Report on Completion of Summer 2010 SBR Project
“medea and medea/for medea”
Peter A. Campbell

After a weeklong workshop in June and much writing, rehearsing, and video editing in July and August, I have completed a draft performance script for my new piece medea and medea//for medea. This new performance work will premiere at the Incubator Arts Project in New York City in February 2011. The SBR funding allowed me to focus on the development of the work this summer in preparation for the professional production. A description of the work accomplished during the summer and the plan for the production follows below.

The workshop took place in the Sharp Theater at Ramapo College and at the Meadowlands Environmental Center in Lyndhurst, NJ. It included eight Ramapo students and recent alumni, who worked alongside half a dozen professional actors and designers as we developed and rehearsed text, movement, and video. In July, I received news that my residency application had been accepted for a February 2011 slot in the prestigious Incubator Arts Project in New York City. Thus, after the workshop, I focused on creating a performance text from the ideas and the 16 hours of video we had created in the workshop, along with other materials I had already gathered. The performance text is ready for the rehearsal process, which will begin intermittently this fall and then be concentrated in the two months before the production.
To: Dean Samuel J. Rosenberg
From: Martha Ecker, Professor of Sociology
Re: Separately Budgeted Research- Progress Report
Amount Awarded: $2,250 Summer, 2010

During the summer of 2010, I continued to work with the APWU/Moe Biller archives to extract textual materials from the digitized transcripts of interviews with leaders of local 10 of the New York Metro Area Postal Workers Union... A student research assistant began this process in the spring semester, but was unable to complete the extraction process during that time period.

Many of these men went on to help create the national union, the American Postal Workers Union. Moe Biller was president of the union shortly after its founding in 1978 until 2001. He remained active in the union until his death in 2003.

The initial impetus for these interviews was the 1970 nationwide strike of postal workers. The strike, a wildcat action not supported by the unions which represented postal workers at the time, was a catalyst for the re-organization of the representative bodies. In discussing and analyzing the conditions that led up to the strike, postal union leaders spent a great deal of time describing their initial introduction to the postal service in the 1930s and their subsequent involvement in the trade union movement.

The article I am working on will illustrate workers commitment to political, economic and social changes both in the workplace and the community. Since all of these men were initially employed during the Great Depression, most of them in 1937, I am seeking to draw parallels between workers and union members during that time period as compared to those who are currently experiencing economic distress.

The men recount issues which they grappled with as postal workers and union leaders.
They discuss problems with the working conditions including safety hazards created by pneumatic tubing which was used at one time to move the mail. In addition they talk extensively about the ways in which superintendents interacted with workers, particularly those who were active in the union and who fought for improvements for themselves and their co-workers.

I append some examples from the archives.

In addition I have made progress on the review of the relevant literature. A selected bibliography is provided below.


Shefter, Martin, “Trade Unions and Political Machines: The Organization and Disorganization of the American Working Class in the Late Nineteenth Century,” In Working Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns
In today’s increasingly technological world, ICTs (information and communication technologies) undoubtedly influence students’ communication practices. As they interface with a variety of different communication media, their reading and writing skills continue to develop and adapt. The purpose of this research was to study the digital writing conventions of teens. This research collected data to take a critical look at what was happening to Standard English when teens took their writing online to communicate with their peers. I applied for an SBR grant in order to help fund the work on a manuscript for publication which would: 1. detail the conventions teens use when writing digitally, 2. discuss why they use these conventions, and 3. explore what this meant for teachers in classrooms where Standard English remains the dominant discourse.

I have been working on this research with a colleague from Fordham University, Dr. Kristen Turner. Together, we conceived of this research at the beginning of 2009. The rationale for our book was to explore the digital language conventions that teens were using when writing to communicate and how this might affect their performance and/or teacher’s teaching in classrooms where Standard English was the dominant discourse.

Data was collected between May 2009 and November 2009 from multiple sites (2 public urban schools, 2 public suburban schools, and 1 private urban school). For a period of one week prior to the end of the school year (May 2009), we asked the students to collect examples from their instant messaging, text conversations, email messaging, and online communications (such as blogs, websites, and social networking sites). Each student was asked to provide a variety of data but also a limited amount of data. In addition, we asked all students to collect similar data during one week of their summer vacation (July-August, 2009). By May 2010, we had still not received data from the 100 participants we anticipated would participate in the study. We decided to work with the data that had been so far collected, and continue to encourage the remaining participants to submit their data samples.

