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ABSTRACT

This paper explains that an interdepartmental writing across the curriculum course at Syracuse University was developed and proposed by a writing teacher and a professor of experimental psychology and psychopharmacology. The paper states that the course, Perspectives on Drug Experience, was to be offered in both writing and psychology and sought to involve students in discussion, argument, and discovery, incorporating writing as a vehicle for exploration, intellectual development, and the sharing of knowledge. It lays out the course in four units: (1) Reading, Discussing, Responding; (2) The Science of Drug Action; (3) Drug Users; and (4) Policy Debates. The paper relates that the course featured as its centerpiece dialogue over texts, problems, and issues and that an open discussion format took the participants through territory that a content course using writing-to-learn is unlikely to tread. It presents a discussion of some of the factors built into this environment, which seem to have been productive--they center around three themes: the diffusion of authority, the significant positioning of a rhetorical perspective, and the discussion forum as a collective setting. (Contains 6 notes and 13 references. Includes an attachment, "Ethos and the Play of Knowledge.") (NKA)

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The Dialogic Instructor: Co-Teaching Across the Disciplines.

by Henry Jankiewicz

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The Dialogic Instructor: Co-Teaching Across the Disciplines

Henry Jankiewicz

Expanded version of a paper delivered at CCCC, March 27, 1999.
Panel: "Ways of Teaching and Co-Teaching Across the Curriculum"

The current model at Syracuse University for writing across the curriculum (WAC) is a simple and flexible arrangement which cultivates and receives linkages on a case-by-case, proposal-by-proposal basis. Projects originate both from inside and outside the Writing Program and at any level, from broad university initiatives like learning communities, to departmental initiatives, to proposals from individual instructors. Under this system, several forms of WAC efforts may be in effect at the same time. Sometimes writing instructors might be consulting in writing-intensive content courses, or teaching writing courses aligned with other units, or, as in my case, co-teaching in another department. The overall pattern of activity is context-driven. Projects are often transient. Budgetary politics and arrangements are varied and complex.

It was in this context that the interdepartmental course I am going to discuss was invented and proposed by myself and my co-teacher. I'm a veteran adjunct instructor in the Writing Program. My co-teacher was Tibor Palfai, a full professor in experimental psychology and psychopharmacology in the Psychology department.

In a number of ways, our situation was singular; it took advantage of our particular circumstances and the resources specific to them, which detracts from its status as an exemplar. On the other hand, because the project was somewhat anomalous, and departed from the format of many WAC collaborations (and by that I mean faculty workshops, journal-keeping, writing to learn content, revisions of drafts) it seems to me to have escaped some of the disadvantages of such links. Less like a courtship between writing and psychology, our design had what felt like some of the characteristics of a true collaboration, one in which the disciplinary perspectives of psychology and of composition--and rhetoric--came off as dialogic, a dialogue that came to include student discourses as well.

Our course originated with my co-teacher, Tibor Palfai. Tibor, originally from Hungary, is a fluent speaker of English; however, he is not fond of composing in English. Back in 1985, he recruited me through mutual friends to help him develop a textbook based on his on his upper-division psychopharmacology course. We produced two editions of this book, *Drugs and Human Behavior*, over twelve years, during which I got an unintended but substantial education in pharmacology and neuroscience. What pertains here is that, for years, we sat in Tibor's kitchen, processing an enormous variety of texts from literature, history, sociology, physiology, pharmacology, and other fields. We celebrated and declaimed texts; we argued concepts; we debated sociobiology, mysticism, drug law; we taught each other; we marveled over new

scientific developments; we relished the styles of the canonic literary drug writers.

It was specifically out of this activity that we developed a proposal for a course to be offered in both Writing and Psychology: "Perspectives on Drug Experience." Our impulse in proposing it was a practitioner's one. We wanted to involve students in the kind of discussion, argument, and discovery we revelled in, and wanted to carry our dynamics into the classroom. The course was not about memorizing and mastering content, and not specifically about writing in a discipline. It was about inquiry and engagement, about interpreting forms of discipline-related knowledge, and about the textual self one uses to negotiate the terrain. It incorporated writing as a vehicle for exploration, intellectual development, and the sharing of knowledge.

