Private, the Public, and the Published

Barbara Couture, Thomas Kent

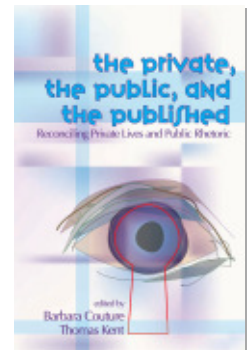Published by Utah State University Press

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UPON THE PUBLIC STAGE

How Professionalization Shapes Accounts of Composing in the Academy

Cheryl Geisler

In the late-nineteenth century, concepts of public activity were reshaped by the emergence of the modern professions. Before the second half of the nineteenth century, the term *profession* was reserved almost exclusively for the three classic professions inherited from the Anglo-Saxon tradition and largely restricted to members of the upper class: law, medicine, and the clergy. By the end of the century, however, the rise of the modern professions had transformed this upper-class solidarity based on social ties into a middle-class solidarity based on ties of occupation (Collins).

As occupation-based alliances formed to protect professional privilege, professions became players on the public stage in two senses. First, professional associations assumed numerous roles, both formal and informal, in shaping the regulatory conditions under which their members worked (Freidson). Second, individual members of professions assumed the role of public representative of the profession itself, taking on the burden of public trust by virtue of professional training and oversight. The actions of individual professionals, for good or for ill, were no longer a strictly private matter but reflected, as a matter of public record, on the entire profession.

The professionalization process entailed not simply the emergence of a new set of privileged occupations but also a redefinition of individuals as *professionals* with lifelong "careers" (Larson). In the academy, this redefinition of the private self as public professional played itself out on the stage of publication. Through texts, individuals created the ethos of professional participation—invoking professional values, declaring their own allegiance, and "making a contribution to knowledge" that substantiated the profession's claim to privilege.

In this chapter, I explore the dynamics by which writers construct professionalized selves during composing in the academy. My basic question is "What story do participants construct in their accounts of composing?" In particular, how do they understand themselves and others as players on the public stage of the professions?

BACKGROUND

The link between literacy and professional identity has been well established by two decades of research on writing in the disciplines. Learning to write in school, for example, not only requires one to acquire specialized knowledge and vocabulary but also to rearrange one's sense of self and relationship to others (Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman; Haas; Prior). Writing in the professions also has consequences for identity and relationships (Bucciarelli; Susan Katz; Myers; Winsor). Perhaps as a result, the transition from one setting to the other is often fraught with confusion and conflict (Clark and Doheny-Farina; Geisler, Rogers, and Haller). Educational efforts to make the transition easier have had limited success (Dannels; Freedman, Adam, and Smart).

In the academy, identity issues are shaped by the great divide between expert and layperson (Geisler, *Academic*), a legacy of the professionalization movement, which sets the academic professional apart from and above the general public. Through long training, the academic professional is expected to transcend the common misunderstandings of the laity and to generate the specialized knowledge that enables other professions to work for society's improvement. The general public becomes both a source of misconception to be corrected and a market for those corrections. For external validation, the academic professional looks instead to the discipline.

In academic texts, the effects of professionalization are most obvious in the citation practices that began to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century and still dominate academic writing today. In research article introductions, the "gap" opened up through a literature review (Swales and Najjar) often originates in a public misconception about the topic that the disciplinary community has been trying to redress through a program of research or scholarship. Citations to specific individuals are seldom to members of the general public but to members within the disciplinary community, and progress is defined as disciplinary progress.

THE STUDY

In this chapter, I extend work done previously with two individuals writing academic argument with different degrees of professionalization (Geisler, *Academic*; Penrose and Geisler): Janet, a college freshman who had not taken an introductory philosophy course, and Roger, a Ph.D. candidate nearing completion of his degree in philosophy. These two worked for over a month on a writing project that led to the construction of an original argument about the issue of paternalism in philosophical ethics.

