

# Journalism, Poetry, Stand-up Comedy, and Academic Literacy: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Literate Activities

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*ABSTRACT: In an effort to live up to Elaine Richardson's dictum that educators and researchers must address "the total linguistic, cultural, and historical background of the learner" (19), basic writing scholarship has addressed a wealth of competencies that basic writers bring with them to the university. The literate lives they lead beyond the academy, however, have received relatively little attention in terms of theory, research, and practice. In an article that draws upon text collection, interviews, and participant observations from a longitudinal ethnographic case study of one basic writer's non-school and school literate activities, I examine the synergies between this student's extracurricular journalism, poetry, and stand-up comedy and his literate activity for two undergraduate courses. Arguing that the writer's school tasks are profoundly shaped by an extensive network of non-school practices, artifacts, and activities, I contend that we need to situate the full range of basic writers' literate engagements into our research and teaching.*

*KEYWORDS: basic writer; extracurricular writing; sociohistoric theory; literate development*

In her 2004 CCCC Chair's Address, "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key," Kathleen Blake Yancey argues for the importance of attending to the self-sponsored writing that populates what Anne Gere refers to as "composition's extracurriculum" (79), those spaces outside of school where writing plays a major role. Yancey's call to bring together "the writing outside of school and that inside" (308) signals a growing awareness that coming to terms with the complexity of undergraduates' growth as writers has increasingly meant attending to the writing students do beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the classroom. It likewise points to the

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small but rapidly growing body of scholarship mapping the richly literate landscape that undergraduates inhabit outside of school and its intersections with school writing (Chiseri-Strater; Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, and Otuteye; Ketter and Hunter). Two recent fine-grained studies, for example, offer detailed views of undergraduates' concurrent engagement in school and non-school writing and the ways in which extracurricular writing shapes engagement with school tasks. In "Performing Writing, Performing Literacy," Jenn Fishman, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and Mark Otuteye draw on school and non-school writing collected from 189 undergraduates at Stanford University to document the interplay between students' extracurricular "writing performances," the "live, scripted, and embodied activities they stage outside the classroom: everything from spoken-word events and slam-poetry competitions to live radio broadcasts, public speaking, and theatrical presentations" (226), and their growth as academic writers. Jean Ketter and Judy Hunter's "Creating a Writer's Identity on the Boundaries of Two Communities of Practice" offers a detailed exploration of how one undergraduate's understanding of what it means to be an effective writer arose from conflicts between her writing for a women's history class and for an internship in the college's public relations office.

Scholarship invested in mapping the non-school writing of basic writers and how it might impact their literate development, however, has been slower to emerge. While basic writing scholarship does indeed have a sustained history of attending to the resources students bring to the university, the bulk of that tradition has focused on students' oral abilities. The number of basic writing teacher-researchers who invite students to "speak themselves into their writing" (Campbell 69) by employing the spoken discourse of their homes and communities outside of school to invigorate their academic writing (Bizzell; Lu; McCrary; Gilyard and Richardson; Smitherman) mark the field's long history of both recognizing and valuing the considerable experiences with spoken language that basic writers bring to the classroom and how those experiences shape their participation in academic discourse. This trend is also reflected in the increasing number of teacher-researchers who weave these hybrid discourses together in their own writing (Gilyard; McCrary; Monroe; Smitherman; Villanueva). More recently, Shannon Carter has drawn attention to the various other kinds of competencies that basic writers possess (e.g., waiting tables, styling hair, playing video games) and the "rhetorical dexterity" they demonstrate as they "read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice (the academy) based on" those abilities (99).

Still, although this growing body of scholarship lives up to Elaine Richardson's dictum that educators and researchers must address "the total linguistic, cultural, and historical background of the learner" (19), the emphasis on basic writers' oral and other competencies only underscores the sparse attention devoted to basic writers' extracurricular experiences with writing. Non-school writing, when it has received attention, has largely been understood as disconnected from the literate activities of school. In "Remediation as Social Construct: Perspectives from an Analysis of Classroom Discourse," Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Fraser, and Marisa Castellano recount an instance where a teacher knows that Maria, a Latina undergraduate struggling in her basic writing course, has written a novel, but doesn't let that awareness trouble her conviction that Maria is the "queen of non sequiturs" (310) who may not have the skills to succeed in college. In *Writing in an Alien World*, Deborah Mutnick mentions that Joe, one of the basic writers in her study, has written and revised two science fiction novels, but characterizes such writing as being separate from the kind he is asked to produce for his college coursework.

Such work highlights the need for fuller and richer accounts of literate development that acknowledge the full range of basic writers' literate engagements. Seeking to fill this gap, this article draws from a longitudinal case study of Charles Scott, Jr.,<sup>1</sup> an African American undergraduate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) from the fall of 2000 to the spring of 2005. What initially drew my attention to this student was the incongruity between his placement (and the apparent appropriateness of this placement) in the basic writing course I was teaching and his extensive engagement with and successes in a range of literate activities outside of school. The longer essays he wrote early in the semester for Rhetoric 101, the lowest composition placement at UIUC, for example, bore numerous traces of his difficulties with marshalling information from multiple sources into an analytic argument. The mechanical aspects of his writing (conventional spelling, punctuation, and grammar and usage) were also problematic. In short, Charles easily fit the dominant image of a basic writer arriving at a four-year college.

Yet while Charles was struggling with the demands of the undergraduate curriculum, his extracurricular literate efforts met with notable success. By mid-semester, four of Charles' stories had appeared in the *Daily Illini*, the university's student newspaper, his latest in a long string of publications stretching back several years to his high school days working for *New Expression*, a student-authored news magazine distributed to public and private

high schools in the Chicago area, and for his high school newspaper before that. Several of these stories had earned him journalistic awards, including the Scholastic Press Association Excellent Sports Story Award and the *Kansas City Star* Ernest Hemingway Writing Award for High School Journalists. In addition to his success as a journalist, Charles had also been getting his fair share of laughs from the stand-up comedy routine he performed at the university's Open Mic Night, an opportunity for undergraduates to showcase their talents. The third Wednesday of each month would find Charles on stage at the university's Courtyard Café reading from a tattered spiral notebook containing the jokes he had crafted and a host of other written and visual texts (e.g., flyers, brochures, and advertisements) he used in his act. Other nights would find Charles on stage at the African American Cultural Center reading poetry, including some of his own, that he and some friends had collected from Chicago-area high school students and published two years before.