The course was laid out as follows:

Unit 1: Reading, Discussing, Responding
(3 weeks)

<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To initiate student discussion</p> <p>To provide feedback on course practices</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Four articles previewing upcoming class work</p> <p>Chapter from Restak's <i>Receptors</i> (popular science writing)</p>	<p>Writing:</p> <p>Informal responses</p> <p>Short essay / response</p>
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Unit 2: The Science of Drug Action
(3 weeks)

<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To investigate the neurobiological perspective of drug action.</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p><i>Receptors</i>, Richard Restak</p>	<p>Writing:</p> <p>Responses (some e-mail)</p> <p>Research reports on specific drug effects</p>
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Unit 3: Drug Users
(4 1/2 weeks)

<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To assess firsthand accounts of drug use</p> <p>To contrast subjective with scientific knowledge</p> <p>To learn about drug use from users' perspectives</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Selections on drug use: DeQuincey, Burroughs, Huxley, short pieces</p> <p>Lecture presentation and video presentation</p>	<p>Writing:</p> <p>Essay (or other)</p>
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Unit 4: Policy Debates
(4 1/2 weeks)

<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To evaluate and critique public arguments, use contrasting perspectives</p> <p>To explore and develop positions</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Varied selections from recent journalism on drug issues</p>	<p>Writing:</p> <p>Argument or critique of argument</p>
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Due to an imbalance in registration, ten of the fourteen students registered in the class were upper division psych majors; three were minors. An informal survey I administered revealed that, as one might expect, their discipline-specific coursework to date had mostly been content-driven. All together, the group identified a total of twenty course experiences that addressed "thinking and analytical skills or the use of methods over familiarization with content." This reinforced observations I have made in other contexts that, often, the disciplines at the undergraduate level seem concerned primarily with general academic thinking and writing strategies rather than specific expert ones.¹ Education is often an expectation-and-assessment process, not a teaching one (viz., "you will not be taught this, but you will be tested on it"). As an indicator of this, the survey asked students about their use of the discipline-specific APA format. Eight out of the thirteen students had never been asked to use APA format in their course writing. All had been asked to purchase a short manual, and all understood that, as psychology majors, they were expected to use the format, but apparently there was no significant emphasis on use, no time however cursory devoted to instruction, and I infer, few consequences in grading.

Our course featured as its centerpiece dialogue over texts, problems, and issues. An open discussion format took us through territory that a content course using writing-to-learn is unlikely to tread. Following is a discussion of some of the factors built into this environment, which seem to have been productive. They center around three themes: the diffusion of authority, the significant positioning of a rhetorical perspective, and the discussion forum as a reflective setting:

¹In assessing writing within disciplines, however, evaluation criteria could often be expected to reflect specific expert discourse practices in implicit ways, as readers demand of students texts what they value in professional texts.

Diffusing Authority

The course was not content-driven, but inquiry-based.

Content-driven environments with presentational formats and texts (textbooks) support a monolithic authority. Instead, we functioned as a reading circle, with a diffused authority. Discussions were fresh, unrehearsed and unscripted. Informal writing and discussion activity were designed as heuristics for students to develop paper topics within a broad range of choice. This arrangement opened up the field for different modes of inquiry to take place at the same time, as different students sometimes worked concurrently on different kinds of intellectual tasks.

The course did not require formal disciplinary reading or writing

This would obviously be a disadvantage in a curriculum focused on genre writing in a particular field. However, in another sense, this factor was freeing. Our readings drew on disciplinary knowledge but were less authoritative than formal disciplinary texts. They were skewed and invited the negotiation of meaning, leaving interpretation and issues of reception to the audience. They represented the interestedness of claims-making characteristic of texts in disciplinary communities. The rhetoricity of the texts was more visible than in the type of technical exposition found in textbooks, and neither instructor owned them; that is, the utterance in the texts was discrete from the utterances and arguments of the instructor(s). The readings thus were targets for comment from all angles.

In this course, writing tasks were not discipline-specific, but were held to general academic expectations (reasoned claims and evidence, accuracy, coherence). The types of projects varied widely.

Activity was student-centered

Although the germ of the course lay in our (the instructors') history of conversation, for the most part, especially at the beginning, we held back and let, or required, students to talk and respond to one another. As a result, student voices were really the central text. There were only two official lecturing occasions, when each instructor gave a presentation, and one of these turned out to be heavily participatory.

Dual instructorship served to displace authority

Neither discipline officially owned the course, which was a tremendous and unusual advantage for the writing interest. Authority was by no means erased, but it was decentered. I was the administrator, the final arbiter of course policies and grading. Tibor, a charismatic teacher in the Psychology Department who had attracted most of the registrations through other courses, wielded authority by precedence (a former teacher of many of the students), by reputation, and by his professorial ethos.