Extensive analysis of the protocols these participants produced as they worked has been reported elsewhere (Geisler, *Academic*). From looking at these protocols, we know several things about Janet and Roger. First, they both completed their task by moving through the same set of activities: Reading, Reflecting, Outlining, Writing/Revising. Second, Roger was more specialized in what he was trying to accomplish within these activities than Janet appeared to be. He interacted with other authors' texts only in the early activities and did not refer to them later; he thought through just a few specific cases of paternalism, and he did this thinking almost exclusively during the activity of reflecting. Janet pursued things differently. She interacted with other authors' texts throughout her working time; she thought about many more and varied cases than Roger, and she did this thinking throughout her working time. These differences were suggestive of an increasing specialization in Roger's work, and they could with some logic be linked to Roger's greater participation in the profession of academic philosophy.

The protocol analysis alone has not, however, given us a firm grasp on the actual mechanism by which these participants were seeing—or not seeing—themselves as public figures in organizing their private efforts at composing. To pursue this issue, I have analyzed the interviews each participant gave following each working session—a total of ten for Roger and twenty-two for Janet. Since my focus was on accounts of past actions, sections of interviews were selected in which participants spoke about the work they had accomplished so far. By and large, these responses were in answer to one of the following questions (Geisler, *Academic* appendix C):

- At what point did you stop in your last session?
- Can you describe the process you went through?

- What problems did you encounter in your last session?
- Why did you stop your last session?

Using techniques for the analysis of verbal data (Geisler, *Analyzing*), I examined these accounts for differences in the ways in which Janet and Roger characterized public action and how this characterization played out as they moved through the composing process. The specific analytic procedures I used were as follows: I segmented the accounts into clauses, each with its own inflected verb. I selected from these clauses those with human agents. I eliminated from analysis any clauses that dealt with paternalistic situations ("the doctor interfered with the patient's rights"), with the situation of the interview or study ("I ran out of tape yesterday"), or with repetitive back-channel expressions ("you know?"). I then coded the remaining clauses as expression action in either the private or the public realm. If the clause was in the public domain, I looked at the agents of the actions and the actions themselves. Further descriptions of the coding procedures and their results can be found in the discussions that follow. All of the differences to be discussed were found significant using the Chi-square test for homogeneity (Geisler, *Analyzing*).

THE LAYERING OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

In their accounts of themselves and their work, both Janet and Roger tipped the balance of their accounts more to the private than to the public. Some of these private accounts were descriptions of managing the work process itself: "I *stopped* at the end of the section." Others were part of descriptions of literate actions: "I was just *reading* it / and *taking* . . . some *notes* / and *jotting notes down* next to the paragraphs . . . in the margins in the booklet / as I was *reading* it." And many of them were accounts of thinking itself: "what I *thought* to be important . . . / just what I want to *remember*." Such private accounts attempted to give the interviewer access to the private cognition of the participants. Neither Janet nor Roger assumed we could infer these actions from the texts they had written; they needed to be explained.

On this base of private action, both Janet and Roger layered accounts of action in public. That is, they both attributed actions to themselves and others in ways that could be directly observable. A few of these actions took place in the world: "Jamie [a friend] and I *talked about* this

at great length." Most of them took place in text: "Komrad [an author] *is talking about* a blanket justification." These public accounts of action in text attempted to give the interviewer an understanding of what the author of a text was doing, to characterize its accomplishment.

Although both Janet and Roger tipped the balance of their accounts to the private, the nature of this balance and the way it played out over the time of their work was significantly distinct according to a Chi-square analysis, where the sum of Chi-squares was 38.09 with 1 degree of freedom and significance at p<.001. To begin with, Roger's accounts drew nearly as often from the public realm (45%) as from the private realm (55%), whereas Janet's accounts were predominately private (72%). Figures 1 and 2 indicate how these different balances played out over time.

For Janet, accounts of public action spread in an even layer over a large base of private activity throughout the accounts that she told of her composing. For Roger, however, accounts of public action pile up in the middle period of his work, beginning at the close of reading and continuing in the period of reflection that preceded outlining or writing/revising.

