Network Rhetoric:

A Network Ethnography of the Knowledge Work of System Builders in Child Care and Early Learning

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Abstract

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An interdisciplinary project situated at the intersection of workplace writing, network theory, rhetorical theory and the study of public discourses, this dissertation argues for how these areas of inquiry intersect productively so that we can better understand the effects of workplace writing on the social and material worlds of stakeholders in the community. This argument is grounded in over a year of field research at a nonprofit resource and advocacy organization (QCR) that is conducting a messaging campaign to build public will for improving the quality of child care in Washington State. My work traces how participants translate for QCR's diverse stakeholders the state's official model for quality child care, and uses network theory to link the participant's rhetorical work to the material conditions of child care that research shows are essential for child brain development. Network theory is useful as an alternative to container metaphor-based constructs of writing context because it can better account for the complex situatedness (Mara & Hawk, 2010) of knowledge workers in a networked and globalized economy. My use of network theory also shifts the study's focus from the work that participants do in producing a wide-range of written genres

to the *effects* of their rhetorical activity—the "net work" (Spinuzzi, 2008) of building and maintaining a network of relationships across organizational, political, cultural, and material boundaries. Better understanding how rhetoric, and rhetorical activity, builds networks contributes to a pedagogy for preparing students to work in the interconnected, globalized workplace where institutional and other boundaries have less meaning than they used to and where the value of work can be difficult to locate.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Network Rhetoric

Introduction

Figure 1.1: A good child care classroom. Image scanned from a training manual for the ITERS-R, the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating System-Revised

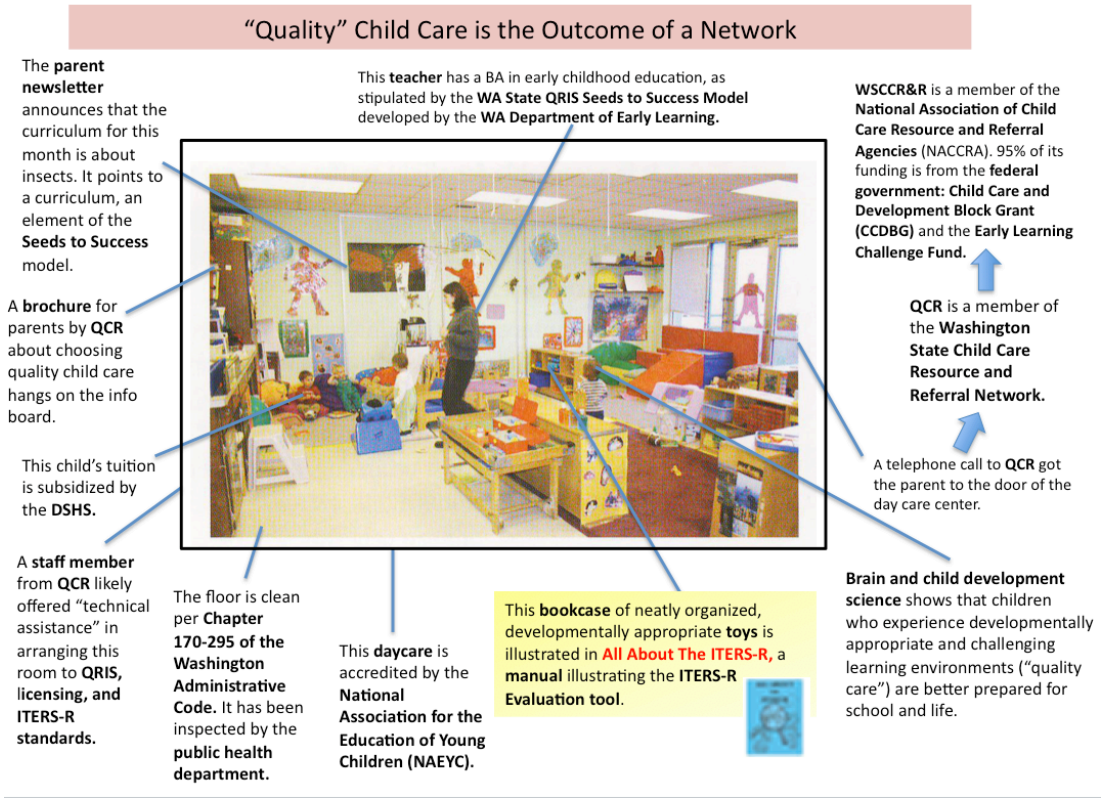

Figure 1.2: A quality child care classroom. The same image with lines connecting the members of the quality child care network to their material traces in the quality child care classroom. Members are bolded in the captions.

The difference among the view of the child care classroom in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 is whether or not the network, of which the quality child care classroom is an outcome, is visible to the viewer. The difference is also whether or not the viewer views the scene as one that is static and its origins opaque, or dynamic and its origins transparent. How did the quality child care classroom come to be? Who, and what, has contributed (and continues to contribute) to the outcome of this cheerful, fun, and enriching environment for children? The short answer is in the bolded names in Figure 1.2, which include my participants in this ethnographic study of knowledge work[1] at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). QCR is not the child care facility pictured above[2], but a non-profit resource and advocacy organization that provides support services to parents and child care providers. In addition, QCR also contributes to early learning system-building initiatives at the city, county, and state levels.

So, how did I come to learn to see networks? A few months into my field work at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR), I picked up a thick manual that was lying on a desk in the empty office where I was waiting to conduct an interview. I flipped through it and was surprised to find images of a child care classroom that looked a lot like my toddler

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[1] The idea of knowledge work originated with Peter Drucker, a prominent philosopher of management and economics. Knowledge is the new capital of the post-industrial knowledge economy. Knowledge work is widely construed as work that requires an ability to apply specialized theoretical and analytical knowledge and to maintain a mindset of continual learning (Drucker, 2001, p. 305). Later in this chapter I turn to symbolic analytic work as the working definition of knowledge work for this dissertation.

[2] This is a scanned image of a child care classroom from the *Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Edition* (Harms, Cryer, & Clfford, 2003). This image is meant to represent quality child care environments in general, rather than a particular location.

daughter's, down to details such as the type and organization of the toys and the partitioning of the room by low slung bookcases into differentiated play areas. When I asked one of my participants about the purpose of this manual, she explained that it was a guide for a rating scale used to assess the physical environment of a child care center—she called it the Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scaled, Revised, or ITERS-R. This is one of the assessment tools used to assign ratings for the Washington State Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), the initiative my participants were working to publicize. The images in the manual guided the rater in what to look for when assessing quality child care: ample and appropriate toys, right-sized furniture and distinct play areas organized by theme and function according to the cognitive, social, physical and emotional developmental needs of young children. Suddenly, I began to see my daughter's daycare classroom a lot differently. Where once I had seen a cheerful classroom with friendly and smart teachers who love my daughter, located at a school that is known within my social group as "good" (1.1), I now saw a space which had been quite intentionally arranged to the specifications of a quality child care classroom, as determined by an external authority. In addition, within this arrangement, my daughter was just another toddler with relatively predictable and scientifically verifiable developmental needs. In other words, what had previously appeared to me as a unique and local phenomenon of good child care, was suddenly abstracted (or globalized, to use Latour's term) by an official notion of quality child care mediated by this assessment tool. Perceptually, at that moment, I had stepped into Bruno Latour's world: Objects, Latour argues, are actants that frame human interaction—objects are the "means of constructing the social world" (Latour, 1996, p. 240). For Latour, interactions—such as child care—are localized and globalized by the mediation of objects. In other words, while my

daughter experiences day care everyday as a wholly local phenomenon, her experience is in fact mediated by an assessment tool that shapes the experiences of children more generally.

With this new view of my daughter's classroom as a globalized interaction, the vast socio-technical network (Figure 1.2—the ITERS-R is boxed in yellow; other members of the network are in bold) that is allied to produce this outcome of quality child care became visible to me: the many public and private agencies, organizations—including QCR—and rhetorical structures—such as the quality topos—and laws, texts, toys, people, toys and furniture. Latour would call Figure 1.2 a spatio-temporal map of the quality child care interaction. In his words, "If one attempted to draw a spatio-temporal map of what is present in the interaction, and to draw up a list of everyone who in one form or another were present, one would not sketch out a well-demarcated frame, but a convoluted network with a multiplicity of highly diverse dates, places and people" (Latour, 1996). In other words, a spatio-temporal map of an interaction is a starting point for tracing the network of which that interaction is an outcome. It suddenly made sense to me that my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR), is one member in the massive assemblage that results in my daughter's quality child care classroom (QCR is called out several times in Figure 1.2). In this moment, I had begun to learn what I had set out to do: to learn how to read the knowledge work of my participants at a medium-sized organization through the lens of network theory.

Socio-technical networks, however, are not static chains of members locked into permanent alliances—my daughter's classroom has not always been as it is, nor is her classroom the norm among daycare facilities city-, state- or nation-wide. Quite the contrary, in fact. The quality of child care in the United States is highly inconsistent, lacks the stabilizing mandate of centralized regulation (in contrast, funding K-12 education is

constitutionally mandated in Washington State) and is highly vulnerable to the winds of economic and political change[3]. From a network perspective, this means that the negotiated alliances, or "splices," among the members of the quality early learning network have to be constantly maintained and renegotiated as the social and economic conditions for investment in quality child care change. Spinuzzi (Spinuzzi, 2008) has a name for this kind of activity; he calls it *net work* (p. 16). And this is the kind of work that my participants at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) do as they work to build the early system towards the goal of quality child care and early learning for all children. In other words, I argue that the knowledge work that my participants do is this rhetorical-political activity of net work.

At the highest level, this dissertation will argue for a network view of knowledge work. The implication of this view is ultimately in how we value knowledge work and how we understand how knowledge work gets done. From a product-oriented view (one that is often reinforced by college-level professional and technical writing courses) my participants at QCR produce documents, both collaboratively and individually—many of them, in many drafts, including official and unofficial genres. But this is not how they define their work, nor the terms by which their work should be valued. To the contrary, my participants work to build the quality child care network in Washington State so that they can achieve what the motto of QCR promises: "Giving every child a great start." In fact, there are material traces of my participants' work in Figure 1.2. In the bottom left corner the caption reads, "A **staff member** from **QCR** likely offered **"technical assistance"** in arranging this **room** to **QRIS,**

[3] Studies have shown that while many parents assume that child care and early learning is regulated, there is actually relatively little national and state oversight. Licensing rules are uneven, often not enforced, and weak. Only 11 states require criminal background checks on employees in child care centers. According to a study of states' standards and oversight for child care, two-thirds earned a failing grade. This means that these states fall short in providing standards, regulation and resources for child care providers to meet the basic requirements of maintaining health and safety standards and to promote children's development and learning (NACCRA, 2009).

ITERS-R and **state licensing** standards." Technical assistance is the type of work that my participant Charlene did when she visited child care providers as they prepared for a visit from the state licensor. She used several documents of her composition to mediate her work with child care providers and to enroll, or persuade them to align with, the standards for quality child care. From a network perspective, Charlene's work was that of "enact[ing], maintain[ing], extend[ing] and transform[ing]" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 16) the quality child care network. Put another way, Charlene's micro rhetorical activity of composing the documents she used to educate the child care providers resulted in the material outcome of the quality child care classroom.

Like most knowledge workers, my participants do primarily discursive, rhetorical work, yet to focus exclusively on their micro rhetorical activity within the context of the organization overlooks how their work has outcomes that materially impact stakeholders in the community, such as children at a child care center. Workplace ethnographies have often drawn boundaries around organizations as hierarchical structures or discourse communities, without taking into account how the outcomes of the knowledge work at that organization circulates beyond the organization's physical or discursive walls (Beaufort, 1999; Dautermann, 1997; Henry, 2000; Paradis, Dobrin, & Miller, 1985; Smart, 2006; D. A. Winsor, 2003). More recently, however, scholars (Spinuzzi, 2008; Wilson & Herndl, 2007) recognize that a distributed and technologically mediated view of knowledge work necessitates tracing how rhetoric circulates across the boundaries of organizations, communities, cultures, domains, or other bounded structures. At the highest level, then, this dissertation focuses on closing the gap, both ethnographically and theoretically, among my participants rhetorical work for QCR and the material outcomes of their work for children in

child care, in both the local and the global sense developed above. In summary, the central areas of inquiry of this dissertation are represented in the following questions: How do we trace, both theoretically and ethnographically, the effects of workplace rhetorical activity on stakeholders in the community? 2. How does rhetorical activity, and rhetoric, function to build networks? And, 3. How is net work, and how are networks, made visible and comprehensible to the members of the network?

Rhetorical Work=Symbolic Analytic Work=Net Work

The rhetorical work of my participants at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) can also be understood in terms of the realm of work that Johnson-Eilola (Johnson-Eilola, 1996) adopted for much of technical communication and other professional discursive activity. This is the realm of symbolic analytic work—the ability to "identify, rearrange, circulate, abstract and broker information" (225). The following scenario from my fieldnotes of a meeting among two of my participants on the QRIS Communications Project, the major work project of my participants during the time of my fieldwork (more on this below), invokes many examples of this kind of work activity. From the account of one meeting we learn that my participants search for information on the internet, determine its value and share it with colleagues; produce documents that track individual and team progress in order to accurately and efficiently collate and report it in an annual report to QCR's funders; gather in meetings to coordinate work and share information; communicate directly with QCR's stakeholders—child care providers; actively shape stories about child care for the media; and prepare

documents that translate the official documents and language of child care "systems" people into documents and language that child care providers can identify with:

> We entered the small conference room at QCR's offices for the first monthly check-in meeting among Charlene, the team's representative from QCR's Provider Services division, and Eleanor, QCR's communications director,
>
> The purpose of this meeting was a monthly check-in by Charlene with Eleanor's progress on her goals for the QRIS Communications Project. It was Charlene's job on the project to manage the complicated work plan spreadsheet and timeline that tracked the project's progress completing the grant's goals. The main idea was to record progress as it happened in order to make it easier and more efficient to write the annual progress report to the grant funder at the end of the fiscal year. In the previous grant year collection of this data had been uneven and disorganized.
>
> The three of us sat down at the conference table and the meeting started informally. Charlene had brought in QRIS models from North Carolina and Virginia that she had downloaded from the internet, and she spent some time sharing them with us. Although it was not officially part of her job, Charlene likely knew more about QRIS initiatives across the US than anyone else in the state. This became particularly true when the state drew back a lot of its funding for the QRIS initiative when the recession hit and fewer Department of Early learning staff were working on it. The conversation then moved to the politics of early learning at the state level, a few stories each about our kids and news about a new state-of-the-art child care

facility opening to much fanfare in March. Finally, Eleanor gave a brief update on her progress getting media hits for issues about quality child care in local TV stations and newspapers. She recounted how a reporter had recently called her for help framing an article on drop-in child care center. She also promised to begin updating her media hit tracking list for these monthly meetings with Charlene.

Charlene then began telling a detailed story about a technical assistance (TA) visit she had done with a child care provider who was upgrading her family child care business to a child care center, but maintaining the same facility—a house. According to Charlene, the child care provider had been given sixteen pages of deficiencies by the state licenser that needed to be corrected before her facility could be licensed as a child care center. The provider had called Charlene in for a site visit to help her fix these deficiencies. Charlene continued to tell us how she had used the "Seeds" QRIS model to structure how she approached giving assistance to this provider. She did not show the provider the official "Seeds" document, however, but a simplified "translation" document that Charlene developed for just these type of situations. (fieldnotes 1/8/09)

If we understand the work of Charlene, and the rest of the QRIS Communications Project team, as symbolic-analytic work, or knowledge work, as the primary occupation of the largest group of workers in the knowledge society (Drucker, 2001, p. 307), then the stakes are high for understanding the nature of this work for workers and the implications of this work for stakeholders in the community. It is not easy, however, from the perspective of the meeting recounted above, and its focus on sharing and documenting information, to

remember that the ultimate goal of Charlene, Eleanor and the rest of the QRIS Communication's team, is not an air tight report to the funder, but materially improved child care conditions for as many children as possible. This is the angst of the symbolic-analytic worker—it is often too difficult to see how brokering information makes a material impact on the world. One contribution of this dissertation is to offer a method of making visible the links among symbolic-analytic work and its material outcomes for stakeholders in the real world; or, to "trace with precision a chain of activity that connects the writing of [a document] to a given public action or impact" (Grabill, 2010, p. 202).

One of the differences among symbolic analytic work and the industrial work oriented around the making of things that dominated the early part of the 20th century is that knowledge work and its outcomes are not very visible due to its primarily socio-cognitive nature. For example, how much of Charlene's or Eleanor's work recounted in the above field note was visible to their colleagues, QCR's stakeholders, or even themselves? Technical and professional communication scholars (Spinuzzi, Hart-Davidson, & Zachry, 2006) are motivated to make knowledge work more visible and quantifiable, especially within industry, because the material outcomes of symbolic analytic work are often hard to trace and thus this work can be hard to place value on in a context of goal-driven and outcome based evaluation of work progress. My participants at QCR, for example, face the challenge of quantifying and narrating their progress on the QRIS Communications Project into an annual report to their funding organization that is structured by a template of goals, objectives and objectives-achieved. The task of collecting and tracking this information is so difficult, in fact, that the task occupies a good deal of the work time Charlene has allocated to the QRIS Communications Project.

In addition, the products of symbolic-analytic work tend to have very short shelf-lives. Many of the documents produced at QCR are like the purchasing procedures manual written by one of Dorothy Winsor's participants in *Writing Like an Engineer* (D. A. Winsor, 1996)—they have to be revised and renegotiated as soon as a situation arises that was not previously anticipated (p.74). In other words, many documents are out of date almost as soon as they are finished, or never finished at all. One of my overall observations of my participants at QCR is how many of the documents they produce have extremely short shelf lives, if they ever reach their intended audiences at all. Often this short lifespan is due to changes in the socio-political context of their work over which they have little direct control. Documents produced, for example, for a state-level initiative that loses funding and political capital, suddenly become archival material, that, at best, might function as starting points for future initiatives. It is difficult, therefore, to place value on these documents as evidence of work accomplished, since post-production these documents have little or no function. For this reason, a new view of the work that many knowledge workers do, such as the work that my participants do at QCR, is necessary to displace the valuation of their work from documents (or other *products* of symbolic-analytic work) produced to the *effects* of the production of these documents. Network theory, I argue, because it shifts the object of study from the documents themselves to the relationships that they mediate, affords this essential shift away from locating value in the products of knowledge work, to the effects of it.

Network Theory as a Rhetorical Theory

> "As Latour argues (Latour, 1991, p. 115) rhetoric builds networks. These networks are nets that incorporate what they catch (just as early Christians were told to be 'fishers of men,' men who in turn became fishers of other men)." (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 40)

Understanding knowledge work from a network perspective, or in terms of the building, enacting and maintaining of sociotechnical networks, has been most fully developed in technical communication by Clay Spinuzzi in his 2008 book, *Network.* A network is, fundamentally, a metaphor for ordering (Law, 1994) the relationships among people, organizations, texts, technology and other material things. The network metaphor[4], invokes a series of nodes, or members, that have been *persuaded* to interconnect with each other such that they hang together in an "assemblage," or net. The making and maintenance of this network does some kind of work in the world, such as deliver universal telephone service, or quality child care, and is identifiable only as this work is materially manifested in a visible way. For example, Spinuzzi explores how a telecommunications company and the telecommunications industry manages to deliver the illusion of consistent and durable

[4] There are two major fields of theory that have developed the network metaphor as a theory of relations—actor-network theory and activity theory. These traditions have distinct origins and sometimes divergent purposes. Spinuzzi's 2008 book, *Network,* teased apart what each tradition has contributed to using the network metaphor for understanding how sociotechnical networks function for knowledge workers. For my purposes here, I will not belabor which aspect of the network metaphor is contributed by which tradition of theory, as one of my projects is to articulate network as a more accessible and broadly useful framework for writing studies researchers. It is enough to recognize that the main contribution of activity theory is a historical view of how networks develop over time, while actor-network theory is more interested in the nature of the rhetorical-political connections, or "splices," among the "actants" in the network. Thus, taken together, it is possible to talk about a network that is constantly changing and evolving over time as a result of the rhetorical-political activity—the net work—that enrolls new members or maintains the connections of existing ones. This is the understanding of network, and net work, that is the foundation for my work.

telephone service despite its history as a complex, historically evolving network rife with conflict and contradictions. The network is an alliance of telephone lines that provides service to every home in America, a history of government regulation that has insisted that telephone service be made universally available, customer service workers who answer the phone and take requests for new phone lines, the computer program that these customer services workers use to log calls and to relay them to the technicians who will physically connect the telephone lines. Without the enrollment of any of these members, telephone service would not be so reliably delivered. It is therefore vital that each human, and nonhuman, member is persuaded to remain allied with the network even if conditions change. Thus, telephone service is the outcome of a complex assemblage of people, laws, organizations, and technology who have been persuaded to hang together in rhetorical-political "splices" (p. 34) over time. In this sense, rhetoric is the glue that holds the network together.

Rhetorical settlements among actors, or members of the network, however, are contingent on the conditions in which they were made. When conditions change and negotiated alliances fail, things can go very wrong: for example, a telephone company customer's dog is let out of the yard and is killed (see Spinuzzi, 2007). Spinuzzi, and the tradition of actor-network theory, have already characterized the alliances among members as being rhetorical-political. "Net workers," a group in which Spinuzzi includes workers and managers, "sorely need to know how to make arguments, how to persuade, how to build trust and stable alliances, how to negotiate and bargain and horse-trade across boundaries" (2008, p. 201). But the vague characterization of rhetoric as agonistic persuasion in the Aristotelian sense—as if rational settlements are a kind of glue that holds members together —is

unsatisfactory and incomplete. As Spinuzzi states in the quote at the beginning of this section, "networks are nets that incorporate what they catch" (p. 40). An Aristotelian, agonistic characterization of how rhetoric functions to build networks, therefore, overlooks the extent to which rhetoric has ontological and material powers. It overlooks how the outcome of rhetorical activity is not necessarily rational settlement among competing interests, but material and ontological change. It is already acknowledged in network theory that enrollment in a network has ontological and material consequences for members, but how rhetoric specifically functions at the location of these splices is not well articulated. Thus, in this dissertation, I draw more widely on rhetorical theory, and in particular on Burke's identification and consubstantiality, to take a close-up view of how rhetoric functions to mediate the enrollment of members of a network[5].

Because a network view of studying rhetoric shifts the focus of study from the production and products of rhetoric to the material effects of it, network theory also contributes to a material rhetoric, in particular the material rhetoric of Michael McGee. In

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[5] A concept roughly parallel to net work that comes from the tradition of activity theory is called "knotworking" (Engeström, Engeström, & Vähääho, 1999; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). In this dissertation, however, I have chosen to exclusively define my participants' work in terms of "net working" because of how it foregrounds the primary object of study of my study: the rhetorical-political nature of my participants' work to manage the associations among stakeholders in early learning. Knotworking, or the "continual tying and untying of genres, objects, texts, people, institutions, and ideologies ecologies are co-constituted, improvised, shaped, and re-formed" (Fraiburg, 2010) foregrounds the cultural-historical perspective of the development of groups or individuals. This view also has value for my project, and in fact slips in to my argument, especially in my discussion of how the historical public discourse of early learning has developed over time. But my primary concern is not the development of the early learning network over time, but how my participants' knowledge work managed the associations among network members in real time, or what we might call the interactional present. In addition, my project is primarily ethnographic, rather than theoretical, so my focus is on using theory to make sense of my participants' experience, rather than to develop theory. For this reason I chose not to explicitly move back and forth among the actor-network view and the activity theory view of how networks are built or historicized. Spinuzzi (2008) has already satisfactorily exhausted such a project, and I am interested in moving forward with a more unified network theory that simultaneously incorporates the epistemology of activity theory and the ontology of actor-network theory. In other words, I argue that a theory of networks can be similar to how we understand and teach light: light is both a particle *and* a wave, rather than there being two different kinds of light.

some sense McGee laid the ground work for understanding how rhetoric functions in an interactional, rather than a structural, framework, such as actor-network theory. For McGee, rhetoric does not represent the world, but it "mediates the relations of humans beings that together constitute it, and, therefore, the material" (Biesecker & Lucaites, 2009, p. 3). In addition, McGee understood rhetoric as a social function, or "a medium, a bridge among human beings, the social equivalent of a verb in a sentence" (McGee, 1982, pp. 38-39). This view also reinforces my argument that an agonistic view of how rhetoric functions to build networks is not adequate. In other words, in at least a simple sense, rhetoric functions to constitute the associations among members of a network, whether we understand this function via activity theory's developmental sense of weaving or actor-network theory's negotiated sense of splicing.

Another bridge among a material rhetoric and network theory is the idea that rhetoric is itself material, and "just as substantial and consequential as any element of its setting" (Blair, 1999, p. 16). This conception of rhetoric opens up the possibility of rhetorical structures, such as topoi, for example, behaving like actors in a network; that is, as members of a network that mediate the enrollment of other members and via which new members are enrolled. This function for rhetoric will become particularly apparent in Chapters 3 and 4 in the discussion of how Catherine and Charlene enroll the quality topos to negotiate relations with their stakeholders in the QRIS Communications Project. There is a lot more to say here about how a material rhetoric contributes to network as a rhetorical theory, much that is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Some of these intersections and parallels will be further developed, and some will be left for future development.

Net Work at QCR: Enrolling Stakeholders in the quality Child Care Network

Taken what I have developed so far, this dissertation uses the case of the knowledge work of participants at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) as a site to study how rhetoric functions to build networks, or to do net work. But what is it, specifically, that participants at QCR *do*?

At the highest level my four key participants, Eleanor, Charlene, Catherine and Judy, worked as system builders in the service of the historic (over 100 years in the making so far) project to build a stable and sustainable system of quality child care and early learning in King County, Washington State, and, ultimately, in the United States. Specifically, during my period of fieldwork at QCR from April 2009 until June 2010, they worked on a grant-funded communications project charged with preparing and disseminating messages about the state-wide initiative to build a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Washington State. A QRIS is an assessment tool that codifies what quality child care is and provides a framework for assigning ratings to child care providers. Ultimately, when the system is in place, parents will be able to access these consumer-type ratings as a tool for locating quality child care for their children. Additionally, a QRIS provides training and other support to child care providers to improve their quality rating. The overall idea is to raise the quality of child care in the state above what is required by the state's minimal licensing standards.

The main idea behind the QRIS Communications Project was to prepare the ground for the initiative's key stakeholders in anticipation of the full, but at this point still future, implementation of the QRIS system. The net work that my participants set out to do was to enroll the support of the major stakeholders in the QRIS, parents and child care providers, in order to generate public will for what is a largely taxpayer-funded project. Parents are important stakeholders because their awareness and buy-in are necessary to maintain public support and funding for the program. Also, their support anticipates their use of the consumer-type ratings to find quality child care providers for their children. Child care providers are important stakeholders, not only because their businesses are the object of the assessment and the training and coaching services offered, but because the system is structured to require voluntary participation by providers. A QRIS system is not a licensing system that is required by law. Instead, it relies on market forces to encourage providers to participate. In theory at least, once the rating information is made public to parent-consumers, providers will want to opt into the system in order to benefit from the coaching and training support offered in order to increase their ratings. In theory, a high rating becomes a marketing tool for providers.

Because of the heterogeneity of the stakeholder groups, however, enrolling them into the QRIS initiative is easier said than done. The QRIS initiative in Washington State is structured around an assessment model for quality child care called "Seeds to Success," which is shaped by the discourse of school and education. The discourse of school and education is not a frame for the care of young children that all parents, and other stakeholders, subscribe to. This is one of the reasons that existing state licensing requirements are so minimal. The conditions for child care in which broad public consensus

is already enrolled, such as the maintenance of clean floors, are already codified in the Washington State Administrative Code as basic licensing requirements. But being licensed is only the point of entry onto the QRIS rating scale of 1-5 apple "seeds." Public support for the regulation of other elements of the QRIS model, such as curriculum development and the professionalization of teachers, however, is still very much in formation and does not enjoy the enrollment of a relatively stable structure, such as the law. This means that the QRIS Communications team was faced with enrolling new stakeholders in the QRIS "Seeds" model when wide public consensus on the model had not already been enrolled.

Communicating to stakeholder groups about the QRIS initiative is therefore a very difficult and delicate rhetorical task, making my participants' work a productive site for studying how rhetoric functions to build networks, in this case the quality child care network. What constitutes quality child care is a complex political and rhetorical problem because of the diversity of the stakeholders. For example, the immigrant parents of a toddler in the full-time care of grandma might articulate quality child care in terms of keeping the care of their child within the family and their cultural context. Middle class parents who pay a lot to send their children to all-day daycare centers, however, might articulate quality in terms of the richness of the learning environment that their children will experience. Likewise, the child care providers in each context articulate their motivation and qualifications for caring for children differently. A member of an immigrant community might recognize her qualifications in terms of her cultural background and her experience with and love for the young children in her community. On the other hand, a teacher in a licensed child care center might point to her qualifications earned via formal training and higher education. The QCR QRIS Communication project team's job, therefore, was to translate the concept of quality

codified in the "Seeds to Success" model in order to identify it more closely with the values and situations of the various stakeholders. This rhetorical-political work of *translation,*[6] I argue, is one of the locations of the net work that results in the quality daycare conditions that children materially benefit from.

Before getting too close to the specificity of what participants at QCR do, however, it is important to recognize that most of the rhetorical work that I observed my participants doing was not unusual to knowledge work, what are called in professional and technical communication the practices of content development and content management (the difference has been conceptualized as "pilots" vs. "air traffic controllers" of complex documents and projects (Hart-Davidson, 2010, pp. 128-129)). My participants sat at computers and answered email, wrote and circulated various genres of documents both individually and collaboratively and talked on the telephone. They planned and attended meetings of small and large groups of coworkers at QCR in order to coordinate their work, and also informally communicated in hallway and break room chatter. Much of their work also involved colleagues from outside of the organization. Often these colleagues would be invited into the office for meetings or my participants would go off-site to meetings at partner organizations. Sometimes meetings of colleagues spread across a large geographic area would happen as telephone conference calls. And, of course, all of these work activities were facilitated by and mediated by technology, such as telephones and computers, calendaring, word processing and database software, cloud tools such as Yahoo Groups and

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[6] In actor-network theory, translation is the process by which the relationships among actors are negotiated and transformed to be mutually beneficial to the enrolled actors. In Chapter 4, I'll discuss how Charlene translates the state's official model for quality child care into terms that family home child care providers can identify with. In this interaction, both actors achieve their goals, although not in the same terms: The child care provider achieves licensing without subscribing to the state's official model; and Charlene is satisfied that the provider is more aware of how to offer a higher quality of care at her business. See Spinuzzi (2008) p. 88.

Survey Monkey, an office intranet, email programs, web browsers and the internet. It could be said that what is unique about what they do is in the content of these basic work functions, and in how these basic work functions affect the transformation of the material conditions of children in child care. But I am not wholly satisfied by this assertion. To do this is to look *through,* rather than *at,* the work that my participants do.

In fact, the pervasive puzzle of how content and form shape and constitute discursive work is one that motivates my work—one that I thought about often at my field site. At some point my participant's generic "knowledge work at a medium-sized non-profit organization" becomes the highly particular "communicating about the state's "Seeds to Success" QRIS model to the stakeholders of Quality Child Care Resources." But this line is very hard to identify in the field, and likewise in scholarship. As a field we rightly question the value of reducing workplace writing to a set of decontextualized genres (memo writing, proposal writing, grant writing, etc.), but then we also wonder why we should invest in the rhetoric and activities of a particular domain, such as the field of child care and early learning. Either extreme is critically untenable, yet I challenge any field researcher to be able to draw the line among the generic and the particular when observing a situation in the field. This problem may seem abstruse on paper, but for the field researcher it is experiential. For the researcher who will also teach professional and technical writing in the classroom, it particularly raises tough questions. As I watch my participants work, for example, answering an email to a colleague, I wonder what is it that I, as a trained writing researcher, know about what they are doing that is not dependent upon the domain knowledge that motivates their work? The answer, I think, is very little, except the ability to analyze their actions in terms of my schema, such as rhetorical situation, genre analysis, or network. This means that what I have

to teach students about writing in the workplace are these same schema, everything else they will learn within a particular domain. But within professional and technical communication there is a strong sense that we can't just teach rhetoric, or awareness, but we have to teach something concrete and domain specific as well (most recently, the emphasis has shifted from teaching particular genres to teaching particular technologies). So we teach genres, either explicitly or as rhetorical theory, and we try our best to situate the teaching of these genres in real world settings by setting up scenarios, or in the best case, internships. But theoretically this is a punt on the question of where form becomes content. We have, in a sense, only solved it by making students into ethnographic researchers themselves, a move Jim Henry made nearly two decades ago and reports on in his book *Writing Workplace Cultures* (2000). From my point of view as a writing researcher and a teacher, turning research practices into a writing pedagogy is a highly satisfactory outcome. All of this is to say that the tension among the specific domain knowledge of my participants, the field of child care and early learning, and a functional, more abstracted understanding of their work as knowledge work, is always present in this dissertation as theory, which points towards generalizing claims, struggles against the local, field specific data. I believe this tension, and the lack of a satisfactory solution for resolving it, is part of the point of my research.

Posthumanism and Bridging the Micro/Macro Gap

The content and form problem is one that network theory makes a contribution towards solving because it supplies a theoretical framework for bridging the micro and macro (or the individual vs. the structural) realms of discourse and activity. Previous frameworks that have been influential in writing studies, such as those founded on container metaphors (such as the

rhetorical situation, the discourse community and social constructionism), and critical theories that over-determine the shaping power of macro-level structures, have not been able to satisfactorily (see Driskill (1989) for a start) trace the effects of micro-level activity by individuals to the macro-level of history and culture.

Mara and Hawk (2010) (see also Russell, 1997; Spinuzzi, 2002b, 2003) have argued for how posthumanist theories, such as actor-network theory, enable scholarship to more accurately account for how both the micro and the macro are co-constitutive of a worker's context and activity. Posthumanism, which Mara and Hawk describes as, "a general category for theories and methodologies that *situate* acts and texts in the *complex interplays* among human intentions, organizational discourses, biological trajectories, and technological possibilities," (p. 3, my emphasis) affords a more complex accounting of the situation in which knowledge work is done. Network theory enables us to consider how the work that the QRIS Communications teams does is situated in relationship to the immediate rhetorical situation in which they are working (say, the rhetorical and organizational situation for the writing of a particular document), but also how the team's work is both shaped by and constitutive of the historical discourse on child care and early learning. This is an important turn in my work, because if we take this statement seriously, then the content and the form of my participant's work is no longer separable—participants at QCR are not knowledge workers in general, they are co-constitutive of the public discourse about early learning, and so is their work activity. For this reason, the public discourse of the field of child care and early learning over the last 100 years is also an element of this dissertation. In other words, the net work that my participants do to extend the quality child care network is shaping and shaped by the historical public discourse on early learning; conversely, analyzing their work

is an opportunity to see how the macro rhetorical structures of public discourse, such as the quality topos for child care, are circulated at the micro-level of discourse.

Attempts to theoretically account for what Mara and Hawk call the "complex situatedness" (p. 2)(a bulky term that replaces the boundary-invoking, but more commonplace term, "context") for knowledge work have mobilized new metaphors that can account for a more distributed and technologically mediated view of work activity: network and ecology. These new metaphors have been deployed by researchers in rhetoric (e.g., Edbauer, 2005) and professional and technical communication (e.g., Potts, 2009) in order to shift the object of study from isolated artifacts or workers to the dynamic relationships among the members of an ecology or network. The metaphors of both network and ecology imply systems in which the members, both human and non-human, share interdependent, mutually constitutive relationships and in which the source of any given product is impossible to trace to a discreet origin. These metaphors resist any kind of boundary setting between what might be "inside" or "outside" of the organization, field, community or other bounded entity, and therefore distribute agency throughout the environment, rather than locating agency within autonomous actors. As a result, adopting either an ecological or a network framework for studying writing and rhetoric, and the activity of knowledge work, shifts the study's focus from the work that participants do in producing a wide-range of written genres to the *effects* of the production of these documents—what Clay Spinuzzi terms the net work of building and maintaining a network of relationships across organizational, political, cultural, and material and boundaries.

The Complex Situatedness of Net Work at QCR

The work that my participants do on the QRIS Communications Project is situated in the local context of Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) as an organization, but also in the contemporary and historical political, economic, cultural, and social conditions of the field of child care and learning. If network theory facilitates the linkage among the micro and the macro realms of discourse, then it enables us to extend the situation for a worker's activity across historical, as well as organizational and discursive, boundaries. It is important, then, to be able to read accounts of the micro activities of my participants within this larger historical-political context. Doing so enables me to trace associations among the historical discourse of child care and early learning, my participants' knowledge work (or rhetorical activity) and the material outcomes this work has for stakeholders in the community.

Network theory has already developed a sense of how networks are historicized—how networks have a history of "settlements that accrete and sediment" (Spinnuzi, 2008, p.96). And these accretions of sediment are part of the complex situatedness of my participants' work. It is possible to understand, for example, my participant Judy's motivation for translating the official school discourse-based language of the QRIS "Seeds to Success" model into more ideologically neutral language that unlicensed care providers, such as grandmothers and extended family members, can identify with by tracing the history of the discourse that she is working within. The ideology of maternalism (the proper care of a young child is at home by mother or a mother substitute) has historical roots in colonial

America, yet there are still traces of this traditional and conservatively-minded ideology in Judy's work today. Her purpose, however, is not to advocate for maternalism, but for a more progressive notion of quality child care. Quality child care, as an influential, ideologically neutral, and thus capacious, topos in the public discourse of early learning, enables the net work of Judy, and my participants, because it unites within one cause stakeholders with otherwise divergent ideologies regarding the proper care of young children.

It is important to understand that the layers of history that accumulate into the conditions of the present—such as the traces of colonial maternalism in Judy's rhetoric—do not precede or exist outside of the meaningful context for my participants' work. In this way, my participants are laying down another level of sediment, as much as their worked is shaped by the contours of what has already been laid down. This, I believe, is an incredibly empowering statement, as it means that the micro contributions of writers in the workplace *materially contribute to the historical discourse*—no one, and no thing, is ever outside of it.

This rest of this section will sketch out the elements of the complex situatedness of my participants' work on the QRIS Communications Project in order to generally intoduce the work activity of my participants at Quality Child Care Resources. This section will address three facets of this complex situateness: 1. The ideological environment; 2. The economic and political climate around the project; and 3. The structure of the grant that funds the project. These three facets roughly correspond to the macro and the micro realms of discourse that constitute and mediate my participants' work activity. Each of these facets will also be developed in more detail in succeeding chapters.

As I have already begun to argue, my participants' work is complexly (I use this term to signify that I am not invoking a container metaphor here) situated by the cultural and historical discourse of child care and early learning. I conceptualize this macro level in terms of Condit's (1999) construct of the rhetorical formation, which she understands as shifting clusters of rhetorical structures agonistically poised in a given historical era of a discourse. The public debate on government sponsored universal access to child care and early learning, understood in terms of a rhetorical formation, has been structured by what Scott (2003) understands as series of scales topos—literally the weighing of the interests of one set of stakeholders over another. In brief, over the last 100 years child care advocates and opponents have weighed the values of maternalism against issues of welfare reform and a woman's right to choose to work outside of the home. From the child care advocate's point of view, the maternalists have largely succeeded in preventing the establishment of a system of universal access to child care and early learning by maintaining public support for the notion that the care of young children should happen primarily at home. The US is, in fact, the only developed western nation without a centralized, government-sponsored system for child care and early learning (Michel, 1999). Proponents for a centralized system have tried to enroll greater public investment with arguments for welfare reform, a woman's right to choose to work outside of the home, and the economic contribution women make to the workforce. But they have failed, overall, to secure public support for a centralized system. Instead, reforms have limped forward with limited central government support, relying instead on a complex network of private investment, public-private partnerships, non-profit organizations, such as QCR, and local and state-level initiatives.

Advocates, however, have made gains over the last several decades by putting aside arguments about welfare reform and women's rights and instead warranting their cause with new scientific research. This scientific research, and brain research in particular, is providing more and more hard evidence about the influence of a child's early experiences on their physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. While child care proponents have historically been concerned about the quality of care received by children in day care (in addition to whether there is access to care), these new scientific warrants have increased the influence of the quality topos on the debate. In fact, I contend that the quality topos has been able to solve the lack of stasis in the debate over universal access to child care: if science says that access to quality child care is a developmental right of children, then it doesn't matter if that quality care is delivered by mothers, nannies, or licensed child care providers at day care centers, as long there can be a common framework for what quality means. The most prominent evidence of the contemporary influence of the quality topos is the development of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, such as Washington State's "Seeds for Success" initiative, the model my participants work to publicize on the QRIS Communications Project at QCR.

Of course, there are still great rifts in the public discourse of child care and early learning, even among key stakeholders, such as parents and child care providers. George Lakoff, the linguist well known for his work on conceptual metaphor and the power of framing, wrote about how the media frames issues of child care and early learning (Lakoff, Bales, Grady, & Brandon, 1998). Lakoff points out how ideological frames for family structure, the "strict father" ideology on the right and the "nurturant family" ideology on the left, structure policy positions about early learning. On the right, the value of the sovereignty

of the family, of developing self-sufficiency in children and the value placed on traditional roles for women, inform policy positions that resist formalizing and systematizing government sponsorship of early learning. On the other hand, most advocates for early learning are informed by the liberal ideological frame that more easily supports the framing of child care and early learning as an education-based and government sponsored system. It is important to understand that this ideological rift exists even amongst stakeholders who are heavily invested in child care and early learning. The experience of my participant Charlene illustrates how she must translate for QCR's family home child care providers the QRIS "Seeds" model from language structured by the discourse of school and education to language that is more resonant with their identities as experienced lovers of children and small business owners.