More than five years of observation, discussion, and textual analysis have further complicated this story. What began as an investigation of the disconnect between Charles' placement in a basic writing course (and his apparent fit there) and his extensive engagement with and successes in extracurricular literate practices evolved into a much more complicated, messy, and yet fascinating exploration (Roozen) of the role that non-school literate practices played in Charles' development as an "academic writer." For this study, I observed Charles' extracurricular and curricular literate activities and collected a wide variety of his non-school and school texts over his five years as an undergraduate. I also reached back to the earlier writing he had done both in and out of school before attending the university and explored the interplay between his non-school and school writing. Text collection, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and participant observation of Charles' school and non-school literate activities were key sources of data. The focus of the semi-structured interviews was to find out as much as possible about the writing that Charles had done, and was currently doing, for school and non-school purposes. During the initial interview I used a protocol of specific questions to elicit information about his early experiences with reading and writing at home and in school. Later interviews<sup>2</sup> tended to revolve around the texts I had analyzed and any new materials that Charles had provided. My observations included Charles' semester as a student in my Rhetoric 101 class, the series of stand-up comedy routines he performed over his freshman and sophomore years, his semester in an upper-division writing course, a number of interviews he conducted for his

*Daily Illini* stories, and the practices and games he coached for an elementary school basketball program.

To explore the relationship between Charles' non-school and school writing, I, a white middle-class male, analyzed this data interpretively and holistically. Hundreds of pages of inscriptions (including rough and final drafts of Charles' curricular and extracurricular texts, sections of interview transcripts, portions of video- and audiotapes, and analytic notes) were read and complete audio- and videotapes of interviews were repeatedly reviewed in order to identify instances in which Charles appeared to be splicing his extracurricular journalism into his school writing or vice versa. Instances of interplay between these literate activities were identified by focusing on what Charles indicated were key practices<sup>3</sup> in a particular literate activity and then determining whether Charles wove those practices into other writings. After initial accounts of these interplays were constructed, they were reviewed and modified by checking them against the data inscriptions (to ensure accuracy and to seek counter instances) and by working through each narrative with Charles himself in later interviews. During these interviews, I requested additional texts from Charles, and frequently Charles volunteered to provide me with additional texts that he thought might be useful in developing the narrative. It was frequently the case that the initial accounts I had generated either broke down entirely or needed significant modification as a result of closer inspection of the data, identification of additional relevant data, or discussions with Charles during interviews. The accounts were later modified according to Charles' feedback. Final versions of the narratives were shown to Charles to determine if they seemed valid from his perspective.

What started, then, as a short-term case study to explore the striking contrast between Charles' placement in a basic writing program and his success with various kinds of non-school writing grew into a longitudinal study aimed at developing a rich portrait of the relationship between his multiple literate activities. This article elaborates the synergies between Charles' extracurricular literate activities and his writing for two courses during his initial semester at the university. I argue that Charles' performance in these classes is enhanced by an extensive network of practices, artifacts, and activities from his non-school literate engagements.

### **Far-flung Networks**

I situate my thinking about the relationship between Charles' extracurricular and curricular literate activities in a sociohistoric framework

that emphasizes the profoundly heterogeneous networks of practices and artifacts that mediate human action. Central to this tradition is the work of Lev Vygotsky, who emphasized humans' use of culturally constructed tools as a means of mediating human action, including mental action. One of Vygotsky's crucial insights was that humans' ability to act with cultural tools did not develop solely within isolated action but rather within networks of other tools employed in other activities. The interdependent relationship Vygotsky described in *Thought and Language* between "everyday," or "spontaneous," concepts that develop within practical community experiences and the "scientific" concepts that develop within the formal settings of school offers one example of this co-development. Discussing the interplay between scientific and spontaneous concepts, Vygotsky writes:

an everyday concept clears a path for the scientific concept and its downward development. . . . Scientific concepts in turn supply structures for the upward development of the child's spontaneous concepts toward consciousness and deliberate use. Scientific concepts grow down through spontaneous concepts; spontaneous concepts grow upward through scientific concepts. (109)

Even though scientific and spontaneous concepts have different origins, Vygotsky saw their development as inseparably linked: scientific concepts refine spontaneous concepts and raise them to a level of conscious use, and everyday concepts serve as the foundation upon which scientific concepts are built. Thus, for Vygotsky, these "scientific" and "everyday" concepts "are not encapsulated in the child's consciousness, are not separated from one another by an impenetrable barrier, do not flow in two isolated channels, but are in the process of continual, unceasing interaction" ("The Development" 365). In essence, scientific concepts develop from their interaction with spontaneous concepts, and, likewise, spontaneous concepts evolve from their interplay with scientific ones.

Informed by Vygotsky's sociohistorical approach to mediated action, Ron Scollon's account of the ontogenesis of social practice in *Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice* theorizes an even more extensive and heterogeneous network stretching across an even broader range of co-developing activities. Scollon argues that while particular practices are situated in specific sites of engagement, they also "can be linked variably to different practices in different sites of engagement" (5) to form a "nexus of practice," a "network or matrix of intersecting practices which, although they are never perfectly

or inevitably linked into any finalized or finalizable latticework of regular patterns, nevertheless form a network or nexus” (16). Each “nexus,” then, is comprised of a heterogeneous array of practices—some local and specific and some spun-off from other sites of engagement. Using the social practice of “handing” as an example (think of handing in stores, in religious ceremonies, in surgical operating rooms), Scollon states that “the practice of handing an object to another person may be linked to practices which constitute the action of purchasing in a coffee shop, it may be linked to practices which constitute the action of giving a gift to a friend on arriving at a birthday party, or even to handing a bit of change to a panhandler on the street” (5). In this sense, handing change to a panhandler is not an isolated act but rather is inseparably linked to and informed by various other forms of handing in which a person has engaged. In other words, the particular act of handing we witness in the present is in part the product of a historical and unique network of handings stretching across a range of interactions and far back into the history of the person. Scollon’s notion of “nexus of practice” draws attention to the way seemingly disparate social practices are linked across diverse sites of engagement and thus to the interdependent nature of their development. Given persons’ encounters with writing in multiple domains, including home, community, school, and the workplace, Scollon’s “nexus of practice” (16) seems an especially fitting lens for viewing literate practice as both situated in “specific purposes in specific contexts of use” (Scribner and Cole 236) and connected across multiple activities.

