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Prospectus

Introduction

The Graffiti Bridge itself, as a community site constructed by students at Southwestern university, fits within an extensive framework of research regarding memory spaces and the various methods of analysis surrounding them. In this paper, I will address the research questions that guide my own approach and identify the scholarly conversations that frame this research object. My first research question is, what are the recurring patterns in the symbols and words used as graffiti on the Graffiti Bridge, and what is their rhetorical significance in the creation of a discursive memory space? The study of rhetoric stretches across thousands of years and multiple disciplines, with countless sources outlining different avenues of procedure. Because of the unique nature of the Graffiti Bridge as a site specific to a very small subculture at an already very small university, the use of scholarship regarding constitutive rhetoric will enable me to study the ways in which the individual components of the Graffiti Bridge have been layered over time to construct the overall meaning and impact of the space. In addition, my understanding of the Graffiti Bridge as a place of resistive practices, outlined in a discussion of graffiti as a theoretical framework, will include scholarship regarding discourse analysis to engage with the political elements of graffiti used within a subculture. My second research question is, what are the collective memory practices surrounding the Graffiti Bridge, and how do they work to interpellate a specific public on Southwestern's campus? In order to do this, I will engage with

sources regarding collective memory as a whole, how it is anchored in place and space, and how it functions to create publics and counterpublics from otherwise disconnected individuals. My third research question is, how does the Graffiti Bridge serve as an example of student-driven vernacular practices at universities, resistive practices, and memory formation, and how does it serve as an antithesis to institutionalized memory practices, such as the graffiti in Cullen tower? This will involve a synthesis of all previous research in order to draw conclusions about ideology and student practices at Southwestern, particularly those that are not as institutionally recognized or can only be expressed within the context of a hidden environment.

Literature Review: Methodology

Constitutive Rhetoric

As previously stated, rhetoric is one of the most popular methods of analysis for communications scholars, and involves countless different approaches to the ways in which written and spoken language operates in society. In regards to this particular research object, the most fruitful method of rhetorical analysis will operate using the concept of constitutive rhetoric, originally outlined by author James Boyd White in his groundbreaking paper “Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: the Arts of Cultural and Communal Life”. In it, White described how rhetoric “is always communal, both in the sense that it always takes place in a social context and in the sense that it is always constitutive of the community by which it works” (White, 691). This frames rhetoric as a collaborative process, created by members of a community and indicative of the ways in which that community functions. More specifically, he defined constitutive rhetoric as that which “includes all language activity that goes into the constitution of actual human cultures and communities” (White, 695). While White spoke specifically on rhetoric as it

connected to his discipline of legal study, the concept of rhetoric functioning constitutively has been extensively utilized in other areas of scholarly discourse.

White's study is explored most often by political and civil rights scholars, such as Leff and Utley in their analysis of works by Martin Luther King Jr. and Holmes' analysis of the U.S. Constitution (Leff; Holmes). In the context of this project, however, constitutive rhetoric is most functionally expanded upon by philosopher and rhetorical scholar Maurice Charland, who wrote multiple pieces on the ways that constitutive rhetoric differs from more traditional forms of persuasive rhetoric and how it is connected to historical and cultural movements. In particular, Charland in his 1987 case study of the *peuple québécois* describes how constitutive rhetoric not only comprises and defines a community, but calls members of that community into being: "A theory of constitutive rhetoric, based on the principle of identification, can account for the constitution of subjects of this type. Such subjects, agents within ideological discourse, are interpellated or called into being through rhetorical narratives... [which] constitute collective political subjects through a series of formal discursive effects." (Charland). This not only describes how these communities are built through rhetoric, but also connects constitutive rhetoric with the realm of discourse analysis, another important methodological framework that will be employed in a study of the Graffiti Bridge. Ultimately, the framework of constitutive rhetoric will provide a baseline position from which I can argue for the significance of the rhetoric used on the Graffiti Bridge as indicative of a subculture of Southwestern students.

Discourse Analysis

A connected but disparate field of study regarding rhetoric is that of discourse analysis, mentioned above in conjunction with constitutive rhetoric. While constitutive rhetoric provides a means of studying language itself and how it works to create a community in the first place,

discourse analysis provides an avenue by which scholars can approach the power relationships inherent in different communities' rhetoric. The basic idea of discourse analysis was conceived by Michel Foucault, a French historian and scholar, who published work in the 1970s regarding cultural systems rooted in specific historical contexts. These works, specifically "History, Discourse and Discontinuity" from 1972, describe the ideological underpinnings of systems of power and break them down into their various components. In Foucault's studies, this was largely rooted in broader political movements, and sought to answer questions of oppression and ideology as they manifest themselves in language and discourse amongst everyday people. While the Graffiti Bridge is not an obvious example of overarching political discourse as it connects to broad movements, it does serve as a microcosm of student politics at Southwestern, and can be examined discursively.

