ABSTRACT

Title of Document: BEYOND WORDS:
A POST-PROCESS BUSINESS WRITING
PEDAGOGY

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The goals of this dissertation are twofold: to identify shortcomings in contemporary business writing pedagogies that result in students being insufficiently prepared for the writing challenges of their post-college careers and, to develop an alternative pedagogy that addresses these problems. To achieve these ends I review the recent history of business writing pedagogy, examine 105 business communication syllabi from U.S. colleges, and perform a close textual analysis of the five textbooks most commonly used in these courses. I then perform a communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network as an exemplar of how communication functions in a workplace setting. Armed with this data I assert that contemporary pedagogical models do not adequately account for the atomistic complexity and fluidity of actual workplace discourse: the historical and organizational factors that affect every discursive interaction, the personal preferences and individual relationships that determine success with each new dialogic engagement, the very nature of communication as uncodifiable and paralogical, or the generative, living genres that allow these activity systems to function.

"Beyond Words" presents a new pedagogy that accomplishes several objectives: first, it accounts for the weaknesses of current business writing pedagogies. Second, it addresses the challenges of contemporary workplace communication, in which writing expectations are constantly evolving and progressively intricate. Third, it incorporates the principles of post-process theory—that writing is public, interpretive, and situated—and draws on aspects of activity theory and ethnographic analysis that remain consistent with a post-process framework but add depth to the holistic conception of discourse practices. Fourth, rather than trying to teach students how to write—which post-process theory argues is impossible—it focuses on helping students to "read" the situated contexts of what are commonly considered discourse communities as evidence of prior communicative theories so as to better triangulate the passing hermeneutic strategies of each of their interlocutors. Most importantly, this pedagogy prepares students for the increasingly complex, unstable, diverse writing conditions of the contemporary workplace and empowers them to better analyze and adapt to whatever communications challenges they face throughout their professional careers.

BEYOND WORDS:

A POST-PROCESS BUSINESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

by

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communication courses throughout much of our discipline, I have only respect for you as educators and for the positive difference each of you makes in the lives and future careers of your students.

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Gromit, we did it!

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2016 there is little need to make a case for the importance of writing's role in the workplace or for the necessity of teaching business writing in American colleges and universities; both positions are widely acknowledged in the business and academic worlds. However, as a very brief nod to those who may still be skeptical, a recent study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) placed written communication as one of the top three attributes employers look for in new hires (2016, p. 31), and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) (2015) reported that writing is among the "skills and knowledge that employers feel are most important to workplace success" (as cited in Jaschik, 2015, para 5). These results echo similar findings from the decade old, often cited 2005 National Commission on Writing (NCW) report and the earlier 1996 American Management Association (AMA) study. Nor has writing's essential role in business gone unnoticed in academia. As Bertha Du-Babcock (2006) noted, "Business communication has established itself as an important subject area and has become an integral component of business school curricula" (p. 254). In fact, over the last decade (at least) there has been a rapid proliferation of business writing programs and stand-alone courses in the nation's colleges. According to Kathryn Rentz, Mary Beth Debs, and Lisa Meloncon (2010), from 1997 to 2005, undergraduate programs in professional writing grew by 22.5% (p. 283); from 2000 to 2005 their growth rate was 110% (Meloncon, unpublished data); from 1997 to 2007, master's programs grew by 31% (Meloncon, 2009, p. 138), and PhD programs grew by 153% (Rentz, Debs, & Meloncon, 2010, p. 283).

The Problem

It is troubling then that despite the continued rise of the business writing discipline, the ongoing growth of college level business writing instruction, and the substantive scholarship in business writing theory and pedagogy, employers in both public and private organizations continue to decry the writing abilities of recent graduates and note that "there is a significant gap between their expectations for employees' writing skills and the employees' actual skills" (Lentz, 2013, p. 475). More disturbingly, the substance of these widespread complaints has changed very little over the last twenty-plus years; the problems with substandard workplace writing that graduates had in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s are largely the same as those plaguing them today. The criticisms of new employees' critical thinking and below standard writing abilities outlined in Rush and Evers (1986) and Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) are also predominant in the 2005 NCW report; a 2008 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) study; the 2015 AAC&U report; and in the 2016 NACE Job Outlook survey, where (although receiving a higher rating than in 2015) "written communication" was ranked as new graduate recruits' poorest skill. Worst of all, perhaps, is that our students actually believe that what we are teaching them in our business writing courses is preparing them for their post-college careers. As the 2015 AAC&U report noted, "students are more than twice as likely as employers to think that students are being well-prepared" (as cited in Jaschik, 2015, para 4). It is no wonder then that employers bemoan the fact that, "recent graduates aren't even aware when things are wrong" (NCW, 2005, p. 14). Clearly, what is being

taught in the business writing classrooms of America's colleges is not translating well to the nation's workplaces.

The cost of this epidemic is significant. The 2005 NCW report estimates that state governments at the time spent $221 million annually to improve employee writing skills through continuing education (p. 6); similarly, a 2004 NCW report found that the private sector spent as much as $3.1 billion annually in order to address its employees' writing deficiencies (p. 18). While, not all of the employees receiving training are college graduates, of those who are, the 2015 AAC&U report found that, "large majorities of employers do NOT feel that recent college graduates are well prepared. This is particularly the case for applying knowledge and skills in real-world settings, critical thinking skills, and written and oral communication skills — areas in which fewer than three in 10 employers think that recent college graduates are well prepared" (as cited in Jaschik, 2015, para 5). Moreover, the true cost of bad writing to businesses is incalculable. Inefficiency, added personnel training, lost business, and poor decision making as a result of ineffective communication directly impact corporate bottom lines. Employees, too, pay a price for failing to execute acceptable workplace writing. The 2004 NCW report, 1996 AMA study, and 2008 SHRM report all found that a literacy ceiling exists, above which substandard writers cannot be promoted and that, "some companies decide not to hire and train new entrants who are unprepared" (SHRM, 2008, para 7). The result is a double hit to companies who must let go employees already familiar with their business' operations, while the learning curve for their replacements further erodes workplace efficiency.

One would think that with such overwhelming evidence there would be calls from business writing programs and business writing instructors for the reevaluation and wholesale reform of college level business writing pedagogy. Yet no concerted, discipline-wide effort has emerged. While piecemeal teaching innovations and advances in business communication theory continue to populate the discipline's various journals, little has changed in the realm of classroom praxis. Over the last two decades business writing scholars have conducted a series of surveys assessing the state of business writing in American colleges (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope & Bayless, 1999). What they reveal is that, on the whole, the content and teaching approach of these courses has remained incredibly consistent over this period of time: a mix of formalist emphases on grammar and reified genre formats (those common across all the surveys include business letters, résumés and cover letters, memos, and reports) along with some level of rhetorical theory which, itself, is often used as a formulaic checklist of elements to judge students' progress. Of course, over time, changes have occurred such as audience accommodation (most often in the form of good news/bad news letters and developing a "you" attitude), the introduction of new reified genres to account for advances in technology (email, social media), increased collaboration (team writing, group presentations), and the inclusion of business ethics (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope & Bayless, 1999). However, as Joseph Petraglia (1999) lamented, the writing discipline, "remains entrenched in the pedagogical enterprise I have characterized elsewhere as 'general writing skills instruction'" (p. 49). Moreover, Sharp and Brumberger (2013) see little

hope of improvement, having concluded that, "our data suggest that business communication has made moderate strides forward but not nearly as many as we might have hoped… Course content in that general business communication course, for the most part, appeared remarkably similar [in 2013] to that reported in the survey conducted by Wardrope and Bayless (1999)" (p. 25).

This dissertation is a response to, what I perceive to be, the wanting state of current business writing pedagogy; it investigates the central question, why are business communication courses failing to adequately prepare students for the discursive challenges and expectations of their future workplaces and what can be done to improve their education? Moreover, in this (beyond) post-process world, why hasn't post-process theory had a bigger impact on disciplinary attitudes toward teaching writing? In order to answer these questions my dissertation engages in four fundamental conversations within the composition and business writing disciplines. First, in the tradition of James Berlin (1982), Richard Fulkerson (1990, 2005), and Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick's (2001) anthology, it attempts to review the evolution of business writing pedagogy and points out inherent problems with prevailing approaches. Second, this dissertation joins researchers such as Travis Russ (2009), Matthew Sharp and Eva Brumberger (2013), and William Wardrope and Marsha Bayless (1999) in conducting primary research into the current state of business writing classrooms throughout American colleges and universities. It further provides a detailed analysis of five popular contemporary business communication textbooks, expanding and complimenting similar projects by Aya Matsuda and Paul Kei Matsuda (2011), Joanna Wolfe (2009), and Stephen Bremmer

(2008). The third area of disciplinary concern in which this dissertation participates is the study of how communication functions in the workplace—the research into which, Dorothy Winsor (2006) asserted is the business writing discipline's most important contribution (as cited in Suchan & Charles, 2006). My communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is part of a long tradition of such workplace studies including collections by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami (1985), Myra Kogen (1989) Rachel Spilka (1993), and Jim Henry (2000), to name only a few. Finally, this dissertation engages in the foundational debate posed by Davidsonian (1974) epistemology, and post-process theory (Dobrin, 1997, 2013; Heard, 2008; Kastman Breuch, 2002; Kent, 1989, 1993; Sánchez 1993, 2013) over the potential obsolescence of the writing classroom and of pedagogy itself.

Recent History of Business Writing Pedagogy

I begin with a review of the recent history of professional writing pedagogy. The relative success of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Writing In the Disciplines (WID) programs would indicate that business writing, as yet another specialized, disciplinary form of discourse, would find similarly fruitful results. However, several factors have contributed to the difficult translation of WID to the teaching of business writing. Meloncon (2009) and Sharp and Brumberger (2013), among others, point out the lack of a unified home for business writing instruction (in various colleges and universities throughout the United States, English departments, business schools, communication departments, and rhetoric departments all lay claim to business communication). The inability to recreate the values, exigencies, and contextual realities

of a work environment within an academic setting (Knoblauch, 1989; Mabrito 1999; Spinuzzi, 1996) is further noted as impediments to effectively preparing students for the challenges of business writing. Additionally, and likely the biggest problem facing the teaching of "business writing," is the practice of consolidating an array of different workplace discourse cultures into a single, reductive category. Charles Darrah (1996) cautioned that there is no "comprehensive, foundational description of the workplace… [as] the diverse understandings of work are extraordinarily complex, reflecting assumptions about the self, its relations with other people, hierarchy, knowledge and causation" (p. 33). While business writing instructors recognize that there is no single, unifying business discourse community, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of this diverse field and, as a practical matter, educators end up discussing the catch-all, "business communication," which they delineate by a set of commonly shared genres, best practices, and stylistic considerations that ignore the situated contexts of actual business discourse (e.g., Adam, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Woolever, 1989).

State of the Business Writing Classroom

Digging deeper into the problem I examine the content and pedagogical approaches that are being used in actual business communication classrooms throughout America. This investigation involved researching existing scholarship including surveys and studies of classroom syllabi and textbooks over the last twenty years (Knoblauch, 1989; Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope & Bayless, 1999; Welch, 1987). In addition, I conducted primary research, collecting over

100 syllabi from colleges and universities across 48 states and performing close readings of the five most commonly used textbooks in these courses. Similar studies of syllabi and textbooks have been used in the past to determine the content and foci of courses or to analyze the use of particular teaching strategies in various disciplinary classrooms. Roger Graves, Theresa Hyland, and Boba Samuels (2010) looked at 179 syllabi from a single college to investigate the kinds of writing assignments among various WAC courses. In order to assess the pedagogical approaches and course content of business communication courses, Travis Russ (2009) surveyed the course content and required assignments of 505 business communication courses. Dan Meltzer (2009) compared the number of writing assignments in writing-centered courses as compared to "strictly" disciplinary courses. Additionally, Bridget Walsh, Dave Bonner, Victoria Springer, Camille Lalasz, and Bob Ives (2013) studied the syllabi of 93 grant-writing courses to determine how textbooks were selected and which features teachers most valued. With regard to textbooks, Joanna Wolfe (2009) studied twelve technical communication textbooks, assessing their (lack of) relevance to engineering students. And Stephen Bremmer (2008) examined eight business communication textbooks in order to measure their coverage of intertextuality. These syllabi and textbook studies suggest that this sort of analysis is an accepted method for drawing conclusions about the content of classroom teaching praxis.

What I discovered is that, despite multiple new editions over the years, the pedagogical approaches in these textbooks has remained wholly consistent over this period of time and that the content has changed very little, primarily adding sections to

accommodate shifting workplace trends such as increased collaboration, international /

multicultural communication, increased ethics coverage, and new technological media.

Moreover, scholarly arguments that textbooks inform instructors of business

communication, as much as their students (Alred & Thelen, 1993; Connors, 1986;

Knoblauch, 1989; Welch, 1987), about the central values and necessary knowledge to be

an effective workplace communicator appear to be validated by the close correlation

between the textbooks' content and the structure and content of the syllabi I examined.

Most notably, however, is that scholarly observations from as long as thirty years ago,

that the pedagogy and lessons in these textbooks willfully ignore contemporary

scholarship and composition theory (Welch, 1987), remain the case today. The

predominant approach to teaching business discourse is a largely current-traditional focus

on writing as a product whose effectiveness can be judged according to its "correctness"

when measured against ideal normative conventions, rather than teaching students a

postmodern understanding of discourse communities; the situated, contextual nature of

genre formation (and reformation); and the interconnectedness of organizational

objectives, subjects, and tools in affecting workplace communication.

Workplace Discourse

By contrast, the complex intertextual and rather chaotic nature of communication as

it occurs in an actual workplace bears little resemblance to the rigid categories,

prescriptive formulae, and a-contextual presentation of writing that our textbooks and

syllabi suggest is being taught to college students. In order to get a better sense of how

communication does, in fact, operate within a business organization, I conducted a

communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). The results of survey questionnaires, office observations, and employee interviews reveal an atmosphere in which multiple factors play a role in discourse, making every communicative act unique. Organizational culture, external circumstances, timing, individual personalities and communication preferences, relationships, material conditions, power hierarchies, discursive histories, organizational objectives, individual goals, genre fluidity, and organizational conventions all play a role, overlap with one another, and blur the ever shifting lines of what may be acceptable or may prove to be effective communication from one moment to the next. Certainly, there are some firm boundaries within which organizational discourse must occur, but the numerous variables that must be accounted for and that interlocutors must be aware of in order to communicate effectively require a nuanced, immersive understanding of the communicative contexts one is engaged in. In fact, employees at ACS CAN almost universally reflected that developing such an understanding took them between six and twelve months.

This communication audit points to where business communication courses should be focusing their efforts. Rather than glossing over the complexity and individuality of each workplace's discursive environments—tying to impose order and to simplify business writing using prescriptive molds and static categories that bear almost no relation to what students' workplace experiences will be—business communication courses should embrace the chaos, making students aware of the messy, uncodifiable nature of discourse. Post-process theory represents just such a perspective on

communication. It offers an understanding that writing is paralogic, that no system or set of conventions can explain or predict how an interlocutor may interpret a message in any given situation or at any point in time; moreover, it challenges the notion that writing is simply the process of translating ideas into words and transmitting them to an end user who, if the writer correctly followed the agreed upon rules and conventions, is able to seamlessly decode the message and understand its meaning.

Post-Process Theory

My answer to the dilemma faced by the business writing discipline is to embrace post-process theory's position that writing is paralogic and "cannot be taught" (Kent, 1993, p. 159). At first glance, this stance appears to make the entire subject moot and the writing discipline irrelevant. In fact, Kent's (1989) declaration that "no formal pedagogy can be constructed to teach the act of writing or critical reading" (Kent, 1989, p. 36), as well as from Sidney Dobrin's (1997) assertion that to be post-process is to challenge the composition discipline's "pedagogical imperative" (p. 63) have been largely responsible for the almost non-existent footprint of post-process theory in the pedagogical realm. However, while, on the surface, post-process theory's interpretation of discourse appears incompatible with the writing discipline's raison d'être (at least in its pedagogical role), I argue that by eliminating the need to teach the "specialized" discourses of particular communities—by ceasing to define writing as a body of knowledge or a set of skills to be mastered (Kastman Breuch, 2002)—instructors can focus on helping students to hone what actually makes communication possible—that is, hermeneutic triangulation.

I analyze the three teaching methods most commonly used among the few

scholars who have proposed post-process pedagogies. The first, used by Heard (2008),

Kastman Breuch (2001), and McComiskey (2000) is to emphasize the public nature of

discourse by locating students' writing activities outside of the classroom. In doing so

students are afforded the opportunity to practice matching their passing theories with

those of their interlocutors, so that they can start developing strategies for more effective

hermeneutic guessing in future encounters. The second strategy, formulated by Kent

(1989) is to reform the relationship between instructors and students as a collaborative

mentorship (p. 38). Couture (1999), Ewald (1999), Sánchez (1993), Heard (2008), and

Kastman Breuch (2001; 2002) all advocate for this instructional redesign.

Problematically, however, these scholars interpret the dialogic nature of teaching as

requiring individualized collaborations between the instructor and his or her students. As

Heard (2008) noted, the necessary one-on-one attention "may be impossible to implement

systematically" (p. 298). Finally, the third post-process teaching approach is that of

engaging students in a metadiscourse about writing—making them aware of writing

theory as a means of helping them better understand how to communicate more

successfully. Ewald (1999) called for courses that "demystify both writing and learning"

(p. 130), Yarbrough (1999) found that a teacher's role is to "make [students] aware of

significant problems and questions [that they] do not presently know exist" (p. 237), and

Kastman Breuch (2002) described Sánchez as wanting to "use class time to engage in

discourse about writing" (p. 125). These scholars argue that making our students aware of

the theories and the ongoing pedagogical discussions within our discipline, will allow

them to become more "adept producers and analyzers of discourse" (Heard, 2008, p. 291), and this, I believe, is exactly the goal of any effective writing course.

Scholarly Contributions

Throughout this dissertation I attempt to expand, or to introduce new elements to, the scholarship of business writing and business communication pedagogy. Significant contributions include original research and analysis of contemporary business communication syllabi and textbooks. While my findings do not substantially diverge from similar, previous studies, they serve to confirm the relatively static nature of business writing instruction despite long standing indications that such methods are failing to meet students' educational and vocational needs. Additionally, my communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network provides original insight into the complexity of organizational communication. The study demonstrates how factors such as current and preferred organizational cultures, individual personalities, interpersonal relationships, material conditions, external events, and power relationships influence the nature, processes, and timing of communication. It further shows how genres, contrary to the prescriptive molds presented in business communication textbooks, are a unique and flexible creation of both routinized activity and the individual circumstances that include the particular interlocutors and exigent situations. Moreover, it recounts the difficult trial-by-fire that new employees must face in learning to communicate in a new workplace environment and points to possible pedagogical implications for easing this adaptation process. The final contribution my dissertation makes to business writing scholarship is the development of a new, largely

unique post-process pedagogy that expands and improves upon some of the core elements found in the handful of prior post-process teaching approaches, but adds completely new and fundamental elements, making the pedagogy practical for wide adoption throughout higher education and providing students with broad strategies that can be applied in almost any workplace system while remaining relevant to the specific, situated contexts of each individual workplace. Furthermore, in proposing this new pedagogy I counter the position of those who hold that to be post-process is to be post-pedagogy, thereby sparking renewed relevance for pedagogy as an area of concern and future research in the writing discipline.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter One presents the problem and purpose of this study, demonstrating the exigence of improving business writing pedagogy for students, for educational institutions, and for workplace organizations.

Chapter Two reviews the recent history and prevalent pedagogical methods of teaching business communication in college-level courses throughout America. It highlights many of the problems that arise from these strategies and suggests post-process theory as an alternative paradigm from which to approach business writing education.

Chapter Three is an analysis of 105 business communication syllabi collected from colleges and universities across 48 states and of the five textbooks most commonly used in these courses. The analysis examines the relationship between the textbooks and the syllabi and argues that the virtually unchanged nature of business communication textbooks over the past 25 years is largely responsible for informing a generation of

professional writing instructors and for shaping the content and classroom practices involved in teaching business communication.

My study finds that, just as in 1987 when Kathleen Welch wrote, "the material presented in these numerous textbooks bears little relation to the large work on composition theory that is widely available" (p. 269), there continues to be a tremendous divide between disciplinary theory and classroom praxis. Current scholarship in discourse community theory and activity theory resoundingly holds that a community's ever evolving discursive practices are entirely bound up in the particular social, historical, material, and temporal contexts in which they are situated (Artemeva, 2008; Blakeslee, 2001; Henze, 2013; Spinuzzi 1996, 2013). However, business communication textbooks and courses continue to consolidate the multiplicity of workplace discourse communities into a catch-all "business world" that communicates using a uniform discourse known as "business writing," terms so general as to be empty, meaningless categories. As a result, while the textbooks and syllabi couch business communication in terms of discourse community theory—learning the conventions necessary to communicate effectively in the workplace—they, in fact, teach using outmoded current-traditional principles of prescriptive genre forms, linear writing process formulae, and mimesis. Writing is treated as a product and students' progress is assessed in terms of conformity to monolithic models and levels of correctness.

Chapter Four describes my communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). The results demonstrate the complexity, fluidity, and interconnected variables—organizational culture, personal relationships, history,

objectives, personalities, timing, external circumstances, etc.—that affect an organization's discursive practices. The study further reveals the challenges faced by new (and even veteran) members of the workplace in navigating organizational, divisional, internal, external, and individual considerations when formulating or interpreting communications. This investigation makes clear that the rigidly delineated, static, universal genres, processes, and style formulae presented in business communication textbooks are far removed from the activity of communication that occurs in an actual workplace. Moreover, the audit confirms the public, interpretive, and situated nature of communication professed by post-process theory, leading to an exploration of how a post-process pedagogy may be the solution to the business writing discipline's problems.

Chapter Five argues, in refutation of Sidney Dobrin (1997), Dobrin, J.A. Rice, and Michael Vastola (2013), and others who hold that post-process theory moves the writing discipline beyond pedagogical concerns, that pedagogy is still worthy of disciplinary interest and research. It then lays out a vision for a post-process business writing pedagogy that accomplishes several objectives: first, it accounts for the well-established criticisms and weaknesses of current business writing pedagogies that have been highlighted throughout the earlier chapters in this dissertation. Second, it addresses the challenges of workplace communication in the information age, in which writing expectations are "ever evolving and more complex, globalized, and multidisciplinary" (DuBabcock, 2006, p. 255). Third, it incorporates the principles of post-process theory— that writing is public, it is interpretive, it is situated—and draws on aspects of activity theory and ethnographic analysis that remain consistent with a post-process framework

but add depth to the holistic conception of discourse practices. Fourth, rather than trying to teach students how to write—which post-process theory argues is impossible—it focuses on helping them to "read" the discursive situation surrounding and informing their written interactions (including what are commonly considered to be "discourse community" conventions) as evidence of their interlocutors' hermeneutic strategies so as to better triangulate their own passing theories with those of their discursive partners. Most important, this pedagogy prepares students for the writing conditions of the contemporary workplace and empowers them to better analyze and adapt to whatever communications expectations they face throughout their professional careers.

Chapter 2: BUSINESS WRITING SCHOLARSHIP:
PEDAGOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS IN ACCOUNTING FOR THE
COMPLEXITY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTS

One of the primary missions of English departments is to guide new college

entrants toward competency in being able to meet the writing challenges they will face in

the academy and beyond. In an effort to refine and improve our capacity to empower our

students with this vital communicative ability, for the last sixty years there has been an

ongoing evaluation process of our pedagogic strategies and their outcomes. Examining

this period of history in composition theory, we can see that the discipline's pedagogical

evolution has been one toward a fuller, more inclusive understanding of the nuanced,

complex, and fluid variables that affect every aspect of the production and consumption

of writing and the knowledge that such discursive activity creates. Our scholarship has

long moved past pedagogies that focus on a single dimension of composition, such as

current-traditional rhetoric and expressivism (Berlin, 1982; Fulkerson, 1990). So, too,

have pedagogies that describe a universal composition process, devoid of situated

context, long been found lacking in their ability to capture the full nature of written

discourse (Bizzell, 1982; Kent, 1989). Even social construction pedagogies, such as

discourse community theory and critical cultural studies, which take into account the

inextricable link between language use and the social context in which it occurs

(Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bizzell, 1982; Bruffee, 1984), have been criticized,

respectively, for establishing overly broad, hegemonic discourse categories (e.g.,

"academic discourse") (Cooper, 1989; Harris, 1989; Fulkerson, 2005) and concentrating

on ideological indoctrination rather than writing instruction (Hairston, 1992; Fulkerson,

2005). Most recently, post-process theories (at least some variations) reject pedagogy altogether, declaring that the communicative act itself is paralogical and, therefore, cannot be codified or systematized (Kastman Breuch, 2002; Kent, 1989). Highlighting this move toward embracing the complexity of written discourse, Richard Fulkerson (2005) has noted that since 1990, the last threads of disciplinary consensus— acknowledgement of a rhetorical axiology—have dissolved, leaving the discipline in a state of disagreement and controversy over what and how it should be teaching.

While disciplinary dissensus can create tension and confusion, it can also give rise to advances and innovation as new and better ideas emerge from the debates and negotiations that ensue. To its detriment, business writing scholarship, as represented in its disciplinary journals and scholarly texts, has failed to keep pace with developments in the larger field of composition studies, of which it is a part. As a result, the fertile atmosphere of pedagogic renewal that exists elsewhere in composition studies, is largely absent in business writing theory. Little attempt has been made by business writing scholars to address the truly atomistic nature of written discourse, with each discursive act involving its own unique set of variables which, at the very least, complicates attempts to explain written discourse using generalized systemic constructs. As of December, 2015, a search of *Business and Professional Communications Quarterly* (BPCQ), *International Journal Business Communication* (IJBC), and *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* (JBTC) resulted in a single article (Rice, 2007, in *Business Communication Quarterly*, now BPCQ) that even mentions post-process theory and its implications for the teaching of business communication. This lack is made all the

more curious by the comparative wealth of texts in technical writing journals that address post-process theory. Instead, for the last twenty years, scholarship regarding business writing pedagogy has relied on various iterations of discourse community theory as the underpinning of its disciplinary scholarship, and while the social contexts of discourse are vital to explicating and teaching aspects of business writing, they can only take our students and our discipline so far.

The central problem with teaching business writing using discourse community theory as its foundation is that there exists no single, unifying business culture, nor a comprehensive process or form of writing that can be said to encompass or represent all of "business discourse." Moreover, the consensus among composition scholars is that the most effective way to teach or to learn a particular discourse community's values, practices, and genres is to immerse students in the culture, relationships, and activities of that community. As a result, it is a practical impossibility to familiarize students with all of the possible workplace discourse communities and genres that they will encounter in their careers following graduation. As Clay Spinuzzi (1996) noted, "We cannot replicate 'the workplace' because each workplace is different, just as each class is different" (p. 299). The solution, proposed in much of business writing scholarship, combines giving students a glimpse of the intricacies of workplace discourse through simulations and exposure to specific workplace discourse communities along with teaching broad, commonly used genre categories and a set of best practices that can be widely applied in professional settings. It is my position, however, that such a strategy is inadequate: first, the values and practices that govern academia and those of the business world are largely

incompatible, making higher education a less than suitable forum for teaching business writing; second, this reductive approach ignores the social construction of discourse communities and frames genres as static and universal rather than as fluid expressions of social action; third, this method fails to emphasize the interconnectedness of communications with the holistic operation and objectives of an organization's activity; fourth, discourse community theory doesn't take into account the importance of individuals' communications preferences, perspectives, relationships, and histories, or the paralogic nature of writing, affecting each particular communicative act. Ultimately, discourse community pedagogy cannot provide a clear or comprehensive view of the vast landscape of workplace writing, underlining the need in our discipline to develop new approaches if we want our students to succeed.

BACKGROUND:
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND DISCOURSE COMMUNITY THEORY

In order to understand the limitations of discourse community theory as a foundation for business writing pedagogy, it will be helpful to review the theory's underlying principles and to examine the ways that discourse community has been used to frame business writing pedagogies thus far. At its base, discourse community theory stems from a postmodern epistemology that posits truth and knowledge as subjective constructs of collective, discursive negotiation. There are several key figures including Lev Vygotsky, Clifford Geertz, Michel Foucault, and Thomas Kuhn who, across multiple disciplines, have helped shape the social constructionist perspective. Joseph Petraglia (1991) found that the "core" elements that "form the basis of social construction" can be found in separate articles by to two of composition theory's more prolific proponents of

social constructionism, James Berlin (1988) and Kenneth Bruffee (1986). Petraglia (1991) summarized these core elements as follows:

- Real entities ("reality") include knowledge, beliefs, truths, and selves.

- All reality is arrived at by consensus.

- Consensus, and thus knowledge, is "discovered" solely through public discourse (rhetoric).

- Reality changes as consensus/knowledge changes. (p. 39)

I would add to this summary, or at least add emphasis to, Berlin's (1988) and Bruffee's (1986) assertions that 1) that discursive consensus building does not ignore the material conditions of the world; and, 2) that not only is knowledge and meaning in the world created through discursive consensus, but the observer's identity and the nature of the discourse community to which he or she belongs are also both generated and regenerated over time.

From the perspective of composition pedagogy, what is most significant about social constructionism is the realization that each discourse community has a uniquely interpreted reality, with its own set of values, traditions, relationships, and ways of communicating. As Chaim Perelman's and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1969) attested, "All language is the language of community…. The terms used, their meaning, their definition, can only be understood in the context of the habits, ways of thought, methods, external circumstances, and traditions known to the users of those terms" (p. 513). English professor Anne Beaufort (1999) provided further insight into the concept of discourse community, describing it as: "a social entity distinguished by a set of writing

practices that result from the community's shared values and goals, the physical conditions for getting writing done, and individual writers' influence on the community" (59). As a result, determining what constitutes "good writing" is almost wholly dependent upon the values and practices of a particular discourse community, including elements as diverse as writing equipment, group dynamics, disciplinary jargon, the number of distinct audiences for a text, revision procedures, the ongoing dialogue within a community, and past work on a subject. Writing cannot be extricated from the contexts in which it is created and utilized; thus, the very same piece of writing might be perfectly suited for use by one discourse community while in another it might prove worthless.

Since discourse and knowledge are situated in particular social contexts, and because individuals are likely to inhabit multiple discourse communities (either simultaneously or successively), the mission for writing teachers, according to discourse community theory, has been interpreted as helping students to adopt (and adapt to) the different identities and different literacies in the various discourse communities they will encounter. This pedagogical objective is made clear by Patricia Bizzell (1982) who noted that writing instruction should be, "interested in the social processes whereby language-learning and thinking capacities are shaped and used in particular communities" (p. 480) and by Kenneth Bruffee's (1986) assertion that, "We use language primarily to join communities we do not yet belong to and to cement our membership in communities we already belong to" (p. 784). David Bartholomae's (1985) influential article, "Inventing the university," crystalized the pedagogic model of acculturating student "outsiders" to the norms and practices of academic discourse. In it he wrote that students must "learn to

speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting,

evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our

community" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 134). Participation in the work of a discipline

requires the ability to converse in that discipline's language; thus, the study of

disciplinary content through writing reinforces both an understanding of the field itself

and of the writing conventions particular to that discourse community.

Genres

Of course, the manifestation of a community's discourse conventions (and the

gateway through which such conventions can be identified and learned) is the writing

genres that arise from and that enact the ongoing activities of that community. There is

wide agreement among composition scholars that writing genres are not merely a set of

normative structural features that identify and differentiate various types of texts

(Bakhtin, 1986; Bazerman, 2004; Beaufort, 1997; Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994;

Knoblauch, 1989; Miller, 1984). These scholars argue that focusing on formal textual

regularities creates a misleading view of genres as fixed, timeless, and universal. Instead,

genres are dynamic; they are constructed by, and are reflective of, recurring social

activities, social roles, and material conditions within particular discourse communities

(Bazerman, 2004; Beaufort, 1997; Miller, 1984). As Cyril Knoblauch (1989) explained,

genres reflect "richly contextualized social realities, lacking precise boundaries or formal

rules, that… ceaselessly evolve throughout the discursive activities of a given group of

language users" (p. 254). As the activities and membership of a discourse community

change, the genres necessary to coordinate, communicate, and shape those activities must

also evolve. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), this evolution occurs through the dual

pressures of maintaining a connection to previous genres (history) while meeting the requirements of new activities (addressivity) that older genres can no longer adequately address.

Aviva Freedman et al. (1994), made the point that since writing is social action we must understand that it is the exigent circumstances of a particular community at a particular moment that determine the nature of writing. Thus, every genre is unique to the discourse community and to the situation that generates it, despite sharing features with the genres of other communities or with past genres from which it has evolved. As a result, genres cannot be taught or learned solely by analyzing the shared structural features of similar texts, but can only be understood in relation to the social networks and activities of a specific discourse community. Ann Blakeslee (2001) expounded, "Research on genres is fairly consistent in its conclusions about how individuals learn genres. This research suggests that individuals must be immersed in a community, interact with the members and artifacts of the community, participate in and adapt to the social actions of the community, and appropriate the routinized tools-in-use of the community" (p. 170). This description summarizes the position widely taken in contemporary genre-based writing scholarship.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITY ACCULTURATION: WAC/WID

Discourse community theory and its related genre theory helped spur the growth of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID). Firmly grounded in the assimilative model of discourse community theory, WAC/WID establishes the role of the teacher "as the professional already involved in the

conversation of that community, helping the novice, the student, enter the conversation"

(McLeod & Maimon, 2000, p. 579). Charles Bazerman et al. (2005), Michael Carter et al.

(2007), Ken Hyland (2009), and others argued that a WID pedagogy exposes students to

a discipline's conventions—its vocabulary and language standards—in a way that allows

them to converse with others in the discipline, to understand their audiences' stance(s),

and to interpret discipline-specific texts. Christine Adam (2000) further emphasized this

point, noting that, "communities of practice… can offer insight into beliefs about what

constitutes rhetorical competence within particular environments… They must be

understood and adopted by newcomers who wish to write appropriately within a given

context" (p. 168). However, because writing is at the center of a discipline's epistemic

activity, not only does WID familiarize students with a discipline's conventions, but also

such a pedagogy engages students in performing the actual work of the discipline (Anson,

1987; Dana, Hancock, and Phillips, 2011; McCarthy, 1987; McLeod & Maimon, 2000).

Presenting a vision of WID in its most idealized form, James Slevin (2001) asked, "What

would happen if we followed an alternative view of academic genres, one that is centered

on the writer's active, contributing participation in an historical and dialogic intellectual

project and so a different view of disciplinarity, one that includes as a given all who

'work in the field,' even students?" (p. 191). Slevin, and others, believe that a WID

approach to writing instruction challenges educators and students alike to shift their

perspective, to look at the writing they do—even its learning process—as partaking in,

and contributing to, the ongoing life of their discipline. While the practical

implementation of these ideals has varied greatly, by the late 1990s WAC/WID programs

were a staple at universities across America (Fulkerson, 2005). As but one of many forms

of specialized, disciplinary composition, business writing courses began to proliferate

during this period.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITY THEORY IN BUSINESS WRITING

There is significant support in business writing scholarship for a WID-style,

discourse-community-based pedagogy (Nicolaus & Annous, 2013), and both disciplinary

journals and scholarly texts are full of models of professional writing instruction, the goal

of which is to acculturate students to the rhetorically constructed values, processes, and

functions of the business world (e.g., Addams et al., 2010; Anson, 1987; Dias, 2000;

Freedman and Adam, 2000a,b; Plutsky & Wilson, 2001; Smith Taylor, 2006; Spilka,

1993). Elizabeth Dorn (1999) noted, "Bridging The Gap between classroom and

workplace has long been the immediate challenge for business writing instructors" (p.

41). Accordingly, an instructional method frequently proposed by theorists is to develop

classes that immerse students in the culture and practices of the business world as a

distinct discourse community, often simulating the dynamics of a professional work

environment and having all written work conform to the generic guidelines expected of

actual professional workplace writing (Dias, 2000; Freedman and Adam, 2000a;

Beaufort, 1999; Woolever, 1989). As Paula Lentz (2013) pointed out, "Numerous studies

in *Business Communication Quarterly* demonstrate how to use simulations, real-life

cases, contexts, and clients to better connect students' communication to an authentic

communication context" (p. 477). Workplace simulations, as a means of teaching

business writing, range from the use of hypothetical business scenarios (Brumberger,

2004; Paulson, 2011; Wills & Clerkin, 2009) and case studies (Dorn, 1999; Rogers & Rymer, 1998) to partnerships with actual business organizations that require students to address real-world problems and to produce written work that will be used by the organizations (Addams et al, 2010; Blakeslee, 2001; Kreth, 2005). These varied techniques each have different sets of merits, and a closer examination of them will help create a portrait of business writing scholarship's pedagogical landscape.

Workplace Simulations: Hypothetical Scenarios and Case Studies

At one end of the business simulation spectrum are courses that use hypothetical business scenarios or case studies as the source material for writing assignments that resemble those found in a typical business workplace. Students research and produce written reports containing recommendations on hypothetical business decisions; they are often grouped in collaborative teams, are subject to peer review, and are required to revise their work before its final submission. Katherine Wills and Thomas Clerkin (2009) found that combining business strategy games (in which students form teams and take on the roles of CEO, CFO, COO, etc.) with reflective writing assignments provides students with "invaluable… experiences similar to those they might encounter in the business world" (pp. 221-222). Similarly, in order to familiarize students with workplace practices such as collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking, Edward Paulson (2011) recommended a simulation that asks student teams to assess and deliver reports regarding hypothetical mergers of real companies. While these imagined scenarios may expose students to the complexity of decision-making in the business world, some assert that an

even greater grounding in reality, in the form of case studies, is needed to recreate a business environment in the classroom.

Dorn (1999) pointed out that, "most scholarship that does exist advocates the case method as an effective way to familiarize students with the principles of business communications and complexities of writing in the workplace" (p. 42). Priscilla Rogers and Jone Rymer (1998), as part of the Association for Business Communication's Casebook Project, listed the following as benefits of effective case studies: providing the context for communication, enabling active learning, presenting communication as social action, showing the collaborative nature of communication, integrating special topics such as intercultural communication and ethics, indicating the contingent nature of communication efficacy, and offering the landscape to test communication theory and models (p. 10). However, they noted that, "the chief advantage of using cases in communication instruction [is that] they provide a *slice of business life* inside the classroom" (Rogers & Rymer, 1998, p. 8). It is this purported ability to bring workplace practices, business related content, and professional writing genres to the classroom that gives case studies their value. Detractors of this method, however, counter that the majority of these simulations fall short, failing to reproduce an authentic workplace experience or the development of actual business writing acumen (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994; Knoblauch, 1989). "Even in a university course in which case-studies are used… based on actual histories, there is an enormous simplification and abstraction from the untidy realities of the everyday world as experienced" (Dias, Freedman, Medway, et al., 1999, pp. 191-2). Further, in her review of the use of case studies, Dorn

(1999) observed that, too often, they present students with extraordinary scenarios that they are unlikely to face upon entering the workforce. Simulations that put students in corporate leadership roles, or where they are responsible for making and reporting high-level decisions, are unrealistic and actually do little to acculturate or prepare them to act as new members of a workplace discourse community.

Workplace Simulations: Classroom-Workplace Partnerships

In response to these and other criticisms that highlight the inability of hypothetical situations and case studies to effectively reproduce a workplace's rhetorical contexts or social dynamics, an increasing number of pedagogues (e.g., Addams et al., 2010; Blakeslee, 2001; Dana et al., 2011; Davis & Krapels, 1999; Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Kreth, 2005; Smith Taylor, 2006) are calling for suspending the classroom's traditional academic structure and replacing it with the closest possible simulation of a workplace environment, typically involving partnerships with actual business organizations. This client-based writing instruction is meant to alter the purpose, motivation, and assessment of written work, as well as the very roles of the class participants, aligning them more closely with the values and operations of the business community than those of academia. While the literature contains a wide variety of client-based projects—Melinda Kreth (2005) described an assignment where students create a first-time home buyer's guidebook for a real estate company; Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (2001) had students revise documents for an allergy clinic; and H. Lon Addams et al. (2010) recounted an assignment where students developed a targeted letter to solicit donations for a non-profit organization—they all share a set of common attributes and goals. Blakeslee (2001)

identified four features that such classroom-workplace collaborations, if properly

instituted, bring to professional writing instruction: exposure (to a workplace's

community, practices, and genres), authenticity (of assignments in relation to real

workplace tasks, as perceived by students), transition (from academic learning to

workplace practice post-graduation), and response (the evaluation of students' work by

clients and instructors). The benefit of a successful client-based approach is the extent to

which it can bridge the gap between the academic and the professional worlds by

immersing students in a workplace discourse culture. This means, as Blakeslee's

framework highlights, establishing assignments, with the following characteristics: their

exigence arises from real-world needs; their content and research requires interaction

with a workplace entity; their written work conforms to the purposes, genres, audiences,

and parameters of the particular workplace and issues being addressed; their success is

judged by the expectations of, and utility to, the document's end user; and, their

epistemic production can be translated into future functionality in the workplace.

　　These client-based courses represent the pinnacle of discourse community

pedagogy within the business writing discipline. Gone (in theory) are the constructs of

the academic discourse community—a student-teacher hierarchy, writing to demonstrate

knowledge, grade as motivator, etc.—and in their place are the values and practices that

drive written communication in the business world: collaborative partnerships between

supervisors (instructors) and subordinates (students) to produce transactional writing with

the shared goal of advancing the organization's operations. As Blakeslee (2001) noted,

"Such assignments, which ask students to complete workplace projects provided by

clients, potentially preserve more of the culture of the workplace, while also allowing

students to address a variety of audiences" (p. 170). Concurring, Freedman and Adam

(2000a) commented on a client-based practicum: "the most striking feature was the

degree to which the writing elicited indeed approximated workplace discourse from a

range of perspectives" (p. 133). Scholars find that employing a workplace partnership

within the writing classroom facilitates a familiarity with business discourse genres

(Kastman Breuch, 2001), engages students in critical thinking and problem solving

(Davis & Krapels, 1999), tends to produce high quality work (Brumberger, 2004), and

enables students to participate and experience, if only peripherally, the types of activities

and challenges they will face as members of the professional world (Blakeslee, 2001). An

additional benefit indicated by much of the literature is that students usually perceive

client-based assignments as being more challenging, engaging, and valuable than those

based solely on theory or case studies (Addams et al., 2010).

DISCOURSE COMMUNITY THEORY: LIMITATIONS

Despite the relative ability of workplace-classroom collaborations to reproduce

business discourse practices in an academic setting, there remain four significant

problems inherent in a discourse-community-based business writing pedagogy that even a

client-based instruction model cannot fully overcome. First, business writing belongs to a

culture whose functions, values, and procedures are largely incompatible with those of

academia and its discourse paradigms. Second, to teach, or even to discuss, "business

writing" or the values of the "business world" is egregiously reductive yet virtually

unavoidable (I, myself, am guilty of this throughout this study), and doing so bears only

the vaguest resemblance to the varied, atomistic nature of individual workplace communities and their unique discourse practices. Third, discourse community theory tends to isolate a workplace's communications from the physical, hierarchical, and historic contexts that engender and define an organization's activity. Last, not only is it impossible to account for the sheer number and the fluidity of discourse cultures (and subcultures) that comprise the business world but also, as post-process theory demonstrates, each individual communicative act involves so many variables in the attempted creation and transmission of meaning that Thomas Kent (1993) went so far as to declare that "writing… cannot be taught" (p. 159).

Academic-Workplace Culture Incompatibility

The first problem with teaching business writing as a matter of discourse community acculturation is that academia and business constitute two largely incompatible discourse communities; both groups write for different reasons, with different motivations and goals, and for different types of audiences. As Freedman and Adam (2000a) observed, "What has become very clear… is the degree to which writing at university differs, and *necessarily* differs, from workplace writing—even when the disciplinary focus is shared" (p. 131). This lack of compatibility makes it difficult, at best, for the values, practices, and contexts of business discourse to be recreated (or even taught) in an academic setting without some conflation of the two communities' disparate discourse paradigms.

Purpose. The purpose of academic writing, as practiced in most universities, is fairly narrow and straightforward: students write to demonstrate that they have learned

some particular knowledge set and to achieve a grade commensurate with that demonstration (Freedman & Adam, 2000a). Business writing, however, is more organically integrated into the activity of the workplace; writing is transactional and occurs as part of an ongoing work process—that is, the written document is rarely an end goal in itself (Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Kastman Breuch, 2001; Petraglia, 1995). Another key difference is that academic papers largely analyze issues and theories retrospectively while workplace writing is concerned with anticipating future events and planning appropriate actions (Adam, 2000).

Audience. Another discrepancy is that writers in academia and in the business world are producing texts for very different types of readers. Despite forays into peer review exercises, ultimately, academic writing is directed at either a single instructor or an editorial board at some publication; in both cases, the writer presents a finished product seeking a definitive evaluation of his or her work from an expert audience. Workplace writers, by contrast, produce texts for multiple—and simultaneous—audiences, including their collaborative co-authors, a hierarchy of superiors, and one or more end users such as clients, board members, customers, or investors, all with the purpose of conveying information in which the authors are expert. From the readers' perspective they, too, are looking for markedly different attributes in a text. The evaluator of academic texts is concerned with the writer's grasp of disciplinary knowledge, his or her original contribution to the discourse, and whether ideas were plagiarized from another's work (Freedman & Adam, 2000a). Readers of business writing focus on the utility and persuasiveness of a writer's plan of action, the exclusion of extraneous or

shared knowledge, the text's consistency with the company's values, image, message, and goals, and the work's compatibility with similar company documents (Freedman & Adam, 2000a).

Process. In addition to the differences they face in purpose and audience, workplace and academic writers also diverge in the process they use to produce a text. The majority of the time academic writing is done solitarily, without collaboration; writers often include narrative elements describing the development of their ideas and arguments; they make sure to cite all sources; writers receive most of their guidance from an instructor prior to writing and serve as the primary editors of their own work; their revisions occur prior to submission; and, excluding drafts explicitly assigned as revision exercises, academic writers view papers as a final product—the end of an assignment process (Adam, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000a; MacKinnion, 1993; Suchan, 1998). In the business world, the writing process is approached differently. Most written business documents are produced collaboratively, with one writer's work comprising only a portion of a finished document, or with revisions by numerous other writers integrated into his or her original draft; the writer's focus is to provide only necessary information, crafted to optimize the document's utility for an end user; pride of authorship has no place, and chunks of text can be adopted from other company documents without need of citation; most guidance from superiors comes during the highly recursive writing and revision stages; writers and their superiors work together as partners to co-produce the best document possible, and most revisions occur after the writer submits his or her work; finally, workplace texts are viewed as part of an ongoing business operation, to be

revised, used, revised, and used again as long as their contents remain valuable (Adam, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000a; MacKinnion, 1993; Suchan, 1998).

Challenges. While client-based courses address many of these academic-workplace incompatibilities, even their proponents acknowledge that they cannot achieve in practice the level of cultural immersion they promise in theory (Adam, 2000; Blakeslee, 2001; Reither, 1993). First, it remains extremely difficult for academia to overcome the grade as motivator and to stop students from privileging the instructor as their primary audience (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994; Kastman Breuch, 2001; McCarthy, 1987; Mansfield, 1993). As James Reither (1993) noted, "What ultimately counts in these classrooms is writing that gets a good grade…" (196). The result is what Petraglia (1995) called "pseudotransactional writing," writing that appears to achieve an objective in the workplace but which, in reality, is meant to satisfy the expectations of the writing teacher. Aware of what will get them a good grade, students write according to the values of academia, and not those of business. A second impediment is that clients and instructors often value and evaluate various aspects of written work differently (Seshadri & Theye, 2000; Smith Taylor, 2006; Reynolds, 1995). Srivata Seshadri's and Larry Theye's (2000) study found that business professionals read more for content and substance and less for genre formats and structural features than do faculty, and Deanna Dannels (2003) argued that instructors tend to give greater weight to academic standards than to client expectations. Additionally, clients are often unfamiliar or uncomfortable with providing feedback to students and end up being either too complimentary or too critical without being constructive (Blakeslee, 2001). This divergence in perspectives

leads to confusion among students (Addams et al, 2010; Smith Taylor, 2006) who incorrectly assume that client expectations are the same as teacher expectations (Kastman Breuch, 2001) or who receive unhelpful or contradictory feedback and don't know what to do with it (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Blakeslee, 2001; Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994). Thus, despite their apparent potential, client-based writing courses too often fail to bring the university and professional worlds together in a manner meaningful enough to be considered an effective solution.

Reductivism

Although Bartholomae's model of discourse community acculturation helped give rise to a new era of writing education, it also created two problems that, to this day, plague pedagogies founded on discourse community theory. First, as Joseph Harris (1989) objects, Bartholomae never defines who it is that constitutes "our community" whose language and ways of knowing students must adopt. Bartholomae is certainly aware that universities contain numerous disciplines with multiple discourses; however, he cannot seem to avoid the pitfall of describing categories of discourse such as those of the "historian," the "anthropologist," the "economist," and most egregiously, "the academy" that are so broad and monolithic as to have little meaning or correlation to the work of any actual academic discipline. The second problem is that this formulation represents a flawed implementation of the social constructionist epistemology, depicting disciplinary discourses as fixed entities to which student initiates must conform, rather than as dynamic, ongoing dialogic negotiations of reality that even new members participate in shaping.