In thinking about literacy, then, theoretical attention to networks of literate activity foregrounds the heterogeneous and heterochronic array of practices, artifacts, and activities that mediate literate action at any moment as well as the co-development of literate practice—that it develops in relation to rather than isolated from other literate practices and activities. This framework, then, provides a way to understand the relationship between Charles’ school and non-school writing. In the two documented narratives below, I partially trace the “far-flung network” (Prior and Shipka 11) of extracurricular writing that shaped Charles’ literate engagements for Rhetoric 101 and Speech Communication 101, courses he took during his first semester at the university.

### **Blending Extracurricular Journalism and Rhetoric 101**

The first account I will present focuses on how Charles appears to weave a key practice from his extracurricular journalism—specifically his

use of statistics from survey data—into the literate activity of first-year composition. I begin by outlining Charles' experience with extracurricular journalism, focusing especially on his use of statistics in the writing he did during his high school years for the student-authored news magazine *New Expression*, and then follow this practice as Charles appears to incorporate it into an essay for his Rhetoric 101 class.

Some of Charles' earliest memories of literacy center around journalism. One especially salient memory involves his great-aunt and great-uncle reading the newspaper at the kitchen table each morning, with Charles waiting rather impatiently for them to hand him the sports section. He particularly enjoyed Jay Mariotti's daily sports column in the *Chicago Sun-Times* "because of his writing style and because he criticizes everyone, except Michael Jordan." "Ever since then," said Charles, "I've wanted to have my own sports column in a major newspaper."<sup>4</sup> As an initial step toward this goal, Charles enrolled in the journalism course at his high school as soon as he was eligible, a course that centered around writing stories for the school newspaper. After having many of his stories published, one of which would eventually win him the Excellent Sports Story Award from the Scholastic Press Association, Charles decided to seek additional opportunities to deepen his participation in journalism. In March of his junior year of high school, Charles started writing for *New Expression*, a monthly news magazine written by Chicago-area teens and distributed to eighty-thousand high school students in the city.

Writing stories for *New Expression* presented Charles with a host of new journalistic challenges. Whereas readers of his fairly small high school paper might have been satisfied with hearing how their track team had performed at a local competition, readers of *New Expression* expected stories to appeal to and incorporate the views of students in high schools across the entire Chicago area. In order to elicit information from as many students in as many parts of the city as possible, Charles began conducting surveys: "At first, every story I wrote had a survey connected to it. After you conduct the survey and get the results, the story is based on those and you have quotes in there and that sort of helped me get started." Charles quickly developed a process he relied on repeatedly. After identifying a topic that appealed to his readers, he generated a series of questions, typed them on a page of paper, copied it, and passed it out to other writers on the *New Expression* staff. Using Charles' survey, those writers would then set about polling students at their respective high schools, keeping track of quantitative data as well as recording participants' responses. As the deadline for his story approached,



Charles combined the reporters' data with his own and tallied the results. The quantitative data these surveys generated shaped Charles' stories in significant ways, particularly in terms of providing the general direction of the story and creating a general framework that Charles could fill in with quotations from the respondents and other information.

The following excerpt from one of Charles' earliest stories for *New Expression*, a piece titled "Students Overwhelmed by Homework," provides a good example of how heavily he relied on statistical data:

Sixty-five percent of Chicago public high school students say they get too much homework.

According to a **NE** [*New Expression*] survey of 350 students, 95 percent said teachers take homework too seriously, and it should be greatly reduced.

"I spend up to 7 hours a day doing homework, and sometimes I still don't complete it," said Teavena Hatch, a junior at Whitney Young. "I lack the time to study because I am too busy doing written homework. I don't have that much time to watch TV or listen to the radio because these teachers give us so much to do."

Fifty percent of students cited a lack of study time because they are too busy trying to complete homework assignments. (3)

The focal point of the story, that Chicago-area public high school students feel they're given too much homework, is established largely by the statistical data in these opening paragraphs. More statistical data is interspersed throughout the rest of the story in sentences such as "A majority of the students surveyed spent at least 2-3 hours doing homework daily. But nearly 40 percent of students surveyed by **NE** last month spent over 4 hours daily doing homework," and "Although 75 percent of students surveyed feel homework is necessary, 60 percent say studying for tests is more important" (3). The story closes with a long list made up entirely of statistics gained from the survey.

As other writers at the magazine recognized the utility of conducting surveys, Charles was given the title of Survey Coordinator and charged with conducting surveys for the entire *New Expression* staff.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting on this promotion during one of our interviews, Charles stated, "Our surveys became very powerful. You would see them and it would be like ninety-five percent said this: surveys became the basis of our stories in our newspaper when I started conducting them. So the rest of the year I conducted surveys

for the whole paper.” Using survey data quickly became a crucial element of Charles’ repertoire of textual practices for writing the news. He relied on this technique so heavily, in fact, that he found it difficult to write stories without it: “When I was the [news] editor, after I stopped conducting surveys, it was like hard to write stories because I was like ‘Oh my God, how am I going to write a story now?’ It was scary. It was a challenge to write a story without a survey, because I was used to writing stories with surveys.”<sup>6</sup>

Working with statistical data, then, proved a crucial strategy as Charles learned to assemble news stories for *New Expression*. This tool from his personal repertoire of journalistic practices also became quite visible as he searched for a way to incorporate material from outside sources into his essays for Rhetoric 101, his first English course at UIUC.

Charles entered the university in the fall of 2000 intent on majoring in broadcast or print journalism. Based on his standardized test scores and a writing sample, he was placed in Rhetoric 101, the first course in a two-semester sequence designed to address the instructional needs of those students scoring in the lowest bracket on the placement mechanism the university employed at that time. In addition to completing the coursework for this course, students were also required to attend a one-hour weekly tutorial session with the instructor. The class’s major writing tasks consisted of four three- to five-page papers in which students were asked to engage with an increasing number of readings from the course textbook. As Charles’ Rhetoric 101 teacher, I sensed that he was struggling to use material from the course readings to develop and support his arguments in any significant way. Although he was successful at drawing from his wealth of personal experiences in order to address the paper topics, he seemed reluctant to engage with specific issues in the readings and to incorporate information from the readings into his own essays. In cases where he did refer to the readings, it was usually only after repeated reminders from me or members of his peer-review group that this was a critical aspect of the assignment. Yet, even in these instances, information was incorporated in cursory ways, with Charles only vaguely indexing ideas expressed in the texts or perhaps just tacking a quotation from one of the readings onto an essay’s final paragraph.

