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# *Writer's Statement about "Through a Microscope, Darkly: Students' Perceptions of What Scientific Communication Is and What It Achieves"*

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DYLAN LANSER

I wanted to write about scientific communication because I wanted to apply the time I spent in Composition to something that could be relevant to my future beyond just the experience of having written a research essay. Unfortunately, this also meant that I was my own ideal interview subject. While writing, I had to guard against contaminating the results with how I myself would have filled out my survey (biased research, I found, is widely condemned). While writing can definitely be both good and hopelessly entangled in the author's perspective, I was acutely aware that for the topic I selected it would have been crippling for the points I was trying to make to not at least attempt to write as objectively as possible. In my own humble research, I thus found myself grappling directly with the paper's enabling assumption: how science is conducted is often dictated by the implicit expectations of the audience.

Selecting a topic for this assignment (the largest of the semester) took longer for me than I believe it did for most other students. I was concerned with picking a topic that would seem too trivial, partly because I was afraid I would grow cynical and lose interest before it was complete. If, on the other hand, I picked a topic which was very controversial, intrusive, or simply above my ability to address, those assessing my work would not have taken it seriously, even if the findings were well-written. In hindsight, I am pleased that I took a long time to decide and am very grateful for the guidance Professor Hopkins provided.

Once the original research I conducted was accumulated, the paper evolved out of repeatedly musing over what the data could mean and how it either contradicted or confirmed assumptions. It wouldn't be accurate to say the paper wrote itself, but I found the actual writing to be easier than other assignments. Through the act of gathering data, I had actually been processing for many hours what that data could mean. Most of the editing was just removing musings that seemed foolish on a second reading.

Although the survey I used is not itself in the paper, I found that the entire paper depended on its wording and execution. This is because most of the students I surveyed knew as much as I did on the topic of scientific communication. If the survey was too boring or confusing, the responses it generated would be bland or echo too closely the clarifications I would try to provide. I had to write a good survey that students could respond to and, sometimes, grow enthusiastic about because I knew it would be difficult to write a convincing discussion on results I myself believed were meaningless.