PLAYERS ON THE PUBLIC STAGE

The Authorial "I"

For both Janet and Roger, the most common human agent in their accounts of public action was "I." This authorial "I" was one who spoke in text: "*I'd* just like say that in my introduction . . . say something about that . . ."; an "I" who discussed things: "*I* have already discussed . . . Ms. Carter's straight consent approach . . . actual consent approach . . ."; an "I" who engaged in critique: "*I* made three criticisms of her." In the public realm, then, this authorial "I" was the animator of the text, the agent who moved through it and, with it, accomplishing his or her purpose.

Others

The world of Janet and Roger's public accounts contained others, however. Not unexpectedly, a great many of these others were the authors they were reading: "*he* [Childress]'s the one with the simple-minded one [definition] . . . just crossing anybody's will about anything." Some were the friends they talked to about the project: "I started talking to this kid
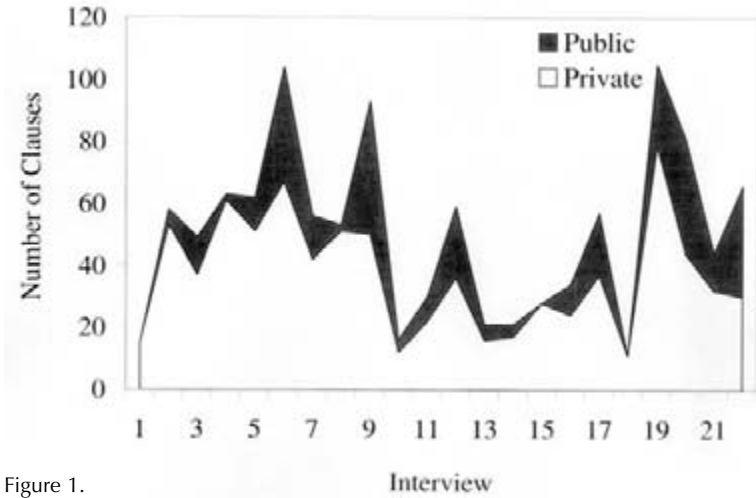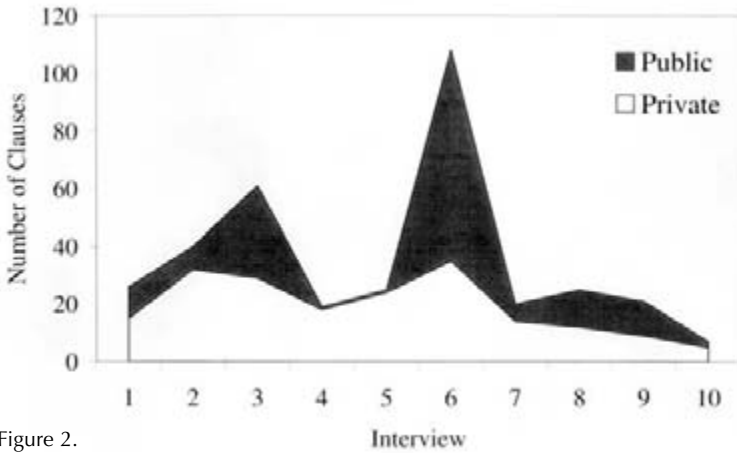
Figure 1.

Figure 2.

/ I knew from my hometown / and *he* told me / on the side of his school work, *he*'s reading all these books on psychoanalysis and psychology."

Others were agents from the reference group they took as their base community. For Janet, these were agents in school such as her composition instructor: "Like one time, *he* asked us to write down / how much time we spent on a rough draft." For Roger, these disciplinary representatives included the "we" who reads: "*we* don't get the next move"; the

"we" who deals with issues: "*we're* dealing with justification now / *we've* gotten out of the definition business"; and the "you" who considers cases: "but when *you* consider cases involving some blood transfusion . . . kidney transplants . . . and whatnot . . ." These other agents, the authors they were reading, the friends they were talking to, and the members of the communities that formed their reference groups, were the agents with whom they saw themselves interacting on the public stage.