Charles’ first two formal essays indicate the difficulties he had with the text-based writing called for in the assignments. The initial essay for the course, for example, invited students to work from a brief article by Marianne Jennings to analyze the roles and responsibilities of both students and teachers in the educating process. In his first two drafts, Charles neglected to reference the Jennings piece, despite being reminded by his peers that he

needed to work closely with her article. The paragraph below, excerpted from Charles' final draft, evidences his effort to engage with Jennings' essay.

In Jennings essay, she made the point that ACT and SAT scores were steadily declining. The problem is that high school teachers are no longer preparing students for college. Teachers main concern today is preparing students for standard test like the ACT and SAT. Simply studying for some standardize test, which is not going to be able to help the student once the student enters college, is not challenging students. It is the teachers responsibility to make sure that their students receive a decent education. This will not happen if student are not challenge with a challenging curriculum. It is the job of high school teachers to prepare students to college.<sup>7</sup>

The opening sentence of the paragraph does contain a loose paraphrase of Jennings' point about declining standardized test scores; however, Charles merely attached this sentence to the paragraph as it already appeared in a previous draft. Rather than attempting to employ Jennings' point to substantially develop and extend his argument about the emphasis on test preparation, Charles just seems to be making a last-ditch effort to minimally comply with the requirements of the task.

Charles' second essay, which invited students to draw from Harold Williams' "Don't Ignore the Arts" and at least one other source to address the function of the arts in education, signaled similar difficulties with writing from sources. Below is the closing paragraph from Charles' third and final draft.

In essence, we must listen to Harold Williams advice. We cannot ignore the arts. The arts are a good thing in life, the other stuff. The arts are essential and life would be boreing without them. The arts enable us to escape from our every day life, which is very hectic and filled with problems. By escaping we can relax, enjoy life, and forget our problems. And by allowing us to escape the arts will enable everyone to have happier more productive lives.

In this excerpt, Charles does incorporate Williams into the conversation after prompting from his peers, but again, as with the paragraph from his previous essay, only by way of inserting a general paraphrase of Williams' overall argument rather than a specific point raised in the reading. As in

the previous example, Charles merely slid the brief reference to Williams' essay into the opening portion of a paragraph that appeared in his earlier drafts, the first sentence of which originally read "In essence, we cannot ignore the arts."

Given that substantial engagement with sources was a key facet of the course's writing tasks and a key learning objective of the class, Charles was disappointed with his performance at mid-semester. Although passing, his grades on his two first two major papers (C- and C) were much lower than he would have liked. Further, he had failed to pass a series of six informal writing assignments that asked students to quote from and then write with and against the course readings using MLA style, which negatively impacted his overall grade. The end comments he received on all of these assignments repeatedly signaled to Charles that he needed to work more closely with the authors we were reading, as did the feedback he received from his peers and me at various points throughout the cycle of drafting, reviewing, and revising these papers.

The third essay Charles submitted, however, represented a substantial departure from his reluctance to engage with the readings. I had fashioned this assignment as a kind of mini-research paper dealing with the issue of sex and violence in mass media and provided the students with a list of readings from the textbook that addressed various aspects of this broad topic. Their "research" consisted of reading and annotating the brief essays from the book, identifying ones that addressed a specific issue, and then using information from those texts to craft an analytic argument. Charles' essay, into which he had incorporated several passages from the readings that were rich in statistical data, represented the first text he produced that I saw as successful in working with the readings. The following excerpts, which rely heavily on statistical data from two readings on the list, appeared in the first draft of Charles' third essay and functioned as a substantial part of his argument. In the first excerpt, Charles weaves together three pieces of statistical data from an essay by Susan Lamson, causally linking the violence viewers witness on television to dramatic increases in homicides and other violent crimes over the past five decades, a link he supports with a contemporary example of the "copy cat" crimes which followed the shootings at Columbine High School.<sup>8</sup>

Hollywood plays a big role in what happens in the real world. According to Susan Lamson, the US. National homicide rate has doubled since the 1950s. And it is estimated that exposure to televi-

sion is related to one-half of rapes, assaults, and other forms of interpersonal violence in the US. Seeing the acts of others on television and wondering if they can do the crime better motivates many crazy people. For example, the Columbine Shooting Massacre. Following the Columbia Massacre there were many copy crimes blamed on the media. Some saw the attention that the students involved in the Columbine Massacre got and wanted the same attention. A recent **TV Guide** study counted 1,845 acts of violence on average during an eighteen hour viewing time. (Lamson, 273-275)

In the excerpt that follows, Charles deploys statistical data from an Associated Press study cited in Michael Medved's essay to suggest that while a substantial number of Americans surveyed object to the amount of foul language, violence, and sex in movies, Americans in general seem reluctant to turn off their televisions or turn away at the box office.

According to Micheal Medved's essay, "*Hollywood Poison Factory*", a study conducted by the Associated Press in 1990 revealed that 80 percent of Americans objected to the amount of foul language in motion pictures. The study also revealed that 82 percent objected to the amount of violence, and 72 percent objected to the amount of sex. The problem is that people evidently like what they are seeing. How would they know the amount of foul language, sex and violence are in the movies, if they are not watching. They are hypercritics. They are complaining about a problem they are helping to creating. If they stop watching the ex-rated movies and television shows, Hollywood would stop creating as many ex-rated television shows and movies. (Medved, 216)

In terms of the wealth of statistical data, these excerpts from Charles' third essay bear a striking similarity to his early news stories for *New Expression*. Not only does Charles employ the same attributive tag ("according to") to introduce material from outside sources that he used for his news stories, but he also uses the information from Lamson and Medved to effectively develop and extend the points he is working to make. In these two excerpts, we see Charles citing sources for statistics (with three citations in each paragraph) in the service of making key arguments. Overall, Charles cited statistics six times in this three-page draft and representations of statistics accounted for six out of nine of his citations of sources. Although Charles'

lingering difficulties with the more mechanical elements of his writing are still very much present in these excerpts, he is certainly incorporating material from sources into his essay in a more substantial manner than he had done in his earlier essays for the course.