Given our structure, any claim was by necessity made in a dialogic context, open to reframing from other perspectives. This was equally true of claims made by students, by the instructors, and by the authors of the readings. Student drug users were often in a position to critique readings authoritatively. On the other hand, claimants with scientific knowledge were in a position to question the idiosyncrasies of individual experience. Writers had to choose, evaluate, and reflect on positions. Moreover, we, the instructors had, on occasion, to rationalize our positions explicitly, in the face of challenges from the other field, which had the effect of destabilizing them.

Instructors shared a relative balance of content knowledge

This was an unusual idiosyncrasy and advantage in our case. I am conversant with the content of psychopharmacology and am a functional reader of expert texts in that field. I can answer many technical questions in the classroom setting, and only occasionally have to be corrected or updated.

Instructors had an established style of discoursing

This was far from a trivial factor in the success of our discussions. We were already comfortable discussing texts and, like seasoned team mates, we knew what we could generally expect from one another in novel situations. In addition, we knew our style for disagreeing and how we could exploit it in presentation.

Breaking the Rhetoric Barrier

WAC initiatives have been in place since the late 1970's (Russell), and have brought an array of composing practices to content classrooms. The types of practices that have been preserved and propagated within the WAC movement,

however, are those compatible with the core philosophies of most disciplines, amicable enough not to be intellectually intrusive. They constitute a project of assistance and service rather than one of revisioning.

Certain rhetorical approaches are likewise theoretically compatible with the positivist models of knowing found in many fields. Instances of these would be classical, humanistic approaches that inquire respectfully into the conventions and thinking strategies of disciplines (Bazerman; Odell) or contrast proofs and reasoning across disciplinary boundaries (Hult). On the other hand, there are strains of rhetorical inquiry that pose more of a challenge. A theoretical perspective like the rhetoric of inquiry, for instance, a fairly recent arrival on the WAC scene in the early 1990s, could easily make for bad blood. As Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey (3) point out, modern scholars tend not to see their own activity as rhetorical, a belief that stands in opposition to critical rhetorical enterprises characterized as epistemic, hermeneutic, neosophistic, or postmodern, all of which challenge foundational claims to knowledge. For instance, to draw on an example close to our realm, there is an epistemic divide between seeing drug abuse as a biological phenomenon, and seeing it as a text or artifact produced by the discursive practices or semiotic organization of a culture.

We can get a sense of potential conflict from a passage by John S. Nelson, writing of the rhetoric of inquiry. Although Nelson is a seminal figure associated with the McCloskey and Nagel rhetoric seminars and symposia at the University of Iowa, which propagated rhetorical analysis as an intellectual vision among interdisciplinary faculty, his treatment of the subject in the following passage waxes almost inimical:

This is the time for the rhetoric of inquiry to enter the drama, not to displace philosophy in general or epistemology in particular so much as to improve them. The rhetoric of inquiry arises alongside other attacks on foundationalism in metaphysics, epistemology, metaethics, aesthetics, and other domains of philosophy. It helps to reject the insistence on absolute, certain, noumenal, or otherwise transcendental foundations for judgment, and it curtails the impulse to search for them. It excoriates the naive treatment of objects as simple givens of unmediated action or experience: what Wilfrid Sellars eschews as "the myth of immaculate perception." But it also criticizes the sophisticated conception of objects as transcendental givens of distorted performance or experience, susceptible to correction in light of universal criteria. (Nelson 263-4) [emphasis mine]

It takes little stretch of the imagination to envision how well a compositionist or WAC administrator would fare in bringing this sort of anti-foundational critique into the traditional classrooms of the positivist sciences. It would play as the height of presumptuousness.

Therefore, in our dialogic environment it was a crucial advantage that Tibor can take a philosophical view of science and is comfortable with a rhetorical reading of scientific knowledge, at least to the extent that we can agree to disagree in the context of productive discussion. Because of this, both rhetoric and psychology had voices, and the tensions were productive. Each discipline provides leverage for qualifying and exposing the assumptions of the other. On the other hand, sometimes there were unexpected overlaps and analogies. Once, unexpectedly, when I described to Tibor Volosinov's view of consciousness as a movement of signs, he agreed, alluding to the way information is molecularly configured in the brain, in patterns that could be seen to resemble signs. Furthermore, to anyone who has studied brain physiology, the conclusion is inescapable that reality is a construction, and that its assembly proceeds holistically with the construction of meaning. However, one side would have it that the brain is constructed in language, and the other that language is constructed in the brain.