The data that we had was organized and coded using Atlas-Ti. Through data analysis, we found some digital writing conventions that teens used when communicating with peers. We found that students manipulated and transmuted Standard English when they communicated digitally, because of their exposure to a variety of technological communication conventions as
well as their peers’ individualistic communication processes. In June 2010, a questionnaire based on the results of our analysis was drafted in order to investigate the writing convention choices students made in their writing. The questionnaire went through multiple drafts and was not disseminated to the students until mid-June. We are still collecting student questionnaires and tabulating the responses.

Our initial hopes were that data analysis would be completed earlier (spring 2010) so that the first chapters of the manuscript would be completed and that the summer of 2010 would be used to write the remaining chapters of the manuscript. I’m afraid these goals might have been overly ambitious. As data collection proceeded slower than anticipated due to slow participant response, analyses could not be completed and the process of writing the manuscript was likewise slowed. However, during summer 2010, we were still able to complete a great deal of work on this research:

1) Data collection was completed,
2) Data analysis was completed,
3) An exit-questionnaire was created and disseminated the collection and analysis of which is nearly complete,
4) A literature review was compiled which needs very little work to become beginning few chapters of the book manuscript, and
5) A detailed conference proposal for the prestigious annual AERA (American Educational Research Association) conference in April 2011 was completed and submitted.

I feel grateful to have been granted a Separately Budgeted Research grant for my summer 2010 research. Although we did not accomplish all that we hoped to, we did achieve a great deal which would not have been possible without the aid of the SBR grant.

_AERA conference proposal:

Objectives/Purpose

In today’s increasingly technological world, ICTs (information and communication technologies) undoubtedly influence students’ communication practices. As they interface with a variety of different communication media, their reading and writing skills continue to develop and adapt. The purpose of this research is to study the digital writing conventions of teens. This study takes a critical look at what is happening to Standard English when teens take their writing online to communicate with their peers. By examining the choices high school students make as they write digitally, we hope to explore the relationship between self and writing, the tensions between convention and expression, and the influences of internal goals and external pressures.

Perspectives/Theoretical Framework

Technology represents one discourse students must master and appropriate into their thinking and writing. New and revised literacy understandings are embedded in and derived from technological settings where modes of representation have broader expression than as in traditional understandings of Standard English, text-based literacies. The notion that task environment plays a role in the writing process contributes to more recent notions of the writing process, where social constructionists identify various discourses that writers must navigate.
Such discourses consist of a profusion of different ideas and tokens helps to construct roles and relationships between beliefs and concrete manifestations (Gee, 1996).

Due to the variety of “text forms” that are being created as a result of improving information and multimedia technologies (i.e., web pages, text messaging, and video captioning), understandings of literacy must be broadened to include a variety of discourses and meaning-making modes in order to include and emphasize different social, cultural, and material contexts (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Kinzer & Leander, 2003; Leu, 2000). In fact, learners from different sociocultural backgrounds are already “juxtaposing and joining a variety of semiotic systems and technologies, reinventing and invigorating what it means to communicate” (Hull, 2003, p. 230), in their attempts at self-expression and communication through a variety of mediating technologies. These combinations of “various literacies and various cultural traditions combine these different semiotic modalities to make meanings that are more than the sum of what each could mean separately” (Lemke, 1998, p. 288). These attempts at both meaning-making and meaning interpretation have implications not only for continuing (and emerging) literacy development but also for conceptions of the role of technology in such themes (Crystal, 2001).

**Method**

We ask the following research questions:

1. Are the choices that teenagers make in communicating electronically truly personal (self-reflective and/or expressive) or are they indicative of popular trends (conventions) in e-language?

2. If the latter, why are certain ways of communicating (e.g., particular abbreviations) more popular than others? Is it because they better enable self-expression or is it because they are the most convenient short-cuts in a fast-paced, ends-justify-the-means culture?

Though the research for this study has not been completed, results will be available by December 2009. At the time of proposal submission, we are finishing the first phase of data collection. Focal students will be selected by the end of July, and the first phase of analysis will begin this summer. The second phase of analysis will commence in early fall.

**Setting and participants**

The study examines the writing practices of adolescent students (grades 7-12) from 6 different schools in the New York City/metropolitan area: 2 public urban, 3 public suburban, and 1 private urban. We have recruited approximately 100 students to provide self-reported data. From these volunteers who submit the requested data, we will select 2 focal students, one male and one female. Because we would like to account for ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as a variety of technological backgrounds, this selection will be purposeful based on a survey taken by all participants. Data will be collected between May 2009 and November 2009.