Another major influence on the QRIS Communications Project has been the economic and political climate for the QRIS initiative in Washington State. The economic downturn beginning in 2008 severely impacted the funding for the state-level initiative to develop and implement and Quality Rating and Improvement System in Washington State. When I first began to be in contact with QCR in late 2008, the state-wide QRIS initiative was moving into an extensive field test stage of the "Seeds to Success" assessment model. By the time I began my fieldwork, the "Seeds for Success" model for quality child care had already been developed from the grass roots level during the preceding years, so the development of this model was not part of my fieldwork (there are layers and layers of sedimentation in the development of this model alone—by the time I began my fieldwork it had been essentially "black-boxed"). During the field test, the model would be used to evaluate and rate voluntarily participating child care programs across the state in order to test the reliability

and validity of the model for assessing child care. In late 2008, however, the legislature had to make emergency budget reductions that resulted in a much reduced funding level for the QRIS field test. Instead of the extensive state-wide implementation, the field-test would be limited to sites that were either self-supporting or supported with mainly private funding. The major implication for the QRIS Communication Project, which had already completed one year of a three-year grant, was that it was suddenly tasked with communicating to the public about a product that would not actually be available for a now indefinite period of time. At this point the main objective of the messaging campaign changed from enrolling new stakeholders in the QRIS initiative, to a more general message about the value of quality child care. This refocusing of the main objective of the QRIS Communications Project had implications for the work of my participants, as it necessitated that they had to reframe their work to their granting agency and the other stakeholders in the project.

In addition to the historical and contemporary rhetorical formation of the discourse and the political and economic conditions for Washington's QRIS initiative, the most local and concrete (and in this sense micro) conditions for my participants' work was the structure of the grant that funded the QRIS Communications Project. There is a lot to be said here about how the values of both public and private granting agencies structure the projects that they fund via the disciplinary action of grant templates and reporting protocols. Additionally, there is a lot to say here about how, for multi-year grants, the original rationale for structuring the goals of a project can be lost to change in personnel, and the ever-changing socio-political conditions of the project. Yet, for the most part, the grant structure is rigid, except to the extent that meetings with the funding agency can allow for small modifications. Much of the work that my participants on the QRIS Communications Project did was in

service of the grant structure, despite, at times, the lack of relevance of the work to the project team members. This fact will become especially evident in the work of Judy, the coordinator of services for unlicensed child care providers.

The grant that funded the QRIS Communications Project was awarded from a large, private philanthropic organization in Seattle. This philanthropic organization has invested locally in early learning in the form of funding a public-private partnership organization in Seattle to coordinate the systems-level work in early learning for Washington State. This organization is also an important partner organization of QCR, and it is not inconsequential that the CEO of this organization is also the former, and founding, CEO of QCR. This is significant because it is more evidence of how the network of organizations that make up early learning in Washington State today has evolved historically, the layers of sediment having been laid down over time, in order to produce alliances among the heterogeneous and largely independent organizations that stand in for a centralized system of early education.

The grant that QCR was awarded to build public will for the QRIS initiative and the "Seeds to Success" assessment model was organized around three goals that also reflect the fundamental structure of QCR as an organization. These three goals, as are the three divisions of QCR, were defined in terms of the three major stakeholder groups that QCR serves: child care providers, parents, and unlicensed providers (also known as family, friend and neighbor (FFN) providers). QCR has divisions that serve each of these stakeholder groups, and each division had at least one representative on the QRIS Communications Project team. The specific language of the grant goals reveals the relationship of each stakeholder group to a Quality Rating and Improvement System:

Goal A: More *providers* will understand the value of a Quality Rating and Improvement System and why they should participate in it.

Goal B: More *parents* will understand the importance of quality of care and its connection to a Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Goal C: More *Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers* will understand the importance of quality of care and apply their understanding to their care giving methods.

Each goal is broken down into 4-6 objectives that more specifically define the outcomes for each goal. The structure of the grant, and the protocols for working on a grant from a large, international funding agency, determined a lot of the work of my participants. For example, at the end of every grant year, the team had to submit a grant report to the funding agency that reported on their progress towards meeting the goals and objectives of the grant. In anticipation of writing this report, my participant Charlene created an elaborate work plan spreadsheet which tracked the team's progress on each objective and strategy of the grant structure. The process of writing the year-end grant progress report, and the task of narrating the positive, and the negative, progress of the team as the political and economic conditions changed for the project fell largely to the manager on the team, Catherine. The process of making the team's narrative of progress fit the reporting template required by the granting agency turned out to be a productive location to study the rhetorical work that my participants do to make the network visible and comprehensible to themselves and their stakeholders.

Of course, there are many more influences that shape the contingency of the QRIS Communications Project, including the personal histories of my participants and the

technological tools that mediate their work (an activity theory view) or that can be understood as actants in the network (an actor-network theory view). We already know that workplace writers draw on previous experience in both their professional and personal lives (Beaufort, 1999), and I have evidence that this is the same for my participants. While of course my participants' personal histories shape and constitute their work activities, my focus has been on the material, rather than the social or cognitive, traces of their work.

Research Methods

This section explains my methods of data collection. The more theoretical concerns of my research methodology, that is how I read my data and for what purposes, is developed in full in Chapter 2: "Making Workplace Rhetoric and Rhetorical Activity Visible: From Rhetorical Ethnography to Network Ethnography." Data for this ethnographic study was gathered at a non-profit organization in Seattle pseudonymously called Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). This site offered me access to communication professionals doing the rhetorical work of a 3-year messaging campaign around the topic of quality child care in anticipation of the development of a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

How I came to this project and this site.

Part way through my exam list reading I realized that I had begun to look for a research site for my dissertation work. Four books in particular inspired this decision: Beverly Sauer's *Rhetoric of Risk* (Sauer, 2003, p. 284), Dorothy Winsor's *Writing Power* (D. A. Winsor, 2003), Blake Scott's *Risky Rhetoric* (Scott, 2003) and Mary Lay's *Rhetoric of Midwifery* (Lay, 2000). Aside from just being good scholarship and compelling writing, these four texts share certain characteristics that I aspire to in my own work: 1. All four texts investigate a rhetoric within the domain of the workplace, technology and/or science; 2. All four texts investigate a rhetoric in which something is at stake for the participants in that domain (the high risk of mining; the function of power in the generation of engineering knowledge; the social justice of AIDS testing, the legitimation of traditional midwifery practices) and 3. All four texts are informed by situated research, to varying degrees ethnographic, but in all cases qualitative. In addition, each text draws on rhetorical theory (among others, such as social and cultural theory) as a lens for reading the practices observed at the research site. These three characteristics have shaped the way I conceive of this project.

In addition, each text is written such that both scholars *and* professionals in the target domain can access the ideas and find it useful in their professional and teaching practices. In other words, these texts make important contributions to the scholarship and pedagogy of rhetoric and writing studies while at the same time potentially contributing to the fields in which the research was done. This dual contribution is imperative in a time when scholarship in the humanities in general, and in professional and technical writing in particular (Clark, 2004) is facing increasing demands to prove its relevance outside of the academic sphere. Such a contribution, I believe, is also the particular affordance of ethnographic qualitative research. The recording and representation of ethnographic data is compelled to stay close to

the experience of the informants (an emic perspective) and resists as much as possible the substitution of informant experience and discourse with that of theory and the perspective of the researcher (the etic perspective).

It is not easy to obtain deep access to a professional context because of the proprietary boundaries of most private industry. Secondly, once access has been obtained, establishing an ethos that entrusts participants to the researcher can be a challenge if the researcher has little or no domain knowledge and has no purpose in that domain other than meeting their own goals (Doheny-Farina & Odell, 1985). Because of these challenges, the researcher's personal circumstances and network are often a factor in establishing access and rapport. Winsor secured access to her site because of her husband's employment at the engineering firm (D. Winsor, personal communication, July 10, 2009) where she did her research and Scott was already an activist participant in his target domain of AIDS testing (Scott, 2003). It was thus with increasing excitement and enthusiasm that I embraced a growing rapport with the staff at a non-profit agency in Seattle I pseudonymously call Quality Child Care Resources.

I first became involved with Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) as a parent a few months before the birth of my daughter in May 2008. Child care is absurdly scarce in Seattle for parents of all socio-economic levels. Child care is in fact so scarce that waiting lists for infant daycare are often 18 months long, necessitating that parents join waitlists before pregnancy, or that they face the absurdity of a wait list time longer than infancy (toddler care, beginning at 18-24 months, is slightly more available because the child/teacher ratios are higher). Understandably, I felt angry at the disempowerment such a system enforced on me and other parents at a very vulnerable time in our lives. Such was the exigence for my first

engagement with QCR, a private and publically funded non-profit social service agency in Seattle that has a program to support parents in placing their children in convenient, affordable and high quality daycare and preschool for infants and children. Because of this engagement, three months after Jane's birth QCR invited me to participate in a focus group session of parents on the UW campus who had used their services. At this event I was able to voice my frustration about the state of child care in Seattle and to inquire about advocacy on the behalf of working parents at all socio-economic levels. Child care is an issue that affects parents regardless of socio-economic class, and while parents of lower socio-economic classes face even greater challenges than middle-class parents, the histories of child care show that it has not been beneficial to the effort to secure universal access to early childhood education to associate it directly with class issues. In fact, the repeated association of child care issues with welfare reform is part of the rhetorical formation (Condit, 1999) of child care and early childhood education that has inhibited wide and sustained public support for a federally mandated and supported system of universal early childhood education (Michel, 1999).

QCR called on me again in October 2008 to ask if I would testify at a King County Council meeting on behalf of the agency in order to help secure funding during a time of an impending fiscal crisis. While my personal appearance was eventually deemed unnecessary, I wrote and gathered testimonies about the importance of QCR's work for parents going through the high-stakes and difficult process of placing their children in child care. As my rapport grew with the staff at QCR, I began to learn more about their work, in particular about their involvement in the development of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Washington State.

Washington is not the first state to develop a system to articulate and rate the quality of care offered by child care providers—such systems have already been successfully developed and implemented in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. More than a system that provides product ratings to consumers (parents in this case), a QRIS is developed to provide incentives and resources to child care providers to support them in increasing the quality of care that they provide beyond the minimum health and safety requirements for licensing. In order to establish the ethos of the rating system with all of its stakeholders, including parents, providers, legislators, and social service agencies, a QRIS is ideally developed from the grass roots level. Initially, I saw an opportunity to trace the development of this ethos via the archive of focus group meetings, public meetings and local, state and national agency reports and by gathering ethnographic data on the process as it continues to unfold today. I quickly learned, however, that this process, which is still underway, but currently largely stalled due to Washington State budget cutbacks, is highly political and contentious. My contacts at QCR made it clear that they did not want to talk about the insider realities of such a development process because of their own and QCR's stake and vulnerabilities within it. They offered me an alternative and related focus of study, however, the messaging campaign to prepare the ground for the public introduction of the state's QRIS, called "Seeds to Success."

Positioning at the field site.

This project is a workplace ethnography in the tradition of "action" research (Clark, 2004) and engaged scholarship (Barker, 2004) as it has been understood within writing studies, and in particular within professional and technical writing. As such, I situated myself as a collaborator, a role central to the practice of engaged scholarship, within a team at my

field site. At the request of my primary contact at QCR I wrote the following statement soon after my field work began in order to situate me for the broader office. The rhetorical moves that this statement make reveal my commitments to positioning myself as a researcher at my field site:

> Sarah Read is a Ph.D. student at UW in Language and Rhetoric (part of the English Department). She is volunteering at QCR to do research using an approach called "engaged scholarship." She is researching the language and communication practices of the development of the QRIS and the QRIS Communication Project. This means that aspects of her research work at QCR will be in collaboration with and beneficial to the mission of QCR. Her research is approved by the UW Human Subjects Division, which ensures the maintenance of research study participants' right to confidentiality via an informed consent process that she will introduce to you before an interview or an observation.

Faber (Faber, 2002) prefaces his book of mini-ethnographies of organizational change with a discussion on the problem of situating the ethnographic researcher within the organization of interest. His argument strives to articulate a stance that connects academic scholarship with social activism in part in response to Herndl and Nahrwold's (2000) argument that a researcher's purpose is not shaped as much by methodology as by social awareness and activism. Faber is critical, however, of such work that fails to show the engagement among the researcher and those being studied. Faber aims for the researcher to exceed the role of the passive data collector disengaged from the social structure and activities of the field site. For an articulation of this more hands-on approach he turns to Goodall's model of the "organizational detective," one who is part scholar and part detective

(11). Such a researcher fully investigates the research site but is not afraid to engage the research as a critic, a consultant, or in the case of Faber, a community activist (12).

Like Faber (see also Clark, 2007; Doheny-Farina, 1986) and I positioned myself within my site as an engaged participant. Given the list of possibilities above, I found consultant the most satisfying role, but collaborator was the most honest description of my stance in the community. In the positioning statement above I clearly stated that my work will be "in *collaboration* with and beneficial to the mission of CCR." This means that as a researcher I already agreed that the mission of CCR is generally beneficial and worthwhile and that I have no intention of producing scholarship or other genres that critique or aim to intervene negatively in its work (or the work of any individual working its behalf), either directly or indirectly, internally or externally.

Unlike Faber, however, I did not readily embrace the rhetoric of making change or intervention the outcome of my work. I did not want to position myself centrally within the tradition of scholarship that makes critiquing power its primary object. This tradition of qualitative research, in particular as it is espoused in the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), insists on moral grounds that qualitative research must respond to past practices of colonization by making resisting and intervening in dominant and often oppressive ideologies its justification. I find this tradition, which has been pervasive in the preceding generation of scholarship, problematic on the grounds that it oversubscribes academic scholarship to activist ends. I would like to articulate an ethnographic research methodology that usefully acknowledges this critical tradition of research, yet does not assume that this tradition will always be perceptive of what is interesting and useful to the field, or to my collaborators, or the only means to an outcome

that serves the ethical interests of its stakeholders. My approach does not deny that power operates through the daily activities of my participants and the rhetoric that they generate and mobilize to do their work, and it does not deny that this power has implications that are costly for certain stakeholders. But this approach does not insist that the primary object of the research practice is to identify these costs and to intervene.

QCR, and the national network of agencies like it, work within existing governmental and regulatory structures to forward their mission, and it is in their best interests to do so—they are both products of it and constitute it—although such agencies also provide some sites of resistance for less empowered publics. In this sense, although I am doing my field research at a non-profit organization, the issues regarding my stance towards the critique of power is not all that different from what it would be at a site in private industry. Although in this context it appears as a bit of an overstatement, Winsor's statement on her orientation towards power has influenced my own thinking. Building on Gidden's position that power is always both constraining and enabling, Winsor states that she believes that power relations in an hierarchical, for-profit engineering company are both productive and constraining; she states that power relations can certainly lead to inhumane behavior, but that hierarchical power relations also accomplish useful work, such as the production of engineering knowledge (Winsor 2003). The analogue here, I think, is that social service agencies who accept funding from power, such as QCR, are both constrained and enabled by shaping their mission within the interests of their funders. Also, of course, within an agency the size of QCR, there is a structural hierarchy for the employees who work towards the organizational mission that "Every child has a great start in life" (QCR website). As I have already articulated above, I

take these structural realities as a given, and position them as inherent to my work rather than as the object of it.

That said, I do think it is important to acknowledge that the structural positioning of QCR is certainly not one that is neutrally beneficial to all of its stakeholders, in particular because such imbalances are easily identifiable in language use. For example, conceptions of quality child care vary wildly by stakeholder group. Home-based child care providers potentially stand to lose the most from the development of a rating system which devalues what they consider the primary component of quality child care: long experience with and a love for children. I have already found evidence of this in a cursory coding of a focus group of Family Child care Providers. While the moderator used the word quality *many* times, the participants took it up only four times: quality is not their concept; the family child care providers do not own it. None of this is news to the staff of QCR, as they and sister agencies have years of experience and more focus group and survey research data to corroborate it. What is interesting to me, however, is not the *fact* of this actual or perceived threat to the vast home-based child care industry, but the rhetorical strategies that a messaging campaign (and other programs supported by QCR) can deploy to negotiate it. The rating system does have a lot to offer home-based child care professionals, but it will take some work for these stakeholders to trust it. The staff of QCR is not sure how to mitigate the threat of a rating system that privileges formal training so that these experientially trained providers will voluntarily opt-in. It is also not clear how final the current model of the rating system adopted by the Department of Early Learning (DEL) is, or whether the stakeholders still have power to shape it. My work as a research and a collaborator has been situated within these problems, among others as well.

Data collection.

My data collection methods were ethnographic, which I believe are defined by the researcher's extended presence at a field site and a focus on the participants' experience (as reported to the researcher and observed by the researcher) as the object of analysis. The data collection methods below reflect the broadest possible field for data gathering, therefore allowing me to gather data in an organically responsive mode while remaining within the boundaries of my IRB approval. Data was collected according to the following methods.

Semi-structured and ad hoc interviews.

- Scheduled interviews with the four key members of the QRIS Communications Project team at QCR, as well as impromptu discussion and questioning during participant observation.

Observations.

- Observations of employees, volunteers and consultants at work at QCR. Observations included meetings, workshops, conferences and individuals at work.
- Observations of public meetings, including the opening of a new child care facility.
- Observation of meetings at partner organizations, when my key participants were present.

Artifact Collection.

- Documents central to the workplace activity of the quality messaging campaign, such as drafts of webpage content, emails, reports and proposals.

- Documents in the archives of CCR, including focus group reports, survey results, and QRIS development materials.

- Public documents related to the development of the state QRIS, including a vast repository of documents on the State of Washington Department of Early Learning website: http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/qris/research.aspx and QCR's website.

- Documents external to CCR, including published scientific papers, books on the subject of child development and histories of child care and stories from the popular media, including television, the internet, newspapers and magazines.

My presence at my field site extended over the course of more than a year: April 2009-June 2010; July 2009-June 2010 with IRB approval. During this time I wrote over a hundred pages of field notes based on observations of my participants' work, mainly in meetings, gathered hundreds of document artifacts and interviewed each of my four main participants, Charlene, Catherine, Judy and Eleanor, formally at least twice. At least one of these interviews with each participants was a discourse-based interview (see section below). Other interviews were quick and informal, and so not all of my interview exchanges with my participants were recorded or formally transcribed, but rather recorded in field notes. It was my intent from the beginning that my presence at the field site would be at a low but steady level over the course of about a year and half. This choice enabled me to level the scope of my data collection at both the micro and the macro levels without losing site of either one; that is, to avoid either being drowned in the micro-activity of my participants' daily work

activities, or focusing too broadly on the changes in the economic and political climate for the QRIS Communications Project.

Interview Protocols

While most of my interactions with my participants were in the group setting of the QRIS Communications Project team meetings, I did conduct at least one formal, recorded and transcribed discourse-based interview with each participant, and multiple more impromptu ones. My method for these interviews was inspired by Anne Herrington's use of discourse based interviews in her 1985 study of the context of writing for two chemical engineering classes (Herrington, 1995). The purpose of a discourse-based interview is to elicit the rhetorical reasoning behind choices that authors have made in writing a document in order to gain an idea of the larger rhetorical situation, or context, in which they are writing, including how the texts are intertextual.

These discourse-based interviews were an opportunity to prompt my participants to unpack for me the rhetoric of child care and early learning, and in particular the local context for their work. I find it a very satisfying process as a researcher to prompt participants to recall their often complicated and nuanced reasoning for choosing one word over another, or referencing a certain idea over another, and therefore making visible to me, and themselves, the level of their own expertise and the complexity of their work. Prompts included: 1. Point to a place [in the text] where you could have said something differently, but chose not to. Tell me about your decision.; 2. Point to a place [in the text] that was informed by a conversation that you had with somebody else—who was that? When and where was that conversation?; 3. Point to a place where you had trouble coming up with the right way to say something—why was it so difficult? What audience did you have in mind while you

struggled?; 4. How successful do you feel that this text is? Putting yourself in the shoes of audience X, how successful do you think it is? See Appendix for complete protocol.

The Organization of this Dissertation

The order in which the following five chapters unfold essentially reflects the logic of my argument previewed in this chapter. First, Chapter 2 develops the theoretical impulse behind my methodology and proposes a methodology of network ethnography. Chapter 3 follows with a more detailed analysis of the macro-level, or the rhetorical formation, of the historical and the contemporary discourse of child care and early learning. Chapter 4 argues for how the micro rhetorical activity of my participants can be mapped to the material outcomes of quality child care via an understanding their rhetorical work to enroll new stakeholders as Burkean identification. Chapter 5 argues for a new genre, the network genre, a genre that functions to make the network visible and comprehensible to its stakeholders, while at the same time bringing it into being. Finally, Chapter 6, the conclusion, discusses the implications for this project and future directions for research based on the feedback I received from my participants at an event to share my findings with them.

Conclusion

The value that I hope this dissertation has for others who value rhetoric, and who either already value network theory or who come to do so via the argument presented in this dissertation, is to begin to be able to see discursive work in a workplace setting in terms of how it builds the networks that makes things happen in the world. This statement, I am

aware, is at once stupendously banal and, I believe, earth shatteringly true. In writing studies we are now comfortable with how workplace writers *compose* things: documents, arguments, genres, and knowledge and other products. And we are comfortable with how workplace writers *learn* how to compose new things when they enter a new discourse community (Beaufort, 1999; Selzer, 1983; D. A. Winsor, 2001). What network theory has to offer to this ouevre of what writers do in a workplace, is a way to trace the *effects* of learning how to compose and the activity of composition, or knowledge work. Of course, we also live in a postmodern world, and, as I will gesture towards more and more emphatically as my narrative unfolds, a posthumanist world in which the comfortable divisions of a Cartesian world have fallen away. As a result, we accept that learning to compose, composing and tracing the effects of that composed product are not discrete processes isolatable in either time or place. In fact, as I aim to argue in this dissertation, knowledge work *is* the work that builds networks, or net work. And accepting this statement has profound implications for how we value the work that writers do in the workplace. This statement is a link among rhetoric and net work, and is therefore a bridge among rhetoric and the material world. How *do* words become things? How does symbolic action become, touch upon, intersect, hinge to, or shape material reality? How do we convince ourselves, our students, and all present and future workplace writers that the words that they choose to do their work result in the conditions that *materially* effect real people in the real world? How do we finally, and convincingly, put the nail in the coffin of "mere rhetoric"? These are the questions that bubble underneath the more technical argument that this dissertation will embark on making.

This dissertation is, more than anything else, my story of how I came to see net work in action, or rhetoric in action, which, as I hope to argue persuasively over the next two hundred or so pages, amounts to the same thing.

CHAPTER 2

Making Workplace Rhetoric and Rhetorical Activity Visible: From Rhetorical Ethnography to Network Ethnography

An Evolving Methodology

This chapter will work towards articulating the methodology that informs how my work is motivated and how these motivations determine what I see in the data that I collected. As such, I am making a distinction between my research methods, which are primarily ethnographic, and my research methodology, or epistemology, for reading my data and making knowledge claims from it. At the highest level, my research methods are ethnographic, which I understand as the collection of data directly from informants via the researcher's extended presence at a field site. I have already detailed my field practices of participant observation, interviews and gathering artifacts in chapter one. My methodology, which has evolved with my project, is the subject of this chapter.

As my project has evolved over the last two and a half years, my understanding of my methodology has undergone an evolution: from a methodology defined by the *mode* of my study—a rhetorical ethnography—to a methodology defined by the *object* of my study—a network ethnography. This said, the break between mode and object is not always easy to maintain, or even wise to maintain. In their article about the importance of an ecology metaphor for writing research, Fleckenstein et. al. (2008) collapse the distinction between the

mode of research and the object of research, a distinction that has become increasingly slippery in my own research practice as well. They say: “An ecological way of thinking aligns phenomenon and research procedures to create the consonance, the harmony that we consider essential for rigorous and informative writing research (p. 393).” Such a statement is founded upon the value of reducing the distance between reality, or the object of study, and the researcher’s analytical lens. Such “consonance” (p. 393), they claim, enables a more holistic and context-rich account of conventional and new media writing. For the sake of this chapter, however, it is useful to maintain the separation of mode and object, at least initially. By the end of the chapter I too will have adopted a posthumanist lens for my reading my data that collapses the distinction between my activity as a researcher and my participants’ activities as knowledge workers in the field of child care and early learning.

This evolution reflects the intellectual and pragmatic journey that I have been on as a writing studies researcher, and the time it has taken for me to understand and articulate the stakes of my work. It has taken time for me to reach a clear understanding in part because one of the central projects of my dissertation work has been to define a methodology for studying how rhetoric functions in networks. Tracing how the rhetorical activity of my participants functions to build and maintain the emerging child care and early learning system was a project that I first had to identify in the field before I could articulate how I could study it and why this study matters to stakeholders in the field and at my field site. I am satisfied that my dissertation work has moved my research to this point of articulation, and what remains for the future is to operationalize, and further refine, this methodology via continued field research.

How this chapter is structured reflects the evolution of my methodology from one oriented around mode to one oriented around the object of study. This chapter begins with a discussion of what rhetorical ethnography is and then evolves about half way through into a discussion of how I am beginning to understand how to do network ethnography. While it is productive to articulate what rhetorical ethnography is, and is not, focusing on rhetorical ethnography falls short when it comes to understanding the stakes of my work for the field of professional and technical communication. The reason for this is that the ethnographic study of rhetoric and discourse in the workplace already has a fairly long history. It is not clear that what I understand as rhetorical ethnography can be persuasively distinguished from this tradition, even if this tradition has not previously been understood in the terms I propose here. However, to turn a methodological focus to the study of networks is still a relatively new endeavor with a fresh exigence: understanding sociotechnical networks is rapidly moving to the forefront of the field because of our increasing awareness of the distributed and technologically mediated nature of knowledge work.

What is Rhetorical Ethnography?

At the highest level, the work of a rhetorical ethnographer is simple to state: the rhetorical ethnographer engages in the research practices of ethnography—including an extended presence at a research site in the form of participant observation, interviewing informants and gathering artifacts—in order to study how rhetoric functions and how rhetoric is used in the field site. While cultural anthropologists have traditionally focused on culture as their object of analysis, rhetorical ethnographers focus on rhetorical structures, their uses, and their consequences. Importantly, however, language and language use have long been a

component of what anthropologists have included in the much problematized concept of culture: "…the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse…As interworked systems of construable signs…culture…is a context, something in which they [signs] can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14).[7] Ralph Cintron, a rhetorician who has long worked at the boundaries of rhetoric and anthropology, draws strong parallels between the disciplines of rhetoric and sociocultural anthropology: "both disciplines are based upon a broad assertion that cultures (including communities and groups) generate ideas, discourses and artifacts through processes of improvisation" (Cintron, 2003, p. 11). For example, what an anthropologist might identify as a "key term," a rhetorician might call a topos, or a Burkean god-term. Either way, the focus is on how language structures shape and constitute the context or culture of human activity.

Rhetorical ethnography, however, is more than just doing ethnography and reading field data through the theoretical lenses of rhetorical studies. It is certainly this in a simple sense, but one of the differences between studying the lives and experiences of people and tracing the use and shape of rhetoric is that rhetoric can travel across cultural, material, political and organizational boundaries in ways that are very difficult to trace. Thus, a major analytical project of rhetorical ethnography is the project of visibility—how can we make visible and comprehensible the circulation of rhetoric within and across publics, organizations, and any other bounded theoretical constructs that we call into being in order to make sense of the shape of society? In addition, contemporary rhetorical theory is heavily influenced by an epistemic view of rhetoric. Rhetoric, we understand, doesn't just circulate between and amongst social structures like a subway train zipping between stations; rhetoric-

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[7] See Writing Culture (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) for more on the postmodern turn in ethnography.

in-use actually constitutes the train, the stations and the tunnel in between. So, another project of rhetorical ethnography is theorizing how rhetoric functions to mediate the associations among the stakeholders.

Therefore, as I understand it, the methodology of rhetorical ethnography is the project of making *visible* (either discursively or graphically) how rhetoric operates in use to achieve the goals of a heterogeneous set of stakeholders. In addition, rhetorical ethnography is the study of how rhetoric functions in situated use to create, break and maintain *associations* among a set of stakeholders, or members of a network or assemblage (Spinuzzi, 2008) or a Latourian "thing" (or issue that gathers and constitutes an assembly)(Grabill, 2010)). While a set of stakeholders may not all share the same motivation or ideology, they are allied around a common objective, such as deciding how to redevelop an empty block in a neighborhood in Chicago (Rai, 2010), raising awareness of environmental issues via "toxic tours" (Pezzullo, 2007), forming an identity at the margins of society (Cintron, 1997), establishing the dredging of a polluted industrial canal as a matter of public concern (Grabill, 2010), or, in the case of my research, increasing access to quality child care.

Making The Circulation of Rhetoric Visible

The conceptual groundwork for articulating the project of making the circulation of rhetoric visible is, according to Ralph Cintron, in critical studies. In fact, Cintron (2003) explores "how the term 'critical,' as in 'critical rhetoric' and 'critical ethnography,' has become one way to imagine the convergence of rhetorical studies and anthropology" (p. 8). He claims that the term "critical" becomes a "unifying adjective" (p. 11) that dissolves

disciplinary boundaries if it is understood as the move to "unmask" (p.12) the entanglements of language and ideology, or rhetoric and language with power/knowledge. The critical project, then, and the ethnographic project, regardless of discipline, share a desire to reveal how power structures are reified in material conditions or tacitly used language structures and ideologies. This line of thinking resonates strongly with my argument in my article in *Technical Communication Quarterly,* "The Mundane, Power, and Symmetry: A Reading of the Field with Dorothy Winsor and the Tradition of Ethnographic Research" (Read, in press), that the topos of "power" has substantially shaped the ethnographic study of workplace writing and discourse within the field of professional and technical communication. While scholars have varied in the degree to which their work has undertaken the critical project of unmasking, the power topos has informed the object of study, the positioning of the researcher at the field site and the genre of the ethnographic account.

The point here is to say that much of the ethnographic study of workplace and technical communication has been motivated by the same critical project to unmask, or in my terms, to make visible, how rhetoric functions to constitute, to shape and to bring into being the rhetoric or everyday life, or the "way things are" (Nystrand & Duffy, 2003, p. ix). In other words, scholars in professional and technical communication have also been pursing a project of rhetorical ethnography, although not explicitly under the same methodological or disciplinary banner as scholars such as Cintron. In my *TCQ* article, I review the work of three scholars who have done ethnographic research within the field of professional and technical communication: Brenton Faber, Dorothy Winsor and Graham Smart. Each of these scholars has written major ethnographic accounts of workplace discourse, although the extent to which their research is shaped by an explicitly critical project varies from completely (Faber,

2002), to moderately (D. A. Winsor, 2003) to mildly (Smart, 2006). The point here is that Cintron's claim that the critical project within rhetoric and writing studies coincides with and intersects with the motives and objects of study in critical anthropology holds in the field of professional and technical communication as well. Hermeneutic projects to unmask or reveal are not necessarily critical, however; it depends on the whether the ends of the study are descriptive or interventionist.

Making the "mundane" discursive work of the workplace visible is also the primary impulse behind my work, and has significant precedent in the field. The project to unmask or reveal how rhetoric functions in situated use resonates strongly with what Dorothy Winsor described to me in an interview as the ethnographers credo: "To make the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (D. Winsor, personal communication, July 10, 2009). The project of unmasking, or to use a more neutral term, making visible, was what motivated her to study the rhetoric of engineering environments. During our interview Winsor also talked about how Latour had inspired her to see workplace and technical communication in a way that had not been available during her training in literature:

> Latour has such a good story and then he analyzes it in a way that makes you see things you haven't seen before. The ethnographers credo is something like "make the strange familiar and the familiar strange" and that is what he is so good at. He takes what looks like a *mundane* action and he makes it so that you see that it is doing something incredible. (D. Winsor, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

In this statement Winsor suggests that what workplace writing that might have been previously dismissed culturally as existing *a priori,* or as too commonplace to be visible, is in

fact also contingent, socially negotiated and *visible* when observed over an extended period of time by a careful outside observer. She credited her own discovery of this insight specifically to the ethnography *Laboratory Life* (Latour & Woolgar, 1986/1979). This book makes visible how the social world of a scientific laboratory produces the products of science, that is papers and other texts. This move to make the invisible visible also frames Paradis' et. al. early ethnographic research about writing in an industrial setting at Exxon ITD: "Written communication takes up a considerable part of the industrial employee's time…Yet in-house writing and editing remain hidden activities in industry: as the saying goes, they just get done" (Paradis, et al., 1985, p. 341). In other words, while three decades ago workplace writing was overlooked by researchers as a necessary, but secondary and largely rote, activity, in the time since researchers have demonstrated how workplace writing is essential and they have theorized how it is constitutive of both the organization and its products.

Cintron's insight that critical work in anthropology and rhetoric is similarly motivated, as well as focused on the study of life as it is lived everyday (as opposed to specialized genres such as political speeches or classroom discourse) also serves as a disciplinary bridge between the two domains of rhetorical study that my project aims to bring together: the public discourse about child care and early learning and the workplace rhetorical activity of my participants. Little work has been done that bridges these two domains of rhetoric. That is, workplace ethnographies have often limited themselves to rhetorical activity within either a professional or an organization, and the study of public rhetoric and rhetorics of democracy have overlooked including workplaces as part of everyday life. On the one hand these boundaries constitute meaningful demarcations within

the study of rhetoric. But everyday life, for most Americans, is largely comprised of time spent at a workplace. Secondly, the rhetorical work that many workers do at a workplace actually shapes and constitutes what might be considered public rhetoric. For example, professional rhetorical work of my participants at QCR very explicitly shapes the public rhetoric of child care and early learning. A brochure or video that they produce about quality child care both initiates and constitutes public discourse on the issue. This is to say that, ultimately, it is not meaningful to draw lines between workplace and public rhetoric because rhetoric circulates more and more freely across these domains.

For researchers of rhetoric, and for my project in particular, the question is no longer to what extent is one domain or another rhetorical; the important question is a matter of scope. Given any particular situation where rhetoric is in use, how far will the researcher trace the circulation of those rhetorical structures? Across workplace and public domains? Across organizational boundaries? Across material and technological boundaries? And expanding the scope of research across multiple domains of rhetoric and other kinds of boundaries (such as organizational or technological boundaries) demands a theoretical framework that can afford such an expansive project.

This issue of scope is particularly pressing for me because the work that my participants do is so directly tied to a long-standing historical discourse about child care and early learning in the U.S. To study their workplace rhetorical activity without taking into account the sources and consequences of the rhetorical structures (topic, genres, appeals) that they deploy is as meaningless as saying that it is possible to strip all of the content out of the form of a document and have anything meaningful remaining. For example, when my participants write a one-pager about their project or a grant report to their funder, they are not

only enacting workplace writing activities that are relatively common to work in the non-profit sector, they are also actively participating in and shaping the discourse of child care and early learning. Tracing how, specifically, this work contributes to and shapes this discourse is a central project of rhetorical ethnography.

Increasingly, however, scholars are merging or conflating traditional faultlines in rhetorical study. An excellent example of this is Jeff Grabill's (2007, 2010) work as a community-based researcher. His work is arguably a prototypical example of rhetorical ethnography as I understand it: Grabill uses field methods to make *visible* how rhetoric circulates to constitute *the associations* among the many stakeholders involved the canal cleanup project that they share as a common concern. Grabill roots his work in technical and professional communication because he frames the work of public rhetoric that his participants do in terms of knowledge work. Grabill explicitly draws a parallel between the work of public rhetoric and "'professional work'," that is, "managing projects, coordinating activity, learning and using information technologies, working well with others and communicating effectively" (p. 205). These rhetorical activities comprise what we call knowledge work (or symbolic-analytic work) when they are enacted in a workplace context. Similarly to how I frame the rhetorical work that my participants do at QCR in terms of Spinuzzi's net work, Grabill understands the rhetorical work that he and his participants do as the "skills of assembly" (p. 205) in order to focus his attention on the *nature of the associations* among stakeholders. In other words, Grabill is focused on tracing rhetorical work that is coordinated and distributed amongst a group, and of which the outcome is the assembly (or identity) of the group itself. To do this Grabill draws on Latour's reconceptualization of the social as a dynamic net of associations to understand how publics,

or communities, are made. For Grabill, the work of assembly, by either an engaged researcher, or a member of the community, is the work of making visible the associations among stakeholders, including individuals, various types of organizations and other entities, in the community.

One act of assembly that Grabill undertakes for his research community is to render a map of the associations among the organizations in the "Harbor" community allied around the canal cleanup project. He claims that the act of making this map is itself an act of assembly. This act of assembly is one way that a community-based researcher can assist a community organization in its goals to influence or communicate with its stakeholders. Making this community visible is important because it makes it possible to trace the tendrils of influence of a document written by a worker within the one of the organizations. Like me, Grabill is also interested in "trac[ing] with precision a chain of activity that connects the writing of [a document] to a given public action or impact" (p. 202). And likewise to my sense of urgency around being able to credibly claim that writers [students], either individually or corporately, can be agents of influence over matters of public life (or private industry), Grabill claims that tracing these connections "seems terribly important as a matter of research and in terms of our ability to be convincing when we say that writing and rhetoric matter in public life" (p. 202).

Given that I am primarily interested in the project of making rhetoric and rhetorical activity visible in the domain of the workplace, the rest of this chapter situates this project more squarely in the field of professional and technical communication. This section of the chapter catalogues some of the work that scholars have already done to make workplace rhetorical activity visible and discusses how this work has contributed to my developing

methodology of network ethnography. After establishing the exigence for this visibility project in professional and technical communication, I discuss the existing analytical tools that make visible the *members* of a network, followed by a discussion of the analytical tools that more explicitly make visible the *associations* among members of the network. In the final section I operationalize network ethnography in my work, and introduce how I have abandoned analytical tools for visualizing how rhetorical activity builds networks in favor of field artifacts that function to make the network visible for my participants and their stakeholders.

Visualizing Knowledge Work

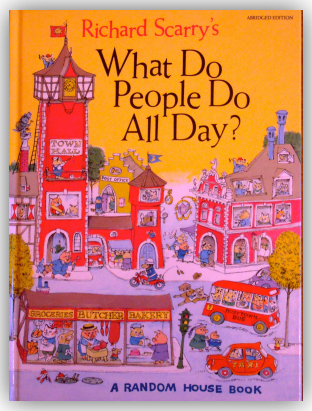

Figure 2.1: A photograph of the cover image of Richard Scarry's book for children, *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1968). Photo by author.

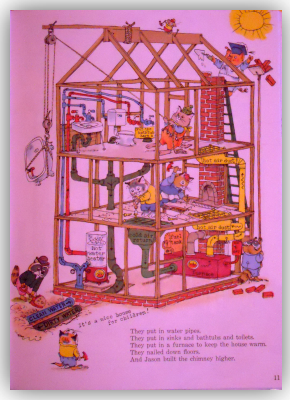

Figure 2.2: A photograph of an inside page (p. 11) from Scarry's (1968) book showing a house under construction. Photo by author.

The above section ended with a review of Jeff Grabill's work as a rhetorical ethnographer to make visible how rhetoric functions to mediate and constitute the associations among members of a community, or public, assembled around an issue of technical and public concern. His work resonates strongly with my own. But to open this section I want to first back up and start at a higher level of abstraction. The title of Richard Scarry's book (Figure 2.1) states a banal, but focusing, question--What do people *do* all day (Scarry, 1968)? Scarry offers insight into the activities that fill people's days with his illustrated book for children peopled with the animal characters of Busytown. Illustrations depict the inner workings of the realm of the working world: a house under construction (Figure 2.2), the post office, a wood mill, a hospital, among other things. He answers for children, where do ordinary, everyday structures come from? What do people *do* to make the world the way it is? Importantly, connotated by the verb "do" is the idea of action or activity. That is, the structures of the world are made or constructed via the *activity*, or motivated action, of workers. The idea that the structures of society are the outcome of everyday

activity is a powerful metaphor for an epistemic view of how rhetorical activity in a public space or in the workplace is constitutive of the social, cultural, and material conditions of everyday life.

Scarry's book is also a useful foil against which to propose the contemporary dilemma of making rhetorical activity visible within the field of professional and technical communication. Scarry chose to illustrate workplaces that would interest children, culturally prototypical places of work, the kind of work a young child aspires to—at least forty years ago. But Busytown *makes visible* work before information overtook heavy industry in terms of social and economic value. What we don't see depicted in the illustrations of Busytown is the realm of work of the post-industrial age—the realm of *symbolic analytic* work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996)—work that is no longer oriented around the making or building of *things,* but the processing of knowledge and information. Symbolic analytic workers posses the ability to "identify, rearrange, circulate, abstract and broker information" (255), hardly work activities easily accommodated to colorful illustrations for children. In fact, this realm of work, within which Johnson-Eilola includes the work of technical and professional communication, is not very visible because of its primarily socio-cognitive nature. So, as I understand it, one of the motivations for rhetorical ethnography, and in particular as it is practiced in the field of professional and technical communication, is to do for knowledge work what Scarry's illustrations do for constructing a house—that is, to make more visible and comprehensible how knowledge workers use language and rhetoric and other meditational tools to do their jobs and to constitute their social and organizational environment.

Scholars who study workplace writing and rhetorical activity, or knowledge work, such as the work that my participants do at QCR as child care and early learning system builders, have already developed some analytical frameworks for making it visible. Since most workplace writing and rhetorical activity is now highly distributed geographically, temporally and technologically, the ability to visualize this distributed work is essential to making it comprehensible to its stakeholders, as well as for understanding how to improve and refine workflow. These useful analytical constructs make visible how writing and rhetorical activity support communication in the workplace. In addition to the transactional activity of exchanging information, writing scholars are also interested in how rhetorical activity and texts *mediate* knowledge work. That is, how do rhetorical activity and texts shape and constitute the sociotechnical workplace environment as well as the products of that environment, such as engineering knowledge (see D. Winsor, 2003; D. A. Winsor, 1994, 2003)?

