

## WHAT CONSTITUTES A DISCIPLINE?

- **QUESTIONS:** What questions are deemed as interesting? significant? a contribution? What is the nature of these questions?
- **OBJECTS OF STUDY:** What do researchers/scholars study?
- **MODES OF INQUIRY:** Which methods are deemed worthy? Which are rejected?
- **GENRES:** What are the acceptable genres in the discipline? How is knowledge disseminated? What are the valid channels? What are the valid forms? What evidence is acceptable?

## DISCIPLINARY DIVERSITY

None of the currently institutionalized sciences form single, homogeneous language communities. Physicists in one empirical area do not necessarily fully ‘understand’ physicists in another; pathologists do not necessarily understand electrophysiologists, and so on. And within each scientific area, even when cut rather finely, one may distinguish disorderly ‘hierarchies’ of language communities: in the extreme case, there may be quite definite and unique observable properties and relations which only two men, perhaps working in the same laboratory, may be able to perceive and denote by some linguistic expression. (529)

--from: Koch, S. (1976). “Language communities, search cells, and psychological studies.” In W. J. Arnold (ed) *Nebraska Symposium On Motivation 1975*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

## SCHOLARLY TRINITY

- **SIGNIFICANT**—A research study must be able to answer the “so what” question. It must be of importance and interest to those in the field, and to those it is meant to benefit.
- **CONTRIBUTION**—A research study must make a contribution to the scholarship in the field. It might *extend* scholarship, *challenge* scholarship, *problematize* scholarship, *open a new space* of scholarship, *fill a void* in the scholarship (topic, area of study, object of study, context, people, etc.)
- **DOBALE**—research must show s/he has access to the resources (time, people, money, location, etc.) to do the research, access to the objects of study, and a reasonable time table for completing the research and writing.

**SOME MODES OF INQUIRY IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION  
TOWARD BUILDING DEFINITIONS**

**Empirical Research**—study of literate practices or some other phenomenon in action

**Theoretical Research**—accounting or explaining a phenomenon

**Historical Research**—tracing the emergence and shifts in particular phenomena (e.g., specific theories, particular literate practices, contexts, participants, and in the teaching and learning of literate practices, etc.)

**Hermeneutical Research**—rhetorical, literary, and/or linguistic close analyses of texts