Discourse analysis since its inception has lived many lives, and this is explored by Penny Powers, who gives a broad overview of its evolution and different methodologies. In particular, she provides a functional summary of the basic tenets of each school of thought, specifically as they are rooted in different ideologies and center on how those in power create systems of thought to oppress others (Powers). The most pertinent application of discourse analysis, explored by Powers, is an approach by author Lupton in her work "Discourse analysis: a new methodology for understanding the ideologies of health and illness". In it, Lupton provides a clearer and more applicable working definition than other scholars: "Discourse... is defined as a patterned system of texts, messages, talk, dialogue, or conversation which can both be identified in this communication and located in social structures. Discourse may be rule-bound and highly governed, or ad-hoc and context-bound..." (Lupton, 145). These patterns are highly present in the rhetoric presented on the Graffiti Bridge, and so will serve as an indicator of the "social

structure” she refers to. In addition, Lupton describes how discourse analysis can be used as a form of resistance through the creation of independent vernacular practices introduced by dominated people groups (Lupton). This is particularly important for a discussion of the Graffiti Bridge, considering the discourse surrounding it has been created by a group which lacks institutional power, i.e. Southwestern students.

Publics/Counterpublics

Another methodology which is incredibly important for the study of rhetorical spaces is that of publics and counterpublics. Originally introduced by Michael Warner in his 1998 book “Publics and Counterpublics”, a public is a group of otherwise disconnected individuals brought together through an experience, physical location, or shared discourse (Warner). According to Warner, “To address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one’s disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology.” (Warner, 10). This provides a means for people unlike in every other way to function as a group via a connecting practice or ideology. While this public can be created along any lines, it is often done so as a method of resistance to dominant ideology or institutional control, and is then defined by its “tension with a larger public” (Warner, 56). When this is the case, this group is referred to as a “counterpublic” by virtue of being able to “contravene the rules obtaining in the world at large, being structured by alternative dispositions or protocols, [or] making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying.” (Warner, 56). Importantly, Warner defines these group members as subordinate, and locates them specifically with certain subcultures- most notably, youth cultures. This is highly connected to the Graffiti

Bridge, and offers a means of defining it as a place which creates its own public, made up of students belonging to a subculture at Southwestern.

The concept of publics and counterpublics has been expanded upon extensively by scholars such as Griffiths and Barbour, Loehwing and Motter, and Travers; specifically, these authors engage with subalterns and governmental policies, indicating that this research is often situated more often in the political realm (Griffiths; Loehwing; Motter). In relation to this analysis of the Graffiti Bridge, however, author David Wittenberg introduces other important contributions to the idea of public vs. private, and more specifically, how publics can be anchored in place and space (Wittenberg). While White considers every public to be, by nature, discursive, Wittenberg connects this discourse to spatial locations, arguing that “spatial terms help the theorist to mark publics as specific, locatable phenomena within the built social and political environment, as well as to begin to describe the way in which publics distinguish and demarcate their own specific character within the wider realm of social relationships.” (Wittenberg, 426). In addition, Wittenberg discusses what it means to be “out in public”, and the threat of institutional recognition and enforcement of ideology that is present when counterpublics are noticed (Wittenberg, 429). This concept of visibility and transgression related to the formation of publics connects to the Graffiti Bridge as a “private public” memory space.

Literature Review: Theoretical Frameworks

Place and Space

There are many scholars, similar to those mentioned above, who seek to understand the ways that place and space function, and more specifically, how they differ from each other. The foundation of this study rests in the field of geography, where author Fred Lukermann provides classical context for topographical discussion by tracing the words “space” and “place” back to

their rhetorical roots as outlined by ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle and Ptolemy (Lukermann). This work as it exists in geographical scholarship is expanded upon by authors such as Robert Sack, who describes the power structures present in place and space, and how they are defined by the ways in which “people and objects interact in space” (Sack, 327). Similarly, Joseph Pierce et al. describe the process of “place-making”, which is “the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live”, and connect it to social networking and politics (Pierce, 54).