Spinuzzi, Hart-Davidson and Zachry, in particular, have developed methodologies for making knowledge work visible with the aim to "support writers' reasoning about their work" (Hart-Davidson, Spinuzzi, & Zachry, 2006, p. 72). Over a series of papers published in the proceedings of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group on the Design of Communication (SIGDOC) and at the RSA Institute in 2009, they have reported on and shared the development of several analytical frameworks for making knowledge work visible. These analytical frameworks include the communicative event diagram (Figure 2.3) and the genre ecology (Figure 2.4). Each of these frameworks reveals a different aspect of knowledge work and can be used in coordination with others to make distributed work visible. To explain each very briefly, communicative event models trace

knowledge work as a series of communicative events, or hand-offs—what Spinuzzi et. al., call keeping the camera on the ball (Spinuzzi, et al., 2006, p. 43). The aim of genre ecologies, however, is to view how texts mediate knowledge work at the system, or game, level. A genre ecology foregrounds actions that are not necessarily communicative and how any given activity requires the mediation of multiple genres. For example, a seemingly simple task, such as a customer service call to a customer, requires the mediation of many official and unofficial genres, ranging from company databases of customer information to sticky notes that direct the attention of the worker.

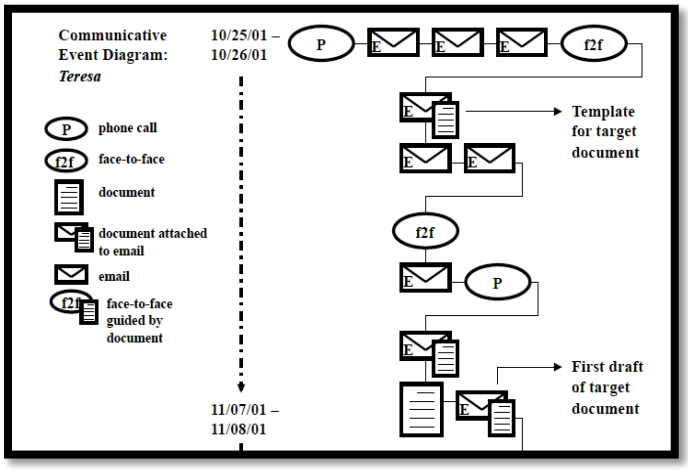

Figure 2.3: Communicative Event Diagram (Hart-Davidson, Spinuzzi, & Zachry, 2009)

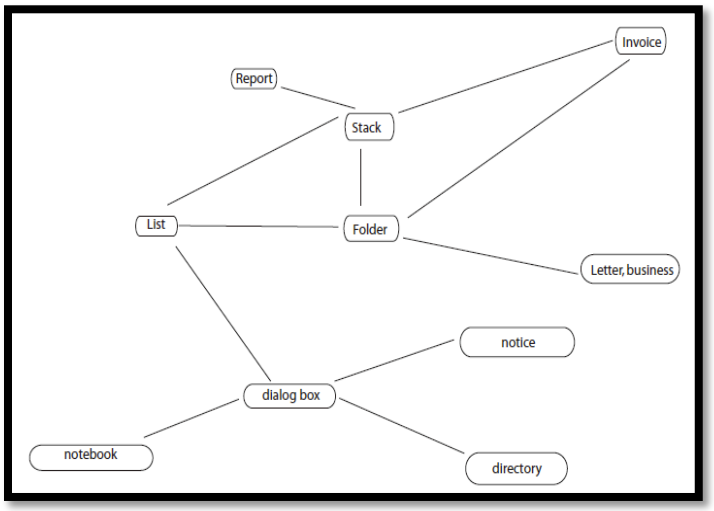

Figure 2.4: Genre Ecology (Hart-Davidson, et al., 2009)

Early in my research process I also spent some time experimenting with a kind of hybrid genre ecology and communicative event diagram (in the sense the successive drafts of a document are isolatable "communicative" events) that aimed to trace the structural and intertextual influence of two "black-boxed" charter documents generated externally to my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) through the many documents, and the many successive drafts of these documents, generated by my participants. In the diagram below, the solid lines represent structural descendents, that is documents that are based, at least in part, on the structure of the charter document. For example, the team's workplan was organized around the goal and objective structure of the original grant for the project. The dashed lines represent intertextual descendents, that is brand new documents that are generically and structurally unique from the charter documents, but that show rhetorical evolution. An example of these are the "translation" documents that my participants generated to translate the official language of the DEL "Seeds to Success" model into terms and concepts that QCR's stakeholders could identify with. Missing from this diagram is a

representation of the flow of rhetoric back out of QCR as the rhetorical work of my participants circulated amongst partner organizations, child care providers, the public and other stakeholders. Gathering such data, however, would required a reception or uptake study. As others have noted (Grabill, 2010) the study of the reception of rhetoric is very different from the study of its production (p. 206) and it is difficult to settle on robust indicators that are capable of measuring it.

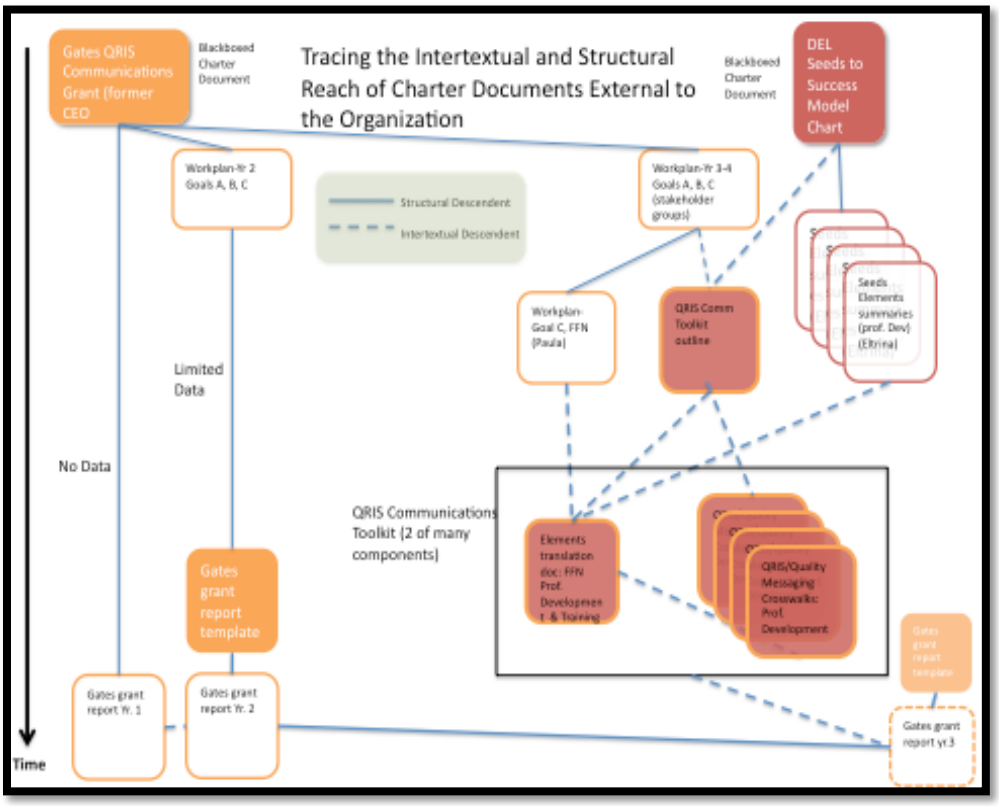

Figure 2.5: Tracing the Intertextual and Structural Reach of Charter Documents External to the Organization

The visualization in Figure 2.5 is effective for showing how the micro (draft-by-draft) rhetorical work of my participants at QCR was significantly shaped by formal and rhetorical structures that originated outside of the organization, and traces, in a limited sense, how these

structures circulated through their work. But an unsatisfactory element of this diagram is how it foregrounds the container metaphor of the organization, as if what is significant is whether rhetoric originates from either inside or outside of the organization. Since my focus as a researcher was not organizational discourse, and by and large my participants were engaged in rhetorical activities that connected them with stakeholders outside of the organization, I became less interested in analytical frameworks that foreground the boundaries of QCR as an organization.

Communicative event diagrams, genre ecologies and my hybrid visualization of intertextuality in success drafts of documents are all analytical tools for visualization that are based on data gathered from fieldwork, although not necessarily ethnographic field work in the most rigorous sense. While full ethnographic accounts can represent a richer emic (insider's) perspective, these analytical tools afford a graphic representation of portions of field data for a more focused purpose. In my view these tools can be complementary to an ethnographic account, but cannot substitute for it entirely. As I will discuss at the end of this chapter, a full ethnographic project of visualization knowledge work moves towards identifying how study participants visualize the knowledge work (or net work) that they do as an activity integral to their work, rather than substituting a researcher's analytical tool for the participants experience.[8]

Like Spinuzzi's workers at the telecommunications company where he did his field research for his book *Network* (2008), my participants were also clustered at the edges of

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[8] Bruno Latour has made a particular strong case for resisting the substitution of participants' experience by the analytical tools and frameworks of a researcher. In his book *Reassembling the Social* (Latour, 2005) he makes a particularly strong statement against applying Actor-network theory as a theoretical lens essentially because such a practice confuses the object for the method. The deep working through of this distinction is evident in the evolution of my own methodology as well, from one focused on method (rhetorical ethnography) to one focused on object (a network).

their organization. One of the challenges of making knowledge work visible is that more and more work happens in a postmodern workplace where the boundaries of organizational culture and context have less and less meaning; one where knowledge and responsibility are highly distributed, workers are highly networked and largely situated at the edges of their organizations. This fact requires a methodology for tracing the activities of workers across organizational, technological and domain boundaries, and also through time. It requires a framework that offers an alternative to container metaphors, one that avoids drawing boundaries between the work of humans and the work of technology, or drawing boundaries around a single activity, or the writing or organizational context.

Network Ethnography: Making the Network, and Net Work, Visible

Two metaphors have emerged as useful for the study of complex, diffuse and messy workplace activity, the metaphors of ecology and network. Fleckenstein, Spinuzzi and et. al. (Fleckenstein, et al., 2008) make an argument for an ecological metaphor for writing studies research. An "ecological orientation," they argue, "enables us to research rhetorically: to devise and argue for a systematic account of reality in ways that others find persuasive, useful, and widely applicable while remaining sensitive to the incompleteness and the distortions of a single account (p. 389-390)." This statement deeply informs my own research methodology. While my research methodology is founded upon a network metaphor, fundamental to research founded on both ecological and network metaphors is a focus on the *relationships* among members of the ecology or network. My research is primary concerned with how these relationships are rhetorical—how they are formed, maintained and broken.

The project of tracing how the rhetorical activity of my participants functions to build the early learning system in King County and Washington State requires a theoretical framework that can accommodate the dynamics of rhetorical ethnography that I have detailed in the section above: it must accommodate an epistemic function for rhetoric, break down the boundaries between domains of rhetoric (public and workplace) and accommodate multiple levels of scope of activity (micro and macro). In the field of professional and technical communication scholars have turned to ecological and network metaphors as lenses for achieving these methodological aims. The posthumanist metaphors of network and ecology refocuses the researcher's gaze away from the products (or texts) of rhetorical activity towards how rhetorical activity orders the relationships among people, organizations, texts, and technology. Spinuzzi (2008) argues that a network metaphor invokes a series of nodes, or members, both human and non-human that have been *persuaded to interconnect with each other* such that they hang together in an "assemblage," or net. Since the alliances among each member of the assemblage are negotiated and contingent, they are therefore rhetorical—network theory, I argue, is also a rhetorical theory. As a rhetorical ethnographer, then, I can look for the rhetorical structures functioning to create alliances among members—in other words, I can set out to study how rhetoric builds networks: I can do network ethnography.

The exigence for network as a framework for studying workplace rhetorical activity has been most explicitly articulated in Mara and Hawk's introduction to the *TCQ* special issue on posthuman rhetorics and technical communication. They point to posthumanist theories to account for the "complex situatedness" (Mara & Hawk, 2010, p. 2) of the technical communicator. They argue that humans have always lived and worked in "a variety of biological and mechanical systems" (p. 2) and thus our theory must be able to account for

how the human and the non-human are always already intertwined and mutually dependent. Posthumanist frameworks that distribute agency throughout the environment, such as distributed cognition, and frameworks founded on ecological and network metaphors, are theoretically powerful because they account for a non-binary relationship between humans and their material tools and environment. So what I have done in my own research is to read ethnographic data through the posthumanist lens of network theory (mainly actor-network theory) in order to make the child care and early learning network visible to myself, and to document how my participants make the emerging system visible to themselves.

Visualizing the Associations among Members of an Assemblage or Network

Communicative event diagrams, genre ecologies and my hybrid diagram of the structural and intertextual relationships between drafts of my participants' documents trace fairly discrete rhetorical activities that correlate with countable material objects, such as phones, genres, documents or other texts. But scholars who study workplace writing in distributed work environments are also interested in the associations, or relations, among members, or stakeholders, in a complex work environment. Attempts to theoretically account for this "complex situatedness" (Mara and Hawk, 2010, p.) as it is encountered during field research have motivated scholars to turn to the metaphors of ecology and network for conceptualizing the dynamic *relationships* among stakeholders. Metaphors, such as ecology and network, imply systems in which the members, both human and non-human, share interdependent, mutually constitutive relationships and in which the source of any given product is

impossible to trace to a discreet origin. These metaphors resist any kind of boundary setting between what might be "inside" or "outside" of the organization or field, or the nature, such as material or natural or human, of the members of an ecology or a network, or the relative contributions, or agency, of any given member. Visualizations structured by an ecological or network metaphor foreground how members of a community, domain or public are in relationship.

In order to trace the activity of workers and organizations across multiple activity systems and to study how they interact, Spinuzzi et. al. have developed the activity network diagram (see Figure 2.6). This visualization generates a macro-level view of activity across multiple workers, groups, organizations or other conceptual containers for drawing boundaries around work activity. By mapping how various work activities (at the individual, group or organizational levels) mediate each other, it is possible to trace contradictions that cause "friction" in the system, and that might also be potential sites for innovation (Hart-Davidson, et. al., RSA Institute 2009 materials handout).

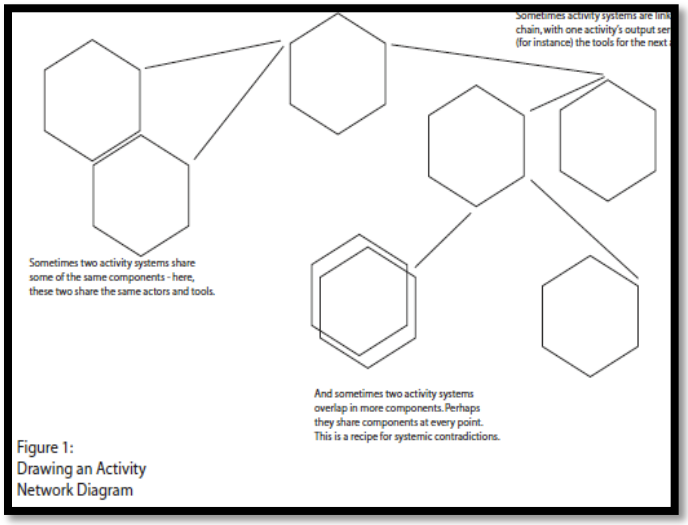

Figure 2.6: Activity Network Diagram (Hart-Davidson, et al., 2009)

Another scholar who is motivated to make the assembly work of rhetorical activity visible and comprehensible is Jeff Grabill. Like Spinuzzi, et. al., he acknowledges how writing studies has tended to focus on the individual skills of workplace writers, or the composition of discrete documents, rather than how an individual writer contributes to a highly distributed system of work that itself functions as a writer or a rhetor (Grabill, 2010). Similar to the macro-level view of work activity afforded by Spinuzzi et. al.'s activity network diagrams, Grabill generates research artifacts that map the community of his field site and the associations among members of this community (See Figure 2.7).

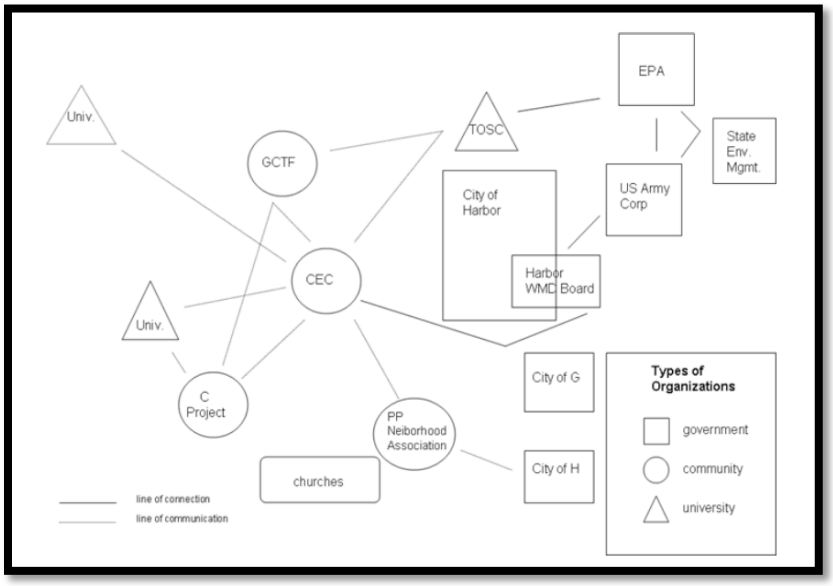

Figure 2.7: A Community Map of Harbor (Grabill, 2010). Permission from author to reprint.

In this map, different geographic shapes represent different types of stakeholders (government, community or university), and darker and lighter shaded lines represent associations of connection and communication among them. In generating this map, Grabill's aim is to foreground how visualizing a community (or public) is an act of assembly, of

bringing it into being by articulating the associations among members. Although the level of detail about the nature of the interactions among the various stakeholders in this community is lower than in the activity network diagram, Grabill claims that this map still "yields patterns that are actionable" (p. 197) because it reveals which organization (CEC in this case) is the most interconnected and therefore a productive location for his team to focus their community-based research work. As I have already suggested, conceptualizing rhetorical activity in highly distributed environments pushes against conventional container-based metaphors for understanding writing context (such as discourse community, rhetorical situation and organization) and is increasingly motivating scholars to turn to ecological and network metaphors for conceptualizing, and visualizing, the associations among members or stakeholders of a community, public or assemblages (all concepts that are based on container metaphors, but that have also been problematized as being dynamic, multiple and contingent).

Wilson and Herndl's (Wilson & Herndl, 2007) scholarship based on their work as rhetorical consultants at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) offer another example of the visualization of how knowledge work operates across domain boundaries (Figure 2.8). They are interested in rhetorical structures that serve to resolve rhetorical problems that are based on an ecological metaphor. They adopt Star and Griesemer's (Star & Griesemer, 1989) notion of the boundary object to understand how knowledge maps help a consortium of interests in the defense industry with different disciplinary and organizational perspectives solve problems. A boundary object, in brief, is an abstract or concrete "entity" (for example, a text, a genre, an institution) that "form[s] a common boundary between worlds by inhabiting them both simultaneously" (Star and Griesemer, 1989 p. 412 qtd. in Wilson and

Herndl 2007). Key to the boundary object is that it functions in, and is constituted by, an ecological metaphor for a system. In contrast to hierarchical models in which knowledge and power is concentrated at the top and distributed downward through the hierarchy (see Winsor, 2003), ecological systems distribute "epistemic authority" (p. 136) as widely and democratically as possible. Figure 2.8 is a highly abstracted knowledge map that visualizes how the individual events and activities of multiple stakeholder groups are united in a "commonality of interest" (Wilson & Herndl, 2007, p. 138) in an effort to establish a shared project space and common motive.

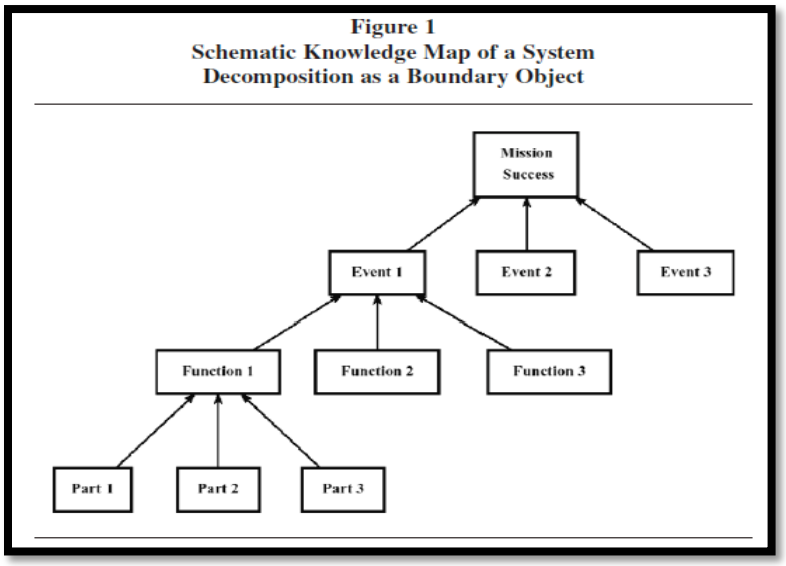

Figure 2.8: Schematic Knowledge Map of a System Decomposition as a Boundary Object (Wilson & Herndl, 2007)

Early in my research I also made attempts to visualize my fieldwork using activity network diagrams. Figure 2.9 is a rough, and incomplete, diagram of the activity network of child care and early learning, at the local level of Seattle, King County and Washington State, and the national level. The knowledge about the field of child care and early learning represented in this diagram is a combination of information gathered from my participants

and my own research. Each triangle represents the activity system of an organization, and organizations are coded by color (Red: public; Green: research institutions; blue: private organizations or public-private partnerships; and purple: media organizations). The curvy line represents the ill defined and complicated relationships between local and national organizations, the heavy green lines represent lines of funding that are most important to my participants at QCR and the black lines connecting QCR, WA DEL and Thrive by Five form an activity triangle putting into relationship three organizations who are working locally to promote the development of the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) and to promote the concept of quality child care. The activity systems within this triangle, WCELI, East Yakima and "other pilot sites," represent sites and organizations that are in a supporting role to the objective of the QRIS activity system. In essence, this diagram functions like Grabill's map of the Harbor community in that it assembles *a portion* of the local and national community that is oriented around the objective of improving access to and the quality of child care and early learning in the Washington and the United States. Likewise, this diagram is an artifact of my research process, in that it represents my early efforts to conceptualize my field site as well as to articulate the purpose and focus of my research.

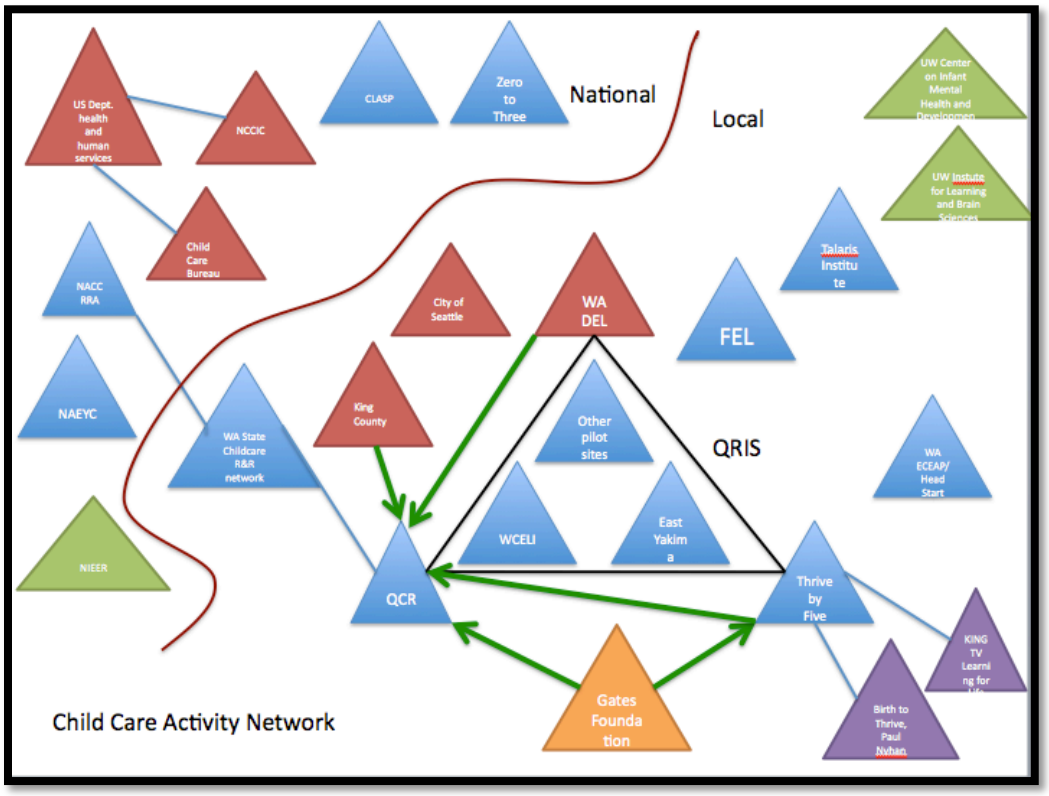

Figure 2.9: The Activity Network of Child Care and Early Learning

A limitation with the activity system/network analytical framework for making visible the associations among stakeholders is dealing with the level of scope of the study. That is, it is difficult in an activity systems model, like in Figure 2.9, to account for the micro and macro realms of activity *and* the relationships among the realms. In addition, it can become frustrating to have to continually distinguish between tools and actors, that is, between meditational objects and their agents. Activity theory is not founded upon an assumption of symmetry, the idea that agency is distributed throughout a sociotechnical environment rather than located within a single agent. Activity theory maintains agency in human subjects, which can become problematic for writing studies scholars given the extensive practice of locating agency in texts and other material objects (such as technology)

that mediate human activity.

In Figure 2.10 below I show a speculative solution I devised to the problem of having to distinguish between levels of scope and tools and actors that I called an "Activity Fractal."

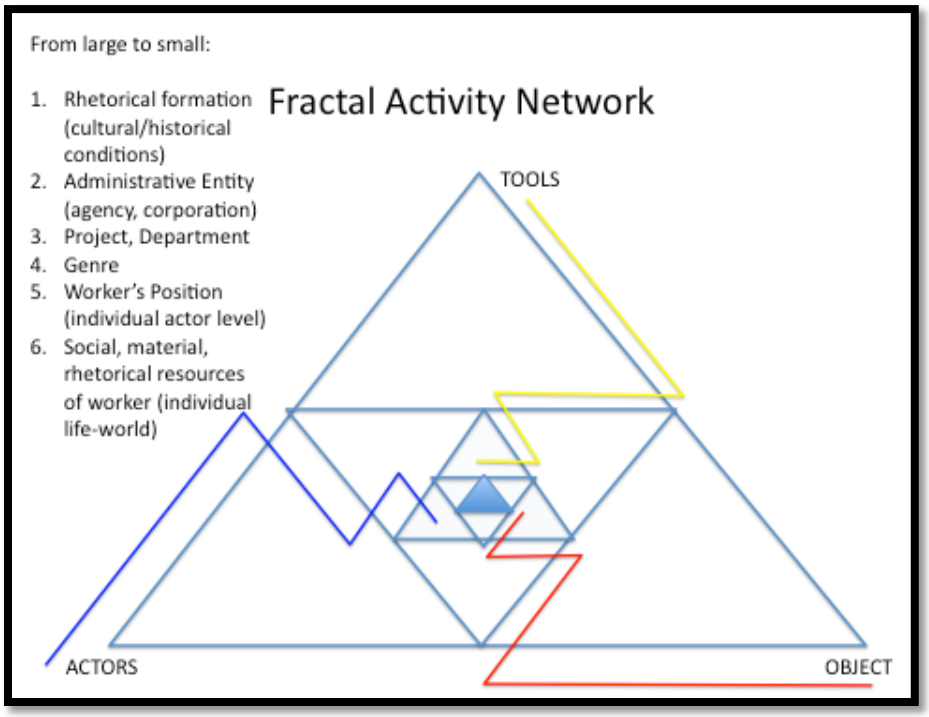

Figure 2.10: Fractal Activity Network (general case)

In this analytical framework, activity systems are embedded within each other to represent that activity systems are components of larger activity systems and that there is a fractal quality to these relationships. That is, at each "level" of the activity network, whether it is at the most macro level of the historical rhetorical formation (marked as 1, or the largest triangle in Figure 2.10), or at the organizational level (level 2, or the next triangle in), complexity is preserved at each level. This principle foregrounds the fact that while activity is embedded, it cannot be reduced. It also foregrounds how it should be possible to seamlessly trace activity from the macro-level of the rhetorical formation to the most local

element of activity in the worker's life world, one of the core motivations of my project. Another affordance of the activity fractal diagram is that by embedding the points of the triangles (tools, actors, object), it is possible to trace how the tools, actors and objects in one system can change roles in successively higher level systems

Figure 2.11 shows how I began to conceptualize how activity was embedded in the particular case of my field site:

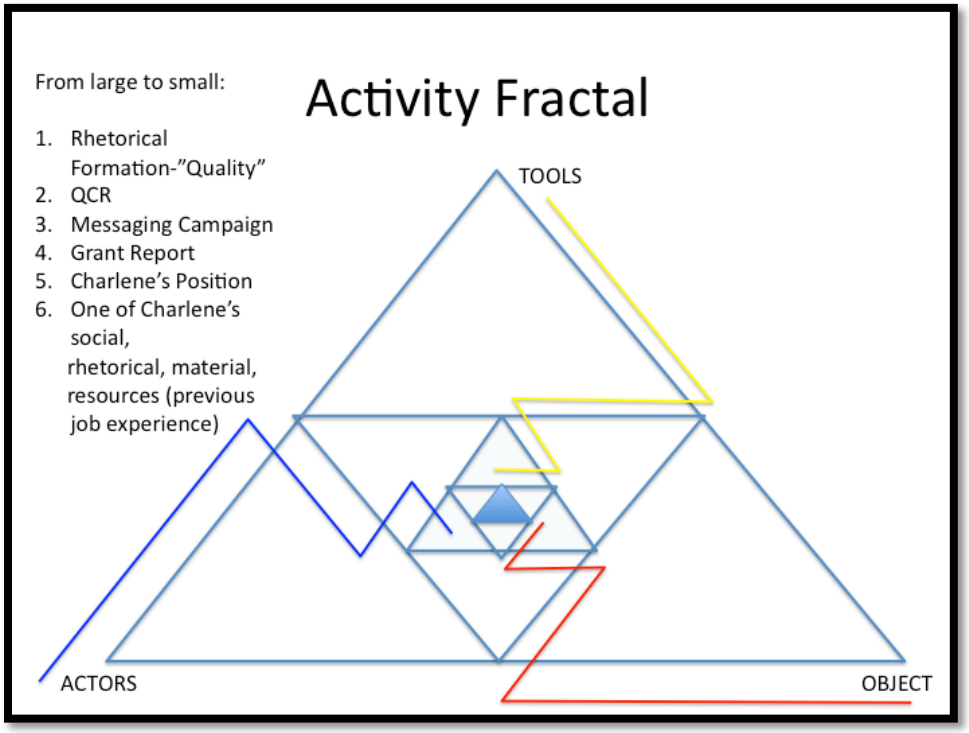

Figure 2.11: Fractal activity network (case of child care and early learning)

Initially, I thought that such a diagram would be useful for tracing how a rhetorical problem is shaped and constituted by the activities that appear both above it and below it, and how by studying how the tools, objects and actors of one system interact with another, solutions can be found to rhetorical problems. That is, when there are gaps among the alignments of each level of the fractal, these gaps can be filled in by generating additional levels.

For example, one of the rhetorical problems my participants faced was communicating to unlicensed child care providers, such as family members and neighbors, about the importance of professional development for child care providers. As an "element" of the state's model for the assessment of quality child care, the team at QCR was obligated by the grant that funded their project to communicate to this stakeholder group about professional development. Obviously, however, this stakeholder group, which might include a grandmother, is not likely to identify with the idea of professional development. This rhetorical problem necessitated that the team generate documents, language and rhetorical structures (that is, more layers to the activity fractal) to "splice" together the formal QRIS model that includes professional development and the unlicensed provider stakeholder group. My participants did do this, via the creation of translation documents that generated new language for talking to granny about professional development.

In the end I abandoned the activity system/network model for conceptualizing and visualizing my field site, as well as pages and pages of hand-written activity system and activity network diagrams, over frustration at their limitations to represent the contingency and complexity of the associations among the members of the assemblage, network or community that is child care and early learning. While any visualization technique is obviously reductive by design, activity system diagrams are also, when used in practice rather than proposed in theory, frustratingly complex. There are seven components to any given activity system (objective, outcome, tools, actors, stakeholeders, rules and divisions of labor), and when the activity network becomes sufficiently large, such a level of detail about each activity system within it becomes exhausting to collect and questionably relevant to represent. In fact, I am sure that Spinuzzi et. al. would agree with my critique that activity

network diagrams are useful for putting into relationship several closely intertwined activity systems with suspected points of contradiction; however, for the purpose of visualizing a comprehensive map of a network, or a community, they are not ideally suited.

Ultimately, I realized that there was a much simpler point that I wanted to make with my research. That is, via my play with these highly abstracted models of my participants' work, I worked my way around to the realization that what I found interesting in my field data was the idea that the rhetorical activity that my participants fill their days with can be understood as the work to form, break and maintain the associations among the members of the network of child care and early learning. This is what Spinuzzi calls net work (2008), or what Grabill calls "the skills of assembly" (2010, p. 205). My participants' net work is largely rhetorical in nature, and is mediated by rhetorical structures which the remainder of this dissertation develops in more detail: The quality topos (Chapter 3); translation and Burkean identification (Chapter 4); and network genres (Chapter 5). I also came to the conclusion that while I, and others who have been engaged in my research, express a strong desire to see a comprehensive map, or "org chart," of how members (individuals and/or organizations) of a community are interrelated, I came to the conclusion that in fact this knowledge when it comes to child care and early learning simply doesn't exist. In fact, if it did then the United States would have a functioning system of child care and early learning. In other words, like Grabill, I agree that the act of visualization is an act of assembly, although the agency to assemble generated by the act of visualization is contingent on the mappers position in the community. In Grabill's case, he was able to use his map to support the community in which he was located as a researcher. Possibly, the same agency is available to me at my field site; however, in contrast to Spinuzzi et. al. and Grabill, as I

progressed in my research I became more interested in the work activities of my participants to visualize the child care and early learning community for themselves. System builders, like my participants at QCR, are highly motivated to make visible and comprehensible, and thus assemble, the child care and early learning system and in doing bring it into being. The work activity of my participants to make visible and comprehensible the child care and early learning community is the subject of Chapter Five: Genres of Visibility and Comprehensibility

Operationalizing Network Ethnography in my Fieldwork

I would like to end this chapter with an illustration from my own field work that operationalizes my work as a network ethnographer. Ethnographers of rhetoric experience a certain kind of effect in the field, something like an operationalization of theory in real time. Cintron writes about it this way: "One of the perverse thrills of the kind of research that I do is that sometimes the theory that one has been crafting for a long time swoops down and becomes embodied in the events of everyday life. What I might otherwise look at with indifference acquires a certain kind of import, a flash of familiarity, as if yesterday's omen had materialized" (Cintron, 2003).

I experienced Cintron's swooping phenomenon during the many project team meetings that I sat in on with my participants at my field site, Quality Child care Resources (QCR), a non-profit resource and advocacy organization in the field of child care and early learning. I began to hear their informal pre-meeting chatter as the continual effort to get a

handle on the current status of the very complex network of organizations, people, laws, texts, initiatives and other elements that makes up the early learning community. Meetings would start with formal or informal information sharing how who was now working where, which organization was doing something new, a new initiative that was being launched, or one that had ended or discussion about how political and economic conditions had changed for early learning—in other words, my participants were trying to stay current with the constantly changing early learning network. Their talk updated the team about the constantly renegotiated alliances among members of the early learning network.

As I began to experience the inevitability of this kind of talk, I began to identify it not as incidental to the purpose of the meeting, but as an essential outcome. In fact, this kind of talk was doing work, too. This kind of storytelling, or what I began to call network narrative, in fact, made visible and comprehensible the dynamic alliances among members of the early learning network. This talk made visible and comprehensible the *many moving parts of the early learning machine,* as one of my participants put it to me later. She said this with an air of humor and resignation, because for her the instability of the field and the constant need to try and stay up to date with it is just a fact of her life on the job, and in fact it shapes much of the work that she, and my other participants, do. In other words, the endemic political and economic instability in the field of child care and early learning is the rhetorical exigence for work activities to control the fragile network, to strengthen it, and above all, to make it visible and comprehensible to those who work within it and who constitute it. These work activities not only include the oral network narrative I repeatedly experienced at team meetings, but also the production of written forms, what I call network lists, and written

network narratives that make visible members of the network and the associations among them.

Figures 2.12 and 2.13 are an example rather simple versions of a network list and a network narrative. These figures are images of a brochure for an initiative one my of participants worked for. The two white panels in Figure 2.12 are examples of a network list, in that they make visible for the reader of this brochure the organizations that make up this initiative. The text heavy panels in Figure 2.13 explain the associations among the partners and how they work together to accomplish the initiatives goal stated on the right panel of Figure 2.12 ("to help ALL young children succeed in school and life").

Figure 2.12: The outside panels of the WCELI brochure

Figure 2.13: The inside panels of the WCELI brochure

One way to understand the rhetorical aim of this brochure is that it aims to make visible and comprehensible the members of the assemblage and the relationships among them that constitute the WCELI initiative. By making these associations visible and comprehensible, it brings the initiative into being for the reader of the brochure. In essence, then, the panels of the brochure in Figures 2.12 and 2.13 function similarly to Grabill's community map or the activity network diagram, except for a public, rather than organizational, audience.

In fact, this realization about the nature of the work that my participants do, and the function of the oral and written genres that mediate their work, what I came to call network genres (see Chapter 5), became one of the central insights of my research: by working to build the early learning system in King County and Washington State, my participants are doing Spinuzzi's net work, or Grabill's "skills of assembly" when they make visible and

comprehensible to themselves and their stakeholders the dynamic associations among members of the early learning public-system-assembly-network. What this argument is leading up to is that my claim for what motivates the project of network ethnography, that is to make visible how rhetoric travels across organization, domain and technological boundaries in order to build, strengthen, or maintain associations among stakeholders, *is also a set of activities that make up what it means to do knowledge work in general.* Certainly researchers are knowledge workers, as are my participants at QCR and, as Grabill argues, as are citizens engaged in the work of building communities (Grabill, 2007). The implications of this statement are that the research methodology of network ethnography has uses for researchers investigating how rhetoric functions in the various domains of life, such as the public domain and the workplace, but that it also has uses for workplace writers as a work activity that both mediates and constitutes their work. This is a claim that requires further explanation and is a statement to carry forward from this dissertation into future forums of scholarship and discussion.

CHAPTER 3

The Historical and Contemporary Rhetorical Formation of Child Care and Early Learning

Introduction

I'd like to start this chapter by reiterating a motivation for this project as the aim of convincingly tracing how the micro rhetorical activity of workplace rhetors, like my participants, contributes to, and also constitutes, the public, or macro, discourse on an issue, such as public investment in universal access to child care and early learning. Like Jeff Grabill, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, I am interested in:

> Trac[ing] with precision a chain of activity that connects the writing of [a document] to a given public action or impact. The ability to do so seems terribly important as a matter of research and in terms of our ability to be convincing when we say that writing and rhetoric matter in public life. (Grabill, 2010, p. 202)

Like Grabill, I believe that tracing writing practices to "public action" is ultimately empowering to students and teachers of academic and professional and technical writing because it offers an opportunity to operationalize how the rhetorical choices a rhetor(s) makes are at once shaped by a historical public discourse on an issue, and at the same time bring the discourse into being, and while doing so affecting material change for stakeholders in the community (or industry).

The aim of this chapter is to establish the "macro" realm of the public discourse of child care and early learning. To do this sets up what I want to do in Chapters 4 and 5, which is to trace how participants' knowledge work at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) has material effects on their stakeholders in the community. To do this I will adopt Celeste Condit's methodology of the rhetorical formation (1999) via the extended understanding of it articulated by Scott (2003), who considers it a useful method for "mapping dynamic networks" of discursive and material actors (p. 25). While Condit understands rhetorical formations as shifting clusters of rhetorical structures agonistically poised in a given historical era of a discourse, Scott shifts the focus of study to the "intertext" (p. 26), or the associations among actors in the network and how the rhetorical structures function to constitute those relationships as socio-political conditions change. This post-humanist move (which actor-network theory assumes) essentially collapses any remaining distance between the micro and the macro by identifying the key location of study as the *associations* among actors, as opposed to trying to draw boundaries around a community to establish an inside and an outside of the discourse. In other words, Scott reformulates Condit's rhetorical formations into rhetorical-material formations that also take into account how "extrarhetorical" (p. 26) influences shape and constitute these associations. As Chapter 2 established, central to a network ethnography is studying the associations among a set of stakeholders, and how rhetoric functions to create, renegotiate and maintain these associations.

This chapter will focus on how one rhetorical structure, in particular, functions to shape and constitute associations among members of the historical and contemporary child care and early learning network: the quality topos. While I will define topos below,

it is important to mention here that rhetorics of quality are central to the work that my informants do because the stakes and process of defining, measuring, achieving, and strategically operationalizing quality are at the core of the rhetorical work they do. The Ancient Greek idea of topos, or "places," meant quite literally a place to go during the process of invention to find stock arguments and proofs. Over rhetorical history, the location and nature of the "place" has changed as rhetorical theory has incorporated a broader and more distributed understanding of how language is shaped by and constitutes social and material context. While ancient rhetoric located topoi on papyrus rolls, or in texts or language in the community, modern scholars have developed a more cognitive view that locates topoi in the (collective) mind as conceptual structures that shape thinking. Even more recently in rhetorical history, the location of topoi has become distributed beyond the minds of individuals into the social milieu by post-structuralist formulations such as the "social imagination" (Rai, 2010, p. 39), as "storehouses for social energy" (Cintron, 2010, p. 102), and as a rhetorical-material formation or the intertext (Scott, 2003, p. 25). In other words, topoi are no longer stored in containers (either texts or minds) independent of the total context of the lifeworld—they are literally instrumental in bringing it into being.