The Dance of "I" and Others

In keeping with the general tendency of Janet to work in private, the majority of the actions she accounted for were her own even when she moved onto the public stage. This pattern was significantly different from Roger's pattern of agency, according to a Chi-square analysis, where the sum of Chi-squares was 52.73 with 3 degrees of freedom and significance at p<.001. Both Janet and Roger referred to the authors they were reading and the friends they were talking to with about the same relative frequency (28% and 8–9% respectively). For Janet, a small percentage of her remaining agents came from her school reference group (9%), while the majority was attributed to her authorial "I" (54%). For Roger, however, the use of the authorial "I" was much less common, replaced by the disciplinary "we" or "you" about one-third of the time, leaving the "I" with a bit less than one-third of the public agents (30%).

As the graph in figure 4 indicates, Roger's references to his disciplinary reference group played itself out over time in much the same way that his public accounts did in general. Most of them piled up in the period that closed his reading and continued through reflection. Other agents had more delimited appearances on the public stage. Friends came on stage early and then dropped out entirely. Authors were a presence through session 6, after which they nearly disappeared. The authorial "I" only played a major part from session 6 onward.

The dance of figures on the public stage was significantly different for Janet (see figure 3). Authors appeared throughout. The authorial "I" didn't appear until the middle sessions, making a second major appearance at the end. School and friends seem to have served in a complementary role: they came on stage when "I" was absent; they left the stage when "I" returned.
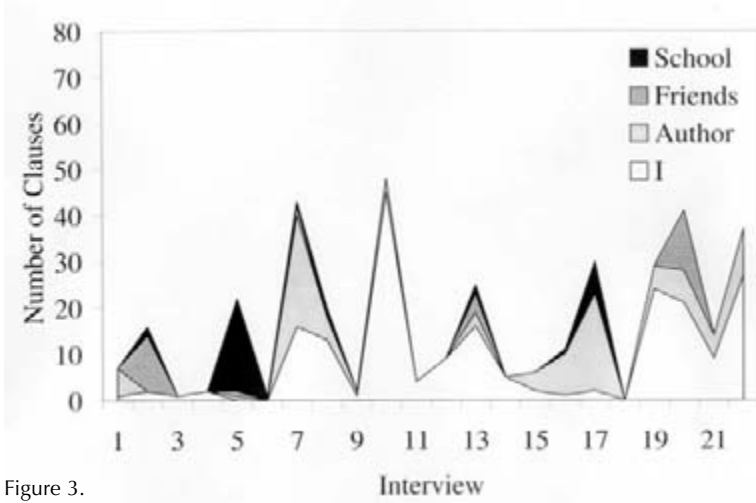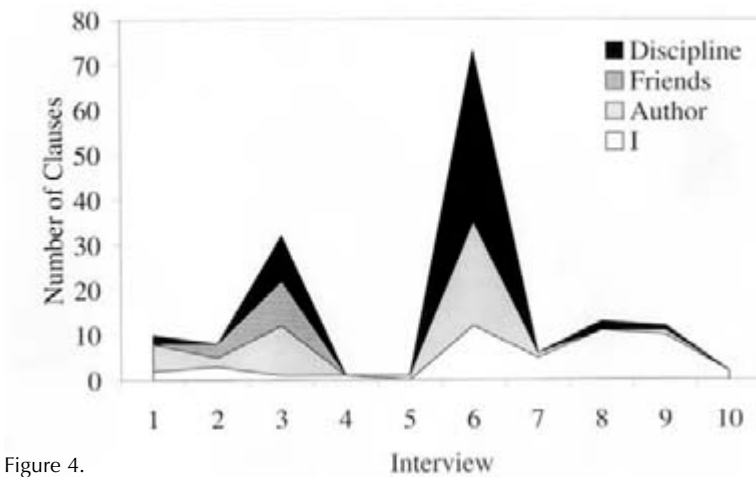
Figure 3.