Just as Bartholomae's generalization in discussing "academic discourse" oversimplifies that field of composition study, so, too, one of the biggest dilemmas facing the teaching of "business writing" is the practice of consolidating an array of different workplace discourse cultures into a single, reductive category. Charles Darrah (1996) warned that there is no "comprehensive, foundational description of the workplace… [as] the diverse understandings of work are extraordinarily complex, reflecting assumptions about the self, its relations with other people, hierarchy, knowledge and causation" (p. 33). Similarly, Nicole Laster and Travis Russ (2010) noted that the disciplinary term, "business," refers to a general program of study that contains a multitude of industries, organizations, divisions, professions, and individual workplace roles, each of which represents a unique set of communications functions and practices. While business writing instructors recognize that there is no single, unifying business discourse community—instead, there are innumerable ones, with their own discourse cultures and subcultures, in which genres, conventions, and values are in constant flux. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of this diverse field and, as a practical matter, educators end up discussing the catch-all, "business writing," which they delineate by a set of commonly shared genres, best practices, and in contrast to academic writing (e.g., Adam, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Woolever, 1989).

Even in the context of a client-based course—arguably the most realistic of academic workplace simulations—the focus of actual writing instruction continues to be on formalist principles. Smith Taylor (2006) found that "because they could not judge the accuracy of the content," teachers in client-based courses "abandoned content evaluation"

and "focus[ed] more strongly or exclusively on design and language" (p. 134). This distilled form of business writing is most often concerned with "writing principles, such as tone, audience analysis, conciseness, and mechanics" (Addams et al., 2010, p.282) and the generic documents that populate most workplaces. This approach is typified by Dorn (1999) who wrote, "I use the term 'business writing' to refer to writing done every day in most workplaces. I mean the letter, the memo, the e-mail, the presentation, the written report (of any type from status reports to business plans to final project reports), and any variation of these core texts" (p. 45). Many scholars of business writing defend such instruction, arguing that although providing students with these business writing fundamentals cannot replicate "the social realities" (Blaskeslee, 2001, p. 175), "complexity" (Adam, 2000, p. 178), or "multilayered" (DePalma, 2008, p. 78) nature of workplace discourse paradigms, they can at least give students a "sense" (DePalma, 2008, p. 78), "exposure" (Blaskeslee, 2001, p. 175), and "guidance to… where this complexity exists" (Adam, 2000, p. 178). However, a closer look reveals this sort of reductivism to be severely flawed. As Knoblauch (1989) insisted, "Workplace practices are embedded in additional layers of social reality and cannot be understood—or learned—apart from them" (p. 257). Rather than serving as a useful preview of the complexity of workplace discourse, teaching the trappings of effective business writing—audience accommodation, concision, and especially common business genres—misconstrues workplace communication as a set of rigid molds into which students must fit their writing; it denies the socially constructed origins of these discursive elements and the roles they play in the life of workplace activity systems. Just as significantly, it

directly contradicts most accepted scholarship on the social nature of composition, thereby creating a chasm between academic theory and pedagogic practice.

Activity Systems

One of the shortcomings of using discourse community theory as the lens through which to analyze and teach workplace writing is that it does not take into account many of the factors that affect communications within an organization. While discourse community theory does provide insight into the values, practices, and genre conventions that a community develops, it ignores how the history, the material conditions, and the holistic objectives of an organization influence all of the rhetorical situations there. As Michael-John DePalma (2008) noted:

> [D]iscourse knowledge, and self-awareness about [one's] role in the particular context is of limited use in that it fails to account for many of the elements… that shape a writer's interactions, behaviors, and cognitive processes (e.g., the hierarchical structures, divisions of labor, activities, histories, tools, objects, material conditions). (p. 74)

Not accounting for such components provides an incomplete understanding of the circumstances that govern and comprise the dialectical relationship between a writer and his or her community. In terms of preparing students to become effective workplace writers, this means that they are missing important pieces of the puzzle they are being asked to solve.

An alternative, and more comprehensive, description of organizational discourse can be found in activity theory. An activity system is a network of individuals, each with

a particular role and identity, whose ongoing interactions with one another are mediated by historically determined tools (including written language) in order to accomplish a common objective (Engestrom, 2001; Prior, 2006; Russell 1997; Spinuzzi, 1996). What differentiates activity theory from discourse community theory is that the former 1) does not bracket off the analysis of social activity from the tools and material conditions that make such activity possible; 2) rather than promoting hegemony, it embraces the diversity of a community's members—their differing histories and points of view, as well as the division of labor that is necessary to achieve a shared organizational objective; 3) it explicitly acknowledges the ongoing "(re)creation" (Russell, 1997) of subjects' identities, the activity system's objectives, and its mediating tools; 4) it recognizes that activity systems are historically situated and that their activities and constituent parts can only be understood in the context of that history; 5) it defines genre as unique to each particular activity system and emphasizes its malleability—that genres are altered by interactions with new members and with other activity systems; and, 6) it establishes the activity system as the "prime unit of analysis" (Engestrom, 2001), meaning that individual and group actions (including communications) cannot be understood apart from the activity system (Engestrom, 2001; Prior, 2006; Russell 1997; Spinuzzi, 1996).

Activity theory reveals why most business writing courses fail to adequately prepare students to communicate in the professional world. Teaching general, a-contextual strategies has little relevance to actual workplace writing and even client-based courses that are grounded in discourse community theory cannot provide the necessary insight for student writers to address their client's needs. While an individual

writing assignment or project does have its own immediate purpose(s) and goal(s), it is also a tool in service of the particular activity system's wider, collective objective (which itself is influenced by the organization's members, its division of labor, its history, its material conditions, etc.) of which the classroom participants, as outsiders, are largely unaware. These writing assignments cannot be effectively executed or assessed in isolation from the activity system in which they are embedded. Moreover, discourse community theory views students as separate from, and mere mimickers of, the professional discourse communities they are preparing to join, whereas activity theory acknowledges students' agency in these communities. By engaging with an organization in a client-based course, students "affect the activity system (and hence genres) of core researchers directly and routinely, and in the process they fully appropriate the activity system's motive/object" (Russell, 1997, p. 30). Thus, in addition to providing a fuller picture of organizational discourse, activity theory also does a superior job of accounting for how new members enter and affect the discursive communities that they come in contact with.

Paralogical Nature of Discourse

Beyond the limitations of discourse community theory to account for the complexity of communication at an organizational level, there is the further problem, brought to the fore by post-process theory, that each individual instance of communication is unique (based on the interlocutors' individual preferences, perspectives, histories, etc.) and cannot be explained or taught using a systemic theory or a repeatable process. Instead, post-process theory holds that writing is an interpretive act,

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a hermeneutic guessing game, trying to match one's encoding/decoding strategies with those of one's dialogic partner(s) (Kent, 1989, 1993, 1999). As Matthew Heard (2008) explained, a "language user cannot ever really know or predict what will happen when he or she actually engages in communication with others" (Heard, 2008, p. 287). What can be known about writing is, as Kent (1999) described, that it is "public," it is "interpretive," and it is "situated" (p. 1). By this he, and other post-process theorists, mean that all writing is in response to other writing—it enters into an ongoing conversation, much like Kenneth Burke's (1941) parlor metaphor—and represents an interactive dialogue with an audience; it also means that both the production and consumption of writing involve interpretation—trying to anticipate and accommodate the encoding/decoding strategies of one's interlocutor(s)—not simply a unidirectional feeling out of the author's intention by the reader (Kastman Breuch, 2001) nor a straightforward translation of the author's ideas into words (Heard, 2008); and last, it means that writing is created within a particular context—it is informed by the intersection of specific historical, cultural, personal, and situational circumstances, all of which contribute to the lack of communicative predictability (Heard, 2008).

The implications of post-process theory for composition pedagogy (business related or otherwise) are significant. The content and form of writing instruction are completely reshaped in a post-process perspective, as are the role and nature of discourse community. Most fundamentally, post-process theory reveals that there is no formula or procedure that can help students predict how others may interpret what they write or that can guarantee a communication will be successfully understood by its recipient(s)

(Heard, 2008; Kastman Breuch, 2001; Kent, 1993). Kent (1993) found that, aside from background skills such as grammar (which cannot ensure effective communication), the act of composing is indeterminate and does not represent a body of knowledge that can be taught or learned. Many have taken Kent's position to be an outright rejection of writing instruction. However, Kastman Breuch (2001, 2002) suggested that what is most essential to post-process theory is its repudiation of mastery, not of writing education in its entirety. That is, there exists no model of writing or set of content for which any level of expertise can be developed; rather, post-process scholars have come to conclude that what we can provide for our students is the opportunity to engage in public discourse, to make them aware that writing is a hermeneutic activity, and to collaborate with them in the discursive triangulation of meaning making so that they may become adept at communicative paralogic guessing (Blyler, 1999; Heard, 2008; Kastman Breuch, 2001, 2002).

With regard to discourse communities, Kent (1989) contended that if, indeed, such entities exist, it is not a shared set of language conventions that allows their members to communicate but the development of a common hermeneutic strategy that has the potential to aid members in guessing how others might interpret their discourse (p. 26). As a result, many post-process adherents see little value in studying discourse community as it represents just another set of codified processes that have no relevance to the "infinite complexity" (Heard, 2008, p. 287) of each communicative act. Kastman Breuch (2001), for one, pointed out that, "students may not adapt well to workplace contexts if they have only been prepared to learn about [a community's] rules and

conventions of writing" (p. 193). Barbara Couture (1999) similarly argued that, "our current scholarship on diverse ways of knowing, meaning, and communicating strongly suggests that modeling specific conventions and procedures will not ensure that writers learn all they need to know in order to communicate effectively to others" (p. 42). A case can be made, however, that there is evidence in post-process scholarship for the benefits of discourse community analysis, not for the mastery of a community's processes or conventions, but to gain insight and exposure to its members' hermeneutic strategies. Kent (1989), himself, defended discipline-specific courses such technical writing, noting that, "they can supply important background knowledge that the student can acquire nowhere else" (p. 39). Couture (1999), too, acknowledged that:

> [W]riters need to know quite a bit about what it is that others do when they communicate in writing so that they can act like them and, perhaps equally important, be like them in order to occupy a common field within which each other's communications are heard and understood. Writers need to know how and why to choose a strategy, have confidence in its projected result and implement it successfully. (p. 42)

The significance here is that one's breadth of background information (in the form of Davidsonian "prior" hermeneutic theory) can be expanded through repeated exposure to the hermeneutic strategies of various discourse communities' members. As Heard (2008) explained, "Moments of passing always add to our 'prior theories,' so that the only way to really 'teach' successful communication is to enlarge students' 'prior theories' by exposing each student to as many different communication scenarios as possible" (p.

288). Thus, while there can never be certainty as to the success of a "passing strategy" in a particular instance of communication, post-process theory does recognize that "prior theories" (informed by patterns observed in a community's discursive activities) are useful to one's ability to effectively match one's encoding/decoding strategies to those of one's dialogic partner(s). As a result, providing students with opportunities to engage in public discourse and mentoring them as they analyze and develop hermeneutic strategies appropriate to various communities forms the crux of pedagogies that take post-process theory into account.

CONCLUSION

Business writing courses in American colleges are failing to adequately prepare students to be effective discursive participants in their post-academic workplaces. Our field's pedagogical scholarship, as evidenced in its disciplinary journals, is lagging behind that of the wider field of composition studies. Having built its foundation in the territory of discourse community theory, the business writing discipline has made insufficient efforts to explore or address how developments in activity theory, post-process theory, and other areas of composition research could and should affect the way we think about and teach professional writing. While discourse community theory still has value (including its recognition of the situated nature of writing, as well as the common purposes, situational familiarity, and genre development that members of particular discourse communities share with one another), too often it is approached as a static set of genres and processes students must learn and adhere to. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, even at its most robust, discourse community theory remains

limited in its ability to account for the complexity of workplace communications. For too long business writing scholarship has been projecting shadows on the cave wall, hoping that they will provide sufficient points of reference for when students emerge into the bright sunlight of their actual workplaces. It is time to accept that more is needed. Our discipline must expand its horizons and embrace research that develops composition pedagogies that go beyond what tried-and-true discourse community theory can accomplish.

Chapter 3: SURVEY OF BUSINESS WRITING TEXTBOOKS AND SYLLABI

In the previous chapter I laid out the case that current methods of teaching business writing aren't adequately preparing students to meet the discursive challenges they will face upon entering the workforce. In this chapter, in an effort to investigate just what college students are being taught in contemporary business writing classrooms—how "good" business writing is characterized, what lessons and information are most emphasized, and how students' progress is evaluated—I collected and analyzed recent business writing and business communication syllabi from 105 colleges and universities in 48 states and I conducted a close textual analysis of the five textbooks most commonly used by the courses represented in these syllabi. My rationale for this approach is based on the idea that syllabi are considered to be "communication device[s]" through which instructors "convey the overall purposes and the strategies" as well as the "content and organization" of their courses to their students (Albers, 2003, p. 61). As a result, syllabi serve as a window into the classroom, providing a broad overview of the teaching and learning that is intended to occur over the course of a semester. Moreover, a number of business writing scholars contend that the teaching models in popular business writing textbooks inform new writing instructors, as much as they do their students, about the essential content of a business writing course (Alred & Thelen, 1993; Connors, 1986; Knoblauch, 1989; Welch, 1987). For many of these professional communication instructors, many of whom are less experienced adjunct and part-time faculty (Meloncon,

2009; Moshiri & Cardon, 2014),[1] textbooks serve as their "primary guide during the semester" (Alred & Thelen, 1993) and these books "subtly persuade new writing instructors… to teach the same way" that the textbooks prescribe (Welch, 1987, pp. 271-272). In this way, an examination of business writing textbooks and syllabi should provide valuable insight into the pedagogies and activities of business writing classrooms in America's colleges and universities.

Similar studies of syllabi and textbooks have been used in the past to determine the content and foci of courses or to analyze the use of particular teaching strategies in various disciplinary classrooms. Roger Graves, Theresa Hyland, and Boba Samuels (2010) looked at 179 syllabi from a single college to investigate the kinds of writing assignments among various departments WAC courses. In order to assess the pedagogical approaches and course content of business communication courses, Travis Russ (2009) surveyed the course content and required assignments of 505 business communication courses. Dan Meltzer (2009) compared the number of writing assignments in writing-centered courses as compared to "strictly" disciplinary courses. Additionally, Bridget Walsh, Dave Bonner, Victoria Springer, Camille Lalasz, and Bob Ives (2013) studied the syllabi of 93 grant-writing courses to determine how textbooks were selected and which features teachers most valued. With regard to textbooks, Aya Matsuda and Paul Kei Matsuda (2011) conducted an analysis of eight technical communication textbooks in order to measure the extent to which global perspectives are represented. Joanna Wolfe

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[1] According to Moshiri and Cardon (2014), 59.2% of business communication instructors, nationally, are non-tenure track. Neither they nor Meloncon (2009) break this category down further (e.g. by % of instructors who are teaching assistants) except to note that most instructors hold Master's degrees.

(2009) studied twelve technical communication textbooks, assessing their (lack of) relevance to engineering students. And Stephen Bremmer (2008) examined eight business communication textbooks in order to measure their coverage of intertextuality. These syllabi and textbook studies suggest that this sort of analysis is an accepted method for drawing conclusions about the content of classroom teaching praxis.

While any analysis of these syllabi and five textbooks cannot represent an exact picture of what occurs in actual business writing classrooms, by undertaking this study I hope to provide an indication of the topics and pedagogical approaches that, in part, guide a good deal of classroom instruction in many undergraduate business writing courses. Following my examination of the contents and instructional methods found in the textbooks and syllabi, I provide a critique of their pedagogical approach, demonstrating that a significant gap exists between what and how our students are being taught and what our contemporary disciplinary scholarship holds to be accepted doctrine. It is not my intention to deride the scholarship and knowledge of these textbooks' authors, who are well respected and who regularly contribute to the same journals whose theories I use to evaluate these textbooks. The same is true of my analysis of the syllabi and the instructors who wrote them. Instead, my critique of the underlying pedagogical assumptions in these textbooks and syllabi, that writing consists of a body of knowledge to be mastered, is meant only to highlight areas where the teaching of business writing can be updated and improved.

METHODOLOGY

In order to collect the data, in late 2012 I requested syllabi from members of the

Association for Business Communication who teach courses in business writing and business communication in American colleges and universities. Additionally, following a model used by Graves, Hyland, and Samuels (2010) I searched college and university websites throughout the nation and downloaded publicly accessible syllabi from departments' websites. The criteria for inclusion in the study was fourfold: the syllabi had to be from college-level courses in business writing or business communication; the educational institutions had to be located in the United States; the syllabi could be no more than a decade old; and there needed to be sufficient detail to provide a picture of the material and/or pedagogical philosophy used in the class.

Of the syllabi I collected, 81% list at least one textbook that was required for the class. It is presumable that those syllabi without a textbook use some sort of a custom-made course packet or other collection of documents that I am unable to include in my analysis. Of the rest, there were a total of 34 different textbooks listed among the business writing and business communication syllabi. For my analysis, I chose the 5 that were most commonly used: *Essentials of Business Communication* by Mary Ellen Guffey and Dana Loewy (11%); *Business Communication: Process & Product* by Guffey and Loewy (8.5%); *Business Communication* by Carol Lehman and Debbie DuFrene (7.5%); *Writing That Works* by Walter Oliu, Charles Brusaw, and Gerald Alred (4.7%); and *Business Communication Today* by Courtland Bovée and John Thill (4.7%). There were a variety of editions used by different courses and rather than subdividing them, I chose to use the most recent editions, available at the time, of each textbook in order to represent

the authors' current viewpoint on what should be included in a business writing or business communication textbook.

There are obvious limitations with this method: syllabi are only partial representations of what actually happens in the classroom; the content and depth of detail is different in each of the syllabi; and, the number of collected syllabi represents only a small fraction of the business writing and business communication courses throughout the nation. However, even with these limitations, the information contained in these syllabi gives us the opportunity to at least begin discussing what takes place in our college's business writing courses. Additionally, my findings are largely consistent with previous studies of business communication classroom practices and pedagogies, including Russ (2009), in which a far larger sample—data from 505 instructors—was analyzed. Furthermore, research assessing the state of business communication in American colleges (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope & Bayless, 1999) has revealed that between 1999 and 2014 the content and teaching approach of these courses has remained incredibly consistent. Such evidence hopefully enhances the credence of my findings.

TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

Overview of Business Writing Textbooks' Strategies

Perhaps the best way to get a sense of these textbook authors' views on teaching business writing can be found my examining the major content areas they have outlined in their books. A review of these five textbooks reveals a remarkably uniform outlook on what they hold to be necessary in order to teach, and to learn, how to become an effective

business writer. All of the texts (though with some minor differences in order and precise wording) divide their contents into four major sections: 1) the foundations of communication and the purpose(s) of business writing; 2) the writing process; 3) common business writing genres; and, 4) an appendix of guidebooks covering grammar, writing mechanics, and document formats (Bovée & Thill, 2012; Guffey & Loewy, 2011; Guffey & Loewy, 2013; Lehman & DuFrene, 2011; Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2013).[2] What this breakdown indicates is that the authors all share the fundamental stance that writing is a cultural product and that to become an effective writer one must learn to master a body of knowledge—a set of rules, genres, processes, and values—that are particular to, and are defined by, a specific discourse community. With regard to business communication then, as Bovée and Thill (2012) noted, "Although you have been communicating with some success your entire life, business communication is often more complicated and demanding than the social communication you typically engage in" (p. 5). It is the job of these textbooks to "uncomplicate" business communication, to offer a "set of tools that simplify teaching" (Bovée & Thill, 2012, p. xx) and make the learning process as easily digestible as possible. To accomplish this task, in all five books, the authors take four steps to simplify the knowledge needed to become an effective business writer: 1) they present business writing as belonging to a single, all-embracing business discourse community; 2) they describe a universally applicable writing process; 3) they narrow the purposes of business writing to only three possible objectives; and, 4) they provide step-by-step instructions for using the most common business genres. In this

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[2] It must be noted that other topics, such as ethical communication, collaboration, developing a "you attitude," and graphical design, are also covered in these textbooks.

way, these textbooks hope to demystify business writing for college students and to ease their transition from the academy to the workplace.

I will begin my analysis of these textbooks by looking at their goals for business writing instruction, their intended audiences, and how the authors' construct their readers' identities. I will then examine all four of the simplification strategies outlined above so as to determine what knowledge these authors deem most essential in order for students to become effective business writers.

Writing Instruction Goals

All of the authors describe the purpose of business writing instruction in similar, straightforward fashion: to "improve your communication skills" in order to "start your business career with a clear competitive advantage" (Bovée & Thill, 2012, pp. 3-4); to "develop and document your business communication skills" so as to "provide evidence to you and future employers that you possess the essential knowledge and skills to be an effective communicator in today's workplace" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. 4); "developing basic writing skills" in order to "make you a successful business communicator in today's dynamic but demanding workplace" (Guffey & Loewy, 2013, p. 6); and, "prepar[ing] students to apply the writing process to the documents and situations they will encounter in the workplace" (Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2013, p. vii). These descriptions of writing as a set of skills that can provide entree to the workplace and that are essential to effective workplace productivity both commodify business communication and establish a very specific pedagogical framework that positions the lessons in these texts as concrete and authoritative.

Business writing's exigence. As further evidence of these texts commodification of business writing—and as a selling point for their books—the authors make a concerted effort to highlight the importance of effective business communication to one's career. Several of the books cite many of the same governmental and educational studies on workplace writing that I do in order to drive home the point that, "Effective business communication is essential to success in today's work environments" (Lehman and DuFrene, 2011, p. 5), and that developing business writing skills "may be the single most important step you can take in your career" (Bovée & Thill, 2012, p. 3). Guffey and Loewy (2013) even contended that, "This textbook and this course can immediately improve your communication skills. Because the skills you are learning will make a huge difference in your ability to find a job and to be promoted, this will be one of the most important courses you will ever take" (p. 2). With such emphatic claims, these authors set a high bar for their textbooks as resources that can deliver practical lessons that will help students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for adapting to the workplace writing challenges they will face upon graduation.

Textbooks' Audience(s)

It is fairly obvious that the two distinct audiences these textbooks address are college students and business communication instructors. What is of more interest is the way that the authors construct their readers' identities.

Students. The books universally position students as American, largely uninitiated in the world of business discourse, and whose primary interests in taking a business writing course are vocational. All of the textbooks include at least one section on the

considerations necessary for communicating with members of foreign business cultures.

Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013), for example, advised readers that, "Organizational

patterns, forms of courtesy, and ideas about efficiency can vary significantly from culture

to culture. What might seem direct and efficient in the United States, for example, could

be seen as blunt and even impolite in other cultures" (p. 74). The implication is that

American business culture forms the readers' default perspective. Regarding their

audiences' familiarity with business discourse, Bovée and Thill (2012) wrote, "we have

taken special care not to assume any in-depth business experience, so *Business*

Communication Today works quite well for students with limited work experience or

business coursework" (p. xix). Last, the vocational purpose of these texts and their

corresponding courses is made explicit by all the authors, as exemplified by Guffey and

Loewy (2013) who wrote, "superior communication skills will give you an edge over

other job applicants. A powerful career filter, your ability to communicate will make you

marketable and continue to be your ticket to success regardless of the economic climate"

(p. 2). Together, the authors' vision of their student readers' collective identity is part-

and-parcel with the textbooks' philosophy that business communication is a skills-based

commodity, as the following quotation makes clear: "Many organizations pay thousands

of dollars to communication coaches and trainers to teach employees the very skills you

are learning in this course. Your instructor is your coach. Take advantage of this

opportunity, and get your money's worth!" (Guffey & Loewy, 2011, p. 7).

Instructors. Instructors' identities are established in a similar manner, but at the

opposite end of the experience spectrum. As Guffey and Loewy (2011) informed student

readers, "You have an expert who is willing to work with you to help improve your writing, speaking, and other communication skills" (p.7). As experts, teachers of business writing are framed as the possessors of valuable knowledge and, in partnership with these textbooks, they can facilitate the transfer and assimilation of this knowledge to their students. The authors further define instructors as their colleagues, with the shared desire for efficient and effective teaching tools and the ability to measure their students' progress. As Lehmen and DuFrene explained, "As business communication professors in accredited business schools, we know the challenges you face in preparing today's student for the ever-changing workplace" (p. 7). They continued, "*Business Communication, 16e*, provides the comprehensive coverage that you expect… [and] a variety of meaningful assessment tools to provide you with measurable learning outcomes" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. 7).

The relationship—the pedagogical model—that results from this particular construction of these subjects necessitates that all three components—distributor of knowledge, receiver of knowledge, and content of knowledge (the textbook)—be present for the educational process to succeed.

Simplification Strategies

Business world. As part of their explanation of why business writing courses are necessary, Guffey and Loewy (2011) wrote, "The first thing you should recognize about *business writing* [emphasis added] is that it differs from other writing you may have done" (Guffey & Loewy, 2011, p. 112). Lehman and DuFrene (2011) similarly asserted, "*Whatever your chosen career field*, [emphasis added]…. you will have the opportunity

to develop and document your *business communication skills* [emphasis added]" (p. 4).

Finally, Bovée and Thill (2013) lauded their textbook's "comprehensive coverage of *business communication concepts… ideal for business communication courses in any curriculum* [emphasis added]" (Bovée & Thill, 2013, p. xix). My purpose in bringing attention to these excerpts is that they are demonstrative of the way that all five textbooks continually represent "business communication" as a single type of writing that is uniform across all professional communities. I am aware, of course, that all of these books' authors are very well respected scholars who recognize the almost infinite variety of business discourse communities, and subcultural divisions within them, that further affect discursive values and practices. In fact, Bovée and Thill (2013) explicitly pointed out that, "communication efforts will also be influenced by the organization's corporate culture: the mixture of values, traditions, and habits that gives a company its atmosphere and personality" (p. 7). That said, not one of the textbooks contains more than a paragraph discussing how culture affects discourse, except in relation to communicating internationally, with foreign business cultures.

The reasons for consolidating "business discourse" into a singular entity are easily imaginable. From the textbook authors' perspective, their primary audience consists of college students who simply want to learn how to write well enough to meet their future employers' expectations. Engaging these readers in discussions of activity theory, discourse community theory, genre theory, and postmodern epistemology, isn't likely to fulfill that desire (at least not in a demonstrable manner over the course of a single semester). Instead, the authors are left with a choice between teaching an in-depth

exploration of one or two particular workplace discourse communities or teaching features of discourse that appear to be common to many business communities. Given such a choice, the latter option is (at least on its surface) the most utilitarian. In this model students learn a set of skills that (with some eventual adaptation to meet specific workplace circumstances) they expect are generally transferrable to any professional situation. Moreover, for the authors' secondary audience, business writing instructors, the streamlined content makes their jobs easier. For example, the textbooks are crafted to "address major business topics in 14 chapters, corresponding well with the weeks in the semester" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. xv) and to be flexible enough that "if you want to begin by reviewing grammar, sentence structure, and other writing fundamentals, you can ask students to read Chapter 5… Conversely, if you want to begin with employment-related communication, you can start with the Prologue, 'Building a Career with Your Communication Skills'" (Bovée & Thill, 2013, p. xxiii). By delimiting the subject matter of business writing and removing the nuance and complexity that attend actual workplace communications, these textbooks provide a readily teachable and more easily graspable set of skills that may enhance students' confidence in their business writing abilities and may provide something of a foundation for them to build on once ensconced in their own specific workplace communities.

Writing process. One of the most important steps that these textbooks take is to hold out the promise that students, unfamiliar with the business world, can become successful business writers by using a universally applicable "writing process." As Guffey and Loewy (2011) proclaimed:

The ability to prepare concise, audience-centered, persuasive, and purposeful

messages does not come naturally. Very few people, especially beginners, can sit

down and compose a terrific letter or report without training. However, following a

systematic process, studying model messages, and practicing the craft can make

nearly anyone a successful business writer or speaker. (p. 113)

Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013) attributed the very success of their textbook's first ten

editions to the claim that "it effectively prepares students to *apply the writing process…*

regardless of their academic background or occupational interest [emphasis added]" (p.

vii). These textbooks then profess to contain all of the necessary ingredients to generate

effective business writing; it is just up to students to "practice the craft" sufficiently to

master these techniques.

Four of the five textbooks discuss the communication process in two distinct

modes: the "Basic Communication Model" (Bovée & Thill, 2012, p. 10) and the writing

process. Only Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013) omit the former. The difference between

the two constructs is that the "communication model" is meant to describe the entire

rhetorical interaction that occurs between interlocutors while the "writing process" refers

only to the activity involved in generating a communication. Discussing the former,

Guffey and Loewy (2013) defined the purpose of communication as "the transmission of

information and meaning" (p. 7) and noted that this "process generally involves five

steps" (p. 7). The depiction of the communication process as involving an orderly

progression of steps is also present in Bovée and Thill (2012) and Lehman and DuFrene

(2011); however the actual number of steps varies from book to book. The following is

an account of the steps that all four textbooks implicitly or explicitly hold in common:

1. The sender has an idea,

2. The sender encodes the idea as a message.

3. The sender transmits the message through a channel.

4. The audience receives the message.

5. The audience decodes the message.

6. The audience responds to the message, providing feedback to sender.

Regardless of the number of steps, though, what is most salient about this communication model is that it frames meaning as existing in the mind of the rhetor, which is then conveyed to an audience through language. Furthermore, as Bovée and Thill (2012) contended, "by viewing communication as a process you can identify and improve the skills you need to be more successful" (p. 10). In other words, the greater one's mastery of communication skills, the more accurately one's intended meaning will be decoded by an audience—that is, the more likely one will be clearly understood. This is where the significance of the "writing process" comes in; it represents these textbooks' formula for successful encoding, and thus successful communication.

Indicative of its central role in business communication, Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013), Guffey and Loewy (2011, 2013), and Bovée and Thill (2012) all devote an entire, multi-chapter, unit to examining the writing process. Only Lehman and DuFrene (2011) choose not to cover the writing process as a distinct lesson; rather, they incorporate the stages of "planning," "writing," and "revising" documents throughout their text. The guidance these textbooks provide regarding the writing process is largely similar. The

following quotation is a representative (if abbreviated) example of how these authors explain the process:

> To plan any message, first analyze the situation by defining your purpose and developing a profile of your audience… Next, select the right medium (oral, written, visual, or electronic) to deliver your message. Then organize the information by defining your main idea, limiting your scope, selecting the direct or indirect approach, and outlining your content… Then you're ready to compose your message by choosing strong words, creating effective sentences, and developing coherent paragraphs… After writing your first draft, revise your message by evaluating the content, reviewing readability, and editing and rewriting until your message comes across concisely and clearly, with correct grammar, proper punctuation, and effective format. (Bovée & Thill, 2013, 87-88)

Important to note, although some of these procedures may be influenced by the vagaries of a particular workplace's cultural values or conventions—deciding which is the appropriate medium, evaluating the content, etc.—the process is set up to be plug-and-play; no matter what, the process's formula remains unchanged. As Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013) noted, "the process occurs in a series of steps applicable to all workplace writing" (Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2013, p. 3).

Purposes of business writing. One of the more daunting challenges of entering a new discourse community is trying to figure how writing functions there. Journal articles and scholarly books on business communication have described the purposes of workplace writing in a variety of ways: "transactional" (Scheiber & Hager, 1992, p. 46),

"praxis oriented… policy oriented" (Freedman & Adam, 2000a, p. 134), "Advertising new positions available; soliciting bids from vendors and suppliers; applying for licenses; consulting with lawyers, lenders, and advertising media; promoting and selling products and services" (Driskell, 1989, p. 130), "letters that make inquiries, employee evaluations, specifications, job descriptions, patent applications, and so on" (Anderson, 1985, p. 63). It is no wonder that graduates transitioning to the workplace can get overwhelmed.

In an effort to streamline matters, these textbooks attempt to cut through peripheral distractions and get at the core purposes of business communication. Guffey and Loewy (2011) wrote, "Although there appear to be a large number of diverse business communication functions, they can be summarized in three simple categories… (a) to inform, (b) to persuade, and/or (c) to promote goodwill. (p. 17). That is, the purpose of any workplace writing task can be thought of as accomplishing one of these three objectives. The four other textbooks concur with this tripartite categorization about the purposes of business writing, though the characterization of the third category differs in Bovée and Thill (2013), where it is described as "to collaborate with the audience," and in Lehman and DuFrene (2011) who suggested the purpose is, "to entertain" (p. 4). Slight differences aside, this succinct typology of business writing objectives allows newcomers to the workplace, when faced with a writing project, to develop a clear understanding of their goal and to begin applying the writing process outlined in the previous section.

Genre. The final element the textbook authors use to simplify business communication is to teach students the most commonly used workplace genres. All five textbooks characterize business writing as consisting of four broad genre categories:

messages (which are further broken down into three subcategories: routine and positive messages, negative messages, and persuasive messages), reports and proposals, employment communications, and presentations. The lone exception is Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013), who include "Writing Instructions" as a fifth category (though this likely more relevant in a technical writing course). This means that in order to become effective business communicators, students need only master a handful of document types. Even more helpfully, the authors provide step-by-step guidance for producing effective versions of each of these genres.

Regarding the construction of a business e-mail, Guffey and Loewy (2011) instructed, "Much like hard-copy memos, routine e-mails generally contain four parts: (a) an informative subject line that summarizes the message; (b) an opening that reveals the main idea immediately; (c) a body that explains and justifies the main idea; and (d) a closing that presents action information, summarizes the message, or offers a closing thought" (p. 191). The idea is that by following this formula, students should be able to compose e-mails that conform to workplace expectations. Bovée and Thill (2013) provided similar counsel for devising negative messages: "Follow the steps outlined for indirect messages: open with a buffer that establishes some mutual ground between you and the reader, advance your reasoning, announce the change, and close with as much positive information and sentiment as appropriate under the circumstances" (p. 257). Longer, more detailed prescriptions are provided for more comprehensive business genres. Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013), for example, offered students the following advice regarding the writing of a formal report's title page:

Although the formats of title pages vary, the page could include the following information: (1) the full title of the report; (2) the name(s) of the writers, principal investigators, or compilers who prepared it; (3) the date the report was issued; (4) the name of the organization for which the writer(s) works; and (5) the name of the organization or person to whom the report is submitted.

1. *Full title of the report.* The title should reflect the topic as well as the scope and objective of the report. Titles often provide the only basis on which audiences can decide whether to read a report. Aim for accuracy and conciseness: Titles too vague or too long not only hinder the audience but can prevent efficient filing and later retrieval of the report. Follow these guidelines when creating the title:

- Focus on the subject matter of the report. Avoid titles that begin "Notes on," "Studies on," "A Report on," or "Observations on." These phrases are often redundant and state the obvious. However, phrases such as "Annual Report" or "Feasibility Study" should be used in a title or subtitle because they help define the purpose and scope of the document. The title should be unique to the report, allowing the report to be easily distinguished from other similar reports. "Annual Report: 2013 Sales and Profits Forecast" is much more useful than simply "Annual Report," for example.

- Avoid using abbreviations in the title. Use them only when the report is intended for an audience familiar enough with the topic that the abbreviation will be understood.

- Do not include the period covered by a report in the title; include that information in a subtitle…

2. *Names of the writers, principal investigators, or compilers, as appropriate*. Frequently, contributors simply list their names. Sometimes they identify themselves by their job titles in the organization (Jane R. Lihn, Cost Analyst; Rodrigo Sanchez, Head, Research and Development). They also identify themselves by their tasks in contributing to the   report (Antoine Baume, Compiler; Wanda Landowska, Principal Investigator).

3. *Date or dates of the report*. For one-time reports, list the date when the report is to be distributed. For periodic reports, which may be issued monthly or quarterly, list the period that the present report covers in a subtitle, as well as the date when the report is to be distributed.

4. *Name of the organization for which the writer works*.

5. *Name of the organization or individual to whom the report is being submitted*, if the work is being done for an organization other than your own.

These categories are standard on most title pages. (pp. 382-383)

Once again, it is the authors' intention that such detailed instructions will provide students with precise models for all of the pertinent business genres that they will need to produce. To become proficient business communicators, students need only to follow these point-by-point guides until they have been sufficiently assimilated into their discursive repertoires.

Summation

Textbooks, by their nature, are meant to take complex subjects and present them in a way that uninitiated readers can readily grasp. These five textbooks undertake this mission by framing business writing as belonging to a single, overarching discourse community; by establishing only three functions of writing (to inform, to persuade, or to build goodwill); by teaching a universal writing process; and by delimiting business writing genres into four broad categories (electronic messages, reports and proposals, employment communications, and presentations). That is, they define business writing as a set of skills and processes that anyone can learn to master given enough time, guidance, and practice. The desire to provide students with a foundation on which to begin their professional lives—giving them some sense of familiarity and confidence regarding the kinds of writing they will encounter in the business world—is a worthwhile and laudable pursuit. Yet, even if we choose to ignore the self-interested motivations of publishers, authors, students, instructors, and administrators to perpetuate the use of these texts, we cannot deny that there remain grave shortcomings inherent in the pedagogies advanced in these textbooks that cannot be responsibly left uncontested.

SYLLABI ANALYSIS

Overview

Supporting theorists' contentions that textbooks "act as persuasive places where new teachers of writing are trained and where experienced ones reinforce the training" (Welch, 1987, p. 271), my examination of the 105 business communication syllabi, unsurprisingly, reveals that course structures and teaching objectives largely mirror those

of the textbooks. As with the textbooks, instructors see the purpose of these courses as helping students to make the transition from the academic writing of the university to the professional writing of the workplace. Consistent with both Russ (2009) and Farrokh Moshiri and Peter Cardon (2014), my analysis of the syllabi further shows that the majority of business communication courses teach effective writing in accordance with the most commonly used business genres and that, as Russ (2009), concluded, these courses emphasize praxis over theory. Throughout the syllabi's course descriptions, learning outcomes, assignments, and evaluation rubrics, instructors portray the path to becoming an effective business writer as developing a set of skills that match the discursive values particular to the business community (such as reader-oriented writing, concision, and clarity), using the writing process to produce well composed ideas, and learning the correct presentation of the most commonly used business communication genres. By framing the purpose and content of business writing in this way, instructors create a streamlined, skills-based course that enables both they and their students to measure students' progress toward mastering the knowledge necessary to write well in the workplace.

Before turning to the details of my analysis I must make three points. First, the central concern of my study is business writing—not ethics, international communication, interviews, etc. (though those are all important aspects of business communication and are closely related to business writing). As a result, my coverage of those topics is admittedly minimal. Second, while I include some quantitative data regarding the contents of all of the syllabi I collected, for practical reasons the qualitative and anecdotal

evidence is taken from far fewer samples. I did, however, make a concerted effort to select excerpts and examples that are widely representative of the syllabi as a whole. Third, while I review and analyze the contents of many individual syllabi, it is not my intention to critique particular business writing courses, professional writing programs, or individual instructors. Rather, the goal of this study is to assess the business writing discipline's most common pedagogical strategies and the topics that receive the most attention in business communication courses throughout the nation's colleges and universities in order to develop changes and improvements to better serve our students.

Course Descriptions

The following course description from a business communication course at the University of Montana (2009) provides a succinct description of the course's objectives: "Business communication is designed to help you develop and refine the skills necessary to communicate effectively in a professional business environment. The focus of this course will be on communicating clearly, concisely, considerately, and correctly, both orally and in writing" (p.3). Another example from the University of Texas at Dallas (2012) goes into further detail and is a fairly representative example of the self-definition used in business communication courses throughout America's colleges and universities:

> Communication is the root activity of business. Communication skills are rated as one of the most sought after qualities in today's job market. In nearly all aspects of professional life you will spend most of your day explaining, writing, directing, persuading, and listening to other people. Your ability to do so clearly and effectively will have a direct bearing on your success in the business world. This

course is designed to give students a thorough introduction to business

communication and its basic concepts and theories. It will also provide the student

with ample opportunities to improve their writing skills. Students in this course

will gain knowledge and skills that will assist them not only in their chosen

career, but will be useful in their academic and social lives as well. (p. 1)

As with these two course description, almost all of the syllabi describe the purpose of

their business communication course as addressing three common areas: 1) familiarizing

students with the basic concepts and theories of business communication and preparing

them to enter the business world; 2) providing students with the fundamental skills

needed to be effective business writers; and, 3) delineating the types of documents (the

genres) in which students will be developing competency. In fact, of those syllabi that

contained course descriptions, only three describe their foci and learning outcomes as

something other than genre, correctness, or conventions.[3]

Business communication concepts. With regard to teaching students the basic

concepts of business communication in preparation for joining the business world, the

University of Washington at Tacoma's (2012) syllabus explained, "This course teaches

the principles of business communications" (p. 1). The course description at the

University of Tennessee at Knoxville (2009) promised, "BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL

COMMUNICATION will prepare you to enter the business world by shaping your

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[3] The Kent State University (2011) syllabus frames the course's objectives in terms of understanding communication theory, organizational culture, ethical considerations, and setting individual goals for writing business correspondence; Southeastern Louisiana University's (2011) foci are critical thinking, theory, ethics, case analysis, and analysis of "language environment"; and the University of Iowa's (2009) course seeks to help students interpret and evaluate "workplace phenomena," investigate "theories of organization and business communication" in order to produce and critique organizational communication (p. 1).

writing and analysis abilities" (p. 1). A syllabus from the University of Maryland (2011) wrote, "This course exposes students to the forms, scenarios and conventions of organizational communication" (p. 1). Similar descriptions appear in virtually all of the 105 syllabi. What is most notable in the way these business communication courses describe their first mission is that, just as with the five textbooks, "business communication" and the "business world" are presented as a singular entity. Once again, by unifying the business discourse community, business writing classes need only focus on one common set of principles, skills, and genres that can be applied in any professional setting.

Skills. The second purpose identified in these course descriptions is to, "help students master the skills of workplace writing" (University of Maryland, 2011, p. 1). As the University of Iowa (2009) explained, "assignments emphasize the practical component designed to improve your skills of both producing and criticizing organizational communication' (p. 1). Teaching students, "to develop ideas fully, organize them effectively and express them clearly… [along with] Basic writing skills, such as grammar, sentence structure and paragraphing" (University of Washington at Tacoma, 2012, p. 1) means that "Students completing the semester's work should see a visible improvement in their writing, especially in terms of clarity and precision" (University of Arizona, 2004, p. 1). The importance of mastering such skills is noted by Delta State University (2010) whose syllabus asserted, "Good communication skills are not only important in almost every type of work setting but in every aspect of our personal lives as well. In the minds of most employers, good business communication

skills represent an important category of 'basic' or 'transferable' skills a worker is expected to bring to the job" (p. 1). What these course descriptions indicate is that business communication classes will improve the clarity, grammar, precision and other skills that make writing effective. Moreover, these are skills that employers expect as a baseline foundation and are valuable in that, as outlined in the principles of business writing, are useful in any workplace.

Genres. The final element contained in almost every course description is a list of the business communication genres that students will be taught throughout the semester. "In this course students acquire practical, template-driven techniques for writing effective versions of the most often-used business documents… professional correspondence, fundraising and marketing letters, brief biographies, deal memos, and more" (Georgetown University, 2011, p .1). At the University of Maryland (2011) that genre list includes, "electronic media such as email and computer-assisted oral presentations… memos, letters, marketing plans and brochures" (p. 1). Finally, at the University of Washington at Tacoma (2012) the business communication course teaches "emails, letters, reports and general business correspondence" (p. 1), while at Clemson University (2012) "the conventions of several workplace-writing genres: the cover letter/ resume, memos, letters and reports" (p. 1) are the focus of attention. In fact, as I will review in a later section, demonstrating competency in various business communication genres serves as the primary measure of a student's success in these courses.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes in the syllabi emphasize elements very similar to those of the course descriptions. This example from the University of Maryland (2011) identified audience analysis and accommodation, genre selection, following the stages of writing process, collaboration, and correctness as primary competencies that students should have developed by the end of this course:

By the end of this course you will be able to do the following:

- Identify the appropriate audience(s) for a text and analyze the audience(s)

- Accommodate the audience(s) as you compose and revise a document

- Determine what genre of business document is appropriate in the context

- Set goals for a document before you compose it and revise the document so that it will achieve those goals

- Generate arguments and select the appropriate appeals for the target audience

- Work collaboratively on writing texts

- Revise texts

- Edit your work and that of others

- Write clear, well structured sentences that emphasize the most important ideas

- Write clear, well structured paragraphs that connect with each other as part of your argument

- Avoid the most common errors (p. 1)

The learning outcomes of the University of Montana's (2009) syllabus share many of the same categories—audience accommodation, genre, the writing process, and correctness—but also add understanding the communication process, the three purposes of communication (to inform, to persuade, to build goodwill), and ethical communication:

> Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts:

- Students complete a number of assignments that demonstrate the ability to apply a 3-x-3 writing process to their written communications to address a variety of business contexts and audiences. This process includes prewriting (analyze, anticipate, and adapt), writing (research, organize, compose), and revising (revise, proofread, evaluate).

Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing:

- Students demonstrate the ability to think critically and express opinions and ideas in their writing using the guidelines of effective business communication.

Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience:

- Students compose routine letters, memos, email messages, goodwill messages, negative messages, persuasive messages, application letters, and various types of business reports. Students apply the 3-x-3 writing process of prewriting, writing, and revising in all their written assignments.

Revise written work based on constructive feedback:

- Students revise and edit professional, written communications through peer

editing and instructor feedback.

Find, evaluate, and use information effectively:

- Students demonstrate proficiency in how to find, evaluate, and use online sources effectively and responsibly by completing a web-based research project.

Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions:

- Students understand the process of communication from the positions of "receiver" and "sender" in a variety of business and professional contexts.

- Students learn communication skills that can be applied to achieve professional goals now and throughout their careers.

- Students apply specific reasoned, practical, and ethical business communication principles for composing and delivering typical business and professional messages.

- Students become familiar with conflict resolution strategies that promote teamwork.

- Students learn specific writing techniques and organization strategies for composing clear, concise, and purposeful business messages and reports (i.e., 3-x-3 Writing Process).

- Students apply acquired collaborative business writing skills through a final oral and written team project.

Demonstrate appropriate English language usage:

- All written and oral communication assignments will be evaluated and revised to

reflect appropriate English language usage. A dual-criteria approach to evaluation

will be applied and is described in the course syllabus. (pp. 1-2)

Although these two sets of learning outcomes are not exact representations of the

remainder of the 105 syllabi, the categories that they touch on are shared by the vast

majority of the syllabi. I was, however, able to identify four additional learning outcomes

not covered in the groupings above. The first two appear in the University of Southern

Indiana's (2011) syllabus: "Reduce time to analyze and write or present a business

communication" and "Analyze differences in international, national, and local

assumptions about interpersonal and corporate business relationships" (pp. 1-2). It is

possible that the latter item is covered in other courses under "audience analysis";

however, the importance of teaching how international cultural values affect discourse is

worthy of its own mention. The final two learning outcomes consist of, "develop[ing] an

understanding of organizational communication theories" and "increas[ing] confidence in

individual and group performances" (University of Iowa, 2009, p. 1). Here, the former

objective appears to refer to exploring how individual organizational cultures affect

discourse, which, at least as evidenced by the textbooks and syllabi, is fairly unique

among business communication courses.

Rather notably, the learning outcomes common to the majority of the syllabi

correspond directly to chapter, section, and topic headings in the various textbooks these

courses use. As but one example, referring back to the University of Montana's (2009)

syllabus, the "3x3" writing process is the exact description used by Guffey and Loewy's

(2011) textbook (and earlier editions) (p. 113). Each of the genre categories, "routine

letters, memos, email messages, goodwill messages, negative messages, persuasive messages, application letters, and various types of business reports" (University of Montana, 2009, p.1) receives its own section heading in Guffey and Loewy (2011) found, respectively, on pages 227, 223, 224, 240, 256, 294, 494, 335. The syllabus's other learning outcomes are similarly represented by particular chapter, section, or topic headings in Guffey and Loewy (2011): "research" (p. 138), the "process of communication" (p. 13), "ethical business communication" (p. 2), "conflict resolution strategies that promote teamwork" (p. 43), "collaboration" (p. 38), "appropriate English language use" (Appendix A). The somewhat belabored point here is that the influence that business communication textbooks have on the objectives and content of business communication classrooms is hard to deny.

Quantitative Breakdown of Content Categories

While the previous section provided some specific examples of the language used by instructors' syllabi to describe the purpose and content of their business communication courses, it would also prove helpful to have a calculation of the coverage of these content areas across all of the syllabi. In order to get a better sense of what is commonly being taught in contemporary, college-level business writing classrooms, I looked for key terms in the learning outcomes, course goals/objectives, and any assignment descriptions contained within the collected syllabi. From these key terms I established several categories and calculated the percentage of syllabi that explicitly mention (and, presumably, teach) these areas of business writing. Once again, let me acknowledge that whatever the merits of this methodology, no examination of syllabi

from these business writing and business communication courses can provide a complete or fully accurate representation of what actually occurs within these classrooms. All I can hope to accomplish with this analysis is to shed some light on the areas of study that the instructors of these courses deemed important enough to include in their syllabi.