It is important to say that the purpose of this chapter is not to generally retell the history of child care in the US; that has already been done effectively and thoroughly by historians in several fields of social history (Michel, 1999; Rose, 1999; Stoltzfus, 2003; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord, 2009). The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the key historical and contemporary rhetorical structures that explicitly and implicitly shape, and both constrain and enable, the work of my participants on the QRIS Commuications

Project team at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). As a reminder, the main purpose of the QRIS Commuications Project is to build public will for the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) initiative of Washington State's Department of Early Learning.

This chapter will primarily discuss the scales topos, as it has been developed by Scott (2003) in his cultural-rhetorical study of the practices of HIV tesing, and the topos of quality child care. In addition, other rhetorical structures, such as the ethical appeal to science and the economic warrant for public investment in universal access to child care and early learning will also crop up.

The analysis in this chapter is divided into two sections, each organized around a topos. Section 1 develops how the contemporary network of public and private agencies, which is inclusive of QCR, has been produced as a result of multiple eras of discourse structured by the scales topos (Scott, 2003) and the resulting lack of stasis in the discourse of child care and early learning. This section draws on histories written from a point of view sympathetic to the establishment of a universal, government-sponsored child care provision. Section 2 follows-up on the historical perspective of Section 1 with an introduction of the contemporarily prominent topos of quality child care as a rhetorical solution to the historical lack of stasis supported by the scales topos. This chapter ends with the operationalization of how the quality topos functions in the work of my participants via a scenario from my fieldwork. By the end of this chapter, the reader should have a sense of the important turns in the history of the discourse of child care and early learning in the US, as well as a sense of the rhetorical structures that shape and

constrain the work of QRIS Communication project team, and of which their work is also constitutive.

Setting up the Rhetoric of Child Care and Early Education in the US

The story of child care in this country is not an isolatable social history. Intimately intertwined with the public debate over child care are issues of women in the workforce and welfare, and attendant issues such as gender, race and class. These issues have often worked at cross purposes to one another: for example, up until the mid-20th century, pervasive maternalistic values that situate a woman's role mainly in the home maintained the dependence of child care initiatives on welfare reform, lest it appear that the government was endorsing women to leave the private sphere except out of dire necessity. Yet the American public's pervasive resistance to a broad and generous welfare system has necessitated that women with no other means of support leave the home to work. As a result, efforts intended to help women achieve and maintain self-sufficiency have, for much of history, been crippled by maternalism-driven ambivalence towards sustainable government investment in child care programs. Permanent government investment in child care and early learning equivalent to the primary and secondary education systems has, thus, failed to come about as an outcome of welfare reform. As long as the universal provision of child care and early learning has been inextricably tied to the issues of women's labor, whether women seek it voluntarily (a feminist concern) or involuntarily (a welfare concern), this logic has been nearly impossible to dislodge.

This logic, however, is just one rhetorical structure in the historical and contemporary public discourse about child care and early learning. In the last fifteen years, arguments that promote child care as a public good have been aided by brain science due to rapid advances in knowledge about how early life experiences affect brain development. This change in the discourse is evident in PR copy blocks in an artifact from my field site:

> *Brain development research* proves that the most crucial time for learning is from birth to five, making *quality* child care and early learning experiences foundational for the future success of every child. Without it, children start behind and stay behind.
> —Opening statement from the "125 Word Count Description," emphases mine.

The above statement introduces the 100-, 125- and 200-word count descriptions that the communications director at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR—not its real name), developed for insertion into documents representing the organization. These blocks of text might appear in a grant proposal, at the end of an email to a parent or child care provider (QCR's clients), in a non-profit status application to the IRS or in the media. These copy blocks were developed internally to regulate the language used by employees in written documentation when describing and warranting QCR's mission to its diversity of stakeholders. The choice to frame the copy blocks with an ethical appeal to science and to modify child care with "quality," a powerful commonplace in the current discourse, reflects that QCR's purpose and mission have been intentionally situated within the contemporary and historical rhetorical formation (Condit, 1999) or the shifting array of rhetorical structures that constitute a discourse over time, about child

care and early learning. At the same time, because QCR is an organization with a great deal of regional influence in the child care and early learning community, and because these copy blocks will be widely disseminated beyond the organization, these rhetorical choices also contribute to and shape the public discourse on child care.

It was not a matter of personal preference that the communications director, in collaboration with colleagues, chose to frame the promotional blurb for the agency with an ethical appeal to science. Over the last couple of decades, advances in the research of brain development have made available such appeals to hard science. That this is an effective rhetorical move right now is the outcome of over a hundred years of public discourse about child care and early learning. Likewise, the assertion of causation between quality child care and brain development is also a measured choice of language. quality as a topos for arguments about child care is not new, but it has only in the last several decades moved to the forefront of the national discourse on child care and early education.

Another way to situate the "125 Word Count Description" statement in the current rhetorical formation of the discourse is to consider the arguments for warranting greater public investment in child care and early education that do *not* lead it off : 1. That more women are voluntarily in the workforce today than ever before in history; 2. That the contributions of women as taxpayers are crucial to the economic growth of the state; 3. That poor women who work out of necessity need support to maintain their self-sufficiency and stay off of welfare; 4. That the majority of men of working age work outside of the home. These statements might seem far-fetched as frames for a short description of QCR's mission, but statements 1-3 have at one point in history

advantageously served as a warrant for public investment in a government provision for universal access to child care. Statement 4 throws into relief how, up until the last several decades, the public discourse about child care has been explicitly tied to the entry of women into the workplace. That this is less the case today, as evidenced by the framing of the QCR's statement with an appeal to brain research, is evidence of how the public discourse has changed as new argumentative strategies have emerged as being more advantageous.

More on Condit's Rhetorical Formation

As the term *rhetorical formation* suggests, this concept is related to the Foucauldian *discursive formation*, yet has several important distinguishing characteristics that better serve a study of public discourse. In particular, it is foundational to a rhetorical formation that multiple positions can continue to exist and have influence over multiple eras of history. Condit's reading of Foucault understands his methodology as seeking a singular, unifying principle that structures all of the major discourses of an era. Foucault, she claims, sought a unifying and dominant principle that "shape[s] human practices at all levels" (Condit 251). In Condit's study of the public debates about human heredity, The Meanings of the Gene (1999), the search for such a unifying principle would overlook important features at the rhetorical level of public discourse.

Based on her extensive qualitative and quantitative study of media sources about genetics from 1900-1995, Condit identifies three elements of an approach to the study of public discourse based on the rhetorical formation: 1. That it is structured by multiple discursive structures; 2. That it supports and maintains multiple competing positions (it is

agonistic); and 3. That it is most meaningfully understood from the perspective of change over time rather than from within a singular era in history. These characteristics suggest that a rhetorical approach to the study of large-scale phenomena, such as a public discourse, can be productive in ways that are not afforded by Foucauldian theory.

For Condit, an implication of this rhetorical approach is a reordering of priorities in the study of large-scale phenomena in discourse. By appealing to Aristotle's general topics of the greater or lesser as being central to any rhetorical investigation, Condit calls for a change in the problem question of the investigation of public discourse. She "urges" (p. 255) for a change in perspective away from one that is based on the metaphysics of presence/absence (to ask if a is b), to one that privileges questions of degree (to ask how much of a is b). In the study of discourse the implication is to move away from projects which seek to identify the dominant articulation in a discourse that silences all others, and towards projects that seek to identify the degree to which any articulation has influence, assuming that at any particular time multiple articulations are not only present but also meaningful. As I will develop below, however, not every position always has the same degree of influence. How the rhetorical concept of *kairos*, or an advantageous moment or opportunity (Crowley & Hawee, 1999, p. 31), functions to render one position more or less influential at a particular point in history is an important part of the story as well.

The Scales Topos

The first rhetorical structure that is of interest in this chapter is that of the scales topos. The scales topos is related to Aristotle's general topos of greater-lesser, but is more carefully understood as a special topos suited to the particular field or discourse

community of public policy, bioethical and legal traditions (Scott, 2003, p. 61). Its basic function, as it is manifest in a particular discourse, is to weigh the pros and cons of an issue. By its very structure the scales topos promotes an oppositional, binary form of debate. Scott's conceptualization is quite literally illustrated as a set of scales with two dishes suspended to weigh items against each other. In his study, the scales are used to weigh the pros and cons of HIV testing, in particular the risk of testing for infected individuals weighed against the benefits of testing for uninfected individuals and the general public (63). In a more general sense, in debates over public policy the scales weigh the liberty of individuals against public welfare. This juxtaposition, according to AIDS historian Ronald Bayer, is inherent to public policy debates (p. 63, quoted in Scott). At any given time, of course, the scales are tipped one way or the other. This phenomena Scott attributes to the classical rhetorical concept of kairos, which is commonly understood by rhetoricians as meaning the right time or the opportune moment to rhetorically intervene. To this notion Scott adds the dimension of tipping the scales to create an advantage before seizing an opportune moment (p. 63). Rhetors, then, can frame their arguments to tip the scales favorably to their present rhetorical situation. In the case of arguments about HIV testing, this means that rhetors invested in public health issues will frame their arguments to put more weight on public welfare, whereas advocates of victims' right to privacy might do the opposite.

What I will show via an historical review of how the scales topos has functioned in debates about child care and early learning in the US is that the outcome of decades of efforts has been a lack of stasis that has stymied large-scale reform. This lack of stasis, which I understand in the limited sense of "a stand" (Crowley & Hawee, 1999, p. 44)

where debating parties agree on what is at issue, results from the "ambivalence" (Prelli, 1989, p. 77), of the commonplaces that rhetors draw on to structure their arguments[9]. Such flexibility in the interpretation of the issue at stake enables proponents of both sides of an issue to make equal claim to it but under different terms. For example, in the public discourse about child care and early learning, an argument that includes full access to work in the public sphere as a necessary component of women's social citizenship might be countered by an argument that a woman fulfills her citizenship by staying home and raising the nation's future citizens or soldiers (motherhood was cast as a patriotic duty during post-revolutionary times and during the Progressive Era). Both arguments make appeals to a woman's right to citizenship, even though the nature of that citizenship is understood very differently. Because certain values are non-negotiable within a particular belief frame, without an agreement of what is or is not at issue in a rhetorical situation, and without agreement on what is actually negotiable via rhetorical discourse, it is very difficult for a debate to proceed. Without a debate, there can be no outcome in which the immobility, or stalemate, of stasis can be converted into the changing of attitudes or actions, or the reform of public policy. Fortunately, as I will argue later in this chapter, contemporary rhetors, including my participants at QCR, have succeeded in

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[9] This is a good place to make a distinction between the terms topos and commonplace. These terms are often used interchangeably in reference to the classical notion of common arguments available to a rhetor. These arguments can be found in "places" such as on a papyrus role or in some region of the mind. But Scott makes a distinction between topos and commonplace: A topos is a conceptual framework, such as the scales topos, "that makes particular structures and lines of argument possible while foreclosing others" (61). Aristotle establishes two kinds of topoi: general and special. A general topoi can be applied to any situation (such as the general topos of greater-lesser); a special topos is unique to a particular discourse. The scales topos is a special topoi of certain kinds of debates, including public policy debates. It structures the debate as a set of oppositions in which individual liberty is weighed against the common good. A commonplace, such as "quality child care," is a culturally available value that rhetors can deploy to their argumentative advantage. A commonplace will likely mean different things to different interests in the debate. In essence, the difference between topos and commonplace in this case is the difference between the form and the content of the discourse.

circumventing or suppressing the scales topos in early learning by appealing to the topos of quality. In doing so, they reorient the debate around a topos that is still plenty ambivalent, or capacious, but whose capaciousness can be productively subsumed into broad efforts to improve child care for a diverse constituency of providers, parents and children—as long as homogeneity is not the goal, tentative progress can be made.

My methodology for discussing how the scales topos has functioned historically in the discourse of child care in the US will be to review three recent academic histories: *A mother's job: the history of day care, 1890-1960* by Elizabeth Rose (1999), *Children's interests/mother's rights: the shaping of America's child care policy* by Sonya Michel (1999) and *Citizen, mother, worker: debating public responsibility for child care after the second world war* by Emilie Stoltzfus (2003). Each of these histories, which I have chosen because of a central concern with the history of child care and a publication date within the last ten years, frames its project with a version of the scales topos that weighs individual liberty against public welfare. There are other histories which deeply implicate the public policy debate about child care, but, in these cases, child care is an attendant concern to the history of welfare, labor, families, or women's issues more broadly. Each of my sources have chosen, because of these disjunctures (Michel, 1999, p. 7) in the other histories between child care and these related issues, to focus directly on the issue of child care. Finally, my aim is not to comprehensively summarize each of the histories, but instead to foreground the aspects of the discourse documented by each one that are structured by the scales topos. I have also chosen to foreground different strands from each history in order to establish the general narrative arc of this discourse over the last one hundred years or so without risking redundancy.

It is important to acknowledge that each of these three histories is written from a contemporary point of view that is sympathetic to the struggle by child care advocates to establish universal accessibility to quality early learning programs for children under kindergarten age as a permanent public responsibility equal to that of K-12 education. This is a point of view that would be recognizable to my participants at QCR, and so it is a productive one to adopt in order to better understand the rhetorical formation within which they work. From the perspective of proponents of universal child care, history has disabled this narrative from being one propelled by an arc of inevitability towards the full realization of their goal of a universal child care provision. Instead, each history has been written as a resource for understanding the still-chaotic state of child care and early learning in the first decade of the 21st century. Even in 2009, the state of child care and early education for children under five remains a, "hodgepodge of efforts with little coordination or coherence" (Dillon, 2009). Over a hundred years of advocacy and cultural change has produced a complex and incomprehensible network of private and public agencies that provide, often in alliance, programs and services that reach many children in need, but which simply do not have the resources or the stability to establish an universal reach. While the meaning of day care has changed over time, it has never been completely transformed (Rose, 1999, p. 5).

Certainly not all of the published literature on this issue comes from a sympathetic point of view. Quite the contrary, actually. As I will demonstrate in my selected review of these histories, there are deep veins of cultural values that oppose government sponsored, or guaranteed, early learning programs. For the sake of my project, however, I have chosen to withhold examining examples of this literature in my

analysis of the scales topos. I now turn to the review of the three histories and how the scales topos manifests in each one.

A Mother's Job: The History of Day Care, 1890-1960 by Elizabeth Rose (1999):

> By portraying *women's mothering work as inherently in conflict with their wage work,* maternalist reformers denied poor and working-class women's own definitions of motherhood, as well as their need for assistance. (Rose, 1999, p. 9, my emphasis)

The Scales:

Is it in the public interest for a woman's job to include wage work, whether she works by choice or necessity?

Rose's book is a documentary history of the development of child care in Philadelphia between 1890 and 1960. Rose has chosen Philadelphia as the focus of her history because it was one of the major centers of the day nursery movement of the early 20th century and local archives have preserved a rich set of documentary evidence (p. 7). Day nurseries were established in Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century by elite women as a charitable effort to get the children of poor working mothers quite literally off of the streets. The establishment of these day nurseries as a charity to desperate mothers working to avoid absolute destitution attached a stigma to day care that it still hasn't fully shaken today. Another thread in the development of child care in Philadelphia in the early 20th century was the rise of the nursery school, which challenged the notion that mother's care is always best and redefined day time institutional care for children away from last-ditch charity for the poor towards enrichment and education for the middle-class. The growth and popularity of both of these forms of daytime care for children were deeply affected by both the Great Depression and World War II. In each era intervention by the

federal government in the form of the establishment of publicly funded day care programs worked towards legitimizing the place of women in the workforce. Yet these programs, still heavily contested because of deep cultural ambivalence about a women's proper role as a homemaker and mother and/or as a breadwinner and career woman, failed to garner sufficiently broad political support to ensure permanent public investment.

Rose's historiography foregrounds the cultural tension over what constitutes a mother's proper "job" in society: is a mother's job limited to the private sphere in which she assumes primary and often sole responsibility for the moral, physical and social development of her children? Or does the role of a mother extend into the public sphere of the wage earner in which she can labor to improve and maintain the living standards of her children, either by choice or necessity? For the most part, during the first half of the twentieth century, the scales have tipped toward keeping a mother's job in the home, therefore, defining public interest as one of maintaining the domestic sphere as the proper location for the care of children, regardless of the situation or interests of the mother.

A product of this state of the scales was the mother's pension, a solution during the Progressive era to enable poor single mothers to stay home and care for their own children while being supported by a monthly stipend from the state. Mother's pensions easily won public support because of their appeal to the widely held cultural value of domesticity. In addition, the idea of state sponsored motherhood equated a mother's child raising duties to that of a man's military service—elevating both to a duty and honor of citizenship. Middle class women, in particular, supported these programs because of their own vulnerability to poverty and the possibility that they might be separated from their

children if forced into labor. Like many of the federal interventions into child care, however, the program failed to fulfill both its pragmatic and lofty ideals because of inadequate funding and the pervasiveness of the ambivalence over the establishment of a welfare state, maternal employment and the perceived legitimization of familial immortality. It was not uncommon for women who had been divorced or deserted, were unmarried, whose men were in prison or ill, or who kept male lodgers as a source of income to be ineligible for the benefit. In practice, only widows with more than one child were clearly eligible for what often amounted to an inadequate level of support, thereby necessitating that the great majority of women who could not depend on a male breadwinner still had to find work outside of the home.

Even during the years of World War II, federal ambivalence over the entry of women into the workforce hampered widespread and sustainable programs to enable women with children to work in the war industries. This fact is contrary to widely held popular beliefs today that "Rosie the Riveter" was widely heralded as she patriotically took up the industrial work men had had to abandon for the war—if Rosie had children, her situation would have been much more ambiguous, regardless of her need or desire to support a family. In fact, child welfare professionals at the federal Children's Bureau fought representatives of the war industries over whether mothers should be enabled to work by the widespread establishment of public day cares (p. 153). This ambivalent form of support for universal access to child care has been termed "maternalism" by historians of these female reformers and their philosophy (p. 8). Similar to the arguments for mother's pensions in the 1910s, maternalist child welfare advocates argued that, like military service, mother's work raising children was a civic duty and should be made a

national priority. While this high value placed on motherhood supported efforts to provide public assistance to struggling families, it stopped short of being able to recognize women as workers. This ambivalence, which mirrored deep public ambivalence about the proper sphere of women, and in particular mothers, disabled the federal child care programs that were established from meeting the full need.

Advocates for child care had also relied too heavily on arguments necessitating the emergency mobilization of women's labor during the war years. Instead of ensuring the existence of a federally supported child care system after the war years, as advocates had hoped, when the need for women's industrial labor dried up after the war, so did support for the child care programs. However, despite the weaknesses of these government programs, the great mobilization of women's labor during the war years did work towards legitimizing women's labor and its side-car of day care for working women's children. No longer was day care only a private, charitable effort intended as a last resort for destitute women, and thusly stigmatized. While after the war the Children's Bureau had to admit that day care was going to be a long-term issue and that the public would have to take responsibility for it, the Bureau continued to resist supporting easily accessible group care for children, and maintained services for very young children as the responsibility of the welfare department (p. 160).

An important contribution of Rose's history is the documentary evidence she unearths of women's voices during the war years. These voices were a major contribution to the gradual change in public attitudes that began to tip the scales in favor of supporting and normalizing women's presence in the work place. Rose demonstrates that many mothers were proactive in redefining their roles on their own terms even as this public

debate about mothers' work "swirled" (p. 180) around them. While they may have agreed with the prevailing sentiment of mother's work as a patriotic duty, they no longer saw that work as limited to the domestic sphere. Rose documents women's voices that extend a mother's work into caring for her children via wage earning to improve and maintain their quality of life rather than just out of desperate economic need. For women to seek work outside of the home, and thus to seek daytime care for their children, not on dire economic grounds, nor on patriotic grounds, was the beginning of a slow but tectonic shift in public attitudes about mothers in the workplace. Could it be in the public's best interests to support child care programs for mothers, who, for a variety of reason, might *choose* to seek work outside of the home? The fact that this question could even begin to emerge from the cultural and historical milieu of the war years suggested that the scales might begin to tip towards a public investment in child care and early learning warranted not by solutions to desperate poverty or an emergency need for wartime labor, but by the inclusion of wage work as a component of women's social citizenship; in short, as a right. As I noted above, however, this history does not gain momentum towards the ultimate fulfillment of child care advocates' ideal: a federally mandated, if not supported, universal early learning system. Issues of welfare reform, market economics, class, race, gender and other social issues have continued until today to politically complicate and undermine broad-based public support for such a system.

Children's Interests/Mother's Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy by Sonya Michel (1999):

> Child welfare experts, government officials, and even day care advocates, have all expressed the concern that employment takes mothers out of the home, depriving children of care. Within this discourse, the presence of mothers in the workforce is presented not as a normal feature of advanced market economies but as a "social problem; *thus children's interests are implicitly positioned in opposition to women's rights.* (Michel, 1999, p. 3, my emphasis)

> Many contemporary advocates have…emphasized the links between child care and children's interests but avoided any association with women's rights out of a fear that it would only harm their cause. (Michel, 1999, p. 7)

The Scales:

Should public support of child care be warranted by children's interests or by mothers' rights?

While the weighing of children's interests against mothers' rights is a strong undercurrent to Rose's history of a mother's "job," Michel places this version of the scales topos at the center of her history. One of the first questions that I naively brought to this project was why is it that issues of child care, even though they touch the vast majority of women, either directly or indirectly, have rarely been framed as a women's rights issue? As I will develop below when I address the function of the contemporary commonplace of "quality child care," even today progressive child care advocates avoid the frame of women's rights—it is simply too politically marginalizing. In this sense, little has changed since the late-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries when elite philanthropist women set up day nurseries in Philadelphia to get the waifs of the desperately poor off of the streets.

In general, the discourse of child care has had to rely on the public's support of arguments promoting children's interests in order to solve child care problems during the nation's wartimes or periods of great economic instability. There have, however, been brief, if never pervasive, shifts in the discourse in which the opposition between children's interests and mothers' rights has been dissipated. It is these moments that I will foreground in my review of Michel's history. These moments throw into relief how recalcitrant the commonplaces of poverty reform and maternalism have been in the discourse of child care and how they continue to be today.

One of the ways in which a mother's interest in working outside of the home has been recognized in legislative debates concerned with federal funding for child care have been arguments for the inclusion of assistance to "nonpoor" mothers (Michel, 1999, p. 239). This attention has taken the form of advocacy for the developmental advantages of quality child care, thereby warranting child care as beneficial for *all* children, not just children living in poverty or below the middle class. Recognition has also taken the form of fiscal relief for middle-class families, including tax credits and sliding fee options for federally supported child care centers, thereby opening up the centers to middle-class parents.

This discourse to broaden support for child care beyond a welfare function was particularly prevalent during debate over the Public Welfare Amendments of 1962. This progress was largely due to the efforts of Elinor Guggenheimer, a society matron turned "professional volunteer" (Michel, 1999, p. 196) for child care advocacy. She was appointed by President Kennedy to his President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) after having raised the profile of the Day Care Council of New York to national

prominence. This legislation was meant to have a dual purpose: to encourage mothers receiving public assistance to work and to address the problem of the children of nonpoor mothers receiving inadequate care. In the PCSW's report to the president, it expressed its overall position in terms that were new to this discourse. Women "in many different circumstances, whether they work outside of the home or not" (p. 239) were included as beneficiaries of "new and expanded community services [including child care]" (p. 239). The language went so far as to affirm a woman's choice to work outside of the home: "Those who *decide* to work should have child care services available" (my emphasis). In essence, this legislation was warranted both as an anti-poverty measure and as recognition that child care was a "developmental boon" for children. Both implicitly and explicitly it endorsed publically funded child care for children of working mothers above the poverty level.

However, as has repeatedly been the case in other periods of the history of this discourse, the change in rhetoric turned out not to be the launching point of a narrative arc propelled towards the inevitable establishment of universal child care. In fact, even in the PCSW's report the rhetoric of traditional maternalism was invoked: "It is *regrettable* when women with children are forced…to seek employment while their children are young" (Michel, 1999, p. 239, my emphasis). Directly addressing woman's right to work remained simply too politically risky and radical. Other progressive warrants for child care, however, were cited by the commission, such as "democratic social development" in the form of racial and social integration and the enrichment of both underprivileged and "normal" children. In the end the commission recommended sliding fees and funding alternatives for "families of all economic levels," including an expansion of the child care

tax deduction for families earning a "median income" (p. 240). The commission's recommendations certainly showed progress in the decoupling of federal support for child care from welfare and at least acknowledged the growing recognition that many women worked out of choice in addition to economic necessity. But, as Michel points out, the commission's report was too "guarded and equivocal" to mandate a fully funded universal program.

Another solution, or roadblock, depending on your point of view, to meeting the increasing demand for child care has been by establishing organizations that are public-private partnerships. By 1970 women had nearly doubled their 1940 proportion of the workforce to a 40% representation, and nearly half of these women had children under the age of six (Michel, 1999, p. 265). Coupled with a labor shortage in certain sectors of the economy and the sheer magnitude of the number of female workers, employers could no longer ignore the issue of child care. For conservative politicians of the time, including President Reagan, an attractive alternative to federal support was incentivizing the private sector to take up the problem via subsidies and tax write-offs (p. 266). While there was an initial surge of activity in the business sector in the 70s, it was not until the early 1980s that an effective congruency was established between "government aims and private-sector policies" (p. 269). This "second phase" of employer-sponsored care reflected a degree of success achieved by women who had made gains climbing the corporate ladder. These women felt confident enough to demand the benefits required of a working mother that would have previously been grounds for firing or exclusion from the workplace altogether. Employers, however, were motivated on largely pragmatic rather than ideological grounds. It was generally cheaper to provide child care than to

train new highly skilled personnel, in particular in industries which were facing a labor shortage, such as high technology (p. 271).

While some working women clearly benefited from the rapid expansion of employer-sponsored child care in the 1970s and 1980s, it did not provide a substitute or a foundation for a government supported universal child care program. In the end, this expansion did not succeed in tipping the scales towards the framing of child care as an individual, and, in particular, a woman's right; a right that is fully distinct from the fragile safety net of welfare. During the Clinton administration, federal child care provisions were, once again, enveloped into welfare reform in what became the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996.

One of the major reasons cited by Michel for the lack of public support for universal child care in the US is that working mothers have failed to unite as a single constituency. And this has not been for a lack of numbers in the workforce, at least since the mid-twentieth century. Over a hundred years of ad hoc and compromised efforts to meet the demand of child care has fractured this constituency by race and more significantly by class. Wealthy women who seek out child care via privately funded means, such as nannies, eau-pairs, and private preschools, largely exclude themselves from the public debate over universal child care. Conservatively-minded women, regardless of class, are excluded because of their pervasive investment in traditional maternalist ideologies and tend to find child care solutions that are off the radar of government programs and oversight. Working class and poor women, who often must work regardless of their value systems, struggle to navigate the shifting sands of private and publically funded child care programs, often having to settle on care that is

inadequate or not culturally appropriate. Middle-class working women, who are arguably the most empowered to take up the discourse of universal child care, also struggle to find child care in a marketplace that fosters chronic shortages of quality care. In short, women who are not shielded from the problem by wealth are divided by ideology, or immobilized by the demands on their lives. The result is that the scales remain tipped against women's interests in the workplace, even today. But Michel ends her book with a call to unite these divided constituencies. She restates the scales topos, as it would be manifested if it were perfectly in balance: "They [Americans] must also grant every woman the right to choose between caregiving and wage-earning….Until then, children cannot be guaranteed adequate resources for nurturance, security, and development, *and* true social citizenship will remain beyond the grasp of American women" (280). Left open is what kind of discourse can balance the scales between children's interests and mothers' rights.

Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care After the Second World War by Emilie Stoltzfus (2003).

> In mid-twentieth century America the definitions of *public* interest and *public* responsibility, along with the kind of public intervention considered legitimate, hinged greatly on how a particular issue was tied to the now distinct institutions described as economic (i.e., the marketplace) or domestic (i.e., the nuclear family)…both sets of institutions were considered *private*….this meant that they…operated outside of the realm of legitimate public political interventions. (Stoltzfus, 2003, p. 5, my emphasis).

The Scales:

If the proper sphere of family life is the private, then on what grounds is it in the public interest to enable women to work outside of the home during peacetime (and thereby intervene in the private sphere)?

Are women who work outside of the home during peacetime delinquent from the private sphere or productive taxpayers in the public sphere?

The difficulty of warranting government intrusion into the private sphere of the family is not new. As long ago as the antebellum period, courts identified a public responsibility to intervene into "failed" families where a child's welfare was at stake due to abuse or neglect (p. 5). But the difficulty of warranting broad public intervention into the private sphere of the family in the form of establishing universal access to child care has been largely due to the relegation of a mother's role to the domestic private sphere, and the articulation of child care provisions to women's work. To put it another way, efforts to establish a public provision for child care have never been motivated by the fact that most fathers work outside of the home. The demand for child care is a byproduct of the entry of women into the workplace, whether they enter on a voluntary or an involuntary basis. As long as women's value for society has been deemed a primarily private one, it has been difficult to justify broad government support that enables and explicitly or implicitly endorses their exit from this sphere.

I have saved a review of Stoltzfus' history until last because she acknowledges the histories of Rose and Michel and articulates how her project builds on and is differentiated from theirs. Stoltzfus' focus is on the grassroots activism mobilized by

mothers in the post-WWII era desperate to maintain the publicly funded child care provisions established during the war. In addition, she chronicles activist's efforts to establish the right to child care as necessary for the fulfillment of women's social citizenship. In particular, Stoltzfus contributes to the history of child care with her rendering of the efforts of women in California, Washington D.C. and Cleveland to sustain the publicly funded day care programs of the WWII era (p. 13). My review will focus on the activity in California because it is of particular interest to this discussion of the scales topos.

As I have already reviewed in Rose's history, one way in which the scales topos has functioned in the discourse about child care is the weighing of public interest in investing in a mother's role outside of the home as a wage earner against deeply entrenched values of traditional maternalism that valued a mother's domestic service. Like Rose, Stoltzfus also documents how a women's role in society has, for much of American history, been delimited in terms of her contributions to the private, or domestic sphere. This has been the case even during periods of history when this contribution has been understood in terms of a woman's patriotic duty to raise the next generation of citizens, also known as "republican motherhood" (p. 3).

It took over a decade of debate, activism, last-minute temporary funding and other contingencies to finally establish in 1957 permanent authorizing legislation for state-run child care in California**.** The move that tipped the outcome of the debate in favor of the parent and educator activists was the realization that in order to win broad public support they would have to change how wage-earning mothers were understood (p. 162). This was done by reframing the presence of mothers in the public sphere, and, in particular, in

the workplace, from one of delinquent mother to that of productive taxpayer. This was a formidable challenge, as the activists had to establish how mothers' labor was essential, non-threatening, and, most importantly, of positive public value. They had to do this against the grain of a long history that had resisted these very changes in conception. While Roses' history ends in the post-war years before such a change in the discourse had really taken hold in an enduring way, Stoltzfus' foregrounds in great detail the changing public debate due to these activists' efforts.

This rhetorical move that changed the discourse about public investment in child care in California was actually promoted by a conservative former businessman and long-time public health advocate, Lawrence Arnstein. In the context of a debate over whether to increase state funding for a welfare program called Aid to Dependent Children, or to increase state funding for the state-run Child Care Centers, the calculus was done that in terms of cost to the state, funding one over the other would have an equal fiscal impact. In part due to federal subsidies for child welfare programs, the prevailing argument that funding the Child Care Centers was cheaper than funding the welfare program was simply no longer valid. Given this state of affairs, Arnstein advised parents and other advocates to give up the "cheaper" argument and to instead emphasize the fiscal benefit of working parents in terms of greater tax receipts for the state. In this sense, parents with children in child care became "productive citizens" and "taxpayers not taxeaters" (p. 187, Arnstein qtd. in Stoltzfus). This reconceptualization of mothers in the workplace tipped the scales in favor of public investment in the day care centers by accommodating multiple commonplaces that had traditionally tipped the scales against it.

First, the argument of "productive citizens" upheld the long held ideal that the American family should maintain self-sufficiency at nearly any cost to itself. In addition, it elevated the family beneficiaries of publicly funded child care from being costly dependents on the state to "producing units" in the economy (p. 188, Bachman qtd in Stoltzfus). In addition, women's inclusion as "productive citizens," branded as "womanpower," finally linked their wage-work to the official economy outside of the national emergencies of wartime or economic depression that had previously warranted their presence in the workforce. In other words, at last, a peacetime rational for publicly funded child care had been found, aided by the particular political and economic circumstances in California (the same argument did not work in other states). Stoltzfus is careful to point out that while legislators were satisfied with this argument on pragmatic and economic grounds, it did not mean that they adopted the wider social understanding that working parents, and mothers in particular, maintained concerning their contribution to the state economy.

What is notable for this discussion of the scales topos is the change in the warrant provided by the "productive citizen" argument for public intervention into the private sphere of the family from a moral one to an economic one. Previous arguments that warranted public intervention into the family, including the protection of abused children or the rescue of destitute families, often single mothers, had failed to separate the issue of child care from that of charity, welfare reform and other forms of social engineering. In addition, previous arguments had failed to overcome the deeply entrenched cultural values that maintained a woman's place in the private sphere, in particular, once she had taken on the role of motherhood.

Tipping the scales in favor of public investment in child care in California, however, was not primarily a success of persuasive reasoning. On the contrary, kairos, as understood by Scott as "tipping the scales to create an advantage and then seizing this advantage at an opportune moment" (p. 63) was an essential element of the change in policy. As Stoltzfus points out, the political, social and economic climate in California contributed mightily to the eventual success of child care advocates' cause. Not the least of which was the state's post-war political culture, which stressed nonpartisanship, pragmatism, moderation and activism (p. 138). These conditions were not replicated in the other parts of the country studied by Stoltzfus, including Cleveland and Washington, D.C.. For this reason, and many others, the move to warrant public investment in permanently funded universal child care did not gather national momentum.

A Lack of Stasis in the Debate

Stasis is most simply understood as the issue on which rhetors agree to disagree, or an agreement on what is at issue in the argument (Crowley & Hawee, 1999, p. 45). To this notion I want to add that this agreement is made with the understanding that it is the preamble to rhetorical discourse rather than the outcome of it. The simplest example is a trial. A trial begins with a disagreement over the innocence of the defendant; what ensues is deliberative discourse from the defense and prosecution, and it ends with a decision by the jury. The advantage of a trial is that it structurally ensures progress, or an outcome in the debate (of course in reality trials can be hung up for years, appealed, etc.). This is not always the case in a public policy debate. The issue of abortion is a familiar example. Pro-life advocates argue against maintaining legalization of the procedure based on deeply held values of when personhood begins and the implications of that personhood.

Pro-Choice advocates argue for maintaining and expanding the legalization of the procedure based on arguments of a woman's right to maintain control over her own body. There is no stasis in this debate given that issues of when personhood begins are not at a point of "agreeing to disagree" with issues of a woman's right to maintain control of her body. Immobility is maintained in this debate as there is no common ground (or stasis, place to stand) from which the rhetors can begin to argue. More importantly, these deeply held values on both sides of the issue are non-negotiable. There is no amount of discourse that will persuade either side to compromise on their core values regarding personhood or women's rights—the debate is stymied.

The same is true, although on more complicated terms, for the historical debate over a government sponsored provision for universal child care. With the risk of oversimplifying, the issue can be broken down into two strands of reasoning: On the one hand, as long of the issue has been articulated to welfare reform, then the issue of child care has been framed in terms of helping poor women return to self-sufficiency. Since a mother's place is primarily in the home, non-welfare warranted government assistance for child care would be an unnatural intrusion of the public sphere into the private. To warrant this position proponents called on the values of traditional maternalism, and a naturalized history of the ideal of domesticated American motherhood developed in the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, advocates for universal child care argued, in addition to adequate welfare for the poor, for the public's responsibility to provide universal early education similar to the K-12 system because of the great boon to child development for *all* children. They also argued for the rights of women with children to choose between spending their days at home with children or entering into the workplace,

whether out of choice or necessity. To warrant their position, advocates have called on research from the science of child development and they have made economic arguments about the public gain from women's labor. As with the issue of abortion, proponents of both sides are deeply committed to arguments that are not fundamentally in dialogue with those of the other side. While this conceptualization of the discourse as stymied by a lack of stasis is useful, it is important to recognize that changes in public policy do happen, even without a fundamental change in the structure of the discourse. Events extrinsic to the issue have warranted policy changes in order to meet the demands of a crisis situation, such as the Great Depression or WWII. But even when the government intervention was substantial, such as when women entered the workforce in great numbers during the war years, long-term reform was not guaranteed because the discourse about the issue had not been fundamentally changed.

In addition, like the stalemate in the public discourse about abortion, both sides of the debate are structured by values that are non-negotiable. No amount of discourse will persuade adherents to compromise their values. In addition, the issue is structured by multiple binaries, each of which has its own long and complex history as a discourse: Is this an issue of whether the proper sphere of a mother is public or private? Is this an issue about the level of tolerance for public intervention into the private sphere? Is this an issue as to the public responsibility to protect children's interests or to ensure a fully realized social citizenship for all citizens? The answer is yes to each of these binary oppositions, resulting in a public discourse that has had difficulty deciding what it is about. As I will develop below, each of these binary oppositions is the outcome of powerful metaphorical belief frames which structure the two main ideological camps in the US: the conservative

and the liberal. Each of these belief frames is defined by a strong commitment to a conceptualization of the role of government that entail all other positions on public policy. As long as the commitment to these core values remains non-negotiable within both frames, then the lack of stasis is likely to continue to stymie many issues of public policy.

The Quality Topos

> **Question: "Who decides what *quality* child care is?**
>
> Answer: Families need to decide what the right child-care setting is for their children. The Seeds *quality* standards reflect research about what supports higher *quality* child care."
>
> (Question and answer from FAQ page of Washington's Department of Early Learning website about the "Seeds to Success" quality standards, my emphasis)

The above question and answer formulation from the FAQ page about Washington's "Seeds to Success" quality standards for child care serves as a useful introduction to the quality topos in the contemporary public discourse of child care and early learning. These short few lines succinctly encapsulate the most powerful rhetorical dynamics of how the quality topos functions in the discourse. First, the question proposes that quality child care exists, but acknowledges that quality is an ambiguous concept open to definition by all stakeholders. Secondly, the first answer statement reaffirms that it is firmly within the private sphere of the family to decide what quality means and where it is located. This statement is a reflection of the long history of maternalism in the United

States, and also the long-standing public suspicion of the state intervening in the private affairs of family life. Finally, the third statement claims that *research* has shown what quality child care means, or what the components of it are, and that these standards have been codified into the state's "Seeds to Success" quality standards. These few lines set up the rhetorical problem that shaped much of my participants' work on the communications project to build public will for "Seeds to Success" Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) being developed in Washington State: the tug of war between the notion of quality child care as an ambiguous, or capacious, notion available to all stakeholders to define within their own values and culture, and on the other hand a set of standards warranted by scientific research and codified in an official model sponsored by the state: the "Seeds to Success" quality standards. In other words, the quality topos is at once an accessible notion available to all stakeholders, and, on the other hand, a set of fixed standards warranted by the authority of scientific research. How my participants, and other system builders in early education, manage the rhetorical dynamics of these seemingly contradictory statements in order to enroll new stakeholders in the official "Seeds to Success" initiative is one of the key stories this dissertation develops.

This section will introduce the special topos "quality child care" as the contemporary solution to the stasis of the historical rhetorical formation of the public discourse in early learning. In other words, the quality topos, because of its capaciousness, "ambivalence" (Prelli, 1989, p. 77), or interpretive flexibility, enables a diversity of stakeholders to identify with it and claim it as their own. As a result, advocates of child care and early learning have been more successful lately in gaining

public support for new initiatives that extend child care and early learning to more and more children. This section will introduce evidence of the increased influence of the quality topos in the contemporary rhetorical formation of the public discourse about child care and early learning. This section will also argue for how important it is that my participants actively work to maintain the capaciousness of this topos in their work in order to maintain existing stakeholders who have radically diverse interests and needs, and to enroll new ones, in their work to raise awareness and buy-in to Washington State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

The quality topos has long been part of the rhetorical formation of child care and early learning in the United States. Since the original philanthropic 19th-century day nurseries in Philadelphia, child care providers and advocates have always had to offer reasons to skeptical parents and public interests that there are positive benefits to putting young children into care outside of the home. These reasons have included getting waifs off of the street, better sanitation and nutrition, exposure to a moral code, an opportunity for women to get their families off of welfare, and, more recently, the developmental benefits for children and the boost to the economy promised by a better educated workforce. The notion of quality child care, then, and how it is warranted as worthy of public investment, is inextricably bound up with how child care outside of the home is valued at a particular time in history. As the section on the scales topos above demonstrated, child care advocates have historically had a hard time building enough public will to create a lasting system that grants access to early education for all children. This is largely due to the fact that, in the U.S., advocates have always had to adopt a defensive stance against the pervasive values of maternalism that date to colonial

America—and this is certainly still the case. But child care advocates have been successful over the last couple of decades in increasing the power of the quality topos to unite otherwise conflicting value systems about child care because of their sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical dynamics of the issue. These dynamics were introduced in the brief analysis of the FAQ question above, and will be unpacked in more detail in the speech by the governor of Washington below.

