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Discourse Communities—Local and Global

In theories of social discourse, ideas about the relationship of author to audience as one mind seeking another become integrated into a concept of the author and audience as participants in a communication system of interconnected and interrelated individuals. Each participant is both a sender and a receiver of information, and each is already implicated at the time of communication in a complex of social formations. In the field of composition and rhetoric, such systems have been described as "discourse communities."

The term is useful in the theory and analysis of writing because it embraces the rhetorical concern with social interchange (discourse) and with situation or context (community). But the term can lead the analyst astray by prompting an uncritical acceptance of "community" as a "natural" element or transcendental category. Because community, like discourse itself, is "socially constructed"—by the analyst as well as by the people who claim membership—the act of identifying communities is never innocent, never free of ideological influences. As both Lester Faigley and Joseph Harris have noted, the word *community* is almost always used positively, and herein lies its danger to rhetorical analysis. If the community is always good, who but the perverse could question or rebel against practices that sustain the community? However, to accept this irresistible goodness as somehow prior to discourse ("above question") would amount to abandoning a key premise of rhetorical criticism—the idea of the *rhetorical situation* (Bitzer), which demands that the analyst acknowledge the possibility of transformation among the elements and aims of discourse, including location. In addition to changing language and changing minds, the enterprise of rhetoric suggests that speakers and writers have the power to transform the site of discourse, the community itself.

In this essay I argue that as a defense against an uncritical adoption of the community concept rhetorical theory needs to keep alive competing concepts of discourse communities, so that alternatives exist in the description and analysis of discourse practices. Recent definitions of discourse communities have established a rather too-narrow foundation upon a communitarian ethic. At the present time, when liberalism's stock is down, communitarianism appears to be a strong alternative for understanding the relation of people to government and culture (Lasch). In liberalism, social organization depends upon two strong formations—the *individual*, who may enjoy a wide range of rights and freedoms at the possible cost of

alienation and fragmentation, and the *nation-state*, which ensures the rights of individuals but, in its administration, trends toward faceless abstraction and bureaucracy. By contrast, communitarianism models social life on the organization of the village or small town; inhabitants share a face-to-face familiarity and a commitment to open conversation among equals (based on dialogue, discourse, and communal trust).

While acknowledging the attractive features of the communitarian *ethos*, however, we should also recognize its potential for defensive traditionalism, which tends to favor cliché, stereotype, and a rigid class structure. The reactionary elements of communitarianism could well threaten the integrity of rhetorical analysis, which requires a robust respect for process, change, and conflict, and which is willing to question traditions and formulas for advancing an unspoken agenda advertised as "the community interest." To allow for change, the rhetorical theorist must make room for conflict and dissent within discourse communities, balancing the provincialism of the village model with a liberal interest in taking the "larger view" (which may eventually swerve to the right or the left, in the direction of either the capitalist's "world market" or the marxist's "world socialism").

To maintain this dialectical potential, I propose that by distinguishing between two kinds of discourse communities—the local and the global—rhetorical analysis can begin to achieve the necessary critical edge by demarcating both a communitarian (local) and a liberal (global) concept of discourse communities. To date, scholars in the field have been content to favor either the local or the global in their definitions and have thereby advanced one political agenda over and against another. Influenced no doubt by my own wavering between the communitarian and the liberal *ethos* and my personal journey from the small town life of the southern United States to the modern state university with its bureaucracy, mass education, and international connections, I think that the field of rhetoric needs both a local and a global model of community to show how different types of social pressures impinge upon the practices of individual writers.

The Recent Preference for Local Communities

I define local communities simply as the place where writers ordinarily work—the classroom, the company, the department, or the office with which the writer is associated, the site of the occupational practice by which he or she is identified in demographic descriptions. Global communities also help to determine the writer's identity, but they are not restricted by physical site. Rather, they are defined by likemindedness, political and intellectual affiliation, and other such "special interests" and are maintained by widely dispersed discourse practices made possible by modern publishing and other communication technologies. The local discourse community is geographical; the global discourse community,

mental. The local community holds its members close to itself and is defined largely by metonymy (the trope of contiguity and close association); the global community inspires a loose confederation of like-minded individuals and is defined mainly by metaphor (the trope of identity-in-difference).