Figure 4.

ACTION ON THE PUBLIC STAGE

In their accounts, Janet and Roger portrayed significantly different kinds of actions on the public stage, according to a Chi-square analysis, where the sum of Chi-squares was 137.33 with 4 degrees of freedom and significance at $p<.001$. By and large, Janet concerned herself with what was "said" (54%) and how things were "orchestrated" (32%) and to a lesser extent with what was "claimed" (11%). Roger had a comparable level of interest in "orchestration" (26%) but significantly less interest in "saying" (11%) and more in

"claiming" (48%). He was also interested in "considering" ideas (8%), an action in which Janet took no interest. [Note: some totals exceed 100% due to rounding.] In the following discussion, we look at each of these actions in turn. Complete definitions and examples can be found in the appendix.

Saying Things

Actions "to say" are foundational verbs of articulation. Some of them were literal: "Jamie and I *talked about* this at great length." But most were metaphorical, describing giving voice in text: "that I . . . I *said* was impurely paternalistic." "Say" was the preferred action for Janet who used it in more than half (54%) of her public accounts. Figure 5 suggests that she used it both to describe her own actions and the actions of the authors that she read, and that "saying" occurred in accounts throughout her sessions. Roger portrayed himself and authors as "saying" things a lot less often (11%). Figure 6 suggests that, for Roger, "saying" was a minor part of periods of generally high activity on the public stage.

Orchestration

Actions "to orchestrate" involved managing the arrangement of text. This often included actions of putting things in or leaving them out: "I *put* as my definition"; actions whereby ideas were elaborated: "somebody *was developing an account* in terms of rights"; actions by which the agent moved around in text: "maybe I should just *move on to* the next section"; actions that did something with an author: "I *did* Komrad . . . before I *got to* Childress"; and actions that did something with an example: "and then I tried to *give an example.*" All of these actions of orchestration involved the text, concerned themselves with arrangement and elaboration, and set aside the issue of belief. Orchestration was a major concern of both Janet (32%) and Roger (26%), without significant difference between them in how they played out over time.

Making Claims

Actions "to claim" involved the public expression of belief. This included actions of believing: "I *disagree* strongly"; actions of argumentation: "and she does this by *wording her definition* in such a way as to involve some kind of interference with . . . the subject by the paternalist"; actions that lead to the accomplishment of work in text: "they . . . made something up"; and actions that provide elements of an argument: "so
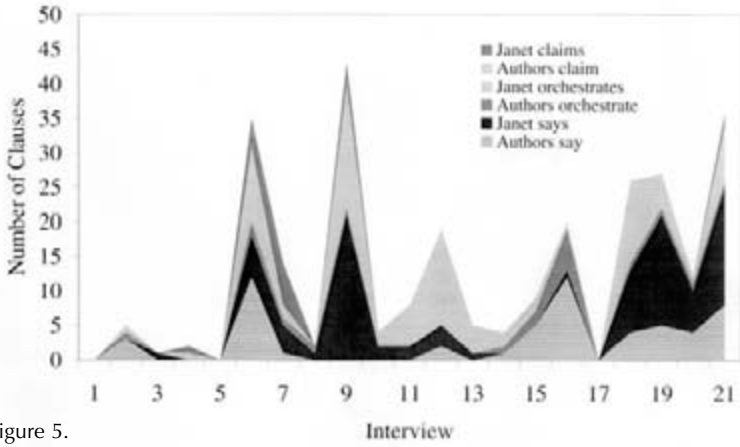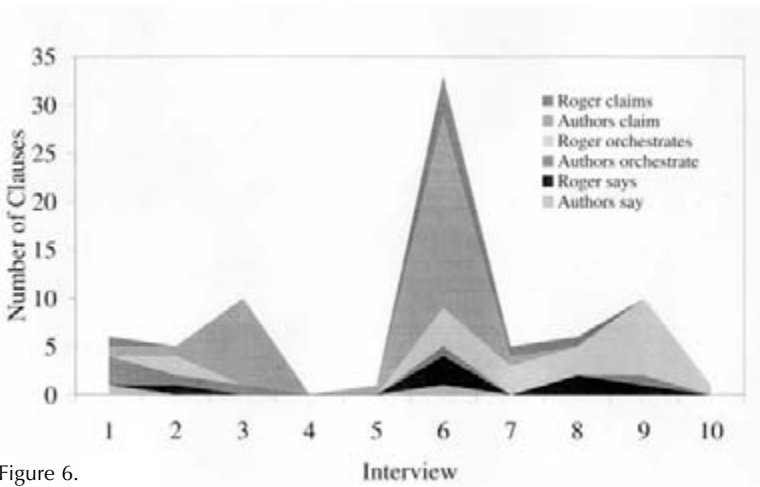
Figure 5.