While the quality topos has been part of the historical discourse about building an early learning and child care system, it is possible to say that in the last couple of decades it has become more influential as a topos, or a "persuasive rhetorical engine that proliferate[s] meaning and mobilize[s] action," (Rai, 2010, p. 39) to enroll new members (or to redefine or maintain the enrollment of existing members) per agenda of early learning advocates. The most available evidence of this are the efforts of states nation-wide to develop Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) with the aim to define and enforce (although not necessarily via legal pressure) standards for child care that exceed state licensing requirements. The exigence for these QRIS intitiatives is that state licensing requirements are highly uneven nation-wide, are inadequately enforced, and are often limited to health and safety standards and child-caretaker ratios without any emphasis on the nature—or the quality—of the interaction between the child care provider and the child. From a historical perspective, for child care advocates it is no longer enough to define quality child care in terms of improved sanitation or a minimum level of staffing per child. After all, unlike in the cities of the 19th century, sanitation and access to nutrition are now virtually universal, whereas access to education is not. At the level of the rhetorical formation of the discourse of early learning, the quality topos has

emerged as an alternative to the scales topos articulated in the first part of this chapter. What is quality child care? And who gets to decide? These are the questions that a diverse set of stakeholders in early learning can agree to disagree on, or can all stand together in agreement that it is the central thing at issue in the discourse.

In fact, in the analysis below, both the governor of Washington State and the Director of the Department of Early Learning make explicit statements that place the interests of citizens, children, mothers and the economy on equal footing, as mutually interdependent in a positive way, but also all hinging on greater investment in *quality* early education for *all* children. But herein lies the rub: advocates' emphasis on quality child care, as understood in terms of its formal educational value, also limits the efficacy of the quality topos to reach stakeholders who do not agree that the values and practices of formal education should shape the care of young children. Is it possible that the notion of quality child care can at once be maintained as an ambiguous notion available to all stakeholders, and at the same time be a codified as set of standards that frames the care of young children as a formalized educational endeavor? The answer to this question is, of course, both yes and no.

In order to better set up how the quality topos as situated within the historical rhetorical formation of the discourse, and how it functions contemporarily in a much more visible circulation, I've analyzed a speech by the governor of Washington State that serves as an introduction to an appeal video produced by my field site Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). This video, "Quality Child Care Is….," was one of the first outcomes of my participants' QRIS Communications Project to build public will for the state's QRIS model, "Seeds to Success." In short, the purpose of the video was to communicate

to the public, child care providers, business people and other clients and donors to QCR about the importance of and the definition of quality child care, and how QCR supports stakeholders to make quality child care accessible to children and possible for child care providers to provide.

This one minute, 45 second speech[10] is brilliant in its efficiency of reconstituting important strands of the historical discourse on early learning, anticipating the counter-discourses to the advocacy message and catalyzing/evoking the quality topos that the rest of the video builds on. The video opens with an image of the governor sitting at her desk in her official capacity, wearing a pink silk blouse. After the governor introduces herself, she immediately restates the agenda of child care and early learning advocates, that is to guarantee access for "every child" to "*quality* care and early learning." By doing this, the governor puts into motion, early in her speech, the quality topos, without stopping to explain, or to limit what it means. Within the context of this video, she does not need to do this definition work, as her job at the beginning of the video is to warrant public investment in quality child care, not explain what it is. In fact, it would be against her

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[10] The full transcription of the Governor's speech: "Hi, I'm Governor Chris Gregoire. As many of your know, education and health care are two of my top priorities. We must ensure that every child gets the *quality* care and early education they need to succeed in school and in life. The best way to grow our economy and to secure a bright future for our children is to build a strong learning foundation that will support a child's education from cradle to grave. My passion is for early education, developed during motherhood. When my first daughter was born, Mike and I knew our roles where to be her first and best teachers. As parents we have the opportunity to start our children on a path to life long learning: their first word, first step, first well-baby checkup. But as parents and teachers we all need help and support. As a result of Washington Learns and the help of the legislature, we're building an education system that will meet the needs of children and their parents. We must continue to build on these accomplishments in our education system. Together we can ensure that all Washington families have access to *high quality* child care and learning programs that support and strengthen our communities. Thank you" (my emphasis).

interests to in any way give away her investment in what quality child care means, because it would necessarily begin to close down the capaciousness of the quality topos that she has just put into circulation. The power of the quality topos is this capaciousness, which gives it the ability to hook in the widest possible audience. In fact, the governor is a key supporter for Washington State's QRIS initiative "Seeds to Success," and the official model for quality child care was primarily developed out of a state department that the governor created: the Department of Early Learning (DEL). This official model is steeped in the discourse of school, curriculum, professional training and assessment: all things that challenge the notion that the ideal care of young children is a private, family-oriented affair.

While her strong position statement situates her within the system advocacy framework, it is quickly followed up the economic warrant for public investment in early education with which advocates have had some limited success in the past: "…the best way to grow our economy…." Notable here is how acting in the best interests of children is not motivated by the concept of citizen's rights, mother's rights, or even, explicitly at least, issues of welfare and social reform; the governor clearly states that it is in the state's economic interests to invest in early education.

The governor then continues to further explain her position in terms that largely answer to the conservative framework for child care and early education that is the continuation of the maternalist ideology of child raising that dates to colonial America: "My passion for early education developed during motherhood…Mike and I knew our roles were to be her first and best teacher." The maternalist ideology has meant different things during different times, but it essentially positions home-based care by a mother-

type caregiver as the ideal for the raising of young children. Maintaining the maternalist ideal has historically been variously a social, moral, and, at times, even a public, imperative. No strong advocacy statement for the regular care of young children outside of the private home can be made without anticipating, or as the governor does, actually out-right owning, this strong tradition. However, shortly after this statement, the governor simultaneously conflates the role of parent and teacher in a single individual, while at the same proposing that these roles are also separated into a private role and a professional role: "But as parents and teachers we all need help and support." She then goes on to explicitly balance the scales topos that weighs parents' (mostly mothers') needs against the needs of children: "we're building an education system that will meet the needs of children and their parents." No longer are the needs of children and mothers in conflict, and no longer does supporting a state-sponsored early learning system requiring abandoning the idea that the raising of young children is first and foremost a private affair. Finally, at the end of her short speech, the governor reasserts that what she desires for all children is access to "high quality" child care and learning. What quality child care is made up of is left to the rest of the video to explain.

The rest of video very carefully resists presenting a notion of quality child care that challenges the framing speech of the governor. In fact, the video says very little about what quality child care actually *is*, and instead shows quality child care as it is enacted via scenes from a family home child care (small child care businesses run out of homes), a daycare center (a larger, multi-classroom, school-type business that offers all-day care), informal, community-center based play and learn groups, and a mother caring for her children at home. While the narrator makes the definitional statement that

"Quality child care includes love, safety and respect," this notion of quality is fully transferable across any child care environment. What the video suggests is that the key location for finding quality is not in one setting or another, or in one kind of caregiver or another, but in the relationship between the children and the caregiver.

The most explicit move to define what quality child care is comes at the very end of the video during a musical montage sequence of photographs of children in a variety of care settings, framed by a series of statements that complete the statement "Quality child care is….:"

> Where children are safe
> Where children are loved
> Where children dance
> Where children are noisy and messy
> Where children discover and explore
> Where children develop social and emotional skills
> Where children are happy
> Where children play
> Where a love of lifelong learning is instilled
> Where children, parents and providers are supported by QCR

Again, none of these statements is exclusive of a particular set of values, or a setting, for the care of young children. The message of the video has very carefully maintained the capaciousness of the quality topos in the sense that quality is a notion that is available to a broad set of stakeholders with a variety of, and often conflicting, values and assumptions about child care.

Within this video is also evidence that the quality topos is being forwarded quite intentionally by system-builders in an attempt to unite, or to balance the scales between interests that the discourse has historically pitched as being at odds with one another. At the end of the video the Director of the Department of Early Learning (DEL) makes a

statement that reasserts how investment in early education balances the scales topoi that previously weighted the interests of the public, children, mothers, and the economy against each other: "When a child receives education from the early years…its going to strengthen our families, our communities, our economy and our democracy." In other words, everybody wins, and everyone is included in this effort.

While this video is first and foremost an appeal for my field site, it also fulfills the important rhetorical function of establishing the notion of quality as a key topos for the discourse of early learning, one that QCR enacts in the very structure and function of the organization. To establish the quality topos as broader than a formal, educational framework for child care, the message of the video has to work against negative cultural stereotypes of young children sitting at desks in child care centers being forced to learn via rote tasks. It also has to work against deep seated fears that children are damaged by the trauma of being separated from their parents or that child care providers, in general, are threats to the primacy of the parents' role in children's lives. These fears are promoted in the counter discourse to child care advocacy, such as in books like *Day Care Deception: What the Child Care Establishment Isn't Telling Us* (Robertson, 2003).

The QCR video successfully resists these negative stereotypes with images of happy, engaged, and well-nurtured children in group care environments (although there is a brief slippage when an interviewee from an informal play and learn group invokes children being forced to write the letter "A" fifteen times at a child care center when, in her view, it is really childrens' job to play). The video does, however, occlude one fact that became an enormous challenge for my participants on the communications project at QCR. The state's official model for what quality child care is, the "Seeds to Success"

model, is actually strongly based in the school discourse of curriculum, professional development, assessment and professional business management practices—not softer concepts such as love and respect. In fact, doubts about the efficacy of the QRIS model, even by the child care advocates instrumental to developing it, were founded upon the impossibility of assessing, in any verifiable way, the quality of interactions between child and care giver—what the video promotes as the essential location for quality. While this video was not made to explicitly explain or promote the "Seeds to Success" model, the QRIS initiative was put into motion simultaneously with the production of this video. Likewise, the grant that my participants received to build public and child care provider will for the "Seeds to Success" QRIS initiative included communicating to all of the divergent stakeholders represented in this video, including family home care providers, child care centers, parents and other informal care givers. There is, therefore, an incompatibility between the capacious notion of quality child care warranted and forwarded in this video, and the official model of quality child care being developed simultaneously with the blessing of the very same individuals and state and private organizations who appear in the video. How my participants navigated the rhetorical challenge of maintaining the capaciousness of the quality topos despite the limiting discourse of the official "Seeds" model is a key theme to this dissertation. In short, in order to enroll new members in the early learning system, and to maintain the enrollment of existing ones, my participants at QCR had to maintain the quality topos as a "storehouse of social energy" (Cintron, 2010, p. 102) that could be mobilized for as many stakeholders as possible in order to move forward the massive effort of building an early learning system.

Maintaining the Capaciousness of the Quality Topos in Real Time.

Drawing on field work, this section will demonstrate how my participants actively maintained the capaciousness of the quality topos in their work as a counter-move to the threat that the "Seeds" model posed to limiting what quality child care is and who or what has the power to define it. In other words, the rhetorical move to reinstate the ambiguity that powers the quality topos as a discursive tool for enrolling stakeholders with divergent values for child care and early learning was key to my participants' work. This field example is an opportunity to see how my participants mobilized the quality topos in order to do net work, or to manage, or maintain, break or renegotiate, the associations among members of the child care and early learning network as the socio-political conditions of their work changed. This scenario is an insight into the net work of my participants in real time, as mediated by the rhetorical structure of the quality topos.

The field scenario centers around Catherine, the manager on the QRIS Communications Project. As the manger, it fell primarily to Catherine to maintain and renegotiate the relationships with QCR's partner agencies and funding organizations, and to persuade them to support and participate in her team's work to build public will for the "Seeds to Success" model. One of the rhetorical challenges that she found herself facing during my period of field work was explaining to QCR's sister child care resource and referral organizations how the legislature's Great Recession-induced reduction in funding for the QRIS initiative had changed the goals of the QRIS Communication Project.

While initially the function of the QRIS Communications Project had been to communicate directly to parent, child care provider and public stake holders in King County about the state's soon-to-be implemented Quality Rating and Improvement

System (QRIS), the revised purpose of the campaign repositioned the "Seeds" model as only a *framework for aligning* the way that quality child care is talked about by QCR's partner organizations across the state. That is, what has once been an effort to build anticipation for a consumer-type rating system for quality child care, had now been reframed as a project to regulate the discourse. As the manager, it fell to Catherine to generate a narrative that would renegotiate the role of the QRIS "Seeds" model for the communication project and that would enable QCR's partner organizations to continue to identify with the project.

In December 2009 I joined Catherine, and her coworker Charlene, in Catherine's office to listen in on their monthly conference call with their sister resource and referral organizations (The Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network) across Washington State. Catherine and Charlene had been put on the agenda to talk about their work on the QRIS Communications Project and how the downturn in the economy had changed it. At the moderator's request, Catherine began the conference call with her narrative to reframe the mission of the QRIS Communication project:

> We want to talk about how we are aligning our quality messaging, as well as how it relates to the development of QRIS in WA state. We got the grant 3 years ago, when the governor was putting together the early learning council, there was lots of funding to early learning and QRIS was on the rise. The Gates Foundation wanted us to provide messaging tools to communicate with providers, families and FFN about quality child care that were in alignment with quality as defined by QRIS in order to prepare the ground for QRIS. Because of state challenges [the budget deficit], the mission has changed from talking about QRIS to talking about

> quality. But we will still use the foundation quality standards developed by state [the QRIS "Seeds" model] to have a more aligned way of talking about quality to stakeholders so that they [families, providers] will demand quality and so that providers can set goals to provide quality. But how do you talk to providers about QRIS and families and FFN about quality? Originally, it [the communication project] was about raising awareness about QRIS in King County. Now it is about raising awareness about quality in pilot communities and across the CCR&R system. We'll talk about how the quality messages we've come up with are aligned with the Seeds model. I apologize that this project is kind of abstract, are there any questions about what we are doing here? (fn 12/3/09) [11]

Catherine's narrative here is a prime example of a network genre (developed in more detail in Chapter 5). In short, network genres narrate the nature of the associations among members of a network that are allied around a particular outcome and how these associations have been negotiated or renegotiated as socio-political conditions change. Importantly, network genres function simultaneously to make the network visible to members and also constitute and reconstitute the associations in real time. In other words, Catherine's narrative on the conference call not only has to narrate and make visible the relationships among the QRIS initiative, the governor, the Gates Foundation and the "Seeds to Success" model, but it also has to renegotiate how QCR's partner organizations are identified with the project—via her narrative, Catherine has to renegotiate those

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[11] A paraphrased narrative means that I transcribed Catherine's speech live. This form of live transcription focuses on recording the rhetorical moves of the speaker rather than reproducing exact lexical verisimilitude.

associations. And Catherine's invitation for questions and apology at the end of her monologue about the newly "abstract" nature of the project is telling of her anticipation of this renegotiation being difficult. As if to confirm her concerns, Catherine's apology was followed by a long silence on the conference call. In response to the silence, Catherine, and then Charlene, made another effort to make it clear what they were asking for:

> Catherine: "How do we [CCR&R organizations] see the definition of quality that the state [The "Seeds" model] has fitting what we already do?"

And Charlene rephrased the question again around the problem of definition:

> "What is quality child care to you and how do you talk about it with providers?"

As the responses came in to Catherine and Charlene's questions, it became clear that the representatives of QCR's partner agencies were confused, and also anxious that what Catherine was suggesting was an equation of the quality standards proposed by the "Seeds" model with the notion of quality child care that they promote to their own constituencies of child care providers and parents. As you can see in the comments[12] below, the representatives of QCR's sister organizations were generally supportive, but skeptical, and somewhat threatened by what Catherine is suggesting:

> Response 1: A great question…we haven't defined this [quality] in this region…you can help us.

---

[12] Like Catherine's narrative above, these comments were transcribed live, and are paraphrases of comments in which my primary focus was to maintain the rhetorical moves of the speaker, rather than reproduce lexical exactitude.

> Response 2: There are a million brochures [about quality child care]…are you looking for a short statement, a mission statement?
>
> Response 3: Hasn't this work has been done at the federal level? I don't want to limit our vision of quality child care so that it can't respond to variety of families.
>
> Response 4: Can we show families the quality indicator from NACCRRA [the national CCR&R organization]? It is a problem to define quality to satisfy all families.

Catherine responded to these questions and concerns, several of which reflect concern over limiting the definition of quality at the cost of excluding certain stakeholders (families, in particular) by reiterating the importance of maintaining the capaciousness of the quality topos. She said:

> The outcome of quality is that children are nurtured and growing…but there are a million ways to get there. When we look at the "Seeds" elements you'll see that they allow for multiple approaches. What we can focus on is a flexible framework for talking about quality that doesn't get so micro that it is too prescriptive.

"A million ways," "multiple approaches," and "flexible framework" are all phrases which Catherine has used to restate, actually overstate, the extent to which she is not proposing to limit or constrain what quality child care means. She, like her colleagues on the phone, are all too aware of the risks of alienating their key clients—child care providers and parents—by insisting on too narrow a conception of quality child care.

In this field scenario it is possible to see how the rhetorical structure of the quality topos is functioning as a tool for Catherine to do net work, to enable the partner agencies

to identify with and enroll in the Communications project, and the broader effort to gain universal access to quality child care for all children. In this interaction Catherine has grappled with the inherent conflict between the success of the quality topos to engage a diverse set of stakeholders in efforts to increase access to quality child care, and the promotion of the state's official quality standards which by its very nature insists on a conception of quality child care shaped by the discourse of formal education.

Conclusion

There is some awkwardness in this chapter with the simultaneous maintenance of the concept of a macro level of discourse and the posthumanist move away from structuralist metaphors that assume divisions between the individual (micro) and the social (macro). This maintenance is a product of both frameworks existing simultaneously in rhetorical theory, with the latter essentially a response to the former. In his more recent introduction to actor-network theory Latour (2005) takes on this problem in particular, by rearticulating the social as an outcome of dynamic associations among actors, rather than a pre-existent ether or soup in which actors, or rhetors, live and breath. From a posthumanist perspective, then, there is no macro or micro—there are only the dynamic associations among members of an assemblage, or network—not even the network exists in a predetermined sense. The associations among actors are always dynamic, and cannot be assumed as stable, as the socio-political conditions of their existence are always changing. Scott (2003) refers to these conditions as "extrarhetorical" (p. 26), and reiterates how they don't just act on the associations among actors, "but [are] components of the primary relationships being mapped" (p. 26). Rhetoric, then, including the

rhetorical structures discussion in this chapter, functions at the point of these associations, or splices.

For my participants on the QRIS Communications Project team at Quality Child Care Resources, maintaining the capaciousness of the quality topos was a rhetorical move that, during this particular era of the historical discourse of child care and early learning, enabled them to manage their associations with the diversity of stakeholders in the "Seeds to Success" quality standards model and the Quality Rating and Improvements System initiative in Washington State. This move is evidence of how rhetorical resources that are outcomes of the historical discourse circulate and are maintained in the contemporary discourse as long as they continue to function to successfully mediate the associations among stakeholders. This is to say that quality will not be an influential topos indefinitely. It will not always be able to function as a "persuasive rhetorical engine that proliferate[s] meaning and mobilize[s] action" (Rai, 2010, p. 39). Socio-political conditions will change, and the rhetorical formation of child care and early learning will change with them, just as the rhetorical formation will continue to mediate these socio-political changes.

CHAPTER 4

Tracing Rhetorical Activity to Its Material Effects in Knowledge Work at QCR

Introduction

I'd like to start this chapter with a question. How does this model for assessing quality child care:

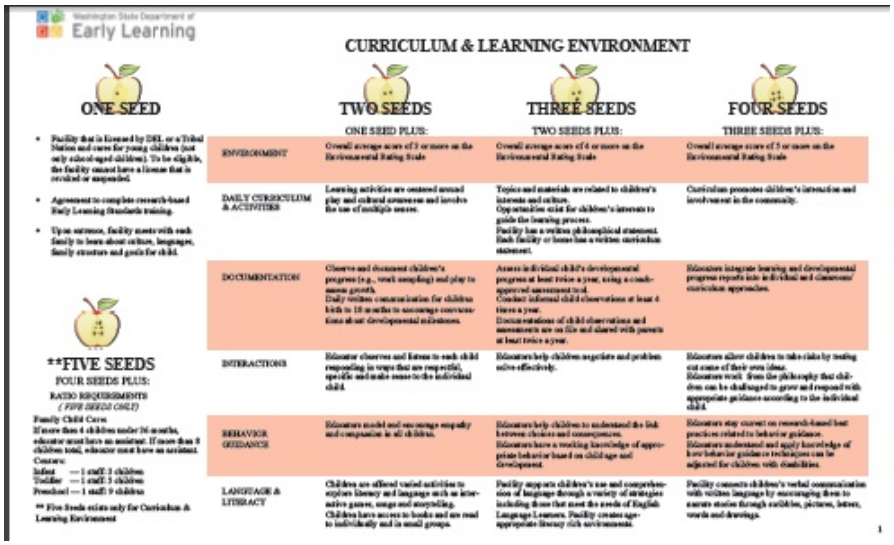

Figure 4.1: The "Curriculum and Learning Environment" element of the Washington State Department of Early Learning's "Seeds to Success" model for a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in Washington State.

Become this quality child care classroom:

Figure 4.2: A quality child care classroom. Image from a training manual for the ITERS-R, the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating System-Revised, an evaluation system adopted as part of the QRIS model that will assign "ratings" to child care providers on a scale of 1-5 "seeds."

Or this quality child care play group?:

Figure 4.3: Image of a Play & Learn Group from a QCR information sheet.

Before answering this question, let's take a closer look at the image of the quality child care classroom (Figure 4.2) to see how Washington Department of Early Learning's (DEL) QRIS "Seeds to Success" model is present in a recognized instance of quality child care. Figure 4.4 below is the same image of the classroom above, but with lines that point to the material traces of elements of the "Seeds to Success" assessment model for quality child care. These traces include clean floors, a highly-trained teacher and the bookcases full of

neatly organized, developmentally appropriate toys. In bold are the names the members of the quality child care network, including texts, state laws, individuals, organizations and state agencies, that are allied around the outcome of quality child care. In other words, their enrollment in the quality child care network results in the material reality of quality child care for the children who attend this school.

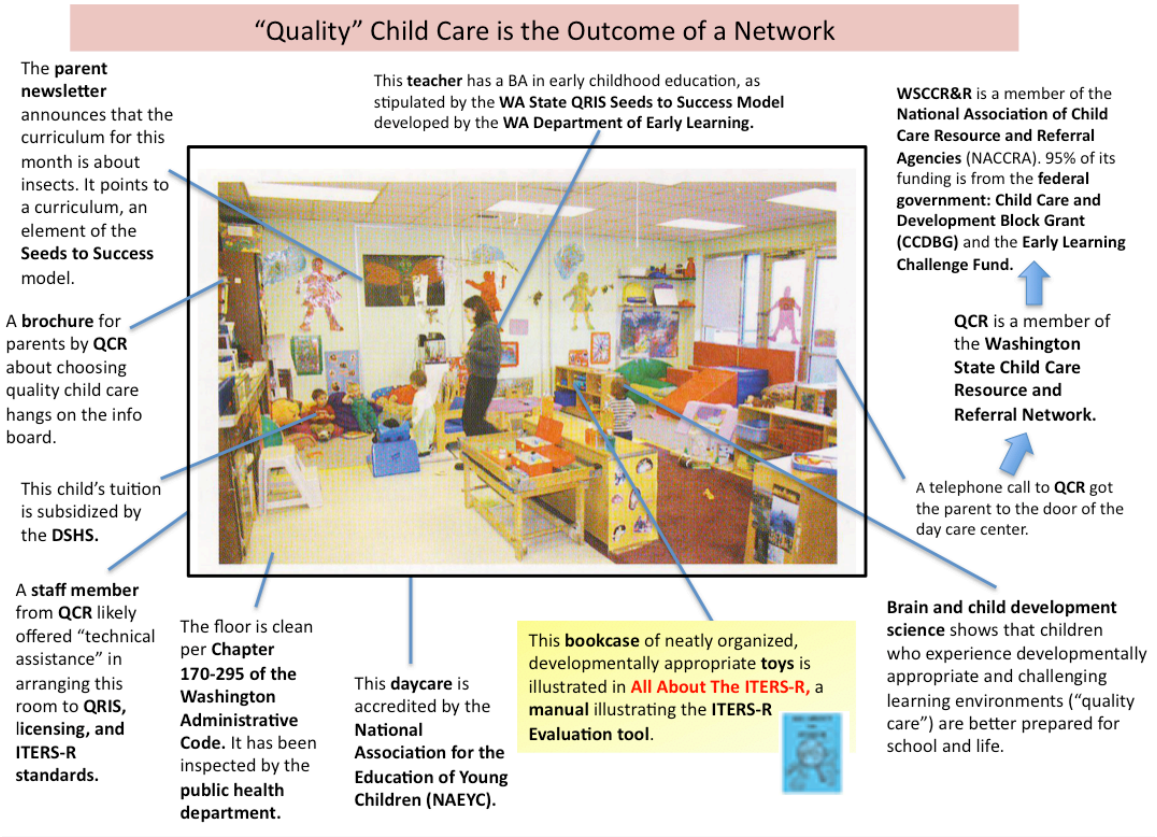

Figure 4.4: A spatio-temporal map of the quality child care interaction

Latour (1996) might call Figure 4.4 a spatio-temporal map of the quality child care interaction. In his words, "If one attempted to draw a spatio-temporal map of what is present in the interaction, and to draw up a list of everyone who in one form or another were present,

one would not sketch out a well-demarcated frame, but a convoluted network with a multiplicity of highly diverse dates, places and people" (Latour, 1996). In other words, a spatio-temporal map of an interaction is a starting point for tracing the network of which that interaction is an outcome. You'll notice that my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR), appears in the captions several times. From the perspective of the quality child care interaction, my field site is just *one* member of the network allied around the outcome of quality child care. In addition, the staff members of QCR, who were the participants in my study, are themselves members, even though they are not individually visible in this image. As I discovered during my research, my participants are actively involved in enrolling new members into the quality child care network. In fact, this chapter makes an argument for understanding the knowledge work that my participants do in terms of enrolling new members in the quality child care network in order to extend the material reality of a quality child care classroom, such as the one in Figure 4.2, to as many children as possible. In this chapter, I trace the network from this material view of an interaction to the points of enrollment of individual members of the network with the aim to understand how rhetoric functions at this point of enrollment.

Before going on, let me give a field example of what I mean. In Figure 4.4 you'll notice that in the bottom left hand corner the caption for a line that points to the whole frame of the image reads, "A **staff member** from **QCR** likely offered "technical assistance" in arranging this room to **QRIS and licensing** standards." Some of the specifics of these standards are also highlighted in the image, such as the clean floors, thanks to Washington State law, the teacher's degree in early education, thanks to the "Seeds to Success" standards for teacher training, and the bookcases of ample, and developmentally appropriate, toys

stipulated by the **ITERS-R Evaluation tool** for child care environments (a rating tool for the QRIS "Seeds" model).

The **staff member** from **QCR** invoked in this image could have been one of my participants, Charlene (this image is a stock image from the ITERS-R manual. See my methods for limitations on my access to photography). In fact, in an episode from my field notes of a meeting between Charlene and the Communications Director of QCR, Charlene narrated her experience of using the "Seeds to Success" model to guide the "technical assistance" (TA) that she gave a child care provider as the provider prepared for a visit by the state licensor:

> The three of us sat down at the conference table and the meeting started informally….Charlene then began telling a detailed story about a technical assistance (TA) visit she had done with a child care provider who was upgrading her family child care business to a child care center, but maintaining the same facility—a house. According to Charlene, the child care provider had been given sixteen pages of deficiencies by the state licenser that needed to be corrected before her facility could be licensed as a child care center. The provider had called Charlene in for a site visit to help her fix these deficiencies. Charlene continued to tell us how she had used the "Seeds" model to structure how she approached giving assistance to this provider. She did not show the provider the official "Seeds" document, however, but a simplified "translation" document that Charlene developed for just these type of situations (fn 1/8/09).

Charlene's narration of her work using the QRIS "Seeds to Success" model of quality child care standards to structure the technical assistance she gave a provider recounts how she used an additional document to mediate the links among the official "Seeds" model, the child care provider, and, ultimately, the material outcome of the child care classroom. In other words, what Charlene did, via her rhetorical work of simplifying the official language of the "Seeds" model to make it accessible to a child care provider, formatting the new language into a document, orally explaining the "Seeds" model to the new provider, physically making the model present during the TA visit and, in some cases, actually pitching in to help rearrange the room, was to enroll the new provider and the objects in her home into the quality child care network. Without Charlene's intervention via the translation of "Seeds" model, the provider would have been left with the "sixteen pages of deficiencies" to fail her licensing inspection. In other words, via Charlene's work to enroll the new provider in the official "Seeds" model, Charlene did *net work*, or what Spinuzzi (2008) describes as the way in which the "assemblage [all the members of the network bolded in Figure 4.4] is enacted, maintained, extended and transformed" (16).

As I argued in the Chapter 1 (Introduction), the work that my participants do at QCR and on the QRIS Communications Project is mainly the symbolic-analytic work of a knowledge economy. Their work can be understood as *net work* that coordinates, extends and builds the quality child care network so that as many children as possible have access to the quality child experiences pictured in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. As Spinuzzi (2008) writes, the connections, or "splices" among members of a network are rhetorical-political, that is, the enrollment of new members in a network is a process of aligning the interests and motives of the members (p. 36). Charlene, as I develop below, had to do considerable rhetorical-political

work in order to enroll the new child care provider by translating the official language of the "Seeds" model into terms that would not threaten the provider's identity as an independent businessperson and expert in early learning. This rhetorical-political work, I argue, and the similar work that my participant Judy did to form the Play and Learn groups pictured in Figure 4.3, is the net work that weaves and splices together the quality child care network. In other words, the rhetorical work that Charlene and Judy do is traceable to material outcomes that have real consequences for stakeholders in early learning, including children, child care providers, and parents.

To understand the significance of my argument for reframing how we understand the work that Charlene and Judy do to build the child care and early learning network, consider how a view of their work limited to their practices of document production and revision might limit how we value their contributions to the QRIS Communications Project, and the early learning community's broader effort to build an early learning system. Grabill (Grabill, 2010) argues that, as a field we tend to orient more towards the rhetorical work of individuals and bounded groups rather than less visible assemblages (or networks) and the work that is required to create and maintain them. In technical and professional communication, the focus on bounded entities, such as individuals, organizations, or even domains, has resulted in studies of organizational discourse or of the composing process. But as Grabill says, "It has long been difficult for me to trace with precision a chain of activity that connects the writing of an issue summary [or other document] to a give public concern or impact" (p. 202). In other words, it is difficult to trace the material outcome, or public impact, of the creation of a document or other rhetorical action.

In summary, one answer to the question of how a state's official model for quality child care becomes the material conditions for quality child care is via the *net work* of the staff at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). A net work view of my participants work shifts the focus of inquiry to how their rhetorical work is making, maintaining and enacting linkages among members of the network. In other words, rhetorical activity is the "glue" between the nodes of the network. But what is the nature of this rhetorical activity? How does rhetoric function to build networks? This more theoretical question is central to tracing rhetorical activity to its material outcomes.

How Rhetoric Builds Networks: Burke, more than Aristotle

> As Latour argues (1991, p. 115), rhetoric builds networks. These networks are nets that *incorporate* what they catch (just as early Christians were told to be 'fishers of men,' men who in turn became fishers of other men). (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 40, my emphasis)

How rhetoric functions to do "net work" is another focus of this chapter. Such a focus necessitates analysis of the rhetorical work that my participants do in order to maintain and extend the quality child care network via their work on the QRIS Communications Project. As I argued above, the value of the actual documents that my participants produce is located less in how the documents function as finished products and more on the outcomes achieved by the process of their making. In other words, enrolling new members in a network requires rhetorical work, and much of that work is mediated by the production of documents. The nature of this rhetorical work, however, has not been previously developed in any depth,

other than as it has been characterized as agonistic persuasion. As this chapter will argue, however, this process is best understood in terms of Burkean identification and consubstantiality.

When Spinuzzi characterizes the rhetorical nature of net work, he draws on the Aristotelian sense of agonistic persuasion (p. 201). "Net workers," he says, "sorely need to know how to make arguments, how to persuade, how to build trust and stable alliances, how to negotiate and bargain and horse-trade across boundaries" (p. 201). He also characterizes an actor-network as an assemblage composed of members who/that have "convince[d] the others to support its own aims" (p. 39). While the conception of rhetoric as agonistic persuasion tells part of the story of how rhetoric functions in net work, I argue that there is a more precise way to account for how rhetoric functions to build networks. Kenneth Burke's concept of identification, and "consubstantiality" (1969, p. 20-21), helps us to account for the ontological and material transformations of enrolling in a network. In addition, identification de-emphasizes the extent to which persuasion is a cognitive and deliberative process. Since network theory incorporates both human and non-human members into the assemblage, the notion of cognition and deliberation based on logos, pathos or ethos, is limiting. However, if enrollment is the outcome of advantageous alignment of identities, how rhetoric functions to enroll new members is extensible to all kinds of actors. It is important to say, however, that just as Burke doesn't see his rhetoric as a substitute for classical persuasion, neither am I suggesting that the rhetorical work of net work has no element of classical persuasion. I am suggesting rather, like Burke, that "it [my argument] is an accessory to the standard lore" (xiv).

What Burke's rhetoric has to add to an understanding of the rhetorical nature of the network splice between actors is the focus on how actors' identities are changed via the process of identification. Burke articulates the paradox of identification in terms of a commitment of substance: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B…In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself…Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another"(Burke, 1969, pp. 20-21). This statement has remarkable resonance with the view of networks as "nets that incorporate what they catch" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 40), and it also invokes an epistemic view of rhetoric.

As for Burke, in network theory members of the network maintain both a separate identity and the identity of the network that they are allied with—that is, the nature of identity is dialectical rather than fixed. For example, a cable is just a cable until it is enrolled in a telephone network— and then it is a telephone cable. In the same way, a grandmother caring for her grandson is just a grandmother until she identifies as a child care provider via a brochure or other resource that enrolls her in the quality child care network. Both the cable and the grandmother retain in some sense their original identities, yet their identification with the telephone company, or the resources of QCR, have also layered on an additional identity that has both ontological and material consequences. The telephone cable will route telephone signals to people's homes, to the exclusion of other kinds of signals; the grandmother will become a better informed and better supplied care giver of her grandson in ways that exceed her personal history, and that even challenge and reinterpret it. The field examples in this chapter will further develop how enrollment in a network entails a

transformation in identity, and how in "acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (Burke, 1969, p. 21).

Burke's theory of rhetoric anticipates the posthumanist rhetoric proposed by network theory.[13] For example, as will be developed later in this chapter, there are remarkable parallels between consubstantiality and the net work process of *translation*, or how "intermediaries interdefine each other (Callon, 1992), and as a result, their relations lead to composite goals different from preexisting ones" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 88). To reiterate, in this chapter I trace the work that my participants do translating the state's official model of quality child care so that QCR's diverse stakeholders can identify with it and enroll in the quality child care network, thereby extending the material conditions of quality child care to as many children as possible. This work, I argue, is net work.

Enrolling Family Home Child Care Providers in the QRIS: Translation and Identification

I've already introduced Charlene's work of translation to enroll a family home child care provider in the official "Seeds" model for quality child care. But I'd like to take a closer look at the rhetorical work that she did in order to more fully understand how rhetoric builds networks via Burkean identification.

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[13] The language in this other quote from a Rhetoric of Motives, in particular the usage of the term "transformation" is highly resonant with how network theory theorizes the effects that actants in a network have on each other. There is much to develop here: "Or otherwise put: the imagery of slaying is a special case of *transformation*, and transformation involves the ideas and imagery of *identification.* That is: the *killing* of something is the *changing* of it, and the statement of the thing's nature before and after the change is an *identifying* of it" (p. 20).

Before enrolling family home child care providers with the official "Seeds" model and the state's notion of quality child care, Charlene had to take into consideration the considerable resistance that she expected to encounter. During the first year of the QRIS Communications Project QCR commissioned a focus group to ask family home child care providers how they felt about the development of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Coding of the focus group transcript revealed that the word quality is not the word of family home child care providers—in fact, while the facilitator frequently used the word, the participants rarely used it in their contributions to the focus group discussion. Getting this group of stakeholders invested in a program sponsored by the Department of Early learning that is structured by the notion of quality child care, then, would be a considerable rhetorical and political challenge. What Charlene was able to recognize, however, is that it was less important that the family home child care providers are persuaded to explicitly agree with or endorse the "Seeds" model, and more important that they enact—or identify with—the model's major elements of quality child care.

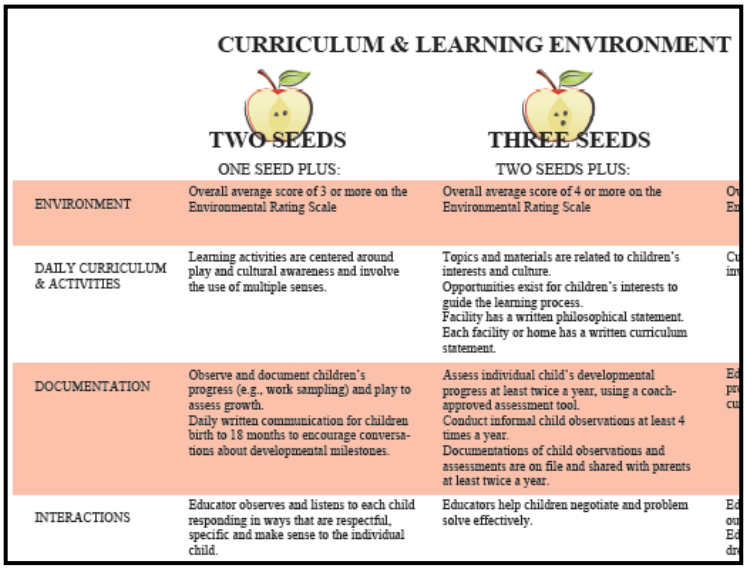
Charlene knew well the challenge of working with family home care providers and their wariness about state initiatives that threaten to further regulate their businesses. On the QRIS Communications team, Charlene represented the interests of the licensed child care provider stakeholder group. At QCR her primary responsibilities were as part of "Provider Services." This is the division of QCR that provides information, resources and "technical assistance," or TA, to people who are setting up new day care businesses, and in particular as they prepare for a visit by the state licensor. TA might mean working a phone line for three hours answering questions from providers looking for services. It might also mean a site visit

by Charlene to provide a pre-licensor visit check up and coaching on how to meet or exceed the minimum licensing requirements.

In order to meet the challenge of getting new providers to identify with the notion of quality child care, Charlene undertook the task of "translating" the complicated document that delineates Washington State's QRIS model, called "Seeds to Success," into a document that could be more effectively shared with child care providers when she visited them to provide technical assistance (TA). It is important to note that the particularity of Charlene's activity of "translation" is not incidental here to my developing a theoretical argument about how rhetoric functions to build networks. Earlier in this chapter I began to argue for parallels between the process of Burkean identification and network theory's process of translation to enroll members into a network. "Translation, when successful," Spinuzzi writes, "leads to the composition of a relatively coherent assemblage of actants" (p. 90). Later in this chapter, the "four moments" (p. 88) of translation will be considered in more detail.

Because of her long experience working with child care providers on technical assistance calls, Charlene knew that both the structure and the language of the Department of Early Learning's (DEL) "Seeds to Success" model would be alienating to family home child care providers. First, the model is structured as an assessment tool: it is a matrix that maps the criteria for each of the model's four elements against the number of seeds earned for achieving these criteria (see Figure 4.5 below). Charlene's manager, Catherine, also pointed out that when the elements matrix is shown to providers as is they quickly get lost trying to locate themselves in the number of seeds, in effect attempting a self-rating (fn 12/3/09). The result is that providers miss the point of the training and coaching function of the QRIS model, the rhetorical aim that Charlene intends on her TA calls. Charlene's "translation"

document (Figure 4.6) removes the evaluative, rating function. Charlene can then take the translation document with her on a TA call as a point of discussion for what it means to provide quality child care beyond just meeting minimum health and safety requirements of the state licensing laws (the one seed, or entry level).



CURRICULUM & LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

	TWO SEEDS ONE SEED PLUS:	THREE SEEDS TWO SEEDS PLUS:	
ENVIRONMENT	Overall average score of 3 or more on the Environmental Rating Scale	Overall average score of 4 or more on the Environmental Rating Scale	Ov En
DAILY CURRICULUM & ACTIVITIES	Learning activities are centered around play and cultural awareness and involve the use of multiple senses.	Topics and materials are related to children's interests and culture. Opportunities exist for children's interests to guide the learning process. Facility has a written philosophical statement. Each facility or home has a written curriculum statement.	Cu im
DOCUMENTATION	Observe and document children's progress (e.g., work sampling) and play to assess growth. Daily written communication for children birth to 18 months to encourage conversations about developmental milestones.	Assess individual child's developmental progress at least twice a year, using a coach-approved assessment tool. Conduct informal child observations at least 4 times a year. Documentations of child observations and assessments are on file and shared with parents at least twice a year.	Ed pr cu
INTERACTIONS	Educator observes and listens to each child responding in ways that are respectful, specific and make sense to the individual child.	Educators help children negotiate and problem solve effectively.	Ed ou Ed dr

Figure 4.5: A portion of the Curriculum and Learning Environment Element of the "Seeds to Success" matrix. Note how the number of seeds awarded (listed across the top) correspond to different types of activity in the areas (listed down the left side), for example, "Environment" and "Interactions."

Environments	***Space*** *- gives children enough room to freely play and learn.* ***Furniture*** *- is in good condition and child size.* ***Toys and equipment*** *- enough for all children, stimulates children's interest, allow children to explore different textures and shapes, etc.* ***Clean and Safe*** *- well maintained and organized, clutter free.* ***Reflects the culture and families served***
Curriculum	***Routines, and schedule of activities*** *Activities providers do in their programs match the children interest.* *It illustrates opportunities for learning, both indoors and outdoors.* *It is shows consistency within the schedule.* *Developmentally and culturally appropriate.*
Documentation	***Written record - evidence of what my child does throughout the day*** *Gives an understanding of individual needs, collection and sharing of children's work for example; samples of writings, art work, drawings, etc.* *Assessments are used to identify children's growth and development.*
Interactions	***Demonstrates ways providers talk and interact with children*** *Challenge and supports children exploration in a positive manner.*

Figure 4.6: A portion of Charlene's translation of the "Seeds" matrix document. Note how the areas listed down the left-hand column match the areas lists in the matrix. However, the "rating" function of the matrix has been removed. In addition, the language has been simplified to identify with both center providers and family home providers.