As one might expect from the analysis of the course descriptions and learning outcomes, 97% of the collected syllabi include genre-based instruction. This figure corresponds to Moshiri and Cardon's (2014) figure of 98.65% (p. 320). The following quotation represents a typical description of genre's role in the business writing classroom: "[This course] teaches the fundamentals of good business writing, including protocols for business letters, memoranda, electronic mail, good and bad messages, persuasive messages and formal reports and proposals" (Johns Hopkins University, 2008, p. 1). Per the syllabi, the most commonly taught business writing genres are reports and/or proposals 77%, letters 76% (28% break this down further to good news and bad news letters), memos 66%, resumes 59%, and e-mails 48%. These results are depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1
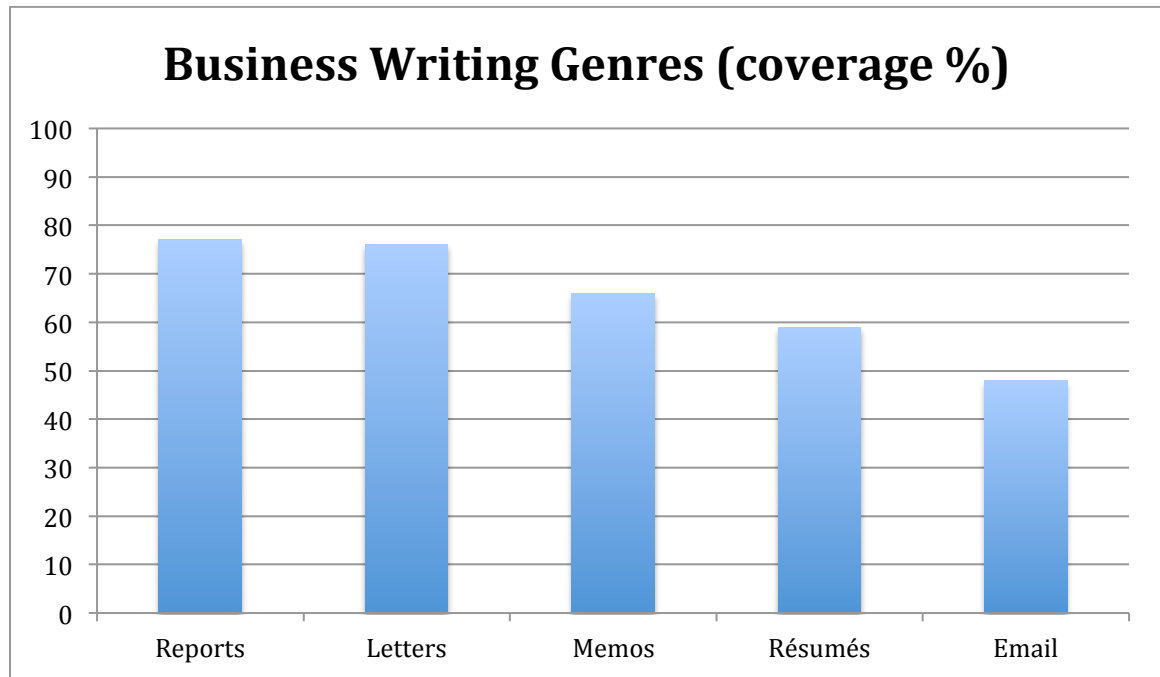
Beyond genre forms, writing mechanics, grammar, spelling, and style were also well represented in these courses. Explicit mentions of grammar and spelling as a means of evaluation or as parts of lessons appeared in 80% of the syllabi. "We will… revisit basic grammar, mechanics, and punctuation" (University of Denver, 2012, p. 1), "[w]rite business documents that are grammatically correct and use appropriate business style" (University of Texas, 2011, p. 1), and "[u]se active voice and parallel construction for a more professional product" (Boston College, 2012, p. 2). In addition, 52% of the courses focus their attention on "correctness, conciseness, coherence, and clarity" (University of Southern California, 2010, p. 1). Or, alternatively described, "strategies to make our writing more clear, concise, correct, and consistent" (University of Denver, 2012, p. 1). Moreover, 71% address the importance of using proper "format, layout, and design" (University of Notre Dame, 2009, p. 2) in business documents.

While 77% of the syllabi mention teaching audience analysis to "make choices about the most effective and efficient way to communicate" (University of Texas, 2011, p. 1), to "[d]evelop the 'you' perspective" (Boston College, 2012, p. 2), and to "choos[e] from among a repertoire of tones and styles appropriate… with different audiences" (University of Southern California, 2010, p. 1), in stark contrast only 24% cite "rhetoric" or "rhetorical concepts" (Ohio State University, 2008, p. 1) as a topic covered by the course. Somewhat surprisingly (due to its prominence in all five textbooks), only 33% of the syllabi include the writing process, "prewriting (analyze, anticipate, and adapt), writing (research, organize, compose), and revising (revise, proofread, evaluate)" (University of Montana, 2009, p. 1) as an explicit area of study, and only 26% consider the role that culture plays in business writing. On this subject of the cultural role of writing, like the textbooks, this is almost universally framed as a matter of teaching, "appropriate communication techniques for global[ly]… diverse cultures" (North Carolina A & T, 2012, p. 2). Less than 1% of the syllabi mention the need to "understand organizational culture" (Kent State University, 2011, p. 2) or to "develop strategies to facilitate communication across… business cultures" (University of South Florida, 2012, p. 2).

Of the remaining categories found in the syllabi, 13% of the classes use case studies. The University of Utah's (2008) course requires, "a 4-5 page report analyzing problems posed in a case study and making recommendations supported by evidence provided in the case" (p.1), while a Brigham Young University (2009) assignment has a student team "complete a consulting project" case analysis that includes a proposal,

formal report, and an oral presentation with accompanying PowerPoint slides (p. 4). An

additional 17% of syllabi mention some sort of real-world simulation within the

classroom. The American Military University's (2011) syllabus explained, "Students will

engage in a variety of business writing exercises to allow students to practice with

simulated real-world materials and situations" (p. 1). Arizona State's (2007) syllabus

similarly described a "major assignment [that] involves writing a series of three business

messages in various formats pertaining to different realistic scenarios that you and your

group members will create" (p. 22). Regarding digital technologies, 30% of the courses

address writing for the web and social media. Dixie State College (2012) noted that,

"Students will also learn about… the Internet's impact on business communication" (p.

2). Moreover, Mississippi College (2011) included "using social media" as part of their

assessment of students' "competence in verbal and written communication skills" (p.1).

An additional 28% of syllabi focus on visual design—"us[ing] graphic highlighting to

convey ideas clearly to readers" (Lewis-Clark State College, 2012, p. 2). Another 71%

emphasize presentations, while collaborations are required in 51% of the courses. Group

presentations are a common collaborative activity, such as the one at Nicholls State

University (2007) in which "The original research report and presentation based on the

report are collaborative projects so that students gain experience working effectively and

efficiently with other people" (p.2). The ability to synthesize and analyze information is a

specific learning outcome in 36% of the syllabi. The University of South Florida (2012),

for example, listed as a course objective, "you should be able to… analyze and evaluate

audience/purpose/situation as they apply to business writing contexts" (p. 2), while the

University of Montana (2009) expects students to, "Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts" (p.1). Finally, like Wright State University (2010), 29% of the courses "help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences" (p. 1). Figure 2 presents a visual representation of these categories.

Figure 2
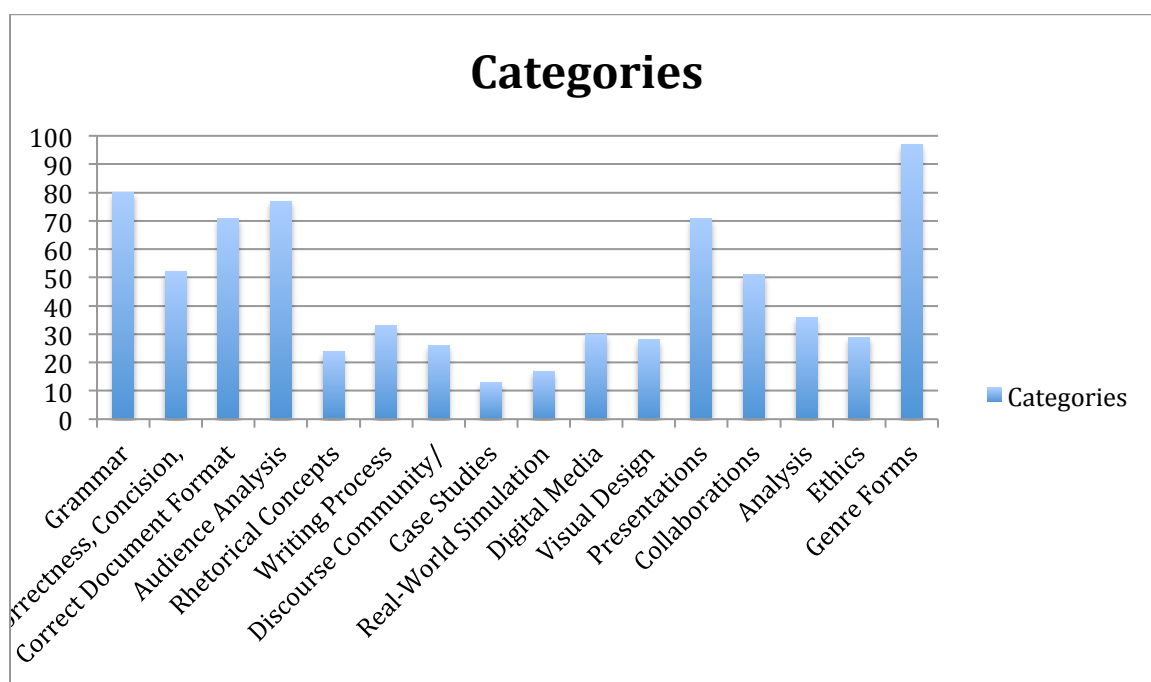
The picture that emerges from the analysis of these syllabi is quite clear: the teaching of skills, genre formats, and correctness are the centerpieces of our colleges' contemporary business writing classrooms.

Assignments and Evaluations

Assignments. The final aspects of the syllabi that I examined are the nature and evaluative standards of the courses' assignments. The actual assignments vary from syllabus to syllabus and range from quizzes on readings, to oral presentations, to in-class writing assignments, to complex research reports. For example, the course at the

University of Central Missouri (2009) counts among its assignments, "10% Daily work (writing/exercises), 30% Written assignments and presentation projects, 10% Individual Written chapter quizzes (objective, listing, essay), 10% Group Written chapter quizzes (objective, listing, essay), 30% In-Class Controlled Writings (writing plans and letters and memos), 10% Final [exam]" (p. 4). As with this example, most of the syllabi include only minimal descriptions of the course's required assignments and are almost always accompanied by a point value or percentage indicating how much the assignment counts toward the students' final grade. From my own experiences as an instructor, and reaffirmed by Cheryl Albers (2003), the syllabus as a genre is typically only meant to provide an overview of the course, while separate assignment sheets usually contain the in-depth detail needed to complete each individual assignment. As a result, there is insufficient information to make informed, general assertions about the progression of assignments or any implications that assignment order might hold.

I had further anticipated being able to find patterns regarding the valuation of certain types of assignments; however, these lack any real consistency from syllabus to syllabus. Some courses require quizzes and exams while others do not; some count participation as part of the final grade; some combine "written work" into one overall value while others break final grade percentages down by assignment (or clusters of similar assignments); some even develop categories, such as Clovis Community College's (2009) "un-timed projects" worth 40% of the final grade and "timed projects" at 30% (p.2), that bear no resemblance to other courses' categories. As an example of the diversity of assignment and their valuations I present the breakdown presented in six

individual syllabi: Emory University (2009) has written assignments (a "self-evaluation memo" and "exit reports") at 20% of the final grade, presentations (an "individual mock interview presentation" a "team presentation" and an "impromptu presentation") at 60%, quizzes at 15%, and participation at 5% (p. 6). Ohio State University (2008) values memos at 30%, presentations at 20%, a group proposal at 20%, a web project at 20%, and participation at 10% (p.1). Creighton University (2012) puts exams at 40%, an employment interview at 23%, a group report at 17%, individual presentations at 10%, and in-class assignments and quizzes at 10% (pp. 3-5). Seattle University (2012) values written work (an email, letter, and report memo) at 75% of the final grade, an oral presentation at 20%, and participation at 5% (pp. 3-4). California State-Fullerton's (2008) breakdown is 10% for participation, 45% for written assignments (letters, memos, résumé and cover letter, portfolio of best work), 10% for "library/electronic database research" and a PowerPoint presentation, and 35% for quizzes and exams. Finally, the University of Massachusetts (2012) awards 15% to résumés and cover letters, 25% to a written group report, 25% to an "international" letter and research memo, 25% to a presentation, and 10% for "professionalism" (p. 6). In an effort to present a side-by-side comparison, I consolidated each of the assignments into the seven categories shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Assignment Valuations	Emory	Ohio State	Creighton	Seattle U.	Cal-State Fullerton	U. Massachusetts
Written Work	20%	50%	17%	75%	45%	70%
Presentations	60%	20%	10%	20%	10%	25%
Quizzes / Exams	15%	0%	50%	0%	35%	0%
Participation	5%	10%	0%	5%	10%	0%
Web Project	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Interviews	0%	0%	23%	0%	0%	0%
Professionalism	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%

Even from this very limited sample of syllabi, the wide array of valuations placed on different types of assignments is apparent. These results suggest that the state of business communication courses in America is something akin to the Wild West, with each instructor (or possibly each program) emphasizing whichever elements of the discipline he or she holds most important in order to prepare students to communicate in the business world.

Indeed, there were only two features that were shared by almost every syllabus that I collected: the separation of written assignments according to genre and the use of team collaborations. While not every course contains assignments pertaining to all of these genres, most syllabi include some combination of the five most common generic types listed in the quantitative analysis section of this chapter: reports and proposals (informal and formal/research), letters (persuasive, good news, bad news, résumé cover letters), memos, résumés, and emails—as well as oral presentations. A second feature common to many of the syllabi is the requirement of collaborative, team assignments

(typically involving both written reports and a group presentation), and peer review.

While it may or may not be the case that greater uniformity in the nation's business communication courses would qualitatively improve graduates' preparedness for workplace writing, this certainly points toward an area of future research. More significantly, for this dissertation, the disparity in teaching approaches indicates that while piecemeal attempts at exploring ways to improve business writing and business communication, by shifting and resorting the various skills that purportedly comprise effective workplace communication, there has been no concerted, disciplinary-wide effort to analyze either what is and isn't working, or to reexamine the underlying assumptions of this pedagogy that has been producing such questionable results.

Evaluation standards. Although the types and weighted values of individual assignments reveal little uniformity, the standards used to evaluate students' work, included in roughly 1/3 of the syllabi, provide three valuable, broadly applicable insights: a common desire to establish definitive (less subjective) measures of students' progress, the need to address both academic and professional standards of good writing, and the characteristics that set business writing standards apart from those of academic writing.

Measuring students' progress. One of the first things that stands out when reading these syllabi is the defensive stance many instructors take regarding (as well as a desire to overcome) the subjectivity involved in assessing what qualifies as "good writing." Several examples of statements that appear in syllabi's grading and evaluation sections make the point that good writing cannot be reduced to a set of hard-and-fast criteria. An instructor at Georgia State University (2006) wrote, "Since your final course

grade will be based predominantly on writing assignments and the grading of writing

cannot be reduced to simple quantitative measures, I will grade your writing on a holistic

basis" (p. 4). A similar qualification was included in a syllabus from the University of

Southern California (2010), "Evaluation of your performance in this course can not [sic]

be boiled down into true-false or multiple choice exams designed for supposedly

'objective' machine processing" (p. 10). While these may appear to be innocuous

statements, they point to a larger issue that grades hold a central focus in, and are the

ultimate aim of, these courses. Even the following defense of knowledge, over

evaluation, concedes the primacy of grades with concern to students' interests:

> Grades are important, of course, for all degree-seeking students. Grades are
>
> somewhat less important, however, than learning outcomes. Your careful
>
> attention to classroom discussion and written assignments is of considerably
>
> greater importance than whether you earned an A… We are sensitive to your
>
> interest in doing well and will do all that we can to help you. (University of Notre
>
> Dame, 2009, p. 3)

In an effort to satisfy those interests, a number of courses try to minimize the subjectivity

of grading. As the syllabus from Radford University (2012) pointed out, "Although an

evaluation of any writing involves a measure of subjective judgment… Many quality

aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, and

paragraph coherence, are relatively simple to identify and assess" (p. 5). Comparable

attention is paid to providing a more objective measure of performance in this excerpt

from Troy University's (2011) syllabus: "Due to the nature of the course, grades tend to

be subjectively determined. To overcome the inherent uncertainty, the student is provided a number of quizzes, tests, homework assignments and class participation, for assessment of the student's progress and performance" (p. 3). In this case, grades and the systematic measurement of students' achievement are so important that sentence level and grammatical correctness become foci of attention, and "objective" assessment tools such as exams and homework exercises are incorporated into classrooms simply to "overcome" subjectivity. This need to surmount the subjectivity of students' evaluations can be found in a fair number of syllabi and is likely attributable to the business communication discipline's characterization of business writing as a set of skills and processes to be mastered. The skills based, vocational nature of business writing courses creates a dynamic in which a "consumer of skills" expects "a provider of skills" to deliver vocational competency that can be documented in a résumé to a prospective employer.

Balancing academic and professional standards. In describing the considerations that go into evaluating students' work, several instructors address the dual masters of business communication courses: academic work standards and professional work standards. The instructor at Radford University (2012), for example, wrote, "To meet college-level standards, I expect your writing to conform to appropriate academic and professional formats" (p. 5). Evaluations at other universities also follow this bifurcated set of standards. The University of Kentucky's (2006) syllabus noted that grades, "will be based both on how well the document is written and on the document's professional presentation" (p. 2), while Georgia State University (2006) and the

University of Notre Dame (2009), respectively, mention meeting "academic and organizational" (p. 4) demands and both the "writing standards in the North American marketplace… [and academic] skills of written expression" (p. 2). The University of Arizona (2004) went so far as to address the two communities' different attitudes toward document ownership: "Even though workplace writing often incorporates previous documents without attribution, all work for this class must be original to the student who claims it" (p. 1). While the acknowledgement that students' work will be judged against two sets of standards is a useful insight for students, what is far more important (for students and for this analysis) is how these syllabi describe the business community's discursive values that students will be learning for the first time and by which they will be evaluated.

Business writing standards. The syllabus from the University of Notre Dame (2009) represents a fairly typical description of a business communication course's evaluation criteria: "Your instructor is seeking to assess your abilities as measured against the standards of the marketplace. Those standards have been developed over a period of more than 30 years… We are asking you to do what your employers will ask of you: prompt, competent, quality work" (pp. 3-4). Here, promptness, competence, and quality are what characterize employers' expectations; however, this description tells us little about what qualifies as competence or quality. A slightly more substantive account of what makes business writing effective is included in Radford University's (2012) syllabus: "An essential characteristic of quality in professional writing, however, is that ideas are clear and coherent, logically developed, and supported by details or evidence"

(p. 5). It goes on, "The difference between basic competency and excellence in professional writing is not only a matter of creating understandable and accurate content, but also the choices made in researching, developing, structuring, organizing, maintaining, and effectively presenting information" (p. 5). In this instructor's estimation, what makes business writing effective is clarity, coherence, and well supported ideas that are thoroughly researched and are presented in an effective manner. Yet, while these are all certainly aspects of well written business documents, the exact same qualities are valued in academic writing. What is missing in both of these evaluative criteria is any sort of differentiation between academic and business writing.

By contrast, the University of Delaware's (2012) syllabus explicitly includes, as part of its evaluative criteria, the key factor that separates business writing from academic writing:

> Because this is a practical course designed to prepare you for professional writing on the job, strict professional standards apply to the evaluation of your work. Therefore, all assignments will be assessed on adherence to genre standards, information design, and technical correctness. Carefully proofread all assignments before you turn them in; spelling, punctuation, and grammar must be correct. See the appendices in your text. (p. 1)

Unlike the Notre Dame and Radford syllabi, this assessment standard sets business writing apart by identifying genre standards as part of its description. It is the specific genres that operationalize workplace activity that are the primary difference between academic and business writing, which is why, as Russ (2009) pointed out, the teaching of

these genres is central to most business communication courses. As this syllabus points out, quality business writing entails: genre standards (correctly using the formal features of a particular business genre), information design (document aesthetics and readability), technical correctness (accurate content), and error free grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Again, other than the particular genre standards, the rest of what qualifies as effective business writing can be equally said of academic writing.

A second point to note is that each of these rubrics represents an idealized model against which student work can be readily compared. How closely does the document meet the generic standards of a business letter? Is there sufficient white space and are graphics easily understandable? Are there grammatical or spelling errors? This formulation reaffirms instructors' concerns that they be able to measure students' progress in assimilating business writing skills as accurately and objectively as possible. Further evidence of this consideration can be gleaned from the syllabus's description of work worthy of an "A."

> The document more than meets the specifications for the assignment, demonstrates sensitivity to the context, addresses the right audience and meets that audience's needs. The content is worthwhile, rich, accurate, and complete. The organization emphasizes what's important, makes information easily accessible, motivates the right audience response, sorts the familiar from the new and begins with the familiar. The style is readable, fluid, appropriate, and correct in grammar and mechanics. The format and design are engaging and enhance content. (University of Delaware, 2012, p. 2)

This more nuanced description incorporates several additional elements necessary for exemplary work. Because they move beyond formal elements, these criteria seem more subjective and less concerned with correctness; however, this proves a false assumption upon closer examination. All of these added factors can be generally described as basic, classical rhetorical concerns: Bitzer's context is present; the rhetorical triangle is represented in the considerations of content, audience needs, and motivating the "right" response; as is Aristotle's order of argumentation—starting with the least important ("the familiar") and concluding with the most important ("the new"). As with conformity to business genres, grammar usage, and document design, these rhetorical formulae constitute a checklist that students' work can be measured against.

CRITIQUE

As formulated in recent business communication textbooks, as evidenced in the 105 business communication syllabi I collected, and as reported in multiple studies (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope & Bayless, 1999), contemporary business communication pedagogy frames the teaching of business writing as the introduction of college students to the unfamiliar discursive culture of the business world. As a result of this discourse community viewpoint, writing is necessarily defined as a body of knowledge—a set of skills, processes, and conventions that students must learn to master in order to be able to communicate effectively in the workplace. While the goal of empowering students with the knowledge necessary to meet their future employers' discursive expectations is admirable, the execution of this mission relies on far too many suspect methodologies. It is my position that the practices and content

widely being used in our business communication classrooms are fundamentally flawed

and that as a result we are failing to prepare our students for the real workplace writing

situations and conditions they will face upon graduation. My critique of this system is

twofold: first, the way this pedagogy is being translated into praxis violates the very

principles about discourse that writing scholars hold to be true. Second, and more

crucially, the discourse-community-based pedagogy itself is a deficient strategy for

teaching business writing.

Since the 1980s, with the emergence of professional writing as a disciplinary

interest, business and technical communication textbooks have been the subject of much

criticism. The overarching concern among discourse scholars has been textbooks' lack of

coherence with contemporary writing theory and the detrimental outcomes that result

from this disconnect (Alred & Thelen, 1993; Bremmer, 2008; Knoblauch, 1989; Matsuda

& Matsuda, 2011; Welch, 1987; Wolfe, 2009). As Kathleen Welch (1987) admonished,

"the material presented in these numerous textbooks bears little relation to the large work

on composition theory that is widely available" (p. 269). These "inconsistent and

outdated models of writing" (Alred & Thelen, 1993, p. 472) appear in a number of

significant areas in business communication textbooks and, consequently, in business

communication classrooms. The four most significant ways in which present-day

business writing instruction diverges from contemporary composition theory are: 1) the

consolidation of all business communities into a monolithic, catch-all "business world"

that communicates using a uniform discourse known as "business writing"; 2) the focus

on writing as a product and the evaluation of student writing based on standards of

"correctness"; 3) the reduction of the writing process to a step-by-step formulae; and, 4) the presentation of business genres as prescriptive templates.

"Business World"

Jim Suchan and Mirjaliisa Charles (2006) noted that "the discipline's movement toward organizational-context-based work" is believed by some to be "our discipline's most significant research contribution" (p. 392). It is disconcerting then that these textbooks, whose focus is business writing and communication, fail to acknowledge that every business organization is a unique cultural entity, with its own discourse community that functions according to that organization's cultural norms, and that to be a successful communicator within one's own organization it is necessary to fully understand that discourse community's cultural norms. Instead, as we have seen throughout this chapter, the practical teaching of business writing involves the glossing over of tens-of-thousands of individual business communities into a lone "business world" and a single form of discourse dubbed "business communication."

Whether it is in the five textbooks or in any number of the collected syllabi, "business communication" is portrayed as a homogeneous set of values, processes, and genre conventions that qualify as "essential knowledge and skills to be an effective communicator in today's workplace" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. 4). As was previously noted, the reason for such oversimplification is clear; the sheer scope and variety of business communities and their correspondingly unique discourse values and practices would make it virtually impossible to teach students about them all in a meaningful way. As David Russell (1999) asserted, "Given the specialization of labor, it

would be impossible for students—or even most teachers… to make sense of a highly specialized activity system's genres… Articles would be as long as textbooks, and textbooks would be as long as encyclopedias" (pp. 85-86). Rather, what has been developed as an acceptable compromise is to boil down business communication to its most common features. Although this makes instructors' and textbook authors' jobs easier, it removes much of the value from the information students are receiving.

Current scholarship in discourse community theory and activity theory resoundingly holds that a community's ever-evolving discursive practices are entirely bound up in the particular social, historical, material, and temporal contexts in which they are situated (Artemeva, 2008; Blakeslee, 2001; Henze, 2013; Spinuzzi 1996, 2013). According to the scholarship in our disciplinary journals, then, the identifiers "business world" and "business discourse" are so general as to be empty, meaningless categories. Yet, rather than heed calls from Bertha Du-Babcock (2006), Helen Ewald (1999), Stephen Yarbrough (1999), Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (2002), Barbara Couture (2011), Raul Sánchez (1993), and Matthew Heard (2008) to merge theory and praxis in our business writing classrooms—exposing students to the concepts underlying the "skills" they are being taught—our textbooks (in whose indexes "Activity System/Theory," "Discourse Community/Culture," "Genre" appear not once) and our courses continue to present students with a set of practices and conventions belonging to a fallacious, monolithic professional realm while promising them these are "the skills [needed to] make a huge difference in [their] ability to find a job and to be promoted" (Guffey & Loewy, 2013, p. 2).

Correctness

Assessing the state of the business communication discipline, Suchan and Charles (2006) declared that, "We are far beyond the rubrics, checklists, and simple statements about communication effectiveness that characterized much of our work in the early to mid-1980s" (p. 396). However, as evidenced by contemporary business writing textbooks and college syllabi, I would argue that their assertion is premature. The primary effect of abstracting writing from its situational contexts is that the focus of writing becomes the "product." With no (or, at best, minimal) attention paid to analyzing the values, relationships, objectives, and sociohistorical development of particular workplace organizations, all that is left to teach are formulae, models, and mechanics. Whether it is the writing process, genres, or audience accommodation, these textbooks and syllabi suggest that there is one "correct" set of standards for the production and evaluation of business discourse and that students' work will be measured against this ideal model (Bremmer, 2008; Couture, 1999; Petraglia, 1991; Welch, 1987). For example, Bovée and Thill (2013) described the correct recipe for devising negative messages: "Follow the steps outlined for indirect messages: open with a buffer that establishes some mutual ground between you and the reader, advance your reasoning, announce the change, and close with as much positive information and sentiment as appropriate under the circumstances" (p. 257). There is no consideration of the situated context of this communication—the history and relationship between the interlocutors, the workplace culture, values, and objectives that should be embodied in such a discourse. As Stephen Bremmer (2008) explained, "students need to see that writing is context-bound: a text

cannot be structured without reference to previous documents, community expectations, organizational styles and so on" (p. 310). Instead, students are taught that the only thing that matters in "good" business writing is one's ability to conform to a set of procedures.

Guffey and Loewy (2013) similarly advised, "Like all business documents, business reports must be clear and concise. They should be written using topic sentences, support sentences, and transitional expressions to build coherence." They go on, "Avoid wordiness, outdated expressions, slang, jargon, and clichés in your reports. Finally, proofread all business reports carefully to make sure that they contain no errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, names and numbers, or format" (pp. 264-265). While there is nothing inherently wrong with teaching clarity, conciseness, and proper grammar, as Thomas Kent (1989) cautions, "Learning these elements, however, does not ensure in any way that a student can produce effective discourse" (pp. 35-36). The problem rests in the fact that business writing textbooks' presentation of these universal standards as the processes and formulae that, if followed correctly, lead to effective discourse.

Moreover, this formalist perspective too often carries over into classroom assignments and assessments of students' work, as these grading rubrics from various syllabi demonstrate: "strict professional standards apply to the evaluation of your work. Therefore, all assignments will be assessed on adherence to genre standards, information design, and technical correctness" (University of Delaware, 2012, p. 1). One of the most overt examples of grading based on correctness appears in the Lewis-Clark State College (2012) syllabus: "[Assignments] will be graded on a percentage of the items correct… The grade [averaged between the first draft and revised draft] will be determined as

follows: 0 errors = 100%; 1 error = 95%; 1.5 errors = 90%; 2 errors = 86%; 2.5 errors =

83%; 3 errors = 80%; 3.5 errors = 75%; 4 errors = 70%; 4.5 errors = 65%; 5 errors =

60%" (pp. 2-3). While most other syllabi don't include such a direct correlation of errors

to grades, of the syllabi that include evaluation criteria, every one of them includes

measuring students' writing against an ideal model. "Correctness" evaluates the aptitude

of students' writing across a series of features; those most commonly mentioned in the

syllabi include: the catchall of "grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics,"

"organization," "appearance," "clarity," "coherence," "conciseness," and "tone" (Georgia

State University, 2006, p. 4; Radford University, 2012, p. 5; University of Arizona, 2004,

p. 1; University of Kentucky, 2006, p. 2; Seattle University, 2012, p.3; University of

Southern California, 2010, p. 10; University of Wisconsin, 2009, p. 2; Wright State

University, 2010, p. 2). Finally, from the University of Central Missouri's (2009)

syllabus: [4]

C Correctness/Completeness
__/4   Information is complete and correct
 O Organization/Structure
__/4   Direct, Concise (no rubber stamps, unnecessary inclusions)
        Emphasis, Transitions and Parallelism are appropriate; add clarity
        Lists (if appropriate)
        Sentence length (16-18 words average)
        Topic sentence and 1-topic paragraph
        Variation in sentence structure (not 3 consecutive simple sentences)
 E Effectiveness
__/4   Sweet (courteous); Positive (no negatives--not, policy, unfortunately, regret,
        hesitate, you goofed)
        Active Voice ("X did it"; not "it was done"); Concrete (specific dates/amounts,
        not vague)
        General fairness (no inappropriate stereotyping or prejudice)
        Ethical (no invented details, unsupported guarantees, or untrue claims)

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[4] These syllabi are only a representative sample of those that use such grading criteria.

CU Computer Use
__/2   Uses appropriate computer program
__/1   Uses computer features effectively (e.g., indents, margins)
 P Professionalism
__/3   Follows directions and meets deadlines (or 1/2 credit if over 1 week late)
 LL Lifelong Learning
__/2   Logical and resourceful; no invented details; uses facts from previous
         assignments), asks co-workers for needed information; uses correct document
         format
 M Mechanics
__/5   Punctuation, Usage, Grammar, Spelling Correct (p. 8)

In this example, which is representative of many in the syllabi I examined, the

degree to which a student's work conforms to a set of formulae determines whether or

not his or her writing is judged to be "good" or "effective." The rationale for why

textbooks construct lessons centered on models, formulae, format guidelines, and

correctness is understandable; the allure of taking a subject—composition—that is

traditionally difficult to evaluate due to its subjective nature, and applying a set of rubrics

and firm requirements that can be ticked off like the steps in solving a mathematics

equation is hard to resist. By comparing students' work to that of "correct models,

teachers are able to concretely measure "progress" and students can enumerate the skill

sets they have acquired. The problem remains, however, that none of this formalist, paint-

by-numbers emphasis is actually helping students to become better communicators.

Writing Process

The disconnect between contemporary scholarship and the business writing

classroom's content continues in the teaching of the writing process. A far cry from

Linda Flower and John Hayes's (1981) intention of encouraging students to think about

their writing from a rhetorical perspective, the writing process depicted in the five

textbooks in this study is one of robotic adherence to a step-by-step formula that, when followed correctly, produces "good" writing. As Guffey and Loewy (2011) advised:

> The task of preparing a written business message or a presentation is easier and more efficient if you have a systematic process to follow… This chapter presents a systematic writing process that you can use to approach all business communication problems, whether you are planning an e-mail message, a report, an oral presentation, or even an instant message. The 3-x-3 writing process guides you through three phases, making it easy for you to plan, organize, and complete any message. Following the 3-x-3 writing process takes all the guesswork out of writing. It tells you what goes on in each phase and guides you to effective results. (Guffey & Loewy, 2011, p. 112)

The authors' systematic plan has the writer moving, in order, through three distinct phases of the writing process, starting with analyzing the audience and determining the purpose for writing; then, moving on to researching, organizing, and composing the message; and, finally, to revising and proofreading the document. They even suggest a schedule for the writing process with 25% of the time spent on prewriting, 25% on writing, and 50% on revising, noting that "good writers spend most of their time on the final phase of revising and proofreading" (Guffey & Loewy, 2011, p. 114). This same formulaic procedure is found in the other authors' textbooks as well (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. 122; Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2013, p. 1), with Bovée and Thill (2012) proclaiming, "The three-step process of planning, writing, and completing is clearly explained and reinforced throughout the course… *Business Communication Today* adapts

the three-step process to every category of messages in every medium, from traditional memos and reports to email, blogs, IM, podcasts, and wikis" (p. xx).

The common thread in the ways that all five books approach the writing process is to create a systematic, step-by-step procedure that is easy for students to follow and, as Guffey and Loewy (2011) proclaimed, "takes all the guesswork out of writing" (p. 112). The concept that good writing consists of nothing more than following a checklist of rules and procedures is anathema to the theory and values found in contemporary composition journals. Welch (1987) decried these textbooks' mechanized approaches as having "converted process into another [discourse] mode" (p. 272). As Barbara Couture (1999) further described, "emphasis on process as model has… [positioned] the writing process as yet another method for getting writing done 'right'" (p. 33). The result is that students do not gain a deeper understanding about the activity of writing; they merely learn another set of steps promising to produce "good writing." Even more disturbing, the inaccuracy of this interpretation of the writing process was pointed out all the way back in Maxine Hairston's (1982) widely hailed article, where she wrote:

> Another truth is that usually the writing process is not linear, moving smoothly in one direction from start to finish. It is messy, recursive, convoluted, and uneven. Writers write, plan, revise, anticipate, and review throughout the writing process, moving back and forth among the different operations involved in writing without any apparent plan. No practicing writer will be surprised at these findings: nevertheless, they seriously contradict the traditional paradigm that has dominated writing textbooks for years. (p. 85)

That five of the most commonly used, contemporary business writing and business communication textbooks still approach the writing process from a long discredited, formalist perspective leaves little doubt that these texts bear much resemblance to accepted composition scholarship.

Genre

At least since Carolyn Miller's (1984) seminal article describing genre as "an aspect of social action" (p. 153) scholarship on genre theory has acknowledged that "Genres aren't simply interchangeable tools that anyone can use in any circumstance; rather, they reflect existing relationships between message creators and recipients..." (Henze, 2013, p. 351). Moreover, genres are "socially situated," meaning that particular communities define and understand the purpose and situation for which a specific genre is appropriate. As Clay Spinuzzi (1996) observed, "a genre that has evolved in a particular [activity network]… will differ significantly from a similar genre in another [activity network]" (p. 299). As a result, the most effective way to learn a community's genres is to meaningfully engage with that particular community. As Blakeslee (2001) noted, "Research on genres is fairly consistent in its conclusions about how individuals learn genres. This research suggests that individuals must be immersed in a community… and adapt to the social actions of the community, and appropriate the routinized tools-in-use of the community" (p. 70). It is puzzling then that the subjective, dynamic, situated nature of genre is completely ignored in the business writing textbooks that I analyzed. Instead, business genres are presented as a taxonomy of static, universal, prescriptive templates that students are supposed to model their own writing after in order to meet the

discursive expectations of some abstract "business world." This is an all too common occurrence in business writing textbooks (Bremmer, 2008; Kent, 1993; Knoblauch, 1989, Welch, 1987).

The teaching of genre dominates all five textbooks and is clearly a cornerstone of these authors' best practices for business writing instruction. Each one of the books contains a virtual laundry list of genre forms that are covered within its pages: "detailed advice on routine correspondence—e-mail and instant messages, letters, and e-memos— informal and formal reports; instructions; and internal, sales, and grant proposals" (Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2013, p. viii); "[the] letter, report, proposal, long formal report, and more" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. xxi); "Twitter, instant messages, podcasts, blogs, and wikis" (Guffey & Loewy, 2011, preface) are just a sampling of what is contained in these books. Again, though, this approach runs directly counter to contemporary scholarship which holds that "genre may never be exhausted in the sense that it can be reduced to a rigid taxonomy of synchronic elements… genre may not be reduced to transcendental categories" (Kent, 1993, pp. 138, 141).

Moreover, beyond the prescriptive reification of genre, all of the authors consistently embrace a mimetic instructional method whereby students learn genre forms and conventions by modeling their work after sample documents presented in the books. They even laud their use of models as one of the primary benefits of their books: Bovée and Thill (2012) proclaimed, "*Business Communication Today* has an unmatched portfolio of realistic examples for students to emulate" (p. xx); Guffey and Loewy (2011) declares, "the 7th Edition as been enhanced with numerous new figures and model

documents" (preface); Lehman and DuFrene (2011) announced, "Numerous poor and good examples illustrate communication related to a variety of print and electronic documents," (p. xx); and Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013) boasted, "clear guidelines for specific types of workplace writing… supported by a wealth of sample documents" (p. vii).

The authors present each genre type using formula-based instruction that encourages learning through mimesis, evaluates writing according to standards of correctness, and elevates the importance of product over process or social construction. All five textbooks are replete with examples of teaching business writing genres through formulae, but I have selected just three to represent the practice. When discussing routine messages, Guffey and Loewy (2011) wrote: "The first sentence of an information request is usually a question or a polite command. It should not be an explanation or justification, unless resistance to the request is expected. When the information or action requested is likely to be forthcoming, immediately tell the reader what you want" (p. 227). This set of instructions doesn't challenge students to engage in critical thinking or to analyze the social dynamics and recurring objectives operationalized by a genre; instead, it describes a strict set of rules to which they simply need to adhere.

Spinuzzi (1996) argued, "[Students] should not expect to pick up merely a list of conventions. Rather, they should analyze the sociohistorical actions within that [activity network], because those actions strongly influence the genres that are used within those [activity networks]. (p. 303). However, in their chapter on negative messages Lehman and DuFrene (2011) presented a chart that contains nothing but a list of conventions that

they claim, "simplifies the process of organizing bad-news messages" (p. 230). The chart appears as such:

Opening:

Begins with neutral idea that leads to refusal or bad news

Body:

1. Presents facts, analysis, and reasons for refusal or bad news

2. States that news using positive tone and de-emphasis techniques

3. Includes counterproposal for "silver lining" idea

Closing:

Closes with ideas that shift focus away from refusal more bad news and indicates continuing relationship with receiver. (Lehman & DuFrene, 2011, p. 231)

Once again, it is the modus operandi of these textbooks to present rules and formulae as the keys to employing universal genre categories.

Finally, this is how Oliu, Brusaw, and Alred (2013) teach readers to compose business memos:

The memo shown in Figure 8-8 illustrates a typical memo format. As this example illustrates, the use of headings and lists often fosters clarity and provides emphasis in memos… Some organizations ask writers to initial or sign printed memos to verify that the writer accepts responsibility for a memo's contents. Electronic copies of memos do not include simulated initials… When memos require more than one page, use a second page header and always carry at least two lines of the body text over to that page. The header should include the

recipient's name or, if there are too many names to fit, an abbreviated subject line; the page number; and the date. Place the header in the upper left-hand corner or across the page as shown in Figure 8-9. (p. 299)

These step-by-step instructions are overly detailed and rigid to effectively teach someone how to communicate in an actual workplace.

Consider Knoblauch's (1989) critique of business writing textbooks, "The textbook argument about writing in the workplace has focused primarily on formats… as though the Memo, the Report, or the Proposal exists as a model, the practicing of which in school will prepare students for composing within essentially the same structure in professional life" (p. 249). Even with the momentous upheaval in communication technology between 1989 and 2013 (my most recent textbook date), it would seem that for all of their regularly updated editions, nothing substantive in these textbooks has changed. In fact, two presentations at the 2013 Association for Business Communication's Annual International Convention declared two commonly taught business writing genres to be "dead." The first, by Cornell professor, Amy Newman, was entitled "The Memo is Dead. Should We Still Teach Students How to Write One?" and the second, "The Sales Letter is Dead… But Concepts Live on in Social Media," was, ironically, given by Lehman and DuFrene. Considering that all five textbooks and more than 2/3 of the collected syllabi teach these "dead" genres, the folly of this approach appears all too clear.

While the scholarship of the business communication discipline emphatically holds that writing genres "are socially and culturally constructed" (Petraglia, 1991, p. 53) and

that "the point is not for the students to learn general 'writing' skills, but rather to learn how to examine and appropriate localized genres and how to understand their uses in that [activity network]" (Spinuzzi, 1996. p. 303), it still appears to be the case that, as Welch (1987) described, "textbooks… engage in a presentation of written language that appears to deny composition theory" (p. 269).

Implications and Post-Process Theory

Without further belaboring the specific shortcomings of business writing textbooks and the classrooms that are informed by these textbooks' lessons, I must point out that at its root the problem with the predominant business writing pedagogy is its framing of instruction as bridging the gap between one discourse community and another— acculturating students to the normative conventions and processes of "the" or of particular business community(ies). Such an approach puts educators in an untenable position. First, it "reif[ies] the subject positions of teachers as providers of knowledge and students as recipients of that knowledge" (Ewald, 1999, p. 126). Second, scholars like Stephen Doheny-Farina (1986), Knoblauch (1989), and Spinuzzi (1996) noted that no matter how earnest an instructor may be in his or her efforts to provide students with a realistic workplace experience, educators will never "be able to exactly duplicate in our classrooms many of the constraints and pressures that writers experience in the workplace" (Mabrito, 1999, p. 104). Third, due to the vast number of discourse communities and the exponentially greater number of discourse genres, teachers (and textbook authors) are forced to make a decision between familiarizing students in-depth with an extremely limited number of workplace discourse communities (which largely

benefits only students who join that particular workplace) or teaching a version of

business writing so broad and generalized as to be devoid of any real use to students

(Bremmer, 2008; Knoblauch, 1989; Welch, 1987; Wolfe, 2009). Fourth, it requires that

writing be viewed as a product and that "effective" business writing be assessed

according to a set of a-contextual, formalist standards against which students skill,

progress, and learning must be measured.

Sharon Crowley (1998) pointed out that, "The easy accommodation of process-

oriented strategies to current-traditionalism suggests that process and product have more

in common than is generally acknowledged in professional literature about composition"

(p. 212). In fact, the title of Guffey and Loewy's (2011) textbook, *Business

Communication: Process & Product*, practically serves as a marriage announcement for

the two paradigms. It should be clear by now that my analysis of these textbooks and

syllabi finds them to be, at least partly, beholden to a current-traditionalist pedagogy,

supporting Crowley's assertion. There seem to be an inability to move beyond product

and correctness as the foundations for teaching business writing, or to move past the

belief that supplying students with sample models and step-by-step formulae is the most

effective way of ensuring that they will learn and adhere to those standards of

correctness. As I noted earlier in this chapter, the allure of structuring their textbooks this

way is easy to understand: providing measurable rubrics and the ability to track students'

"progress" by comparing their work to approved models is attractive to educators who

assign textbooks for their classes; similarly, students appreciate both the reduction of

what they perceive to be arbitrary, subjective evaluations of their writing, and the ability

to inform potential employers of the skill sets and business writing genres in which they have developed proficiency. While, to a degree, the material in these books can benefit readers as they transition from college to the workplace, on the whole these textbooks divert students' attention from learning that "good writing" requires foremost a deep understanding of their interlocutors and the situated contexts in, and for which, that writing is produced. Unfortunately, as long as business writing textbooks continue to focus on prescriptive genre conventions, formalist interpretations of the writing process, and correctness, we will continue to produce students who are ill prepared to be effective writers in the workplace.

The answer (or at least the germinations of an answer) is to recognize that treating writing as a body of knowledge—a set of skills and processes—whose mastery of which will allow effective communication between the members of a particular group is, itself, fallacious (Davidson, 2006; Kastman Breuch, 2002; Kent 1989). Post-process theory identified that writing is public, interpretive, and situated (Kent, 1999). As a result, "we are forced to deny the possibility that textbooks can represent adequately the acts of producing and analyzing discourse, and more important, we are forced to acknowledge the impossibility of teaching writing and critical reading as an epistemologically centered body-of-knowledge" (Kent, 1989, p. 35). Post-process theory's demonstration that writing is paralogic, requiring ongoing interpretation, is in direct contrast to the "basic communication model," that is the foundation of these textbooks, where, as Bovée and Thill (2012) suggested, simply knowing a community's normative conventions allows for the seamless encoding-decoding of discourse (p. 11). So theory explains is that writing is

not simply the process of translating ideas into words and transmitting to an end user; instead, the very act of communication begins with interpretation—of an interlocutor's hermeneutic strategies, of his or her prior theories about the world, and about one's own interpretations of these matters—and continues with the recipient's interpretations about the sender's hermeneutic strategies, prior theories, and so on. As a result, an entirely new paradigm is called for—one that engages the activity of discourse in the publicly situated contexts in which it actually occurs; one in which genres are recognized as "hermeneutic strategies that propel the guessing games we employ in order to produce utterances and to understand the utterances of others" (Kent, 1993, p. 143). In the next chapter I examine just such a public arena of business discourse in order to compare it to the models of instruction that have been reviewed here and to look for new ways that business writing may be taught in the future.

Chapter 4: COMMUNICATION AUDIT OF THE
AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY CANCER ACTION NETWORK (ACS CAN)

At the 2005 annual meeting of the Association for Business Communication

(ABC), Dorothy Winsor asserted that the business writing discipline's most important

contribution has been research that allows us to "better understand what actually happens

with communication in the business workplace" (as cited in Suchan & Charles, 2006, p.

391). In fact, there has developed a long tradition in business communication research for

conducting such studies using a variety of methodologies (Couture & Rymer, 1993;

Beaufort, 1997; Dobrin & Miller, 1985; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999;

Driskill, 1989; Ledwell-Brown, 2000; Odell, 1985; Smart, 1993). Just as the previous

chapter analyzed what actually occurs in business communication classrooms, so this

chapter examines how communication functions in a contemporary professional

organization. The purpose of this study is to determine the localized contexts that affect

communication and make it unique to a particular organization, and to then consider the

factors a new member of the workplace community would need to understand in order to

become an effective, contributing participant in the organization's communicative

activity.

The first step in such an investigation is establishing an understanding that the

professional world represents a set of unique cultures, delineated by different professions,

organizational identities, and even divisional specialties within a single organization.

These varied discourse communities each have their own unwritten rules about what, and

how, things can be said (Couture & Rymer, 1993). Additionally, it must be recognized

that workplace organizations don't merely produce discourse but that organizational

culture is constructed and continuously altered by that very discursive activity (Cooren,

Taylor, & Van Every, 2006). It follows, then, that since the norms of professional

discourse are socially constructed, and rhetorical activity molds organizational

community, the most effective way to assess communication is to understand the

discourse community in which it exists. Or, as Harrison explained, "to describe the

relationship between written discourse and the professional, organizational, or

disciplinary communities established by discourse, which in turn give that discourse

meaning and legitimacy" (as cited in Herndl, 1993, p. 350). In order to develop strategies

for teaching people to become effective professional writers, we must first determine

which aspects of communication are the most valuable and sought after in particular

workplace discourse communities and how such communication affects those

organizational cultures.

Since the late 1970s communication audits have been a preferred method for

analyzing the production and consumption, the practices and procedures, the values and

assumptions, and the relationships and power dynamics of workplace discourse

communities (DeWine & James, 1988; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977; Jones, 2002).

Traditional communication audits typically serve as diagnostic tools used to uphold best

practice standards and to identify communication problems, within organizations, that

need to be fixed (Jones, 2002). While it is my hope that the results of the audit

instruments presented in this chapter prove helpful to the organization under review, the

primary focus of this study is to identify how and why communication operates in an

exemplar workplace organization so that these insights can help inform the development

of a new business writing pedagogy. As such, this communication audit will combine two widely used and respected audit instruments, the Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI) and the International Communication Association (ICA) Communication Audit, along with an interpretive audit methodology proposed by professor of management studies, Deborah Jones (2002), that "sees the organization holistically as a communicative system" (p. 469), and "allows the auditor to work collaboratively with practitioners in ways that respect practitioners' knowledge of their organisational context and empower them to reflect on their own unique and complex issues" (p. 470).