Creating a Reflective Setting

The content classroom, which emphasizes the transfer of information, offers limited resources for reflection on the assumptions of disciplinary discourse. That is, in the scene where information is transferred and methods taught, the operating assumptions are often implicit and self-validating. Students, for instance, might memorize material and procedures without examining the broader assumptions and cultural forces that led to their instigation and survival as forms of discourse.² One advantage of our interdisciplinary discussion forum is that it was a site where knowledge and methods could be treated reflectively, and where metadiscourse could come into play about the strategies students were using to manage knowledge. On the simplest level, this was evident in Tibor's sensitivity to moments when students should be thinking and speaking like psychologists and in my sensitivity to moments when students should be thinking and speaking like critical rhetoricians.³ On the ladder of reflection above this were discussions about why students were or were not occupying these roles at key points when they seemed to be called for. In fact, one of the interesting features of this setting was the critical role ethos played as an important strategy for knowledge-handling.

²This is not to say that composition is any more virtuous in this respect, except that the sort of content considerations encountered there, such as contrastive rhetoric, often invite self-scrutiny by implicating themselves in unavoidable ways.

³It must be said that Tibor often took up this critical role more aggressively than I. On a number of occasions he provoked discussion by declaring that the author of a reading seemed to him to be a bold-faced liar with reprehensible motives, which he would demonstrate by calling some key claim into question.

Ethos and the Play of Knowledge

WAC discussions tend to construct the telos of disciplinary writing along fairly narrow lines. They conceive of the expert writer, who is the final product of the writing curriculum, in terms of the collective ethos of a field or profession, and in relation to canonical genres and finished written products, like journal articles, proposals, experimental reports, company memos, and so forth. In actuality, the situated learning and social activity of experts involve a greater range of discursive practices than those attached to the production of canonical professional texts. Namely, the scientist who writes the experimental article is not the whole scientist, but is, in fact, a rather abridged version of the scientist, even if we limit our treatment to the scientist as a discursive being. While some of these other discursive practices are employed in undergraduate academic settings, they are not usually explicitly identified nor articulated as disciplinary procedures, but are acquired by initiates through immersion and imitation.

Because of the structure of our classroom discussions, the open dialogue over texts and contrasting perspectives of several types in the analyses, we found ourselves producing and calling a number of these other discursive strategies into play.⁴ Students in our course could adopt the role they associate with their "natural" selves (called the *natural figure* by Goffman), or the role of a drug user, of a psychologist, of a critical academic reader, and so forth, and these roles sometimes became the object of negotiations. For instance, one of the first texts we read involved a flawed categorization of biological drives. This could have been refuted with a reference to any basic psych textbook, yet our psychology majors responded unanimously to the article simply as public readers/consumers. This effect, then, came up for discussion. In other instances, these roles came to represent horizons of knowledge whose limits had to be considered. The scientist and the drug user can both speak with limited authority about use of a specific drug, the scientist providing generalizations without subjective knowledge and the user providing particulars, but perhaps erring in generalizing from the idiosyncrasies of one case.

Figure 1 lists and illustrates some of the key roles in our discourses, favoring those that have played a prominent part in the WAC literature. A key point is that the roles it identifies were in play in the same dialogic field (related conversations over the course of the semester) and were used on different occasions for different purposes, so that they functioned in much the same way that Aristotle envisioned ethos--self-presentation as a persuasive strategy.

⁴*Ethos*, with its Classical heritage and its connotation of credibility through the public virtues of the speaker, does not seem quite the appropriate term to use in this description. Erving Goffman (541) employed the term *figure* to describe the self, role, or persona speakers create for themselves in oral conversation. This has the advantage, as a term, of being modern and non-literary, and as a strategy, of being consciously rhetorical (or not), audience- and context-sensitive, flexible, and layered. However, because the term *figure* overlaps with the same term understood as *figure of speech*, I will, with apologies to Goffman, attach to his concept the more general term *role* (which I can imagine, he avoided for other reasons).