**Data Sources**

Student volunteers participated in a brief training session that instructed them on the kinds of data to self report. For a period of one week during the school year, they collected examples from their instant messaging, text conversations, email messaging, and online communications (such as blogs, websites, and social networking sites). Each student provided samples of their writing in each of these spaces. As part of their training, participants completed a survey that collected demographic and technology-related data. We are using this data to create a questionnaire that investigates the language choices students make in their writing.
After this questionnaire has been completed, we will interview focal students for a more in-depth examination of the choices individuals make. It is most likely that these interviews will take place electronically. These interviews will be unstructured but based on the analysis of the writing that we conduct.

After this first phase of the study, we will ask the participants to collect similar data during one week of their summer vacation. We hope to gather more information about context (time and place) and its effect on the choices students make in their digital writing. Based on the results of preliminary analysis, we suspect that we might wish to conduct a focal group interview of the students who attend the private school. This focal group would be focused on the role of community (culture, school) and its affect on the choices students make in their online writing. In this case we would invite all participants from the private school to attend the focus group interview.

Data Analysis

As we have just begun this research, we are in the process of collecting data and organizing our data analysis processes. We will most likely use Atlas-Ti to log and code data collected according to a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Differences in coding will be negotiated through collaborative discussion among researchers.

In order to answer our first question, we will code student writing for language use. Preliminary scans of the data have identified the following codes to begin analysis: (1) use of Standard English, (2) abbreviations, (3) additional consonants, (4) emoticons, (5) alternate spellings, (6) common/conventional text speak, (7) multiple languages, (8) use of numbers/L33T, and (9) omission of vowels. Once we have coded data, we will identify those conventions that cross users. In other words, we will examine the possibility that there exist standard conventions in text speak.

This analysis will allow us to create the questionnaire that asks individual users to think about when and why they might use a particular convention. We hope to explore our second research question using this data. Conversations with focal students will shed additional light on the choices individuals make. The electronic transcripts of these conversations will be coded using constructivist grounded theory methodology. By examining aggregate responses to the questionnaire in conjunction with interviews of the focal students, we hope to develop a picture of why teens make the choices they do when they write in digital spaces.

Results

It is difficult to predict what the data in this study will reveal, as collection and analysis have just begun. However, we anticipate that the data will show that students manipulate and transmute Standard English when they communicate digitally because of their exposure to a variety of technological communication conventions as well as their peers' individualistic communication processes. Though little has been done to analyze the digital writing of teens, many assert that this kind of communication lacks convention. Early analysis reveals that this might not be the case. Rather, conventions are communally situated, and it is through social practice that teens learn to manipulate the language of digital writing. We hope to further explore the relationships between self and writing, the tensions between convention and expression, and the influences of internal goals and external pressures as we continue to collect and analyze this data.
Educational Significance

We cannot underestimate the impact technology has and will continue to have on the literacy practices of each forthcoming generation of students. If traditional textual literacy acquisition can be described as a process of learning steps within a defined body of information, then technological literacy practices can be described as non-traditional ways of processing information in order to enhance self-directed and self-responsible approaches to exploratory learning. In order to prepare our students to function successfully in an increasingly technological world, we must continue to study and encourage such non-traditional literacy practices which connect more authentically to the meaning-making processes in the world around us.

References


I was awarded an SBR Grant/Stipend in the amount of $3,350 towards my project, "Medical Charity in 16th Century Ottoman Empire," Summer 2009, which I have successfully completed. My paper is now being considered for publication in the international peer-reviewed journal, History of Science.

I could not have completed this project if it were not for the generous funding provided by Ramapo College of New Jersey.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Pinar Kayaalp

Pinar Kayaalp, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern History
School of American and International Studies
Ramapo College of New Jersey
505 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah NJ 07430-1680
201-684-6211
pkayaalp@ramapo.edu
MEMORANDUM

To: Dean Samuel Rosenberg, SSHS  
From: Kathryn S. Krase  
Re: Summer 2010 SBR- Summary Report  
Date: September 29, 2010

Having been awarded an SBR grant for Summer 2010, I embarked on accessing the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System for the year 2006, in order to explore reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made by professional reporters in New Jersey in that year. Shortly after receiving IRB approval for this secondary data analysis, I was informed that data was now available for the year 2008. My research was temporarily delayed while I awaited the release of this newer data, but it was worth the wait.

I conducted extensive univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis of almost 75,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in New Jersey, and compared them with more than 3 million reports in the United States as a whole. My analysis found that reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made by professional reporters in New Jersey were 1/3 LESS likely to be substantiated that reports in all other states combined, and most other individual states. A whopping 89% of reports from all reporters in New Jersey are not substantiated after investigation by child protective services.