Recent research and theory in composition have tended to favor local communities and to reduce global communities to contrary norms, values, and practices within the local community. This turn of interest is partly methodological and partly ideological. Ethnography and case study methodology support nicely the mapping of local communities (Broadhead and Freed; Matalene), but may not account so effectively for global communities, since their definition depends upon a metaphorical mapping of sites rather than a metonymically allocated site (which can be treated as the culture-in-place required by ethnography). The study of global "sites" requires large-scale *rhetorical inquiry*, an analogical or dialectical methodology (Lauer and Asher 4-5).

The ideological difference is not quite as clear as the methodological. It is obscured, for example, even in Joseph Harris's tough-minded critical survey, "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing." Harris takes up the work of several recent composition theorists who share an interest in the sociology of writing—David Bartholomae, Patricia Bizzell, and Kenneth Bruffee. He commends these writers and other "social constructionists," "sociologists of knowledge," and "ethnographical researchers" for providing an alternative to psychological models of composition by "de-mystifying the concept of intention"; "rather than viewing the intentions of a writer as private and ineffable, wholly individual," they help us to see "that it is only through being part of some ongoing discourse that we can, as individual writers, have . . . points to make and purposes to achieve" (12). Building upon Bartholomae's assertion that "the discourse with its projects and agendas . . . determines what writers can and will do" (139), Harris argues that "We write not as isolated individuals but as members of communities whose beliefs, concerns, and practices both instigate and constrain, at least in part, the sorts of things we can say" (12).

The trouble with the concept of discourse communities, in Harris's way of thinking, is that "recent theories have tended to invoke the idea of community in ways at once sweeping and vague: positing discursive utopias that direct and determine the writings of their members, yet failing to state the operating rules or boundaries of these communities" (12). The discourse communities of the "utopian" theorists lack material substance; they are utopias in the literal sense of being "nowhere": "In the place of physical nearness we are given like-mindedness" (15). Harris's solution to this problem of reference is to "reserve our uses of *community* to describe the workings of . . . specific and local groups" (20). In a crucial terminological argument, he claims that there are "other words—*discourse*, *language*, *voice*, *ideology*, *hegemony*—to chart the perhaps less immediate (though still powerful) effects of broader social forces on our talk and writing" (20).

Harris thus gives us the rudiments of a *realist theory of discourse communities* as a foil to the *utopian theory* of Bartholomae, Bizzell, and the other scholars he surveys. In the terms suggested so far in this essay, Harris insists on the reality only of local (metonymically construed) discourse communities and tends to discount the presence of global (metaphorically construed) communities. What would an analysis look like if it applied this localist theory to the study of communities? A number of studies have appeared that seem to respect the limits set by Harris. In "Discourse Communities, Sacred Texts, and Institutional Norms," for example, the researchers Richard Freed and Glenn Broadhead present a classic ethnographic description of the writing practices and informing values of two consulting firms, "Alpha" and "Omega," which the authors designate as "corporate cultures," each manifesting its own "discourse community." Writers within these groups are subject to "cultural," "institutional," "generic," and "situational" norms that govern the production of discourse. In the view of the researchers, however, the norms do not constitute the community. Instead, the community appears to be a real group of people in an actual location, the place where norms determined by "larger groups to which the community belongs" converge in special and unique ways (163): "Alpha and Omega are such communities; so is Freshman Composition 101; so is Jane Brown's Freshman Composition 101 class" (162). Here, then, are some examples of the "specific and local groups" that Harris thinks should count as discourse communities.

But this way of thinking is vulnerable to the same logic Harris has used to object to the utopian view of discourse communities. There are plenty of good words to describe specific and local groups—if *culture* seems a little too high-minded, why not *company, corporation, composition class, neighborhood*? Why distinguish any such social group by inventing new jargon?

Both the realists with their preference for local communities and the utopians with their preference for global communities have taken the first steps of rhetorical inquiry. They have developed tropes to account for the phenomena they observe; the localists favor metonymy and synecdoche as their master tropes, while the globalists are inclined toward analogy and metaphor. The localists dissect their companies, classrooms, and neighborhoods; while the globalists model their "discourse utopias," "abstract societies" (Popper 1.174-75), and "invisible colleges" (Geertz 157; Price), which, rendered in the language of popular discourse, might include the "scientific community," the "educated public," and the "urban underclasses"—all groups that, without the conveniences of daily contact, appear to behave and communicate according to the demands of communal interests and norms.