To see the writer's role as a flexible strategy gives us access to an analysis of students' spoken and written texts that moves beyond some of the limiting binaries produced by the structure of WAC discussions. For instance, the first two items in Figure 1, the natural role and the general academic role, represent the WAC/WID divide.⁵ This polarity has been extended through discussions into a seemingly intransigent set of binaries, such as WAC/WID, generic/specific knowledge, knowledge-making/adapting to disciplinary conventions, individual/collective value, resistance/accommodation, "voice versus discourse, learning versus performance, process versus form" (Kirscht, Levine, and Reiff 369). In their article, "Contributions of Academic and Dialogic Journals to Writing About Literature," MacDonald and Cooper provide an emblematic case of these dichotomies, mounting a study which evaluated the use of dialogic journals (freewriting, unstructured responding, writing-to-learn) versus academic journals (structured academic tasks for writing-in-the-disciplines) in a Chinese literature course. The experimental set-up, which evolved naturally from the conceptual structure of WAC discussions, suggests a false dilemma in which there is some choice to be made between *either* the dialogic or the academic approach, with the results in this case generally favoring the latter.

The WAC/WID bifurcation arises largely from a static and compartmentalized vision of writing subjects and of genres defined, procedurally and perspectively, in terms of those subjects. Elsewhere and more recently, MacDonald (1994), like other theorists feeling constrained by the limits of reigning paradigms, pushes beyond the idea of a polarity to a developmental staging of a set of roles like those I have listed:

It would help to abandon some of the formulations that have restricted us to binary choices--for example, academic or nonacademic, convention or self-expression, accommodation or resistance. If we conceive of degrees from novice to expert practice on a continuum, there may be at least four points along the continuum that novices move through in gaining access to academic discourse:

1. Nonacademic writing
2. Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting other's opinions, and learning how write with authority
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge
4. Expert, insider prose. (187)

⁵The writer as construed through WAC writing-to-learn activities is the quotidian, expressivist self using writing to explore new knowledges. Posed in opposition to this is the writer of WID (writing-in-the-disciplines), who is construed as the aspirant to a collective discourse, one who must appropriate community conventions as efficiently as possible. The WAC self gardens, shops for groceries, and tries to make sense of course work; the WID self produces expert knowledge in a field.

MacDonald suggests that these stages might be used to inform curriculum, which, for instance, could implement the first two in early college writing experiences and progress from there. The narrative I would construct from this model is that, at the beginning of the process, one makes sense of the knowledge of a discipline by reading it through the eyes of common sense experience. The personal and everyday circumscribe the technical way of knowing. ("Freud had some pretty strange ideas.") At the end of the process, one has the capability to make sense of everyday experience through the eyes of disciplinary schemas. The technical circumscribes common sense ways of knowing. ("Forgive me, my id is acting up today.")

MacDonald's suggestion for development in the passage above involves a linear sequence of stages, which has a tendency to maintain the compartmentalization and discreteness, over a span of time, of what I have referred to as discursive roles. The model implies that one uses and then discards the nonacademic role and its concomitant ways of knowing at an early stage, and at a later stage adopts the expert role. This is an understandable inference for a writing teacher looking at sequences of texts with the aim of producing a certain kind of discourse (expert) and seeing the process as a gradual progression of learning and refining appropriate moves and editing out inappropriate (nonacademic) ones, of progressively eliminating one voice and displacing it with another. However, the model stabilizes the roles themselves as static, coherent entities, points of departure and arrival. Even with its implications of progress, it re-enacts the dichotomies that produce the hard distinction between dialogic and academic writing.

The model that became apparent from our work in WRT 400 resembles MacDonald's but suggests a more recursive, dynamic form of development in which multiple processes run in parallel, and in which many roles are in play simultaneously. I would argue this is not only because they are used for different purposes, to achieve different kinds of credibility in social situations (speaking as a drug user, for instance, to claim authoritative first-hand knowledge), but because they are also used as devices for organizing knowledge. For example, the experience of being stoned is not officially part of the public identity of a psychologist; to access this, a student has to speak using a different role, framing a different identity. Seen in this way, we might say ethos functions as a form of *topos*. The roles are associated with particular discourses that are stereotypically "allowed" to know only certain data and their relationships to other data in certain ways; hence, they become sites of knowledge and resources for invention (*topoi*). To call up certain combinations of data, then, necessitates one's switching from role to role.