While these are useful approaches to this concept and offer a wide avenue for study, they lack the versatility of application required by a unique research object such as the Graffiti Bridge. In the 1970s, however, this field of scholarship was made more accessible to other fields by author Yi-Fu Tuan in his work “Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective”. Released in 1979, this paper references Lukermann but more clearly presents how the terms “space” and “place” refer to different things, and thus have different rhetorical power: “Place, however, has more substance than the word location suggests: it is a unique entity, a ‘special ensemble’ (Lukerman, 1964, p. 70); it has a history and meaning. Place incarnates the incarnations and expectations of people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who have given it meaning.” (Tuan, 387). In saying so, Tuan gives a sort of “square and rectangle” scenario whereby every place is a space, but not every space is a place. His definition indicates that a place is something made out of space, but which is imbued with meaning and power by the people that occupy it. This is especially pertinent for the Graffiti Bridge as a site of analysis, and provides a framework for an argument of the construction of this as a “place” with its accompanying practices, ideologies, and associated public.

Memory

As rhetorical places are built by the people that inhabit them, so these people imbue the space with their own ideology, beliefs, and experience. This is deeply connected to an analysis of sites of collective memory, an important touchstone in the study of memory work as a whole. Collective memory is the overarching concept of communal knowledge, explained in the field of psychology as “the memories that individuals have as members of the groups to which they belong... [or] history as people remember it.” (Roediger). Importantly, collective memory is *not* historical fact; rather, it is knowledge of events created through the communicative practices of participants in group experiences (Roediger). This concept of “collective memory” was popularized by Maurice Halbwachs, a sociologist in the early 20th century who revolutionized the idea with his book “On Collective Memory”. In it, he describes how societies create “group consciousness” and shared identity through memories and commemorative processes (Halbwachs). Specifically, Chapter IX outlines how collective memory is deeply embedded in space: “we may say that most groups... engrave their form in some way upon the soil and retrieve their collective remembrances within the spatial framework thus defined.” (Halbwachs, 15). This is crucial for understanding the ways space represents people, and provides a starting place for site analysis of these culturally significant places. This is reiterated upon by authors Smith and Bergman, who explore Alcatraz as a memory space within the argument that “collective memory is *spatial* and *material*... memories are anchored in space and location” (Smith and Bergman, 165). This foundational statement is critical for an understanding of how the Graffiti Bridge serves as a memory space.

In the fields of communications and geography, most site analyses of collective memory spaces are understandably focused on places where culturally significant events occurred, such

as wars, crimes, or political action; these events are most often commemorated by public memorials and monuments, which serve as the primary focus of collective memory practices (Alderman; Árvay; Mitchell). While this is undoubtedly important research relating to the ways in which place and space operate on a larger scale, it often overlooks the ways in which the everyday landscapes of our lives can be considered memory spaces. One analysis which offers a theoretical framework along these lines, but which can be scaled down to apply to smaller locations, is “Monumentality, Memoryscapes, and the Politics of Place”, by Reuben and CindyAnn Rose-Redwood, Ian Baird, and Emilia Palonen. In it, the authors “critically examine the spatial politics involved in the making, unmaking, and remaking of memoryscapes conceived as assemblages of memory-objects, practices, and imaginaries that relationally constitute memory/spaces.” (Rose-Redwood, 448). This source is particularly useful because it uses a constitutive rhetorical analysis to examine collective practices as comprised of “memory objects” (Rose-Redwood). In the context of the Graffiti Bridge, this concept of collective memory is important because the historical facts of the bridge have been lost, and all that remains is the collective memory practices surrounding it, memorialized in the rhetoric presented in the graffiti itself. These memory practices have been created constitutively, constructing an overarching discourse unguided by any one force.

Graffiti

The above methodology and theoretical frameworks are all present in some sense in the study of graffiti, which stretches across multiple disciplines. While there is no one theorist who introduced an analysis of graffiti, its longstanding historical presence has made it a feature of many different scholarly works, each of which adds a unique insight. It is important to note that *every* source addressing graffiti specifically defines it as a transgressive practice by nature,

showcasing a unity amongst theorists that is significant to this project. One interesting work which does not mention graffiti specifically but which uses the above theories is “PublicandPrivate’: The Trialectics of Public Writing on the Street, on Campus, and in Third Space” by author William Burns. In it, he describes how public writings are complex and must constantly be negotiated within the context of existing hegemonic forces, as well as situating their location in material space (Burns). More importantly, he introduces the concept of “PublicandPrivate”, which “denotes spaces, identities, and discourses in which notions of public and private are so closely linked that to separate the terms and experiences would be to lose sight of the interconnectedness and reciprocity of these relationships (Burns, 31). This is pertinent to a study of the Graffiti Bridge not only because of its hidden status, but also because graffiti is a largely anonymous public writing practice, maintaining a private identity of the rhetor while also subjecting their rhetoric to the visibility of others. It is important to note that Burns’ use of the word ‘public’ is the more commonly used form, and does not necessarily connect to Warner’s definition; however, the two concepts are deeply intertwined, and both uses can be applied in the analysis. This concept of public yet private writings is also explored in Cathryn Molloy’s work “Curiosity Won’t Kill Your Cat’: A Meditation on Bathroom Graffiti as Underlife Public Writing”, which presents bathroom graffiti writings as placing “the act of composition on a verge, a precipice, a liminality, a site of cleavage. Writings there are undeniably public, but also, by definition shadowy and rebellious; in the compositional moments, one might very well be engaged in a very private act.” (Molloy, 19). This directly relates to the semi-public practice of graffiti as it is present in my research object.