Both localists and globalists have thus given examples of discourse communities and have even carried out detailed studies of these examples. But both groups, falling prey to the ideological attractions of their own models, have failed

to realize the extent to which their own favored version of the discourse community depends dialectically upon the existence of the other.

The Individual Writer and the Dilemma of Discourse Communities

Even definitions that appear to be broad enough to include both local and global interests may fail to show how ideological conflicts both define and threaten the boundaries of the different communities. James Porter, for example, defines a discourse community as "a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated" (38). He gives good examples of "professional, public, or personal discourse communities": "the community of engineers whose research area is fluid mechanics; alumni of the University of Michigan; Magnavox employees; the members of the Porter family; and members of the Indiana Teachers of Writing" (39). He explains that each community uses certain "forums" as approved channels of discourse; examples include "professional publications like *Rhetoric Review*, *English Journal*, and *Creative Computing*; public media like *Newsweek* and *Runner's World*; professional conferences (the annual meeting of fluid power engineers, the 4Cs); company board meetings; family dinner tables; and the monthly meeting of the Indiana chapter of the Izaak Walton League" (39). He tells us that each forum is constrained by a set of "rules governing appropriateness to which members are obliged to adhere"; these rules may be "more or less apparent, more or less institutionalized, more or less specific to each community" (39).

What Porter does not do, however, is to account for conflict among and within discourse communities. In fact, his appropriation of the concept of "intertextuality" suggests a fairly smooth flow of influence and interchange among the different communities, a flow that empties gently into the discourse user, a self compounded of the different elements contributed by each community. Such an analysis fails to theorize adequately the lines of tension that coexist and interfere with the lines of influence among discourse communities.

The local/global distinction is helpful in showing how conflicts erupt not so much between discourse communities as within the individual user of discourse. The local discourse community—the "culture" into which the individual discourse user is, to some degree, "socialized" (Lutz)—always dominates the site of communication at the time the discourse is initiated; while the global community, which the individual user perceives as distant—or even abstract and metaphorical—exerts pressure for change over and against the demands of local practice. A user of discourse will be involved simultaneously in both local and global discourse communities and will feel challenged to favor one over the other.

Technical writers who produce computer manuals at IBM, for example, may be members of the local discourse community at the San Jose office, with its special procedures for researching, writing, editing, and reviewing the documents

they produce. The needs of this office may occasionally conflict with the needs of the corporation as a whole with its global, multinational interests. Despite its international reach, however, IBM in its entirety is in effect a local discourse community, not only because it can be defined specifically by distinctive demographic features—number of employees, number of shareholders, places of business, names of customers, annual profits, taxes paid, and so on—but also because the corporation has the power to regulate within each specific site its special requirements for producing texts, products, and actions. The local writers perceive IBM not as a distant, but as a present influence on their work. The corporation's authorized practices, rituals, and requirements for discourse represent a definite corporate culture that constantly and continuously impinges upon work at any of the local offices. Though other offices are distant from the site of discourse at San Jose, all IBM offices have a metonymic or synecdochal relation to one other. They are portrayed (metonymically) as contiguous within a corporate network, hierarchy, or association; or they are portrayed (synecdochally) as a part of a whole, a piece of the IBM monolith.

The technical writers' membership in a global discourse community would be harder to grasp, but just as important, for it could have an equal or greater impact on the process of writing and the quality of the documents they produce. If they have been trained in rhetoric or technical communication programs, they will apply (analogically or metaphorically) ways of thinking about ideal users and readers that may well be in conflict with the more particularized views of audience that have developed in usability tests and other actual (metonymic) contacts with users within the company itself. Eventually, they may give up their academic viewpoint and say, "Well this is the real world; these folks know the audience through experience rather than through theory." On the other hand, they may realize that, by an uncritical acceptance of the practices of the local community, not only will they be abandoning their personal ideals (or those of their professors), but also they may be limiting the appeal of the documents they write to the existing audience, thereby closing off opportunities for expanding the audience, which corresponds to their product's market. Their failure to retain the alternative viewpoint, in other words, may well be judged as a failure to the company. After all, these young writers could have been hired to bring in a fresh perspective.

The issue is far from simple. But it is clear enough that every writer must negotiate between the demands of the local discourse community and the demands that the writer brings to that community. It is also clear that these demands overlap and interpenetrate in complex ways. The writer's dilemma is not, as it is often imagined, merely a conflict between workplace and academic values, nor is it, in any simple sense, a struggle between the individual and society. It involves an attempt to choose between two possible subject positions or to create an alternative position. Whichever choice the writer makes, there will be concrete effects within the local discourse community. Established practice will become yet more strongly

established by defending itself against internal attack, or it will be revised according to the outsider's knowledge.