Figure 6.

you have to *provide* piecemeal *justification* of whatever." Verbs of "claiming" go beyond simply "saying" by implying the expression of belief in text; they are foundational to the activity of argumentation. "Claim" was the preferred mode of action for Roger, who used it nearly half of the time (48%) in his public accounts. Interestingly, for the most part, it is others rather than Roger who make claims, perhaps because he has associated most of the claims with which he would agree with disciplinary

agents. By contrast, the relative frequency of "to claim" in Janet's work was low (11%). For Janet, claiming was not something that she or her authors did very often.

Discussion

Actions "to discuss" involved interacting with others: "and he was telling me / about a *debate* he *had*." Unlike actions "to say" discussed below, actions of discussion imply the presence of other interlocutors. Surprisingly, discussion played a relatively minor role in the accounts of both Janet (4%) and Roger (7%). Neither one seemed to see others, particularly authors, as interlocutors with whom they interacted.

Consideration

Finally, actions "to consider" involve thinking publicly about an idea: "imagine a case." Verbs of consideration invite others into a process of thinking that otherwise would be done in private. "Consider" was not very common in Roger's accounts (8%), but was entirely absent from Janet's. Thus, it was only for Roger that verbs of cognition moved onto the public stage to be shared with others.

HOW PROFESSIONALIZATION SHAPES THE PUBLIC STAGE

What can we say about the public stage across which both Janet and Roger play out their accounts of composing? For Roger, the public stage emerged in the activity of reflection through which others (authors, friends, and the discipline) used the actions of argumentation ("to claim") and cognition ("consider") in the service of developing the position that Roger's authorial "I" emerged to claim as his own by the closing act. For Janet, early scenes on the public stage were dominated by the "saying" of others (authors, friends, and school); in the middle scenes, the authorial "I" began to "say" things for itself; and in the closing scenes, both "I" and others were on stage together, still "saying" for the grand finale.

Professionalization has shaped the accounts of both Janet and Roger, though from quite different perspectives. For Janet, the story of paternalism is a story told from the perspective of the layperson who attends to the public stage in order to hear what others have said about the topic and then orchestrate some of those things into a text for her own readers. For Roger, the story of paternalism is told from the perspective of the expert who projects a series of claims onto the voices of the discipline in an effort to create a position for himself.

While it might be tempting to see Roger's accounts of composing simply as a contrast to Janet's, we can also understand them as developmental in several ways. To begin with, it's important to note what they have in common. Both base their accounts on a solid layer of private work. Both interact with authors, friends, and their particular reference group. Both concern themselves with the orchestration of text and somewhat less with discussion with others.

Furthermore, the differences between them, though striking, are not surprising. Roger's disciplinary reference group can be understood as an extension of the school-based reference group that Janet used, though its role has grown tremendously. His authorial "I", rather than simply disappearing, seems to have been transformed into a disciplinary "we" that has now taken over much of its work. His "claiming" can also be understood as an extension of Janet's weaker "to say"; in fact, the relative frequency of "say" declines in Roger's work (54% to 11%) in direct proportion to his increase in the use of "claim" (11% to 48%). And finally, his use of actions "to consider" is not wholly without precedent in Janet's work; what may have happened is that cognitive actions moved out of the private realm where they are found for Janet and onto Roger's public stage. The accounts that Janet and Roger offered thus show them to represent, at the same time, two sides of the great divide that separates the laity and the public and two ends of a developmental spectrum through which academic expertise develops out of school literacy.