If I am correct in concluding that, in this third essay for Rhetoric 101, Charles was repurposing, consciously or not, a literate practice that he developed from his early experiences putting together news stories as a strategy for engaging with sources, then this narrative traces part of a nexus of literate practice that includes elements of extracurricular journalism as well as first-year composition. Here, an element of creating and compiling surveys, tallying results, and using the data to build news stories is re-deployed across space, time, and genre as a key element of an analytical writing task for first-year rhetoric in what James Gee might refer to as a sophisticated kind of literate “mushfaking,” employing practices and discourses from one community as a way to make do when the “real” ones of another community are not available (13). Charles’ third essay, then, might best be understood as an aggregation of literate practices, a combination of some local and specific practices and some repurposed from other literate activities. In blending together elements of extracurricular journalism and those more commonly associated with first-year writing, and perhaps from other literate experiences as well, Charles produced what Patricia Bizzell refers to as a “hybrid academic discourse,” a combination of “elements of traditional academic discourse with elements of other ways of using language that are more comfortable for . . . new academics” (11). Given that these excerpts from his third essay represent the first time I regarded Charles as successfully writing from and with the readings, I’d argue that repurposing this practice contributed significantly to his success on this essay in particular and toward his proficiency with the kinds of literate practices privileged in the academy in general.

### **Blending Poetry, Stand-up Comedy, and Speech 101**

Charles’ interest in print and broadcast journalism prompted him to enroll in Speech Communication 101: Principles of Effective Speaking during his first semester at the university, a popular course with undergraduates like Charles seeking entry into the College of Communication’s journalism program. Students enrolled in the course were asked to prepare and present a series of four brief informative and persuasive speeches, with an emphasis on strategies for selection and organization of material, methods of securing interest and attention, and elements of delivery. Explaining his decision

to enroll in the course, Charles stated, “A lot of journalism people sign up for Speech Communication, plus I have a problem speaking in public, and I thought this class would help me.” As was the case with his early essays in Rhetoric 101, Charles struggled with the initial speeches he was required to give in front of the class. While the teacher was fairly satisfied with the content of his speeches, Charles received very poor marks on elements associated with his delivery. He either tended to read straight from his notes with little or no eye contact with his audience, or, when he attempted to rely less on what he had written, he nervously stumbled over his words, filling the pauses between sentences with “um” or “uh,” or omitting large portions of his talk entirely. Reflecting on his first speech in the journal he was required to keep for the class, Charles wrote,

The biggest problem of my speech was that I kept saying um. I wasn't fluent. Most of my speech, especially toward the end I was groping for words. I used um and uh more than anyone in the class. I was shocked by how much I used um. I didn't feel comfortable. . . . I would consider the areas I need to improve are my deliver, fewer words on my keyword outline, look more at the audience and stop reading from my paper so much.

Problems with delivery affected his second speech as well, this time with even more disastrous results. Charles explained, “On my second speech I just really messed up. I was nervous and then my Powerpoint messed up and things started taking too long, and I then I just didn't use my keyword outline. I finally gave the rest of my speech with my back turned to the audience. That's how bad it was.” After the first five weeks, as a result of receiving a D on the first speech and an F on the second, Charles found himself in danger of failing the course. His concerns extended beyond just receiving a failing grade; he also worried that failing Speech Communication 101 would significantly hurt his chances of getting accepted into the College of Communication's journalism program, to which he planned to apply the following academic year as the next step in pursuing his dream of becoming a professional journalist.

Following his second speech, Charles decided to seek help: “Speech Comm was killing me, and I didn't know what to do. I went to the [university's] writing workshop, but they couldn't help me with speaking.” Unable to find assistance through curricular channels, Charles began exploring extracurricular opportunities to speak in front of a live audience. Almost

immediately, he discovered that the campus's African American Cultural Center hosted weekly poetry readings. In order to participate, Charles decided to read some of the poems from the collections of poetry he and others had published years before as members of the People's Poets Project, an organization that Charles founded with some of his co-workers at *New Expression*. This project had its beginnings in a conversation between Charles and the magazine's poetry editor about their common interest in poetry. Half-jokingly, the two talked about publishing their own collection of poems. Recounting their conversation during one of our interviews, Charles said, "So I was like 'Do you want to write a book? Like, you know, a poetry book?' I was just playing around and he was like 'You know what, that's a good idea.'" This conversation was overheard by one of the editorial advisors at *New Expression*, who encouraged them to pursue their interest in publishing a book of poetry and offered to show them how to do it. In April of 1999, with the help of the advisor, Charles and his friend established the People's Poets Project, with Charles serving as president and editor. Drawing from the poetry written by its two founding members and students at other high schools, the People's Poets Project published its first book, *Days of Our Lives*, in August of 1999. This initial book sold two hundred copies, and its success prompted the Project to publish a second one, *People's Poets Project: Lasting Impressions*, which was published in July 2000 and sold one hundred and ninety copies.

Having these poems on hand positioned Charles to take advantage of the African American Cultural Center's weekly readings, in which he participated each week for the rest of the semester. Explaining his decision to use the poems from the published volumes, Charles stated, "I hadn't written any [poems] since we finished the last book, so I just decided to use those [his poems in the book] since that's all I had. I read other people's poems too." Browsing through the dozens of his poems that appear in these volumes during one of our interviews, Charles admitted that a few were written simply to meet the publisher's minimum page requirement. The vast majority, though, were the product of careful and sustained effort over multiple drafts and driven by his passion for writing. His poem titled "Thank You," which I include below, is a moving tribute to the great-aunt who raised him and his two older sisters after their mother passed away.

You raised six of your own  
Then you raised you know who  
Something I couldn't possibly have done



Journalism, Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy, and Academic Literacy

Then you decided to take on three more, including myself  
You worked, you worked, and you worked to you could work no  
more

To put food on the table for your family

You gave it 150% and more

You dealt with everyone problems

And forgot your own

You forgot you had Sugar and arthritis

You took care of your bad grandchildren

You lectured everyone on their mistakes

You led us the right way

You let me be, and you never told me to shut up

Thank You!

His other poems often dealt with less serious subjects. “Nightmare on 35<sup>th</sup> Street,” for example, reflects Charles’ long history as a fan of the Chicago White Sox, his favorite professional baseball team. Charles used the opening stanzas of this poem as an opportunity to playfully point out that the criticisms of Comiskey Park, the Sox’s recently renovated stadium, are only symptoms of more fundamental problems plaguing the team:

I love baseball

But I refuse to fall

I refuse to fall from the top of the ball mall

I love my White Sox’s

But I hate their stupid new park

How can you build something that’s worst that what you’re  
tearing down

It feels like we’re in the center of hell

Maybe that’s why we no longer have Belle<sup>o</sup>

Maybe that’s why the fans have bailed

We must stop blaming the upper deck

Because Comiskey is in a wreck

The upper deck is a small part of a larger problem

Comiskey park is mirage

It looks good on the outside

But its hell in the inside.