Discourse without Communities?

Acknowledging the presence of diverse and conflicting forces within such sites of discourse practice as the IBM office and wishing to avoid an uncritical acceptance of the term *community*, the rhetorical analyst may well decide, taking the hint from Harris, simply to leave off *community* altogether and restrict theoretical or terminological discussions to *discourse*. The problem is that, without the ballast of *community*, which designates a (real or imagined) site for production, the concept of *discourse* drifts toward abstraction. Either it implies some linguistic formation prior to contexts of use (which, just like the transcendental version of community, contradicts the premises of rhetorical analysis), or, like some uses of the concept of ideology, *discourse* in this broad sense implies a closed system. It suggests that, once inside a discourse (or an ideology), a participant cannot get out, but is transformed and absorbed, as dependent upon the discourse as upon air, the very medium of existence. This concept of discourse is, like intertextuality, too smooth and homogeneous to reflect the texture of conflict, at times conscious, at other times unconscious, that characterizes the social medium of rhetorical exchange—a social medium which, in Kenneth Burke's memorable image, recalls the barnyard, with all its squawking noise and pecking violence.

Even Michel Foucault—who, in documenting how systems of exclusion and knowledge-brokering eliminate commentary and criticism, has perpetrated the concept of discourse as a closed system—admits ambivalence, anxiety, and difference into his discussion of discourse formation. In his monstrously extended trope of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault seems to have conceived of discourse practice as an all-pervasive medium of power and manipulation that somehow remains subjectless; users of discourse are represented as victims of the communication media. But his later work, especially his multivolume history of sexuality, restores at least the concept of culture and clears the way for a discussion of psychological and social conflict. Indeed, as early as "The Discourse on Language," he showed concern for conflicts within the speaking subject, the individual who may in fact *wish* to be absorbed into discourse. The voice of inclination within this subject of resignation may well say, "I don't want to have to enter this risky world of discourse; . . . I would like to feel it all around me, calm and transparent, profound, infinitely open, with others responding to my expectations. . . . All I want is to allow myself to be borne along, within it, and by it, a happy wreck." However, against inclination speaks anxiety; all along, the speaker will remain suspicious of "the conflicts, triumphs, injuries, dominations and enslavements that lie behind these words [of the chosen discourse], even when long use has chipped away their rough edges" (*Archaeology* 215-16).

Foucault thus embraces the concept of community. Inclination and Anxiety—these personified figures—inhabit the individual as a community, a site for the enactment of discourse practices and conflicts. New discourses will enter the site as interlopers, "novelizing" or "carnivalizing" accepted practices, producing the "heteroglossia" that Bakhtin recognizes as the condition by which literature is renewed. In any forum of discourse—whether within an individual or a geographically defined region—whether the space is "imaginary" or "actual"— a single discourse cannot be utterly pure or utterly powerful, just as, in the words of Gregory Jay, "no particular ideology has the power to control every instance of expression in a given culture" (239). Civilization will have its discontents.

In sum, *discourse* (without community) lacks the heuristic power of *discourse community*. If the analyst discovers within a college, department, company, corporation—or an individual person—two or more general schemes for discoursing, it is very likely that one discourse will tend to be dominant and will, in a manner of speaking, fill the space of the local discourse community. Users who prefer the other form of discourse will vie for a share of the territory and, in order to nurture their favored discourse practices, will create an imaginary space, a utopia that, in principle, would represent the ideal location for their form of discourse.

To take another example, say that a group of scientists has a strong commitment to basic research (what used to be called "pure science"), an investigation into some theoretical topic deemed interesting only by other scientists in their own subspeciality. They are, we can imagine, interested in some esoteric aspect of quantum physics. This commitment may be at odds with the norms of the scientists' home department and university, the administrators of which urge them to pursue applied research—something with definite ties to nuclear power, for example—because more grant money is available for applied research. In pursuing the discourse of basic research, a set of values and a set of characteristic actions, arguments, and genres of speaking and writing, they tend to identify with other scientists who have similar interests to form quasi-political groups that protect and promote their way of life. Though not defined by the boundaries of space or by specific affiliations, such groups certainly demonstrate the qualities of community—hence the common phrase, the "scientific community." To protect their favored discourse paths, basic researchers may cleave to colleagues in their subspecialty (whether quark physics, herpetological ecology, or urban agricultural engineering), or they may band together with other scientists interested in the social autonomy of basic researchers. The latter course is perhaps the best example of how a global discourse community might act. Though the group is represented by no job title, no professional organization, no central office, it works as if it were a location that draws adherents together—often against the pulls and tugs of local communities and their demands.