The language of the "Seeds" model is also alienating to family home child care providers. The language is alienating because the official "Seeds" model is structured by the discourse of school and education. However, 14% of children under five in full-time child care are cared for in the less formal environment of a family home day care (NACCRA 2010 report). A family home day care is considered child care provided in return for compensation for up to six children in a family home. These child care providers tend to be differently motivated than those who work for centers that are based on a school model. Family home providers are more likely to be small-time entrepreneurs who decided to take in other children to care for if they were already home caring for their own. They tend to cite their motivation for starting a child care business along the lines of "loving children" or "wanting to stay home with my own children and so I might as well take in a few more for money"

(Focus group). They also tend to cite long experience with children or a deep love of children as evidence of their qualifications to care for children professionally. As a recent NACCRA study has pointed out, there is very little state assessment or oversight of family home day cares, meaning that children cared for in these settings are subject to care that is effectively unregulated. Efforts such as a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), then, are efforts to create a system of assessment that will motivate family home providers to improve the quality of their services by incentivizing them to voluntarily opt-in to a coaching and training program. Because the ideals of early education advocates are shaped by a school-based model for the care of young children, however, the language of the QRIS matrix comes into conflict with the family home child care providers motivations and identity. Charlene's translation of the official model is an attempt to mediate this conflict and enroll the child are providers in the model of quality child care without asking them to identify with the official matrix document.

At the lexical level, Charlene made some very deliberate word substitutions to reframe the "Seeds" model for her audience. For example, the agents in the matrix statements are named as "educators" because the model is structured by a school-based model. The statement, "Educator observes and listens to each child responding in ways that are respectful, specific and make sense to the individual child" is found under the "Interactions" category of the "Curriculum and Learning Environment" element of the "Seeds" model (see Figure 4.5). This statement is most closely translated on Charlene's document as "Demonstrates ways *providers* talk and interact with children" (my emphasis, see Figure 4.6). Charlene has substituted the more general term *child care provider* for *educator* because it is the one that workers at both day care centers and family home day cares (focus

group coding) identify with. “Provider” is also the term that identifies the division of QCR, “Provider Services,” dedicated to serving people who take care of children. The term “provider,” therefore, is already part of the discourse that a diversity of stakeholders already share, whereas, the term “educator” is an ideologically loaded term that is part of the DEL’s agenda that asks some providers to take on a new identity and thus catalyzes resistance. Unlike the term “educator,” the term “provider” is neutrally oriented towards the school model for early education, and thus more inclusive of both center and family home child care workers. Although I have just used the term “day care worker” as a synonym for “provider,” “worker” is also a term that early education advocates want to move away from because of how it de-emphasizes the role as one primarily oriented around the educational goals of a school. Early education advocates, including the state DEL, want to promote the language of a school-based model for early education not only to boost curriculum and learning goals, but also to promote more professional training for those who care for children. To become an “educator” requires formal, professional training, something that many family home providers have been resistant to.

Charlene’s translation of the term educator into provider in order to better identity with her audience is also an example of how ideology is a powerful engine of identification. Lakoff (Lakoff, et al., 1998) advises advocates to metaphorically reframe the discourse of early learning away from “day care” and its entailments of “storing” breakable children in a padded cell, and into the terms of “early learning” so that the care of young children is ideologically framed by the values of education. But, as Lakoff is well aware, not all child care providers, parents or members of the public subscribe to this frame—for many people, the frame of “family” is more appropriate for the care of young children (see discussion of

maternalism in Chapter 2). Charlene is also acutely aware of how the conflict between the official framing of birth to five care as "early learning" and the values of family or community-based care plays out in the stakeholders that she works with directly. In fact, in her translation document, Charlene is actively removing much of the school-discourse language in the official model for quality child care. This is not because her own professional values are in conflict with the school frame, but that she is aware of the resistance she will encounter from her stakeholders. In order to enroll family home child care providers, she needs to connect their knowledge and values about child care to the notion of quality child care without alienating them with the perceived threat of the state's official model.

Charlene's work to translate the "Seeds" model is evidence of how tenuous the enrollment of stakeholders in the quality child care network really is. But it is also an affirmation of how powerful the quality topos is at binding the network together (see Chapter 3). As long as the quality topos is capacious enough to allow the translation of what quality means across narrow ideological commitments, then the quality child care network will continue to grow.

Another example of the translation work that Charlene has done to broaden the appeal of the "Seeds" model is to change the word that refers to the overall operation of the child care business. The "Seeds" model uses the word "facility," a word that invokes an institutional context, in which the physical plant of the operation is somehow independent of the investment of the individuals who work there. This word is alienating, then, to providers who care for children in their homes. On the translation document for the Family Relationships and Community Partnerships Element of the QRIS model, Charlene has substituted the word "program," a vaguer word that does not assume as much about the size

and nature of the business. For example, the "Seeds" model states in the "Connecting to Resources" area of this element that at the four seeds level the "Facility provides opportunities for local community resource organizations to share information on-site," Charlene has revised this statement to "Program is able to provide resources to parents who need help." This change in language reflects not only change in the identifying term "facility" to "program," but it suggests a different function for the child care provider. The official language assumes that the provider will make space for some kind of a clearinghouse of community information; Charlene's revision connotes that providers will have a personal interest in the parents and assist them in finding ways to meet their needs. Overall, the declarative mode of the "Seeds" matrix is structured by the assumption that the business of child care is an institutionally-based educational enterprise. Charlene's translation removes the institutional bias and maintains more ambiguity around the values of the child care provider. Put another way, Charlene's translations reinstate the capaciousness of the quality topos, which was closed down by the strong bias of the "Seeds" model based in the DEL's agenda to promote a school-based model of day time care for young children.

Charlene's efforts to "translate" the purpose and the language of the "Seeds to Success" model in order to better identify with a broader constituency of child care providers, in particular family home child care providers, is an example of the rhetorical-political work that serves to build, maintain and extend the network of which quality child care is the main outcome. Without Charlene's translations, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to enroll these critical members in the network because the identity proposed by the "Seeds" model is unacceptable to them. Certainly Charlene's document simplifying and translating the "official" language of the "Seeds" model is insufficient to enroll all potential

members; nor does the activity of generating this document actually enroll new members—the document must be used in an interaction, such as the TA call Charlene described in the meeting recounted above in my field notes. New members are in fact enrolled one by one as Charlene makes her TA calls to assist new providers in preparing for a visit from the state licenser: in other words, Charlene enrolls new stakeholders via identification (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Charlene's translation document mediates her interaction with the family home child care provider. As the child care provider identifies with the translation document, she is also enrolled with the official "Seeds" model.

While Charlene's *rhetorical* work of translation functioned to enroll the child care provider in the "Seeds to Success" model of quality care, sometimes Charlene also assisted with the *physical* work of enrolling material objects in the network, such as bookcases or other elements of a classroom. Take another look at the neatly organized, child-height book cases in the picture that opens this chapter and notice how they are arranged so as to organize the room into areas with different play and curriculum functions (soft areas for resting and story time, areas with toys to develop fine motor skills, etc.). How, and why, did these book

cases come into this arrangement? Because Charlene, or someone like her, helped to push them into place because they were informed, either directly or indirectly, about the notion of quality child care proposed by the "Seeds" matrix. In a very real way, then, it is possible to begin to see that the outcome of the quality child care network, via the continual enrollment of human, textual and material members, is a quality child care experience for the children who spend their day in this classroom or a family home child care.

While Charlene is not the only QCR employee who makes technical assistance calls to new providers, she is the only one who intentionally structures her interventions along the lines of the "Seeds" model. This fact was explicitly praised when Charlene left the room during a meeting with Eleanor, the Communications Director:

> When Charlene left the room for a moment, Eleanor commented to me that Charlene is a "firecracker" who will go far. She commented how all of the provider services team members who do TA calls should be using the "Seeds" model, but that there is resistance because most people want to continue to do things the way they have always been done. Eleanor continued to say that it is brilliant that Charlene understands the "Seeds" model as just her everyday work in a new framework—she takes the "QRIS" out of the "Seeds" model, so to speak. But, Eleanor, acknowledged, it is difficult to explain this to stakeholders, such as child care providers, who see the QRIS "Seeds" model as a threat (fieldnotes 1/8/09).

Charlene's work on the QRIS Communications Project has made her knowledgeable about and deeply invested in the model. For her, integrating the model into her daily work is effortless. But not all QCR employees have the same level of exposure or buy-in to the

"Seeds" model. Therefore, another stakeholder group for the QRIS Communications team are other QCR employees. Like stakeholders in the community, QCR employees have their own resistance to the "Seeds" model, from reluctance to invest in a complicated initiative that, like many that have come before, may not come into full fruition as political and public will for it dries up, to personal and professional conflicts with the purpose and the discourse of the QRIS.

The fact that Charlene is among only one or two QCR employees who works directly with providers and intentionally shapes her work with the "Seeds" model for quality child care points to the current weakness of the quality child care network in Washington State. In network theory, the more members of a network are enrolled, or "spliced" together, the stronger the network and the longer its reach (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 87). As long as Charlene is the only QCR employee who structures her TA work with the "Seeds" model, enrollment of new members amongst child care providers will be slow and tenuous: one or two visits from Charlene may not be enough to permanently ensure the provider's buy-in to the model's recommendations. However, as the number of enrollments in the network is increased, as more and more members are enrolled, such as more QCR employees, more providers who talk to each other, more parents who will look for it, more literature and documentation that explicates and promotes it, and the more bookcases that are moved out of their current arrangement into functionally differentiated "areas," the stronger, the more robust, the more "sedimented" (Spinuzzi 2008, p. 87) the network will become. QRIS is still in development in Washington State, so the weakness of the network is to be expected. Viewing the weakness of the network, however, via the tracing of Charlene's efforts to extend it,

foregrounds how much work it takes to develop and implement an initiative such as a QRIS and the rhetorical-political nature of this work.

Characterizing the Function of the QRIS "Seeds" Model

The preceding discussion about Charlene's activity to enroll child care providers in Washington State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) model for quality child care, "Seeds to Success," raises the issue of how to characterize the rhetorical function of the "Seeds" model in the quality child care network. While from the perspective of activity theory the QRIS "Seeds" model is a "tool-in-use" (Russell, 1997), for Charlene and other members of the QRIS Communications Project team it also functions like an actant in the network: it has agency of its own. In other words, the "Seeds" model, and other genres, documents and rhetorical structures, are not just passive tools wielded by all-powerful human agents—they are meditational tools in that they extend the capabilities or transform the object of the work activity, in this case Charlene's TA work and the team's work of early learning system building more generally. Like Charlene and other team members, and QCR as an organization, genres, documents and rhetorical structures also constitute and enact the network—that is, they also do net work.

Writing studies scholars have developed several different terms for texts that function to represent, discipline, negotiate and stabilize a version of reality that is acceptable to a diverse group of stakeholders. For example, McCarthy (L.P. McCarthy, 1991; Lucille Parkinson McCarthy & Gerring, 1994) defines a *charter document* as one that defines for a

social or political group, "an authoritative way of seeing and deflects attention from other ways" (p. 359). Certainly, the "Seeds" model promotes an official version of quality child care that is founded upon a school-based paradigm for early education, to the exclusion of others, such as a strictly maternalist paradigm (see Chapter 2). Another term for a similar function is that of the *conscription device* (D. A. Winsor, 1994, 1996), or an object that a diverse group of people can accept yet interpret differently with enough consistency to generate a common vision (1996, p. 74). The "Seeds" model also functions in this way, to the extent that Catherine and her colleagues are successful at maintaining the capaciousness of the quality topos in order to enroll as many stakeholders as possible. Finally, another analytical concept for understanding the function of a text to coordinate interests across social boundaries is the *boundary object* (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Boundary objects, "are both plastic enough adapt to local needs…, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (p. 393), so they, too, function to coordinate the interests of heterogeneous stakeholders. While these terms for understanding the socially coordinating function of a text are not identical, they all invoke the network function of rhetorically-politically splicing together members of a network. In this sense the "Seeds" model is an actant in the network because it defines (by enrolling in the network) other actants, who, as a whole (as an assemblage) are identifiable not just semiotically, but functionally (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 85), via the material gains that are made to ensure that as many children as possible have access to quality child care. Actants mediate and transform each other via the process of continually persuading each other to join or stay joined to each other.

Understanding the "Seeds" model as an actant foregrounds a characteristic of an actant that is general to all actants, textual, material and human, in the quality child care

network—the function to enroll new members in the network via a process of translation, understood in this chapter as identification. As this chapter has demonstrated so far, Charlene and her colleagues work to enroll new members in the quality child care network by finding ways for their stakeholders to identify with the topos of quality child care. Likewise, as a charter document, conscription device and boundary object, the "Seeds" model functions in the same way. Of course not all texts are such clear and neat examples of how actants (human or nonhuman) essentially *peddle identity* in order to form rhetorical-political alliances, but an actor-network theorist would extend this concept to all actants in a network. This is possible because the act of definition is not a one way street. Just as the "Seeds" model document functions to stabilize the identity of quality child care providers and agencies, it is at the same time an effect of the work of these providers and agencies to create it—without one there would not be the other. Likewise, in the next section, I will develop how a brochure serves as an actant in order to enroll unlicensed child care providers, such as family members, in quality child care by enabling them to identify with quality child care practices.

Enrolling Unlicensed Providers in QRIS: Peddling Identity and Creating Space

The great effort required to do net work, or the rhetorical-political work of enrolling new members in a network, is going to be most obvious to a worker who is trying to build a network from nothing and who has the fewest existing members to lend the network stability and visibility. This fact is certainly true for Judy, the QCR staff member who coordinates QCR's program to provide resources to *unlicensed* child care providers, such as extended

family members, friends, family and other community members. This is a group that has not traditionally been considered a stakeholder in government initiated programs to improve the quality of care that children receive in private homes.

While the care that these children receive is rarely visible to the public, the number of children who receive care from unlicensed providers is significant. In Washington State, 65% of infants and 45% of toddlers are cared for by extended family, friends and neighbors (referred to as FFN). In addition, 61% of school age children are cared for by these unlicensed providers outside of school time (QCR FFN program sheet). In the last ten or so years, grassroots concern for the quality of care that this large number of children are receiving has gained more visibility and recognition in the form of funding for initiatives at the state and federal level. One of the products of this higher level of concern and visibility is a program at QCR that is dedicated to reaching and providing resources to these unlicensed caregivers. Judy, who has been part of the rise of FFN work in Washington State from the beginning, coordinates the Family, Friend & Neighbor Program at QCR. More than the other staff at QCR who work on the QRIS Communications Project, Judy is aware of how her work is largely rhetorical by nature and that the purpose of her work is to "build relationships:" in other words, to do net work. Judy's awareness is largely an outcome of the fact that she has been part of the formation of this field of work from its beginning as a local, grassroots effort. Judy has experienced the transition from being a practitioner to, as she put it, "a person of influence," or a systems person who is working to bring recognition and support to the cause. In an interview she explained that:

> The key to all of this is relationships. The key to reaching FFN caregivers who are basically in the home and not belonging to any system…is reach[ing] somebody next

> to them, really really close by. It's like a chain of relationships that gets built….An effective method [for getting FFN caregivers resources and information] is to provide where they can establish a healthy social network.

In other words, the work that Judy does is explicitly net work, and like Charlene, much of the net work that she does is the rhetorical work of translating the notion of quality child care that is articulated by the "Seeds" model into terms that this stakeholder group will identify with. Like Charlene, she is not trying to persuade this stakeholder group to give up its identify, or substance, in the Burkean sense, but instead to enter into a dialectical relationship with the notion of being a quality child care provider—like Charlene, Judy's net work is the work of identification.

Judy's work on the QRIS Communication project team, however, has been difficult for her. It is actually not clear why Goal C of the grant that funds the QRIS Communications Project includes this third stakeholder group at all: "Goal C: More family, friend and neighbor caregivers will understand the importance of quality care and apply their understanding to their care giving methods" (2010 Grant Progress Report). Notice that this statement does not specifically mention QRIS (unlike Goals A and B), but instead uses the more general and capacious term, "quality care." When I asked Judy why FFN was included in the QRIS Communications Grant when the elements of the "Seeds" model are clearly exclusionary of unlicensed providers (such as "Professional Development and Training" and "Management Practices,") she said that the writer of the grant, the former CEO of QCR, had called her when Judy's position was still fairly new to say that she was including FFN in the grant. Judy said that she had just said "ok." The initial reasoning for the inclusion of FFN in the grant focused on promoting the QRIS system has since been lost, and this has caused

problems for Judy, as she cannot see the value in translating some of the elements of the QRIS model for the FFN audience. In fact, she voiced concern that trying to translate the QRIS language for FFN risked, "polluting or diluting the messages that we've been trying to get out about quality and that you can provide…quality child care in your home as a regular old person." As is suggested in her comment here, her concerns were particularly strong regarding the "professional development" element of the QRIS model. Judy is, in effect, asking whether or not it is possible, and also advantageous, for unlicensed providers to identify with the model at all.

Another problem is that the FFN stakeholder group does not really exist except in the official-ese of systems people like Judy. She explained that this term is just a "handle so that we can talk about this and write grants…it's a placeholder for people." What this means is that the caregivers themselves don't actually identify themselves as FFN caregivers, as opposed to the way that licensed caregivers identify as a group by the term "provider." This lack of group identity makes for a particularly difficult problem for enrolling new members, as each new member has to be essentially reached individually and on his or her own terms. This fact results in informational brochures (see Figure 4.8) which are printed in eight languages, and, according to Judy, not always all of the right ones. It is also difficult to find community spaces where family, friend and neighbor caregivers can be reliably reached, as it is not possible to assume that all of these caregivers will go to a public library or a community center. Judy talked about how in the early days of initiatives to provide resources and outreach to this group, flyers would be printed inviting "FFN" providers to meetings and workshops. Of course no one came, Judy said, because grandma does not self-identify as a "FFN" provider—she is just grandma. Judy pointed out how FFN systems people are now

smarter at how they try to get the attention of these caregivers. For example, the front panel of the brochure (see Figure 4.8), avoids naming a group and instead invokes the audience with a question oriented around activity: "Are you taking care of your grandbabies, nieces, nephews or cousins? Do you help take care of a friend's child?"

Figure 4.8: Front panel of the QCR brochure for Family, Friends and Neighbors stakeholders

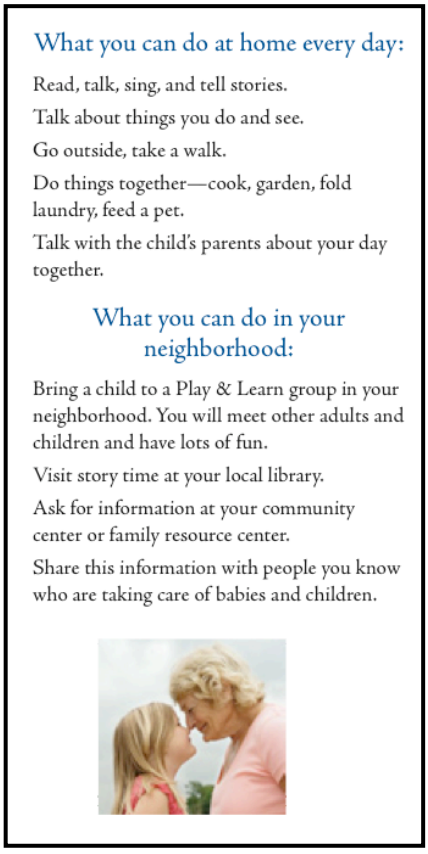
The heterogeneity and lack of definition of these stakeholders also makes for a particularly difficult job of defining what quality child care means for this group, as it will mean something different across cultural and socio-economic contexts. Not surprisingly, then, how Judy articulated the markers of quality FFN care maintained the capaciousness of the quality topos. For markers of quality FFN care, Judy identified safety ("well obviously," she said), interaction and play with the child that is informed by a basic understanding of child development, and being intentional in interacting with the child and taking advantage of "teachable moments." An example she gave of such a moment was teaching a child how to count by matching socks while sorting the laundry. For Judy, this conception of quality

distanced her work from the QRIS initiative: “To me these sort of folksy, homey messages are pretty far away from the very formal QRIS.”

Judy’s statement about the distance between “folksy, homey messages” and the QRIS exposes the trouble that she also has identifying with the “Seeds” model. In fact, in a monthly check-in meeting between Judy and Charlene, Charlene spent a good deal of time trying to explain to Judy that the point of the QRIS Communications Project was to translate the official QRIS model for quality into terms that stakeholders could understand, not to try and push the model on FFN providers. Judy said that “this project is hard for me because the FFN and the QRIS thing don’t [hand gesture to communicate “mesh”]. In an interview, Judy indicated her own resistance to efforts to extend licensing requirements to family, friend and neighbor caregivers. Fundamental to the FFN philosophy is that anyone can provide quality care to a child, so efforts to control and codify that care begin to weaken this philosophy. Judy also expressed frustration at trying to integrate her responsibilities to the QRIS Communications Project with the goals and objectives of the FFN team without having to “reinvent our shop.” In other words, enrolling Judy in the QRIS Communications Project was part of Charlene’s on-going net work. This work was made difficult by structural decisions that had been made long ago (such as including FFN in the grant goals to begin with) and the fundamental philosophical differences between providing support and services to licensed and unlicensed providers.

The language of the brochure (see Figure 4.8) developed by QCR and disseminated to FFN caregivers via community outlets, such as libraries and pediatricians, reflects Judy’s notion of quality implicitly rather than explicitly—in fact, it does not explicitly mention quality once. Instead, the brochure, via the use of photographs and spare and simple text (see

Figure 4.9), makes suggestions for how quality care can be enacted. Essentially, the brochure calls out activities that many caregivers are likely to already be doing in some fashion, such as talking, reading and singing with children, taking a walk and visiting the library. The brochure also promotes, via a large banner across the main span of the brochure, the idea that children are always learning, wherever they are. This is a rhetorical effort to instill the practice of intentionality in the caregiver reading the brochure. Caregivers may not have to do anything different in the care of their child, but it makes a difference in what framework they understand their actions. In other words, it makes a difference whether they are enrolled in an effort to intentionally provide the highest level of care for their child. Importantly, a child care provider who is aware of how his or her care is effective can pass that knowledge on to others as well.



What you can do at home every day:

Read, talk, sing, and tell stories.

Talk about things you do and see.

Go outside, take a walk.

Do things together—cook, garden, fold laundry, feed a pet.

Talk with the child's parents about your day together.

What you can do in your neighborhood:

Bring a child to a Play & Learn group in your neighborhood. You will meet other adults and children and have lots of fun.

Visit story time at your local library.

Ask for information at your community center or family resource center.

Share this information with people you know who are taking care of babies and children.

Figure 4.9: Inside panel of the QCR brochure for Family, Friend and Neighbor stakeholders

The brochure panel in Figure 4.9, therefore, frames the caregiver as an agent, not only in the care of a child, but in passing the information along to someone else they know who also cares for children. Via this brochure, a FFN provider is persuaded to enroll as an actor in the FFN network with the potential to enroll new members. And all roads lead back to QCR, as the back panel of the brochure provides ample ways and reasons for the caregiver to contact the Family, Friend and Neighbor Program at QCR. Such a "consolidation" (Spinuzzi, p. 41), or multiplying of the connections among members of the network, between FFN caregivers and QCR via the mediation of the brochure, is actually ideal from the point of view of building strength and stability into the network. The more ways a member is in relationship to the network, the more stable his or her enrollment is going to be.

Understanding the function of the brochure as a mediator foregrounds a particularly important aspect of how networks are built and strengthened. Or, put another way, it brings into focus how net work *works*. Network theory, in particular as it is understood by the tradition of actor-network theory, is fundamentally a rhetorical theory because it is primarily concerned with the nature of the relations among members in the network, and how those relationships transform those members via the process of *translation*. That is, from one point of view, network theory is all about identity transformation, as Burke develops in his concept of identification: the objective is for the grandmother to become consubstantial with the quality child care network. Or in Spinuzzi's words, "'the fishers of men', who in turn become fishers of other men" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 40).

For example, if Judy's goal is to reach a grandmother who cares for her two grandchildren while their mother works, then that grandmother must first define herself as a caregiver beyond her identity based on familial ties—she must first identify as a caregiver. As a caregiver, this grandma then might be interested in seeking out support from other caregivers (outside of the family ties) and understanding that she can learn and expand her effectiveness in this role. How will Judy achieve this translation of the grandma's identity? Well, first the grandma must see that there is a problem, or something to be accomplished, a "moment" referred to as "problematization" in network theory (Spinuzzi 2008, p. 88). This function might be achieved when she sees the front cover of the brochure that introduces the question of her identity as a caregiver for her grandchildren. If grandma responds to this question of her identity, and picks up the brochure, then Judy is on her way to achieving the next moment, or "interessement," that is, "finding a way to interpose oneself between stakeholders and their goals, to make oneself an 'obligatory passage point.' (Spinuzzi p. 89). If grandma accepts the identify of caregiver and engages with the material in the brochure, uses the material to inform her role as caregiver and ultimately passes the information along or makes contact with QCR, then "enrollment" into the quality child care network has been achieved and Judy's net work has been successful. But enrollment is only successful as long as Grandma remains invested in her identity as a caregiver, and grandma is most likely to maintain this identity if it is reinforced, or consolidated, by forming relationships with other members of the network, including other caregivers, organizations such as QCR, or other texts that QCR makes available. Therefore, it is part of Judy's work to ensure that this grandma has multiple opportunities to engage this process of transformation and enrollment beyond the off-chance that she will pick up and read a brochure that she happens upon in the

community. The brochure, then, has the potential to function as a powerful mediator, or actant, in the enrollment of new members in the network, but it is likely not sufficient on its own to build a strong and stable network of caregivers.

Judy and her staff know well that designing, printing and disseminating brochures is not sufficient for reaching FFN caregivers with the information and resources to provide quality child care as they understand it. As Judy stated above, the key to her work is building relationships, in particular building the social network of FNN caregivers by providing physical space and time for them to interact. This chapter began with the question of how a rhetorical tool like the "Seeds to Success" model becomes the material reality of quality child care. For FFN providers, one of the material spaces of child care are Play & Learn Groups.

Play & Learn groups are informal, usually free play groups for caregivers and their charges hosted and sponsored by community organizations such as the YWCA or the Boys & Girls Club. At these play groups a trained facilitator structures a couple of hours of group play into periods of group interaction, such as circle time, and individual activity time such as doing artwork or playing with toys (see Figure 4.10). The QCR information sheet on play and learning groups explains what happens: "During the group, the facilitator is active in helping children and adults engage in the activities and in providing a **positive role model** for interacting with children. The facilitator also checks in with the adults and provides them with **information** about community resources, child development and other topics. Some groups have a time when the adults are away from the children to talk and learn."

Figure 4.10: A play and learn group (image from QCR "Play and Learn" information sheet).

As the text from the QCR information sheet suggests, the facilitator, and the group itself, serve a mediator function for enrolling new caregivers into the quality child care network. In their roles as role models, facilitators, like the front panel of the brochure, propose a new identity of intentional and informed caregiver to the family, friends and other caregivers who attend the group. The facilitator also offers information about child development and other resources (such as QCR). If the caregivers respond with the desire to learn more and to get involved with the Play & Learn group, interessement has been achieved, and ultimately enrollment into the network when the caregivers invest in the identity and the activity of the group by returning multiple times, or replicating the activities at home.

Two points remain to be made about Play & Learn groups. Like the brochure, which is published in multiple languages in order to reach across the diversity of FFN caregivers, Play & Learn groups are structured so as to accommodate the cultural and language diversity in the community. Facilitators are recruited from within a community in order to ensure relevance and continuity for the caregivers. The content of the Play & Learn experience is left, beyond general outcomes and guidelines, to the local determination of the facilitator

who has received training from staff at QCR. In effect, then, the capaciousness of the quality topos has been effectively maintained by the Play & Learn Group program, enabling a diversity of caregivers to enroll in the program, and, therefore, extending the network of quality child care as deeply as possible into the community (the network theory metaphor for this extension is a "rhizome"—rhizomes can be interconnected at any point, and if broken can regenerate from a fragment (Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 9; quoted from Spinuzzi 2008, p. 7). And this effectiveness is not idiosyncratic: It is one of the main arguments of this dissertation that the *net work* of QRIS Communications Project staff at QCR is effective when it maintains the capaciousness of the quality topos (which, remember, is the outcome of the historical public discourse on the issue of universal child care and is a specific response to a rhetorical exigence structured by the scales topos—see chapter 2). On the contrary, when the capaciousness of the topos is challenged or closed down, as it is by the DEL QRIS "Seeds" model, stakeholder groups who do not and can not identify with the narrower understanding of quality are disabled from enrolling. Thus, it is up to Charlene and Judy to resist the constriction of the quality topos and to do the rhetorical work necessary to persuade their stakeholder groups to enroll in the quality child care network by finding ways to extend the rhetorical resonances for an ever larger audience of providers with competing interests.

The second point returns to the necessarily material aspect of quality child care. In Judy's definition of quality child care in the context of the FFN stakeholder group (see above), quality requires community and intentional interaction based on a basic knowledge of child development. Notice in the photograph above (Figure 4.10) that multiple caregivers and children are playing an interactive, age-appropriate game together in the same place. How did this material reality come about? How do Play & Learn groups happen such that

these children's day is materially enhanced by this rich experience of quality child care? The answer proposed by this chapter is that via the net work of Judy and her staff, human and material members (such as Judy's staff, the brochure discussed in this chapter, the group facilitators, the facility where the group is hosted, etc.) of the network are enrolled via the rhetorical process of problematization and interessement in order to transform Judy's rhetorical work of defining quality child care for FFN stakeholders into this material experience of quality child care.

Conclusion

This chapter has put in motion several arguments that weave together into an initial investigation into how workers use rhetoric to build networks that become the material conditions that children experience in child care. To review, these arguments are:

1. Net work functions via the process of *translation*, a process with profound parallels to Burkean identification. This parallel is a bridge from net work theory to rhetorical theory.

2. Participants at QCR enroll new members in the quality child care network via the process of translation. In particular, they translate the state's official model for a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in order that QCR's diverse stakeholders can identify with it.

3. Translation is a process where actors peddle identity in order to persuade new members to identify with, and enroll, in the network, including individuals, agencies, documents and rhetorical structures.

4. The outcomes of translation are the material conditions of the child care center, family home daycare classroom or the play and learn group.

5. The net work that my participants do is constituted by, shaped by and contributes to the historical public discourse on child care and early learning. This is evident in their use of the quality topos (a product of the historical discourse) as a rhetorical resource for persuading new members to enroll.

So, what is the usefulness of such a highly abstracted understanding of the work that my participants do? The constant need to balance theory with practice drives me to look for ways to apply my development of theory in the workplace or in the teaching of workplace writing. I was unexpectedly comforted, however, during a recent chance social encounter. During a conversation with a stranger about the nature of her work, the stranger was initially reticent to talk about her job because it is one of those that is impossible to explain to people outside of her domain of work. In other words, the nature of her work is highly abstracted and does not directly result in any material outcome that is visible to the public. But it was clear from her attempts to describe what she does, that while she doesn't make or produce anything, she is always negotiating, solving problems, and resolving conflicts. While she is not a manager in the hierarchical sense, a lot of her work has managerial functions. In other words, her work is net work. Since I had nothing to lose, I apologized for the abstract nature of my dissertation (and the social risk of talking about my theory work during a social encounter at

a party) and tried out some of the theory I have developed in this chapter. I described her work in terms of brokering and maintaining alliances among members of a network that is allied around the material outcome of the buildings that her agency funds and manages the operations of. Based on her feedback, it seemed like this language was useful to her. In fact, her initial reticence to talk about her work had disappeared by the end of the conversation.

Additionally, as my new friend talked about her work she mentioned how difficult it is to explain the nature of her work to job candidates. When I asked her if it would be useful to have some kind of a visualization of what her net work looks like, she responded affirmatively. All of this is to say that in a knowledge economy many workers do work, much of it rhetorical work, that is not visible to even the workers who are most closely allied with it. The issue of visibility and comprehensibility is the topic of the next chapter, but I hope that this encounter has illustrated that the rhetorical exigence exists in industry for a methodology for tracing rhetorical work, or net work, to its material outcomes.

CHAPTER 5

Network Genres: Genres of Visibility and Comprehensibility

> "Texts (from *textere*, to weave together) both weave and splice networks….Texts weave and splice so successfully because they are *inscriptions*, concrete traces that represent phenomena in stable and circulable ways. They appear in *genres*, regular responses to recurrent situations that can connect activities in continuous, developmental ways while accommodating changes and that function ecologically." (Spinuzzi, 2008 p. 145)

Introduction to Network Genres

One of the lines of inquiry of this dissertation is how rhetoric, and rhetorical activity, builds networks (Latour, 1991). How a particular rhetorical structure, the genre, functions to build networks is the topic of this chapter. This chapter builds on Spinuzzi's (Spinuzzi, 2003, 2008) argument about how genres circulate to weave and splice networks by proposing a new classification of genre, *network genres:* genres that make the network visible and comprehensible, and by doing so bring it into being. As a quick introduction, consider the list pictured below in Figure 5.1. This is a list of the "partners" who contributed to building "an early childhood systems framework" ("Kids Matter,"). This list of partners was, at the time of the publication of the executive summary report in which this list appears, a comprehensive

list of the players in early education system building in Washington State:

KIDS MATTER PARTNERS

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Child Care Health Consultants (Nurses in local health jurisdictions statewide)
- Child Care Resources and Referral Network (Managers of local resource and referral networks statewide)
- Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Providers (Community-based family, friends and neighbor care providers in King County)
- Family Support Programs (Statewide network supported by Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Family Advisory Network (Statewide network of parents that guide the work of the Program of Children with Special Health Care needs)
- Head Start/ECEAP Regional Directors
- Teachers, administrators and parents participating in Summer Institutes (Institutes with statewide participation sponsored by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)

LOCAL INITIATIVES

- Bright Futures (Whatcom Co)
- CC-CHILD Profile Project (Grant Co)
- Circle of Security (Spokane Co)
- Getting School Ready (King Co)
- Kids Get Care (King Co)
- Northwest Early Learning (Skagit Co)
- Support for Early Learning and Families (Clark Co)

STATE LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS (Advisory Group Members in bold)

- Center for Infant Mental Health (CIMH)
- Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF)*
- **Department Of Health, Washington State (DOH)***
- DOH Child and Adolescent Health (CAH)*
- DOH Washington Integrated Service Enhancement (WISE)
- DOH Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW)
- DOH Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)*
- **DSHS – Division of Child Care & Early Learning (DCCEL)***
- DSHS Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
- DSHS – MAA, EPSDT Improvement Team (Medicaid)
- **Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)**
- **Family Policy Council (FPC)**
- **Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)***
- Governor's Office – Early Childhood Policy*
- **Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO)***
- **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB)**
- Institute for Language and Brain Sciences
- **Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE)**
- League of Education Voters (LEV)*
- **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)***
- Oral Health Coalition
- Statewide Action for Family Empowerment (SAFE-WA)
- Talaris Research Institute*
- University of Washington, School of Nursing (Promoting First Relationships (PFR), NCAST
- Washington Association for Education of Young Children (WAEYC)*
- **Washington Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)**
- **Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)***
- Washington Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- **Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCRRN)***
- Washington State Fathers Network (WSFN)

FEDERAL EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) – Maternal Child Health Bureau
- Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) – Child Care Bureau, Head Start Bureau & Department of Education
- Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative – National Zero To Three
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Department of Education
- Build Initiative – Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

*Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children's Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 10

Figure 5.1: A "network list" of the partners who contributed to the *Kids Matter* framework for build an early learning system in Washington State.

This list, I argue, functions to make the emerging early learning system, or network, visible and public to stakeholders such as my participants at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR), and other stakeholders in the community. Without a list such as the one pictured above, how would stakeholders, and would-be stakeholders, know who and what made up the under-construction system of early learning? How would they even know that it exists? Certainly all of the stakeholders listed above, and the relationships among them, are not visible simply via daily experience because the members listed are displaced in time and

space, and vary considerably in type (initiatives, non-profit organizations, public agencies, at the local, state and federal levels).

Network genres, such as the network list, I argue, function to make the network visible, to stabilize it and, ultimately, to enroll new members. But the identification and classification of a new genre, or a new classification of genre, is a tricky business. Scholarship in the two major traditions of genre studies, North American rhetorical genre studies and the Sydney School, has complicated whether to classify genres based on their function and/or their typified features, and whether to classify genres as grounded in specific situational contexts, or more abstractly as macro-genres (Grabe, 2002) or "generic values" (Bhatia, 2002, p. 282), such as the modes of narration, exposition, description, and evaluation. Bhaktin distinguishes between "relatively stable and normative forms of the utterance" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 81), or primary and secondary speech genres, based on whether the utterance contains a single (a turn in a conversation) or multiple (a novel) types of utterances.

While the existing literature in genre classification and typology has been helpful for retrospectively situating network genres within existing classifications of genres, it is important to note that as an ethnographer I have worked inductively based on my empirical data collection. I have worked inductively, first gathering artifacts from the field (such as the list in Figure 5.1) and observing how they function in context, and then seeking to connect my findings to theoretical precedence, and finally arguing to extend the theory. This said, these existing classification systems for genre contribute to my understanding of network genres. For instance, network genres are constituted by macro-genres, such as narrative, which Grabe has characterized at length, and also the list, arguably another instance of a

macro-genre. Also important is Bhaktin's attribution of characterist a kind of agency and materiality to utterances as "link[s] in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere" (p. 91), including expressivity, addressivity and dialogism. Bhaktin's attribution of these characteristics to utterances, rather to speakers or writers, also points to the materiality of rhetoric, a theme that is woven throughout this dissertation and that is fundamental to actor-network theory.

My argument for network genres, via the discussion of two instances of network genre that I identified via my field work, the network narrative and the network list, collapses the above values for classifying genres into the single notion of the *actant.* An instance of a network genres, I argue, is an actant in a network, and functions to make the network visible and comprehensible to network members and stakeholders. In addition, by making the network visible and comprehensible, the network genre also brings it into being (compare to Grabill's "act of assembly" (Grabill, 2010)). As an actant, it is "an effect of the network, something that gains its identity through the interactions of an ecology" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 84-85). It is important to say here that network genres are a theoretical construct identified by a researcher, rather than genres recognizable by a speech community, or my participants at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). Again, Bhaktin is helpful here, in the sense that it is not necessary to be able to name primary speech genres in order to be a proficient user of them, for example when taking turns in a conversation, or when writing an endnote on a student paper (Smith, 1997), or, like my participants, writing an annual report to their funder.

In this chapter I focus on two instances of a network genres, that of the network list and the network narrative. The network list and the network narrative are available in many

common workplace documents, such as project summary sheets and grant reports, and public genres such as informational brochures and event programs, and also orally in the form of meeting talk. I identified these genres in my field work by making the connection between what I learned from my participants about the overwhelming instability of the early learning network and my emerging understanding of much of their work activity as an effort to manage and control this instability. The network narrative and the network list, therefore, are also *tools-in-use* (Russell, 1997) that mediate my participants' efforts to manage, control, strengthen and extend (in other words, their *net work*) the early learning network.[14]

To further connect how my theoretical insight into how genres function in networks emerged from my experience in the field, I would like to return to the overwhelming impression I had during my field work that what I was witnessing during meetings of the team, meetings between just two members of the team, meetings with partner organizations, or doing interviews, was the constant effort to generate, revise, extend and maintain the very complex network of organizations, people, texts, initiatives and other elements that makes up the early learning community. This overwhelming impression, one that became the primary "aha" moment of my research, is a certain kind of effect that rhetorical ethnographers experience in the field, something like an operationalization of theory in real time. Ralph Cintron writes about it this way: "One of the perverse thrills of the kind of research that I do is that sometimes the theory that one has been crafting for a long time swoops down and becomes embodied in the events of everyday life. What I might otherwise look at with

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[14] Network genres function both as actants and meditational tools. Spinuzzi handles this slippage between how genres are conceived by attributing each conceptualization to a level of scope of study, the macroscopic, the mesoscopic and the microscopic (Spinuzzi, 2003, p. 45). I will return to the distinction between actants and meditational tools at the end of the chapter.

indifference acquires a certain kind of import, a flash of familiarity, as if yesterday's omen had materialized" (Cintron, 2003, p. 6).

I experienced this phenomenon, this "flash of familiarity," during the many meetings that I sat in on with my participants on the QRIS Communications Project team at my field site, Quality Child Care Resources (QCR), a non-profit resource and advocacy organization in the field of child care and early learning. I began to hear their informal pre-meeting chatter as the continual effort to get a handle on the current status of the very complex network of organizations, people, laws, texts, initiatives and other elements that makes up the early learning community. Meetings would start with formal or informal information sharing how who was now working where, which organization was doing something new, a new initiative that was being launched, or one that had ended or discussion about how political and economic conditions had changed for early learning—in other words, the constantly changing and constantly renegotiated alliances among members of the early learning network.

As I began to experience the inevitability of this kind of talk, I began to identify it not as incidental to the meeting's agenda, but as part of the purpose itself. In fact, this kind of talk was doing work too. This kind of storytelling, or what I began to call network narrative, made visible and comprehensible the dynamic alliances among members of the early learning network. This talk made visible and comprehensible the *many moving parts of the early learning machine,* as one of my participants put it to me later. She said this with an air of humor and resignation, because for her the instability of the field and the constant need to try and stay up to date with it is just a fact of her life on the job. In fact, it shapes much of the work that she, and my other participants, do. In other words, the endemic instability in the

field of child care and early learning is the rhetorical exigence (Grant-Davie, 1997) for work activities to control and strengthen the fragile network, and to make it visible and comprehensible to those who work within it. Part of the work that my participants at QCR do is to contribute to county, state and national efforts to build an early learning system that will make quality child care and early learning universally accessible. For my participants, this desire to make the network comprehensible is ever-present, shaping formal and informal discussion during meetings as well as the contents of official and unofficial documents. I started to recognize this desire to understand and manage the dynamic relationships among members of the early learning network as the exigence for these network narratives.