There were significant differences between the rates of substantiation across report sources, with more than 90% of reports by teachers and mental health personnel unsubstantiated after investigation. The race of the child in the report was significantly related to the likelihood of the report to be substantiated, with reports of African-American children being more likely to be substantiated than reports of White children.

Another finding of import, most report characteristics varied by county in New Jersey. This conclusion further supports the findings of my research on reports in New York State that county level examination is more valuable than statewide and national statistics on these issues.

I am currently using the results from my 2010 SBR research study in a report I am preparing for the new Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Alison Blake. Dr. Blake is a member of the Ramapo College Social Work Advisory Board. She has expressed interest in the findings of this study, and assisted me in securing the data for this study. I will use the findings of this research in my advocacy efforts to improve access to appropriate training for professional reporters in their responsibilities to protect children and families.

I am also submitting an abstract for two international conferences next summer using the results from this study. Additionally, I am preparing a manuscript to be submitted to an international journal reporting on these results.
Date: Aug. 30, 2010
From: Edward Shannon
Re: 2010SBR Reward

To Whom It May Concern:
In Summer, 2010, I was granted SBR funds to complete a draft of my essay, “Confessional Crumb: Robert Crumb's Autobiographical Comics and the Confessional Poets,” a version of which I had presented at the 2010 North East Modern Language Association conference.

I have completed the draft (see attached), which I am submitting as per the terms of the award. I hope to submit this essay to a journal this semester.

Thank you,

Edward A. Shannon
Figurative and Non-Figurative Returns: The Legacy of Ana Mendieta
Iraida H. López
Associate Professor of Spanish Language and Literature
School of American and International Studies
Report on SBR award (2009-2010)
August 2010

In the fall 2009, I applied for a Separately Budgeted Research (SBR) award to conduct research on the time spent by Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) in Havana, Cuba, her birthplace, in the early 1980s. As I indicated in my proposal, my plan was to go to Havana in order to explore the impact of Mendieta’s visits to Cuba, where she not only worked on (and with) Cuban soil, but also met with young Cuban artists whom she inspired. At the time, Mendieta had already achieved considerable recognition in the US, and her homeland visits generated much expectation. Although the site-specific, earth sculptures Mendieta made in Cuba have been reasonably documented, the artist’s influence over her peers and subsequent generations of artists has not been the object of a separate study. I intended to locate and interview artists who met Mendieta and were impacted not only by her intense and vibrant personality but, more importantly, by her innovative, avant-garde, “earth” art. Through them, I hoped to learn about her legacy on the island. I also wanted to see what is left of her work in Cuba, including the caves in Escaleras de Jaruco, a site outside of Havana where she worked.

I am happy to report that I was able to accomplish my most significant goals and that I will be able to present on the outcome of this research at a major conference on Cuban Studies, Cuba Futures: A Symposium, at the Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies, CUNY Graduate School, March 31-April 2, 2011. However, things did not turn out exactly as I expected and I had to revise my thesis based on my findings in Havana.

One of my inspirations for this project was a photograph taken of Mendieta surrounded by a group of Cuban artists, known by the name of Volumen Uno, who began to exhibit their work in 1981. My initial plan was to interview them in Havana. In the course of my research, prior to taking off, I discovered that only one of those artists remains in Cuba, the others having fled in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Still, I wanted to interview the one that still lives on the island and was able to do this. I interviewed two others in Miami, after returning from Cuba, and have been in contact over e-mail with four or five of the remaining artists, who are now living in various countries around the world—Belgium, Mexico, Barbados. While in Havana, I also tried
to locate a copy of an interview with Mendieta that was shown on Cuban TV in 1980 or 81. This was an impossible task; due to the shortages of all kinds, including videotapes, which Cubans have experienced over the years, it has become a habit for ICRT (Cuban Institute on Radio and Television) cameramen to recycle videotapes. For this reason, no record remains of past programs. On the positive side, while in Havana, I tracked down artwork that Mendieta exhibited at the 1982 Havana Art Biennial and reviewed the catalog for that exhibit. I also met with an art scholar who provided valuable information and shared with me two drawings by Mendieta that are part of his private collection. My conversations with an artist, René Francisco Rodríguez, who resides in Cuba, represented a breakthrough. Rodríguez is a teacher at the well-known Arts Institute, where some time ago, in the late 1990s, he taught a course on Ana Mendieta. His students’ final projects involved making performances that evoked her spirit and visiting the Escaleras de Jaruco to look for traces of Mendieta’s work there. Rodríguez was gracious enough to give me a copy of the video documenting the students’ work and promised to accompany me to Jaruco next time I go to Cuba (he had another trip planned this time). Evidently, this is part of Mendieta’s legacy in Cuba.