It is important to recognize, however, that the sense of "public" for Janet and Roger is much reduced compared to the visions of public that shaped the oratorical tradition before professionalization (Clark and Halloran). Janet's public is a public trained to listen to what the experts "say," not to think about it. Roger's public is his discipline, which, through the give-and-take of argumentation, develops the knowledge that the Janets of the world are waiting to hear; they do not expect to hear from her.

It might be tempting to consider Janet as a representative of an alternative way of knowing (Belenky et al.), one who, under an epistemological stance often more frequently associated with women, seeks to build community and extend knowledge, rather than "do battle" in argumentation. In academic philosophy, the division between professional and layperson is fraught with issues of gender. Men dominate the field and the gender bias in the kind of ethical thinking with which Janet and Roger were dealing has been questioned by feminist philosophers (Noddings). Janet's epistemology does not, however, so much represent

an alternative to Roger's as its complement. That is, Janet's stance is dependent upon the Rogers of the world; she cedes knowledge-making power to the players on the public stage while she is content to remain in the audience. Thus, if Janet's way of knowing has been shaped by gender, it has not yet been transformed by it—at least, in some of the ways called for by feminist critics.

In fact, much has been written in critique of the model of professional expertise that we have seen underlying these accounts of composing. Many concerned with the public sphere have decried the impoverishment of the public forum and its replacement with disciplinary expertise (Bender; Farrell; Phillips). Many in the academy have renounced the foundationalist assumptions shoring up disciplinary claims to expertise (Bauman) and have begun to explore alternative relationships to the public and to members of other disciplines. What this analysis has suggested is the ways in which professionalization has shaped the very language with which we account for our work, the daily stories we and our students tell of our progress in the academy, the stories through which we shape our identities. What will be interesting in the coming years is to see is how such programs of reform reshape our language, the identities that underlie it, and the scope of academic action on the public stage.

APPENDIX

VERBAL CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

Category	Definition	Verbs found in interviews
Say	To say or give voice to	Articulate, mention, remark, say, talk, talk about, tell
Orchestrate	To orchestrate or manage the arrangement of ideas, including	
	To include	Bring in, drop, get in, have that, include, incorporate, leave out, limit, put, put in, shove, spend, stick in, take in, take out, throw in, throw out, use, write in
	To elaborate	Call attention to, deal with, describe, develop account, emphasize, expand, explain, give feeling, go into depth, list, make variations, relate, repeat, skim, skip, stick to, summarize
	To move	Come, finish, get out of, get to, go along, go back, go from, go on, go through, move into, move on, move toward, pass on, start, step back
	To use an author	Be imbedded in, do author, quote, use author
	To use example	Bring up examples, give example, have examples, make case work, make use of example, use
Claim	To claim or express an opinion or develop an argument, including	
	To believe publicly	Agree, be against, believe, be with, disagree, justify, regard as, subscribe to, suppose, take, think
	To claim	Argue, call, claim, come up with, define, give definition, have as, have point, make criticism, make statement, make up, point out, show, take a stand, waive, word definition, write
	To accomplish	Cook definition, do, do something, have flaw, make much of, make plausible, move toward definition, prime to do

	To provide an argument	Accommodate belief, appeal, apply defense, give definition, need justification, offer definitions, provide, provide justification, supply definition, supply justification, take definition, want argument
Discuss	To discuss or interact with others	Address critic, ask, discuss, have a conversation, have a debate, have discussion, love to hear
Consider	To think about publicly	Allude to, consider, do with, find features, get move, imagine, look for definition, make of it, parse