My participants, and their colleagues, work very hard to make quality child care available to as many children as possible. But if my participants, and organizations such as QCR, ceased to work tirelessly towards the goal of universal child care and early learning, what would happen? I can only speculate at the answer to this question, but I think it is fair to say that without the effort of my participants to extend the influence of the quality child care message, or to magnify their efforts by coordinating with partner organizations, any appearance of an early learning system (in the sense that there is a K-12 system, either at the local or national levels), would disappear: the network really is this fragile and unstable. It is important to foreground here, however, that a network is never a static state that once achieved can be left to operate like a perpetual motion machine. In fact, networks are not a state at all, but an outcome that must be constantly achieved via net work (Spinuzzi, 2008). Networks are not static because the socio-political conditions of their existence are constantly in flux.

This flux is the mileux in which my participants do their work, and as such it functions as the exigence for a good deal of their work activity, as I witnessed during my field work. The focus of this chapter is on the work activity that my participants do to stabilize, make visible and comprehend, and thus constitute, the complicated and dynamic network that is early learning. The theoretical framework I will draw on is that of rhetorical genre studies, as genre and network theorists have already established how a genre, or a typified rhetorical response to a recurring social situation (Miller, 1984) works to stabilize networks. Spinuzzi (2003) points out how texts "weave and splice so successfully because they are inscriptions, concrete traces that represent phenomena in stable and circulable ways" (p. 145). What is important here is the *material* notion of inscription, that is, that as concrete traces, inscriptions (in this case, genres of texts) transform the state of the network from an emerging and unstable network of relations to a material, visible and comprehensible phenomenon that has presence and a function in the world. Stability in an actor-network is a function of how many actors are enrolled, and the more ways in which an actor is in relationship with other actors in the network, the better. An inscription, then, that makes the network visible to many members of the network has the potential to greatly multiply the ways in which the members of the network are interconnected.

In this chapter I will first establish the historical political and economic exigence for genres of visibility and comprehensibility in the context of the early learning community. This is a useful investment because it foregrounds my aim to trace how the macro conditions and rhetorical structures in the field of early learning shape, and are shaped by, the micro activity, or knowledge work, of my participants. Genre is a useful framework for this project, because genres are a universal unit of analysis at the macro-, meso- and microscopic levels

(Spinuzzi, 2003). The macro level genres are seen as shaping and being shaped by the sociocultural milieau; at the meso-level, a genre is a tool-in-use in an activity system; and a microscopic view of genre focuses on fine-grained, moment by moment operations of a genre. Next, this chapter will investigate field examples at each level of analysis via the presentation of two network genres from my field work: the network narrative and the network list. These genres function to stabilize-for-now the early learning network by making it visible and comprehensible to my participants, and other stakeholders and therefore multiplying the number of enrollments. While there are many genres that my participants enroll in order to do their work on the QRIS messaging campaign, this chapter will focus on what I call network genres, or genres of visibility and comprehensibility—the textual genres (oral and written), that function to make the current state of the network visible, and that thus give it substance, or materiality. These are the genres that function to stabilize and make public an early learning system. As I will develop, this genre function may also be understood as another instance of net work, or the ways in which the network is "enacted, maintained, extended and transformed" (Spinuzzi 2008, p. 16).

The Exigence for Genres of Visibility and Comprehensibility, or Why is the Early Learning Network So Unstable?

At the most macro-level, the cause of the fragility of the early learning network is easy to identify: early learning does not yet have the enrolled support of public will. While support for universal access to quality child care and early learning is on the rise, thanks in part to the work of my participants on the QRIS communications team, it is not yet consolidated in the sense that it has strength and stability that can withstand socio-political

change. Consider in contrast: would the public consider formally limiting access to first grade by socio-economic status or cultural background? Likely not, thanks to the additional enrollment of constitutional mandates and court interpretations that stabilize the public will for free universal K-12 public education[15]. In Washington State, the state constitution is clear on the state's commitment:

> "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex."
>
> —Washington Constitution, article IX, section I

In addition, in Washington State the courts have interpreted the constitutional article to mean that funding K-12 education must be completed before cuts can be made to the state budget. In other words, "Neither fiscal crisis nor financial burden" relieves the legislature of this duty (Citizens Guide 2009). This constitutional amendment, and the court's interpretation of it, functions as a system guarantee for K-12 education. In other words, the enrollment of these important texts and interpretations, which are also blackboxed settlements between once conflicting and competing claims and ideologies, function to stabilize the K-12 system, or the network that delivers basic education to all citizens.

However, the state's duty is limited to what is defined as "basic education," and this traditionally has *not* included pre-K early learning. The state has therefore not accepted it as its duty to guarantee access to early learning. Advocates are working to change the scope of "basic education" in order to extend the state's guarantee to the early years—and they have

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[15] Of course, the quality and equality issue is still outstanding even in K-12 education. But it is difficult to argue over whether that a system exists, even if it is "broken," or unevenly successful.

made progress. In April of 2009 the Washington State House passed a bill (HB 2261) to include in the state's "paramount duty" the funding of preschool programs for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. However, as it has happened so often in the history of efforts to systematize early learning, the guarantee is a limited one and it is framed by a concern for the welfare of families and children at risk rather than a holistic ideological commitment to early learning as a human right or a right of citizenship. As I have argued elsewhere, the resistance to full-scale ideological acceptance of state guaranteed universal access to early learning faces resistance that is deeply embedded in American history and culture, and for this reason it is not likely to change quickly.

So, while early learning currently has a lot of support from state and federal politicians, their support is largely partisan (see Zigler, et al., 2009) for the story of partisan politics and child care policy) and vulnerable to the winds of change in state legislatures and congress. Likewise, as my participants experienced with the economic downtown starting in 2008, efforts to systematize early learning are vulnerable to changes in the economic climate. In 2009 the Washington State Legislature had to make tough decisions about filling in a substantial shortfall in the state budget. At a meeting between QCR and a key partner organization that does advocacy work for early learning at the state level, there was discussion over the uncertainty of the continued funding of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) initiative, and whether it was even strategic for the legislature to discuss the funding status of QRIS. My fieldnotes report on the discussion that linked the uncertainty around the future of early learning and political strategy:

> The loosely articulated and dynamic nature of the early learning network shows up in instability in language use and the necessity for lots of meetings to articulate roles and

> areas of responsibility and language use….There is also explicit talk about this uncertainty at meetings. There was even disagreement between Thrive staff whether the legislature would be/should be making funding decisions about QRIS again this year. The argument for was needing to show commitment in order to get the federal challenge grant money; the argument against was that if QRIS is not yet showing results, then when things need to be cut it is vulnerable. This is another source of instability. (fn 9/29/09)

The impact of the economic uncertainty on the QRIS Communications Project was also mentioned as a key challenge in the annual report to the funders of the QRIS Communications Project. In the annual report to funders, Catherine narrated in the "Challenges" section of the report template that: "Our primary challenge has been with us since the outset of this project- the delayed launch of a QRIS in Washington State, and the insecure nature of funding throughout. The delays have impacted the timeline by which we are able to achieve our deliverables, pushing some planned activities out further than we had hoped" (annual report to funders 2009-2010). In other words, the economic uncertainty around early learning and the QRIS project was a key shaper of my participants' work activities and their progress on the project.

To reiterate, without the enrollment of the public will that has been stabilized and guaranteed in the form of constitutional mandates, legislative action and court interpretations, funding for early learning programs and initiatives are vulnerable to economic and socio-political change. As I have said elsewhere, the fact that there are currently efforts underway to systematize early learning is what makes this field such a rich one for the study of

networks. In other words, it's not a coincidence that I had a sense that net work was happening all around me, in both a micro and a macro sense—it *was*.

People who work in the field of child care and early learning are well aware of their efforts to try and build a sustainable and stable system that can make quality child care and early learning available to every child. This is a historic project however, as it has already taken decades to get where it is today. The enrollment of the quality topos and the scientific research that warrants it are the rhetorical structures that have enabled early learning advocates to make the gains that we see today (see chapter 2).

Given the unstable state of the emerging early learning system at the macro-level, it is reasonable to expect that everyone involved in the endeavor would spend a good deal of their time and energy trying to gain a stable and up-to-date understanding, or picture, of the current status of the early learning network. As expected, my participants are very aware of the instability of the field of early learning. My field notes report on a conversation I overheard during a shared ride to the above mentioned meeting with QCR's partner organization in which Catherine and an employee of the state Department of Early Learning (DEL), a former employee of QCR, commented on the nature of their work:

> On the way downtown, Char and Catherine had a quick and light exchange about how difficult it is to keep track of all of the "moving parts of the machine" that make-up early learning. Even insiders can't keep track of all of the agencies, initiatives, programs etc. at the agency and government level, who is doing what and what it is called (an acronym soup). It strikes me that this is an admission that the early learning network is very dynamic and loosely articulated—this demands many meetings of the type we were headed to today where three agencies (QCR, DEL and Thrive) will

> work to articulate the rhetorical-political splices that hold them together them via largely the negotiation of language use). (fn 9/29/09)

The statement about "all of the moving parts of the machine" was uttered with an air of humor and resignation, as if it is just a fact of her life on the job—and it is; in fact, this instability and complexity shapes much of the work that my participants do. These are the conditions within which my participants at QCR work, and so part of their work is to manage this instability, as much as they also participate in and constitute it. In other words, the endemic instability in the field of child care and early learning is the rhetorical exigence for work activities that control the fragile network, to strengthen it, and above all, to make it comprehensible to those who work within it. For my participants, this desire to make the network comprehensible is ever-present, shaping not only casual conversation, as during the car ride above, but also discussions during meetings and the contents of documents. As the socio-political conditions of the network are constantly changing, however, network genres are always out of date, in the sense that by the time a fixed list or narrative of the network has been produced, it is likely already out of date again. This sense that network genres are always a little bit out date, results in an anxiety, or a renewed exigence, for the production of more texts, oral and written, in an attempt to visualize and therefore make comprehensible, the network that they both constitute and produce.

Genres of Visibility and Comprehensibility: Network Narratives and Network Lists

Over the year of my field work I sat in many meetings with the QRIS Communications Project team in which a good deal of the discursive activity was oriented towards naming, clarifying and renegotiating which agency, or individual, in the early

learning community was doing what and when and how. As I sat in these meetings it was as if the network of people, agencies, initiatives, projects and so on was so unstable that it had to be re-established every time a handful of members met. This storytelling about the status of the who, what, why, when and how of the members of the network I came to understand as net work happening in real time. Additionally, this function of the meetings did not seem to wane over time. Contrary to the expectation that over time the network relationships might become more stable, given the dynamic economic and political environment around early learning issues in Washington state, this *network narrative* continued to take up a significant portion of every meeting. A network narrative is the story of how members of the network are allied, or in relationship—it is a story that, to use Spinuzzi's terms for what net work does, enacts, maintains, extends and transforms the network (2008, p.16). I would add that the network narrative also aims to make the network comprehensible and visible, so that members of the network, such as my participants at QCR, can have a shared understanding of the network that is stabilized-for-now, enabling them to make decisions about their work in the present and near-future.

In addition to the oral narratives iterated and reiterated at meetings, my fieldwork identified a written genre, the *network list***,** that also functions to stabilize the network by making it visible and comprehensible. Network lists, however, unlike network narratives, give a minimal amount of information about the nature of the alliances among members. For this reason a network list, essentially a list of names of people, organizations, initiatives, and so on, is often accompanied by an oral or written network narrative. Sometimes the network list is a response to the exigence provided by the telling of the network narrative: once the alliances among members have been (re)negotiated, they can be written down and therefore

made visible, comprehensible and public. I found the opposite to be true as well. A network list, when viewed by a person knowledgeable about the network, can also motivate a network narrative, as the insider orally updates how the alliances among the listed members of the network have changed. This was the case when my participant Judy explained to me in an interview an already-out-of-date brochure published by a state-level commission charged with systematizing early learning in Washington State. The near exasperation in the tenor of her voice during her explanation reflected her sense that early learning is "a system that isn't a system." In other words, there is no dependable organizational chart (or org chart) for the ad hoc system that is early learning. The desire for one, however, produces network genres in a variety of modes and mediums.

Like the network narrative, the network list functions to stabilize-for-now the membership of the network by making it visible and comprehensible. And like the network narrative, it is likely to be out of date by the time it is articulated or published. In reality, the network list also historicizes the network as much as it establishes its existence. Network lists can appear in many places, and stand alone or be integrated into a document. For example, the internal summary sheet document for the QRIS Communications Project at QCR includes at the bottom a list of the individuals and departments who are contributing to the project. This document was distributed as a resource at a state-of-the-project team meeting. Catherine, the manager of the QRIS Communications project, opened the meeting by introducing a new team member, Katie, who would soon be replacing Charlene as the project coordinator and the representative of provider services. Katie's name, however, was not yet listed at the bottom of the project summary document even though her enrollment in the project had been made public. At the meeting Catherine's update of the network was oral and

by doing so she implicitly promised a soon-to-be updated network list on the summary sheet for the project. Team members might reasonably expect that the list on the summary sheet would be updated before the next meeting. If the network list were not updated to reflect the change in network, however, it would be out-of-date and be source of potential confusion and inefficiency for members of the team who were not present at the meeting, or other stakeholders in the project who are not core team members.

Workers in the early learning system also produce oral and written network narratives and network lists that function together to make the network visible and comprehensible to a more general audience. This will become clear below in the example of the opening ceremonies for a new child care education center that was the outcome of the alliance of a vast network of stakeholders, including QCR. The program listed all of stakeholders in the new center, but the speakers had to fill in the nature of the alliances among the listed individuals, organizations, government agencies and initiatives.

Both network narratives and network lists function to stabilize the network by making it visible and comprehensible, and thus function as part of the genre ecology that mediates the work of my participants, in particular their efforts to work within such an unstable and emerging system. The framework of a dynamic, shifting ecology of different genres (see Spinuzzi, 2002a, 2003; Spinuzzi, et al., 2006) has been used by writing studies scholars in technical and professional communication to account for how workers use multiple artifacts, including, and especially, genres, as tools to mediate their work activities. The idea of genres as tools-in-use was first established by Russell's (1997) seminal article. In this article Russell synthesized North American genre theory and Vygotskian activity theory so that writing studies scholars could view genres as a "tool-in-use" to accomplish motivated outcomes in an

activity framework. If my participants' work activities are in part motivated by an exigence to make the network visible and comprehensible, then network genres, in the form of the network narrative and the network list, are the tools that my participants, and others in the early learning community, use to mediate this outcome.

It is important to understand that in the context of Vygotskian activity theory the term *mediate* is understood in a more complex sense that just to use something or to pass something on in the sense of a communicative action. Mediation involves controlling oneself and others "from the outside," through artifacts and practices (Spinuzzi, 2004, p. 114). To mediate means also to extend the capabilities of and to transform. Spinuzzi (2004) emphasizes the dynamic and contingent nature of genre ecologies when he says that "Genres represent the 'thinking out' of a community as it cyclically performs an activity" (Spinuzzi, 2004). This "thinking out" is achieved via mediation that "qualitatively changed[s] the entire activity in which workers engage" (p. 114) For example, in order for a human being to use the efficient and reliable technology of the nail to connect pieces of wood, he or she requires the mediation of a hammer, or another solid, weighty object. Once the human has secured such a tool-in-use, however, it is possible to imagine and achieve building projects at a scale and efficiency not previously possible—in other words, what it means to construct things with wood as a human has been fundamentally transformed via the use of this tool. When it comes to network narratives and network lists, their function is not only the narrow and structuralist function of representing the network articulated by members of the early learning community; these genres also comprise and enact the network itself—that is, the existence of the network, and the possibility of growing and strengthening it, is not separate from these genres. In other words, my participants accomplish *net work* by enacting these

genres, just as these genres accomplish net work by constituting (and always reconstituting) the always already unstable network.

Another way to understand the dual role network narratives and network lists to both represent and constitute the network is to return to the long-standing theoretical issue of how to articulate the relationship between text and context. For example, Winsor showed how the four engineers in her study used documentation as tools for "ordering their reality" (D. A. Winsor, 1999, p. 204), a concept Winsor drew from John Law (Law, 1994): "The companies are not static and reified. Instead, they are created by the actions of the employees, such as Al, Chris, Ted, and Jason" (1999, p. 220). More specifically, the engineers' documentation functioned as a genre to stabilize and order the past and future activity of their engineering companies. In other words, the framework of activity theory and genre allows us to see how organizations are continually being (re)created by, in part, genres of text such as engineering documentation. If the terms "company" and "organization" are replaced by the term "network," reflecting a fundamental shift in the controlling metaphor for context from a bounded entity (or container), such as an organization, to an unbounded entity such as a network, and the genre of documentation used by the engineers is replaced by network narratives and lists, then it becomes clear how my participants similarly generated and used network genres to continually recreate, stabilize and constitute the early learning network.

The claim that documents such as a project summary sheet, a list of initiatives and organizations in an executive summary document, or the chatter before a meeting function to constitute the network might be difficult to substantiate with reports from my key participants. This is because they are so close to efforts to systematize early learning in Washington. That is, how they imagine the network to exist is how they represent it in

network narratives and lists. For my participants, the invention of the network and the representation of the network are often a single activity. However, for their coworkers, child care providers, the public and other stakeholders one or two degrees removed from the work of system building can *only* comprehend the network via the genres that make the network material—that is, genres that can circulate inscriptions of the network (even as they are constantly out of date). New stakeholders can only know how to act within or enroll with the network if they first know of its existence and architecture. And how these stakeholders can know about its existence and architecture is via access to written or oral network lists and narratives—for them, the network does not exist outside of these genres.

The view that my participants do net work by generating network narratives and lists, and that the genres themselves do net work by materially constituting the network, is possible because of the posthumanist framework in which genre ecologies, and more broadly network theory, has been developed. In other words, both my participants and these genres function as agents to maintain, strengthen and extend the network of early learning. Posthumanist theories, such as distributed cognition and actor-network theory, are founded upon the notion that distinctions among human and material agents are not meaningful, and that agency is not the property of the liberal humanist subject, but instead distributed throughout the environment, or context. This means that agency, power and knowledge are distributed among a network of relations among members, such as between my participants, the network narrative and the network list. It is the nature of the relationships among these members that is interesting and revealing, because it is the *alliance* among members that is constitutive of the outcome and also the location of the stability or instability due to contingency in the system. So, when the economic and political climate changes, as it did for the QRIS

Communication Project, the nature of these alliances has to be renegotiated, as we will see below in the examples from my field work that will develop the theoretical claims I have made above.

The Annual Report to the Funder as a Location for Network Narrative

This section develops a case of the micro operations of the genre of the network narrative in the work of the manager of the QRIS Communications Project, Catherine. As Catherine had to navigate the project through constantly changing, and worsening, political and economic conditions, she had to renegotiate the alliances among the members of the network (or do net work) most closely allied with the project: the goal and objective structure of the original grant approved by the funder, QCR's funder and QCR's partner organizations. In other words, Catherine did net work via the generation of and modification of oral and written network narratives and lists in response to the exigence generated by the change in the macro socio-political conditions of the QRIS Communications Project.

In addition, this section develops the annual report to the funder (or grant report) as a key location for network narrative. As inscriptions, network narratives within the grant report document also (re)constitute the network (that is, they do net work) by putting into circulation the nature of the (re)negotiated alliances among members of the network that are allied to this project by making them visible and comprehensible to other stakeholders.

As the manager on the QRIS Communications Project, Catherine was responsible for making sure that the work that the team did fulfilled the goals and strategies outlined in the original grant and that the team's progress is accurately reported to the funder at the end of every fiscal year. Over the two fiscal year period of my field work, Charlene, the Project

Coordinator, meticulously recorded the team's progress in meeting the grant's goals and objectives on an extensive spreadsheet called "the work plan." Mapping the team's progress to the original grant structure, however, was not always easy, especially as focus of the project changed as economic conditions declined. Over the course of my fieldwork, the socio-political conditions of the QRIS Communications Project changed dramatically. When the budget outlook for Washington State began to look grim in late 2008, the legislature drastically reduced the budget for developing and implementing a QRIS in Washington State. The change in the level of investment in QRIS by the state meant that the prospect of having a functioning rating system available to the public on the original timeline was suddenly very unlikely. It was therefore necessary to change the fundamental purpose of the communications campaign away from building public will for a specific child care quality rating and improvement system in Washington state, to a more general message about quality child care and building public awareness of the value of it and how to seek it out and identify it. Because other states that had developed quality rating systems had run into trouble when they over publicized a public service that was not yet available, my participants wanted to be careful to not set public expectations too high.

This change in the project in response to the changed economic conditions of the state required Catherine to rearticulate the purpose of the communication campaign and to re-negotiate, or re-splice, the role of the QRIS "Seeds" model for the campaign. In other words, the changed economic conditions generated the exigence for a *network narrative* that would explain the changed alliances among the original grant goals and objectives and the activities and outcomes of the project team. One of the places that Catherine had to generate a narrative about the change in the conditions of the project was in the annual report to the

project's funders. In fact, the annual report to the funder (or grant report) functioned as a key location for the network narratives produced in response to the changed conditions for the QRIS Communications Project. As she reported in an interview, Catherine found this "storytelling" a challenging part of her job, as she was hyper-aware of the necessity, and the difficulty, of narrating the team's progress within the language of the original goal and objective structure of the grant. In a sense, the whole genre of the grant report can be understood as a network narrative because in form and function it narrates the dynamic relationships among changes in the political and economic conditions for the project, the team's activities and the original goals and objectives of the grant structure.

The grant's template actually formalizes the function of network narrative. The template first reiterates the original goal and objective structure of the grant, and then calls for an update on progress on these goals and outcomes. The final three sections, "Lessons Learned," "Challenges," and "Changes" provide space to explain, or narrate, the dynamic relationships between the goals and objectives, progress on the project, and the changing economic and political conditions of the project (See Figure 5.2). In other words, the final sections of the template are locations for network narratives. It is important, however, to view the structure of the grant report to QCR's funder not only in terms of the formalities of the grant template structure, but also in terms of how the form of the template "embod[ies] and also shape[s] the strategies and values of communities" (Rude, 1995). In other words, the form of the grant report template determined the type of work that Catherine could use it to do. The fact that the form of the template invited network narrative, speaks to the recognition by the funding organization that the conditions for a grant project are dynamic, and that over a multi-year granting period, in this case three years, things *will* change. Network narrative,

therefore, is not necessarily an unofficial genre. On the contrary, in the case of the annual report to QCR's funders, network narrative has an official function within the template of the report.

A.Reporting Period: 5/1/08-5/31/09
B.Restated Goals and Objectives
Goal A
Objective 1…
Goal B
Goal C
C. Progress to Date
1. Intended Outcomes
2. Key Accomplishments and Success Stories
3. Unintended Outcomes
4. Unmet Outcomes
D. Lessons Learned
E. Challenges
F. Changes

Figure 5.2: Basic Template of the Annual Report to Funder

Network Narrative in the Grant Report: Reports on Changes, Instabilities, Negotiations, and Updates in Network Alliances.

One of the locations in the 2008-2009 annual report to the funders where Catherine had to narrate how changes in the conditions of the project required new alliances among members of the network was under the "Unintended Outcomes" heading of the template. There she included a bullet point called "Redefining our Communications goals:"

> Due to the fact that the QRIS in Washington State ultimately has not yet reached the general public, we re-evaluated what would be the best way to create a pathway of understanding towards QRIS. Especially when it comes to parents and FFN

> caregivers, it is useful to start with the concept of quality child care. We are developing messages focused on quality that are in direct alignment with the key elements of the "Seeds to Success" quality standards. In retrospect we feel this has been an extremely valuable step to take, and we believe that this groundwork will lead to a more informed general public which holds a higher level of readiness for a QRIS when it comes to our communities.

In this passage Catherine renegotiates the nature of the rhetorical-political enrollments of several members for the network. First, she is reporting on how she, and her team, had to "redefine" their communication goals about QRIS. This process also meant redefining the function of the QRIS "Seeds" model in determining the content of the messages the project team was disseminating to stakeholders. While initially the function of the campaign had been to communicate directly to stakeholders in King County about the upcoming quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that was entering in to the field test stage of development, the revised purpose of the campaign repositioned the "Seeds" model as a framework for aligning the way that quality child care is talked about by QCR's partner organizations in early learning across the state. The revised strategies of the grant were to develop tools and messages that these organizations could use to promote the concept of quality child care more generally in their own communities.

Secondly, in this narrative Catherine is renegotiating the relationship of the project team's activities to the goal and outcome structure of the grant and the expectations of the funding agency. The final sentence explicitly makes a positive statement, "an extremely valuable step to take"—in other words, the change in the project's focus was an extremely valuable realignment between the original purpose and intended outcome of the grant and the

work activities of the team members. Another way to understand this passage is as a location where Catherine's work to enact, and extend the reach of the early learning community, or *net work*, becomes visible as a network narrative. Additionally, this passage also functions to do net work. Without a passage that reconciles the changed QRIS Communications Project's goals to the original purpose of the grant, the funders would be left to wonder if the project team's activities had diverged to the extent that they had actually failed to fulfill the original goal-objective structure of the grant. In the worst case scenario, the funding agency could withhold continued funding for the project, or sever their enrollment with QCR.

A more straight forward exigence for a network narrative in an annual report to the funder is a change in a staffing situation or a renegotiated collaboration with a partner organization. These kinds of changes produced written network narratives in the grant report similar in function to the "who works where" and "who is doing what" talk at staff meetings. Quite simply, within the "Changes" section of the 2009-2010 report, Catherine wrote a statement reporting on the reorganization of employees and their duties on the QRIS Communications Project team:

F. Changes

- In May, 2010, we designated Zadie, QCR staff, to coordinate this project through year 4. Ada will also support Zadie's coordination of the final year of this grant. Ada's primary role is to coordinate the QRIS program activities in White Center, so her involvement will add great context- and a seamless application- to our communications efforts. Charlene left QCR in early June 2010.

Another narrative in the "Changes" section that updates the alliances among members in the network reports on the changing alliances between QCR and its partner organizations in the local early learning community. QCR works closely with the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), as well as a public-private partnership organization committed to building an early learning system in Washington State. There is a little bit of a too many cooks in the kitchen problem as these three agencies compete not only for funds but also for the attention and commitment of stakeholders in the community. The relationships between the organizations, then are constantly in negotiation, primarily in order to maximize the efficient use of resources, but also to ensure that each organization has a role suited to its main mission, and strengths, as an organization.

QCR's main mission as an organization is actually *not* system building; its primary mission is to provide resources (information and training) to parents and child care providers in King County. One of QCR's key partners, however, Thrive by Five Washington (which is funded by the same granting organization as the QRIS Communications Project) was formed to function as a bridge between private and public efforts in Washington State to systematize early learning. This difference in mission, explains in part why my participants had trouble motivating its partner organization to get actively involved in some of QCR's efforts on the QRIS Communications Project. While QCR is a "street level" service and resource organization, Thrive functions at the level of policy and system. Therefore, QCR failed to fully enroll Thrive's support for aspects of the QRIS Communications Project that QCR put in motion that aimed to systematize and codify ways of talking about quality child care. In fact, reluctant inter-agency collaboration slowed the process down so significantly that the QCR team decided to table this part of the project. Catherine then narrated in the annual

report to the funder that the roles of QCR and its partner organization had been explicitly renegotiated and clarified. The pieces of text below narrate how QCR has been explicitly repositioned in a supporting role to system level efforts of Thrive and the state Department of Early Learning (DEL). The underlined verb phrases, "closely coordinate," "make ourselves available," and "assist," point to QCR's newly renogiated role. Again, in the 2009-2010 "Changes" section Catherine is updating the renegotiated relationships among members of the network:

- As mentioned above, QCR, with guidance from our funder, is adjusting our game plan for the final year to focus our energy on leveraging our resources to benefit the communications efforts of Thrive and DEL. We will closely coordinate with DEL and Thrive to the best of our ability, and make ourselves available offering ideas and suggested approaches to communicating to our primary audiences.
- "QCR continues in helping maintain the momentum of the importance and value of quality child care in relation to a QRIS by hosting informational trainings, workshops and discussions with partners in the four other field test communities. QCR continues to assist Thrive by Five Washington and DEL with developing messages to providers about "Seeds to Success," and making these messages available to all the field test communities."

Later in the report in the "Changes" section, the changes in the alliances between QCR and their key partner due to the changed socio-economic conditions are even more clearly articulated. QCR's role as a resource and support organization is clearly articulated in the verb phrases "be serving as a resource and support," and "be carried out in coordination

with." In addition, a new member of the network is introduced, the *Seeds to Success Communications Plan* developed by Thrive. The nature of the negotiated relationships between QCR, DEL and Thrive are established as "in alignment" with this plan:

- Through a conversation convened by the Funder, it has been determined that our primary role in this final year will be serving as a resource and support to Thrive and DEL's statewide communications efforts to advance their agenda in relation to QRIS/*Seeds to Success*…All of this will be carried out in coordination with DEL and Thrive, and in alignment with the *Seeds to Success Communications Plan* developed by Thrive.

Understanding an annual report to a funder (or grant report) as a location for network narrative foregrounds the power of a text as a circulable inscription that makes the always renegotiated alliances of a network visible and comprehensible, and thus temporarily stabilizing it. The network narrative is a genre that mediates a dynamic network, where new relationships among members are both represented and constituted. In other words, the network narrative functions like a railway switching yard, where the cars and engines of trains are disconnected and reconnected in order form new trains that will carry goods to their destinations across the railroad network.

An Oral Network Narrative: From Talking About QRIS to Talking About Quality

A network narrative is also an oral genre, for example, the informal talk before a meeting, a formal meeting agenda item, or, as will be developed in this section, an oral narrative on a conference call between members of the QCR QRIS Communications Project team and

QCR's sister child care resource and referral organizations partner organizations. As the purpose and scope of the project changed due to the downturn in the economy and the uncertainty of funding for the QRIS initiative, it was Catherine's job to communicate to QCR's partner organizations about the changes in the project and to enroll these organizations as stakeholders given the new terms of the project. In response to the rhetorical exigence of the changed economic and political conditions of the project, Catherine had to generate a network narrative, much like she did in the grant report above, that renegotiated the role of the QRIS "Seeds" model in the QRIS Communication Project in such a way that QCR's partner organizations would enroll in the project.

In addition to the coordinating work Catherine did with QCR's partners Thrive and the DEL, Catherine also coordinated the work of the QRIS Communication Project team with QCR's sister organizations in the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network. Child Care Resource and Referral, or CCR&R, organizations, like QCR in King County, provide resource and referral services about child care to every county in the state. CCR&R organizations serve parents looking for child care, as well as licensed and unlicensed providers looking for training or other kinds of support. The organizations vary in their form and functions, and many, such as QCR, also take on publically and privately grant-funded projects furthering early learning initiatives in the state, such as the QRIS initiative. While the state-wide network of CCR&R organizations work fairly independently in their local communities, they also communicate at the network level to better coordinate their systems-level work in the field of early learning. When the purpose of the QRIS Communications Project changed away from communicating directly to stakeholders in King County about the upcoming quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to aligning the

way that quality child care is talked about by QCR's partner organizations across the state, this change had to be communicated in order re-enroll QCR's sister organizations into the new purpose of the QRIS Communications Project. The existing alliances of the CCR&R network, therefore, provided the QRIS Communications team an opportunity to further disseminate the idea of aligning how workers at CCR&R agencies talk about quality child care to parents and providers. The monthly network-wide conference call, was an ideal venue for such a network narrative.

In December 2009 I listened in on a monthly CCR&R network technical assistance, or "TA," conference call, in which Catherine and Charlene were put on the agenda to talk about their work on the QRIS Communications Project. This call was their opportunity to explain their work to their partner CCR&R agencies and to enroll them in the project. At the moderator's request, Catherine began the conference call with a network narrative about the development of the QRIS Communications Project and how its focus has changed because of changes in the budget situation in Washington State. Here is a paraphrased transcription of her narrative[16]:

> This project has been an opportunity to think cross-team. We want to talk about how we are aligning our quality messaging, as well as how it relates to the development of QRIS in WA state. We got the grant 3 years ago, when the governor was putting together the early learning council, there was lots of funding to early learning and QRIS was on the rise. The Gates Foundation wanted us to provide messaging tools to communicate with providers, families and FFN about quality child care that were in

[16] A paraphrased narrative means that I transcribed Catherine's speech live. This form of "live" transcription focuses on recording the rhetorical moves of the speaker rather than reproducing exact lexical verisimilitude.

> alignment with quality as defined by QRIS in order to prepare the ground for QRIS. Because of state challenges [the budget deficit], the mission has changed from talking about QRIS to talking about quality. But we will still use the foundation quality standards developed by state [the QRIS "Seeds" model] to have a more aligned way of talking about quality to stakeholders so that they [families, providers] will demand quality and so that providers can set goals to provide quality. But how do you talk to providers about QRIS and families and FFN about quality? Originally, it [the QRIS Communications Project] was about raising awareness about QRIS in King County. Now it is about raising awareness about quality in pilot communities and across the CCR&R system. We'll talk about how the quality messages we've come up with are aligned with the "Seeds" model. I apologize that this project is kind of abstract, are there any questions about what we are doing here? (fn 12/3/09).

The beginning of Catherine's narrative reprises the origins of the QRIS Communications Project, and the alliances that put it in motion: the strong economy, the governor's early learning council, the QRIS initiative and the Gates Foundation's investment in how the "Seeds" model defined quality child care. However, things changed, and as a result these alliances had to be renegotiated. In the underlined section of the narrative above, Catherine explicitly renegotiates for the partner agencies the role of the QRIS "Seeds" model for the QRIS Communication Project. Again, the underlined phrases communicate the nature of the re-alignment: "Because of state challenges, the mission has changed from talking about QRIS to talking about quality. But we will still use the…[the QRIS "Seeds" model] to have a more aligned way of talking about quality…." In short, Catherine explained that while originally the QRIS "Seeds" model *was* the message, now, since conditions have changed for

the QRIS initiative, the model will only *align* the message that is now more abstractly about quality child care. Essentially, the definition of quality child care codified in the "Seeds" model has been shifted from that of programmatic imperative (The QRIS "Seeds" model is an assessment program that will be implemented in the near future), to that of a rhetorical tool for stabilizing the way that quality child care is talked about more generally across the early learning community. Catherine apologizes at the end of her monologue about the newly "abstract" nature of the project, an indication of her awareness of the difficulty that her audience will have identifying with the change in the purpose of the QRIS Communications Project.

Network Narratives and Network Lists Function Ecologically

Network narratives and network lists also work together in an ecological relationship to mediate the activity of early learning system builders. Since genres in ecological relationships overlap and intermediate, they are contingent on each other. The success of any given genre, therefore depends on its interconnections with other genres and how those genres jointly mediate a given activity (Spinuzzi, 2004, p. 114). Genres can, for example, categorize or structure others, or attach to and thus transform others. In the case of the genres functioning to make the network visible and comprehensible at an opening ceremony for a new state-of-the-art child care facility, the network lists in the ceremony program categorized and made visible the members of the network who were named and put into relationship in the many speeches from the podium.

I attended the opening ceremony for the new Educare child care center because it was part of an initiative, the White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI), in which Catherine, the manager of the QRIS Communications Project team, also had a managerial role. The development of this new state-of-the-art child care facility was an outcome of a long and complicated collaboration between both public and private, local and national interests. My experience at the Educare opening ceremony was, like the experience of listening to so many network narratives at QRIS Communications Project meetings, a time in my field work experiences when, "the theory that one has been crafting for a long time swoops down and becomes embodied in the events of everyday life" (Cintron, 2003, p. 5). As during those many meetings of the project team at QCR, I had the sensation that the early learning network was being conjured into being around me and therefore made visible and comprehensible, however fleetingly.

The program handed to me at the door, the glossy brochure that was inserted into it, as well as the hour of speeches during the ceremony, had to accomplish the difficult job of narrating for the diverse audience packed into a school gym the development of the project via the coordination of literally dozens of different interests. These interests, both bureaucratic and abstract, such as initiatives and foundations, and human, such as the local and state politicians who were present and the representatives of the foundations, some of them celebrities in their own rights, all had to be recognized as members of the network, and their contributions, or the nature of their alliance with the network, narrated. The ceremony program, the glossy brochure and the speeches from the podium, were thus packed with written and oral network narratives and network lists that worked together to make material (visible and comprehensible) the complex network of members that had developed, built and

now opened this new state-of-the-art child care center. In other words, these genres functioned ecologically to give the network presence, or materiality, for the audience assembled at the opening ceremony.

As the opening ceremony progressed through the program of eight speakers, each representing a major category of stakeholder that contributed to bringing about the Educare center (a major foundation, Thrive By Five Washington, a public-private partnership, the director of the state Department of Early Learning, public education officials and a community member and parent), each speaker recognized additional initiatives, programs and more people present in the audience, including many city, state and national-level politicians, builders and architects, parents and children of the local community and representatives of other funding sources.

The program for the opening ceremony committed three pages to listing all of the public and private organizations, foundations, initiatives and individuals of whose alliance the new quality child center is an outcome. In addition to this network list, the program included several network narratives that made explicit the nature of the alliances among the key members of the network. Of particular interest is the alliance between the White Center Early Learning Initiative and the new Educare child care center. “The Center,” the program narrates, “serves as the hub for the WCELI.” In other words, the new child care center is the material home for the WCELI initiative, an abstract entity itself composed of many different kinds of members.

One section of the program text, “About WCELI” narrates how a heterogeneous set of members are articulated, or aligned, around the common objective to improve child care

conditions in this low income neighborhood in southwest Seattle. Many of the members named in the narrative, highlighted in the narrative copied below, are familiar because they also play a role in the QRIS Communications Project. In this sense, the case of the Educare opening ceremony as an exigence for multiple network narratives and lists is also a glimpse into how the early learning community is networked around projects other than just the QRIS initiative, and the QCR's QRIS Communications Project in particular:

> The **White Center Early Learning Initiative** is a partnership of **community members** and **public and private organizations,** which is expanding services to young children….WCELI is one of two **Thrive by Five Washington** early learning **demonstration communities** in the **state,** modeling strategies and approaches that can be replicated in other communities to improve early learning statewide. Primary partners in WCELI are **Quality Child Care Resources**, **Highline Public Schools**, **Open Arms Perinatal Services, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Puget Sound Educational Service District,** and **Thrive by Five Washington**. The partnership is supported by grants from **Thrive by Five Washington** and the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.**

The speeches during the opening ceremony went on for an hour. Even a three minute transcription of these speeches is representative of the complex network narrative told by the speakers in order to make visible and comprehensible to the assembled audience the vast network that was aligned around making the Educare child care center happen. In these opening remarks is the story about how the effort to build this new child care center came about, who was involved at the beginning and what his or her role was in the alliance, including a new initiative that was launched that made possible the funding of this project,

thanks to the support of Bill Gates, Sr. and others. In other words, this speech narrates how individuals, communities, federal programs, private foundations and local initiatives were originally allied around the common object of rebuilding a better child care center in the White Center community:

> In 1993 we faced a real challenge, the **white center community** was being torn down to be rebuilt as the much more beautiful **Greenbridge,** so we had to rebuild our building…Fortunately, at the same time there was **the early learning initiative** being started by the **Gates Foundation** and others…A bunch of us went back to Chicago to see **Educare**, and on that trip was **Bill Gates Sr.,** the grandfather of this project; **Lisa Smith,** who I think I'll say is a fairy godmother; and **Ruth XX** who I think I'll say is the queen of early child care in this state. Long story short, we loved what we saw, because **Educare,** on top of **Head Start,** offers services from birth to five, smaller classes, more qualified teachers…a whole raft of things that you can read about in the **brochures**…We're so happy that **Nina Auerbach** is going to talk a little bit about this, but we're so happy to be part of the **White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI)** because one of the parts of **Head Start** that I left off is, two things. The first is community based, because **Head Start** has always been community based, and now we are community based as part of **WCELI** and also that **Head Start, Educare** and our **initiative** are based on the cultures of the **children** and of the **community** area and so it is really wonderful to have both of those things at one time and we couldn't have done it without so many of the **people** in this room. It takes a whole **staff** to build a **program,** and I would like **everyone from the Head Start and Educare Program** to raise their hand (applause).

The remaining 42 minutes of the opening session continued with multiple speakers, representing multiple stakeholder groups, including the CEO of QCR's partner organization Thrive by Five, the Gates Foundation (a key funder), the director of the Washington State Department of Early Learning, a community member and parent of an Educare student and the Senior Vice President of the Bounce Early Learning Network, the parent organization of Educare early learning centers. In essence, each of these speakers, who were individually listed in the program represented a category of stakeholder in the Educare project.

It is important to recognize that network lists and narratives don't simply invoke a set of alliances that come and go as conditions change, although this is certainly one way to conceptualize the dynamics of networks. Networks, however, aren't just a series of "spliced" (and unspliced) relationships, they also represent sedimentations that accumulate over time, the process that Spinuzzi refers to as "weaving." Within the network narrative articulated during the opening remarks transcribed above is evidence of the sedimentation, accretion, or the historicity (Spinuzzi 2008) of the early learning network. When the speaker says, "Long story short, we loved what we saw, because Educare, on top of Head Start, offers services from birth to five, smaller classes, more qualified teachers…," he is referring to how the newer Educare Early Learning Center concept was built on top of an existing, but widely recognized as insufficient program, Head Start. Head Start, the national pre-school program for low-income children, was itself an outcome of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty in 1965. Since then it has faced numerous challenges to maintaining its funding and has been moved around the federal bureaucracy in Washington to remove it from its origins as a progressive social action program (Zigler, et al., 2009). Despite Head Start's impressive longevity, however, it is still recognized as a program that is not funded at the level necessary

to provide quality child care to all the children who quality for it. Additional programs and initiatives, like Educare, have therefore come about to fill this gap.