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) was selected for the communication audit for three reasons: first, for the practical fact that they offered me access to their workplace, employees, and documents; second, that, as the "nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society" ("About ACS CAN") ACS CAN is the primary lobbying arm of the American Cancer Society and is, therefore, directly concerned with producing effective, persuasive communication; and, third, because as the "nation's leading voice advocating for public policies that are helping to defeat cancer" ("ACS CAN One Pager"), and partner of the American Cancer Society, the largest voluntary health organization in America ("ACS Fact Sheet"), the organization provides a necessary specificity and gravitas to this study's findings.

When I began my investigation of ACS CAN's organizational culture and communication practices I had little idea what the OCAI and ICA audit instruments or the employee interviews would uncover. I anticipated that the study would show that

discourse practices in an actual workplace organization involve more than simply knowing the textual and format characteristics of a handful of business document genres, the understanding that professional writing should be concise, should employ a "you attitude," and should contain proper grammar and spelling. Indeed, what I found was far more complex than I had imagined. The audit demonstrated that organizational culture (both the workplace's dominant culture and the subcultures that arise, in part, due to employees' preferred cultural values), organizational objectives, workplace relationships, pressures from the organization's external environment, and even individual's personalities all play a role in shaping organizational communication policies and practices as well as specific discursive engagements. Moreover, because so many variables are involved in every instance of discourse, no two exchanges are the same. Such a complex communication setting not only makes it impossible for the lessons contained in business writing textbooks, and classrooms that are largely informed by these texts, to adequately prepare students to face such writing environments, but even for veteran employees, effective communication involves a set of complicated calculations about the objectives, situated contexts, and particular interlocutors they are in dialogue with, that makes discourse difficult to navigate and interpret correctly. The findings of this audit were so compelling that they ultimately altered my thinking about what sort of pedagogical adjustments are needed in business writing classes. What I concluded is that contemporary organizational communication is best described by a combination of activity theory—that a workplace's activity and discourse are determined by the organization's objectives, subjects, and tools—and by post-process theory, which

holds that discourse is public, interpretive, and situated. This chapter describes the results

of this communication audit and demonstrates the intricate web of elements that influence

one another and which, together, shape communication at ACS CAN.

<div align="center">**OCAI INTRODUCTION**</div>

In order to function successfully, a business organization must address the ever-

evolving needs of its stakeholders, be they clients, board members, employees, or the

larger community. Particularly in the field of nonprofit advocacy, research suggests that

success is dependent upon relationship building—helping policymakers to personally

connect to an issue and increasing an organization's credibility and reputation (Ruggiano,

Taliaferro, Dillion, Granger, & Scher, 2015). One of the keys to an organization's ability

to relate well to external constituencies involves a solid awareness of its own

organizational culture, how it is perceived by its own members and by the various entities

that it deals with (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1984).

The first part of this chapter describes research within the American Cancer

Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) aimed at identifying the nature of its current

organizational culture and the extent to which this culture is perceived to be appropriate

by its members. Using Cameron and Quinn's (1999) Organizational Cultural Assessment

Instrument (OCAI), the theoretical basis for which is Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983)

Competing Values Framework, it is apparent that ACS CAN is currently dominated both

by market and hierarchy value sets. However, in contrast, the organizational culture

desired by those working in the organization is clan-focused, with the welfare and

empowerment of employees guiding the way. As this study will later demonstrate, these

divergent sets of cultural values have direct implications for the communication practices at ACS CAN, pitting a control heavy, regimented official discourse culture against employees' desires for more nimble, dynamic communication efforts. However, the immediate priority is to first establish the make up of ACS CAN's organizational culture by looking more closely at its members' perceptions of that culture.

Background

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, when interest in organizational culture first came into real focus (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Hofstede, 1983; Pettigrew, 1979; Siehl & Martin, 1983), there have been multiple, often competing, theories put forth regarding just what the concept entails. The term "culture," itself, has been defined in markedly different ways by a number of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and psychology. As a result, developing a relative consensus in describing the nature of organizational, or corporate culture has been a challenging process that has taken decades of work. What has emerged is a set of tenets that are generally accepted as fundamental elements of organizational culture.

First, and foremost, is the understanding that organizational culture is socially constructed, formed by a group's shared experiences, assumptions, and beliefs (Alvesson, 2002; Gordon, 1991; Kropp, 1991; Schein, 1987; Siehl & Martin, 1983), as it attempts to negotiate the dual challenges of adapting to its external environment and maintaining its internal cohesion (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Schein, 1987). Moreover, these underlying values and processes have been deemed sound, and are passed along to new members,

thereby perpetuating the culture (Helfrich, Li, Mohr, Meterko, & Sales, 2007; Schein, 1987).

Also important is the fact that every organization's culture is unique (Gordon, 1991), differentiated both by industry (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992), and by organization-specific symbols, rituals, and values (Brown, 1999; Hofstede, 1983). It is also widely accepted that organizational culture is not monolithic and often comprises various subcultures; that it is ever changing and malleable; that it is greatly influenced by an organization's leaders, but is also affected by the addition of new members, and pressure to grow and adapt to environmental shifts (Bellot, 2011; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Schein, 1987).

Finally, despite being a major determinant of successful performance and employee morale (Baker, 2002; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Coolican & Jackson, 2002), and providing a context for implementing policies and establishing expectations (Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992), organizational culture is not something that can be easily managed or manipulated (Bellot, 2011; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayr, & Sanders, 1990), though it can be affected by changes in leadership style (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Ogbonna & Harris, 2000).

The dominant influence that culture has on almost every aspect of an organization's success, makes it critical that some sort of measurement or assessment of an organization's culture can be taken. Over the last three decades, researchers have developed more than seventy quantitative and qualitative instruments to do just that (Jung et al., 2005). However, the approaches, methodologies, and aims of these instruments

vary greatly and there is little agreement on a best, or preferred, way of measuring

organizational culture (Jung et al., 2005).

The Competing Values Framework (CVF), developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh

(1983) and later refined by Quinn (1988), is a widely respected model for assessing and

describing organizational effectiveness and "has been rated as one of the 50 most

important models in the history of business study" (Igo & Skitmore, 2006, p. 125). It

holds that two dimensions of competing values, 1) centralized control and stability versus

discretion and flexibility and 2) internal versus external orientation, serve as the axes of a

construct that forms four sets of core values which represent the range of approaches

organizations can take to meeting the basic challenges of operation (Quinn, 1988; Quinn

& Rohrbaugh, 1983).

The Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI), designed by

Cameron and Quinn (1999), is based on the CVF and has been used nearly 10,000 times

to identify the cultural profiles of organizations across an array of sectors (Cameron,

2008). The OCAI is recognized as one of the "most scientifically rigorous instruments" in

existence (Bellot, 2011), has been and its validity and reliability have been verified in

studies by Kallaith, Bluedorn, and Gillespie (1999); Cameron and Quinn (2006); Helfrich

et al., (2007); and Heritage, Pollock, and Roberts (2014). For these reasons, I chose to

perform the organizational cultural analysis in this paper using the OCAI.

Cameron and Quinn (1999) asserted that the same four value sets that represent

organizational effectiveness correspond to the four cultural archetypes that constitute the

spectrum of organizational cultural orientations: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market,

shown in Figure 3. The authors were careful to note that there is no ideal, nor universally preferred, corporate culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999); neither are the four cultural types mutually exclusive (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Helfrich et al., 2007; Kallaith, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999). Instead, organizations exhibit, in varying degrees, elements of all four cultures; however, one cultural model tends to be predominant and is recognized throughout all levels of the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Helfrich et al., 2007; Kallaith, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999).

The OCAI measures an organization's cultural composition by plotting its prevailing values across this four-quadrant construct (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The instrument examines six key dimensions of organizational culture: 1) dominant characteristics, 2) organizational leadership, 3) management of employees, 4) organizational glue, 5) strategic emphases; and 6) criteria for success (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Respondents are asked to use an ipsative scoring scale for each of these dimensions, allocating 100 points to assess their organization's emphases across the four cultural archetypes formed by the CVF. The results are used to create a spatial representation of the organization's cultural composition.

Figure 3   OCAI Competing Values Framework

Flexibility and Discretion

CLAN	ADHOCRACY
Emphasises values of community and flexibility, with an internal focus on employees and stakeholders that fosters a family-like atmosphere, encourages teamwork, and welcomes input from organizational members in decision making processes.	Stresses flexibility with an external focus that encourages innovation and adaptability oriented toward meeting a particular challenge; once addressed, the organization realigns its resources to tackle the next task that arises.
HIERARCHY	MARKET
Prioritizes organizational stability and maintaining operational consistency through defined organizational structures, set procedures, and a firmly established chain of command.	Values competitiveness and productivity that focuses on engaging in relationships with external entities that result in moving the organization closer to its goals or improving its position in the marketplace.

Internal Focus and Integration

External Focus and Differentiation

Stability and Control

Adapted from Cameron and Quinn (1999)

Data Collection

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) was founded in 2001 to serve as the advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society (ACS). As a 501(c)(4) ACS CAN is able to lobby state and federal lawmakers and advocate for positions based on the ACS's scientific research without jeopardizing the status of ACS as a 501(c)(3). ACS CAN employs 65 individuals at its headquarters in Washington, DC

and, approximately, an additional 135 people nationwide. The nonprofit organization comprises eleven divisions: Federal Relations, Strategy and Operations, Media Advocacy, Policy Development and Analysis, Income Development, Field Advocacy Operations, Field Advocacy Training, Grassroots Campaigns, State and Local Campaigns, Program Integration, and Legal, all of which work in tandem toward the organization's mission of "encourag[ing] elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority… in support of laws and policies that save lives from cancer" (ACS CAN One Pager).

ACS CAN represents an ideal subject for conducting research into the organizational culture of a national nonprofit advocacy group. The organization's bona fides are well established; it is both well known and is universally recognized as a leader in its field. Moreover, it advocates on behalf of an issue with national scope and worldwide significance. With regard to its managerial and organizational structure, in April 2015 (the same month this survey was disseminated) ACS CAN installed a new CEO, making this a particularly opportune time for assessing the nonprofit's current organizational culture and determining what that cultural identity ought to be moving forward. Throughout the rest of the organization, ACS CAN employees serve in highly specialized divisions that require ongoing, active management and coordination in order to accomplish the organization's singular mission. From a communication perspective, ACS CAN is responsible for addressing, satisfying, and persuading multiple stakeholders, both internal and external, each of which presents a unique set of challenges. Making these complex communication tasks even more difficult is the

requirement that ACS CAN must be able to adapt to a rapidly changing landscape, where new issues may arise at a moment's notice, while at the same time maintaining a precise consistency in its messaging, positions, and the factually driven, scientific data that defines its advocacy. These competing organizational values of structure and fluidity along with a set of ever-changing, and often divergent, communication demands requires an organizational culture that is capable of uniting all of these diverse elements. Coupled with the timeliness of the nonprofit's recent leadership change, ACS CAN makes for a compelling case study of organizational culture.

The standard OCAI survey questionnaire, developed by Cameron and Quinn (1999), was used for this study.[5] The survey was uploaded to the web using SurveyMonkey, an online survey development cloud-based company, and was made available to all ACS CAN employees for a two-month period. Participation was requested via an email from one of the organization's directors, which explained the purpose of the survey and its role in the context of my overall research. Further recruitment efforts, in the form of follow-up emails and in-person requests, proved necessary and, for reasons of proximity and access, were limited to the Washington, DC headquarters. Any concerns over confidentiality were addressed by following University of Maryland's IRB protocols.

Results

The questionnaire was made available to all 200 ACS CAN employees, though recruitment efforts were primarily focused on the 65 employees at the Washington, DC

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[5] A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.

headquarters; 29 questionnaires (14.5% of the entire organization or 44.6% of the headquarters) were completed. The mean results of the survey responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2   Mean cultural profile scores

Mean results	Clan			Adhocracy			Market			Hierarchy		
	Now	Pref.	Var.	Now	Pref.	Var.	Now	Pref.	Var.	Now	Pref.	Var.
Overall profile	25.95	33.05	7.1	13.77	24.25	10.48	30.92	21.01	9.91	29.31	21.67	7.64
Cultural attributes:												
Dominant characteristics	26.55	25.00	1.55	12.76	29.31	16.55	28.10	23.97	4.13	32.24	21.90	10.34
Organizational leadership	23.97	32.41	8.44	14.14	23.45	9.31	33.45	18.28	15.17	28.45	25.86	2.59
Management of employees	29.83	39.14	9.31	12.59	23.97	11.38	28.97	17.41	11.56	28.62	19.48	9.14
Organizational glue	29.31	37.07	7.76	11.55	20.69	9.14	29.31	23.45	5.86	29.83	18.45	11.38
Strategic emphasis	21.90	32.41	10.51	16.03	24.66	8.63	34.31	21.72	12.59	27.76	21.21	6.55
Criteria of success	24.14	32.24	8.1	15.52	23.45	7.93	31.38	21.21	10.17	28.97	23.10	5.87

Blue figures denote a variance where a preference is indicated for more of a particular organizational cultural value then is 'now' occurring.

Red figures denote a variance where a preference is indicated for less of a particular organizational cultural value then is 'now' occurring.

The current cultural profile shows a clear emphasis toward the market and hierarchy cultures, indicating that the organization places high value on getting results, enhancing its reputation, and the achievement of measurable goals, while maintaining centralized control to ensure smooth-running operations, a defined organizational structure, and internally consistent rules and procedures (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). This

is in direct contrast to the respondents' preferred cultures: clan and adhocracy.

Figure 4 shows a representation of the current overall cultural profile contrasted with respondents' preferred cultural emphases, plotted on the four-quadrant graph of cultural archetypes.

Figure 4 Overall Culture Profile
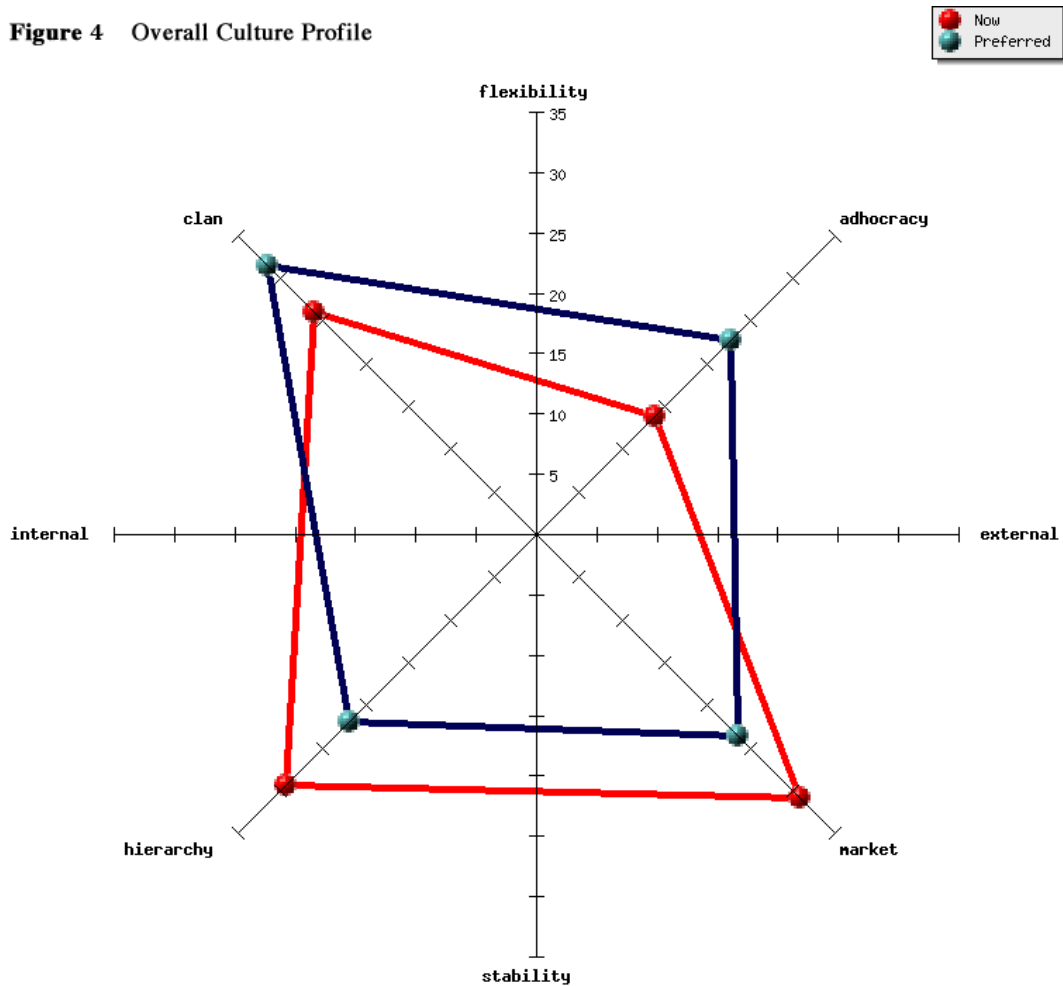
Figures 5-10 depict this contrast with regard to the six cultural dimensions described by Cameron and Quinn (1999). Consistent with the overall culture, market and hierarchy dominate the current cultural practices (with market taking the lead in three

categories and hierarchy in two), except with regard to the Management of Employees, in which a clan culture takes the lead. In five out of the six cultural dimensions, Respondents' preferred a clan approach, the one exception being a desire for adhocracy in the organization's Dominant Characteristics.
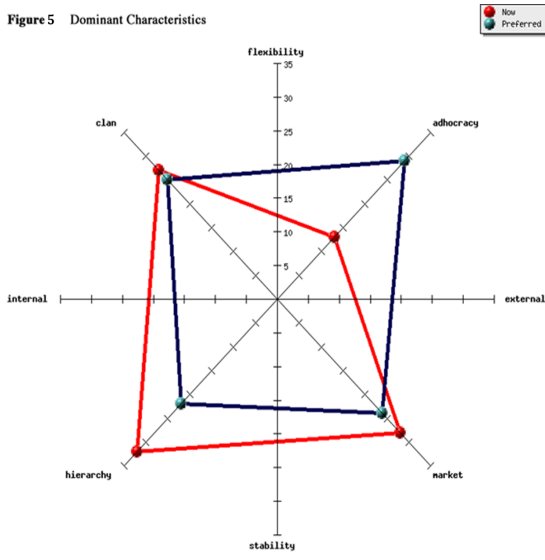
Figure 5 Dominant Characteristics
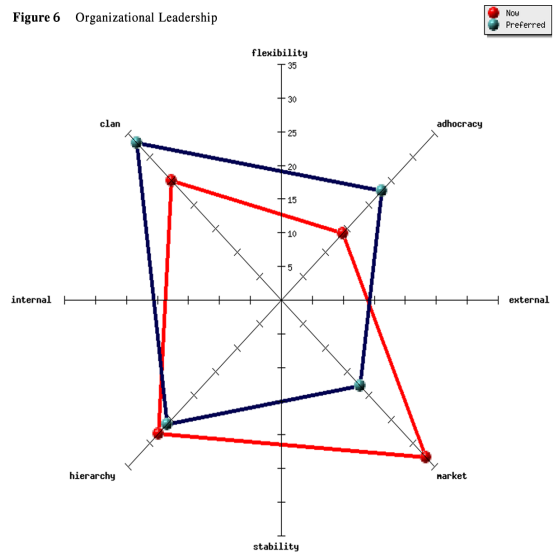

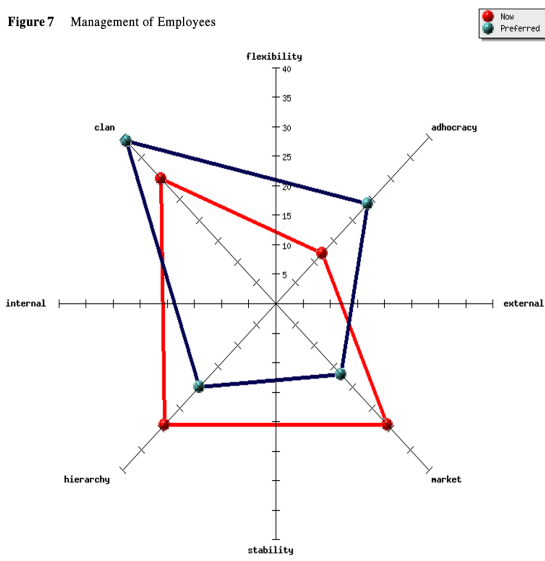**Figure 6** Organizational Leadership

Figure 7 Management of Employees

Figure 8 Organizational Glue
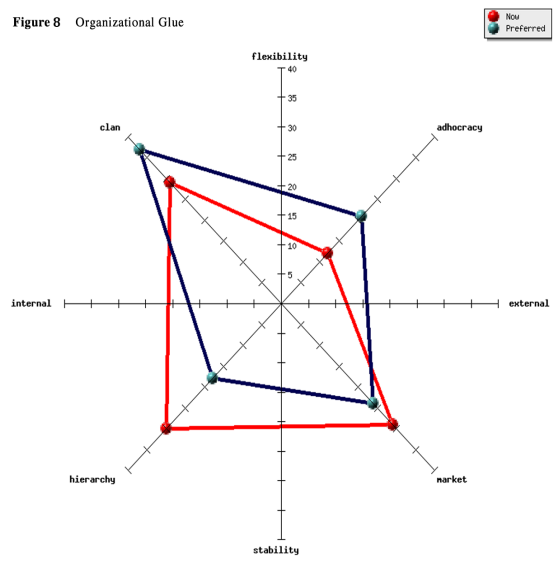
Figure 9 Strategic Emphases
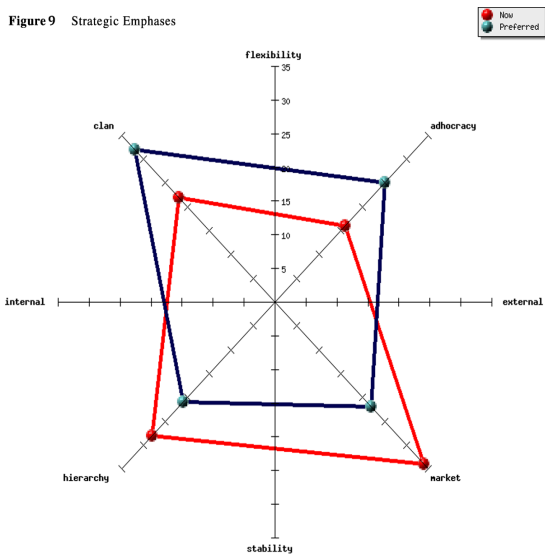
Figure 10 Criteria of Success

126
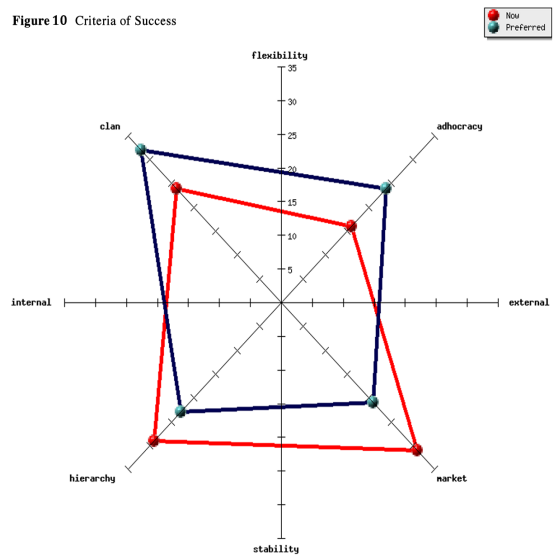
Discussion

Cameron and Quinn (1999) provided a template for interpreting OCAI results that involves determining the organizational type, measuring the strength of the predominant culture, noting discrepancies between the current and preferred cultures, assessing the congruence of results throughout all six of the instrument's dimensions, comparing the organization's results with the average results for all organizations within their database, and taking into account trends in cultural profiles that the two researchers have observed over the years. Comparisons of ACS CAN's organizational culture with other organizations is beyond the scope of the study; however the other five factors play significant roles in understanding ACS CAN's organizational makeup.

Type. ACS CAN's current emphases on market and hierarchy cultures are largely consistent with the organization's advocacy-based focus and its partnership role with ACS. ACS CAN's reputation serves as its primary currency, allowing it to build and expand its volunteer base, positioning it as the "go to" source for media inquiries about cancer policy, and providing it with the influence to effectively lobby and campaign in support of targeted healthcare legislation. Also corresponding to market archetypal values, the organization's performance is judged on how it manages external market forces, i.e. legislative "wins" and its ability to build advantageous relationships with legislators, media, and the public.

ACS CAN's secondary adherence to a hierarchical culture can largely be explained by its need to provide "legal protection to the [American Cancer] Society" ("About ACS CAN") through the separation of the advocacy organization and the

science-based charity. Ensuring that there be no blurring of the lines between these two, closely aligned, organizations requires that all of ACS CAN's communications—press releases, interviews, media campaigns, emails to volunteers, promotional materials, etc.—be governed by strict rules and a vigilant centralized review processes.

Strength. While a market culture takes the lead in ACS CAN's overall value structure (30.92) its strength is not such that market-based values drown out other cultural considerations. However, when combined with the second most emphasized cultural archetype, hierarchy (29.31), the two account for over sixty percent of the organization's perceived value system. Early research into the relationship between organizational culture and performance has indicated that strong cultures tend to have a clearer focus and higher performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Denison, 1990; Schein, 1985). However, more recent studies find that this link is more tenuous and is contingent upon the organization operating in an environment where stability and a unified vision are necessary (Cameron & Quinn, 1999) and, just as important, that this homogeneity and organizational consistency do not limit the organization's ability to adapt to future changes in the environmental landscape (Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Ogbonna & Harris, 2000).

Discrepancies. While this bias toward the stability end of the spectrum certainly allows ACS CAN to achieve many of its goals, it is clear that a level of dissatisfaction and a desire for more independence are present within the organization. Looking at the overall cultural profile, the variance between the current culture and the one preferred by respondents shows a preference for more emphasis on the adhocracy (+10.48) and clan

(+7.1) archetypes and less of one on the market (-9.91) and hierarchy (-7.64) approaches. Cameron and Quinn (1999) counseled that differences of more than ten points warrant particular attention which, in this case, means considering ways to better empower ACS CAN's workforce and include them more in decision-making processes.

Turning to the results of the six cultural dimensions that compose the OCAI, we see a similar pattern where variances of ten or more points are concerned:

1) The organization's dominant characteristics currently reflect a hierarchical culture with strong market influences, while the culture overwhelmingly preferred by the respondents is an adhocracy (+16.55) with a significantly reduced focus on hierarchy (-10.34).

2) The current leadership style is founded, primarily, on a market-based set of values which, when compared to the preferred leadership style, would be de-emphasized by -15.17 points.

3) The relationship between managers and employees is presently characterized by a clan culture, followed closely by both market and hierarchy. While respondents appear to value a clan approach to management and would like to see it emphasized even more (+9.31), the two greatest variances in this dimension are the desire for less of a market approach (-11.56) and an increase (+11.38) of an adhocracy type management style.

4) The cultural factors that now bond the organization together are almost equally divided between the well-defined structure and rules of ACS CAN's hierarchy (29.83); it's collegial, family-like atmosphere (29.31); and, it's competitive us-

against-the-world market mentality (29.31). However, the area where change is most demonstrably sought is in a decrease of the role that hierarchy plays in bonding the organization (-11.38).

5) The cultural values that drive the organization's strategy are, by a fair margin, grounded in the market archetype, and that is also exactly where the greatest preferred cultural decrease resides (-12.59). Replacing the market as the preferred primary strategic emphasis is the clan culture (+10.51).

6) Last, falling in line with the organization's strategic emphasis, the main determining factor of success at ACS CAN is also firmly located in the market archetype quadrant. Additionally, just as with the respondents' preferred strategic values, a decrease in the market's hold on how the organization defines victory is desired (-10.17).

In reviewing the variances of greater than 10 points between current and preferred organizational values, a picture of this organization's perceived cultural misalignments emerges. Presently, the organization seeks to maintain and increase its levels of success in the legislative "marketplace" by embracing values of order, consistency and using a system of defined channels and firm protocols. However, the organization's members express a desire to see a greater value placed on creating an internal sense of team unity, and a greater recognition of members' abilities to meet challenges in a more dynamic, less structured environment.

  Congruence. The scores for ACS CAN's overall profile as well as its six cultural dimensions reveal a relatively high level of congruence in the perceived cultural values

that mark this organization's operations. The market and hierarchy archetypes alternate in taking the lead in every dimension, with the lone exception of the management of employees. By less than one point, a clan culture is perceived as the prevalent working environment created by management, closely followed by the market and hierarchy value constructs. Additionally, while hierarchy remains the principal archetype in the organizational glue category, here too the clan culture scores high, tying with the market culture for the second most influential set of values that hold the organization together. A possible explanation for the clan culture's strong showing in both the management of employees and the organizational glue dimensions is the fact that many of ACS CAN's employees have either a personal connection to, or are simply passionate about, the organization's mission of defeating cancer. As a result, a level of unity and fellowship is inherently present among the organization's stakeholders at all levels, thereby influencing their perceptions of the organization's internal sense of community.

As with the research on how cultural strength affects an organization's performance, there is no consensus on definitive link between cultural congruence and organizational success. However, a number of scholars suggest that having all areas of an organization on the same page, regarding the cultural values and assumptions that guide the organization, helps to eliminate confusion and disunity that can impede performance (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Trends. Cameron and Quinn (1999) attempted to provide some context for those looking to make sense of their organizational culture profiles by describing several trends that the researchers have noticed after examining over one thousand organizations.

According to the authors, on average, adhocracy scores are typically the lowest of all the cultural archetypes; organizations, over time, move toward the hierarchy and market cultural values; and, once established, attempts to deemphasize these two cultures is extremely difficult, taking a concerted effort and strong leadership (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). These trends are in line with ACS CAN's OCAI results and suggest that, if the organization does seek changes in its culture, it will face significant hurdles in doing so.

OCAI Limitations

This section of the chapter describes research into the current and preferred organizational culture at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. An unmodified version of the Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI), distributed as an online questionnaire, was used to determine the overall cultural profile of this organization along with its six dominant characteristic traits.

While the OCAI and the Competing Values Framework, on which it is based, have been found valid and reliable (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Heritage, Pollock, & Roberts, 2014; Kallaith, Bluedorn, & Gillespie, 1999), it must be noted that the instrument's creators did not claim that the OCAI provides a comprehensive picture of an organization's culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999) and it is acknowledged that limitations, including the number of respondents, the inherent constraints of the ipsative scoring method (Bellot, 2011; DeWine & James, 1988), and the collection of data from a single point in time, all factor into the results.

OCAI Conclusion

In applying the OCAI, the results indicate that ACS CAN has dominant market-

oriented and hierarchical cultures. ACS CAN's mission is to help defeat cancer through its efforts to influence legislation and political agendas with regard to healthcare policy and cancer research funding; it operates in an arena where success is measured by concrete legislative "wins" and the ability to form advantageous relationships with political figures, media outlets, and volunteer activists, suggesting that the organization's emphasis on market values is an appropriate one. ACS CAN is also responsible to its parent organization, the American Cancer Society, by which it was founded. This responsibility entails translating ACS's science-based findings into lobbying positions, while maintaining a clear separation between the charity and the advocacy so as not to jeopardize the former organization's objectivity or its tax-exempt status. This dual mission requires that ACS CAN closely monitor all of its communications and its lobbying positions using a centralized review process, strictly enforced protocols, and clearly defined chains of command. This explains the organization's additional adherence to the values of the hierarchy archetype.

In contrast, the preferred culture of the respondents is an adhocracy, indicating a level of misalignment between the culture employees think is needed and what is currently perceived to exist. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the personal sense of mission that employees' feel in their common goal to defeat cancer. While many in the organization have a direct connection to the fight against cancer, even those who do not share a passion for the cause. This feeling of common purpose is particularly apparent in the elevated clan archetype scores for both the management of employees and the organizational glue dimensional categories. ACS CAN respondents express a sense of

being part of a team, both in their relationship with management and with the values that bond the organization together. However, while these feelings of unity and personal investment help to enhance loyalty and commitment to the organization, they also lead employees to desire greater leeway to exercise their talents in order to have a bigger impact on the fight against cancer; they additionally foster a feeling that employees' passion and contributions are under-recognized by the organization.

The next section of this chapter directly examines ACS CAN's discourse culture, looking more deeply at how these cultural values and other variables affect communication.

ICA INTRODUCTION

Just as establishing a clear picture of organizational culture provides advantageous insights into the values and relationships that drive a workplace's activities, so too does developing a profile of an organization's discourse culture help to "construct a broad view of organizational life" (Maki et al., 2009, p. 385). For, it is not the case that workplace communication merely transmits information between parties; instead, rhetorical activity is culturally constitutive—knowledge creation and cultural identity are formed by discourse through an ongoing collaborative mix of dissensus and the negotiation of ideas. Discourse culture, then, is not merely reflective of organizational culture, but helps to create it. Thus, understanding a workplace's discourse culture allows that organization to better assess and optimize the vital practices, values, and relationships that define its organizational community.

With contemporary society firmly ensconced in the information age, where constant communication among all variety of current and potential stakeholders is an expectation, it seems almost superfluous to make a case that developing an effective discourse community is vital to an organization's success**.** Indeed, for the last two decades, both academic scholars and workplace practitioners have established an almost universal acceptance of the central role that communication plays in the professional world (e.g., Clampitt & Downs, 1987; Downs & Adrian, 2004; Hargie & Tourish, 2000; Maki et al., 2009; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Not only is effective communication necessary to execute an organization's strategy, but also research has shown that communication satisfaction affects employees' overall levels of job satisfaction, trust, commitment, and productivity (*H.R. Magazine*, 2008; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007). As a result, academics and organizations alike find it useful to measure and analyze the efficacy of workplace discourse and to better understand the discourse cultures that underlie and emerge from these dialogic activities. Communication audits have become one of the most relied upon methods for gathering and evaluating information about workplace communication practices and about employees' communication satisfaction (Downs & Hazen, 1977; Goldhaber, 2002; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007).

This section of the chapter describes the use of the International Communication Association (ICA) Communication Audit for assessing communication perceptions at ACS CAN. It reveals that, much like the OCAI results, the organization's discourse culture is dominated by hierarchy and market archetypal concerns while its employees desire more autonomy and less centralized oversight of communication related activities.

Moreover, the results of the ICA study illustrate that workplace communication is made of a unique and intricate web of interrelated factors—organizational culture and objectives, organizational members' relationships with one another, the interpretation of various interlocutors' personalities and communication needs, and external exigencies that affect the strategy and timing of communication. The organizational communication story that emerges from the ICA study of ACS CAN'S communications is one that aligns both with the activity theory model of organizational analysis and a post-process theory of language that holds discourse to be public, interpretive, and situated. These results indicate that business writing pedagogies must find a way to incorporate these two theories into business communication courses if students are to be adequately prepared to meet their future workplace's writing challenges and expectations.

Background

Developed from 1971 to 1976, the ICA Communication Audit is a valid and reliable tool for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of an organization's communication practices. The audit evaluates employees' perceptions and attitudes regarding information flow, message content, and communication relationships which have the potential to affect employees' behavior, satisfaction, and the effectiveness of organizational operations (Brooks, Callicoat, & Siegerdt, 1979; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977; Maki et al., 2009; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007). Following its development, the ICA Communication Audit "became the dominant method chosen by academics and consultants" (Goldhaber, 2002, p. 451) and "has been used extensively in research and consulting" (DeWine & James, 1988, p. 144). It has been described by scholars as

"comprehensive" (Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007, p. 264) in scope, and its impact on the field of organizational communication as "immense" (DeWine & James, 1988, p. 144). Moreover, Goldhaber and Krivonos (1977) found that the audit questionnaire's reliability "ranges from a low of .73 to a high of .92" (p. 46), while DeWine and James (1988) reported a reliability range from .76 to .90 (as cited in Maki et al., 2009, p. 393).

The ICA Communication Audit creates a portrait of an organization's communication processes using up to five instruments: a survey questionnaire, interviews, network analysis, communication experiences, and a communication diary, "which can be administered independently or in any combination" (Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977, p. 46). For the purposes of this study only the questionnaire and the interviews were chosen. The questionnaire consists of 123 items and 12 demographics that measure eight key communication variables: receiving information, sending information, follow-up, sources of information, timeliness of information, communication channels, communication relationships, and satisfaction with organizational outcomes. The survey asks respondents to indicate their perception of the current status of their organization's communication system as well as their ideal situation using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Very Little) to 5 (Very Great). The interviews allow for a deeper investigation and explication of participants' survey answers.

While the ICA Communication Audit has been widely accepted, it is not without its critics. Among the audit's perceived shortcomings are that it is overly long and impractical, taking up to six months to administer (DeWine & James, 1988; Goldhaber &

Krivonos, 1977; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007); it is faulted for providing only a

snapshot in time of an organization's communication processes (Brooks, Callicoat, &

Siegerdt, 1979; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977); its reliability is questioned due to its

reliance on subjective, perception-based evidence (DeWine & James, 1988; Goldhaber &

Krivonos, 1977); its depth of insight is challenged because of the limitations of the

Likert-type scoring method (Barnett, Hamlin, & Danowski, 1982); and, its usefulness is

doubted because there is a lack of information about developing recommendations based

upon the audit's findings (DeWine & James, 1988).

DeWine and James (1988) delivered a compelling rebuttal of these, and other,

criticisms of the ICA Communication Audit, particularly their defense of its reliance on

perceptual data, in which they noted that, "Organizational members' perceptions of

reality are, in fact, the reality that controls behavior" (DeWine & James, 1988, p. 156).

Additionally, while acknowledging that the audit does measure only a brief period in an

organization's existence, they explained that the results deliver, "an organization's

generalized and collective view of its communication climate" (DeWine & James, 1988,

p. 158). However, despite Dewine's and James's arguments, the critiques of the ICA

Communication Audit are not wholly unfounded. The length of time it would take and

the likelihood of a reduced response rate were, in part, responsible for my electing to

forego administering all five audit instruments. Shorter versions of the questionnaire,

itself, have been developed, most notably the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire

(CSQ) by Downs and Hazen (1977). However, for a more comprehensive examination of

ACS CAN, I elected to use the ICA Communication Audit questionnaire. Last, as no

formal guidelines exist for developing recommendations based on the ICA

Communication Audit's findings, and in keeping with Jones's (2002) interpretive audit

methodology, I have attempted to keep any recommendations generalized in order to

prompt reflection on the highlighted issues rather than providing concrete suggestions for

change. As Dewine and James (1988) suggested, "The recommendations may function as

a force to propel communication behaviors to a higher level of consciousness for the

purposes of observation, assessment, and modification" (p. 159).

Data Collection

Previously in this chapter I reviewed the reasons that ACS CAN represents such a

good subject for conducting research into its organizational culture. Those same

characteristics also lend themselves to warrant the study of this organization's

communication. However, even more than its exemplary reputation and its power to

influence healthcare policy throughout the United States, as an organization focused on

lobbying and advocacy, ACS CAN's employees are acutely aware of the importance of

producing effective, persuasive communications. On a daily basis, ACS CAN staff

members are responsible for engaging in compelling discourse with multiple

stakeholders: Internally, they must maintain a coordinated, consistent front across every

division; externally, they operate in a fluid environment where new issues and challenges

must be addressed at a moment's notice. As a result, the feedback and self-analysis of

the organization's communications is likely to produce a greater level of insight into the

nature of these communications than might those of an organization with less

communication savvy employees. ACS CAN, thereby, proves to be an optimal case study for research into organizational communication.

An updated version of the standard ICA Communication Audit questionnaire, developed by Goldhaber et al. (1977), was used for this study.[6] Emails were sent to ACS CAN employees from one of the organization's directors, explaining the purpose of the survey, its role in the context of my overall research, and soliciting their participation. The survey was made available for two months on the SurveyMonkey website. Due to the initial lack of response it was necessary to conduct follow-up requests with members of the nearby Washington, DC headquarters. Any concerns over confidentiality were addressed by following University of Maryland's IRB protocols.

In addition, in order to corroborate and expand upon the survey results, one-on-one interviews were conducted with eleven employees, each of whom volunteered for the sessions. The interviewees ranged in position from those with no subordinates to upper-level management; their tenures with ACS CAN varied from new hires to those with more than a decade with the organization. The interviews were conducted either over the phone or in-person at a location near the organization's headquarters. They lasted roughly 75 minutes and were recorded (with the participants' permission), and the anonymity of the participants (including their job titles) was assured and each of them signed a consent form that had been approved by the University of Maryland's IRB.

Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was made available to all 200 ACS CAN employees, though

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[6] A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix C.

recruitment efforts were primarily focused on the 65 employees at the Washington, DC headquarters; 24 questionnaires (12% of the entire organization or 37% of the headquarters) were completed.

The demographic breakdown of the participants is as follows: the respondents included 6 (25%) males and 18 (75%) females. 100% of the respondents were full-time, salaried employees. Almost half of the respondents (46%) have worked at ACS CAN for between 1-5 years and a majority (54%) have held their current position for between 1-5 years (see Table 3 for complete demographic profile). Respondents represent a wide spectrum of positions throughout the organization, from new employees with no direct reports to senior directors. Using the age categories presented in the original ICA Audit, respondents' ages were: 21-30 (16.6%), 31-40 (41.6%), 41-50 (16.6%), over 50 (25%). Participants reported that the highest level of education completed ranged from college graduates (33.3%) to Masters Degrees (54%) to Ph.D.s/JDs (12.5%). Respondents who are presently looking for a job in a different organization measure 25%.

Table 3   Demographic profile

Income type	Salaried	100%
Gender	Male	25%
	Female	75%
Work status	Full-time	100%
Time with organization	Less than 1 year	8.3%
	1-5 years	46%
	6-10 years	29%
	11-15 years	8.3%
	15+ years	8.3%
Time in current position	Less than 1 year	12.5%
	1-5 years	54%
	6-10 years	29%
	11-15 years	0%
	15+ years	4%
Position in organization	Don't supervise anybody	58%
	First line supervisor	12.5%
	Middle management	8%
	Top management	4%
	Other	17%
Level of education	Undergraduate degree	33.3%
	Masters degree	54%
	Doctorate degree	12.5%
Age	21-30	16.6%
	31-40	41.6%
	41-50	16.6%
	50+	25%
Communications training	None	12.5%
	Little	25%
	Some	41.6%
	Extensive	20.8%
Salary	$30,000-$49,000	29.2%
	$50,000-$100,000	66.6%
	$100,000+	4.2%
Other jobs in last 10 years	0	29.2%
	1	29.2%
	2	8.3%
	3	12.5%
	3+	20.8%
Currently seeking a job in a different organization	Yes	25%
	No	75%

In this study, the subsections reported mixed reliabilities:[7] receiving information now α =.89 (M = 38.04, SD = 9.23) and needed α =.89 (M = 49.96, SD = 6.82), sending information now α =.70 (M = 19.25, SD = 4.46) and needed α =.83 (M = 21.71, SD = 5.10), and follow-up now α =.58 (M = 12.53, SD = 3.73) needed α =.30 (M = 14.63, SD = 3.00), sources of information now α =.43 (M = 24.71, SD = 4.40) and needed α =.49 (M = 27.82, SD = 3.71), timeliness α =.42 (M = 18.21, SD = 2.93), channels now α =.64 (M = 28.92 , SD = 5.26) and needed α =.66 (M = 27.50, SD = 4.81), organizational communication relationships α =.92 (M = 62.33, SD = 12.31), organizational outcomes α =.88 (M = 43.42, SD = 7.85).

The ICA survey measures eight communication data points: 1) receiving information from others, 2) sending information to others, 3) follow-up action, 4) sources of information, 5) timeliness of information, 6) communication channels, 7) organizational communication relationships, 8) satisfaction with organizational outcome. A closer analysis of each of the eight sections provides an important overview of the communication practices at ACS CAN (see Table 4 in Appendix D for a complete set of results). Employee interviews appear with the survey results, providing additional detail into these eight survey categories and adding deeper insight into the organization's discursive relationships as well as the practices and challenges unique to communication at ACS CAN.

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[7] Five of thirteen Cronbach's alpha scores fall into the "poor" or "unacceptable" range. These results are due to the limited number of survey responses coupled with the minimal number of questions (between 5-9) in these sections, as well as the fact that respondents without subordinates were forced to skip several questions, skewing the internal consistency.

Overview

      As an advocacy organization, communication is the life's blood of ACS CAN. The messages it crafts not only determine if it will be able to persuade legislators, media, and the public at large regarding the policy positions it is promoting, but they can have equal effect (positively or negatively) on the organization's reputation and credibility, the successful maintenance of its relationships with various stakeholders, the protection of its parent organization's tax-exempt status, and the social climate of its own workplace. The power that communication wields at ACS CAN directly impacts the way the organization sets its priorities as well as how it determines the organizational culture that governs the way those communications are developed and disseminated. The OCAI survey revealed that ACS CAN's organizational culture is dominated by the stability end of the cultural archetype spectrum, with market values the primary determinant of operations, followed closely by hierarchy sensibilities. With the symbiotic link between discourse culture and organizational culture, it is no surprise that the questionnaire and interviews conducted as part of the ICA survey confirm these results. Similarly, employees' preference for a stronger emphasis on adhocracy and clan values, noted in the OCAI, is also apparent in the interviews and in the ICA questionnaire results that show the variances between communication that currently exists and that which employees perceive is needed.

      Beyond confirming the OCAI findings, the second significant insight that emerges from the ICA's results is that communication at ACS CAN is affected by two primary factors: 1) the interplay between the organization's objectives and its cultural values and, 2) the discursive relationships and situational contexts of communication with

specific audiences. Both of these elements play a role in every discursive interaction;

however, their relative influence and effects change from situation to situation.

Examining the ICA questionnaire's results and employee interviews helps to develop a

deeper sense of the organization's objectives and cultural values, its social dynamics, the

outside forces it faces, as well as how each of these factors affects ACS CAN's

operations and communication practices. Moreover, it reveals just what is involved in

becoming an effective communicator in this environment.

Interplay Between Organizational Objectives and Cultural Values

The ICA audit reveals that ACS CAN's objectives and its organizational culture

are inextricably intertwined, and that together they inform the organization's

communication policies, its employees' acceptance of and resistance to the organization's

values, and the way the organization frames and measures its success.

Dominant culture. In talking with ACS CAN's employees it becomes clear that,

in keeping with the organization's dominant market and hierarchy cultural archetypes, the

organization's communications are handled in a centrally controlled manner that

emphasizes consistency and uniformity in its presentation to, and discourse with, the

outside world. As one employee described, "I don't know if it's a bad thing, but ACS

CAN has a very top-down communications channel; there are many layers that a

communication must go through. It can be a bit of a challenge sometimes" (Anonymous

4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Another respondent expanded on this, "I'm

not allowed to directly communicate with our volunteers. There are over two thousand of

them and there is a culture at ACS and ACS CAN where I would get in pretty big trouble

sending out an email to that big a group. So, there is definitely a chain of command about who gets to address [whom]" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

Receiving information from others. ACS CAN takes great pains to keep employees on the same page about the organization's mission and the projects underway to achieve its objectives—coordinating employees' efforts and making sure that everyone is aware of external events that may have implications for the organization's ongoing work. The ICA questionnaire finds that employees value this information; across every item in the "Receiving Information from Others" category, participants express an eagerness to be given more information than they are currently getting. The data further suggests that employees are largely satisfied with the information they are getting related to their individual job duties and organization-wide programs and goals. As this interview participant noted, "ACS CAN is really good at getting emails out… and keeping us informed. I really appreciate that, that they really try keep us all in the loop" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). Concurring, another employee stated, "I think we have a good system of notifying each other what's going to happen and when it's going to happen" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

These results are corroborated by the responses to the "Sources of Information" section of the ICA questionnaire which shows that the amount of information employees receive from various sources within the organization is largely appropriate to the amount of information they need from those sources. With the exception of the "grapevine" (for which a .21 decrease is indicated), only minimal increases from these sources are desired,

the largest of which (.67) is for more information from coworkers both within their own unit/department and from individuals in other units/departments within the organization.

However, along with the benefits that come from keeping employees well informed, there are also drawbacks. Interview subjects almost unanimously described an atmosphere of information overload. Common sentiments included: "Over communication is one of our weaknesses" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015); "When I first started, everyone said, 'the email is like a fire hose, but you'll get used to it'" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015); "We have weekly email updates from our president, we have an internal newsletter that comes out about every other week—I have to admit, I don't really ever read that. A lot of that information just isn't really useful to me in my job" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015); and, "Sometimes [at ACS CAN] it can be death by meetings" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). The culture of over communication is so entrenched that one employee even related a story in which she discovered that a colleague had set up a filter to segregate the employee's routine updates, but had done so in such a way that all of the employee's emails—even direct, business related requests—were being missed (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015).

The ICA data shows a rather different outcome regarding the organization's communication with employees about internal matters such as the challenges faced by the organization and, particularly, issues related to employees and their careers. This section of the questionnaire has both the widest variances between current and "ideal" scores as

well as the greatest number of items (seven) with variances larger than one point on the five-point Likert scale. The mean scores for these seven items are as follows: "How technological changes affect my job" (now: 2.82, needed: 4.09, variance: 1.27); "Mistakes and failures of my organization" (now: 1.96, needed: 3.38, variance: 1.42); "How I am being judged" (now: 2.88, needed: 4.00, variance: 1.12); "How my job related problems are being handled" (now: 2.91, needed: 3.91, variance: 1.00); "How organization decisions are made that affect my job" (now: 2.38, needed: 3.88, variance: 1.50); "Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization" (now: 2.25, needed: 3.88, variance: 1.63); "Specific problems faced by management" (now: 2.04, needed: 3.25, variance: 1.21). Of particular note, the difference in scores between current and needed information regarding promotion and advancement opportunities represents the largest variance in the entire survey.