Other approaches to graffiti focus more strongly on graffiti as a political and social force. One such work by authors Seloni and Sarfati takes a discourse analysis of protest graffiti in

Turkey; this approach is useful not only because it utilizes a similar approach to my own analysis, but because it effectively presents graffiti as a transgressive force and a tool of resistance, albeit with a much more significant topic. In addition, Seloni and Sarfani describe the importance of different modalities of written communication, linguistic as well as symbolic, and incorporate both forms into the concept of a “Linguistic Landscape”, which “deals with written language in the public space and its social and political role in the lives of people who live in these spaces” (Seloni and Sarfati, 785). Considering the Graffiti Bridge is filled with mostly symbols and few actual words, this distinction between linguistic and symbolic graffiti is important. An approach to graffiti as a means of expressing “repressed social attitudes” is also utilized by Terence Stocker et al. in their work “Social Analysis of Graffiti”, which uses a quantitative approach to argue that “graffiti, as an aspect of culture, can be used as an unobtrusive measure to reveal patterns of customs and attitudes of a society. Observing graffiti will reveal changes in customs and attitudes” (Stocker, 356). This will serve as a foundational portion of my argument for the significance of the Graffiti Bridge as a rhetorical touchstone of Southwestern’s subcultures.

Perhaps the most pertinent source to this project is Ricardo Campos’ work “Youth, Graffiti, and the Aestheticization of Transgression”, released in 2015 and working with a case study of Lisbon, Portugal in the early 2000s. Campos presents an argument centered on graffiti as a transgressive youth practice, which is mentioned but not expanded upon by other sources; he describes graffiti as “vernacular creations that may be interpreted as discursive instruments forged in the context of symbolic struggles” (Campos). This visibility is situated uniquely amongst young people living in an increasingly technological and aestheticized environment, and serves as a method of symbolic resistance in public communicative exchange (Campos). Campos

also employs Michel de Certeau's concept of tactic as a means by which young people respond to authority, describing tactic as "the creative ability of the common citizen to resist hegemonic logics and the domain of more powerful social actors." (Campos, 21). This is highly present in the practice of graffiti, whereby rhetors constituting a counterpublic create alternative discourse as a means of identity and ideological expression. Similarly to Molloy's work on the placement of graffiti in bathroom stalls, "Youth, Graffiti, and the Aestheticization of Transgression" stresses the importance of context in the study of graffiti: "the reading of a graffiti piece depends heavily on its setting. First, space bears a specific symbology, and the meaning of what is inscribed cannot be dissociated from the social significance of its specific surroundings... Second, the space where an inscription is placed determines the level of exposure that the work will have and its potential audience. (Campos, 26). This is highly significant to the Graffiti Bridge due to its unique location, and will serve as a formative portion of arguments surrounding its audience and community.

Conclusion

My initial conclusion is that the Graffiti Bridge is a microcosm of a resistive discourse community, constitutively created in opposition to dominant ideologies and practices set into place by the institution of Southwestern. While scholarship mentioned above offers a look into graffiti as a resistive youth practice, situated in complex place-space environments with varying degrees of public visibility and private participation, none of them offer the sort of synthesis between these theories that the Graffiti Bridge provides, and an analysis of this research object is an important connection between otherwise disconnected approaches. In order to analyze the Graffiti Bridge, I intend to approach its "Linguistic Landscape" as a constitutive rhetorical construction of a community-specific discourse, one with significant commentary on the

small-scale politics of a university (Seloni and Sarfati, 785). This will incorporate a quantitative coding of each word and symbol used on the Bridge, with special attention paid to ideologically significant items; these findings will serve as the basis for an argument about how the graffiti operates as a form of constitutive rhetoric as anchored in a specific place. In addition, interviews conducted on Southwestern students will highlight the collective memory practices surrounding the bridge and the ways in which ideological discourse is created amongst a subculture. While graffiti is in itself a resistive practice, both a constitutive and a discourse analysis will highlight transgressive ideologies specific to Southwestern. Ultimately, the Graffiti Bridge is a unique research object which provides a potential for theoretical synthesis between otherwise disconnected approaches.

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