Educare Centers, therefore, are not the outcome of a brand new network built from scratch, but instead the Educare Network was an outcome of a historic effort to improve access to and the quality of child care. In other words, to articulate Educare to the network in terms of being built "on top of Head Start" is a more developmental view of how networks form; networks are not only a set of alliances that come and go as conditions change, but members are also a series of sedimentations that accumulate over time, which each new sedimentation changing the nature of the network, while at the same time being shaped by the precedence of the original.

The example of Educare as an emergent initiative build on top of others that preceded it points to one of the high level arguments of this dissertation. This is the argument that the existing ad hoc network of private and public entities is the outcome of the historical failure of the discourse about early learning to produce an early learning system in the US. Just as Educare is a response to a gap left by Head Start, so is the entire network a response to the gap left by the lack of a centralized, guaranteed early learning system. Unpacking the relationship between Educare and Head Start, let alone the associations among all of the other stakeholders, begins to reveal the contingency and complexity of this network, and how it has evolved historically, and non-systematically.

Sitting in the audience listening to the proliferating network narratives generated by the speakers and looking at the network lists in the program that categorized the members of the network in print, I was struck by how incredible it was that this project, to build one

quality early learning center in one community, was ever able to happen at all—so many different players, so much time and so many contingencies. Additionally, now that it had happened, the likelihood of this effort being reproducible seemed little to none, even though the vast investment in this one center had been warranted by the positioning of an Educare center as a model for other child care centers; in other words, the idea that this process was reproducible.

While the network narratives and lists at the opening ceremony served to stabilize networks of stakeholders by making them visible and comprehensible, and therefore public, what these genres don't represent are certain future alliances, or even reproducible ones. In fact, it is very unlikely that the particular set of alliances among the members listed in the Educare program brochure would happen again. Not only do individuals change jobs and positions, but economic and political conditions at the state and national levels have already changed dramatically since the Educare project was initiated and funded. Public funding for early learning, in particular has sharply decreased since 2008 and the public mood has darkened regarding public funding in general. For example, part of President Obama's 2010 health care bill included additional money for the federal block grant that funds child care initiatives such as the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCR&R), the umbrella organization of which QCR is a member. This additional money, which my participants referred to at the beginning of this chapter as the "challenge grant" they hoped to win by encouraging the legislature to show commitment to QRIS, was eliminated from the bill before it was ever passed. As such, the imperative to have fundable public initiatives in place to qualify for that money disappeared. The enrollment of key members of the Educare network listed in the program brochure, such as the Taxpayers of

Washington State, and other public funding sources, may in fact no longer be possible without new arguments and warrants that are likely not yet available. In other words, network narratives and network lists function both to historicize alliances in a network, in addition to the extent to which they update present alliances. The extent to which a network narrative historicizes or updates present conditions is often difficult to discern except by key stakeholders who are instrumental in building the network. My participants at QCR, for example, would be able to tell how accurate a network list or narrative about the early learning network is. As soon as the narratives and lists are made available to a broader public, however, the distinction is easily lost.

Updating Network Lists with Oral Network Narrative

During an interview with another one of my participants at QCR, Judy, I noticed that while she was showing me the executive summary document of a framework for systematizing early learning in Washington State, the *Kids Matter* framework, she was at the same time narrating to me the many ways that the document was already out of date. In fact, her narration, slightly exasperated in tone, was delivered as evidence of how unstable the early learning network is and how difficult this makes it for her to work both within it and for it. Judy's exasperated narrative was also another example of how network narratives and lists can function ecologically, or can jointly mediate an activity. While network lists can structure, or *categorize*, complex network narratives, as evidenced in the opening ceremony of the Educare center, another way that these genres function ecologically is when an oral network narrative *updates* an out-of-date network list.

The *Kids Matter* framework was a strategic framework that was developed via the input of multiple stakeholder groups in the early learning community. The stated purpose of the framework in the executive summary's introduction is, "This plan offers a framework that supports the efforts of local and state stakeholders to coordinate, collaborate and integrate efforts that will lead to children being healthy and ready for school" (Kids Matter, p. 1). The last page of the executive summary brochure lists all of the "partners" who were involved in this effort, categorizing them by breaking them down into family and community groups, local initiatives, state level stakeholders and then federal initiatives—there are fifty in all (see Figure 5.3 below). This last page was, of course, a network list.

The network list of the *Kids Matter* framework is also a lesson in how listed members of the network may themselves be only representative of a network of alliances in their own right. It is interesting to note how these stakeholder groups are listed by type, and how not all of the members are people, organizations or other members that might be materially bounded in some way. This list foregrounds how "initiatives" are also members of a network, even though an initiative itself is an enrollment of members that exceeds organizational boundaries (such as QRIS). On the executive summary page the "local initiatives" are assigned to counties, such as "Kids Get Care (King Co)." This initiative is really a label for a multiple-grant supported program that ensures that all children have access to integrated oral, physical, mental and developmental preventative medical care. Rather than being an organization unto itself, the initiative works via multiple community organizations, such as Head Start and Family Support Centers. This initiative, then, is really the name of an outcome, that is "integrated preventative care," of a network of public and private agencies, people, and rhetorical structures, just as quality child care is the outcome of the network that

Charlene, Judy and Catherine work to build and maintain. In one sense, then, this lengthy network list is actually a list of networks that embedded within each other and inextricably intertwined historically, bureaucratically, politically and economically.

KIDS MATTER PARTNERS

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Child Care Health Consultants (Nurses in local health jurisdictions statewide)
- Child Care Resources and Referral Network (Managers of local resource and referral networks statewide)
- Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Providers (Community-based family, friends and neighbor care providers in King County)
- Family Support Programs (Statewide network supported by Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Family Advisory Network (Statewide network of parents that guide the work of the Program of Children with Special Health Care needs)
- Head Start/ECEAP Regional Directors
- Teachers, administrators and parents participating in Summer Institutes (Institutes with statewide participation sponsored by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)

LOCAL INITIATIVES

- Bright Futures (Whatcom Co)
- CC-CHILD Profile Project (Grant Co)
- Circle of Security (Spokane Co)
- Getting School Ready (King Co)
- Kids Get Care (King Co)
- Northwest Early Learning (Skagit Co)
- Support for Early Learning and Families (Clark Co)

STATE LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS (Advisory Group Members in bold)

- Center for Infant Mental Health (CIMH)
- Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF)*
- **Department Of Health, Washington State (DOH)***
- DOH Child and Adolescent Health (CAH)*
- DOH Washington Integrated Service Enhancement (WISE)
- DOH Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW)
- DOH Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)*
- **DSHS – Division of Child Care & Early Learning (DCCEL)***
- DSHS Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
- DSHS – MAA, EPSDT Improvement Team (Medicaid)
- **Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)**
- **Family Policy Council (FPC)**
- **Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)***
- Governor's Office – Early Childhood Policy*
- **Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO)***
- **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB)**
- Institute for Language and Brain Sciences
- **Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE)**
- League of Education Voters (LEV)*
- **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)***
- Oral Health Coalition
- Statewide Action for Family Empowerment (SAFE-WA)
- Talaris Research Institute*
- University of Washington, School of Nursing (Promoting First Relationships (PFR), NCAST
- Washington Association for Education of Young Children (WAEYC)*
- **Washington Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)**
- **Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)***
- Washington Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- **Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCRRN)***
- Washington State Fathers Network (WSFN)

FEDERAL EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) – Maternal Child Health Bureau
- Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) – Child Care Bureau, Head Start Bureau & Department of Education
- Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative – National Zero To Three
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Department of Education
- Build Initiative – Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

*Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children's Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 10

Figure 5.3: Page 10 of the *Kids Matter* Executive Summary Document: A Network List

This network list, however, as Judy wanted to be rightly clear about, was already out of date. Since it was published in 2005, this fact may not have been unexpected, except to an outsider to the network, such as myself. How up-to-date network lists are is not apparent to audiences who do not have insider knowledge about the status of the network (this problem

will be discussed in more detail in the next section about online network lists). In our interview Judy pointed out to me all of the ways that this list no longer made visible the network as was presently constituted: initiatives had ended, state level departments had been reorganized and renamed and newer ones were left off. For example, *The Kids Get Care* (*KGC*) initiative in King County listed under "Local Initiatives," was funded from 2001-2007 but has now been redefined as the "model" for a new initiative, *The King County Children's Health Initiative* (CHI). On the website for the *KGC* program *KGC* is now referred to in the past tense. While the organizations enrolled in the now defunct *KGC* initiative still exist, they may or may not still be articulated to the effort to ensure access to preventative care for children without health insurance. The changing nature of this initiative is evidence of how as socio-political conditions change, so do the articulations among the members of the network. The network list, as a static representation of the members of the network, cannot represent the contingency and dynamism of the network, and therefore is always already out of date. As such, the extent to which the network list is up to date or not is only knowable by an insider of the network, such as Judy.

As such an insider, Judy was able to point out to me ways that the list of partners in the *Kids Matter* executive summary was already out of date. In the interview Judy showed me this document primarily as an example of efforts to systematize the otherwise ad hoc and unstable nature that the field of child care and early learning has traditionally been (see Chapter 2). Her network narrative about the *Kids Matter* effort to systematize the field of child care and early learning in Washington State reflects the unstable nature of the field, her insider knowledge, as well as her personal exasperation with how difficult it is to stay up to date with what is going on:

> It's a system that isn't a system, right (laughs)?....Well, it's just really been a struggle. It's still going on here and now that [Kids Matter] has gotten incorporated into the work that DEL is doing and the most recent early learning plan and work that is going on. So what came from the ECCS here was Kids Matter which was a framework, a way to talk about, a way to think about early childhood systems….The way they had to put that together and the work that they're still doing now is just an indicator of how disjointed everything is, so it was just a matter of sitting down and sort of trying to take a snapshot of this moving train and what is in place right now and putting that together. Then the DEL got formed, and then Thrive by Five got formed and has just run amok, so things keep happening….New programs pop up all the time. Oh, we're going to start this, oh, we're going to start this, and it's like could we just pick five really good things and do those? I mean there is way too much overlap, way too much redundancy.

The *Kids Matter* executive summary network list functioned as a prompt for Judy to deliver an oral network narrative that reflects her own bias of how the network is formed and functioning. In her narrative above she refers to how the current state Department of Early Learning has been formed since the *Kids Matter* list was published (The DEL was formerly part of the Washington State DSHS) and how another powerful organization, Thrive by Five, a public-private partnership, has also come into being. The CEO of Thrive by Five is actually the former CEO of QCR, representing how the dynamism of the network has also directly affected Judy and the organization that she works for.

In our interview, then, the network list in the *Kids Matter* executive summary served three functions. First, it gave material presence to the state effort to systematize the field;

second, as an out-of-date list, it served a historicizing function of these efforts; finally, this list, in its out-of-dateness, functioned ecologically to prompt Judy to draw on her insider knowledge to update the list orally via a network narrative. It is also important to note that Judy's oral updating of the network list provided the exigence for another, more up-to-date network list to be formed.

There are now, of course, more up-to-date network lists than the *Kids Matter* document, and some of those are online. Online documents, or website pages, unlike documents published in print, can be continuously updated, often without the awareness of the viewer of the information. There is a sense, then, that information on websites is more up-to-date than printed publications. In theory, at least, there is more potential for an online network list to more accurately reflect the current configuration of a network. This might be the reader's expectation, but is it true?

Online Network Lists

There are now more up-to-date network lists than the *Kids Matter* document, and some of those are online. For example, the website of one of QCR's partner organizations, Thrive by Five, functions in part as a network list. This website includes a page of resources for each category of stakeholder in early learning: parents, child care providers, the business community and the legislature. An image of the page of resources for parents and child care providers is below (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5 below).

While the intention of this web page is good, that is to provide a comprehensive list of the initiatives, organizations, foundations and other entities that have a stake in improving early learning, the reality is that this unsorted list of dozens of members is bewildering in its length. Secondly, an uneducated viewer of this list wouldn't really even know where to start looking, even if the viewer did come to this page looking for a fairly specific kind of resource. This fact foregrounds a limitation of network lists—while with their very existence they make the network visible, they are not actually useful to an uneducated viewer, in particular in the absence of a network narrative. In addition, although found online, this page too does not offer any information about how up to date its representation of the network is. In this sense, this page offers little more than the network list in the *Kids Matter* executive summary document.

Figure 5.4: The top half of webpage: a list of resources for parents and child care providers on the Thrive by Five website (""Resources",")

Choosing Child Care

Family, Friend & Neighbor Care
Family, friend and neighbor providers (FFN) include grandparents, aunts and uncles, elders, older siblings, friends, neighbors and others who help families take care of their kids on an informal basis.

Getting Help Paying for Child Care & Preschool
Child care can be expensive. State child care subsidy programs help eligible families with children pay child care costs.

Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network (Parent Page)
Tools to locate child care and find information on child development and caring for children with special needs.

Washington State Department of Early Learning (Child Care & Preschool Options)
Assistance with choosing high-quality child care. Also offers Also offers Child Care Check, Washington State's Licensed Child Care Information System which provides basic licensing information and the history of any complaints made about a licensed child care provider that was found to be valid.

Child Care & Early Education Research Connections

A comprehensive, up-to-date, and easy-to-use collection of more than 14,000 resources from the many disciplines related to child care and early education.

Child Development

CHILD Profile
Regular mailings containing health and safety information designed to help parents make decisions about their young child's health care. *This resource is available in Spanish.*

Healthy Families America
Healthy Families America, a program of Prevent Child Abuse America, strives to provide all expectant and new parents with the opportunity to receive the education and support they need at the time their baby is born.

ParentHelp123.org
ParentHelp123.org connects you and your familiy to food and health resources in Washington state.

Smart Start
Smart Start is North Carolina's nationally recognized and award-winning early childhood initiative designed to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Whole Child Leon
Florida's Whole Child Leon seeks to engage the entire community in a commitment to its youngest residents and strives to holistically address the needs of young children.

WithinReach
Essential resources for child and family health, safety, nutrition, and information for expectant parents.

Childrens Museums in Washington State

School Readiness

Child Care Aware (from the National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies) Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten (and the World) talks about the skills most children need when they enter kindergarten, what you can do to help your child get those skills and what to do if you think your child isn't "ready." *This resource is available in Spanish.*

First Five California
Simple things that parents and caregivers can do to help their child develop and be ready to succeed in school when the time comes. *This resource is available in Spanish.*

Foundation for Early Learning
Tips for parents and caregivers on how to encourage children's early learning. Also supports Getting School Ready Web site. *PDF versioins of the Getting School Ready booklet is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali and Russian.*

Head Start and ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program)
Comprehensive preschool programs that provide free services and support to eligible children and their families to help ensure all Washington children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The programs include early learning preschool, family support and parent involvement and child health coordination and nutrition. *The ECEAP enrollment form is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali and Russian.*

National Reading Panel
Updated regularly with new publications and materials to help children learn to read.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Washington's state agency that supports the K-12 system. Site includes links to local school districts and an online report card for the state, school districts and individual schools.

Reach Out and Read
Reach Out and Read makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading. Be sure to check out their Reading Tips, What Children Like in Books, and Developmental Milestones of Early Literacy.

Success By 6™
Sponsored locally by United Way of Snohomish County, Success By 6™ is providing the tools and training for parents, teachers, and child care providers at 54 sites to improve school readiness.

Washington State Department of Early Learning
Offers a child's checklist for school readiness.

General Early Learning Research and Information

Administration for Children and Families
Within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACF is responsible for federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.

Child Care & Early Education Research Connections
Offering a comprehensive, up-to-date and easy-to-use collection of more than 13,000 resources from the many disciplines related to child care and

Figure 5.5: The bottom half of the webpage: The list of resources for parent and child care providers on the Thrive by Five Website (""Resources",")

So, on-line network lists, unlike documents published in print, can, in theory, be more continuously and cheaply updated. There is a sense, then, that information on websites is more up-to-date than printed publications. In theory, at least, there is more potential for an online network list to more accurately reflect the current configuration of a network. But there is no indication about the recency of the last update of this website page. The last updated information may be missing in part because the non-profit organization that runs this site doesn't have the staff to keep it dynamic. But wouldn't it be interesting if a network list,

such as this one, included a history page, similar to the one that tracks changes that are made to Wikipedia pages? In essence, a history page would function much like a network narrative, narrating when, why and how a particular member of the network was either added or deleted from the list or the nature of its alliance was altered. Functioning together, or ecologically, the network list and the network narrative would offer a much richer, more reliable and more accurate resource about the status of the network and how the viewer can enroll in it.

So greater recency might be the reader's expectation, but can this expectation be counted on? To what extent does the potential for more instantaneous updating of a network list equate to a more reliable representation of a network? I don't have data about the currency of the Thrive by Five website, but it is a future avenue of research to look at how network lists and narratives function when they are digitally constituted and therefore can circulate more quickly and, ideally, be updated more often.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter there has been a slippery aspect to my argument about how genres function to build networks, and I would like to address this slipperiness now. I have been talking about the function of genres from two theoretical perspectives simultaneously. Genres, as Spinuzzi has already articulated, both *weave* and *splice* networks. These two functions of genre have their origins in two different theoretical perspectives of network: the activity theory view (weave), and the actor-network theory view (splice). In the activity theory view, genres function to mediate the workplace activity of my participants. That is, genres are tools-in-use (Russell, 1997) that my participants use to shape and constitute their

work to build the early learning network. As time moves forward, genres continuously transform (or weave) the past activity of my participants to build the early learning network into its present state—this is a developmental view of work activity. From the actor-network perspective, however, genres are themselves members of the network, whose function it is to connect members of the network together in alliances; in other words, in this view, genres are locations for the rhetorical-political work that binds (or splices) members of the network together into an assemblage. In this view, genres are members of a network with their own agency, who, like my participants, are enrolled in the early learning network. As Spinuzzi developed in his book *Network* (2008), these two perspectives on network, and on how texts and genres function in particular, are sometimes complementary and sometimes incommensurable. Spinuzzi's book went a long way, however, towards synthesizing these two perspectives on network so that scholars can use both as a resource without having to reiterate the complicated and lengthy historical provenances of each of these theories. It is for this reason that I have postponed addressing this issue until the end of the chapter.

The activity theory and the network theory view of how genres function to build networks converge in the concept of the *actant* from actor-network theory. Actants can be textual, material and human, and actants function to enroll new members in the network via a process of translation (or what I developed as Burkean identification in Chapter 4), a form of mediation. In other words, actants mediate and transform each other via the process of continually persuading each other to join or stay joined to each other. An actant defines (by enrolling in the network) other actants, who, as a whole (as an assemblage) are identifiable not just semiotically, but functionally (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 85), via the material outcomes of their alliances. Quality child care, for example, is the material outcome of the alliance of

members of the early learning network, including my participants and the texts and genres that mediate their work. For example, the network narrative in the annual report to the funder at once transforms (or mediates) Catherine's work, but also works to enroll (or re-enroll) other members of the network, such as QCR's funders.

So, why is it useful to understand a network list or a network narrative as an actant? Why is it useful to understand the speeches at an opening ceremony as actants? Why is it useful to view my participants at QCR as actants? Because this view gives us insight into how the world is put together, and that it is only via the continually renewed and renegotiated alliances among the members of a network that any semblance of stability is achieved in the world. For example, I have said elsewhere that many parents live with the perception that there is more of a centralized child care system in the US than there really is. This perception, and the extent to which there is *some* truth to it, is the outcome of the constant work of my participants, the speech makers at the opening ceremony of the new Educare center, and the coalition that built the *Kids Matter* framework, the network narrative and network lists that comprised the grant report, the opening ceremony program, and the speeches themselves. The efforts of all of these members both constitute the network and also make it visible and comprehensible. That is, not only do my participants and network genres work to make the network larger, that is to ultimately make child care accessible to more children, but they literally bring it into being. As I ominously proposed at the beginning of this chapter, what if my participants, and their colleagues at partner organizations, and the politicians at the state capital just stopped trying to improve the reach of quality child care?

To return to the idea of knowledge work and the importance of making it visible that frames this dissertation, there is value in being able to trace the often office-bound symbolic

analytic work of knowledge workers like my participants to the material outcomes of their work in the real world. This ability, I believe, not only persuasively connects abstract rhetorical work to material outcomes that affect stakeholders in the community, but by doing so it also positions rhetoric, and rhetorical activity, as epistemic, or constitutive of the world. This ultimately, is what Latour and Spinuzzi mean when they say that "rhetoric builds networks." Actor-network theory is an ontological theory; it is a theory about the nature of the world. If the world is made up of networks that are held together by rhetoric, then rhetoric, and how it functions, is ultimately important. In other words, network theory is also, and arguably, foremost, a rhetorical theory.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

How is an email like a hammer?

When I began my fieldwork over two years ago, all I had to go on was a high-level understanding of my research questions and a field researcher's comfort with the inductive and recursive process of building theoretical knowledge from field data. At the highest level, I hoped to learn more about the nature of the rhetorical activity of professional and technical communicators via the situated, ethnographic study of knowledge work. Like ethnographic researcher Dorothy Winsor (1996, 2003), I felt driven to "make the strange familiar and the familiar strange," (D.D. Winsor, Personal communication, July 10, 2009) a motivation that for me became wanting to understand how the mundane rhetorical work that people do all day can be traced to the material, but often transparent, structures of our work and personal lives. Unlike the readily apparent connection between the work activities of the construction workers illustrated in Richard Scarry's (1968) book for children, *What Do People Do All Day,* and the material outcome of their labor, a house, it is difficult to visually connect the rhetorical work of knowledge workers with the material effects of their work on their stakeholders in the community. Nails and hammers are tools to build houses that people live in—in this case both the tools and the outcomes are readily visible in our daily lives. But how does an email written by my participant at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) become better quality child care for my daughter, or for all three-year-olds in King County, Washington? In this dissertation I have asked, *how is an email like a hammer?* From an

actor-network theory perspective the question of *how is an email like a hammer* is really the question of how many intermediaries and transformations link the rhetorical act of writing this email to the bookcase full of developmentally appropriate toys in my daughter's day care classroom? And even more importantly, how can this link be made visible? What network theory, the primary perspective via which I have read my field data, affords us, I believe, is the theoretical footing to draw a parallel between the hammers and wrenches of Scarry's house builders and the rhetorical structures, documents and genres of my participants at QCR—either way, material tools build material outcomes. I am aware that in some sense this is both a banal and a non-disciplinary concern to pursue, and for this reason it is a difficult one to establish clear stakes for. It is a long road to understanding knowledge work, or rhetorical activity, as the work, or net work, of building, maintaining and renovating networks of actors or activities that produces the world around us. The road is long because learning to think via networks is not only an epistemological project, but an ontological one too. My work is not just about training myself, my participants or my students to read the world via the lens of network theory, although this is a good start. The real end is to live like actors, or self-conscious agents, who are motivated to use the available material tools of our trades to have material impact on the domains of life within which we work and live.

As I mentioned in the Introduction (Chapter 1), this dissertation can be read in part as the story of how I learned to read my field data via the lens of network theory. In this sense my ethnographic account is akin to the ethnographic confessional tale (VanMaanen, 1988, p. 73) that explicitly foregrounds the evolution of the author's subjectivity as the main narrative arc of the ethnographic account. In the case of my account, of course, this evolution has been a theoretical and methodological one. My hope is that a reader of this dissertation will have

traversed some of the same territory along with me, and finished up here with a sense of what it means to understand rhetorical activity as net work and to do network ethnography (see Chapter 2). Over the course of my research, however, my research questions have become more finely shaped by network theory and the data I gathered from the field. What had originally been vaguer clusters of interests became a set of concerns that I have by no means exhausted, and that will be at the center of my research as I move forward from here: 1. How do we trace, both theoretically and ethnographically, the material effects of workplace rhetorical activity on stakeholders in the community? 2. How is net work, and how are networks, made visible and comprehensible to the members of the network? And, 3. How does rhetorical activity, and rhetoric, function to build networks? In other words, my project evolved into the title of this dissertation, and the realm of rhetorical study that I plan to refine and extend in my future research: Network rhetoric.

The rest of this conclusion narrates my return to Quality Child Care Resources to present my research to my participants, and also considers the implications of the questions and comments raised during my presentation for the arguments about network rhetoric that this dissertation has set in motion.

Is System Building in the Best Interests of Children?

On May 9, 2011 I returned to Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) to present my researching findings to my participants and other interested staff[17]. My key participant

[17] Attending my research presentation were my long-time participants Catherine, the manager on the QRIS Communications Project, and Martha, the Director of Family Services. In addition, the CEO of QCR was present along with three other staff members loosely affiliated with the project. Two of my key participants, Charlene and Eleanor, have left QCR in the last year. I asked Catherine to limit her invitation

Catherine helped me to organize a one-hour lunch meeting over sandwiches and strawberries (provided by QCR) and home made cookies (provided by me). We sat around the encircled tables in the large conference room, a room in which I had sat in as a participant observer during many QRIS Communication project meetings. As my audience ate lunch, I began by summarizing my research into the historical rhetorical formation of the discourse of child care and early learning (Chapter 3 of this dissertation). My historical narrative was met with strong nods of recognition from my audience since several of the people present had been working in early learning for over twenty five years. I then showed the group a few of my slides that visualize how I have come to understand my participant's work as system builders in terms of net work. I prefaced my presentation with the announcement that I had made no assumptions about what my audience would find interesting. The agenda I proposed was simple: I would talk about my work for about twenty minutes and then take questions and requests to say more about something of particular interest to my audience.

The motto of QCR is "Giving every child a great start," so it might seem a little bit ironic that the main issue I saw raised by the discussion around my research presentation was whether the rhetorical work of building an early learning system—the kind of work that my participants did on the QRIS Communications Project—is actually in the best interests of children. This question poses yet another version of the scales topos that I argue has shaped the public discourse on public investment in universal access to early learning (see Chapter 3): is it in the public interest to build an learning system at the short term cost of services to

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to the lunch time presentation to staff she thought would be interested in a fairly academic presentation. My request was in light of back channel criticism of being too academic (despite my best efforts to the contrary) regarding a presentation that I did in 2009 in partnership with Eleanor, the former QCR Communications Director, on communication frameworks for early learning. My motive this time was not to oversell my contributions for too broad of an audience. As I suspected, the most engaged attendees at my presentation were the CEO of QCR and my key participants.

at-risk children, or is it in the public interest to meet the immediate needs of at-risk children as the cost of moving forward with building an early learning system for all children? Since the CEO of QCR's questions and comments invoked this balancing of interests, it became clear to me that the scales topos still shapes the public discourse and the knowledge work of my participants at QCR in a way that I did not anticipate. During my reflection on my research presentation after the fact, I realized that there is something more to learn here about how networks are built and maintained.

During my research presentation, I learned from QCR's CEO that the governor of Washington State, a strong advocate of early learning, recently weighted the scales towards system building rather than the immediate needs of at-risk children. The governor did this by vetoing a bill that would add preschool for at-risk 3 and 4 year olds to the state's constitutional mandate for basic education. According to the CEO of QCR, the governor justified her veto in terms that the state does not mandate to provide services to specialized populations, only to all citizens. The governor said that she hoped to be able to return to this issue in 2010 to include preschool for *all* children as part of Washington's mandate for public education.

While the CEO of QCR viewed the governor's veto as a failure to provide needed services to a vulnerable population, which includes a good number of QCR's clients, the governor's choice reflected the historical reality that early education reform via welfare initiatives has consistently failed to gain broad public support for early learning system building. The conflict between the CEO's view of the governor's veto as a failure to guarantee needed services, and the governor's rationale that her veto is good for system building has something to teach us about how networks are built, and how rhetoric functions

to build them. It teaches us that rhetorical structures, such as topoi, are locations where the tension between the system's interests and individual interests is either maintained or renegotiated, with the result of either maintaining the status quo or shifting the scales in favor of either the system (when certain stakeholders, or network members are excluded), or the individual (when the negotiated association may not be in service of the system). In other words, topoi are one location where the macro interests of the system and the micro interests of the individual are actively negotiated or renegotiated.

Actor-network theory has a particular answer to whether networks are built from the top down, in the service of the system, or from the bottom up, via the piecemeal enrollment individual members. In actor-network theory, networks are not built from the top down according to a centralized organizing principle. Instead networks are the outcome of a complex set of associations among individual members, relationships that are unstable and dynamic, or rhetorical-political, and defined in terms of the local interests of each member. Members enroll to satisfy their immediate self-interest, not the interests of the whole network. From this point of view, QCR's work to individually connect parents and children to quality child care and to support new child care providers on a one-by-one basis is an effective strategy for increasing the reach of quality child care and building and early learning system. This is especially the case since the official model for quality child care, the "Seeds to Success" model for Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) initiative, is likely to seem either abstruse or threatening to many of these stakeholders. A top down initiative, one that relies on channels of power to disseminate and enforce a new model, will inevitably isolate certain stakeholders because of such an initiative's inability to adapt to the needs and values of each stakeholder, or potential

stakeholder. But achieving stability in the system is also dependent on enrolling a centralized structure, such as a constitutional mandate for early education, because without it the associations in the network are highly vulnerable to economic and political change. As I discussed in the Chapter 5 (Network Genres), the instability in the field of early education due to this lack of a legal guarantee shapes every aspect of my participant's work, resulting in a continual exigence for making the network visible and comprehensible in order to mange it, control it and work within and for it.

How Rhetoric Builds Networks

The question the contradiction between system building and serving individuals raises is whether effective system building is ever anything more than a series of individual negotiations among members. In other words, is it possible to build and maintain the associations among members of a network any way other than one by one, at the level of the individual, in the sense that every association is negotiated and maintained as if it has never been negotiated before? If networks exist only in the interactional present—and "interaction is all there is," (Law, 1992 quoted in Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 82)—then the answer is likely to be no. In actor-network theory, actors only join or remained aligned with a network if it is in their own best interests to do so—no central organizing principle, ideology or power can bring the network into being and/or maintain it. In the case of early learning and my participants' work at QCR, broadcasting a codified notion of what is quality child care will only exclude a set of stakeholders whose enrollment is necessary in order to build broad support for an early learning system. However, negotiating individually with each and every

individual stakeholder about what constitutes quality child care is untenable considering the pragmatic constraints of time and staff resources.

System building, or network building, is therefore extremely difficult. On the one hand, system builders, like my participants, have to operate at the level of negotiating and maintaining associations among individual members, which is labor-intensive and necessitates a rhetoric that is open and flexible based on the needs of individual stakeholders. On the other hand, system builders can choose to accept the loss of some stakeholders by broadcasting, or insisting on, a more codified, less capacious, but more stable, message. In other words, rhetoric functions best to build networks of heterogeneous members when it maintains its flexibility, that is its ability to respond *kairotically* to the immediate situation of the present stakeholders.

If maintaining flexibility in rhetorical structures is central to enrolling a broad spectrum of stakeholders, then the question is raised regarding the effectiveness of frameworks, such as the QRIS "Seeds to Success" model, for building an early learning system. Remember the opening question of Chapter 4: "How does a model for assessing quality child care become a quality child care classroom?" In other words, how does a framework, which already represents a complex series of negotiated rhetorical-political settlements among a set of stakeholders, become the material conditions in which children learn and play every day? My answer in this dissertation has been via the rhetorical activity, or knowledge work, or *net work*, of my participants at QCR. More specifically, I argue that the pathway from a rhetorical construct (such as a framework) to the material conditions of quality child care is via the one-on-one interactions of my participants with their stakeholders. In Chapter 4 I operationalized this claim via the field example of Charlene's

efforts to enroll the family home child care provider in the official "Seeds" standards for quality child care via a translation document that the child care provider could more easily identify with. But the settlements reached via these one-on-one interactions are always toeing the line of either subverting the framework by paying to much heed to the individual child giver's values and needs, or alienating the child care provider by insisting on the official discourse codified in the "Seeds" model.

This tension between the efficiency and efficacy of imposing a framework for quality child care and the laboriousness negotiating what quality child care is on one-on-one basis explicitly shapes the work of my participants at Quality Child Care Resources (QCR). During my research presentation the CEO of QCR raised concerns about just this tension: How should a framework function to structure the work of QCR workers as they train and coach new child care providers? During the question and comment period of my presentation, the CEO narrated how she struggles with whether it is QCR's job to just respond to what child care providers want or need, or is it QCR's role to more forcefully impose a framework of quality child care? The CEO said:

> Another fatal flaw in the field [of child care and early learning] right now is that we want to walk along side and support what providers know.…And, yes, that's true. And we also know a lot about what makes quality child care…We don't need to bring them to believe in my framework, but I can bring them along in the objective of the behavior that equals the framework. And I think that we have lost ourselves as a field around being willing to hang our hat on something that is an objective frame because we think it's not being transparent if we don't set it out there and get them to buy in first.

What the CEO is getting at is the paradoxical problem of not making the framework the main thing, yet at the same time acknowledging it as a high ethos structure that is the outcome of child care advocates' expertise and experience. In other words, how can an official framework be both flexible and authoritative at the same time? Another way to ask this question is whether an official framework from power can be effectively implemented via the delivery of street-level services, such as QCR's main mission to provide parents and child care providers with resources and support. And from the organizational perspective of QCR as a whole, this question raises the issue of whether the direct services mission of QCR is complementary with, or contradictory to, its role in state-wide efforts to build an early learning system.

As I have already mentioned above, in Charlene's work to enroll family home child care providers in the QRIS "Seeds to Success" model we see an example of how effective it is to approach enrolling new stakeholders at the individual level. During her technical assistance visits to family home child care providers, Charlene sought to persuade the providers to change their behavior around child care not by insisting that they recognize the state's formal "Seeds to Success" model (see Chapter 4), but via the translation of the "Seeds" elements into terms these providers can identity with. Charlene understood that many family home child care providers would view the state's model for quality child care assessment as a threat rather than as an asset, and so Charlene took the official "QRIS" out of quality in order to teach quality child care practices without asking her client to endorse, or enroll, directly in the official model. In other words, Charlene focused directly on changing the behavior of the child care providers, rather than seeking their affirmation of, or direct enrollment in, the QRIS model. Charlene's interaction with the family home child care

provider, however, is labor intensive because of Charlene's work to personally negotiate the terms of quality child care at the individual level. Building a system one-by-one, from the bottom up, by focusing on each individual enrollment, might be the way that networks are actually built, maintained and enacted, but it is not an economically tenable process for system builders to rely on exclusively.

The alternative, that is to try to enroll broad support, or "public will," as my participants' on the QRIS Communications Project were charged to do, also has serious limitations for building a network. Communicating broadly about a framework, such as "Seeds to Success," or an assessment initiative, such as a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), necessarily excludes a portion of the stakeholders, as frameworks necessarily define something one way over another. This is true for quality child care as well, as the "Seeds to Success" model frames quality child care in terms of the discourse of formal education, rather than that of the family, community or other more private domain. One of the refrains in this dissertation has been that when my participants maintained the ambivalence, or the ambiguity, in the definition of quality child care, or what I have been calling the quality topos, they are successful at maintaining and building broad support. But as soon as there is a move to limit what quality means or who has the power to define it, which any framework does implicitly, stakeholders are threatened and start to fall away.

During my research presentation, the CEO of Quality Child Care Resources (QCR) also asked me why I thought it was so hard to build an early learning system beyond the health and safety standards and minimum staff ratios (*e.g.*, one staff member per three infants) required for obtaining state licensing of a child care facility. She asked me: "The little systemic work we've done around this seems to be predicated on minimum licensing

requirements and not quality. Do you talk at all about that and what kinds of conclusions do you draw?" My answer to her, as it has been in this dissertation, is that public will for the minimum licensing standards for a child care facility has already been enrolled and codified in Washington State's Administrative Code because the minimum standards do not fundamentally challenge a majority of stakeholder's views about the proper care of young children. To enroll and codify public will for a more sophisticated set of licensing requirements, however, will require overcoming the contradiction between enforcing a codified, exclusive model of quality child care, and maintaining an open, capacious and flexible notion of what quality child care is. In other words, the tension between building systems from the top-down via the development and implementation of frameworks and the one-on-one work of translating a framework so that an individual can identify with it may never be resolved. Arguably, this tension can be understood in terms of the rhythmic movement between the constricting forces of a framework imposed by power and the flexible and expansive force of negotiation among individual members[18]. In a sense the momentum generated by the constriction and expansion is the source of energy that powers the dynamism of a network. One location where this movement between constriction and expansion is visible is a topos, or a "persuasive rhetorical engine that proliferate[s] meaning and mobilize[s] action" (Rai, 2010, p. 39). In this dissertation I have argued that contemporarily, in the field of early learning, the quality topos is such a mediator of network

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[18] What I have identified here as the movement between the constriction and the expansion of a topos is highly resonant with Bakhtin's notion of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of language. What Bakhtin says about how "every concrete utterance" (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 75) functions as a node of centripetal and centrifugal forces also points to a material rhetoric in which rhetorical structures are themselves actors with agency in the network. "This active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of unitary language" (p. 75). This movement between constriction and expansion is also resonant with de Certeau's distinction between the *strategies* of the powerful and the *tactics* of the weak for negotiating power relationships in everyday life (Certeau, 1984).

building, of the constricting and expanding potential for enrolling new stakeholders in the nacent early learning system.

Here at the end of my dissertation, I can say that I have achieved my purpose to understand the knowledge work of my participants at QCR as the net work to enact, maintain, extend and transform the emerging system of early learning. In addition, I have successfully argued that part of their net work is to make the members and the associations among members of the network visible and comprehensible to themselves and their stakeholders in order to bring the emerging system into being. Finally, I have identified the location where the rhetorical-political negotiation that is net work is visible—the topos of quality child care. And this topos, a rhetorical tool deployed daily in the work of my participants at QCR, is a product of the current rhetorical formation of the public discourse of early learning. In this sense the quality topos is a node where the daily work (or micro) activity of my participants comes into contact with the historical public discourse (the macro), and where the interactional present has the potential to be transformed by an official structure that has the power to guarantee the system's existence beyond the capricious interests of individual members. My participants' work is shaped by and constitutes this node—they are in the business of making, breaking and maintaining the series of associations that will result in materially improved conditions for stakeholders in the community, in particular children in child care. In other words, this dissertation has been a project of making visible rhetoric-in-action, or, net work-in-action, which, as I have argued on every page of this dissertation, amount to the same thing.

In terms of my understanding of my research practice as engaged scholarship, the end of the story is yet to be written. I understand engaged scholarship in fairly simple terms, that

is as my commitment to my field site that my presence as a researcher and the products of my research will be directly or indirectly in service of the mission of QCR. I believe that my presence in the field has contributed to helping my participants understand what they do, and to put language to it. Phrases like, "that's an interesting way to put it," or, "I hadn't thought of it that way," came my way with enough frequency to indicate that my presence and point of view had value for my participants. But more concrete contributions are also still possible. At the end of my research presentation, the CEO asked if I would be willing to give my ten-minute summary of the historical discourse of child care and early learning at a QCR board meeting: "It would be good for that to come from someone other than me," she said. In addition, Catherine, and several other of my QCR participants, were particularly intrigued by my image of a child care classroom (see opening images of Chapter 1) with lines pointing to the agencies, individuals, texts, laws and so on that are in alliance to bring into being that quality child care classroom. From what they said, this image more than anything else made visible the connection of their work to the material outcomes of quality child care. My participants' interest in this image is evidence that there is a strong exigence for my participants at QCR, and possibly for knowledge workers more generally, to be able to see the material impacts of their work, and to visualize the network which they, and their work, are building, maintaining and enacting. This is a strong argument for continuing the project of making rhetorical work visible to workers and their stakeholders.

In Chapter 2 I pointed to Richard Scarry's illustration of a house under construction as a metaphor for the idea of making visible how knowledge work, or rhetorical activity, builds networks. Knowledge work, unlike construction work, however, is hard to make visible because of its primarily cognitive and symbolic nature. But to find ways to make the

material effects of rhetoric and rhetorical activity visible increases its value for its stakeholders, and empowers workers who may otherwise be far removed from the material impacts of their daily work.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Discourse-based Interview Protocol for Stimulating the Recall of Rhetorical Activity

I. Establishing the Rhetorical Situation:

1. What is the name of this document? What type of document is it?
2. What is the purpose(s) of this document?
3. Who is the audience(s) for this document?
4. Who made this document?
5. Do you feel like you can identify with the audience? How or how not?

II. Unpacking the rhetoric of the document (ask each prompt as often as necessary):

Intertextuality:

6. Tell me why you chose this photograph, title or other feature…Where did it come from?
7. Point to elements of this text (photo, word, phrase, paragraph, etc.) that you imported from existing documents or other sources. What are those documents? How did you edit what you imported to make it work in this document?
8. Point to a place in this x that was informed by a conversation that you had with somebody else-who was that? Where and when was the conversation?

Rhetorical Choices:

9. Point (rhetor) to a place where you could have said something differently but chose not to. Tell me about your decision.
10. Point (rhetor) to a place where you changed the wording from how you would say it to a way that the audience will understand—which audience were you thinking of?
11. Point to a place where you had trouble coming up with the right way to say something—why was it so difficult? Are you happy with how it is now? Why or why not? What audience did you have in mind while you struggled?

Social, Material and Rhetorical Resources Used

12. Point to a place where you drew on your experience as an x to word something to reach audience x. Point to a place where you drew on your experience as an x to reach audience x.
13. Point (interviewer) to rhetorical moves such as "research says" and ask the rhetor to unpack them. Which research? How do you know this? Why did you choose to include this in the document?
14. What tools did you use to do this project? (computer, software, paper, pens, etc.)

Assessment

15. How successful to feel that this x is? Putting yourself in the shoes of x audience, how successful do you think it is?

VITA

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