In such ways, the user of discourse is led to contextualize communication as between two people at a certain location. The persistence of conflict and contra-

diction within the discourse—despite hegemonic efforts to gloss over or clean up the rough spots (or to exclude troublesome individuals)—suggests the persistence of "subject positions," *places* of speech and action, *topoi* of contrary motivations within a discourse (see Laclau and Mouffe). Within the discourse appear points of conflict, whose perpetrators seem to be coming from some other place. Devoted users of the established discourse may well say to these interlopers, following the current slang, "I don't know where you're coming from."

Metaphors and Models from the Social Sciences

In the attempt to map (metaphorically or metonymically) such relationships and conflicts, composition theorists and rhetorical analysts are hardly alone. The social sciences have also experienced a renewed interest in the concept of community and a corresponding struggle over how the term should be used. In the social sciences, the debate is framed by the ongoing attempt to distinguish between communities and societies.

Christopher Lasch has traced this line of thinking to the German philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies, who deeply influenced Weber, and, through Weber, passed his concept of community to sympathetic social critics like Lewis Mumford and to unsympathetic critics like Adorno and Marcuse. In an 1887 book, Tönnies distinguished between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*). Community, he said, is the older social structure. It implies the spontaneous organization of people, usually small, village-sized groups, into informal, face-to-face systems of interchange and cooperation. As populations grow and centralize into nation-states dominated by urban centers, the organic solidarity and interdependence of the community gives way to society, the haunt of the autonomous individual of classical liberalism. Whereas custom, habit, and faith rule the community, society is governed by the letter of the law, by rationalism, by commercial exchange. Though Tönnies was ambivalent about the value of each mode of social organization, like Raymond Williams (whom Harris cites), he seems never to have given up hope that "socialism would somehow reestablish gemeinschaft on a new basis" (Lasch 144).

As Lasch shows, the recent revival of interest in communities and the related "lament for the decline of 'community'" (16) depend upon a critique of the liberal idea of progress that coincides with a reemerging "sensibility of the petty bourgeoisie," which Lasch identifies with the communitarian *ethos*. In both the liberal tradition (the politics of the upper middle classes) and the marxian tradition (the politics of the proletariat), the petty-bourgeois sensibility has been known primarily by its "characteristic vices of envy, resentment, and servility." But recent social thought has revived its more admirable qualities—moral conservatism, egalitarianism, loyalty, the struggle against the temptation of resentment, and above all, "a sense of limits" that recoils from liberal competitiveness and greed (Lasch 17). In

environmentalist discourse, for example, the twin communitarian commitments to moral conservativism and political liberalism lie behind the politics of the "human scale" (Schumacher), the "steady-state economy" (Daly), "sustainability" (Brown), and other such checks on unbridled economic development, the high-growth concept of progress on which both liberals and socialists stake their social programs (Killingsworth and Palmer).

Lasch's analysis, in one of its remarkable sweeps, rescues the communitarian values from the liberal tendency to dismiss the provincialism, narrowness, and bigotry of the lower middle classes. His genealogy of the communitarian ideal includes social critics as impressive and influential as Emerson, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King, Jr. But Lasch the chastened liberal withholds his full approval, stopping short of a communitarian polemic and strongly suggesting the key problem of this revived outlook—its tendency toward nostalgia and an idealization of a village mentality no longer meaningful in mass culture.