With respect to that legacy, there are both gains and losses. While initially my paper was going to focus on what remains of Mendieta’s presence in Cuba, both figuratively and non-figuratively, I have realized that the circumstances surrounding the material and political conditions that enable memory to survive are a relevant part of the story. Writing about Mendieta’s legacy in a vacuum will not do. Those conditions explain the lack of records. More important, the absence of those who knew her mark a rupture in the genealogy of memory. They also explain why Cuba is a unique case and the return migration that can take place, however uneasily, in other parts of the world is so difficult to accomplish here. The experience has made me rethink some of the issues revolving around the notion of “return,” a topic I’d like to explore at depth in a book-length study. The difficulties extend to the research itself. I was able to move forward with the project only through personal contacts, and local transportation is always a challenge.

I am grateful to Ramapo College for providing the funds for this trip, which was fruitful in unanticipated ways, too. A Cuban journal is interested in publishing one of my articles, on Violeta Parra, and a renowned Cuban writer, Mirta Yáñez, is interested in working with me on the critical edition of her work. This is a direct result of the trip. Thank you!
I completed everything I set out to do and realized a dream to interview Cherríe Moraga after several years of requests, work and preparation. Finally at the end of the summer in August in Santa Ana, CA, after viewing the above mentioned play, we had the long-awaited conversation. The subject of this interview was environmental issues in her work. I intend to publish the interview for a Chicano Studies such as the NACCS journal or the ISLE, Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment. The recording of the interview needs reviewing and transcribing and Moraga has agreed to not only have input on the interview but also continue the conversation as I have questions we didn’t have time to address and I’m sure new ones will emerge as I review and revise the piece. I will also certainly write another article on the subject based not on her drama as in my previous work, but rather on her autobiographical writing and our conversation. Naturally, I’ll need time for further research for this article.

In search of material for an earlier project, I traveled to Stanford University and studied Moraga’s papers there. Many items I gathered aided my current research, in particular rare video recordings of productions directed by the author. I cannot overstate the importance of my visit to Stanford’s special collections library as well as the Californian agricultural landscapes and towns where Mexican and Mexican-American workers live. This is what initially inspired my environmental projects, for I witnessed the region’s beauty as well as its devastation in the form of strip malls and vast feedlots. On this last stay in August I visited sites of gentrification that
have displaced working-class and poor people of color. I met leaders of the South Central Farmers cooperative that created the largest community garden in the country, which had been given to the community after the tragic losses of the riots that resulted after the Rodney King police beatings. This urban garden fed several hundred low-income families and was bulldozed after city council members and developers colluded against the community. Even after the community raised the 16 million dollars developers claimed the land was worth (developers paid 5 for it), they refused to sell the land to those who had farmed the land for 12 years. I am very interested in the way Moraga’s activist writings and theater address these communities and the social and environmental justice issues that plague our world today. Aside from treating all of the college’s missions, the international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and experiential pillars and including our concerns with sustainability, this project will allow me to bring together many areas of my personal research and pedagogy.

I also completed the article I intended to present at the Latin American Studies Association conference and will be presenting it in Toronto on October 8, 2010. This presentation is entitled, “...to be seen as the Earth is seen...”: Environmental Crisis in the Autobiographical Writings of Cherrie Moraga.” This work looks at Cherrie Moraga’s autobiographical writing, a fusion of memoir, political essay, and poetry, is permeated with the urgency of immanent disaster, from its early moments, in Loving in the War Years, los que nunca pasado por sus labios (1983 and 2000)-- with its title expressing the danger of living openly as a Chicana lesbian. The author’s more recent prose and poetry collection, The Last Generation (1993), takes up the global environmental crisis alongside her earliest concerns, identifying herself and her female body, in particular, with the land saying: “Land remains the common ground for all radical action. But land is more than
rocks and trees...For immigrants and native alike, land is also the factories where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing projects where we live. For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is that physical mass called our bodies” (173). In this study I analyze the ways in which Moraga’s work draws from a powerful Mexican/Chicano past - a tradition of holistic thought that describes human beings as part of the earth, creating a link between Chicana feminist discourse and the global indigenous struggle for sovereignty and environmental justice.