For example, one of the advantages of our dialogic instructorship is that it provided us with an opportunity to model for students how expert academics, in a cross-disciplinary peer relationship, might go about discussing a problematic text. The opportunities for undergraduate students to observe this kind of discourse are unfortunately rare, yet this type of exchange is a staple of intellectual life within and between scholarly communities, and is an important hidden dimension in the processes of producing canonical professional texts, like

journal articles. In addition, this kind of exchange can be exciting and edifying, especially if one is invited to participate. Generally, Tibor and I used, in flexible and nuanced ways, a klatch of quickly shifting roles to relate to one another. We addressed one another as psychologist and rhetorician, as respected friends, as pranksters and provocateurs, as opponents in debate, as co-authors of a textbook, as American and European, and so forth. This is simply to isolate some moments from many more which involved the many roles used by students as well. In student writings, these considerations translated to major rhetorical decisions about voice.

In disciplinary learning, students are in the process of learning a new way of knowing (a method), which will in turn re-organize their experience by providing them with new systems of concepts. However, developed as part of a curriculum, the steps to this method are themselves assimilated as contents of experience, for instance, in the form of demonstrations of practices or classroom activities. To make sense of the new, we refer it to the familiar, what we already know. ("Freud has some pretty strange ideas.") We could therefore argue that students in the process of academic initiation will have occasion to call up natural roles representing established bases of knowledge (Goffman's *natural figure*) to manage disciplinary ones (new ways of knowing), in which case we should expect to see natural roles/voice appearing in the texts they produce, even at late stages of education.⁶ In regard to the MacDonald and Cooper study, this would suggest that students need recourse to both the type of activity represented by dialogic journals and that represented by academic journals. We might also expect to see, or invite, amphibious species of discourse that share characteristics of both, or that alternate rapidly to make comparisons between different domains of knowledge. In this view, the stubborn polarity in WAC discussions between writing-to-learn and writing-in-the-disciplines, between dialogic and academic journals, between expressivist and disciplinary voices, can be seen as an unproductive artifact of attachments to narrow, static definitions of real and textual selves, and of the politics of ownership of these definitions among academic departments.

⁶Two mutually framing figures like these are strongly reinforced in classroom discourse, when a teacher uses vernacular discourse to explain material encountered in the technical discourse of course textbooks and articles.

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Ethos and the Play of Knowledge

Natural Role

Reader/consumer, drug user

I found this reading to be not as entertaining as the last assignments. This seemed to be more of a textbook.

The entire next week I spent smoking crack and weed with my childhood pal.

General Academic Role

General strategies (summary, analysis)

Each neuron consists of axons and dendrites that serve as deliverers and receivers of messages between other neurons. [General academic approach to technical exposition, seems to model itself on textbook discourse.]

Formal Disciplinary Role

Insider to insider, formal setting

In each of the studies considered above, an effort was made to elucidate some of the specific epidemiological factors involved in the transmission of hydatid disease. In each case, field research was carried out (student text, cited in Odell 90)

Informal Disciplinary Role

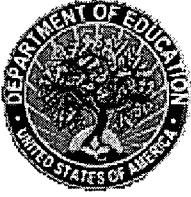
Insider to insider, informal setting

Well, Narby doesn't account for how structural information could be translated from the molecular level to the macro level and at the same time become visual imagery. What receptor system does it impinge upon? Does it go directly into memory? It's fascinating stuff, but the explanation is missing important steps.

Extradisciplinary Role

Expert to expert across disciplines, expert to public

Rhetoricians would say that articles like these highlight cultural stereotypes to lay down *backing* for *warrants*. In other words, they help shore up assumptions that can be used later to support arguments for drug control.



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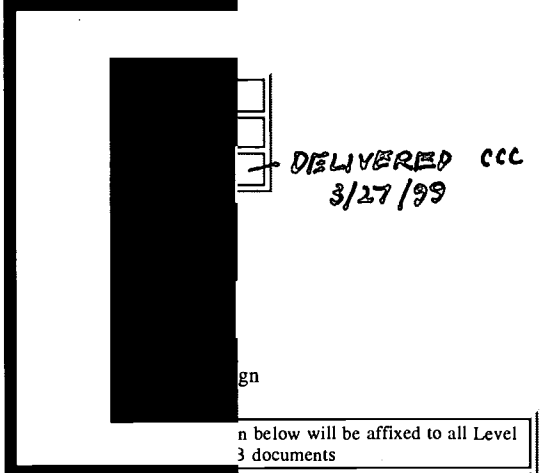
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