In addition to entertaining and informing his audience and showcasing his abilities as a poet, these two poems and the dozens of others Charles used for the Center's weekly readings helped him to improve his public speaking for his speech communication course in ways that were not available through curricular channels. In participating in these readings, then, Charles was simultaneously creating and maintaining a connection with the university's small African American community and practicing how to use written materials during an oral presentation, maintain eye contact with his audience, avoid using "um" and "uh," and control his nervousness when addressing a live audience.

Seeking opportunities to further develop these abilities, Charles also discovered that the university hosted Open Mic Night, a monthly event that invited students to display their talents in front of their peers. After attending one of the performances, Charles realized that Open Mic Night could provide him with another regular opportunity to develop his public speaking abilities. But, according to Charles, "all the other people get up there and like played the guitar and did music stuff, and music is my one weakness, so that like wasn't a possibility." The next week, Charles attended the African American Cultural Center's annual comedy show, an event where well-known African American comedians from the Chicago area perform a series of stand-up routines for UIUC students, and he realized that he could do something similar for Open Mic Night: "I saw them and I was like, 'Oh, I could do this,' and they gave me an idea for what to do at Open Mic Night." Seeing the comedy show also prompted Charles to recall the short stand-up routine he had put together and performed at the final banquet for the People's Poets Project the previous summer. In order to celebrate the Project's success and the two collections of poetry it published and sold, Charles organized a banquet and assumed the role of master of ceremonies during the festivities. To entertain the audience before the meal was served, Charles jumped up on stage with a microphone to read a couple of humorous bits he had written and some of the poems that had appeared in the Project's collections: "I came up with the jokes. This was the first time I'd ever put together a comedy routine. It went alright. People laughed at the jokes, and then I read [some of] the poems from the book. The crowd loved hearing them."

With the next Open Mic Night a few weeks away, Charles set about amassing and creating material for his stand-up act, jotting pages and pages of rough notes to himself in a red spiral-bound notebook as he watched his favorite television shows such as *ESPN Sportscenter*, *Saturday Night Live*, and

the *Daily Show*; read the joke pages of magazines like *Playboy* and *Maxim*; browsed pamphlets, flyers, and other visual texts posted around his residence hall; elicited jokes from friends; scanned through humorous e-mails his sisters had sent him; and reflected on his own life experiences. Charles also turned to his *New Expression* news stories as a rich source of material. For example, a passage from one of his sports editorials about drug use in professional basketball that asked whether “athletes had to get so high to get high” was incorporated verbatim into his routine. In another instance, comments from one of his sports columns about Comiskey Park were repurposed into a much longer comedy bit about the various mistakes architects had made while building the structure. It is interesting that Charles developed a bit about his disastrous second Speech Communication 101 speech. A brief note referencing this bit appears in his notebook as #13) Bad speech com speech.” Working from these rough notes, Charles would select a series of jokes and longer bits to include in his act, determine the order in which they would appear, and then set to work writing them out more fully and neatly in his notebook so that they could be accessed more easily during his act. More elaborate bits, those too long to write out in their entirety, were worked into keyword phrases that signaled the points Charles needed to remember

Once he had about fifteen pages worth of one-liners, knock-knock jokes, impersonations (e.g., Bill Clinton reading a presidential address, Jesse Jackson addressing the issue of voter fraud during the 2000 presidential election, Harry Caray or John Madden doing the play-by-play of a baseball or football game, or Tom Brokaw doing the evening news), personal experiences, and his own observations about life’s twists and turns written neatly on the pages of his notebook, Charles felt he had enough material to make people laugh for a ten-minute performance. When it was his turn, Charles would step on the stage and into the spotlight, adjust the microphone, flip to the proper page in his notebook, greet his audience by announcing “Hi. I’m Charles Scott and I’m here to do some jokes for you,” and start into his act (see Figure 2). When his routine went well, Charles was able to glance at his notebook every so often and then look confidently out into the audience to smoothly deliver his jokes, make an impromptu observation, or deal with the occasional heckler. Sometimes, though, Charles stumbled through a few of his bits, resorted to reading jokes straight from his notebook, or grew visibly nervous while on stage, any of which might prompt a few boos from the audience. Charles was able to take this all in stride, perhaps because he saw his routines as an opportunity to improve his performance in Speech Communication 101 rather than preparation for a career as a stand-up comedian. As Charles stated,

“I like the writing and making people laugh, but I’m there to work on my public speaking.” Like his weekly poetry readings, then, Charles’ comedy performances gave him a chance to practice speaking in public, maintaining eye contact with his audience, and producing an oral presentation from written material.



**Figure 1.** Holding his joke notebook, Charles delivers a joke during one of his stand-up performances at Open Mic Night.

After receiving a D on his first speech and an F on his second, Charles earned As on his last two speeches of the semester, which allowed him to pass the course with a C. According to Charles, performing in both of these venues figured prominently in his success at the end of the term. Reflecting on how his poetry readings helped his performance in the speech course, Charles said, “I read the poems there twelve or thirteen times during the semester, and I think it made a big difference for my Speech Com speeches. It helped me improve my speaking a lot. I was always scared at first when I was speaking in front of the class. And after I gave the second speech, the really bad one, being up there reading my poetry helped me to get over my nervousness.” Explaining how his stand-up performances enhanced his speeches, Charles stated, “[During my early speeches] I was like real nervous all the time, but after I did the Open Mic Night I wasn’t as nervous, so it helped, it helped a lot. If I could have started Speech Com over again, I’d probably get an A opposed to the C that I got in the class.” Charles specifically mentioned that he felt injecting some of the humor from his comedy routine into the

last two speeches also made a substantial difference: “What helped me a lot was that I used the comedy too. When I gave the last two speeches, my tone was more joking and relaxed, and so I wasn’t so serious and uptight.” In the evaluations he wrote for class, Charles credited his use of humor with helping him to capture and hold his audience’s attention. Critiquing his performance on his fourth speech, for example, Charles wrote,

I showed substantial improvement over my first two [speeches]. I did a good job with keeping the audience interested in my speech. I could tell because the audience was laughing through the entire speech. It was humorous and I wasn’t nervous.