Further elucidating employees' dissatisfaction with the information they receive about their careers, how they are being evaluated, how complaints are dealt with, and the organization's level of concern about these matters, one interviewee stated, "I would like more information about how organizational decisions are made and about the typical career trajectory; those things would be beneficial"(Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). Another employee added, "I think that if you take something to your boss, whether it's a complaint or a suggestion… there should be an expectation that it's going to go beyond your boss, but it doesn't" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Echoing these sentiments this interviewee noted, "Management seems to just want everyone to be happy; as long as everyone is

happy, everything is good. But that kind of creates a culture of not bringing up issues and having frank conversations" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Also in line with the questionnaire responses is an expressed desire for more transparency about the challenges facing the organization and top management's decision-making processes. "We get a lot of trickle-down information. I'll hear from my boss, who hears from his boss, so it's like telephone operator. It would be nice to hear more from our president what he thinks [our strategy should be] about a particular issue" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). By way of explanation, one participant stated, "We are overly inclusive here, so the expectation of the staff has become that everyone is going to be included on every decision or informed of everything going on; but just because that's the expectation doesn't mean it's the right thing [for the organization]" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015).

The communication story that emerges is of two very different sets of values. When it comes to organizational objectives, ACS CAN makes a concerted, ongoing effort to keep its employees well informed and working from the same playbook. This reflects its strong market and hierarchy organizational culture, but it also feeds employees' desire for a clan-based unity; it encourages everyone to feel part of the same team with the same set of goals. In these matters it is "overly inclusive." However, the superior level of communication and togetherness dissipates when it comes to informing employees about the issues that are relevant to their careers and how the organization actually operates in that arena. The disappointment respondents expressed in these areas, both in the ICA questionnaire and in their interviews, mirrors the OCAI findings that employees would

prefer a shift from the market approach to organizational leadership and the management of employees toward a more clan like concern for employees as stakeholders and the adhocracy-based consideration and inclusion of employees' ideas.

Sending information to others. As much as "Receiving Information from Others" demonstrates the presence of ACS CAN's market and hierarchy culture in the organization's communication practices, the "Sending of Information to Others" is even more explicitly governed by these cultural values. The ICA questionnaire results show little need for change regarding the reporting of information about the day-to-day activities and problems related to employees' job duties. Of the seven items addressed in this section, only one measures a variance of larger than one point: "Evaluating the performance of my immediate superior" (now: 1.50, needed: 3.04, variance: 1.54). The 1.50 score for the current amount of information being sent on this topic also represents the lowest score in the entire survey. However, none of the interview subjects mentioned the desire to spend more time critiquing their immediate supervisors. In fact, almost all of the comments regarding the employee-supervisor relationship were positive: "My supervisor [is] always very open to me asking a lot of questions" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015); "I always end up going to my boss… I feel lost without him" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). Instead, the interviews focused on the sheer amount of communication that employees produce and the layers of bureaucracy and review that accompany the dissemination of communication.

Consistent with the perceived culture of over communication, many interview participants expressed concerns with the excessive number of people with whom they need to share information on a regular basis. One employee complained, "I have all of this information that I need to get to other people, and all of us do, and everyone kind of gets overwhelmed with the amount of information coming at them" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). A number of interview participants related examples of the communication chains they must keep in contact with. One person in media advocacy remarked, "I'll write [a document] and then I'll send it to the content experts… then it will go to my boss… and then to our president" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). It is a similar story for the field team, "I'll draft something and then run it by my supervisor, and then it gets escalated up to further review—policy people, the federal team" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Another respondent noted, "Everything I do or say has to be run by the legal department… even our Facebook posts have to be approved by legal" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Yet another employee expressed her frustration at the growing layers of bureaucracy: "Previously… I would reach out to my [workgroup volunteers] directly. Now it's the regional vice president, who then talks to the managers, who talks to the advocacy leaders, who talks to the staff that I want on my workgroup, and if I skip anyone [in that chain] it causes problems" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015).

Organizational objectives. Much of this organizational rigidity stems from ACS CAN's relationship with ACS, from which it was originally birthed in order to separate

ACS from all advocacy activities. As one interview participant explained, "The Cancer Society can't lobby in any way or they'll lose their nonprofit exemption status, so anything that has an advocacy message, asking Congress or a lawmaker to do something, or interacting with a lawmaker, all has to come from our [ACS CAN] side of the table" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). Internal communication, too, has certain restrictions. One employee noted, "just because of our tax status there are certain ways in which we can and can't communicate. So we can't tell our staff to take action on a particular issue… go sign this petition or anything like that. It's one thing if they got an email from the outside… but that communication can't be driven by us" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). One consequence of this legal tightrope is diligent oversight of all external communication, much of it from the organization's legal department. As this interviewee described, "Everything that we send out from ACS CAN, or that uses a logo, has to be approved by legal" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). A member of the media advocacy team added, "I know that our legal team doesn't want us to use terms like 'we' or 'our.' They want there to be a clear distinction whether something is coming from ACS or ACS CAN, so that it doesn't even appear that ACS is doing the lobbying or taking on advocacy" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015).

Making sure that all ACS CAN employees are cognizant of the legal "liability for the 501(c)(3) part of the house [ACS]" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015) is an ongoing priority and has practical implications for workplace procedures. This interview participant noted, "We bend over backwards to get reviews and approvals

of documents. That's true of many organizations, but it's particularly true of ours" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). One employee described the challenges of having to balance legal concerns with advancing the organization's mission: "Often times I will say, 'we' because I want the volunteers to feel like we are united—we are all fighting cancer; we are all working toward the same mission—but I really can't say 'we.' I have to be very clear whether I'm talking about ACS or ACS CAN because that sort of intermingling is where the legal problems can be" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). These legal concerns and the resulting hierarchical control over communication, demonstrate how an organization's unique circumstances and objectives affect everything from the process of who needs to review communications, the language that can be used, and even who is allowed to communicate to various audiences.

A second, equally important, objective that necessitates close review of, and consistency in, ACS CAN's communication is its effort to uphold the organization's exemplary reputation among politicians, the media, the public, and other advocacy groups. This reputation is derived in large part from the fact that all of ACS CAN's policy positions and advocacy efforts are "evidence-based" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015; Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). A member of the media advocacy team explained, "Our advocacy positions are based on evidence, and we've got to be consistent with that or else we'll lose our credibility… There are times when we really want to say something,

because common sense dictates that we should, but the scientific evidence isn't necessarily there, so we just can't do it" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). This requirement for scientific, evidence-based advocacy at ACS CAN is largely unique in the advocacy and lobbying worlds and reflects a specific set of organizational values; however, that set of values presents its own set of challenges to the organization.

One of these challenges is that the organization's external communications are wholly dependent on ongoing collaborations between the various silos formed by employees' different areas of expertise. As one employee described, "The media team never decides what our position is going to be. We go to our experts. If it's a scientific issue we go to the subject matter experts; if it's a legislative issue we go to our federal relations team; if it's policy related, we go to our policy team. We then take their words and arguments and refine them to help express our position" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Even more significantly, there are times when sticking to the evidence-based principle that gives the organization so much of its influence ends up preventing it from being able to advocate for its cause. As one interview subject put it, ACS CAN's policy is, "[If] we don't have a position, don't testify, don't do anything" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). An employee on the federal relations team provided an example of the policy's impact:

> So we, for instance, come out with guidelines for cancer screening, and every 5
> years, there's change. And we right now, the United States Preventative Services
> task force came out with draft guidelines on breast cancer screening, and it just so

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happens that we're developing our new breast cancer guidelines... We've therefore been not able to engage as much as maybe we would, because we have to refer everything we say with a caveat: "but we're updating our guidelines; but we can't tell you what they are, because they're in process." So I find that it makes my job harder to push congress to do something to fix this, because I can't with certainty say what our guidelines are going to be. (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015)

Timeliness of information. One significant consequence of this policy of evidence-based advocacy and ACS CAN's stringent oversight of communication is that the timeliness of information can be negatively impacted. While the ICA questionnaire showed little dissatisfaction with this issue—only middle management (2.75) received a score below 3.00—the questionnaire only measures the timeliness of internal communication. In their interviews, however, participants pointed out organizational policies and cultural proclivities that can create bottlenecks, slowing operations and, at times, getting in the way of employees' abilities to effectively execute their jobs.

A participant from the media advocacy team explained that, somewhat counter-intuitively, subject matter experts are required to be the spokespeople for the organization rather than those in the media department: "I give them the language they are going to use as spokespeople because communications isn't their expertise... yet I can't be affiliated with that comment and it can sometimes hamper our ability to make it into a [reporter's] story because of [the lack of] availability of a subject matter expert" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). The organization's emphasis on

oversight and review can also affect the timeliness of information sharing. As this

interview participant lamented, "I'd say it takes about three days to get a press release

out: a day for me to write it… and then maybe a day and a half to two days for review; it

just depends on everyone's schedules and which teams need to get involved in looking at

it" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Another employee decried:

> We spend far too much time getting approval from every possible person. Not to
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> say that you should publish something that hasn't been vetted, but checking with
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> six levels of people and policy experts slows our communications process down
>
> incredibly… It also makes us late in getting stuff out there; we don't have to be
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> the first one out there, but you also don't want to be the fifteenth out of the gate.
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> (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

Another element in the, sometimes, sluggish review process is the legal department. As

one employee explained, "Legal is getting documents from all 50 states, from ACS

headquarters in Atlanta, and from ACS CAN headquarters in DC. They ask you to give

them 5 business days to review what you send them, but they are usually a bit quicker

than that" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015).

In order to manage some of these challenges and to streamline and expedite

oversight by the legal department, the very wording of ACS CAN's discourse is tightly

controlled. ACS CAN's communications rely heavily on "coordinated messaging"

(Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015), "templates" (Anonymous 10,

personal communication, May 15, 2015), and maintaining "consistency of language and

style" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015) with previous

communications. As one employee described, "there is language you use for ACS CAN, then ACS also has their own little paragraph they use" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). A member of the federal media advocacy team provided more detail on this process:

> [The federal team] will often send out messaging documents, talking points, that the state teams are free to use verbatim or can manipulate as needed for their particular situation, but that should form the basis of their messaging. We do a lot of template materials—template press releases, op-eds, letters to the editor, media advisories—that, again, people can manipulate, but are encouraged to use as much as possible. Any manipulation [of those documents by state teams] is required to be sent to us for review… We have people who monitor and review these full-time—content review, legal review, and media review. (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015)

The view from the state teams makes clear why this oversight is so important:

> We'll look at other documents; we'll look at documents that the policy team has produced, we'll look at other pieces that have been approved and update them and make them fresher, or say, this language is preferred locally, and see if it still is in sync with what national is looking for, and making sure that we're not using our local jargon. I think part of that is certainly the need for better quality product… if we get a statement or lead out there that's a little goofy, it's going to spread, and you don't want a state director in Florida that gets jumped by a lobbyist or a

member if a statement was released in California that's the opposite of what's

said. (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015)

While ACS CAN certainly helps its reputation by founding its advocacy positions on

scientific evidence that credibility can be quickly eroded if those positions become

inconsistent due to variations in messaging; the alteration of a few words can have severe

repercussions. This intertextuality of workplace communication, that every document is

affected by what preceded it and has consequences for other documents that will come

after, is central to ACS CAN's communication protocols. This viewpoint, and the

operational environment that grows out of it, reinforces the organization's market

(influence building) and hierarchy (centralized control) cultural values throughout every

level of the organization.

Conformity of messaging, a multilayered review process, and strict adherence to

legal and scientific boundaries may prove frustrating to employees and limit the

flexibility and, occasionally, the immediate efficacy of ACS CAN's advocacy efforts;

however, the need to protect ACS's 501(c)(3) status and to ensure that ACS CAN's

policy positions do not overstep the scientific basis on which they are founded are among

the organization's primary concerns. As one long-time ACS CAN employee aptly

summarized, "We're the advocacy arm of an organization that's over one hundred years

old, and there's a lot at stake. We're not going to put something out that we're not sure is

correct or that we're not sure is high quality, because it will reflect on all of us in this

large, very respected organization" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15,

2015). This perspective both informs and is generated by ACS CAN's organizational

culture that holds stability and control as the values that forge the organization's identity and success.

Preferred culture. The counterargument, however, is represented throughout the OCAI survey where ACS CAN employees indicate that, more than any other change, they desire a greater emphasis on adhocracy values within their organization. In the ICA audit, as well, employees express wanting more flexibility, independence, and acknowledgment from the organization that they have the ability, and are responsible enough, to perform their jobs without excessive oversight. One employee with almost ten years experience suggested, "The organization should be a little more trusting that its employees know what they're doing and that not everything has to be checked all the way up to our local president" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Another exclaimed, "It gets to the point where sometimes you don't want to ask permission, you just want to go and do your job" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015).

The feeling of being constrained is pervasive enough that several employees argue they are hindered from doing their jobs as effectively as possible, and posit that the organization could more readily achieve its mission if it were to free ACS CAN's employees from the strictures of some current protocols and procedures. This employee stated, "Bureaucracy isn't a horrible thing. There are places where you need procedures and structures in place, especially in an organization as large as ours. But sometimes when you start to have too much structure, I don't think it's necessarily good for being a nimble, strategic organization that's trying to end a public health problem" (Anonymous

3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Another participant described the organization's lack of agility this way, "The national office tries to make things seem very open and collaborative, like we are working at Google, but the thing is we're not very innovative. We don't have that culture, so it's kind of hard to pretend that we do have that culture when really things are very structured and static" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Other employees were able to provide examples where ACS CAN's rigidity gets in the way of its work. A member of the media advocacy team commented on the disadvantages of having strict conformity in messaging: "Sometimes I do wish we could be more conversational or more creative in our language because that's what gets you quoted. Nobody wants to quote boring and bland; they want something different and catchy and we're not quite there yet" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015).

Others, however, suggested that ACS CAN's current organizational culture isn't as restrictive as some make it out to be. One such person reflected, "It is definitely an inclusive culture; definitely a lot of people included in meetings and in emails, all for the right reasons—that everyone is aware of what's going on and is allowed to contribute" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). However, he continued, "That said, it is a very corporate style of office: there is a hierarchy, there are processes, and there is a 'mothership' organization [ACS]; it's not laissez faire with people sitting around ideating."

What the interviews reveal is that employees' desire for more freedom to operate without jumping through so many procedural hoops stems, not from a perception that

their workplace is an oppressive environment, but rather from an almost universal desire to see ACS CAN succeed in its mission to "end deaths and suffering from cancer through legislative and policy change" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). These "smart" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015), "committed" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015), "driven, and incredibly capable" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015) employees know that "they are good at what they do" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015), know the subject matter that they are dealing with, and, collectively, seek the flexibility to be able to exercise their discretion, make decisions, and execute their work without first having to run everything through multiple layers of oversight.

Measures of success. One of the key factors in determining an organization's objectives and its cultural profile is analyzing the way that it defines success. While the interviews demonstrate strong hierarchy values with regard to ACS CAN's discourse culture, they indicate an equally strong affinity for market values when it comes to how the organization measures its level of achievement. According to interview participants' responses, ACS CAN assesses its performance-based on two main criteria: meeting benchmarks and building both its reputation and beneficial relationships, all of which fall squarely within market cultural archetype.

Several employees explained, "As an organization there are tangible goals that are set that we measure ourselves against" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). These benchmarks include financial ones: "coming in under budget" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015) and seeing "where our events have exceeded

or fallen short on our fundraising goals" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Media exposure is another measuring stick: "Are we seeing an uptick in our media mentions... Are we seeing growth in our social media audiences" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015) and "how often are we getting quoted in stories" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). A further benchmark involves increasing volunteers and membership: "getting people to sign up for ACS CAN, and that is tracked separately, so we are able to say 'compared to last year, we are up 15% in those memberships'" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). As one employee noted, "In this day and age when you have to demonstrate your return on investment and justify your value it helps to have information like analytics to show these things" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015).

On the surface, it would seem that ACS CAN's most important benchmark would be the number of laws that get passed or the number of votes the organization can garner in support of its policy agenda; however, none of the interview participants mentioned this as a measuring stick for how the organization is performing. In fact, one employee stated just the opposite: "I don't necessarily judge how we are doing based only on if [lawmakers] support or don't support the legislation... Because maybe this person cannot support you today, but you may come back a year from now and the situation has changed" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015).

This awareness of the long game explains ACS CAN's second method of self-evaluation: reputation and relationship building. As one employee described, "Our goals are to be moving forward with our brand, our reputation, and being known for our

expertise. We measure success by how often we are seen as the 'go to' source when something [cancer related] is happening" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). A senior member of the communications staff added, "We want to be engaging, we want to be responsible, we want to be respected, we want to be trusted… and our messaging tone needs to reflect that: relying on science, relying on evidence, being bipartisan" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015).

ACS CAN's credibility and reputation are further enhanced by the relationships that the organization builds and maintains with a variety of constituencies. One interviewee explained, "We are always focused on advancing our mission through building relationships—at fundraisers, with reporters, legislators and their staff, or other organizations" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). A member of the media relations team added, "Success, in my job, is having good relationships with reporters so that even if we're not getting into a story today, they come to us for a different story down the line" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). An employee in the federal relations division similarly noted, "Hill staffers meet with so many people that you want to try to build a relationship, not just have a meeting. Any kind of personal connection helps in standing out" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015).

While ACS CAN is a results-driven organization, success is not simply measured by tabulating the number of legislative wins in a given session of Congress. Instead, the organization recognizes that advocacy is an ongoing process that relies on bottom line financial considerations, continued growth in participation and support for the

organization, and increasing its exposure and influence. As such, in addition to achieving a set of identifiable benchmarks, success is also understood in terms of ACS CAN's ability to build and maintain its all-important relationships and to enhance the organization's reputation. These objectives can only be accomplished through effective communication.

Summary. The ICA audit demonstrates that the discourse practices at ACS CAN derive from its unique set of cultural values and organizational objectives. These principles have engendered a market-based organizational culture that values centralized, hierarchical control in order to monitor that its delicately balanced operational requirements are upheld. The necessity to diligently enforce the separation between its activities and those of ACS, the requirement of only taking positions that are founded on scientific evidence, and the emphasis on continuously building and fostering its relationships with legislators, the media, the public, and other advocacy organizations, permeate every level of discursive activity within the organization, from who is allowed to address particular audiences, to the review processes that communications must traverse, to the very wording used in organizational statements and documents. These elements shape ACS CAN's organizational discourse in ways that no outsider could anticipate or learn except by immersing himself or herself in the community. Yet, as integral as these organization-wide factors are in informing ACS CAN's discourse practices, they do not tell the whole story. Another entire level of considerations, the organization's social dynamics and dialogic relationships, further adds to the complexity of each discursive interaction within the workplace.

Social Dynamics and Dialogic Relationships

Just as an organization's cultural values and objectives play an important role in

determining how discourse is shaped and whether or not it is effective, so too do social

dynamics. Most of the ICA questionnaire scores regarding "Organizational

Communication Relationships" demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the

communication relationships within ACS CAN, particularly among coworkers and

between employees and their immediate supervisors. In these two categories, the only

score below a 3.63 came in response to how well "my immediate supervisor understands

my job needs" (3.46). These scores indicate that the communication climate is very good:

employees trust one another, trust their bosses, and feel that open communication flow

exists in all directions. The scores for respondents' communication relationship with top

management rank only slightly lower, ranging between 3.30 and 3.54 in assessing their

trust for top management, the sincerity of top management's efforts to communicate with

employees, and the satisfaction of employees' relationship with top management. While

respondents indicate that they believe they have an impact on the operations in their

particular units or departments (3.04) and that they play a part in accomplishing the

organization's goals (3.65), they also note that the organization tends not to be open to

differences of opinion (2.71) and that employees have little say in decisions that affect

their jobs (2.33).

The interviews indicate that two of the social considerations that greatly influence

professional discourse are the workplace's atmosphere (the relationships among

employees) and the situational and personal contexts related to whichever audience is

being addressed. This section of the chapter takes a closer look at these factors and examines the interconnected web of social variables that influence workplace communication.

Workplace relationships. Starting broadly, a workplace's atmosphere is significantly affected by the organization's cultural values. This is the case at ACS CAN where the dominant and preferred cultures both exert influence on the social dynamics between employees. The OCAI results indicate that within ACS CAN, the values represented by the clan culture are most prominent at the departmental level, in the relationship between managers and their employees, and in the values that bond the organization together. However, holding almost equal sway in these areas are the market and hierarchy archetypal values, creating a dichotomy that puts the workplace atmosphere at odds with itself. As one interview subject described, "we're corporate from a hierarchical, and from a process perspective, and from a general cultural perspective, but interpersonal relationships are very friendly" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). The result is an organization that is at once familial and competitive, with both sets of values affecting workplace communication.

Reflective of the clan culture tendencies in the workplace, employees described the organization as, "very family focused and tightknit" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015) and "very familial" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). One respondent said, "People describe [ACS CAN] as a family and it really is kind of like that" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). Interview subjects also regularly referred to their departments—media

relations, federal relations, policy, etc.—as "teams."[8] This feeling of community helps to

promote an openness, collaboration, and willingness to seek advice. Describing these

positive dialogic relationships, interviewees stated, "People [at ACS CAN] want to get to

know you, not only as a team member, but also just as a person. I think that that really

fosters a community of trust" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015);

"My supervisor has always been supportive… [She] never made me feel stupid when we

would have conversations and I would ask what the priorities were" (Anonymous 2,

personal communication, April 30, 2015); and, "I think we're pretty close to ideal in ACS

CAN in terms of the very open-door collaborative policy, where my manager gives me

feedback and critiques, but he also seeks my input" (Anonymous 1, personal

communication, May 4, 2015).

Although such sentiments were common throughout the interviews, even those

employees who felt most adamant about ACS CAN's family-like attributes

acknowledged that a more competitive, aggressive dynamic—indicative of the

organization's overriding market culture—was simultaneously present. One employee

captured this dual relationship particularly well:

> [ACS CAN] is like a family and it's very supportive of home life balance, but
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> because we're in Washington I think there is a competitive nature—a sense of, "I
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> want to take credit for the hard work I'm putting in and I want it to be recognized
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> in the organization." So, I think it's an interesting combination of, on the one

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[8] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015; Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015; Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015; Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015)

hand, the wedding, birthday, baby celebration every other day in the office, and

on the other hand, when we're in the height of a campaign and somebody doesn't

get to review something, frustrations can flare fairly quickly. (Anonymous 1,

personal communication, May 4, 2015)

In describing the workplace atmosphere at ACS CAN, the terms "taking credit" and

"getting noticed" were just as prevalent among the interview participants as the

organization's "familial" nature. One employee remarked, "I think people are very

protective of their work; they want to get credit for what they've done or make sure that

their ideas get pushed through into the final [product]" (Anonymous 7, personal

communication, May 13, 2015). Another echoed this sentiment: "There are a lot of

people trying to take credit, making sure that they are recognized when we have a

success" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). One employee

explained the competitiveness this way, "Part of the problem is that all of us have been in

the same position for many years and things just feel stuck" (Anonymous 7, personal

communication, May 13, 2015). Expanding on this, another interviewee added, "There

are a lot of egos [at ACS CAN] and I think one of the challenges is that there are a lot of

talented, really bright people in jobs where they know they're not going to go

anywhere… so they're trying to throw some elbows and create some room so that they

can get their own names out there" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7,

2015).

This sense of being stuck or underappreciated by the organization is also evident

in some of the categories in the ICA questionnaire's "Satisfaction with Organizational

Outcomes" section. Two areas where respondents register a significant level of

dissatisfaction include their opportunities for advancement within the organization (2.21)

and the organization's system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance

(2.50). Problematically, "There is no room for advancement" (Anonymous 7, personal

communication, May 13, 2015), remarked one employee. Another added, "There is no

professional development. It's almost discouraged as taking away focus from your job"

(Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). This same interview

participant commented on the struggle for employees' to have their work noticed and

praised by the organization's leadership: "Everyone is working together for the mission,

but people want it to be known that they are responsible for the work that they did… That

almost never happens" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015).

This competitive desire for credit can end up leading to distrust, and both

aggressiveness and defensiveness among employees in ways that directly affect how they

communicate with one another. For example, several interview participants mentioned

the common practice of holding colleagues accountable by "including their boss and your

boss in [email] ccs."[9] "I don't know if that's normal in other workplaces" questioned one

ACS CAN employee, "but it's definitely part of our culture" (Anonymous 11, personal

communication, May 19, 2015). Another participant noted, "email is great, because you

kind of have somewhat of a paper trail, a virtual paper trail [that can be pointed to] when

there are disputes" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). The

consequences of this behavior are described by one employee:

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[9] (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015; Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015; Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015)

I've seen where folks will copy someone on an email, let's say, where they're

elevating or escalating a situation before they've worked directly with the team

member that could help them… That leads to hurt feelings or misunderstandings,

or an inherent defensiveness… I think folks could work on not escalating a

problem to management until they've worked with their colleague to try to arrive

at a solution. (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015)

Hurt feelings occur for other reasons as well; another commonly shared communication

concern is provoking negative reactions if people aren't included in email chains. One

interviewee stated, "You don't want to offend individuals [by not including them in

emails]… but you also want things to run smoothly, and the higher number of people

who are included, the longer it can take for the process" (Anonymous 1, personal

communication, May 4, 2015). This practice is partly responsible for the complaints

about ACS CAN's over communication.

This recognition-seeking and competitiveness at ACS CAN applies not only to

individuals but to the various departmental silos (policy experts, regulatory experts,

media relations, grassroots, etc.) as well. One interview subject affirmed, "Yeah, there's

definitely territorialism… the policy team wants to showcase the work they do, and they

want credit, and the fed team does too… but the supporting teams have to also show the

work they've done to help reach that goal [of passing legislation]" (Anonymous 9,

personal communication, May 8, 2015). This territorialism can have negative practical

implications as various factions vie for influence over communications, program

initiatives, and other organizational operations. A member of the media relations team offered one example of this too common occurrence:

> We are putting up a new page on our website and we have been butting heads a bit on what should be included. For me, it shouldn't be every policy document that we publish on this issue… It's a webpage, so we need to be very consumer focused and friendly; while the policy team understands that, they just don't think that way and they want showcase the work they are doing. (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015)

Such differences in agendas and interpretations of one's audience can often lead to the slowing of progress on projects, as was the case with a year-long delay in implementing a new blog (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). These disputes can also create tension within the office. As one employee noted, "it's easy to get upset at people, or another division, who don't share your immediate focus or priorities" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015).

Aware of these tendencies, ACS CAN has made efforts to encourage collaboration and cross communication by reorganizing its workspace, eliminating many private offices and creating a large bullpen of cubicles, mingling members from all departments (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). However, such efforts have had unintended consequences; while there may be more cooperation interdepartmentally, new lines of division have been created as some "people who are in the bullpen are really resentful of people who have offices" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015).

Finally, with regard to decisions that affect their jobs and the ability to be heard by members in ACS CAN's leadership, employees feel a certain lack of agency within the organization. Several interviewees mentioned that they would bring suggestions, or point out problems, to their immediate managers, who they all felt were receptive; however, none of them felt that they would be heard or would be able to influence change at higher levels. As one individual expressed it, "people feel like they don't have a voice in the organization beyond their immediate supervisor" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Additionally, "There's always been this divide between national staff and field staff; they feel like we are telling them what to do" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Corroborating this, a field staff member suggested:

> We get the opportunity to go from our states to DC to get their input and perspective... I think it would be great if some of their staff could come the other way [and] see some of the absolute chaos that we're dealing with. They can get some perspective on, "here is what we're sending to the states and here's why it is or isn't being effectively received." I think it would be a healthy thing. (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015)

While fostering an environment of collaboration and camaraderie is a deliberate strategy within ACS CAN, there are limitations to how far an organization can stray from its core organizational values. As the interviews demonstrate, it appears that the familial atmosphere at ACS CAN pertains, primarily, to the personal relationships between intra-divisional coworkers and their immediate supervisors. With regard to how work-specific

communication is conducted, however, the organization remains guided by its competitive market and hierarchy values, with employees finding it necessary to routinely include supervisors in order to ensure coworkers' accountability; with egos that are easily bruised; and with a sense of disenfranchisement in the power relationships between employees and management and between the state and federal teams.

Connection to ACS CAN's mission. Whatever level of dissatisfaction there may be from the misalignment between the organization's dominant culture and the one employees' desire, or the friction that arises from competitiveness between employees, one huge mitigating factor enjoyed by ACS CAN is its staff's sense of connection to, and passion for, the organization's mission. As a member of the media advocacy team described, "everyone here has been touched by cancer in some way and believes in what we are doing" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). The ICA questionnaire results regarding "Satisfaction with Organizational Outcomes" echo employees' identification with ACS CAN's purpose. Five items in this section receive some of the highest scores in the entire survey, pointing to exceptional levels of satisfaction: 1) The opportunity to make a difference in contributing to the overall success of the organization (3.71); 2) The overall experience of working in the organization (3.75); 3) This organization, as compared to other such organizations (4.00); 4) The overall quality of the organization's service or mission (4.38); 5) The organization's achievement of its goals and objectives (3.96).

Several of the interview subjects talked about having "a friend," "people I've known," "family members," who have "passed away from" or "dealt with" cancer.[10] For most of the people working at ACS CAN their job means more than a paycheck; it fulfills a personal passion and sense of purpose. A few interviewees recalled their motivations for joining the organization: "I saw an ad [for this job] and thought, this is something I can do to make a difference" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Another expressed, "I wanted something that I would be passionate about and this [position at ACS CAN] has definitely filled that for me" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). One individual recounted his story in more detail:

> I was working as a legislative assistant and a friend of mine got diagnosed with… cancer. I was looking… at all these lobbyists working for various [expletive] causes and I was thinking, "why aren't we doing more for cancer?" It was right after that that a job opened up at ACS CAN… So it was very personal and the mission has been incredible. (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015)

The effect that this personal connection has in the workplace is significant in the way people approach their jobs. A grassroots manager declared, "You can have all these other efforts [survivor resources, counseling, etc.] in place, but without what we do—shaping public policy—we're not going to win the war on cancer" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Another employee expressed, "We try to be very

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[10] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015; Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015; Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015)

diligent about what we are doing… because what we do impacts people's lives" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Yet another interview participant added, "I like the idea of a mission driven environment, where people have different roles but where we are all in the same boat together, rowing in the same direction" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015).

More than simply feeling connected, however, virtually every interview participant expressed a belief that he or she is able to affect the organization's mission. As one employee related, "I feel that, in my role, I can make a significant contribution to the fight against cancer" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). In addition to feeling empowered by their work, employees also value the differences between ACS CAN and other, similar, organizations. As one participant noted, "In many nonprofits you are working every day just to keep the doors open; it's nice to be in an organization that's large enough that… you are doing work that really makes a difference" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). Another added, "I think this organization, like no other, tries. They try for effective communications; they try for frequent communications… I love that" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Last, employees take pride in the high level of quality of the organization's work. "I really do think that we do things well at ACS CAN, and the folks in each of our respective functions—lobbying, policy, grassroots, media—they're all high functioning people, all of those teams, and we don't put out junk" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015).

This sense of unity and purpose enables employees to move past challenges that might stymie other workplaces. As one employee explained, "At the end of the day you think about, 'why am I doing what I'm doing?' and it's for someone else, not for yourself. So I think that common mission helps ameliorate a lot of the head-butting and territorial conflicts" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). Another participant noted that, in the heat of an important campaign, people's passions can lead to ruffling one another's feathers, then added, "but I think at the end of the day there is a sense that we're all in this together, toward a very specific end" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). That end, "to help support, protect, and defend laws and policies that benefit cancer survivors and their families" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015), and the passion and dedication that ACS CAN's employees feel toward that mission, ultimately provide a buffer that allows the gap between the current and preferred organizational cultures to exist without a significant level of disquiet from employees or a disruption of the organization's operations.

Audience(s) and contexts. The second set of factors that directly affects workplace communication is the context in which communication with particular interlocutors occurs. One of the topics that the interview participants discussed was how they define effective workplace communication. The answers were remarkably consistent and were focused, almost exclusively, on "understanding the audience and their needs" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). This emphasis on audience manifests in five ways: 1) relevance to the interlocutor's interests and perspective; 2) using the most appropriate communication channel; 3) speaking "their language"

(Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015); 4) understanding a counterpart's discursive personality, and, 5) external, exigent circumstances.

Audience interests. The first element of effective communication is making the recipient understand "why it matters" to them (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). One media advocacy staffer put it this way:

> What resonates in our messaging depends on the audience: if the audience is the general public, what's compelling is how this policy is going to help in the fight against cancer. If the audience is ACS staff or ACS CAN staff, it's more closely tied to, how is this going to help us achieve our mission. If it's lawmakers or their staff, it's targeted to: this is language that is going to motivate voters to care about your position on this issue. It's all about relevance to the audience, but most of all being persuasive—in the area of advocacy, that is most important to us.
>
> (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015)

In order to get, and keep, their attention, knowing what one's audience cares about is of utmost importance. One employee noted, "it's always relevance with the media, but it's more than that. It can be controversy, it can be, is this good news or bad news? Because the media rarely reports on good news, and usually likes to report on bad news" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Another interview participant always asks herself, "Does it speak to the right audience? Or does it speak to all audiences?" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). A member of one of the state teams remarked that what is key to his communication is, "seeking out opportunities that have a real local relevance… when we say, look at how it's impacting

people in these communities, it gains more traction if we localize it, it has more

relevance" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Every audience has a

different set of interests and, no matter what the subject, it is incumbent upon an effective

communicator to explicitly address how the information they are sending is relevant to

that particular audience's needs and concerns.

  Communication channels. Ensuring that a communication is relevant and

compelling to an audience is important, but equally so is making sure that the message is

actually seen. Of the nine communication channels measured in the ICA questionnaire,

only face-to-face discussions and external media (television, radio, newspapers) are

viewed as needing (minimally) increased attention. The rest, according to respondents,

could benefit from slight decreases in their frequency of use, especially the amount of

email and internal organizational publications that are currently exchanged. Presently,

email is the primary communication channel in this organization, and receives the highest

score of the entire questionnaire (4.63); printed documents are the least used

communication channel, scoring just 2.50, yet a further decrease of .25 is sought by

employees.

  Internally, ACS CAN regularly engages in multiple communication channels and

mediums, many of which provide quick and efficient alternatives to email; however, it is

email that (often detrimentally) remains the organization's primary mode of

communication. As this interviewee described:

  We're a very email heavy office, so much to the point where I think sometimes it

  can be problematic in helping people be able to kind of cut through the clutter,

and kind of prioritize, and be able to determine what's the priority, what are the top things that I need to know right now, and why? So, but it's still a preference, and depending on who you talk to, people prefer either, people say can you just email that as opposed to sending out this newsletter, or posting on our intranet, can you just email that? Then when we ask them, well we emailed it, well I didn't see that, well we emailed it to you. (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

Comments such as, "We use way too much email" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015), "You'll get the same email from 3 different sources" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015), and "It sometimes feels like there are so many emails that people aren't reading them all" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015), are almost a mantra among ACS CAN employees. Even in situations where using other communication channels would be more appropriate, people tend to rely on email. This employee lamented, "You could hash things out in a five-minute conversation rather than long email chains, but we tend not to do that even if the person is right across the room from you" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015).

Regarding other internal communication channels, employees remarked, "nobody uses the phone" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015) and "people are shocked when their phone rings" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015); "We have an internal IM system that we're always on" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015); and, "I can't stand conference calls because I can't

'read' people who are on the phone with me" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). Such medium preferences also extend to face-to-face meetings, which tend not to be a regular part of work related activities. Instead, they occur primarily when there is a problem using another medium or there is a complex issue that needs to be quickly worked through. One employee remarked, "Sometimes [if I'm not getting a response] I will physically get up out of my desk, and walk down the hall and stand in their doorway so that I can check the box to say, we didn't skip over the process" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Another offered her view on work related conversations, stating, "I honestly think that we've all gotten so used to relying on technology that we're kind of gun shy about talking to one another" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015).

Externally, ACS CAN employees largely defer to what their interlocutors prefer. A member of the media relations team noted, "I'm always reevaluating the best way to get in front of the audience that I need to communicate with… I know that the communications process is evolving and I need to take more time to learn the new platforms and how to use them effectively" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Another employee added, "We just recently did a survey and it showed that most people would prefer online communication… I've had to learn Twitter and Instagram; to be less wonky and more short, sweet, and to the point" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). A member of the federal relations team offered, "I would never pop in on a [Hill] staffer… they wouldn't be receptive. So what I usually do is, I send an email introducing myself… and ask for a face-to-face meeting"

(Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). Regarding the media, one interview subject explained, "predominantly my external communication is facing reporters, and I would say – and this is their preference, it's a lot of electronic [email]… and a lot of reporters are even moving to social media, which is even more challenging because 140 characters to engage with somebody is really challenging, but that's definitely something [I use in order to reach them]" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). No matter who the audience—a colleague or a constituent—using the communication channel that will encourage their engagement is a key factor in effective workplace communication.

Common language. The third facet of crafting an effective workplace communication is "speaking the language" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015) of your interlocutors. This interview participant explained, "I try to keep my emails casual, and even playful… I'm competing, not just for their attention, but for their response" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). One employee described her strategy with external audiences, "Especially when we're communicating to non advocacy staff, [I] try not to use so much jargon, and just try to write things in a way that isn't so wonky… Don't assume that just because we throw those terms out amongst each other, that others outside of the advocacy world are going to understand that" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). A member of the federal policy team explained that with her audience, the opposite approach is needed, "You do have to know your audience. On the Hill, there's a lot more technical 'inside baseball' language that, if I were talking to, say, my husband, he would have no idea what we were

talking about" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). Another interview subject noted that sharing a common language even helps with internal communication: "When we have meetings where we break down the staff [by department]… that's where a real cornucopia of information begins to flow" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015).

In fact, getting the right language is so important to ACS CAN that time is regularly spent analyzing "analytics" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015), "polling" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015), and "focus group responses" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015) to various messaging efforts. A member of the media advocacy team noted, "If we send out two versions of a tweet on an issue and one gets only one response and the other gets thirty re-tweets, [we try to figure out] what are the differences there and how can we leverage that" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). At the other end of the spectrum, another employee explained, "if you send out an email to all these people and you don't get a strong response, say 12-15% of the people respond, it's a little deflating to staff… [so there is] some sort of ongoing conversation, of how do we communicate these action alerts best to people?" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Using language that resonates with one's audience, whether it be including or omitting jargon and shorthand or simply adjusting one's tone to encourage a response, is a key factor in developing communications that have their intended effect.

Discursive personalities. Another critical consideration for effective workplace communication is developing an understanding of your counterpart's discursive personality As this ACS CAN employee's comment illustrated:

> If I'm going to ask my direct manager for help with a project, I'll first check in with her on how her day is going, and what she's working on. And she's usually more receptive, whereas someone else on our legal team who is like, go, go, go, they don't want trivialities, they need to know, what do you need from me, and how soon do you need it? But it's adjusting, it's not really a one size fits all.
> (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015)

Another participant similarly remarked, "I find that I need to change my tone based more on the personality of who I am dealing with more than their position or an overall [workplace] culture" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). One interview subject explained, "I think it's also just having an understanding of personalities and expectations and their wishes going into it that, while I may not necessarily agree all the time, if I know what they're looking for and I can come to a place where I'm comfortable with the communication, then I can address what I know their concerns are going to be" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Differences in personality type can affect things as small as, "does he prefer a printout or an electronic copy" of a document (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015), or issues as significant as "who I send to meet with different legislators based on their personality preference and the types of people they have responded to well or poorly to in the past" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015).

Regarding some of her own communication proclivities an interview subject described, "the time when I send [email] during the day. I guess I go with phone calls too, I never call anyone at 9:00 in the morning, that just seems—I'm still getting into the office and my day started" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Another remarked, "I'm really big on not just writing the same font, the same size, the same color, but trying to break things up, because I really like [how] designs… have a way to grab people's attention and draw them in. I feel like that helps make [emails] effective" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). One employee stated, "I don't feel comfortable, it's personal preference. I don't feel comfortable going to sleep at night unless I have at least looked at every email that I got that day" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015).

Even generational factors can add to the calculations regarding an interlocutor's communication proclivities. As this interviewee related, "I think younger generations, I would say Generation X, Millennials they tend to like the mobile, the IM, you don't need to email… Some [older] people prefer that we pick up the phone, or you print out a copy, and certain generations may not appreciate, you're wasting trees… so there's some of that that comes into play as well" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). A twenty-something employee suggested, "I think my generation, and especially the generations coming up behind me, are very used to communicating in writing, or behind a screen, and not so much with the face-to-face" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). Another interviewee noted, "I prefer face-to-face, just because I guess I'm old-fashioned. I think younger people prefer the IMs, and I'm in my

early 40s, but there's a generational thing" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015).

ACS CAN employees have found that one of the more effective ways to learn the communication personalities of their discursive partners is through follow-up. Follow-up is important to communication because it helps to confirm that interlocutors are interpreting one another accurately and that, if they are not, adjustments are made to their discursive strategies so that they can proceed forward in unison. As one employee explained, "I like to have a team review… I find sometimes they may be reading [a communication] a different way than I'm digesting it" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). This process can involve asking questions, making comments or edits, or responding to requests contained in the initial communication.

The ICA questionnaire showed that the amount of follow-up that is currently taking place at ACS CAN is, for the most part, in line with the amount of follow-up that is actually needed; all of the variances in this section are well under one point. That said, there does not seem to be a uniform approach to sharing information or anticipating the need for feedback. One member of the media advocacy team's philosophy on providing information to colleagues is that, "Good communications cover top line things, and if people want more information they can follow up; but, you don't want to turn people off by including every issue or every detail" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). By contrast, another person in the same division takes the opposite approach: "I'll give you more until you tell me you don't need as much, because I don't want people to feel they've been left out or haven't gotten the information that they need"

(Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). These differences in philosophy about what constitutes effective communication cannot be directly traced to organizational culture, nor can they be accounted for by differences in departmental conventions or experience level (both employees' tenure with ACS CAN is just under a decade and within six month of one another). Instead, this is evidence of the role that individual communication preferences and proclivities play in organizational communication; depending on the particular interlocutor, different discursive strategies are encountered and are required. Following up with one's discursive partners can help to assess if too much or too little information has been shared and to clarify whether or not it was properly interpreted.

     External exigencies. The final factor that can affect ACS CAN's communication with an audience is unexpected pressure from exigent circumstances that demand a response. While ACS CAN strongly values its ability to oversee and regulate its organizational communication, controlling ongoing, public dialogues isn't a simple task. Discourse is always, in some way, a response to other discourse. When ACS CAN puts out a press release, contacts volunteers with an action alert, or conducts a meeting with a Congressional staffer, there is an implicit expectation that those communications will generate a corresponding dialogic response. This framework, however, goes both ways and it is often the case that events or communications from outside the organization arise and require a response from ACS CAN. In these situations, the organization finds itself having to weigh the competing priorities of safeguarding its reputation and maintaining

consistency of messaging against having its voice heard in a competitive, rapidly changing communications environment.

Unanticipated communication requests, or needing to respond to emerging developments, are frequent occurrences at ACS CAN. As one employee explained, "We could get a media request or a series of media requests based on an unexpected announcement from another organization, or from Congress, or just based on something that a reporter is thinking about" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). Another added, "I can be railroaded at any moment… there can be crisis communications discussions at any given moment, there can be handling random reporter requests at any given moment, so I would say 60% of my time is planned and that 40% of my time is reactive to whatever is coming in" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Raising the stakes even higher is the fact that ACS CAN is competing, with other organizations and other interested parties, to have its voice stand out on cancer related issues. As this employee explained, "If we don't get [our message] out in time we are not going to be relevant" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Yet, even under these circumstances, consistency of language and of position are still of utmost importance. One interview participant noted, "If it's a request that we weren't expecting or weren't prepared for, it's gathering the appropriate people and balancing the various interests to make sure that we have consistent communications" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). As one media advocacy member stated, "I think there are some instances where... at most we might be able to say, 'Look, this is all we can

provide to you at this point,' but I also think, as I mentioned before, this ability to respond in a timely fashion to get us into the story and maybe open the door to another conversation is important" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Attempts to minimize communications surprises can be helpful: "[We keep an eye on] what's going on, on the national level or in the states… just to know when things are bubbling up that maybe we need to have a position on" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). However, such efforts aren't always successful. As one employee described:

> Just the other day… the college system in New Mexico was wanting to implement a tobacco control policy, smoke free policy; but they're a public university system, so they needed legislature support for it. So we knew that effort was taking place, but all of a sudden in "the box" comes an op-ed that they wanted to pitch like the next day. It turns out, we had no advanced notice of the fact that they were thinking of an op-ed, and even some of our local staff didn't know that an op-ed was being thought about, and so it ended up taking ten times as long to get the op-ed through [our review process] as it otherwise would have.
>
> (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015)

ACS CAN is aware of the significance that voicing its position on issues like this can have in the fight against cancer. Other organizations may follow the instinct to respond to sudden calls for communication, believing that a hurried response is preferable to no response. This can put ACS CAN at a temporary disadvantage when other advocacy groups take the lead on a story or an issue. Still, despite the urgency of the matter, with

legislative policy on the line, the organization's core values of centralized oversight and uniformity of messaging take precedence. ACS CAN recognizes that it has a responsibility to maintain its part in the ongoing dialogue of cancer advocacy; however, it also holds that retaining its credibility and reputation enables it to more effectively pursue its mission in the long run, even if that means being less effective in the moment.

Adaptation and onboarding. A final topic discussed in the interviews, though not covered in the ICA questionnaire, related to the issue of "onboarding"—the process for new employees to learn and become comfortable in participating in ACS CAN's unique and complicated communication environment. One of the most consistent complaints among the employees was with the organization's onboarding process, or lack thereof. Comments such as the following were common among interview participants: "Our onboarding system has never been great; we've never really quite had a formal orientation in place" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015); "We just don't have a very good set of materials in our organization for onboarding. My understanding is that we are revising them; they have been deemed inadequate; they've never been as good as they should be" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015); "Overall, I don't think we do a very good job onboarding anyone. We know it's going to take six months for people to get up to speed, but we really just throw them in" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Recalling their own onboarding experiences, employees described various scenarios: "All of the training I received were modules on the computer. There is a video you're supposed to watch—one every week" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015); "I got no formal

training. It was more, as things come up, someone will say, 'okay, we need to talk about how we are going to approach this project'" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015); "My own onboarding experience was simply being given a 'to do' list, without any real explanation of how or why I was doing it" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015).

The adaptation process is, perhaps, made even more difficult because of ACS CAN's multilayered structure, its unique communication culture, and it's complicated relationship with ACS. One employee, with more than a decade of experience, noted that ACS CAN is "not an organization [where] you can just jump in and hit the ground running" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Areas where employees found difficulty include, "The ability to integrate into a complex organization" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015); "just learning the culture…" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015); "understand[ing] not just our organization, structurally, but broadly who needs to know what, when, and how…" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015); and figuring out how best to coordinate with ACS. As one employee noted, "[ACS] is the first place I've worked where it's really hard to come across an organizational chart. ACS CAN, I know exactly who works on what, but in terms of the parent company structure it's sometimes really hard to grasp onto it and they don't share those things; they keep a lot of things close to the vest" (Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015). Employees also found it a challenge initially getting used to "the way that we put things—phrases that we like and phrases that we avoid…" (Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15,

2015), and, "learning how to communicate sensitivities about the way we talk about cancer…" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015). As a result of the learning curve, many respondents estimated that, it takes new employees between six months[11] and one year[12] to truly adapt to the workplace environment.

Several interview participants recounted figuring out the organization's discourse culture and learning how to perform their job duties through a process of "trial and error,"[13] asking questions of colleagues and supervisors,[14] and modeling their work on pre-existing documents and communications.[15] Other important learning tools, particularly in adapting to the organization's discourse culture, were "feedback from my manager and reviewing the edits that I get on track changes; seeing what their expectations are is how I learned to write for this organization" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Another employee expanded on this process, "We use track changes in Word a lot, and one of our unwritten rules is, 'don't just make an edit, tell me why you are making an edit so that I won't make the same mistake in the future'" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015).

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[11] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

[12] (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015; Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015; Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015)

[13] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015; Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015; Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015).

[14] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015; Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015; Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015)

[15] (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015; Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015; Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015; Anonymous 8, personal communication, April 28, 2015; Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015; Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015)

There are also intricate personal and professional relationships that need to be navigated. As this employee explained, "I think looking for nonverbal [cues] is as important as verbal ones. So, like, when someone is talking, what is everyone else doing? You can kind of see, sometimes, where respect is; if everyone is on their phones, checking email while someone is talking" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Or, as another participant noted, "subtle cues, like when a colleague is reading an email that was sent out and is rolling her eyes, [you know that] it's written in a way that doesn't meet her expectations" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

Adapting to the culture—the values, the procedures, and the personalities—in a new workplace environment is essential, both for a new employee's success and for an organization's ability to function optimally. The high standards, public visibility, serious nature of the work, and complex organizational structure at ACS CAN—particularly with its relationship to ACS—make the integration of new hires all the more important and challenging. While the organization's current ad hoc method of onboarding does encourage informal mentorship, hands-on learning experience, and may allow new members of the community opportunity influence the evolution of the discourse culture, interview participants clearly indicate that a more formal, comprehensive program for training new employees would be of real benefit to ACS CAN.

