand literacies beyond the current state. This could be implemented as lessons on

[27] This is where that entangled identity shows up: through labels and language. It is hard to attempt to parse out these two roles even though they are very much synonymous with learner.

visual rhetoric, digital rhetoric, and semiotics in the FYC space. This means that some application theory would need to be added to the current syllabus and learning outcomes would have to be modified to include some concepts of visual rhetoric which focus on these virtual/digital worlds. Current pagination projects could be expanded to cross and be scaffolded in ways that intersect each assignment in FYC. An interesting possibility would be to make the e-portfolio a more robust item while also making it useful to the students. There might be a value in even connecting it as a multimodal composition of remix established as YouTube channels or Vimeo spaces. Dillon and Amanda both spoke directly to being familiar with digital social spaces - and these are the spaces which come up in general discussions about how multimodal composition is performed in rhetoric and composition classrooms. If there was an overlap between these assignments and a future-proof thinking about embracing these non-academic spaces for student's agency - then we might move closer to being able to value other areas of interest within the discipline, translanguaging for example.

Limitations

This study's limitations are chronological and assessment-oriented outcomes[28]. Further research would benefit from digging deeper into one or two of the participants over the course of a year; follow up could include asking how the individuals saw their identity in non-English disciplines that they participate within and better understanding the intersected identities of composition across the core curriculum requirements for successful completion of undergraduate

[28] IPA does not set down parameters for how long a study should take place. For the purposes of a dissertation, it seems appropriate to maximize the minimal time access to participants. It would be problematic to follow students over a four-year period of time to see if their positionality about identity and agency - as it correlates to writing, composing, publishing, or any other contextually appropriate compositions occurred and whether they saw changes that could be identified and explained. Assessment also plays a role in the consideration of this study because, as a graduate student, I still am producing a document to seek successful assessment toward the completion of my doctoral career. I cannot take forever to really sit down and structure a long-term study and it would be problematic from the position of not being in a paid, permanent position at the end of my studies.

studies. From an assessment standpoint, the challenge with eliminating or mitigating Standard Academic English are framed around a centralized assessment model for composition. The requirement of rubricized, non-holistic assessment heavily impacts the possibility of adapting changes suggested in this study. As a limitation on the study itself, assessment also impacts what student participants understand as their purpose, i.e., grading, composing, acting. No student felt compelled to suggest that first-year composition was wrong or performed in ways that they did not agree with. Rather, they said they understood how they were expected to perform as actors and negotiated their agency in exchange for an A in their FYC courses.

Entanglement

An important variable that came out of this study that was not necessarily tied to the student participants directly is the impact of technology. I found that the students reflected on correctness, which is heavily substantiated by technology, as well as assessment[29]. Technology is something that was not easily defined by the students. From my perspective as the PI for this study and a student faculty member, I distinctly noted that autocorrecting software, spell checking, and even the annoyingly limited grammar tools used in Microsoft Word significantly impacted composition while not being identified by the students during their responses. This is entangled around the students because they never noticed that it was a technology that altered and modified their discussions and thinking in academic settings. It was the unidentified actor, the technology with impact, because it was the means by which correctness was established and understood while not existing in social media. It was the responses to the question about what constituted technology that really set this as the most important silent framework that complicated the two identities and the agency of composition in alphabetic text.

[29] Assessment really gets short shrift in this study. That is not because it is not relevant but, rather, it becomes its own area of research for future study.

OUTRO

So does all this address why students do not use the technology that is readily available to them to compose within academia? Not directly, however, there is an answer that begins to emerge, or at least fringes. The network is an abstract space which calls upon many phenomena to exist. All networks have rules which govern them and the actors, all those elements which have agency, and while society may actively think about how that changes, those rules are hardwired into the very nature of the classroom. I believe that it is that space which both has complete agency and dictates the used technologies within that space that cannot be necessarily accounted for because we have no way to sort out the testimonies of this object as ontological. I can say that future studies that connect to this should not just look toward reassembling the testimonial interview format, but also explore the postphenomenological aspects of the classroom.

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