In “Real Niggaz’s Don’t Die,” Kermit Campbell notes the way his students deployed the linguistic resources of their homes and communities as they “spoke their way into their [academic] writing” (69). In Charles’ case, we see him writing his way into his academic speaking by drawing upon a range of his own extracurricular texts to improve his performance in Speech Communication 101. Tracing an even more profoundly heterogeneous and heterochronic latticework, this narrative highlights Charles’ purposeful and systematic efforts to assemble and coordinate a constellation of texts, practices, and activities. The last two speeches Charles gave in Speech Communication 101 were heavily informed by poetry readings and stand-up comedy routines performed weeks or perhaps only days earlier. Those performances, in turn, were underwritten by the poems and news stories Charles had written years before and by the host of other texts from which Charles assembled his comedy routine. In addition to the heterogeneous and heterochronic complexity of this nexus, I am also struck by its profoundly multimodal nature. The texts, practices, and activities that Charles acts with have been repurposed not just across time, space, and genre, but across mode as well. The poems originally written for the People’s Poets Project’s collections, for example, were read aloud from those volumes at the African American Cultural Center, and portions of news stories originally written for the news magazine were later embodied, enacted, and voiced in Charles’ stand-up performances.

As Charles delivered his two final speeches, he was leveraging the literate “funds of knowledge” he developed by reading poetry and performing stand-up comedy in front of live audiences. He was, as Moll and Gonzales would claim, “taking full advantage of social and cultural resources in the service of academic goals” (441). This nexus of extracurricular and curricu-

lar texts, practices, and activities proved to be a critical one for Charles. He was in real danger of failing the speech course, as his grades on his first two speeches attest, and earning a passing grade in the class was a key first step toward succeeding in the undergraduate curriculum, having a successful first semester at the university, making progress toward a degree, and, perhaps even more importantly, accomplishing a much longer-term goal of being a professional journalist.

### **Writing His Way into the University**

As we've seen, Charles' extracurricular writing certainly helped him to write himself into the university's extracurriculum. The stories he wrote for the university's student newspaper, the *Daily Illini*, were read by thirty-thousand people each morning. Charles stated that his peers frequently congratulated him when his stories made the front page, and, upon hearing his name, people often responded by saying, "Oh yeah, I've seen your name in the *DI*." His frequent readings at the African American Cultural Center earned him a great deal of recognition within the university's small but active African American student body. His stand-up comedy routine won him notoriety as well. Following one of his initial performances, our entire Rhetoric 101 class was abuzz with talk of Charles' routine, and for the next few days his classmates all but begged him to repeat some of his material in class. Indeed, his acclaim extended throughout his residence hall and the campus as a whole. Although these extracurricular activities were begun in response to Charles' difficulties in his speech class, he continued to read his poetry and perform his stand-up act long after he'd passed the class. His poetry readings lasted for another full semester, and his stand-up comedy continued through the middle of his sophomore year.

These extracurricular engagements also provided him with the means to inscribe himself into the college curriculum as well. Charles' success in incorporating material from outside sources into his rhetoric essay was supported by his extensive experience weaving statistical data into his news stories for *New Expression*, the magazine where he acquired valuable experience during his high school years. The successful delivery of his final two speeches was underwritten by his experiences reading poetry and performing stand-up comedy in front of live audiences, which in turn were supported by his poems, news stories, and an array of other extracurricular texts, practices, and activities. These successes are not miraculous; rather,

they appear to be grounded in the literate practices Charles had employed in the past and in blendings of non-school and school literate practices. This type of blending is not unusual. Is it uncommon for a college student to draw on a personal interest or hobby in writing for a class? Is it unusual for a student writer to draw on popular, religious, or political discourses to enrich the voicing of a paper?

I do need to point out, though, that drawing upon elements of his extracurricular writing was certainly no panacea for all of the difficulties Charles encountered in the university. Despite the linkages he was able to make between his non-school and school writing, problems with the more mechanical elements of his writing continued to mark Charles' journey through the curriculum. His struggles with conventional spelling, punctuation, and grammar, for example, figured prominently in Charles' poor performance in the introductory journalism course he took at the beginning of his sophomore year as he worked toward admission to the university's journalism program. The C he earned in the course overall probably hurt but certainly did not help when he applied to the program, and he was eventually denied admission. Although greatly disappointed with the rejection, Charles turned once again to his extracurricular writing, particularly his journalism, as a way to pursue a career in journalism. He changed his major to political science, which he saw as another popular major for journalists, and promptly increased the number of stories he wrote for the *Daily Illini* and also actively sought out additional opportunities for publication. These published stories, in the form of the clips Charles submitted with numerous applications for internship positions, helped to earn him a summer internship with the *Duluth News Tribune* in Duluth, Minnesota, and a second internship the following summer with the *Wausau Daily Herald* in Wausau, Wisconsin. Pursuing his dream of working at a larger newspaper after he graduated from UIUC, Charles eagerly accepted an internship with the *New Jersey Star Ledger* in the summer of 2005.

This portrait of Charles' literate development points to the interdependent nature of these seemingly separate experiences with writing and to the continual, unceasing interaction of extracurricular and curricular literate activities that are so profoundly interconnected that it becomes difficult to see where one ends and others begin. In this sense, understanding Charles' development as an academic writer and speaker means taking into account his experiences with non-school journalism, poetry, and stand-up comedy as well as with Rhetoric 101 and Speech Communication 101 and how such engagements motivate, facilitate, and invigorate one another. Whether

assembled tacitly or consciously, these densely textured networks that link apparently disparate literate activities are the very fabric of Charles' literate life. Or, one might say that writing, whether for first-year composition or stand-up comedy or any other purpose, is not so much about learning new practices in a new context as it is about coordinating and re-coordinating networks of multiple practices, artifacts, and identities; about reading those diverse currents of literate activity and understanding how they are and might be related, and then writing at the confluences where they meet.

In terms of research into the literate development of basic writers, Charles' story serves as a cogent reminder that the term "basic writer" only applies to a narrow range of literate abilities (see Bartholomae; Horner; Lu and Horner), and thus to how much more we need to know about the literate landscapes basic writers inhabit. Thinking back some seven years to the Rhetoric 101 tutorial sessions and subsequent interviews during which Charles initially introduced me to the richly literate life he led outside of school, I can still vividly recall how powerfully this revelation hit me both as a teacher and a fledgling writing researcher who had just begun a doctoral program in Writing Studies that same semester. I had spent the previous decade teaching writing at a variety of secondary and post-secondary institutions, and it had never struck me that the students in my classes might write for purposes other than school, or even to ask them if they did. In terms of writing research that addressed this issue, I had begun to read a number of studies that focused on undergraduates' school writing, but only a precious few provided even a cursory glimpse of their non-school literate activities. Had it not been for Charles showing me his *Daily Illini* stories during one of our weekly tutorial sessions, which then prompted an ongoing discussion about the various other kinds of extracurricular writing he was and had been deeply involved in, I would have missed a crucial element in his construction of a literate self.