Summary. Communication is the currency of ACS CAN's workplace; whether it be interdepartmental coordination, collaboration between colleagues, providing information to the press, lobbying legislators, or rallying volunteers, nothing gets

accomplished without the ability to deliver one's message clearly and persuasively. This ability, according to the interview responses, is dependent upon interpreting, and catering to, one's audience—satisfying their needs, interests, and priorities; being simultaneously informative and persuasive; using the medium and language that the interlocutor will find familiar and impactful; having an awareness of which tactics and approaches will best match the audience's personality; and sticking to the organization's guiding principles even in times of crisis. Furthermore, this complex web of variables changes with every situation; in order to become an effective communicator one must try to account for all of them.

ICA Conclusion

The ICA Communication Audit provides a brief glimpse of the multitude of variables that affect communication at ACS CAN. It reveals a discourse community that is largely governed by the organization's market and hierarchy cultural values but one where interlocutors must also account (both internally and externally) for the needs, interests, mediums, language preferences, discursive personalities of their dialogic partners, in addition to the exigent circumstances that also play a role in organizational communication. Furthermore, it demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses that exist as a result of the communication practices that have developed over time at ACS CAN.

ACS CAN's two organizational objectives (in service of advocating for cancer research, funding, and care) are to protect ACS's 501(c)(3) status and to improve its own credibility, reputation, influence, and strategic relationships. These priorities simultaneously stem from, but also shape, the organization's discursive activities. The

discourse culture that emerges emphasizes values of centralized control and oversight, adherence to procedures, and rigidly delineated roles based on employees' areas of expertise. Collectively, this results in several, often contradictory, communication challenges:

- First, while employees appreciate the need for ACS CAN to speak with one voice and they value being kept informed of the organization's strategic plans and activities, the multiple, often overlapping, layers of coordination and review have created a culture of over-inclusiveness and burdensome over-communication. Redundant and poorly targeted communications (particularly using email) prove overwhelming and annoying to recipients, and senders of information find it difficult to balance inclusiveness (of content and interlocutors) with the ability to attract and maintain recipients' attention amidst all of the communication clutter.

- Second, there is recognition that basing its advocacy positions on scientific evidence provides ACS CAN with its reputation and credibility; however, doing so necessarily limits the organization's ability to act in as timely and dynamic a manner as possible. This is seen in instances where the organization is unable to comment on breaking issues because the science isn't present to allow a position to be formed. It is also witnessed in the organization's decision to create operational silos of policy specialists, regulatory specialists, media specialists, legal specialists, etc., who remain within the bounds of their own expertise and yet must work together to produce any communications that advance the organization's mission. Such collaborations slow ACS CAN's ability to react to

changes in the cancer advocacy landscape, at times putting it behind other

advocacy organizations and diminishing, to some degree, its "market share" and

influence.

- Third, the personal satisfaction of ACS CAN's employees is heavily influenced

by the communication relationships they have with one another and with the

organization as a whole. Where dialogue flows freely, between colleagues at the

peer level and, in many cases, with their immediate supervisors, almost familial

relationships exist. However, employees perceive a certain lack of agency in their

ability to be heard by the larger organization: there is a dearth of information

regarding career advancement, individual recognition from upper management is

rare, and voices for change or innovation get mired in bureaucracy. There is also a

sense of frustration with the primarily top-down communication flow and upward

facing power relationships: between different departments, between the state and

federal teams, and between ACS CAN employees and their counterparts at ACS.

This sense of disenfranchisement leads to turf battles, credit seeking, and most

dishearteningly to employees, the realization that the inflexibility of ACS CAN's

bureaucracy leaves their talents underappreciated and underutilized, thereby

hampering their ability to affect the organization's mission about which they are

so passionate. In fact, the largest discrepancy between the organization's current

and preferred cultures comes down to the difference between tight control and

oversight versus employees' desire for the freedom and trust to perform their jobs

without having to run every communication decision up the chain of command.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, much of what saves the organization from potential dysfunction is that due to their passion for defeating cancer, so many employees are willing to look past the organization's shortcomings in order to help accomplish this goal that transcends them all. That said, many interview participants believe that addressing these outstanding problems could potentially enable ACS CAN to perform even more effectively than it currently does.

Beyond the observations pertaining to the ICA Communication Audit's eight questionnaire categories, the interviews produced other important insights, particularly in two key areas of inquiry. The first of these deals with ACS CAN employees' perceptions of what constitutes effective communication, the consensus being, persuasiveness through addressing the needs of one's audience: explicitly demonstrating the relevance of your communication to their interests, respecting their time by remaining concise and informative, and understanding their discourse personality—knowing whether or not they like to spend time on social niceties or if they prefer to cut straight to the chase, using the language and tone that they will most identify with, familiarizing yourself with their preferred communication medium, and identifying when the best timing is to reach them. The second regards the onboarding of new employees and their learning, and adapting to, ACS CAN's organizational and discourse cultures. There is wide agreement that the assimilation process is a challenging one, taking six to twelve months for new employees to get up to speed. This learning curve is due to the organization's complex structure, poorly defined (or unclear) coordination and communication relationships with ACS, and the lack of a

formal training process or effective materials to help familiarize new hires with the organization's communication values, practices, and relationships; instead, leaving new employees to learn by trial-and-error, modeling, and receiving feedback on a document-by-document basis.

As an organization whose primary function is the development, analysis, and targeting, of effective, persuasive communication, understanding and optimizing its discourse culture should be a focused priority for ACS CAN. While its operations have positioned the organization as the leader in cancer related advocacy, the always evolving market and competition require ACS CAN to be ever vigilant. Whether that means doubling down on its current philosophy of oversight and consistency of message or shifting its communication strategies toward allowing more freedom for its dedicated employees to address discursive challenges in a more nimble, agile manner remains to be seen. In either case the ICA Communication Audit shows communication, in all its multilayered complexity, lies at the heart of ACS CAN's organization. Understanding the nature of that communication system—how it operates, what its virtues are, and how it can be improved—is vital to each employee's success and to the continued success of ACS CAN itself.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The professional world comprises an almost infinite variety of organizational cultures, each with its own unique communication paradigm. In order to comprehend what constitutes good or effective workplace communication, one must understand the workplace culture whose values, beliefs, goals, practices, structures, and relationships

provide the context that infuse that discourse with its purpose and meaning. This chapter

represents the effort to develop just such an understanding of the organizational and

discourse cultures of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN),

with the aim of using the insights from this study to help inform the development of a

new business writing pedagogy.

The examination and analysis of ACS CAN's organization and communication

practices was conducted using two well-known and well-regarded communication audit

methodologies, the Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI) and the

International Communication Association (ICA) Communication Audit. The former

instrument focuses on producing a profile of organizational culture based on the

competing values framework and the latter assesses the organization's discourse culture

across eight communication variables as well as employee interviews covering a range of

organizational communication topics; both instruments also compare the organization's

current culture with the ideal, or preferred, culture as perceived by the organization's

members.

Pedagogical Insights

Toward the end of gaining insights, from studying the organizational culture and

communication practices of a contemporary workplace, that can be used to assist in

forming an improved business writing pedagogy, there are three areas where significant

lessons emerge.

First, comparing ACS CAN's organizational culture profile, its discourse

culture's characteristics, and its members' interview responses provides evidence that

confirms the constitutive power of rhetorical discourse in relation to organizational culture. The similarities between the organizational values and discourse values are not a coincidence, nor does one artificially impose itself on the other. Instead, they are symbiotically related, co-generating and influencing their simultaneous development and continual evolution. ACS CAN's organizational identity—the very currency that provides its relevance in the advocacy marketplace on behalf of the fight against cancer—derives from its rhetorical discourse. The organization relies on its reputation as a credible, non-partisan voice whose policy positions and advocacy efforts are founded on evidence-based science in order to provide its persuasive power. ACS CAN's discourse culture and rhetorical activity are what create its reputation, and each and every communication either adds to or diminishes its ability to influence volunteers, employees, media outlets, legislators, and other stakeholders. The organization's discursive activities generate knowledge about what is and isn't effective advocacy—how the organization describes its efforts in contrast to those of ACS, the different ways it communicates and builds relationships with its various constituencies, the discourse between employees both intra-divisionally and inter-divisionally. Developing this knowledge helps to mold ACS CAN's organizational community and culture, its organizational identity, and its operational priorities.

Second, particularly in the interviews, there is ample evidence that in order to successfully contribute to an organization, its members must be made aware of the values, practices, and relationships that constitute the organizational culture and its corresponding discourse culture. Understanding how one's discursive activities fit into

the larger organizational picture enables a more savvy perspective on what (and who) to include, which communication medium makes the most sense, what tools of persuasion are likely to be available and effective, and the appropriate tone, style, and vocabulary to use. Having a grasp on the organizational culture and discourse culture also allows employees to read the pulse of the workplace: to know how to interpret what is heard through the grapevine, to identify different personalities and cliques, to read cues and body language that reveal unofficial hierarchies and levels of respect, to learn shortcuts and "tricks" in order to get people's attention or ensure their accountability, and to determine where, and from whom, help and mentorship can and cannot be found. Developing a familiarity with workplace culture also lets employees know which of the organization's boundaries are hard-and-fast and which can be massaged, it elucidates the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and it helps to empower employees to navigate the complex workplace community of which they are now a part. However, at the same time, new members of an organization bring different discursive backgrounds and perspectives with them that ultimately strengthen and expand the organization's discourse culture. This occurs through a process of challenging static practices and ideas and through finding compromise that inevitably alters the discourse community, however incrementally.

Third, it is not simply the case at ACS CAN (or at any workplace organization) that a strong organizational culture is imposed on employees who must conform or be let go. There is clearly a divide between the market and hierarchy values that govern ACS CAN's objectives and influence much of its communication regime and the clan and

adhocracy values that employees prefer and which they create, to some extent, within their individual departmental teams and in their interpersonal relationships. Yet, despite these divergent cultural philosophies, both are able to coexist without disrupting the organization's work and purpose for being. Moreover, there are countless individuals whose distinct discursive personalities, writing styles, communication habits, and personal opinions diverge from both ACS CAN's "official" communication protocols and from the ways that other employees think and communicate. Whether it is a difference in their default positions regarding how much information to share in an email, what the content of a web page should be, which communication medium is preferable, the color and font size in which to write, or whether or not they read every message or filter and prioritize them, a diversity of discourse methods exist within ACS CAN. What makes this organization effective and what allows its communication practices to function is not that its members are acculturated to a set of normative conventions that allow for communication to exist, rather it is that this group of people share a common set of beliefs about the world, their mission and objectives, and they agree that the most effective way to accomplish these goals is to work together, to put aside disputes over particular instances where their opinions about communication differ, and to use this common outlook to serve as the foundation for creating those conventions that enable them to better interpret one another and maintain a dialogue with their stakeholders.

What follows from these insights, pedagogically, is that formalist approaches that suggest "we can teach people to write well by teaching them the underlying principles common to all writing tasks" (Anson, 1987, p. 5), or that "We should be telling students

that good writing is good writing in any discourse community" (Lewis, 1989, p. 90), are severely missing the mark. The complexity of actual work environments cannot be explained or made to fit into the a-contextual, prescriptive genre forms, universal writing processes, and oversimplified formulae for constructing business documents that are presented in business communication textbooks. While using correct grammar, having the ability to be concise, and knowing what a press release looks like, are certainly useful skills, they do not enable one to communicate in the intricate network of competing priorities, interpersonal relationships, organizational objectives, and multiple audiences that comprise a business organization.

Instead, what this study shows is that business writing is more accurately described by the tenets of post-process theory—that writing is public, interpretive, and situated. Business communication is inherently public. Every text and every communication is a response to another discursive act. The intertextuality of business communication means that every instance of discourse is necessarily affected by what has come before and necessarily influences what will follow. A piece of writing cannot be considered in isolation, but only as part of the ongoing conversation in the life of an organization; it is part of the sociohistorical fabric of the workplace. Additionally, all writing is interpretive, meaning that it isn't merely the self-contained transmission of ideas or information from point A to point B. Instead, communication cannot even begin to come into being without first interpreting one's discursive partners and the shared environment. The very construction of meaning anticipates the interpretive codes an interlocutor may use and alters how a writer approaches that communication from the

moment of inception. We see this in interviewee's discussions about assessing people's communication styles, in deciding the timing and medium that will prove most effective, and in considerations of their shared discursive histories—the background information that informs their prior theories about how someone may interpret this new message. Yet, even with all of these careful calculations, there is no guarantee that a message will be interpreted as intended, which is why ACS CAN employees so value follow-up and feedback—whether it be editing notes from superiors, re-tweets, or media mentions—in order to measure their effectiveness and to shift and refine their interpretive strategies to better match those of their interlocutors. Finally, the audit demonstrates that workplace writing is situated; internal and external discourses involve different sets of considerations; the legal concerns and scientific credibility at ACS CAN differentiate it from other advocacy groups; the communication proclivities of one's supervisor necessitate the inclusion or exclusion of small talk. One size does not fit all, nor does one successful instance of communication indicate future success even among the same discursive partners. Much like Heraclitus's assertion that one cannot step into the same river twice, so, too, the situated contexts of communication never stand still.

Only through immersion in a specific communication environment, and with the proper training in how to read and analyze that environment (for, workplace organizations, themselves, are largely ill equipped to educate their new employees), can we hope to adequately prepare students to make the complicated calculations about the objectives, situated contexts, and particular interlocutors with whom they will be in dialogue; only then will our students be ready to participate as effective communicators

in their future workplaces. In order to develop these abilities, a business writing

pedagogy is needed that can help make students aware of all of these disparate factors

and to understand the role that each plays in forming communication; a pedagogy is

needed that educates students about activity theory and post-process theory and helps

them to apply these theoretical foundations to specific, public workplace contexts. The

last chapter of this dissertation is my attempt to undertake this very task.

Chapter 5: A POST-PROCESS BUSINESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, current pedagogic approaches to teaching business writing are wanting, relying largely on stale conceptions of discourse community theory that, in actual classrooms, too often take the form of current-traditional checklists, sweeping oversimplifications, process formulae, and mimesis. Moreover, research reveals that these ineffectual methods have remained virtually unchanged for almost two decades.[16] Educational strategies tend to focus on teaching students commonly used business genres, basic rhetorical considerations (eg. argument order, tone, and audience accommodation), and general characteristics of "business writing" such as concision, clarity, and standard document format. The truth, however, is that no single model of business discourse, no list of commonly used rhetorical strategies, and no set of best practices can account for the variability, complexity, and fluidity of actual workplace discourse: the historical and organizational factors that affect every discursive interaction, the personal preferences and individual relationships that determine success with each new dialogic engagement, the nature of communication as uncodifiable and paralogical, or the generative, living genres that allow these activity systems to function.

The questionable state of contemporary business writing pedagogy has not gone unnoticed; prominent scholars from various schools of composition theory have pointed out significant shortcomings in particular areas of the way students are being taught to write. Clay Spinuzzi (1996) and Yjrö Engeström (2001) both found fault with the practice

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[16] In their 2013 study of business communication curricula at America's top 50 business schools, Matthew Sharp and Eva Brumberger found that, "Course content… appeared remarkably similar to that reported in [a 1999] survey" (25).

of teaching broadly applied, fixed skills and procedures. According to the former, "The traditional approach of teaching students generalized communication strategies without reference to localized [activity networks] will not help much…" (Spinuzzi, 1996, p. 304). Yet, at the same time, he cautioned, "students' future workplaces are too diverse to imitate in a single course" (Spinuzzi, 1996, p. 300). Engeström (2001) similarly criticized traditional pedagogic models when he argued that "standard theories of learning," where one acquires a particular skill or learns a uniform process, do not align with workplace learning which, in reality, is ongoing and covers knowledge "that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time" (p. 137). Others have found problematic the multiplicity and rapid evolution of workplace communication. Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner (2009) expressed concern that, "Given the scope and speed of changes and the degree of instability… it's unclear what skills might and might not be marketable at any given time or place, nor is it certain that those that were would long remain so" (p. 126). Along these same lines, Bertha Du-Babcock (2006) asserted that future workers face "an ever widening variety of communication situations… cultural differences, information exchange possibilities, and communication dynamics" (p. 256) that are difficult to fully account for using conventional, discourse-community-based pedagogies. Last, Joseph Petraglia (1991) and Nancy Blyler (1999) each presented post-process objections to the misnomer that writing can be taught using a community's standardized processes. Petraglia (1991) argued that, "the context dependence of writing behavior, heavy with situational variables and interpretative screens, makes the notion of an easily identifiable writing system or process suspect" (p. 54). While Blyler (1999) emphasized that no level

of research into how writing occurs in a discourse community can ever be used "to codify composing process behavior as it occurs on the job" (p. 68), and that it is fundamentally flawed to presume that mastering a community's discourse practices "are necessary prerequisites to learning how to write" (p. 66). The conclusion to be drawn from these critiques is that the business writing discipline's "tried-and-true" pedagogical strategies are doing little to provide students with the insights, skills, or experiences, that will enable them to contribute to, and operate in, their future workplaces' discursive environments at anything more than the most superficial levels.

Despite this realization, however, there has been a distinct lack of voices calling for holistic change. Only post-process theory (and its proponents) has provided a case to urge contemporary composition pedagogy toward a paradigm shift. Yet, for reasons I will discuss later, as compelling as its condemnation of process related pedagogies may be, post-process theory has not lived up to its potential as the launching pad for ongoing pedagogical examination and innovation in the composition discipline; there has been little traction from any of the handful of post-process inspired pedagogies, and in the business writing subfield there has been almost no scholarly response to the problems with current teaching strategies that post-process theory brings to light.[17] Rather than leaving students adrift when entering a new workplace, equipped only with a handful of reified business writing genres they may have "mastered," a knowledge of correct grammar, and the ability to be concise and make tonal adjustments in the name of audience accommodation (all of which are useful skills, but do not by themselves make

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[17] The notable exceptions are Nancy Blyler (1999) and Bruce McComiskey (2000), who both recommended versions of a critical pedagogical approach.

one an effective writer), it is time to pursue a more meaningful methodology for teaching

college students to become competent writers in the business world.

In this chapter I lay out a vision for the development of a new pedagogical

approach that accomplishes several objectives: first, it accounts for the well-established

criticisms and weaknesses of current business writing pedagogies that have been

highlighted throughout the earlier chapters in this dissertation. Second, it addresses the

challenges of workplace communication in the information age, in which writing

expectations are "ever evolving and more complex, globalized, and multidisciplinary"

(DuBabcock, 2006, p. 255), and where "most contemporary organizations witness high

turnover in their workforce" (Henry, 2013, p. 93) which results in "the majority of job

seekers [being] consigned to a fate of constantly migrating from position to position, ever

retooling their skill sets according to the vagaries of an illusive 'market'" (Lu & Horner,

2009, p. 122). Third, it incorporates the principles of post-process theory—that writing is

public, it is interpretive, it is situated—and it draws on aspects of activity theory and

ethnographic analysis that remain consistent with a post-process framework but add

depth to the holistic conception of discourse practices. Fourth, rather than trying to teach

students how to write—which post-process theory argues is impossible—it focuses on

helping them to "read" the discursive situation surrounding and informing their written

interactions (including what are commonly considered to be "discourse community"

conventions) as evidence of their interlocutors' hermeneutic strategies so as to better

triangulate their own passing theories (that is, the interpretive strategy the rhetor intends

his or her audience to use in the moment of discourse) with those of their discursive

partners (how the audience actually does interpret the message). Most important, this pedagogy prepares students for the increasingly complex, unstable, diverse writing conditions of the contemporary workplace and empowers them to better analyze and adapt to whatever communications expectations they face throughout their professional careers.

FRAMEWORK

In 1990 Richard Fulkerson developed a model for a "full theory" of composition (which he reaffirmed in 2005) that he deemed necessary in order for writing to be taught in a coherent, considered manner. He explained:

> [I]n order to have a philosophy of composition upon which you can explicitly erect a course, you must answer four questions:
>
> 1. The axiological question: in general, what makes writing "good"?
>
> 2. The process question: in general, how do written texts come into existence?
>
> 3. The pedagogical question: in general, how does one teach college students effectively, especially where procedural rather than propositional knowledge is the goal? And
>
> 4. The epistemological question: "How do you know that?" which underlies answers to all the others. (Fulkerson, 2005, pp. 657-658)

While the four components need not be uniformly matched—he likens it to choosing items from different columns of a restaurant menu—they all play a role in every writing course and should, therefore, be incorporated into those courses in a deliberate manner. Fulkerson's metatheory has been widely recognized within the composition discipline

and, in the interest of presenting a pedagogy that is part of a deliberate, full theory of composition, I will briefly review how post-process theory provides clear answers to the three non-pedagogical questions.

Axiology

According to post-process theory, the goal of writing is to be understood (Kent, 1999); thus, "good" writing can be defined as that which is comprehended by the discursive partners as a result of successfully aligning their passing hermeneutic strategies (Couture, 2011; Dobrin, 1999; Heard, 2008; Kent, 1989). As Donald Davidson (2006) explained, "What must be shared for communication to succeed is the passing theory. For the passing theory is the one the interpreter actually uses to interpret an utterance, and it is the theory the speaker intends the interpreter to use. Only if these coincide is understanding complete" (p. 261). While Fulkerson intends the axiological question to serve as a guide for evaluating students' progress in mastering the content of a writing course, post-process theory denies that writing is a body of knowledge that can be learned or mastered (Kastman Breuch, 2002). Instead, post-process theory conceptualizes students' progress as "their ability to analyze and participate in discourse" (Heard, 2008, p. 301) and acknowledges that "we cannot know with certainty if students are successful" (Kastman Breuch, 2002, p. 133), and that "the true benefits of a postprocess rhetorical education may not surface until students are faced with unique writing challenges later in their academic or postacademic careers" (Heard, 2008, p. 301). Consequently, the nature and role of evaluation in a post-process classroom must be wholly reimagined.

Process

      Regarding the second question, post-process theory has shown composition scholars' preoccupation with process to be misguided. This is not to say that writers do not use a process in order to write—thoughts and texts do not magically appear, wholly formed, out of nothingness—it is just that post-process theory has made it clear that every instance of communication is unique and unpredictable (Kent, 1989). Writers create texts by shifting their prior theories to adapt to the situational demands of each particular communicative occurrence by guessing at their interlocutors' hermeneutic strategies (Davidson, 2006; Kent, 1989). Since "no logico-systemic process can account for the paralogical moves we make when we produce or analyze discourse" (Kent, 1989, p. 36) there is no process model or system—no matter how dynamic or nuanced—that holds true relevance in the writing classroom.

Epistemology

      Skipping to the fourth question, that of epistemology, Fulkerson (2005) observed that among postmodern composition theories, "epistemological assumptions always include a claim that knowledge is socially constructed through dialectic exchange" (pp. 661-662). While post-process theory acknowledges the necessity of discursive exchange for knowledge to exist, it does so rather differently, rejecting the relativism of social constructionist epistemology (Kent, 1991). Based on a Davidsonian "externalist" philosophy of language, post-process theory holds that there is no split between an inner world of the mind and an outer world of objects and others. As Kent (1994) explained:

      Davidson argues that knowledge of our own mind cannot be separated from

knowledge of another's mind and knowledge of the world. Without the other, we

can have no thoughts, no language, no cognizance of meaning, and no awareness

that we possess something we call mental states. Public and external

communicative interaction, through our ability to triangulate, forms the basis for

internal mental states, and not the other way around. Internal cognitive processes,

mental schemata, or conceptual schemes do not recreate an external world;

instead, the external world creates our sense of an internal one. (p. 304)

"Truth" and "knowledge," then, reside neither in the individual nor in the "objective"

world, but are formed through the public exchange of language about the world.

Knowledge corresponds solely to our dialogic interaction with others; that is, a statement

is "true" only insofar as it is consistent with other statements we already hold to be true

(Kent, 1993). As such, knowledge is necessarily situated and constructed through

discursive exchange—and in this way is consistent with postmodern sensibilities—

because the self cannot be bracketed off from its interaction with others and with the

world.

Pedagogy

While there is wide consensus among post-process scholars regarding the nature

of axiology, process, and epistemology, no such agreement exists when it comes to the

question of pedagogy. Much of the discord over translating post-process theory into

classroom procedures and curricular design stems from two sources: Kent's (1993)

declarations that "writing… cannot be taught" (p. 159) and that, "no formal pedagogy can

be constructed to teach the act of writing or critical reading" (1989, p. 36), as well as

from Sidney Dobrin's (1997) assertion that to be post-process is to challenge the composition discipline's "pedagogical imperative." Kent's critique of composition pedagogies stems from his belief that there is no teachable content—no codifiable process or system that can be mastered by students in order to make them better writers. Dobrin, J.A. Rice, and Michael Vastola (2011), however, held that "postprocess is not just a critique of process… but a move postpedagogy, postcomposition and postdiscipline" (p. 16). With no teachable content and calls for an anti-pedagogical, purely theory-based scholarship focus, it is little wonder that a widely accepted post-process pedagogy has failed to emerge. Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (2002) reflected the pessimism of the situation when she wrote, "I suggest that because of the anti-foundationalist influence on post-process theory, it is unlikely that we will *ever* see a 'post-process pedagogy,' complete with neat, bulleted points about applying a specific approach to the writing classroom" (p. 140). Matthew Heard (2008) voiced a similarly dim outlook when he noted, "It is my view that a wholesale adoption of postprocess theory is not realistically possible in most universities, since the idealism of the theory clashes at times with the exigencies of students' needs" (p. 283). Despite these inherent challenges, several scholars have attempted to develop pedagogies that, at the very least, remain consistent with the principles of post-process theory.[18]

Critical approach. A number of post-process pedagogies have been proposed over the years, covering an array of approaches to conducting writing classes in which it

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[18] The absence of authors from Theresa Enos's and Keith Miller's (2002) *Beyond Postprocess and Postmodernism* is the result of my agreement with Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola's (2011) critique that the collection does little to advance post-process theory and primarily views it as part of a continuum of approaches to describe students' writing.

is understood that writing cannot be taught. While more substantial accounts of such pedagogies can be found in both Kastman Breuch (2002) and Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola (2011), I will briefly review a cross-section of these strategies to provide a sense of what has been proffered thus far. At one end of the spectrum, critical pedagogy is viewed as the solution to enacting post-process writing courses. Arguing for the inherent compatibility of post-process theory with the critical approach, Nancy Blyler (1999) contended that rather than attempting to analyze the process of workplace writing, our pedagogical goal should be to "interrogate existing social structures and practices, with the aim of uncovering the workings of domination and power and thus fostering critique and social change" (p. 77). Likewise, Bruce McComiskey (2000) saw the removal of the writing process from the pedagogical map as an opportunity to "encourage students to adopt a critical stance toward encoded values, determining from their own perspectives the veracity of the cultural and social values promoted in target texts" (p. 43). For both of these scholars the need to find new content and purpose for the writing classroom, along with post-process theory's definition of writing as relational (rather than as a skill or a set of procedures to be mastered), make the analysis of the values and power relationships conferred by discursive exchanges appear to be a natural fit. However, while critical pedagogy correctly frames writing as relational, it provides students with no practical guidance how to effect change in the hegemonic cultural values that written texts perpetuate; for, to do so would require that they alter the discourse by responding effectively in writing—a subject which critical pedagogy ignores. While it is valuable in other contexts, I see two further problems with critical pedagogy's application as a post-

process answer to the writing course. First, although the two theories may be aligned in a number of ways, the critical approach is far from an outright pedagogical implementation of post-process theory. Second, as Maxine Hairston (1992) astutely pointed out, critical pedagogy is, "a model that puts… the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the student"(180). In the end, critical pedagogy is a simply not a suitable method for conducting courses on writing, particularly those meant (as are both of these authors' articles) to prepare students to write effectively in the workplace.

  Ethical approach. Further along the array is a somewhat different value-centric angle for post-process pedagogical design. Davidson's (1974) theory of dialogic charity, of which he wrote, "if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters… We make maximum sense of the words and thoughts of others when we interpret in a way that optimizes agreement" (p. 19), forms the cornerstone of Joseph Petraglia's (1999) and Barbara Couture's (1999, 2011) pedagogical schemes. The former's "reconceptualization of what it means to 'teach writing'" involves "efforts to inculcate [students'] receptive skills" (Petraglia, 1999, pp. 61-62). Petraglia's vision, here, is twofold: first, he holds that as more aware consumers of writing, students may become better producers of it; second, he thinks that a rhetorical openness to others' ideas might encourage social cohesion. Even more explicitly, Couture (2011) sees the "relational" nature of writing—that is, the discursive necessity to understand others' positions and the ways that our positions affect others—as a call to develop students' ethical agency, wherein writing's purpose of "com[ing] to a shared meaning" (p. 29) is achieved by helping students emulate those "whose actions represent the persons we

would like to be and whom we wish to recognize that identity in us" (1999, p. 47). For Couture, since writing represents our agency and identity in the world, writing teachers' primary accountability is in guiding students to become positive actors.

While it is hard to deny the connection between dialogic charity and the roles that social responsibility and ethics play in conducting discursive activity, it is presumptuous (at best) to think that academics somehow have special insight into what constitutes ethical social behavior, let alone the right or ability to determine what that should be for their students. Petraglia, sensibly, understands that social cohesion naturally arises from adopting a rhetorically charitable default position to others' ideas; Couture, however, overreaches by suggesting that the concept of dialogic charity justifies instructors taking on the role of social engineer, and by doing so becomes susceptible to the same critiques leveled at critical pedagogues.

Prior theory approach. A different tack is taken by Helen Ewald (1999) and also Heard (2008) who each identify the opportunity to embrace students' prior theories—in contrast to the discourse community model of enculturation that generally eschews previous writing conventions—as a key element to post-process instruction. Ewald (1999) argued that students "could draw upon past knowledge of punch lines of jokes, or two-minute drills in football" to better grasp "closure moves in academic discourse" and, similarly, could refer to advertising to identify rhetorical moves such as claim making (p. 129). Heard (2008), also a proponent of engaging students' background knowledge and prior theories, observed that, "When students realized that their prior theories of writing were welcomed and not stigmatized under postprocess theory, they seemed to be more

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interested in the idea that their writing could be strengthened through discursive interaction" (p. 291). Despite being a somewhat narrow, limited answer to reforming writing courses, this method makes use of post-process theory's unique acceptance of the knowledge students already possess about communication and makes it relevant to classroom activities.

Public approach. Three other strategies have received wider attention and agreement over their value to post-process classrooms. The first, used by Heard (2008), Kastman Breuch (2001), and even McComiskey (2000), is to stress the public nature of discourse by locating discursive activities outside of the classroom. Heard (2008) noted that when students' "writing take[s] place within the sphere of public discourse" (p. 292) they learned to "adapt their knowledge and values to the needs and expectations of… the community organization… [Thereby] employing their existing 'prior theories' of discourse in 'passing' with the specific audience expectations they were encountering" (p. 293). Kastman Breuch (2001) also found that, "client-based projects require… that students identify, consider, and understand client expectations and motivations for a project" (p. 195). Having students engage in matching their passing theories with those of others allows them to start developing strategies for more effective hermeneutic guessing in future encounters.

Collaborative approach. The second broadly used post-process approach focuses on the dialogic partnership between instructors and students, rather than a traditional model with teachers being unidirectional disseminators of knowledge. Kent (1989) defined this relationship when he wrote, "the instructor would treat the student's

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writing with the same regard as she would treat a colleague's writing; that is, she would

collaborate with the student in order to help the student create a more persuasive

discourse within the disciplinary conversation where both instructor and student work"

(pp. 38-39). Couture (1999), Ewald (1999), Raúl Sánchez (1993), Heard (2008), and

Kastman Breuch (2001; 2002) have all advocated for this instructional redesign. The

latter wrote that, "such a stance helps us reconsider teaching as an act of mentoring rather

than a job in which we deliver content" (Kastman Breuch, 2002, p. 143). In summarizing

Sánchez's pedagogy, Dobrin (1997) wrote that it promoted "an emphasis on

individualized instruction and a reevaluation of student-teacher relationships… [where]

classroom time would be better spent focusing on individual or small-group needs" (p.

84). Finally, Heard (2008) argued that "committed instructors can foster the benefits of

interaction and engagement by making space within the course schedule for

individualized instruction through office conferences or other one-on-one appointments"

(p. 298). All three of these scholars interpret the dialogic nature of teaching as requiring

individualized collaborations between the instructor and his or her students. As promising

as the unique post-process mentorship relationship may be, Dobrin (1997), Couture

(2011), and even Heard (2008), himself, acknowledged that the necessary personalized

attention "may be impossible to implement systematically" (p. 298). As a result, the

creation of a dialogic classroom would need to be reconceived in order to be part of a

practical pedagogic plan.

Metadiscourse approach. The third, and last, of the more universally accepted

post-process strategies I will review, is that of engaging students in a metadiscourse about

writing—making them aware of writing theory as a means of helping them better understand how to communicate more successfully. Ewald (1999), Stephen Yarbrough (1999), Kastman Breuch (2002), Couture (2011), Sánchez (1993), and Heard (2008) all express support for some version of this approach. Ewald (1999) called for courses that "demystify both writing and learning" (p. 130), Yarbrough (1999) found that a teacher's role is to "make [students] aware of significant problems and questions [that they] do not presently know exist" (p. 237), and Kastman Breuch (2002) described Sánchez as wanting to "use class time to engage in discourse about writing" (p. 125). Heard (2008), however, best summarized this philosophy when he wrote, "We as instructors have a unique opportunity to… figure out together how we can best catalyze and facilitate [students'] metacognitive awareness of postprocess…" (p. 291). These scholars argue that making our students aware of the theories and the ongoing pedagogical discussions within our discipline, it will allow them to become more "adept producers and analyzers of discourse" (Heard, 2008, p. 291), and this, I believe, is exactly the goal of any effective writing course.

ESTABLISHING THE CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL POST-PROCESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

The consensus among post-process scholars is that the theory, as a foundation for pedagogy, has failed to take root within the writing discipline. Petraglia (1999) proclaimed, "while we may be theoretically post-process… professionally, the dominance of the general writing-skills classroom reminds us that we continue to inhabit a process-centric universe" (p. 60). Couture (2011) came to the same conclusion when she wrote, "In short, despite the postprocess movement, writing as a phenomenon

continues to be taught in terms of specific material processes to be emulated or verbal forms to be imitated" (p. 22). Furthermore, Heard (2008) declared, "no spokespeople for postprocess have channeled this energy into a practicable pedagogy for postprocess or have even made attempts to speculate about postprocess teaching strategies" (p. 285). And, Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola (2011), of course, not only noted the failure of post-process theory to transform the writing discipline's pedagogy, but claimed that "composition studies' acknowledgment of postprocess theories has mostly attempted to placate postprocess and inculcate it into the disciplinary narrative" (p. 14).

While I concur that post-process theory has had no significant impact on how writing is taught in American colleges and universities, calls for the writing discipline to abandon pedagogic research and to become solely theoretical in nature—in the way that physics research deals with the study of matter and not with teaching students to become better physicists—is misguided. As McComiskey (2000) argued, "Dobrin's desire to limit the discourse about post-process composition… violates the very principles of paralogy upon which this anti-process version of the post-process movement is based" (p. 41). Nor am I alone in my conviction that developing a post-process pedagogy is a worthwhile pursuit. Heard (2008) insisted that, "postprocess theory can and should be made workable in our own classrooms, even if only in limited contexts" (p. 283). Even Gary Olson (1999), a frequent Dobrin collaborator, concluded that post-process theory requires "us to adjust our pedagogies…" and that "such work can potentially have significant implications… for how we enact those understandings in the post-process classroom" (p. 15). Taking an even bolder stance, Sánchez (2011) argued that, as a culturally

constitutive force, "writing is pedagogy" (p. 193). On this point I most emphatically

agree, although for somewhat different reasons. I hold that post-process theory *demands*

pedagogy—that, by its paralogical nature, every discursive interaction requires

pedagogical involvement. The classroom is simply one locus where such pedagogic

activity can occur in a more explicit and considered manner.

It is my position that, to date, post-process pedagogies (for academic and business

writing) all suffer from a failure to meet the needs of their constituencies: the writing

discipline, writing students, and the academic or workplace audiences with whom these

students will ultimately be communicating. What is required to successfully establish a

post-process (business) writing pedagogy is a set of criteria that clearly define and

address the goals and needs of these three groups: first, the pedagogy must satisfy

students' educational and vocational needs; second, it must provide broadly applicable,

adaptable strategies related to the wide variety of situated discursive interactions writers

will face (in this case, within the contemporary workplace); third, it must be practical

insofar as it can be readily adopted throughout higher education, and; fourth, it must stay

true to, and implement, post-process theory, including the three principles that writing is

public, that it is interpretive, and that it is situated.

Students' Needs

My stance on the needs of business writing students is informed by multiple

sources including my own experiences working in the "business world," six years of

teaching business writing courses at the University of Maryland, and the disciplinary

research I've conducted over an extended period. I've concluded that the needs of

business writing students are, most fundamentally, to develop the ability to better understand and to successfully engage in the discursive activities required in their future workplaces. Therefore, it should be the express aim of business writing courses and of instructors to help guide their students toward fulfilling these goals. There is a persistent problem among academics, however, as David Chapman, Jeanette Harris, and Christine Hult (1995) observed, that, "[Many] scholars would shudder to think their academic role was to produce more efficient technicians and managers" (p. 426). While it is important to familiarize students with the theories underlying discourse studies we must also recognize students' practical needs and not dismiss them as beneath the concerns of academia. On this point, regarding the "sometimes derided 'careerism' of students," Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner (2009) sagely observed that, "to ignore students' financial concerns is unconscionable, particularly in light of the growing privatization of the costs of education" (p. 114). To be fair, Lu and Horner (2009) are arguing that the binary choice of "accommodat[ing] unjust social relations or consign[ing] students to economic deprivation" (p. 113) is a false one. However, with roughly 97% of college graduates entering the professional world in careers other than academia (United States Department of Labor, 2015), I contend that we should defer to students' interests in being able to succeed within business communities as they presently exist rather than indulging our disciplinary predilection toward enabling them to resist the hegemonic power (im)balances that writing can perpetuate.

Broadly Applicable, Adaptable Strategies

Much of what I identify as problematic with the post-process pedagogies that have been developed thus far is the relatively narrow range of experience they provide and their limited applicability to the diversity of students' future workplace writing. Sánchez (1993) relies on the mentorship role between instructor and student to introduce hermeneutic strategies, which Dobrin (1997) criticized as "confining students' learning about discourse to a two-participant model" (p. 85). The trouble with this approach (one put forth by a number of post-process scholars, including Kent) is that it teaches students only one model of discourse. A different, but similarly wanting method, is used by Heard (2008) and Kastman Breuch (2001), both of whom are strong advocates of post-process writing classrooms. They employ client-based projects as the cornerstone of their courses. As Heard (2008) observed of his students, "the passing theories students developed through their experiences in and out of the classroom had indeed enabled them to seek out the values of their audience and respond with sophistication to the demands of each writing scenario" (pp. 291-292). This inclination is, in fact, a good one; involving students in public discourses and giving them opportunities to practice matching their passing theories with those of real interlocutors is immensely valuable pedagogically. However, while such an approach may allow students to gain exposure to hermeneutic interactions in one, or possibly even several, communities of practice, it does not equip them with generalizable strategies that can help guide them through future discursive challenges.

The reality is that the contemporary professional landscape is vast, diverse, and rapidly changing—business organizations themselves, communication mediums and genres, and the frequency with which employees jump from company to company all contribute to workplace instability and the need to be able to pivot and adapt. According to Lu and Horner (2009), "The marketable skill for such a neoliberal market economy is flexibility" (p. 122). Michael Eraut (2004) also found that, "even for experienced workers, what counts as competence will change over time as practices change and the speed and quality of work improves. Thus, from a learning viewpoint, competence is a moving target" (p. 264). In order to ready students to enter such an environment, what is needed is a pedagogical strategy that enhances students' abilities to recognize and to adapt to the multitude of discursive situations and interlocutors that they will be required to face over the course of their careers.

There is already widespread agreement on this matter within the business writing discipline. Graham Smart and Nicole Brown (2008) called for attention to be paid to preparing students "for the continuous learning that will be required of them during their professional careers as they work within constantly changing worksites and, in some cases, move among a succession of jobs and work environments" (p. 261). Sharp and Brumberger (2013) similarly argued that, "our curricula must anticipate, where possible, future needs and try to provide students the foundation and flexibility they will need to meet those needs" (p. 26). And Bertha Du-Babcock (2006), accurately asserted that:

> Our goal should be to provide students with competencies, skills, and knowledge
> bases to communicate in an increasingly complex and diverse global

communication environment… [in which they] develop the ability to adapt their

communication strategies and methods to fit differing situations and tasks as well

as the varying linguistic and communication competency levels of their

interactants. (pp. 263-264)

Clearly, then, flexibility and adaptability are among the most important skills that

students will need when they eventually engage in workplace discourse. What's more,

this concept of shifting strategies to meet the situational requirements of individual

discursive interactions is the very foundation of post-process theory. It is, therefore,

somewhat puzzling that no post-process pedagogy has emerged that effectively address

the needs of business writing students.

A Practical, Readily Adoptable Pedagogy

For a variety of reasons, a large number of writing scholars are skeptical about the

ability of post-process pedagogies to be widely adopted by American colleges. Heard

(2008) and Dobrin (1997) both point out the logistical problems presented by the post-

process role of the instructor as mentor. As Dobrin (1997) remarked, "It becomes

impossible to offer one-on-one attention to all students. Surely, most writing program

administrators would be forced to dismiss this approach…" (p. 84). Couture (2011) also

doubts the willingness of administrators to embrace post-process pedagogy, though for

her it is because post-process theory is antithetical to institutional demands that teachers

"produce evidence that what they are doing is valuable, through state-wide testing or

evidential means" (p. 22). Additionally, Sánchez (2011) concluded that for post-process

pedagogy to thrive it cannot be "tied to classroom teaching and the conceptual limitations

imposed thereby" (p. 185). While the hurdles that these theorists bring up are certainly problematic, it is my position that none of these impediments is insurmountable.

Aiding one's students in the way that work colleagues often provide feedback for one another can be achieved without constant one-on-one interaction between the instructor and his or her students. In fact, Dobrin (1997) and Sánchez (2011) both allow that small group work may suffice as an acceptable compromise. I will, in my own pedagogical proposal, argue that this collaborative relationship can be extended classroom-wide, to all students at once. I also reject the argument that administrators will only accept courses whose value can be quantifiably demonstrated; if that were the case, there would be virtually no literature or critical theory courses offered in English Departments. While post-process writing courses lack the ability to provide a set of content that students have mastered or list the genre formats that they have memorized, it is possible to describe the theories students have become familiar with and to explain how those theories have been applied in their coursework. Last, I agree with Sánchez that post-process pedagogy cannot be limited to the confines of the classroom; the public nature of discourse requires that business writing students be engaged in actual dialogues with real businesses. Through client-based courses that use class time to enhance and broaden students' exposure to hermeneutic strategies beyond those of the single organization they are engaged in, such a publicly situated pedagogy can be made to work. Ultimately, for a post-process business writing pedagogy to be of value, it must be something that can be implemented and reproduced in actual classrooms throughout our colleges and universities.

Uphold Post-Process Principles

The last of the criteria is that a post-process writing pedagogy must enact post-process theory and uphold its three main principles: that writing is public, that it is interpretive, and that it is situated. It may appear obvious or redundant to explicitly state that a post-process pedagogy should conform to the tenets of post-process theory. However, I include it here for two reasons. The first is in response to scholars such as Blyler (1999) and McComiskey (2000) who attach the label "post-process" to what are actually critical (or other) pedagogies simply because post-process theory's revelation of the paralogical nature of writing provides a justification for teaching aspects of communication that do not involve the writing process. The second reason is to address pedagogues who, like Ewald (1999) or Couture (2011), focus only on limited aspects of post-process theory. For a pedagogy to fully embody post-process theory it must translate the entire spirit of the theory (if not all of the theory itself) into teaching practice, not just the concept of prior theories or of receptivity or of the public nature of discourse. In the following section I attempt to present just such a post-process business writing pedagogy.

BEYOND WORDS: A POST-PROCESS BUSINESS WRITING PEDAGOGY

In order to respond to the business community's decades long criticisms that college graduates remain unprepared to write in the workplace, in order to address our students' needs to develop marketable skills, in order to remain consistent with the paralogical nature of discourse, and in order to acknowledge contemporary professional discourse environments whose mediums, values, conventions, and participants are more diverse and change more rapidly than ever before, a new approach to teaching business

writing is required. Rather than providing students with a fixed set of content to be "mastered" (such as genre forms, grammar rules, or models of tone and audience accommodation) and have them try to force the discursive circumstances of wherever they end up working into these predetermined molds, what is needed is a pedagogy that imparts strategies that will empower students to quickly analyze the particular discursive situations in which they are engaged (both organizationally and with individual interlocutors) and to adapt accordingly so that the learning curve for effective workplace communication is greatly reduced.

Post-process theory has demonstrated that writing is wholly interpretive, making it impossible to guarantee or to predict if one will be understood. In addition to the theories presented by Davidson, Kent, and others, research into the functional realities of workplace communication, including my own communication audit of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), bears out the subjective, paralogical nature of communication. Interviews with ACS CAN employees revealed that the personality and preferences of an interlocutor affect how communication is conducted—including factors such as the medium, tone, timing, length, and depth of detail—even more than the person's position or the overall workplace culture (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015; Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015)). Consequently, as post-process theory contends, this case-by-case hermeneutic adaptation makes it impossible to teach students any codifiable or systematic method for how to write effectively. That does not mean, however, that writing instructors have nothing to offer their students.

I hold that there are three critical components to a post-process pedagogy that we, as instructors, must use if we are to help our students more successfully navigate the hermeneutic uncertainties of writing. First, we can provide students with opportunities to engage in multiple and diverse discourses, so that through the repeated exercise of matching their passing theories with those of their interlocutors, they will build and refine their prior theories, possibly making future discursive encounters less uncertain. Second, we must transform our classrooms into collaborative pedagogical communities in which instructors and students work together to become more adept at hermeneutic triangulation. These first two approaches have been widely espoused and, to date, serve as the primary focus of almost every post-process pedagogy that is concerned with better preparing students to engage in future discourses. The pedagogy I advance here affirms these two factors, except, as I elaborate later, my reconceptualization of the classroom diverges from what has already been proposed. What I contend has been missing from post-process pedagogies, my third component, is a set of strategies that enables students to more quickly and more astutely assess the hermeneutic theories of their interlocutors. We can guide students in developing something akin to what Graham Smart and Nicole Brown (2008) describe as a "discursive gaze" (p. 260), that is, how to "read" the situated contexts that inform all discursive interactions. Moreover, unlike the production of writing, the teaching of what I call "contextual literacy" *can* be codified, thereby providing students with generalizable strategies that can make them more effective communicators without contradicting the precepts of post-process theory. It is my belief

that without combining all three elements, we are leaving our students ill prepared to face the writing challenges of the "business world" that they are soon to enter.

Creating Discursive Opportunities

In her 2011 article, Couture noted that, "Good writers usually have a pretty good idea of what kind of communication works in particular social settings…" (p. 26). This observation begs the question, how, if discourse is paralogical, does one develop a "good idea" of what communicative strategy is most appropriate for a particular situation. The answer is that while successful communication requires hermeneutic guessing, these guesses are not completely random; they are founded on a history of dialogic experience—the more experience, potentially the greater possibility for more accurate triangulation. Prior theories are an individual's "library" of hermeneutic strategies that have been collected from each one of his or her discursive experiences. As Heard (2008) explained, "In Davidson's model, our 'prior theories'—the conventions, models, and rules we learn and absorb—are constantly being reshaped as we meet in 'passing' with interlocutors—other people, imagined audiences, and the discourses they represent" (p. 287). However, this collection of prior theories is not some ever-improving personal philosophy of discourse; it is merely an increasingly savvy reference tool that helps to narrow the range of hermeneutic guesses based on the relevance of our background knowledge to one's particular interlocutors and the discursive situation. Thus, developing a "pretty good idea" of what a successful communicative strategy will be during a specific moment of discourse requires more than a large number of prior theories; it requires knowing about the values and hermeneutic strategies of one's dialogic partners

in particular communities of practice who, through their own ongoing discourses with other community members, have learned, adjusted and participated in creating the community's "shared interpretive theory" (Kent, 1989, p. 26). This conception of writing's epistemic underpinning serves as the foundation for the first pedagogical component: by engaging in written discourse with a variety of dialogic partners, students can add to and cultivate their prior theories and knowledge of individual interlocutor's and of particular workplaces' discourse strategies.

