Daria Letcher

James Paul Gee and Amy Cuddy both discuss ways to become who you want to be and how to become what you want to be. Gee and Cuddy have very different views of how to get the status or roles you want to achieve. Gee believes that if you miss the apprenticeship or miss the proper training then you cannot enter a different social class or gain the social goods associated with that class. Gee also believes there is a way to pretend to be in a certain social class, but people in that class will know a pretender in their class and will not give them the social goods that accompany that status. People are in certain groups when they are at home as compared to when they go to school or work or participate in other activities. These activities and interactions are called Discourses by Gee. There are many different discourses and everyone has many discourses in their life. Amy Cuddy does believe in Discourses and that there are many but she believes that people can fake their way into a discourse. Even though they have many different views, some of the Cuddy’s views can help strengthen Gee’s points.

Entering a Discourse comes with many challenges and very few paths that Gee explains in his paper. Gee believes “Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse”(7). Gee considers an apprenticeship as “enculturation” with people who are fluent in the Discourse. Gee thinks that to become fluent in a Discourse one needs an apprenticeship to gain another Discourse and without it one cannot become fluent in a new Discourse. If you miss the apprenticeship with a master in the Discourse then you can never become fluent so in turn you can never acquire the social goods that come with different Discourses. It is also hard to obtain a new Discourse if it is in a different social class because the members in that class will know that they do not belong. Even though Gee says that there is no way to become fluent without an apprenticeship he does say you can pretend to be in a certain Discourse. Being a pretender allows you to interact with people on that Discourse but you will not acquire any of the social goods that come with that Discourse. Those social goods could be power or money. Gee also says you can mushfake a Discourse. Gee states “Mushfake Discourse means partial acquisition coupled with meta-knowledge and strategies to make do...”(13). Mushfaking is just using what you have to get to where you want to be. People might “mushfake” because their primary Discourse and the Discourse they are mushfaking may have ideas that conflict with each other and they don’t want to give up their primary Discourse’s values. I believe once you have gone far enough to gain social goods then you have probably changed in ways that are out of your control which is not to say Gee is totally wrong about never truly becoming a part of the class, but I believe that it is impossible to not gain some of the values and ideas from a Discourse if you have gained the social goods because you have then become fluent. Cuddy agrees with Gee on mushfaking but she believes that you eventually become fluent in that Discourse which is something I agree with because there is no way to immerse yourself with people in a discourse and interact with them are their beliefs and not become fluent and become one of them. Cuddy states that if you “do it enough you will actually become it and internalize”(19:15) which agrees with my opinion of eventually becoming fluent because you have spent a majority of your time trying to fit in with the Discourse and you cannot fake being a part of the Discourse forever because eventually you are either in or you are not.

Cuddy believes that if you fake it then eventually you will become even if you don’t want to. Faking it will only take you so far but eventually you will have become it and you will no longer be faking. You will have become a part of a new Discourse by learning from those people whether they are a master in the Discourse or not. Cuddy asks if “it is possible that we could get people to fake it and would it lead them to participate more”(6:34)? I think it is possible for people to participate if they fake confidence because even if they are wrong they have tried and put themselves out there and they can learn from their mistakes. Faking confidence can help someone go from faking a Discourse to becoming fluent in a Discourse because you ask questions and learn the ideas or concepts correctly so you make less mistakes so no one will know you are faking it. Cuddy claims “that our bodies change our minds and our minds can change our behavior, and our behavior can change our outcomes”(15:36). Even if you feel like you should not be there you will eventually have a moment where you realize you are doing it rather than faking it. While Cuddy says you will eventually stop faking and will have become fluent in a Discourse, and Gee says you can mushfake but never truly be fluent in a Discourse after missing the apprenticeship, I say you can enter a Discourse by faking it, but I also think that the best way is to not miss the apprenticeship, but if the apprenticeship is not an option then Cuddy’s way of faking it to become it will be just as effective.

Consistently pretending and posing enables you to become literate in a Discourse because eventually you won’t be pretending and will just be doing it. You will also have acquired the “saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations” that Gee claims makes up a Discourse then you will be fluent. If faking a Discourse long enough means you become a part of it then that can change your social class by affecting your amount of power or money. While you can still enter a Discourse after missing the apprenticeship there is no guarantee that faking it or mushfaking will enter into a Discourse. If you have conflicting values between Discourses then you might not fake it enough to become fluent because you do not want to change your values whether it is intentional or not. Knowing that you can enter a Discourse even after missing the apprenticeship by faking it is helpful “because the people who can use it the most are the ones with no resources and no technology and no status and no power”(Cuddy 20:11). The people who are in the position that Cuddy describes at the end of her talk are the ones who are most likely faking it until they become it. Gee and Cuddy have similar ideas but while Gee has some ideas that I agree with like mushfaking, I agree with Cuddy’s ideas of faking much more because she believes you can actually become fluent in the Discourse unlike Gee who thinks even if you mushfake you will never truly become fluent in a Discourse.

Dear Dr. Frank,

I feel this paper really shows improvement in all of the outcomes. I know I was almost the mastery of writing as a recursive process. With this paper I think I have almost mastered the recursive process if I have not already. I feel I did a good job with integrating the ideas of others. I think I used many more quotes in this paper than I have in any paper and I tried to make sure they all were necessary and that I explained them. I also tried to make sure I planted naysayers to further complicate my claim while integrating the ideas of others. I feel that I have mastered documenting work with the appropriate conventions because it was nothing new to me. I feel I have a pretty solid understanding of how to cite sources. I think all the other outcomes are doing well considering how our meeting went. I have been improving on my engagement with the course because that was my lowest mark out of the outcomes we had practiced. I do need to work on the organization of my website so that it is clear where my assignments are on the portfolio.