And yet, merely mapping basic writers' extracurricular literate lives is not enough. In "The Problem and Method of Investigation," Vygotsky cautions against trying to understand complex psychological activity by parsing it into discrete elements and studying them in isolation. He likened, for example, attempts to understand human action by reducing it into isolated parts to adopting

the strategy of the man who resorts to the decomposition of water into hydrogen and oxygen in his search for a scientific explanation of the characteristic of water, its capacity to extinguish fire . . . .



This man will discover, to his chagrin, that hydrogen burns and oxygen sustains combustion. He will never succeed in explaining the characteristics of the whole by analyzing the characteristics of its elements. (45)

Charles' story suggests that the same is true of our search to understand how basic writers develop as literate persons throughout the undergraduate years. Like the man who looks separately at hydrogen and oxygen without ever coming to realize the characteristics of water, the researcher who examines non-school and school writing as separate, autonomous activities cannot see and account for how they mutually interact and inform one another. In other words, we can understand basic writers' literate development only by studying "the way literacy actually lives" (Carter 119) in the far-flung assemblages of non-school and school texts, practices, and activities that shape and texture our students' growth as writers. Such a view of literate development not only addresses the richness of non-school literacies, but also does not presuppose either that non-school discourses are relevant only to the extent that they interfere with school discourse or that non-school discourses are true and authentic and hence should simply be valorized.

In addition to underscoring just how hard our students are willing to work to succeed at school tasks, Charles' story foregrounds an all-important fact for basic writing teachers: helping students extend themselves into the privileged conventions of the university is not so much about teaching them new practices as it is about providing them with productive opportunities to negotiate a range of literate engagements, to explore the wealth of literate practices in their ever-expanding repertoires and to consider how these practices might relate to one another. Charles' experiences should encourage us to see that non-school writing has the potential to enrich undergraduates' educational experiences and thus to explore more fully how we can all learn to recognize, acknowledge, and promote the productive weaving together of diverse literate practices. By inviting our students to draw from the range of literate practices and activities they engage in outside of school and to honor the values, beliefs, and interests embedded in them, we encourage them to contribute to, rather than merely reproduce, academic literacy—to make it their own rather than someone else's. And, ultimately, we empower students to write their own way into the university. As a way to create academic environments that value and afford connections to the competencies that basic writers bring to the university, Bizzell, Campbell, and a host of others have asked students to read the hybrid discourses of others and to produce hybrid discourses of their own. We might also invite

students to trace the far-flung networks of texts, practices, and activities that underwrite their various engagements with writing. We might begin, for example, by asking students to identify extracurricular experiences with writing and map the various resources they draw upon to accomplish those tasks. These assignments might give way to fuller analyses of those elements that are unique to or could be repurposed across various literate activities. Having students attend to the full range of their literate engagements, those in the near and distant past as well as those in the present, gives them the opportunity to locate both synergies and conflicts between them. An awareness of continuities can help students to see that taking up academic practices doesn't necessitate the displacement of the non-school practices in their repertoires. Understanding any discontinuities can throw into high relief the wealth and diversity of literate practices that students have at their disposal and can also help them to challenge and refine their sense of themselves as writers. A knowledge of both the potential synergies and conflicts, I contend, is essential if we are to develop in our students what Patricia Bizzell refers to as "a sort of craft-person attitude toward writing, in which various tools are developed and students learn to deploy them with greater facility" (20).

Attending more closely to the full range of basic writers' experiences with literacy would also help us to avoid misconstruing their writing abilities. As Carter is quick to point out, the CCCC Position Statement on Assessment acknowledges that "one piece of writing—even if it is generated under the most desirable conditions—can never serve as an indicator of overall literacy, particularly for high stakes decisions" ("Writing Assessment"). What Charles' story foregrounds so powerfully is that the same might be said for one particular kind of writing, be it academic or otherwise. To focus on only one type of writing to the exclusion of others is, in effect, to make a sampling error, mistaking performance on a narrow task or judged by a single dimension for the full multi-dimensional range of literacy. In an environment with ever greater emphasis on ever narrower regimes of literate accountability, I hope this picture of literacy as intermingled networks of literate activity, of literate development as a function of a full range of experiences with written and spoken language, reminds us how important it is in human terms to look at the whole person, to support the extracurricular activities as well as the curricular.

## Notes

1. Charles Scott, Jr., granted permission for his real name to be used when he volunteered to participate in this research in September of 2000. He continued to grant permission to do so each year as we continued this project and after reading final drafts of conference presentations and an earlier draft of this manuscript.

2. These formal semi-structured interviews were supplemented by dozens of informal conversations Charles and I had during his time at the university. I kept notes on fifteen of these informal conversations, which occurred during chance meetings on campus, in phone and frequent e-mail exchanges, during occasional meals together, and during my observations of Charles as he engaged in a variety of extracurricular activities (e.g., at and following Charles' stand-up performances, driving to and from the basketball games and practices Charles coached).

3. For example, Charles' lengthy and detailed explanations over several different interviews of the crucial role that statistical data had played as he struggled with rapidly producing news stories for *New Expression*, his promotion to the role of Survey Coordinator at the newspaper, and the copious amount of statistical data in almost all of his early news stories suggested that this was a key practice in his development as a journalist.

4. Excerpts from interviews used throughout this article have been slightly edited. False starts and repetitions have been omitted; punctuation and capitalization have been added.

5. In August of 1999, the Chicago-based television broadcast program *Concerning Chicago* focused on *New Expression*. As one of the student journalists who appeared on the program, Charles announced that as the Survey Coordinator for *New Expression* he had handled 4,607 surveys (i.e., individual responses) during the three months he worked at *New Expression* that year (*Concerning Chicago*).

6. I do not wish to imply that using survey data was the only strategy Charles used in writing his stories. His later stories for *New Expression* attest to the expansion of his repertoire of journalistic practices as he came to rely increasingly on intensive and repeated interviews with his sources.

7. Throughout this article, I present excerpts from Charles' writing exactly as written, recognizing that it frequently includes unconventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

8. Beyond the wealth of statistics, other features from Charles' news stories for *New Expression* are present as well. The bolding of "TV Guide" in the first paragraph, for example, resonates with the bolding of "*New Expression*" and "NE" that occurs in all of the *New Expression* stories Charles gave me.

9. Here, Charles refers to Albert Belle, a former Chicago White Sox outfielder.

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