Pedagogically, then, it is necessary to move the focus (if not the locus) of writing education from the classroom to multiple, external communities of practice—in this case, business organizations—and the conversations occurring therein. As Couture (2011) claimed, within the post-process framework, a successful writer is one who "understands the demands of relating to the world and specific readers in a public setting" (p. 28). Despite the lack of a unified pedagogical vision among post-process scholars, on this point, at least, there is significant agreement. Heard (2008) and Sánchez (2011) both find that the answer to revising post-process writing pedagogies is to free them from the limitations of the classroom by emphasizing the public nature of discourse, framing writing as participating in cultural production, and placing students' coursework within community or client-based settings. As Sánchez (2011) explained, "Pedagogy is not only the explicit act of imparting lessons in an authorized educational setting; it is also, and more important, the production and transmission of values at various levels and locations of a given society. From a variety of sources, one learns—generally and specifically— how to be part of a larger group" (pp. 191-192). The concept behind a client-based

approach within post-process theory is that only through direct engagement in a range of discourses can one augment one's prior hermeneutic theories and become better attuned to the values that inform the passing strategies of others within particular communities of practice. Kent (1989) described this mechanism of hermeneutic refinement within a specific community, such as a business organization, this way:

> A student may only learn how to employ his background knowledge—and learn how to expand it at the same time—by entering into specific dialogic and therefore hermeneutic interactions with others' interpretive strategies… The student would be asked to apply [his] background knowledge by responding to others who know the field and keep the conversation alive. (pp. 37-38)

Heard (2008) reaffirmed this idea when we wrote, "the only way to really 'teach' successful communication is to enlarge students' 'prior theories' by exposing each student to as many different communication scenarios as possible" (pp. 287-288). Even Dobrin (1999), who derided the writing discipline's "pedagogical imperative," acknowledged that, "students must become participants in communication; they must constantly engage in developing the skills needed to be adept triangulators" (p. 144). When students are immersed in multiple "real world" discourses, they enter into these ongoing conversations, engage in making meaning with various communities, and gain experience at hermeneutic guessing which adds to and refines their prior theories. All of these scholars are correct that in order for students to learn how to communicate within a discipline or a community they must actually do so while situated in, and engaged in dialogue with, that community's members. In the absence of any fixed rules, processes,

or conventions about writing that can be learned in one context and applied elsewhere (e.g., learned in a classroom and applied in a workplace), the only way to determine the hermeneutic strategies of a community's members is to experience them firsthand.

Of course, the idea of client-based teaching is not a new one. Virtually the same structure and goals, though stated without the post-process emphasis on hermeneutic interpretation of language, have been used for years within the process paradigm to acculturate students to the practices and conventions of particular "discourse communities." Spinuzzi (1996), for example, wrote, "I have argued that students should join other [activity networks] and use the professional writing classroom as a forum for discussing them and as an opportunity to examine their practices" (p. 304). It is no coincidence then, that Heard's and others' pedagogies suffer from the same shortcomings that do earlier, process-related Writing in the Disciplines (WID) and client-based pedagogies. That is, on their own, client-based writing courses give students only a glimpse of the wide spectrum of discursive situations they will face during their careers. Either they provide a smattering of several workplace contexts and attempt to draw reductive lessons from their comparison, or they offer more in-depth interaction with one or two discursive communities and hope that students can reference and extrapolate these engagements in future settings; both approaches are insufficient. Despite Heard's (2008) observation that his students, "were repeatedly engaging in the activity of learning the discourses of others, and through this engagement adjusting their prior theories to be able to anticipate future discursive encounters" (p. 299), there is little in his pedagogy that can guide them in recreating this success when faced with new discursive locations and

situations. As Davidson (2006) noted, drawing conclusions about the relative success of one communicative occasion "does not mean (necessarily) that we now have a better theory for the next occasion" (260). Simply providing students with an opportunity to build and refine their prior theories in a public setting isn't enough. They will still largely rely on having to navigate through new workplace discourse environments using little more than trial-and-error to match their hermeneutic strategies with those of their future interlocutors. More is needed, pedagogically, to accompany the benefits of locating coursework in public, client-based settings; what is needed are strategies that students can turn to in order to make better use of their prior theories when interpreting future discourses.

Classrooms as Collaborative Pedagogical Communities

Post-process theory challenges the academy's long-standing conception of the writing classroom, both in its understanding of the classroom's purpose and at the level of praxis. Dobrin (1997) summed up the approach this way: "classrooms do not become a place where teachers inform students about discourse, but rather teachers become another voice in the dialogue that helps them become acquainted with their interpretive strategies" (p. 79). While the role of instructor as a responsive collaborator dates back at least as far as Donald Murray, this is less frequently the dynamic in business writing courses. Moreover, with no content to master and with an emphasis on the relational, dialogic nature of discourse, traditional classroom roles are no longer valid in a post-process paradigm; "instructors" are no longer positioned as the keepers and monological transmitters of knowledge, and students are not attempting to learn or to mimic a set of

discursive models or processes. As Kent (1993) elucidated, "an externalist pedagogy would stress collaborative and not dialectical interaction between teacher and student" (p. 163). Rather, by necessity, everyone in the class is both a teacher and a student since the paralogical nature of discourse requires pedagogical engagement from all participants as they learn to match their hermeneutic strategies with each other and with those of others outside the classroom. Heard (2008), Kent (1993), and Sánchez (1993) envision individual collaborations in which the teacher as "mentor" would "actively collaborate with his or her students to help them through different communicative situations both within and outside the university" (Kent, 1993, p. 164). And, while Couture (1999), Dobrin (1997), and Kent (1993) have all noted the untenable impracticality of such an approach on a wide scale, I contend that a viable solution is to treat all classroom members as part of a community of practice wherein they collectively collaborate to engage in the discourses necessary to accomplish each individual's and the community's objectives.

Classroom community. In fact, by enrolling in a college-level business writing course, students are participating in (at least) two distinct, ongoing scenes of public discourse—two communities of practice—the first being the classroom and the second being the workplace organization in which they are, or will be, involved. For, as Kent (1989) noted, a student "can only learn to write by engaging in the dialogic/collaborative interactions—the conversation—inherent in her [discipline or workplace]" (p. 39). Or, stated from a non post-process perspective, "To do the work of a particular discipline is to understand how one effects understanding, concern, agreement, and debate there… and

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thereby contributes to the collaborative, historically unfolding inquiry undertaken by those who work with that discipline" (Slevin, 2001, p. 192). Thus, beginning with the business writing classroom, the first step in achieving such a collective pedagogical community is to include students as co-equal members in the discipline's discourse. This means peeling back the veil and exploring aspects of discourse theory—postmodern epistemology, activity systems and discourse community theory, organizational culture, ethnography, post-process theory, etc.—that are relevant to students' dialogic interactions, both in the classroom and in the workplace. Because the discursive scenes will vary from class-to-class and from student-to-student the theories to be discussed may change, but those noted here seem appropriate as a foundation of background knowledge that could help students' hone their hermeneutic strategies in a wide number of situations. Heard (2008) cogently observed that post-process theory naturally encourages metacognition as interlocutors analyze their own and others' communicative strategies; however, if we are to embrace students as full-fledged participants in our discipline, we must make their inclusion in our disciplinary dialogues more overt.

In his 1993 presentation Sánchez hinted at just such a deliberate approach. "Sanchez suggests that writing courses… use class time to engage in discourse about writing" (Kastman Breuch, 2002, p. 125). What this classroom discourse about writing might look like is further fleshed out by examining Kent's pedagogical musings. As has been noted, when engaged in dialogue, one must call upon one's background knowledge in order to formulate a passing theory that is likely to be understood by one's discursive partners. Thus, for an interlocutor to enter the ongoing conversations of the writing

discipline he or she would need to utilize not only his or her linguistic knowledge, but also that of "the practical disciplinary matrixes—the language codes—where communication occurs" (Kent, 1989, p. 29). Pedagogically, then, Kent sees instructors' input as most valuable when using their (presumably) greater depth of disciplinary experience and, therefore, background knowledge to collaboratively guide students through their hermeneutic triangulations while engaged in these disciplinary conversations. As he explained, "the mentor's guesses in most instances will be more likely to work than the student's guesses" (Kent, 1993, p. 167). Kastman Breuch (2002) held a similar view: "To think of teaching as mentoring means spending time and energy on our interactions with students—listening to them, discussing ideas with them, letting them make mistakes, and pointing them in the right direction" (p. 143). While I support the need to engage in discourse with our students about the writing discipline's work and theories—its conversations—I find Kent's and Kastman Breuch's characterizations of the mentor's role in this task to be somewhat erroneous in that, in practice, it ends up being more prescriptive than collaborative, a point I will try to illustrate in the next paragraph.

Workplace community. The second site (at least) of public discourse that students will be engaged in is a workplace outside of the classroom. As previously noted, the use of client and community-based interaction is a well established cornerstone of post-process pedagogy; if students are to build prior theories relevant to the discourses of their future workplaces, they must do so by entering into dialogue with interlocutors who are part of those ongoing conversations, thereby experiencing these individuals' passing theories. What is most pertinent to this current discussion, though, is how the

collaboration between the instructor/mentor and the student should proceed when the

community of practice, whose discourses are the object of study, is outside of the

instructor's immediate purview. Kent (1993) asserted that, "the instructor's primary

obligation is to help the student formulate appropriate genres for the different

communicative tasks that the student encounters" (p. 167). However, unlike the

conversations regarding the writing discipline—in which the mentor is likely (though not

guaranteed) to have more extensive experience, greater background knowledge, and

better-refined prior theories—when it comes to the worksites in which the students are

involved, the opposite is likely (though not guaranteed) to be true. Kent (1993) even

acknowledged this scenario when he wrote, "in some instances, the student obviously

may possess more background knowledge than a mentor and, therefore, may be better

situated to make an effective guess about the kind of interpretation required in a

particular communicative context" (p. 164). The problem I see with Kent's pedagogical

schema is that the mentor has little of particular value to add in such a scenario. Spinuzzi

(1996) described this pitfall as such, "although a teacher may have greater knowledge of

general hermeneutic strategies… she or he knows less about the student's [activity

network] AN, and therefore may give advice that directly *contradicts* the object(ive)s of

the AN" (pp. 302-303). In other words, how is the instructor/mentor supposed to fulfill

his or her obligation to "help the student formulate an appropriate genre that might

respond effectively to another's utterance" (Kent, 1993, p. 164) if the student is the one

who is familiar with the discourses, interlocutors, contexts, and hermeneutic strategies

being used in his or her workplace? It cannot be the case that the instructor collaborates

with the student by suggesting genres based on his or her own personal experience or based on the common use of such genres in similar situations; to do so would be to offer a menu of reified genres that has little relation to the particular circumstances involved in that discursive moment when a passing theory is formed, and violates Kent's own Bakhtinian view of genre as dynamic, evolving patterns of discourse that arise from and that enact the ongoing activities of a specific discursive community.

There is little help from post-process pedagogues in solving this dilemma, save from Heard (2008) who enacted his mentorship role by designing "activities that began with the students' writing and then moved toward recognition of common strategies" (p. 295), thereby letting his students deduce which, and how, genre conventions were relevant to their conversations. My solution, that of a collective pedagogical community of practice, where the instructor is more an organizer and facilitator than a mentor, is largely informed by Heard's (2008) description of his students serving as each other's audiences in order to anticipate "how the author's attempts… might be received by real readers in the community" (p. 26). It is unlikely that the dialogues between classmates, about each other's workplace discourses, will result in precise insights regarding which genre is most appropriate to respond to a specific discursive interaction or a particular passing theory. However, the dialogic moments and passing theories exchanged with one another in the classroom may provide reference, or at least inspiration, for the considerations of audience and context that can aid students in formulating their own genres appropriate to their workplace writing tasks.

More important, this problem that exists across all post-process pedagogies to

date—that is, the instructor's limited ability to provide meaningful help to students in learning how to triangulate their workplace discourses—only serves to highlight the need for the final component of my pedagogy: teaching students to develop strategies for reading the situated contexts that inform all discursive interactions.

Strategies for Developing Contextual Literacy

Starting with Davidson's notion of dialogic charity, there is ample evidence within post-process theory that knowledge of the contexts and of the communities in which discourse occurs is indispensible in formulating a hermeneutic strategy that is likely to be understood by one's interlocutors. Kastman Breuch, Kent, and Sánchez all make arguments to this point. Kastman Breuch (2002) declared, "Writing becomes an activity that requires an understanding of context, interaction with others, and our attempts to communicate a message**"** (p. 138). Kent (1993) wrote that, "In order to respond to the other by employing an appropriate genre we must consider… all the linguistic, contextual, and political decisions that constitute the communicative situation" (p. 166). While Sánchez (2011) opined that, "the act of producing a text [is] comprised of innumerable and necessarily ad hoc acts of interpretation… rooted in cognitive, emotional, and social/cultural situations" (p. 188). Couture and Heard concur, but focus more on how receptivity to our discursive partners necessitates attention to the communities and cultural influences with whom they identify. Couture (1998) held that our responses to others are authentic only if "our reasoning respects the persons and perceptions of those within the community we address by recognizing our mutual obligation to construct communal solutions" (p. 130). Heard (2008) further noted that,

"since writing always begins and ends with people, it must be described in organic terms that fit the 'changing relations' between people and their cultural and historical contexts" (p. 286). Despite the clear recognition, within post-process *theory*, of the significant role that context and community play in hermeneutic triangulation and the making of meaning, the few scholars who have ventured into the realm of post-process *pedagogy*, have failed to take advantage of these discursive contexts as a teaching strategy.

I, however, argue that there is still an important role in post-process pedagogy, though certainly a reimagined one, for the analysis of "discourse communities," activity systems, and their conventions. I should be clear, though, that the conception of "discourse community" and conventions that I'm referring to is not that of the "secret language," social norms, or ways of knowing that govern, or unlock membership to, a particular community's dialogic practices. Rather, like Heard (2008), I hold that we ought to "emphasize conventions and strategies as active, living prior theories gathered from real interactions between writers and audiences" (p. 295). Or, as Kent (1989) pointed out, "What we share with our neighbors within a discourse community… is a shared interpretive theory that helps us begin to guess about the interpretation others might give our discourse" (p. 26). A "discourse community" is simply a group of people who have tested and retested their shared beliefs about each other's hermeneutic strategies and the objects and environments they encounter. In this light, the analysis of context and conventions is just one more avenue for adjusting our prior theories in ways that make our passing hermeneutic strategies more effective. Kent (1989) further elucidates this idea for us when he wrote, "social conditioning, the sharing of certain common practices,

helps narrow the split by supplying a heuristic starting place for interpretation… we possess crutches like social conventions to help us in our hermeneutic guessing" (pp. 28, 30). However, these language conventions that members of a "discourse community" share do not "enable them to produce discourse" (Kent, 1989, p. 26). Yet, while these conventions cannot be counted on to accurately or consistently predict others' language codes, their analysis is essential insofar as it can be used to reflect the differences and commonalities of these contextual landscapes with our own prior theories and can provide clues as to how we might shift our passing theories in moments of communication.

Some may criticize this maneuver of emphasizing situational context and discourse conventions within post-process theory as nothing more than a semantic repackaging of systemic discourse community theory—a charge I hope to disprove. Heard and Sánchez both contend, the divide between process and post-process pedagogies is greatly exaggerated. Heard (2008) asserted, "postprocess values—when carefully mapped onto more familiar pedagogical strategies… can be practically instituted in ways that build toward a promising and workable future for writing instruction" (pp. 283-284). Similarly, Sánchez (2011) has argued that the differences "between what Janet Emig and Thomas Kent described [are] more of degree than of kind" (p. 188). It is only natural, then, that the contexts in which writing occurs should play a significant role in *any* postmodern pedagogy, regardless of its underlying paradigm. As Lucille McCarthy (1987) wrote in advocating for Writing Across the Curriculum, "Because all writing is context-dependent, and because successful writing

requires the accurate assessment of and adaptation to the demands of particular writing situations, perhaps writing teachers should be explicitly training students in this assessment process" (p. 262). The repurposed role I envision for discourse conventions, as material from which to help expand and analyze our prior theories, demonstrates that such explicit teaching of contextual assessment is not only consistent with post-process theory, but is the final component that makes post-process pedagogy work.

Strategy Overview

Despite the paralogical nature of discourse it cannot be denied that communities of practice, such as business organizations, have a set of discursive expectations and practices that cannot be ignored by interlocutors who wish to communicate with, or as part of, that community's members. As Couture (2011) noted, "Postprocess theorists do acknowledge that we have a set of linguistic expectations… the requirements of certain social and work situations, and so forth" (p. 26). Understanding these contexts and conventions is a necessary part of the background information needed to formulate an effective passing theory and should, therefore, be part of any post-process pedagogy. Spinuzzi (2013) explained the need for localized knowledge when he wrote, "In a real sense, without accounting for context, we can't really understand how texts work or evaluate how well they're designed" (p. 265). Upon entering a new workplace, students must be able to identify and adapt to the organization's discursive practices as quickly and adeptly as possible in order to productively contribute to the conversations and meaning-making that constitute and drive the organization. The most salient and comprehensive lens through which to view the relationship between organizational

contexts and their members' communicative habits is activity theory. Activity theory holds that a community's (such as a workplace's) objectives, its members' roles and identities within the community, and the tools (such as writing) that they use to achieve those objectives are socially constructed and cannot be understood except in relation to one another (Engeström, 2001; Russell, 1997; Spinuzzi, 1996). As a result, activity theory provides three interrelated areas of analysis that can greatly benefit students in their ability to read the contexts of discursive workplace engagements.

Without recounting activity theory in its entirety, presenting a brief overview of its relevance to our current discussion is helpful. Much as with Davidsonian epistemology and post-process theory, activity theory eliminates "the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure" presenting an analytical framework in which "[t]he individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts" (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). In terms of discourse, "activity theory traces cognition and behavior, including writing, to social interaction… The object of analysis is neither texts nor minds nor conceptual schemes per se but what is in between—the social intercourse" (Russell, 1997, 509). Once again, the philosophical alignment between activity theory and post-process theory is clearly evident. Where the two theories (unnecessarily) diverge, and what I propose is fertile ground for post-process pedagogy, is the explicit analysis and teaching of discursive contexts. As Spinuzzi (1996) noted, "[A] genre that has evolved in a particular [activity network]… will differ significantly from a similar genre in another [activity network]…" (p. 299). It is the

context of a particular community of practice that concurrently shapes and reveals the members' shared values and, thereby, which discourses they deem appropriate or effective. This is not to say that discourse conventions override instance-by-instance hermeneutic triangulation, but rather that they might provide a measure of insight into the beliefs that inform an interlocutor's prior theories. As David Russell (1997) suggested, "many collectives (such as disciplines, professions, governments, industries, and educational institutions) have long-term objectives and motives beyond conversation, which condition—but do not determine—participants' actions (including writing) in powerful ways" (p. 507). Having knowledge of these discursive influences that extend beyond the immediate exigencies of a particular communication or the lone concerns of one's interlocutor(s) can increase the likelihood for an effective exchange; hermeneutic strategies cannot be wholly formed without considering all of the elements—subjects, tools, and object(ive)s—that constitute organizational activity and that affect interlocutors' interpretive strategies.

As educators committed to a post-process interpretation of language, we can teach our students a set of strategies that address all three components of an activity system— the holistic organization, the tools that mediate the organization's discourse, and the role of individual members' communication histories and preferences—thereby greatly benefiting their ability to read the contexts of discursive workplace engagements in order to assist in their hermeneutic triangulation with members of those communities. As Pris Rogers argued at the Association for Business Communication's 2005 annual meeting, "we need frameworks that enable practitioners to see more clearly the organizational

communication situations in which they are embedded… and to analyze those situations more effectively." (as cited in Suchan & Charles, 2006, p. 394). The strategies I propose for enhancing students' contextual literacy build upon the theories of Jim Henry (2000, 2013), Spinuzzi (2013), and Smart and Brown (2008), all of whom view workplace organizations (including their discourse) through the lens of activity theory, who hold that one cannot learn to communicate in an organization without being present and participating in that community, and who consider various incarnations of ethnography as the most effective methodology for researching workplace "discourse cultures." This, then, will serve as the general framework for my proposal of strategies that enable students to read discursive contexts of their future workplaces—a first-hand, ethnographic analysis of an activity system with an eye toward informing one's prior and passing hermeneutic theories.

Ethnography. It is no small feat for newcomers to a professional organization to make sense of, and to adapt to, their workplace's unique discursive values, relationships, and processes; learning to understand, let alone master, the contextual variables and hermeneutic strategies that effect communication within a community of practice can be an overwhelming task. Smart and Brown (2008) accurately observed that, "developing the ability to write proficiently can be a difficult challenge, one that involves learning to participate competently in multiple facets of organizational activity" (p. 241). The value, to a new employee, of conducting a workplace ethnography should be obvious. As Henry (2013) noted, "those who can analyze their environment effectively and insightfully are most likely the ones who will become the fittest to and for that culture" (p. 93). When

students enter a workplace they must start, virtually at square one, learning how to communicate productively with (and as) members of that community. Of course it is the case that these students have written useful documents, with varying degrees of success (and often using genres similar to those of their workplaces), before starting their careers. However, both the paralogical nature of writing and the localized contexts that inform the hermeneutic strategies of members within a particular "discourse community" require that student newcomers make significant adjustments to their discursive strategies in order to accommodate these new circumstances. It is necessary, in order to develop discursive acuity within a particular workplace, to study the cultural activity of that community and, since discourse produces and reproduces culture, studying a community means studying its discursive formation. As Petraglia (1991) described, "genres, audiences, and writers themselves are socially and culturally constructed and… the ways in which writing gets produced are characterized by an almost impenetrable web of cultural practices, social interactions, power differentials, and discursive conventions…" (pp. 53-54). I, and many other scholars (see Blakeslee, 2001, p. 170), hold that the best way to untangle this web is to do so from within, as both a member of the workplace community and as a researcher using ethnographic techniques to study and make sense of the workplace's activity.

Likening ethnographies to archeological digs, Henry (2000) held that piecing together the shards of a workplace's discursive artifacts is an effective way to analyze the link between a culture and its writing. He explained that such an examination allows us to "begin mapping at the very least some recurrent dynamics between individual writers and

organizations, dynamics of collective procedures and writing, and writers' practices with respect to organizational goals" (Henry, 2000, p. 72). In mapping the relations between localized contexts and their affects on writing, not only can members of a workplace community better understand the values, roles, conventions, and history of their organization, but as writers they can use this knowledge to contribute productively to the organization's objectives and to continually shape and give life to their workplace's culture in a deliberate manner. Moreover, conducting an ethnography while a member of a community allows an individual to be more than a detached cultural observer, it enables the individual, through participation in the community's discursive activities, to affect the culture and to hone his or her hermeneutic triangulation which may result in the ability to communicate more successfully with interlocutors from that community.

Henry, Spinuzzi, and Smart and Brown have made it clear that we, as teachers of professional writing, can help students with the goal of becoming "reflective practitioner[s]… able to construct and apply localized theories in the course of professional practice" (Smart & Brown, 2008, p. 245). Yet, as complex and intertwined as a "discourse community's" contextual elements may be, Spinuzzi (2013) aptly pointed out that, "we can't study *everything*" (p. 263); instead, "We must narrow the range of things we examine—the range of data we collect" (Spinuzzi, 2013, p. 265). The methods for conducting ethnographic research at professional organizations are well established: observations, interviews, electronic systems monitoring, field-notes, shadowing workplace professionals, examining previous documents, cataloging kinds of writing and organizational products, identifying cultural practices, etc. (Henry, 2000, 2013; Smart &

Brown, 2008; Spinuzzi, 2013). Differences, however, occur in the foci that direct

ethnographic inquiry. It is here, the manner in which Henry (2000) and Spinuzzi (2013)

have chosen to "narrow the range" of their respective texts, that our visions of what is

needed in the classroom diverge in significant ways. Even Smart and Brown (2008), with

whom my proposal regarding the study of workplace discursive contexts is most closely

aligned, do not fully capture what I believe to be the assessment needs of entrants to the

contemporary workplace.

Henry (2000) detailed the autoethnographies of eighty-four, relatively experienced,

professional writers conducted over a seven-year period. Most of his subjects had jobs

specifically as "writers"—technical writers, newsletter writers/editors, webmasters,

researchers, etc.—within their organizations, rather than those who simply count writing

as one of the many activities necessary to perform their jobs. As a result, one of Henry's

primary concerns is with examining how the writer's role can be elevated in importance

within workplace power hierarchies. Moreover, pedagogically, Henry's (2000) practical

expectations are simply that, "[w]orkplace writers and students [will be able to] discern

ways to elaborate their writing practices and broaden their discursive knowledge" (p. xi).

Spinuzzi (2013), on the other hand, dealt with undergraduate student ethnographers

whose connections to the workplaces they were studying were more peripheral.

Accordingly, the focus of his ethnographic project was more purely pedagogical.

Spinuzzi's students followed two teams at the same organization tasked with producing

very similar brochures and proposals. The students observed how differences in

collaboration, writing processes, tools, and meditational strategies created different

outcomes for both teams. Spinuzzi's (2013) aim was for students to explore "how similar people, doing similar work, can be compared to understand certain kinds of similarities and differences in their work" (p. 263); in other words, how differences in context affect discursive performance. There are two areas where I find his approach to be less than ideal. First, Spinuzzi primarily attributes differences in discursive outcomes to differences in actors' discursive processes, suggesting that process is the key to successful writing. Second, the narrow scope of his investigative assignment—identifying specific discursive problems and developing solutions—provides workplace newcomers with only limited insights that might be applied to learning how to write successfully in future professional environments. Smart and Brown (2008) more pertinently intend their student interns' analyses of localized discourse practices to help them develop "the rhetorical awareness… to recognize and respond effectively to the distinctive ways in which written discourse functions within the activity of any particular professional organization" (p. 241). While I share their objective, the ethnographic techniques that they have their students use are likely to prove impractical, inefficient tools for reproducing such efforts under normal employment circumstances at future worksites. Moreover, Smart and Brown's (2008) map of organizational activity, meant as a heuristic aid that might help with such a transference, is little more than a visual depiction of a generically defined activity system.

Joining my criticism of these schemas' somewhat limited utility is the additional problem that, as Rogers pointed out, "[a]lthough businesspeople often learn through example, that process takes too long…" (as cited in Suchan & Charles, 2006, p. 394). The

whole point of business writing courses is to prepare students for workplace discourse in ways that accelerate and make that on-the-job learning process easier. Using these scholars' particular ethnographic models is far too inefficient. New employees simply do not have the luxury of taking the equivalent of a semester's time (and certainly not seven years) to interview, observe, journal, and reflect upon their workplaces' discourse cultures before having to fulfill expectations of productivity. The "gradual process of increasingly competent participation in a community of practice" (Smart & Brown, 2008, p. 245), while an accurate description of one's professional development over time, is often not a practical option for new members who are struggling to find their footing at the start of their careers. Furthermore, though managers typically recognize that they have a role in mentoring new hires as those employees get up to speed, it is widely the case that "managers maintain that their responsibilities do not include teaching writing" (Ledwell-Brown, 2000, pp. 219). Thus, with the expectation that new employees should already possess the writing abilities to hit the ground running, there is extra pressure for these new hires to navigate and to adapt to their workplace discourse practices as quickly as possible.

    Solution. The solution to this dilemma is to narrow students' range of ethnographic inquiry in a way that still allows them to be aware of all areas of an activity system, and the interrelation of those areas, while helping them focus on key elements that will enable them, as newcomers to a workplace, to streamline their analysis and adaptation to the discursive practices of that organization. Doing so requires a "post-process ethnography," one in which there is no separation between organizational culture and activity and the

discursive exchanges of its members, one where newcomers aren't analyzing a fixed or slowly evolving external entity to which they are trying to conform, but where they are learning to understand others' ways of knowing, creating, and constantly recreating the organization in temporary, though largely similar, instantiations with each discursive exchange—in other words, an ethnography predicated on learning workplace members' beliefs about the world as evidenced by their hermeneutic strategies. In viewing organizational discourse this way, we remove the mystery and "otherness" of workplace discourse for students. Learning to communicate with members of a particular community of practice is, in functional terms, no different than the way one communicates with everyone else on a daily basis; it is simply a matter of opening oneself to another's perspective on the world and attempting to match hermeneutic strategies.

In order to assist students in cutting through the clutter and to avoid being overwhelmed by the sheer number of variables that affect the formation of a workplace's discourse culture, we need to furnish them with a set of simple, portable heuristics that allow them to perform a rapid ethnographic analysis of any workplace in which they find themselves—something akin to triage assessment, quickly prioritizing the most critical contextual factors. The first mechanism that can aid students in making sense of new workplace discourse environments is to develop an organized, accessible model for the ethnographic analysis of a workplace that divides the activity network into three categories: the collective organization (its culture, objectives, history), its tools (with an

emphasis on writing), and its individual members (their identities, roles, relationships, and hermeneutic strategies). Table 5 depicts this analytical model.

Table 5

Activity System Analysis	Organization	Tools	Subjects
	Culture, Objectives, History, Environment	*Writing and its Production*	*Identities, Roles, Relationships*
Ethnography **Observation** **Inquiry** **Artifacts**	Objectives Ideology/Values (Un)Official Structure Current Culture Desired Culture Subcultures History Industry Clients/Partners	Mediums Processes Products Genres Exigencies Effects Conventions Variations Materials	Titles Identity Construction Agency Relationships Personality Division of Labor Project Involvement Discursive Proclivities

This activity system analysis model is a practical reference tool that can offer some level of clarity to students who are trying to assess their workplace discourse environments; it provides them with a map of the key elements that affect workplace activity and organizes these elements within the three categories that comprise an activity system. In this way, students are better able to focus their attention on each of these categories individually without losing sight of their intersections. The analysis of these components should prove useful to employees in different scenarios and at different points throughout their careers. However, with an eye toward educating students who are, or are about to be, at the onset of their professional lives, even this model is likely to prove too broad and too inclusive to be helpful to many. As this is the case, two additional heuristic aids are needed. The first assists students in focusing their ethnographic inquiries on what is most essential to producing writing that will be valued

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in their workplaces. The second goes beyond helping students simply identify the factors that make up an activity system, it guides them in learning how to "read" the way that these factors function in their particular workplaces.

For newcomers attempting to decipher a workplace discourse environment it is best to begin with what is most fundamental and to then work outward as needed. In this regard, there are lessons to be learned from the field of anthropology, which, over the last two decades, has begun to embrace the use of "rapid ethnography" (Handwerker, 2001; Millen, 2000; Pink & Morgan, 2013). These accelerated ethnographic studies are "…intended to provide a reasonable understanding of users and their activities given significant time pressures and limited time in the field" (Millen, 2000, p. 280). In order to achieve meaningful insights within an abbreviated timetable, one of the "core elements" of conducting a rapid ethnography is "limiting or constraining [one's] research focus and scope" (Millen, 2000, p. 280). W. Penn Handwerker (2001), for example, recommends "Identify[ing] no more than five focus variables that embody the essentials of your research goals" (p. 26). Such ethnographic methodologies not only provide guidance in limiting research to only what is most culturally important, but they also align with the need of new employees to make informed assessments of their work environments as quickly as possible.

Within the realm of professional writing, many scholars who use student-led ethnographic analyses in their courses recognize the value of limiting the scope of these inquiries, rather than having students try to absorb and master every aspect of their workplaces' activity system at once. As noted earlier, Spinuzzi (2013) accomplishes this

simplification by structuring his students' inquiries so that they focus primarily on comparing the differences in how employees accomplish similar writing tasks. One of the tactics used by Smart and Brown (2008) is to ask their student interns to "focus on a particular written genre" (p. 252) in their worksites. While both of these tacks succeed in steering students' undertakings toward more manageable goals, I question how applicable these schemes or the insights they produce will be to students' future, on-the-fly cultural investigations once they are engaged in their eventual careers. Instead, I hold that the method of circumscribing students' workplace analyses should get at the heart of the contextual considerations that engender effective workplace discourse.

At its core, the most basic requirement for successful business writing is having a clear understanding of the needs and values of one's immediate discursive partners in relation to the organization's objectives. As a longtime employee at ACS CAN reflected, "I think the biggest, number one thing, as far as our organization is concerned, is tying [written communications] to our mission" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). This formulation accounts for both the passing hermeneutic interaction and the localized history and ambitions that form the parameters of what a particular community judges to be useful. Although the factors needing analysis in order to come to such an understanding may change from situation to situation, they will most commonly include the following elements from each of the three columns of the activity system analysis table: 1) From the "Organization" column, the organization's objectives and its current culture; 2) From the "Tools" column, the specific document's purpose (its exigencies and its desired effects), communication processes, and the genre best suited to the situation;

and, 3) From the "Subjects" column, the identities, roles, and relationships of everyone who should be included in the discursive exchange (both in contributing to its creation and to whom it should be distributed), as well as their discursive proclivities. Positioning these elements as the focal points for students' attention is how I propose to delimit their ethnographic workplace training; doing so not only mitigates the volume of information that they must consider, but learning to identify and analyze these components can be equally useful and similarly implemented in multiple discursive scenarios throughout their careers.

Pointing out which elements of an activity system students should pay the closest attention to only gets them part of the way toward "contextual literacy." In addition, we need to teach them how to study and to analyze these foundational elements without the intrusive, protracted process of a traditional ethnography, all while engaged in the work they were hired to perform. Again, using the tripartite divisions of an activity system, I will lay out methods that students can use to gather information and to adjust their discursive strategies in order to meet their needs as members of a community of practice.

Organization. Uncovering an organization's culture and objectives are, perhaps, the most straightforward tasks a student ethnographer faces; it is simply a matter of guiding them where (and how) to look. An organization's image is often purposefully crafted and projected so that outsiders and stakeholders alike are not only aware of the organization's products, but of its reputation and of its work environment (Kowalczyk & Pawlish, 2002, p. 159). The clues are readily available, embodied in mission statements, catch phrases, slogans, and mottos, all of which "act as carriers of ideologies and institutional cultures"

(Swales & Rogers, 1995, p. 225). Furthermore, within the workplace, this branding "tend[s] to occur and recur in visual form on desks and doors" (Swales & Rogers, 1995, p. 225). In fact, it is likely the case that students and prospective employees are, at least partially, aware of an organization's culture and objectives even before engaging as members of its community. As Daniel Cable and Kang Yang Trevor Yu (2006) noted, research indicates "that people's beliefs about organizational image are formed quite early, prior to any recruitment processes" and that "organizational images begin to presocialize job seekers in terms of what to expect from the company and what would be expected of them if they joined the company as employees" (p. 828). This being the case, organizational culture—at least that which the organization actively promotes—should be apparent to new and even prospective employees.

A level of critical analysis is, however, required in order to compare the reality on the ground with the image that individuals perceive the organization is projecting. Additional factors to be considered include the dynamic nature of cultures and objectives, the alternative, though often complimentary objectives of subcultures, that must also be learned and accounted for. In order to help students perform such an analysis, we can utilize the principles of the Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI), described in greater detail in chapter four. By way of a brief review, the instrument examines six key dimensions of organizational culture: 1) dominant characteristics, 2) organizational leadership, 3) management of employees, 4) organizational glue, 5) strategic emphases, and 6) criteria for success (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Respondents are asked to use an ipsative scoring scale for each of these dimensions and the results are

plotted along a spectrum of four competing organizational cultural orientations: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). While it is impractical for students or new employees to conduct a formal survey of their colleagues in order to determine the prevailing and desired organizational cultures, they can perform an abridged version of this inquiry.

Casual conversations with fellow employees along with observations of a workplace's physical layout, organizational charts, and operational/meeting formats can yield a wealth of information about an organization's values and culture—whether it is run more like a machine or has a family feel; if it relies on a hierarchical, silo structure or is more collaborative and open. Annelies van Vianen (2000) noted that, "For newcomers, perceptions of immediate peers and supervisors are most relevant for their own perceptions of organizational culture" (p. 120). However, Millen (2000) found that a more efficient method for getting a sense of organizational culture is to identify a handful of "key informants" (p. 280), "people with access to a broad range of people and activities" (p. 282). He noted that such "Guides should be able to reduce observation time by helping the researchers know where (and when) to look" (Millen, 2000, p. 282). This advice is confirmed by the anecdotal evidence provided by my interview with a new employee at ACS CAN: "There's [sic] a group of people that have lunch every day, and I try to have lunch with them at least once a week to find out what's going on, because there's a lot of history, and people have been with the organization a long time. And that's the easiest way to find it" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). These key informants, having their fingers on the pulse of a wide swath of the

community, can condense the assessment of the organization's culture by providing an overview of its members' values and perceptions.

With regard to identifying and understanding the various subcultures that exist within a business organization, Henry (2000) suggested "taking stock of how a unit seem[s] to hold norms and values divergent from those encountered in other units, prompting closer inspection of these norms and values" (pp. 81-82). An effective means for expeditiously discovering these subcultures' divergent values is by connecting with employees who are "outliers" of the organization. Millen (2000) asserted that, "While insiders are often no longer cognizant of their personal or group behavior the liminal informant remains aware of interesting patterns or unusual events…. " (p. 282). Finding key and liminal informants to act as guides can greatly enhance a newcomer's ability to quickly and unobtrusively gather the information necessary to determine where in the competing values framework an organization's dominant culture and subcultures reside. The importance of such an understanding is, as Henry (2000) remarked, that "Writing to meet one's goals may mean monitoring one's socialization into such subcultures as they shape writing practices" (p. 84). While not comprehensive, these methods can help novice employees to orient themselves and become well enough acquainted with their workplace cultures so that they can be productive communicators while continuing to develop deeper, more nuanced understandings over time. This is not to say, however, that communication within a community is dependent upon a foundational structure or language conventions. Ultimately, organizational culture is socially constructed and is continuously altered by a group's shared experiences, assumptions, and beliefs

(Alvesson, 2002; Kropp, 1991; Schein, 1987). That is, organizational culture is formed by its members' collectively negotiated ways of seeing the world, which as Kent (1989) described, accounts for the community's "common hermeneutic strategy that enables them to *begin* to produce discourse that they believe will be comprehended by others" (p. 26). Without the context that comes from understanding the culture and subcultures they inhabit, new hires will struggle greatly in matching their hermeneutic guesses with those of their colleagues. Teaching them the strategic shortcuts described here ought to make this task more manageable.

    Tools. In a business writing course the most relevant workplace tool is, obviously, that of writing. Determining the exigence and the desired effects of one's own workplace writing tasks is a relatively straightforward prospect. From an epistemological sense all writing is language-in-use and derives, not from some *a priori* idea that we are compelled to express, but in response "to what has come before us and what is being said and done around us" (Dasenbrock, 1993, p. 29). This is certainly the case in the business world where writing is largely transactional and is specifically assigned, is part of one's routine duties, or is a reply to, a commentary on, or a request for, another person's discourse. The exigence, therefore, is usually explicitly spelled out for employees, as are the desired effects. If they are not, however, the recommendation of a senior ACS CAN employee—"Don't be afraid to ask questions" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015)—is good advice. As Plouffe and Grégoire (2011) pointed out, in order for employees to navigate their organization's practices, it is often necessary to "actively seek information and/or other needed inputs that help them perform their jobs or achieve

other valued objectives" (p. 699). A straightforward inquiry about these matters can often quickly clarify any uncertainty.

A second component that makes writing unique to a particular workplace is its production process. This does not refer to the "invention," transcription, and revision process that post-process theory rejects, but rather to the commonly held beliefs that members of an organization have regarding how their community of practice shares information. It answers questions like those posed by ACS CAN employees, such as, "Who should I be including on this email? This is happening, do I have to tell anybody" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015)? To learn these discursive values, newcomers need to both observe the communication patterns of others and to understand the beliefs underlying those practices. A number of heuristics have been developed by professional writing scholars to focus these newcomers' attention. One example comes from Spinuzzi (2013) who, regarding communication processes, events, and technologies, asked, "What kinds of information do people hand off, to whom, in what sequence? What differences exist in how people enact the same sort of communication?" (p. 266). In addition to these questions, others recommend identifying document types and the roles of people who regularly produce them, the mediums used, the review processes, and how are these documents are used to accomplish work (Henry, 2000, 2013; McComiskey, 2000; Smart & Brown, 2008). Drawing students' attention to these issues is extremely valuable, though they do not address the deeper need to understand organizational members' shared beliefs that engender these communication practices. For this, I draw on a study of applied psychology regarding metacognitive interventions that

found using "generic question stems that required [participants] to fill in the blanks…

[resulted] in greater comprehension, strategy use, and knowledge structure" (Schmidt &

Ford, 2003, p. 409). Regarding discursive production processes, encouraging students to

use generic questions stems such as, "how do <u>organizational roles</u> affect <u>the chain of</u>

<u>distribution</u>?" or "what does <u>the review process</u> reveal about <u>how collaboration is</u>

<u>valued</u>?" can serve as a window into the shared beliefs that give rise to the procedures

they observe.

    Often more difficult for new members of a workplace community to determine is

how to craft their writing so that it addresses their interlocutors' expectations and achieves

its transactional purpose and desired effects. For this, new employees must learn to "speak

the language" of their community, meaning that they must engage with the genres that have

historically developed there in order to facilitate the community's activity. The

contemporary view of genres is that they "are not merely texts that share some formal

features; they are shared expectations among some group(s) of people… [that] in certain

typified—typical, reoccurring [sic]—conditions, may be used to help participants act

together purposefully" (Russell, 1997, 513). In terms of workplace writing, genre is

understood as "a broad rhetorical strategy encompassing texts, composing processes,

reading practices, and social interactions… that allows a professional organization to

regularize writer/ reader transactions in ways that ensure (or at least encourage) the

reliable, consistent construction of the specialized knowledge that the group needs to do its

work" (Smart & Brown, 2008, p. 248).

From a post-process perspective, following in the Bakhtinian tradition, Kent defines genre as the basic unit of communication; genres, not words or sentences, are how communication occurs (Kent, 1993, p. 126). A genre represents the momentary concretization of an interlocutor's passing theory; it encapsulates all of his or her hermeneutic calculations about how to respond to an ongoing exigent dialogue in a way that will engender the continuation of that dialogue. Furthermore, according to Kent, "The genre represents the utterance's social baggage in the sense that the utterance must take on a determinate and public form that communicants can identify" (p. 138). In other words, use of a genre anticipates how one's interlocutors will receive the communication; it represents the hermeneutic calculations made by the writer about his or her audience's interpretive strategies and is customized for that particular rhetorical situation.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed Kent's position, along with its accompanying problems, that the foundation of the post-process mentorship between instructor and student is the cooperative manipulation of genre. Since, as I argued, an instructor will typically have limited access to the culture that generates whatever genres a student/employee may encounter, there is little pragmatic insight that the instructor can provide to the student about developing genres with which to respond. Instead, what teachers of business writing can offer are heuristic prompts that help students to analyze their workplace's genres, either while reading another's writing or formulating one's own written response. Kent (1993) asserted, "In order to respond to the other by employing an appropriate genre, we must consider in a holistic way… all the linguistic, contextual, and political decisions that constitute the communicative situation" (p. 166). This position is

similar to Bazerman's (1988) concept that a genre is understood through analysis of its four typified features: textual characteristics, social relations, production processes, and readers' interpretations. This idea of genre has spawned a number of heuristic models for analyzing a workplace's genres. Two of these, Anthony Paré and Graham Smart (1994) and Brent Henze (2013) have informed my own heuristic prompts for assessing workplace genres. The former frames the study of genres as identifying regularities in textual features, social roles, composing processes, and reading practices (pp. 249-258) while the latter proposes questions focusing on the genre's purpose, the relationships embodied in the genre, and the genre's textual characteristics (pp. 350-352).

The five questions I have devised in order to aid students/new employees in better understanding their workplace's genres are not dissimilar to those of Paré and Smart's or of Henze's; however, there is a fundamental difference between them. Because genre is the concretization of a passing theory, what it represents is "the theory [the writer] *intends* the interpreter to use" which is calculated using "what he *believes* the interpreter's prior theory to be" (Davidson, 2006, pp. 260-261). From a post-process prospective, then, the insights that are derived from these heuristic prompts are not intended to enlighten us about some object we call a "discourse community" where discursive norms allow its members to communicate more effectively; instead, they are intended to inform us about our interlocutor's hermeneutic strategies and the beliefs about our shared environment that he or she anticipates we hold in common. The aim, therefore, is to understand how the genres our interlocutors use can enhance our prior theories in a way that leads to more successful future hermeneutic guesses with those

same interlocutors. Toward this end, the heuristic prompts I propose are: 1) What are the textual features that identify the genre?; 2) What is the exigence of the genre and what does it accomplish?; 3) How does the genre accomplish what it does?; 4) What socio-historical elements inform the prior theories of the community's members that results in their using this particular genre (i.e. what shared values, beliefs, roles, and relationships are embodied in the genre)?; and, 5) What passing theories are concretized in this genre?

By way of illustration, let us borrow Russell's (1997) example, and look at one of the simpler genres, the grocery list:

1) The textual features that identify the genre are its format as a list and that each item typically consists of a brief identification of the product to be purchased (as opposed to full sentences or descriptive paragraphs).

2) The exigence of the genre is the regular, ongoing need to buy particular items of food or other groceries in order to meet the biological and cultural functions of the members in a household activity system. What the genre accomplishes is to enable an efficient shopping experience and to avoid forgetting to purchase needed items.

3) The genre accomplishes this objective by presenting the needed items in an organized, easily referenced format that allows the shopper to recognize what needs to be purchased and to know where in the gathering process he or she is. The content of the list changes based on one's situational needs or appetites, but the format of the list remains largely the same.

4) I will turn to my own household in order to describe the socio-historical factors that inform my prior theory and have given rise to my particular grocery list genre.

Originally, I began using a grocery list because I saw my mother use one when I was a child. Moreover, I have found list-making useful for other types of activities and understood conceptually that this utility would transfer to the purposes of grocery shopping. The roles of "shopper" and "list maker" are informed by my quadriplegic status and need assistance to do my grocery shopping. As such, every week I type out a list of items that I need and email it to my attendant's phone so that she can reference the list while going through the store. I choose this medium, rather than a paper list, because my attendant is in the habit of always having her phone with her, and I anticipate that it is less likely she will forget the grocery list this way. Because my attendant and I have an ongoing relationship and because grocery shopping and list-making are recurring activities for us, I believe we both recognize the genre these activities engender. At the same time, our version of the "grocery list" genre assumes certain shared knowledge, values, and beliefs that might leave another interlocutor confused. Nowhere on the list do I mention which grocery store she should go to, nor do I identify which brand of yogurt, coffee, or "that spicy Vietnamese sauce" that I want her to buy. I believe that she is aware of my expectations from our previous, routinized interactions and will interpret the list as I've intended her to. Similarly, when I include apples, spinach, or strawberries on the list, I do not need to specify that she should select fresh, unspoiled produce because in our experiences together we have come to share similar values about the quality of food that is preferable to eat.

5) When I create my weekly grocery list I am making a set of hermeneutic calculations about the way that my attendant, the reader, will interpret my written discourse. Kent (1999) pointed out that our hermeneutic guesses are far from blind; "we cannot start from nowhere when we write; everyone starts writing from somewhere…" (p. 2). My calculations are based on my prior theories which, in turn, are based on my attendant's and my shared values, beliefs, experiences, and discursive history as part of the same activity system. I am guessing that she will recognize the "grocery list" genre and that from that recognition she will understand that the communication's objective is to have her purchase the items on that list; I am guessing that she is familiar with the contents of the list; I am guessing that I have provided neither too much nor too little information and detail; I am guessing that she interprets our relationship and roles in the same way that I do; and I am guessing that I've balanced considerations of our prior discursive interactions with the uniqueness of this individual moment of hermeneutic passing. All of these guesses and calculations become crystallized in the writing of that grocery list, but none of it guarantees a successful discursive exchange.

Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart Selber (2013) pointed out that, "merely following these steps does not guarantee a definitive [understanding of a genre]. Rather, the heuristic provides an initial framework for how to approach the problem space" (p. 5). In answering these questions, new members of a workplace community are required to think about the discursive genres they encounter in ways that link those documents to the holistic activity of the organization. They must attempt to understand the

communication's objectives, the shared beliefs about cultural contexts, the roles and relationships of the communicants, and the socio-historical interactions that inform their interpretive strategies and give rise to these routinized genre forms. This exercise will help the novice identify what knowledge he or she possesses in order to respond to the document as well as any gaps in information that exist for lack of experience. Simply recognizing the genre should provide clues to many of these answers. As Kent (1993) noted, "When we establish the genre in which a text participates, we learn something about the hermeneutic strategy we must employ to interpret that text" (p. 142). For instance, identifying a list as a list allows one to infer, from prior exposure to similar genres, that the items appearing therein are things that need to be addressed or accomplished in some way. However, as with my grocery list, a new interlocutor would need to ask for further information in order to flesh out cultural practices and shared beliefs that would inform him or her about which grocery store to visit, which brand of items to buy, and how to determine which pieces of produce he or she should pick.

Of course, over time, a new employee's reserve of background information and prior theories will continue to grow and to adjust according to the routines and cultural insights that he or she gains with repeated interactions in the activity system. As Eraut (2004) pointed out, "People are able to make [rapid] decisions because they recognize the situation quickly and 'know what to do' as a result of their prior experience… rather than explicit use of codifed knowledge" (p. 262). Thus, with continued engagement, the new employee's ability to identify a workplace's genres (and all that they entail) will improve, and his or her hermeneutic strategies will likely prove increasingly successful when

communicating with other members of the activity system. However, during the initial

phase of employment, when one is still trying to make sense of a workplace's

communication practices, possessing a means of mapping the discursive landscape, in the

form of these five heuristic prompts, can be of significant advantage; one that as teachers

of business writing we should certainly impart to our students.

