

Joining a discourse community comes with its own set of complications and challenges. As mentioned by Johns: “Full involvement or affiliation in academic discourse communities requires major cultural and linguistic tradeoffs from many students” (334). In summation, when one affiliates themselves with a discourse community, there are expectations of linguistic character, culture, and “ways of being” that the members are expected to uphold. In her example, Johns described a graduate student from Japan that was accustomed to being given an example essay before attempting to create a paper, but was not provided the same luxury in the United States. Despite her previous education experience, she was expected to submit an essay to her professor, without a previously presented sample. Another conflict depicted by the author was the issue of authority. In every academic circle, many countries, and even within one’s own social groups, there is a consciously or unconsciously established allocation of authority. By understanding these placements of authority, students may discover how texts and spoken discourses are used to gain and maintain authority, and how to critique such relationships.

With the author’s demonstration of how a rebellion may actually change the discourse community, it is meant that with a successful rebellion, comes change. Whether it be an updated set of values and principles, or an entirely new branch of a discourse community, rebels inspire change and adaptation with their questioning of the established rules. One historical example that can be drawn from this theory is Martin Luther King Jr. and his participation and influence in the Civil Rights Movement. King was a respected Baptist minister and social rights activist in the 1950s, and challenged the widely accepted beliefs of the time of inequality and racism. Through his

inspirational speeches and activism, King played a pivotal role in ending the legal segregation of African Americans in the United States, thus altering the discourse community he was affiliated with for the better. According to Gee, “When such conflict or tension exists, it can deter acquisition of one or the other or both of the conflicting Discourses” (280). This argument contrasts Johns view of change as one of welcoming adaptation in a discourse community to condition itself to new members.

Works Cited

Johns, Ann M. “Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity.” *Text, role, and Content: Developing Academic Literacies*, Cambridge UP, 1997, pp. 51-70

Gee, James Paul. “Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction.” *Journal of Education*, vol. 171, no. 1, 1989, pp. 5-17