Other champions of the concept of community have evinced doubts as well. In *Habits of the Heart*, for example, the best-selling sociological study of American indecision over "individualism" and "commitment," Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton explain the modern longing for commitment in terms of the decline of community in liberal culture. The longing for lost community is said to account for the rise of the therapeutic subculture and the formation of "lifestyle enclaves"—the ubiquitous "support groups" and special interest organizations that appear to accompany the rise of professional people into high status positions in the liberal culture (the individual's transition—in the terms developed by Lasch—out of the extended family of the petty bourgeois community and into the urban society of the higher middle classes). But when reviewers attached the label of "communitarian" to *Habits of the Heart*, the authors demurred. Their latest book begins by conceding a limited sympathy with communitarianism: "If philosophical liberals are those who believe that all our problems can be solved by autonomous individuals, a market economy, and a procedural state, whereas communitarians believe that more substantive ethical identities and a more active participation in a democratic polity are necessary for the functioning of any decent society, then we are indeed communitarians" (Bellah et al., *Good Society* 6). But they worry about being confined within a definition too narrowly conceived: "the word 'communitarian' runs the risk of being misunderstood if one imagines that only face-to-face groups—families, congregations, neighborhoods—are communities and that communitarians are opposed to state, the economy, and all the larger structures that so largely dominate our life today" (*Good Society* 6). Now, Bellah and his coauthors defend the life of institutions as well as communities and insist that "only greater citizen participation in the larger structures of the economy and the state will enable us to surmount the deepening problems of contemporary social life" (*Good Society* 6). In the

debate over communitarianism, they thus take a position between the politics of the petty bourgeoisie and the politics of classical liberalism.

However, because of the large gap between family-sized groups on the one hand and institutions on the other, social critics, including theorists in composition studies, would do well to consider intermediate social formations. The concept of "discourse communities" is just such an intermediary. It tropes on the petty-bourgeois concept of community, extending it into the space between small, face-to-face communities, which correspond more or less to the linguist's "speech communities" (Gumperz) and the wider field of practice known as "society," the realm of institutional discourse.

The discourse community may exist as an emerging cooperative arrangement that may or may not ever achieve institutional status. In this sense it is most like the "lifestyle enclave" described pejoratively in *Habits of the Heart*. Bellah's assertion that enclaves of like-minded people are weak substitutes for traditional communities has the effect of limiting the development of "support groups" for people weakly represented by communities and institutions—people like gays, victims of domestic violence, and the elderly (in their new role as the social majority). To restrict the term *discourse community* to local or established communities may have the same dampening effects on groups that first define themselves in opposition to the established community by their styles of communicating with one another (as well as by their "lifestyles").

The problems of location, origin, difference, and community are deeply rooted in American popular culture. They form, for example, a regular topic in Hollywood movies about the old West, like *Shane*. In the typical situation, the open range has been ruled by the cattle bosses, who have no use for fences and settlements. They take as much of the prairie as they can control by raw power. They feed their herds and build their fortunes on the unbridled will to power. Then the homesteaders come, small ranchers and dirt farmers, staking out bits of the range and cutting off the old natural boundaries and passageways—the rivers and streams and cuts and gaps. These newcomers have, to say the least, a different set of goals and values and a different way of doing business. Gradually the competing interests strive to control the direction of the community, and the battle—legal and physical, squawking and pecking—is on.

Discourse community, as the concept has developed, tends to imply the settlement of a discourse in a certain place. To use the term *discourse* (without community) is to imply instead a homeless type of language practice that can erupt (like dirt farmers on the open prairie or homeless people in midsized cities) in any established discourse community. The metaphor of the global discourse community, by contrast, suggests that these invading discourses and their users come from *some other place*—like the dirt farmers from back East (or like "the homeless," who must once have had a home and are thus neither a virus nor an abstract "problem," but a group of people that, for very real reasons, have lost their places

to live). These interlopers within an established discourse community want to recreate the community by importing values and practices from previous experiences, from different places. Now, in dialectical combat, they will eventually either conform to the established requirements of the new community or change the community to accommodate their own perspectives.

But, just as values and practices, when separated from their place of origin, tend to become idealized and utopian, the interlopers in the established community identify their own subject position not directly with the old place that they actually experienced, but with something like Habermas's ideal communication community. After all, the dirt farmers left the East for a reason—usually an economic reason—despite their clinging to some version of the old place's values.

Thus, instead of restricting the meaning of discourse communities to local sites defined according to the communitarian *ethos*, and instead of distinguishing between established communities and free-floating (infectious) discourses, and instead of blaming conflict within discourse communities on a simple desire to make one place into another, I would say, in sum, that most people stand between two kinds of discourse communities: *local discourse communities*, groups of readers and writers who habitually work together in companies, colleges, departments, neighborhoods, government agencies, or other groups defined by specific demographic features; and *global discourse communities*, groups of writers and readers defined exclusively by a commitment to particular kinds of discourse practices and preferences, regardless of where and with whom they work.

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