Subjects. One of the most complex set of variables that a novice employee must

grapple with when trying to analyze a new workplace environment is that` of the roles,

relationships, and discursive proclivities of his or her colleagues. As one ACS CAN

interviewee noted, "So that kind of stuff, that's more important to know, the

relationships, that if I don't include somebody on an email there's going to be

consequences because they'll complain" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June

1, 2015). The importance of social awareness, the ability to assess coworkers'

communication personalities, and being able to establish constructive workplace

relationships cannot be overstated. As Ferris et al. (2005) asserted, "although

performance, effectiveness, and career success are determined in part by intelligence and

hard work, other factors such as social astuteness, positioning, and savvy also play

important roles" (p. 127). This view is echoed by another ACS CAN employee who

stated, "When [you are] a new hire… you need people to want to work with you, and if

they don't want to work with you, then you're not going to succeed" (Anonymous 3,

personal communication, May 13, 2015). Knowing who will feel snubbed if they are left

out of a communication, who can cut through red tape, who is open to giving advice,

who is on the outs with whom, who is a stickler for the rules, who likes lots of detail, who

prefers to "catch up" before getting down to business, etc. can be the difference between fitting in as a productive, valued member of a workplace community or being on the outside, looking in.

While formal titles, organizational charts, and one's immediate and second level supervisors are easy to identify, the reality is that the social relations, the ways of getting things done, and the mix of personalities within a workplace are rarely defined by these formal structures. Organizational psychology and management scholars describe the ability to assess and to maneuver through a workplace's social currents as "social intelligence" or "social astuteness" (Ferris et al., 2005; Parales-Quenza, 2006). As Ferris et al., (2005) explained, "people high in social astuteness have an accurate understanding of social situations as well as the interpersonal interactions that take place in these settings" (p. 129). According to these experts, the qualities that one most needs in order to be socially astute are awareness and empathy. Parales-Quenza (2006) explained, "Both empathy and anticipatory planning are components of social intelligence… the ability to relate to others, which implies the construction of understandings about others' beliefs, feelings and behaviors" (pp. 42-43). Pfeffer (1992) similarly noted that such individuals possess "sensitivity to others" (as cited in Ferris et al., 2005, p. 129). Such descriptions echo those of scholars in the business writing discipline. Smart and Brown (2008), for example, wrote, "We also encouraged the interns to 'read' situations, events, and behaviours in their worksites from multiple perspectives—their own, a co-worker's, a supervisor's, a client's…" (p. 252). More significantly, this notion that empathy is necessary in order to successfully function in a workplace organization recalls

Davidson's theory of dialogic charity—that rhetorical persuasion isn't a unidirectional effort to convince others to see things as we do, but is a matter of developing our receptivity in order to understand others' positions so that we can better come to a shared vision of what it true. In fact, Parales-Quenza's (2006) insight into social acuity sounds much like a post-process description of discourse: "As long as astuteness and trust require the existence of shared codes and social representations to allow the understanding of communicative contexts, behavioral analysis becomes a hermeneutic task; the understanding of the context of action is basically an act of sense making" (pp. 44-45).

Being open, aware, and empathetic to one's coworkers sounds like a simple enough task, but what exactly does it entail? How does a newcomer to a workplace develop the social intelligence and social astuteness needed to accurately understand the roles, relationships, and communication personalities of the members who populate his or her new community? Teaching students how to perform psychological analyses of their coworkers and of interpersonal dynamics is beyond the scope of this project and that of the business writing discipline. However, anyone who holds an epistemological view that rejects objective truth—be it postmodern, social constructionism or Davidsonian externalism—understands that individuals' identities and the communities to which they belong are either discursively constructed or are shared ways of interpreting each other and the world through discourse. Thus, if one wants to get a handle on the roles, relationships, and personalities of a community's members, studying their discursive exchanges (both formal and informal, verbal and non-verbal) can be a fruitful method of

doing so. Post-process theory is a particularly useful framework in this regard because it recognizes that all acts of communication are in response to other communicative acts and that all discourse involves an awareness and consideration of one's interlocutors in order to successfully interpret the messages they are sending. These principles serve as built-in guides for helping to assess the roles and identities people cultivate for themselves and the relationships in a community of practice because they, too, are formed discursively. While such guides may not make for a checklist of hard-and-fast rules that define a workplace's social practices, they can help to focus students' attention on what to look for during their transition to a new workplace.

Newcomer's roles. Perhaps the most immediate area in which a new employee must develop astuteness is with regard to his or her organizational role and professional identity. One may hold a particular position at a workplace with prescribed duties, a set salary, and a firm line of supervisory reporting; however, one's organizational role and identity are neither fixed nor wholly dictated from without, rather they are negotiated understandings between individuals. As Henry (2000) noted, "Just as the organization employs writers, so may writers employ the organizational culture, if they are astute in positioning themselves mentally and psychologically with respect to the culture" (p. 74). How a person develops his or her identity as a new community member can have implications for the entire course of his or her tenure at an organization. Henry (2000), who was largely concerned with elevating the importance of the writer's role in the workplace, held that rather than passively reproducing the "relations and ideologies" of an organization's official discourse, it is incumbent upon writers to consider how subject

positions are formed through these discourses and to assert their agency in shaping these roles (p. 129). He explained, "writers who learn the norms governing representation up and down the organization may be more politically astute in manifesting their ideological positions on organizational products and claiming their share of authority in organizational life" (Henry, 2000, p. 56). Importantly, such advice is applicable for all employees whether or not they function specifically in "writing" roles.

The challenge for new employees who are trying to assert their agency—to fashion their identities as valuable, competent, contributing members of their workplace communities—is that they are still learning what those things mean to other members of their organization and they are often butting up against those members' expectations about the roles of newcomers. Such conflicting perspectives are demonstrated by the comments of two ACS CAN employees. One noted, "So they'll come into the society as an intern or a new hire, and they think that their voice weighs as much as someone who's been there for eight years, and that's not really how it goes. You have to earn your voice" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Another similarly cautioned:

> I had an intern that wanted to speak up at every meeting, because he thought that was how he showed he's here in leadership, and I had to pull him aside and be like, "Don't speak up in any meeting. Especially ones with the vice presidents all around the table. Don't do that." I had to clarify why that reflects on our team, but also you're in a learning phase… I personally would coach them to sit back, and watch, and observe. (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015)

At least in this organization, with these two individuals, there appears to be an

expectation that the newcomers' role is to stick to their assigned duties, to learn how things operate, and to respect the authority of those who have been there longer, until such time as they have "earned their voice." Contrarily, it appears that these two new employees perceive that their purpose for being in the organization is to contribute and they are attempting to enact that role by speaking up during meetings.

From a Davidsonian, externalist perspective, these exchanges are demonstrative of the parties' trying to shift hermeneutic strategies to find a common understanding of their roles and relationships. If a successful dialog is to occur, neither individual can impose his or her belief about the world on the other; instead, both must accept the other's position as true and adjust their prior and passing theories until they find the language that, at least temporarily, allows them to understand one another. A third ACS CAN interviewee described the need to be receptive to new perspectives this way: "Don't assume that you're coming in with this degree and you know everything there is to know… always be open, and willing to learn new things, or to hear new lines of thinking, new opinions, new thoughts" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). While we cannot teach students the "correct" role or identity to enact as a new employees, the lesson we can impart to our students is to be aware of the socially situated, interpretive nature of workplace roles and to balance the need to assert their agency with the necessity of being receptive to their counterparts' positions. Only by doing so can they possibly develop and maintain identities that will serve them well no matter what workplace environment they enter.

Relationships. Delving further into workplace social relations, the ability to identify those members of the workplace who are respected and who have influence, as well as knowing where the fault lines of soci-political relationships lie can be essential to advantageously situating oneself within a workplace culture. As an ACS CAN employee advised, "You really have to figure out, what are the dynamics, what are the teams? Who would be a good mentor? Who could coach if you had questions that you didn't want to go to your supervisor with, but someone you trust" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015)? Detecting these social currents will not involve official documents or organizational charts; it will require the ability to decipher meaning from body language, resource allocation, personal behaviors, and even keeping an ear out for office gossip. As another ACS CAN employee described, "There's definitely a favoritism. Like I said, the family part of [ACS CAN], it doesn't apply to everyone. It applies to certain people… I'm not very good at that game. I just want to do a good job" (Anonymous 4, personal communication, April 27, 2015). Helping students to be aware of, and to read, these relationships and social cues can be just as valuable as knowing how to interpret the workplace's formal discourses.

Aside from keeping abreast of news from the grapevine, a useful heuristic instructors can introduce to help students assess a workplace's social order is to direct their attention to their coworkers' body language, i.e., "tak[ing] in the posture, gestures, and facial expressions of the participants" (Keteyian, 2011, pp. 90-91). Ethnographers Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (2011) explained, "The body is not just a physical object; it is a social object… how [people] use them will tell you much

about how they see themselves and their cultures" (p. 273). Several employees at ACS

CAN made similar observations as they noted that "the non-verbals… say almost as

much as the verbals" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015) and that

"there's so much to being in the room and actually reading people…" (Anonymous 10,

personal communication, May 15, 2015). Anecdotal evidence from these ACS CAN

employees suggests that nonverbal communication is one of the most effective tools for

measuring levels of respect in the workplace. One interviewee stated, "You can see

where respect is, if everyone's on their phone while this person is talking—checking

emails, and on their computers—and when someone else is speaking, everyone puts stuff

down, and puts stuff away" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015).

Another employee similarly noted, "there was some sort of e-mail that someone had sent

out that was sort of goofy, and [my boss was] sort of reading it and rolling her eyes, and

so I took note of that definitely, like 'Oh, you're not taking this seriously' (Anonymous 2,

personal communication, April 30, 2015). Finally, another interview subject observed

that "knowing where you stand" involves "getting a sense of whether they're paying

attention or not… see[ing] when people have a look of concern on their face, or

frustration, or if you see a couple people on the team exchanging looks out of the corner

of their eyes, you realize something may be up" (Anonymous 10, personal

communication, May 15, 2015). Organizational psychologists, Ivanov and Werner (2010)

conducted a study that confirms many of these anecdotal observations. They found that

"[c]ommunication styles, whether verbal or not, can be tools for managing self-concept

by impacting others' reactions" (Ivanov & Werner, 2010, p. 19) and that there is

"tentative evidence that behavioral communication may be regarded as a personality trait entailing the tendency to create and manipulate circumstances as a means of communication" (p. 22). Such behaviors then are not trivial, momentary reactions; they can be signals that indicate deep-seated feelings about levels of respect, whether or not someone is taken seriously, who holds power and influence, and can even reveal where allegiances lie.

A second nonverbal language that socially astute employees should be aware of is the allocation of resources and the division of physical space. As Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2011) advised, "consider how the people you study share and possess space. In other words, what do you notice about the proxemics of the culture" (p. 273)? Henry (2013), too, emphasized the analysis of a workplace's "physical layout, the dress code… the smell and feel of the place" (p. 87). Two examples from my interviews with ACS CAN employees demonstrate this point. The first recounts the distribution of parking passes for employees. "So there's apparently a limit to the number of parking passes in our building, which parking is expensive. So they said, only this level and above get it. But people were promoted and didn't get it, and others that were below them did because they liked them… I didn't realize that there was this whole situation happening of favoritism…" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Here, a prized asset was supposed to be part of what delineated the organization's official hierarchy. However, when the stated criteria (job position) failed to govern its distribution, the perception was that unofficial social hierarchies were being revealed. In the second example, a change of office buildings led to a redistribution of space which also had

implications for perceptions of social value. As the interviewee explained, "[Our office], it's set up like a bullpen, and then the offices are around the perimeter. And the people who are in the bullpen are really resentful of people who have offices. Which, I have an office, I didn't know that. So I guess in the [old building] more people… had their own office. So there's a lot of griping about who has an office and who should or shouldn't, that kind of stuff" (Anonymous 6, personal communication, June 1, 2015). Once again, the distribution of physical space is perceived as an indicator of who is more or less valued by the organization.

While reading body language or assessing how resources and perks are allocated may seem instinctive or beyond the realm of a business writing course, this nonverbal communication reflects a workplace's cultural values and can spur students/employees to investigate what behaviors those people who are "in favor" exhibit that makes them so. A self-proclaimed "outsider" at ACS CAN ascribed her social position to being "looked at as kind of the 'negative Nancy' or the naysayer" (Anonymous 11, personal communication, May 19, 2015), while another employee reflected, "There's a lot of perks that seem to be given to the squeakiest of wheels" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). If accurate, at ACS CAN, skepticism will push one to the periphery while people who demand attention are rewarded for being vocal. Of course, different values work differently from organization to organization, but once students/employees have a sense of the social currency at their workplace, they can decide if those values and attributes are ones they want to adopt or ones to push against in hopes of changing the culture. In either case, knowing a workplace's socio-cultural

landscape, recognizing one's position in it, and being aware of ongoing nonverbal communication are essential elements in being able to successfully operate and communicate in a workplace community.

Discursive personalities. The last factor that a new employee should consider regarding an organization's subjects is the analysis of their discursive personalities. In addition to the hermeneutic activity of trying to communicate in a way that will be understood, there is an added layer of assessment needed to determine the discursive "style" to which an interlocutor will be most receptive. I want to be clear that I am distinguishing what I am calling "discursive personality" or "discursive proclivities" from the prior theories and hermeneutic strategies that one uses to make communication possible. The difference is that the former are (largely) consistent communicative style preferences while the latter are a set of calculations that necessarily change with each discursive interaction. Ivanov and Werner's (2010) study "suggest[s] that people are consistent in what they communicate behaviorally, no matter with whom they do so" (p. 22). Consequently, once an interlocutor's communicative proclivities (their discursive behaviors) are identified, one can anticipate that it is likely these behaviors will govern future discursive exchanges.

Many students are aware of, and many business writing courses focus on, the expectations of professionalism and often formality when it comes to workplace writing. However, much (if not most) of the writing that is produced in a business is subject to the non-standardized communication preferences of individual interlocutors. Accommodating these audiences is not simply a matter of following prescriptions about

using a respectful tone or being concise; it requires having a grasp on the communication

personality and discursive proclivities of one's dialogic partner, as well as one's

relationship with them. The examples of two ACS CAN employees highlight the

importance of these factors. The first explained:

> Sometimes in talking about your personal life and your interests and your hobbies,
>
> you learn how someone likes to be communicated with. I would say my direct
>
> manager really values the personal relationship, and she's more willing to help you
>
> when she knows a little bit more about you, and your needs, whereas there are other
>
> people in the office who are more cut to the chase. And it's learning to balance that,
>
> so you really do approach them differently. (Anonymous 4, personal
>
> communication, April 27, 2015)

The other commented, "when I have a new colleague start with me, it's asking their

preference for things. 'Do you like things printed out to review them?' 'Do you like them

e-mailed to you?' It's really… learning their personality, because that will ultimately help

me to better navigate my interaction with them and be able to do my job as effectively as

I can" (Anonymous 1, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Knowing an interlocutor's

communication preferences can be critical to one's job performance and, as such, helping

students learn how to determine a person's discursive personality needs to be addressed

in our classes.

The significance that differences in discursive personalities can play in workplace

communication has not gone unnoticed. A variety of research studies have been

conducted, correlating communication styles with everything from culture, gender, race,

and age, to Myers-Briggs results. In fact, one interview subject recounted that ACS CAN conducted "a really interesting exercise of figuring out your personality types." She continued, "I am a person who likes to come into the office… to ask a work question, but first I want to talk about how you're doing as a person… [My boss] is… where it's like, no, you want to get straight to the work question. So that was actually really helpful to learn people's communications styles" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). Newcomers to a business community, however, will likely not have the luxury of an office-wide study and must figure out these communication styles on their own. In order to do so, they will need to utilize the techniques of empathetic observation and attention to detail proposed by rapid ethnography (Pink & Morgan, 2013, p. 353).

In my communication audit of ACS CAN I found that the techniques employees use to in order to assess their colleague's discursive personalities tend to fall into one of three categories: observation, feedback, and mimesis. Comments from those who find it useful to observe others' communication patterns included, "A lot of it for me is trying to pick up on cues. Depending on who I'm working with, I find sometimes I have to… approach a conversation in a certain way so that people are receptive to it" (Anonymous 7, personal communication, May 13, 2015). Another employee who finds observation helpful said, "My first supervisor has always been more direct… I took cues from her in the way she would write emails to me, or conduct meetings with me" (Anonymous 9, personal communication, May 8, 2015). Finally, another interviewee advised, "Follow what your boss is saying, how your boss is saying it kind of thing, see what's working for him or her, how they prefer you to be communicating, and you'll know how they prefer

to be communicating" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). For these employees, discursive exchanges represent an opportunity to learn how their interlocutors prefer to communicate. They are not simply paying attention to the content of the communication but also to its style, and they are doing so from a position of empathy—considering "how they prefer to be communicating." Of course, this deference to an interlocutor's discursive proclivities tends to be unidirectional from subordinates to superiors, but that isn't exclusively the case. As one ACS CAN employee remarked, "sometimes [my boss] will give me something he's written and asks me to [add my touch] before I send it out, because we want it to be softer and more accessible, and he knows I'm good at that" (Anonymous 2, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

The two other approaches are probably more familiar to business writing students. Listening to feedback and modeling one's discourse after existing artifacts are techniques people learn from their earliest days in school and they are regularly used in workplace settings. One interviewee described his process this way, "People who are reviewing materials that I write… just kind of reviewing those, and reviewing their edits, and just kind of getting a better sense of what the expectations are, and what they're looking for" (Anonymous 5, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Another employee added, "So part of it's instinctive, and part of it's the feedback you're getting. If somebody isn't responding to it, or somebody said something to your boss that suggests you were too playful, and he then tells you, that definitely helps shape [how you communicate] the next time" (Anonymous 3, personal communication, May 13, 2015). In addition to feedback, "examples of prior documents" written by particular interlocutors can be used

as "models for determining how [those individuals] "prefer to communicate"

(Anonymous 10, personal communication, May 15, 2015). Modeling often takes place in

business writing classes, though usually with the goal of mastering organization-wide

genres and writing practices. For example, Smart and Brown (2008) noted of their

students: "Examples of texts and other tools that the interns found useful in this way were

in-house style guides, websites, policy and procedures manuals, memos, minutes of

meetings, web-based document templates… [etc.]" (p. 255). It is rarer, however, to see

models used instructionally, as I am suggesting, in order to highlight individual

interlocutor's communicative proclivities—their relative directness, formality, detail,

wordiness, etc. As Henry (2013) advised, "Treat every document you encounter as data…

that you can study later as part of your cultural analysis" (p. 87). Adapting the modeling

of written artifacts for this purpose, though, provides students with further information

with which to refine their discursive interactions, potentially leading to more successful

outcomes.

As I noted at the start of this section on assessing a workplace's subjects, these

heuristic prompts and strategies do not add up to a list of fixed rules or procedures that

govern organizational members' social practices. Rather, they offer students the tools to

begin mapping their workplaces' interpersonal landscapes and to raise their awareness of

the role that social astuteness plays in effective communication within a business

organization. As newcomers to a workplace community, knowing where to look and how

to analyze what they observe regarding the roles, relationships, and discursive proclivities

of their organization's members should enhance their ability to contribute and communicate more productively during that transitional stage.

Ethnography summation. In review, the ethnographic examination I have proposed functions through the lens of post-process theory. It should be understood that the observations and analyses of a workplace culture do not describe some organization or entity "out there." A workplace activity system exists only in relation to the discursive activity of its subjects; any objectives, histories, genre conventions, identities, relationships, etc. that appear to bond the "community" together exist only due to a series of ongoing hermeneutic triangulations that tentatively reveal the group's cohering beliefs. Participating in a new workplace community means weaving the beliefs that they hold in common "into our own webs of belief" (Kent, 1993, p. 67). An ethnography, then, simply provides us with the ethnographer's interpretation of the beliefs shared by a particular group of people at a particular time, as expressed by the passing theories that comprise the group's ongoing conversations. The hope is that in identifying these cohering beliefs about the world and in experiencing the various interlocutors' hermeneutic strategies, one can refine one's prior theories about these individuals, thereby informing his or her hermeneutic guesses in future dialogues with individual members of the group.

CONCLUSION

At the start of this chapter I laid out my goals for developing a post-process business writing pedagogy: to address the shortcomings of predominant contemporary business writing pedagogies; to consider students' needs in a business environment where turnover, career hopping, and rapidly evolving workplaces require the continual ability to adapt

one's writing and communication strategies; to stay true to, and to implement, all three of post-process theory's principles—that writing is public, interpretive, and situated; and finally, to be practical and adoptable in classrooms throughout American colleges and universities. I believe that the pedagogy I have described in the preceding pages accomplishes all of these objectives. It accounts for the understanding that successful writing isn't about formal features, reified genre models, or formulae for adjusting tone or concision, but about being open to and assessing an interlocutor's beliefs about the world and his or her hermeneutic strategies for expressing those beliefs. Rather than trying to reductively present "business writing" or "business culture" as a virtually universal set of features or values—or, conversely, trying to expose students to one, or pieces of several, individual workplace discourse environment(s)—it focuses students' attention on "reading" the contextual clues of any workplace using "post-process ethnographic techniques," thereby allowing them to identify and assess the shared beliefs and values that engender those workplace's objectives, roles, and activities. Moreover, it presents a teaching philosophy that upholds the tenets of post-process theory in a way that can be readily applied in the classroom; one in which students are given opportunities to engage in public discourses that are situated in activity systems relevant to their careers; one that reimagines the classroom as a collaborative pedagogical community where students are accepted as co-equal members of the writing discipline and where they are equipped with the theories necessary to building a metacognitive awareness of the discourses they encounter; one that prepares students to be astute observers and participants within their workplace environments; and, one in which the main goal is to equip students with the theory,

experience, and collaborative help to be cognizant of others' hermeneutic strategies and to refine their own prior theories so that, potentially, they will be more successful in their hermeneutic triangulations during future discursive exchanges.

I recognize that there will always be differences of opinion and that this pedagogical proposal will have its detractors. In addition to those who will not be moved from the position that to be post-process is to be post-pedagogy, and those who may hold that I have overreached in asserting that ethnographic research into the situated contexts of discourse can be used to inform an individual's prior theories regarding the hermeneutic strategies of his or her interlocutors, there are also likely to be those who are skeptical about the lack of measurable rubrics for determining students' progress or assessing the long term efficacy of such a pedagogy in empowering students to more rapidly and meaningfully participate in the discourses of their new and future workplaces. Looking forward, it is my plan to turn this pedagogy into an actual curriculum in order to test (and likely refine) its ability to help students and new employees face the discursive challenges of their workplace environments. Perhaps future qualitative and/or quantitative research on such a curriculum will be able to sway some of these critics. It is also my hope that this dissertation will inspire other business writing instructors to incorporate or adapt the ideas I have presented here into their own teaching.

On a broader note, it is not my intent, nor do I expect, that this pedagogy will be immediately or universally accepted as *the* solution for teaching contemporary business writing in American colleges. Rather, it is my hope that this dissertation will serve to stir debate and refocus attention and discussion on the viability of post-process pedagogy in

the (business) writing classroom—"bridging the gap" not between the classroom and the workplace (as has been the goal of business writing scholars for so many decades), but between the classroom and disciplinary theory—demonstrating that post-process conceptions of writing and language can be translated into effective classroom practice and that pedagogy is still fertile ground, worthy of the attention of disciplinary research.

Appendix A – Syllabi List

American Military University. English 225. "Business Communication."

Arizona State University. English 302. "Business Writing."

Baruch College. Communication 3150. "Business Communication."

Baylor University. Business 5290. "Management Communication."

Boston College. English 57501. "Corporate Communication."

Brazosport College. POFT 2312 "Business Correspondence and Communication."

Brigham Young University. Management Communication 320. "Writing in
    Organizational Settings."

California State University at Fullerton. Business Administration 201. "Business
    Writing."

Casper College. BOTK 1540. "Business English."

Community College of Rhode Island. English 1410. "Business Writing."

Central Texas College. English 2311. "Technical and Business Writing."

Clemson University. English 304.

Clovis Community College. Business Administration 201. "Business Communication."

College of Charleston. Management 332. "Business Communications."

Cornell University. HADM 1650. "Management Communication."

Creighton University. Communication 314. "Managerial Communication."

De Anza College. Business 085. "Business Communications."

Delta State University. Business Administration 203. "Business Communications."

Dixie College. English 3010. "Writing in the Professions."

East New Mexico Community College. Business 201. "Business Communications."

El Camino College. Business Management 28. "Written Business Communications."

Emory University. Business 365. "Business Communication."

Emporia State University. Business Administration & Education. "Business
Communications."

Georgetown University. MPPR 703. "Business Writing for Communicators."

Georgia State University English 3130. "Business Writing."

Greensboro College. English 2440. "Business and Administrative Communication."

Harvard University. EXPO E-34. "Business Rhetoric."

Illinois State University. BTW 250. "Principles in Business Communication."

Indiana University at Purdue. English 331. "Business and Professional Writing."

Jackson Community College, Michigan. English 232. "Technical & Business Writing."

Johns Hopkins University. Professional Communication Program 661. "Business
Communication."

Kent State University. Communication 25863. "Business and Professional
Communication."

Lee University. Business 251. ""Business Communications."

Lehigh Carbon Community College. Business 209. "Business Communications."

Lewis-Clark University. GNBPT 245. "Business Writing."

Marlboro College. Communication 300. "Business Writing."

Midland College. English 2314. "Technical and Business Writing."

Mississippi College. GBU 321. "Business Communication."

Mississippi State University. Management 3213. "Organizational Communication."

Modesto Junior College. Business 210. "Business Communication."

North Carolina A&T State University. Business and Education 360. "Business
    Communication."

Niagara Community College. Business 229. "Business Communications."

Nicholls State University. English 310. "Business Communications."

Notre Dame University. Business Administration 30420. "Business Communication."

Ohio State University. English 304. "Business and Professional Writing."

Oklahoma State University. Business 2113. "Business Communications."

Oregon Health and Science University. MST 590. "Effective Business Writing for
    Managers."

Phillips Community College of University of Arkansas. Business 1013. "Business
    Communication."

Radford University. English 307. "Business Writing."

Rogers State University. Business 3113. "Business Communications."

Sam Houston State University. Business Administration 389. "Business
    Communication."

San Francisco State University. Business 714. "Elements of Business Writing."

Seattle University. Management 280. "Business Communication."

Southeast Missouri State University. Management and Marketing 252. ""Business
    Communication."

Southeastern Louisiana University. Management 240. "Professional Business

    Development."

Southern Utah University. English 2040. "Professional Business Writing."

St. John's University at New York. English 1006. "Effective Business Writing."

Stephen Austin State University. Business Communication 247. "Business

    Communication."

Texas A&M University. Business 125. "Business Learning Community."

Towson State University. English 317. "Writing for Business and Industry."

Troy University. Business 3382. "Business Communication."

University of Alabama. Management 395. "Business Communication."

University of Alaska. English 314. "Technical Writing."

University of Arizona. English 307. "Writing at Work."

University of Bridgeport. English 202. "Advanced Exposition (Business Writing)."

University of California Berkeley. Business 100. "Business Communication."

University of Central Missouri. Management 3325. "Business Communication."

University of Delaware. English 222. "Introduction to Professional Writing."

University of Denver. English 2021. "Business Technical Writing."

University of Florida. GEB 3213. "Writing in Business."

University of Hawaii. English 209. "Managerial Writing."

University of Idaho. English 313.

University of Iowa. AJB E246. "Business and Professional Communication."

University of Kentucky. English 203. "Business Writing and Communication."

University of Maryland. English 394. "Business Writing."

University of Massachusetts. Management 310. "Management Communications."

University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Management 310. "Management
   Communications."

University of Minnesota Duluth. FMIS 3141. "Business Communications."

University of Mississippi. Business 271. "Business Communications."

University of Montana. Communication 287. "Business Communication."

University of Nebraska at Lincoln. JGEN 220. "Business Communication Strategies."

University of Nevada Las Vegas. English 407. ""Business Writing."

University of New Orleans. Management 4497. "Managerial Communication."

University of North Dakota. ISBE 320. "Professional Communications for Business."

University of Puerto Rico at Humacao. INCO 3027. "Business Report Writing."

University of Southern California. Writing 340. "Advanced Writing for Business."

University of South Dakota. English 205. "Business Writing."

University of South Florida. ENC 3250. "Business Writing."

University of Southern Indiana. Business 231. "Business Communication."

University of Tennessee at Knoxville. English 295. ""Business and Technical
   Communication."

University of Texas. Business Administration 324. "Business Communication."

University of Texas at Arlington SPCH 3302. "Professional & Technical
   Communication."

University of Texas at Dallas. Accounting 3311. "Business Communications."

University of Utah. Writing 3016. "Business Writing."

University of Vermont. English 3104.

University of Virginia. Communication 4640. "Advanced Managerial Communication."

University of Washington at Tacoma. Continuing Education Certificate Program.

"Effective business writing and communication."

University of Wisconsin. Business 300. "Professional Communication."

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. English 431. "Professional Writing for

Nonprofits."

Virginia Tech University. English 3774. "Business Writing."

West Virginia University. English 304. "Business Writing."

West Georgia University. ABED 3100. "Managerial Reporting."

Western Nebraska Community College. BSTC 1210. "Business Communications."

William Paterson University. English 2970. "Effective Business Writing."

Windward Community College. English 209. "Business Writing."

Wright State University. English 330. "Business Writing."

Communication Audit: Organizational Cultural Assessment

Purpose:
This survey is conducted by Adam Lloyd, doctoral student seeking a Ph.D. in English at the University of Maryland, College Park. Results of the study and other data comprise the dissertation study required for graduation.

It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete these 13 questions. This is a study of Organizational Cultural Assessment. You were chosen because you are an employee of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the workplace organization whose communication practices I am studying.

This document is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand the study before deciding whether to participate. Your decision to participate in this survey demonstrates your informed consent to take part in a study of the workplace communication of the employees at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. Further information on the study may be obtained from Adam Lloyd at lloyda@umd.edu.

The purpose of the OCAI is to assess 6 key dimensions of organizational culture. In completing the instrument, you will be providing a picture of how your organization operates and the values that characterize it.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will check the box below, and continue.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are minimal, if any risks, to participating in this survey. Upon request participants will receive results of the study. Results will be provided to the University of Maryland, my advisor, Dr. Scott Wible, and will be included in Adam Lloyd's dissertation. Results may also published in academic journals related to business writing and communication.

There are no direct benefits to participants other than knowing you have helped my research and, possibly, contributed to future improvements in the way business communication is taught in colleges.

Confidentiality:
Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping any information you provide anonymous. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes other than this research. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you (including job title) in any of the reports of the study. Data will be destroyed after a period of five years.

If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this survey is voluntary and it is your decision, whether or not you want to participate. Other employees and company leaders will not treat you differently if you decide not to participate. If you decide to participate in the survey, you can change your mind at any time. If you feel stressed during the survey, you may stop at any time. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal. For those of you who may personally know Adam Lloyd, your choice to participate or decline this survey will not be a factor in your relationship with him. Participants' identities are strictly confidential.

If you have any questions you may contact the researcher via email at lloyda@umd.edu. You may also contact his research supervisor, Dr. Scott Wible, at swible@umd.edu. You may obtain a PDF document of this consent form for your records by emailing Adam at lloyda@umd.edu.

*1. Participant Rights:

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

University of Maryland College Park
Institutional Review Board Office
1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, Maryland, 20742
E-mail: irb@umd.edu
Telephone: 301-405-0678

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Consent:
Checking the agreement button below indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

○ By checking this button, I have agreed to participate in this survey.

Instructions for completing the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument

The purpose of the OCAI is to assess 6 key dimensions of organizational culture. In completing the instrument, you will be providing a picture of how your organization operates and the values that characterize it. No right or wrong answers exist for these questions, just as there is no right or wrong culture. Every organization will most likely produce a different set of responses. Therefore, be as accurate as you can in responding to the questions so that your resulting cultural diagnosis will be as precise as possible.

The OCAI consists of 6 questions. Each question has 4 alternatives. Divide 100 points among these 4 alternatives depending on the extent to which each alternative is similar to your own organization. Give a higher number of points to the alternative that is most similar to your organization. For example, in question 1, if you think alternative A is very similar to your organization, alternative B and C are somewhat similar, and alternative D is hardly similar at all, you might give 55 points to A, 20 points to B and C, and 5 points to D. Just be sure your total equals 100 points for each question.

Note, that the 1st pass through the 6 questions is labeled "Now." This refers to the culture, as it exists today. After you complete the "Now," you will find the questions repeated under a heading of "Preferred." Your answers to these questions should be based on how you would like the organization to look 5 years from now.

Your answers and identity will be kept completely anonymous so be as frank as you wish. This is not a test; your opinion is the only right answer.

*2. Dominant Characteristics (Now)

A) The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.

B) The organization is a very dynamic entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their neck out and take risks.

C) The organization is very results-oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.

D) The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.

*3. Dominant Characteristics (Preferred)

A) The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.

B) The organization is a very dynamic entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their neck out and take risks.

C) The organization is very results-oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.

D) The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.

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*4. Organizational Leadership (Now)

A) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.

B) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk-taking.

C) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.

D) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.

*5. Organizational Leadership (Preferred)

A) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.

B) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk-taking.

C) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.

D) The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.

*6. Management of Employees (Now)

A) The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.

B) The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.

C) The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.

D) The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.

*7. Management of Employees (Preferred)

A) The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.

B) The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.

C) The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.

D) The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.

*8. Organization Glue (Now)

A) The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.

B) The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.

C) The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.

D) The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.

*9. Organization Glue (Preferred)

A) The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.

B) The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.

C) The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.

D) The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.

*10. Strategic Emphases (Now)

A) The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.

B) The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.

C) The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting targets and achieving in the marketplace are dominant.

D) The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important.

*11. Strategic Emphases (Preferred)

A) The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.

B) The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.

C) The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting targets and achieving in the marketplace are dominant.

D) The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important.

*12. Criteria of Success (Now)

A) The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.

B) The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest products/initiatives. It is a leader and innovator in the field.

C) The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.

D) The organization to find success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low-cost production are critical.

*13. Criteria of Success (Preferred)

A) The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.

B) The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest products/initiatives. It is a leader and innovator in the field.

C) The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.

D) The organization to find success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low-cost production are critical.

Communication Audit: Communication Evaluation

Purpose:

This survey is conducted by Adam Lloyd, doctoral student seeking a Ph.D. in English at the University of Maryland, College Park. Results of the study and other data comprise the dissertation study required for graduation.

It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete these 93 questions. This is a study of Communication Evaluation. This is a study of Organizational Cultural Assessment. You were chosen because you are an employee of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the workplace organization whose communication practices I am studying. Please select your response on the survey form. Please answer all questions since each is important for analyzing and possibly improving the operation of your organization. If there are any questions which do not apply to you, leave them blank. I appreciate your patience for this important survey. Your answers and identity will be kept completely anonymous so be as frank as you wish. This is not a test; your opinion is the only right answer.

This document is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand the study before deciding whether to participate. Your decision to participate in this survey demonstrates your informed consent to take part in a study of the workplace communication of the employees at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. Further information on the study may be obtained from Adam Lloyd at lloyda@umd.edu.

The purpose of this survey is to inquire about your assessment of communication practices in your
organization as they currently exist and as you would optimally like them to exist.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will check the box below, and continue.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal, if any risks, to participating in this survey. Upon request participants will receive results of the study. Results will be provided to the University of Maryland, my advisor, Dr. Scott Wible, and will be included in Adam Lloyd's dissertation. Results may also published in academic journals related to business writing and communication.

There are no direct benefits to participants other than knowing you have helped my research and, possibly, contributed to future improvements in the way business communication is taught in colleges.

Confidentiality:

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping any information you provide anonymous. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes other than this research. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you (including job title) in any of the reports of the study. Data will be destroyed after a period of five years.

If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and it is your decision, whether or not you want to participate. Other employees and company leaders will not treat you differently if you decide not to participate. If you decide to participate in the survey, you can change your mind at any time. If you feel stressed during the survey, you may stop at any time. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal. For those of you who may personally know Adam Lloyd, your choice to participate or decline this survey will not be a factor in your relationship with him. Participants' identities are strictly confidential.

If you have any questions you may contact the researcher via email at lloyda@umd.edu. You may also contact his research supervisor, Dr. Scott Wible, at swible@umd.edu. You may obtain a PDF document of this cons

*1. Participant Rights:

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

University of Maryland College Park
Institutional Review Board Office
1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, Maryland, 20742
E-mail: irb@umd.edu
Telephone: 301-405-0678

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Consent:
Checking the agreement button below indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

○   I agree to the terms described above and agree to participate. By checking this button, I have agreed to participate in this survey.

Instructions for Questions 1 through 13:

You can receive information about various topics in your organization. For each topic listed below, select the response that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you ARE receiving on that topic, and (2) the amount of information you NEED to receive on that topic; that is, the amount you have to have in order to do your job.

2. How well I am doing in my job

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

3. My job duties

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

4. Organizational policies

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

5. Pay and benefits

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

6. How technological changes affect my job

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

7. Mistakes and failures of my organization

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

8. How I am being judged

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

9. How my job related problems are being handled

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

10. How organization decisions are made that affect my job

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

11. Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◯	◯
2 = Little	◯	◯
3 = Some	◯	◯
4 = Great	◯	◯
5 = Very Great	◯	◯

12. Important new product, service or program development in my organization

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◯	◯
2 = Little	◯	◯
3 = Some	◯	◯
4 = Great	◯	◯
5 = Very Great	◯	◯

13. How my job relates to the total operation of my organization

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◯	◯
2 = Little	◯	◯
3 = Some	◯	◯
4 = Great	◯	◯
5 = Very Great	◯	◯

14. Specific problems faced by management

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◯	◯
2 = Little	◯	◯
3 = Some	◯	◯
4 = Great	◯	◯
5 = Very Great	◯	◯

Instructions for Questions 14 through 20

in addition to receiving information, there are many topics on which you can send information to others. For each topic listed below, select the response the best indicates: (1) the amount of information you ARE sending for that topic and (2) the amount of information you NEED to send on that topic in order to do your job.

15. Reporting what I am doing in my job

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	◯	◯
2 = Little	◯	◯
3 = Some	◯	◯
4 = Great	◯	◯
5 = Very Great	◯	◯

16. Reporting what I think my job requires me to do

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

17. Reporting job related problems

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

18. Complaining about my job and/or working conditions

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

19. Requesting information necessary to do my job

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

20. Evaluating the performance of my immediate supervisor

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

21. Asking for clearer work instructions

	This is the amount of information I send now	This is the amount of information I need to send
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

Instructions for Questions 21 through 25

Indicate the amount of action or follow-up that IS and NEEDS to be taken on information you send to the following:

22. Subordinates

	This is the amount of follow-up now	This is the amount of follow-up needed
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

23. Co-workers

	This is the amount of follow-up now	This is the amount of follow-up needed
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

24. Immediate supervisor

	This is the amount of follow-up now	This is the amount of follow-up needed
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

25. Middle Management

	This is the amount of follow-up now	This is the amount of follow-up needed
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

26. Talk Management

	This is the amount of follow-up now	This is the amount of follow-up needed
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

Instructions for Questions 26 through 34

You not only receive various kinds of information, but can receive such information from various sources within the organization. For each source listed below, select the response that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you ARE receiving from that source and (2) the amount of information you NEED to receive from that source in order to do your job.

27. Subordinates (if applicable)

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

28. Co-workers in my own unit or department

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

29. Individuals in other units or departments in my organization

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

30. Immediate supervisor

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

31. Department meetings

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

32. Middle Management

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

33. Formal management presentations

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

34. Top management

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

35. The "grapevine"

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

Instructions for Questions 35 through 40

Indicate the extent to which information from the following sources is usually timely (you get information when you need it--not too early, not too late).

36. Subordinates (if applicable)

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

37. Co-workers

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

38. Immediate supervisor

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

39. Middle management

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

40. Top management

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

41. "Grapevine"

   ○ 1 = Very Little

   ○ 2 = Little

   ○ 3 = Some

   ○ 4 = Great

   ○ 5 = Very Great

Instructions for Questions 41 through 58

A variety of communicative relationships exist in organizations like your own. Employees exchange messages regularly with supervisors, subordinates, co-workers, etc. Considering your relationships with others in your organization, please select the response which best describes the relationship in question.

42. I trust my co-workers

   ○ 1 = Very Little

   ○ 2 = Little

   ○ 3 = Some

   ○ 4 = Great

   ○ 5 = Very Great

43. My co-workers get along with each other

   ○ 1 = Very Little

   ○ 2 = Little

   ○ 3 = Some

   ○ 4 = Great

   ○ 5 = Very Great

44. I trust my immediate supervisor

   ○ 1 = Very Little

   ○ 2 = Little

   ○ 3 = Some

   ○ 4 = Great

   ○ 5 = Very Great

45. My immediate supervisor is honest with me

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

46. My immediate supervisor listens to me

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

47. I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

48. I can tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

49. My immediate supervisor praises me for a good job

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

50. My immediate supervisor is friendly with his/her subordinates

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

51. My immediate supervisor understands my job needs

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

52. My relationship with my immediate supervisor is satisfying

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

53. I trust top management

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

54. Top management is sincere in their efforts to communicate with employees

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

55. My relationship with top management is satisfying

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

56. My organization encourages difference of opinion

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

57. I have a say in decisions that affect my job

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

58. I influence operations in my unit or department

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

59. I have a part in accomplishing my organization's goals

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

One of the most important "outcomes" of working in an organization is the satisfaction one receives or fails to receive through working there. Such "satisfaction" can relate to the job, one's co-workers, supervisors, where the organization as a whole. Please select the response which best indicates the extent to which you are satisfied with:

60. My job

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

61. My pay

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

62. My progress in my organization up to this point in time

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

63. My chances for getting ahead in my organization

- ○ 1 = Very Little
- ○ 2 = Little
- ○ 3 = Some
- ○ 4 = Great
- ○ 5 = Very Great

64. My opportunity to "make a difference"--to contribute to the overall success of my organization

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

65. My organization's system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

66. My organization's concern for its members' welfare

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

67. My organization's overall communicative efforts

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

68. Working in my organization

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

69. My organization, as compared to other such organizations

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

70. My organization's overall efficiency of operation

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

71. The overall quality of my organization's product, service, or mission

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

72. My organization's achievement of its goals and objectives

○ 1 = Very Little

○ 2 = Little

○ 3 = Some

○ 4 = Great

○ 5 = Very Great

Instructions for Question 72 through 80

The following questions list a variety of channels through which information is transmitted to employees. Please select the response which best indicates: (1) the amount of information you ARE receiving through that channel and (2) the amount of information you NEED to receive through that channel.

73. Face-to-face contact between 2 people

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◉	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

74. Face-to-face contact among more than 2 people

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◉	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	◉	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

75. Telephone

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	◉	○

76. Written (memos, letters)

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	◉	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

77. Email

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

78. Social Media (website, Facebook, Twitter)

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

79. Internal Publications

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

80. Internal Audio-Visual Media (Videotape, Films, Slides)

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

81. External Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers)

	This is the amount of information I receive now	This is the amount of information I need to receive
1 = Very Little	○	○
2 = Little	○	○
3 = Some	○	○
4 = Great	○	○
5 = Very Great	○	○

Background Information

This section is for statistical purposes only and will be used to study how different groups of people view your organization. We do not want your name, but would appreciate the following information:

82. How do you receive most of your income from this organization?

○ Salaried

○ Hourly

○ Piecework

○ Commission

○ Other

83. What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other

84. Do you work:

○ Full-time

○ Part-time

○ Temporary full-time

○ Temporary part-time

85. How long have you worked in this organization?

○ Less than one year

○ 1 to 5 years

○ 6 to 10 years

○ 11 to 15 years

○ More than 15 years

86. How long have you held your current position?

○ Less than one year

○ 1 to 5 years

○ 6 to 10 years

○ 11 to 15 years

○ More than 15 years

87. What is your position in this organization?

○ I don't supervise anybody

○ First-line supervisor

○ Middle management

○ Top management

Other (please specify)

[   ]

88. What was the last level you completed in school?

○ Less than high school graduate

○ High school graduate

○ Some College or Technical School

○ Completed college or technical school

○ Masters degree

○ PhD

○ Law degree

○ MBA

89. What is your age?

○ Under 20 years of age

○ 21 to 30 years of age

○ 31 to 40 years of age

○ 41 to 50 years of age

○ Over 50 years of age

90. How much training to improve your communicative skills have you had?

○ No training at all

○ Little training (attended one seminar, workshop, training activity, or course)

○ Some training (attended a few seminars, workshops, training activities, or courses)

○ Extensive training (attended a great number of seminars, workshops, training activities, or courses)

91. How much money did you receive from this organization last year?

○ Less than $10,000

○ $10,000-$19,999

○ $20,000-$29,999

○ $30,000-$49,999

○ $50,000-$100,000

○ Over $100,000

92. During the past 10 years, in how many other organizations have you been employed?

○ No other organizations

○ One other organization

○ Two other organizations

○ Three other organizations

○ More than 3 others

93. Are you presently looking for a job in a different organization?

○ Yes

○ No

Table 4   ICA survey mean scores

	Now	Needed	Variance
Receiving Information from Others			
How well I am doing in my job	3.42	3.92	.5
My job duties	3.75	4.13	.38
Organizational policies	3.66	3.92	.26
Pay and benefits	3.50	3.92	.42
How technological changes affect my job	2.82	4.09	1.27
Mistakes and failures of my organization	1.96	3.38	1.42
How I am being judged	2.88	4.00	1.12
How my job related problems are being handled	2.91	3.91	1.00
How organization decisions are made that affect my job	2.38	3.88	1.50
Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization	2.25	3.88	1.63
Important new product, service or program development in my organization	3.13	3.75	.62
How my job relates to the total operation of my organization	3.71	4.08	.37
Specific problems faced by management	2.04	3.25	1.21
Sending Information to Others			
Reporting what I am doing in my job	3.46	3.21	-.25
Reporting what I think my job requires me to do	2.87	3.09	.22
Reporting job related problems	3.04	3.63	.59
Complaining about my job and/or working conditions	1.96	2.17	.21
Requesting information necessary to do my job	3.42	3.50	.08

Evaluating the performance of my immediate supervisor	1.50	3.04	1.54
Asking for clearer work instructions	3.13	3.21	.08
Follow-up Action			
Subordinates	2.58	2.47	-.09
Co-workers	3.04	3.48	.44
Immediate supervisor	3.30	3.61	.31
Middle management	2.52	3.13	.61
Top management	2.13	2.70	.57
Sources of Information			
Subordinates	2.41	3.06	.45
Co-workers in my own unit or department	3.00	3.50	.50
Individuals in other units or departments in my organization	2.79	3.46	.67
Immediate supervisor	3.04	3.71	.67
Department meetings	3.17	3.58	.41
Middle management	2.54	3.08	.54
Formal management presentations	2.67	2.88	.21
Top management	2.75	2.96	.21
The "grapevine"	2.96	2.75	-.21
Timeliness of Information			
Subordinates	3.21		
Co-workers	3.21		
Immediate supervisor	3.54		
Middle management	2.75		
Top management	3.04		
The "grapevine"	3.25		
Communication Channels			
Face-to-face contact between 2 people	3.13	3.38	.25
Face-to-face contact among more than 2 people	3.04	3.42	.38
Telephone	3.50	3.38	-.12
Written (memos, letters)	2.50	2.25	-.25
Email	4.63	3.96	-.67
Social media (website, Facebook, Twitter)	3.04	2.87	-.17
Internal publications	3.46	2.79	-.67

Internal audio-visual media (videotape, films, slides)	3.25	2.83	-.42
External media (TV, radio, newspapers)	2.61	2.87	.26
Organizational Communication Relationships			
I trust my co-workers	3.71		
My co-workers get along with each other	3.71		
I trust my immediate supervisor	3.63		
My immediate supervisor is honest with me	3.75		
My immediate supervisor listens to me	3.70		
I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor	3.63		
I can tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong	3.88		
My immediate supervisor praises me for a good job	3.88		
My immediate supervisor is friendly with his/her subordinates	3.92		
My immediate supervisor understands my job needs	3.46		
My relationship with my immediate supervisor satisfying	3.67		
I trust top management	3.42		
Top management is sincere in their efforts to communicate with employees	3.54		
My relationship with top management is satisfying	3.30		
My organization encourages difference of opinion	2.71		

I have a say in decisions that affect my job	2.33		
I influence operations in my unit or department	3.04		
I have a part in accomplishing my organization's goals	3.65		
Satisfaction with Organizational Outcomes			
My job	3.54		
My pay	3.04		
My progress in my organization up to this point in time	3.21		
My chances for getting ahead in my organization	2.21		
My opportunity to "make a difference"— to contribute to the overall success of my organization	3.71		
My organization's system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance	2.50		
My organization's concern for its members' welfare	3.25		
My organization's overall communicative efforts	3.26		
Working in my organization	3.75		
My organization, as compared to other such organizations	4.00		
My organization's overall efficiency of operation	3.08		
The overall quality of my organization's product, service, or mission	4.38		
My organization's achievement of its goals and objectives	3.96		

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