Journal of Basic Writing

CELEBRATING *JBW*'s 25th VOLUME

FALL 2006
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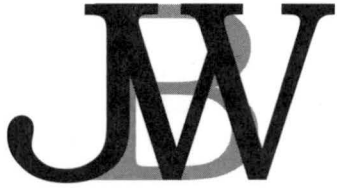

Journal of Basic Writing

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The *Journal of Basic Writing* publishes articles of theory, research, and teaching practices related to basic writing. Articles are refereed by members of the Editorial Board (see overleaf) and the Editors.

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Journal of Basic Writing

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CELEBRATING *JBW*'s 25th VOLUME

CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 15-25 pages, double spaced, on topics related to basic and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and e-mail addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page *only*. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of 4-5 key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain permission for including excerpts from student writing.

We prefer that contributions be submitted as Word document attachments via e-mail to: baugust@citytech.cuny.edu. If electronic submission is not possible, mail five copies of the manuscript and abstract to:

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You will receive a confirmation of receipt; a report on the status of your submission will follow in about sixteen weeks.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic-writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening. The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in non-technical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy.

EDITORS' COLUMN

As we commemorate the publication of the twenty-fifth volume of the *Journal of Basic Writing*, it seems appropriate to reflect on the state of basic writing today. Thirty-one years have passed since this journal was founded in 1975 by Mina Shaughnessy—*JBW*'s first editor—along with eight female colleagues at CUNY's City College of New York.[1] In some ways, the field of basic writing, always contested and endlessly under construction, appears in 2006 to be besieged from all sides. In recent years, the United States has experienced a proliferation of government-mandated high-stakes tests at all educational levels. Not only have these tests caused many students to be labeled as not competent in writing, but they have also influenced definitions of competence in writing. Testing formats that are economical or logistically convenient for large-scale administration have often led to a constricted, impoverished definition of writing, thus devaluing the very competence they were designed to ensure.

To further complicate the situation for the faculty and students who are affected by these problematic definitions of competence in writing, legislatures in several states have passed laws forbidding "remedial classes" in four-year institutions or prohibiting academic credit for basic writing courses. CUNY itself, whose Open Admissions policy was implemented in 1970, has also undergone changes in recent years. On May 26, 1998 (and again on January, 25, 1999, after a legal challenge to the first vote), CUNY's Board of Trustees voted to phase out all "remediation" in its four-year colleges by January 2001. In practice, this meant that only students who passed all three of the University's assessment tests (reading, writing, and math) upon entrance could be admitted to a bachelor's degree program in one of the four-year colleges. Others would have to begin their studies in an associate's degree program or in one of the University's community colleges.

Despite these setbacks, however, the field of basic writing seems to be experiencing a resurgence of energy and commitment from scholars and practitioners across the country. In response to legislative mandates banning "remediation" from four-year institutions, faculty committees are developing creative and academically sound programs to offer students BW support as well as academic credit. Often, this involves removing "remediation" from separate "skills" departments and instead offering regular English Department courses, which carry at least partial academic credit. For descriptions of such innovative

[1] Sarah D'Eloia, Virginia Epperson, Barbara Quint Gray, Isabella Halsted, Valerie Krishna, Patricia Laurence, Nancy Lay, and Betty Rizzo.

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approaches, see "Integrating Reading and Writing: A Response to the Basic Writing 'Crisis'" by Sugie Goen and Helen Gillotte-Tropp (*JBW* 22.2: 90-113); "It's Not Remedial: Re-envisioning Pre-First-Year College Writing" by Heidi Huse, Jenna Wright, Anna Clark, and Tim Hacker (*JBW* 24.2: 26-52); and "Arrested Development: Revising Remediation at John Jay College of Criminal Justice" by Mark McBeth in this issue.

Another positive sign is the development of graduate programs or courses in basic writing (see Barbara Gleason's article in this issue) and an impressive number of print resources including the second edition of *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Gregory R. Glau and published in 2005. Yet another sign of interest and commitment is the CBW (Conference on Basic Writing) listserv (<http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/composition/cbw/listserv.html#subscribe>), which enrolls approximately 450 members and has seen many spirited exchanges in recent months on such topics as course and curriculum design, assessment policies, and pedagogical practices.

To help us take stock of the current state of basic writing, we invited a number of scholars to contribute to this issue. The articles that follow describe important trends in BW today and assess causes for concern and for celebration as we look ahead. In "Back to the Future: Contextuality and the Construction of the Basic Writer's Identity in *JBW* 1999-2005," Laura Gray-Rosendale examines how the identity of basic writers has been portrayed in this journal in recent years. She follows three lines of thought, each of which uses a contextual model to construct the basic writer's identity. While Gray-Rosendale sees an admirable and salutary focus on students' own voices and self-identification, she also identifies a danger: where attention is so narrowly focused and contextualized, it becomes more difficult to recognize the impact of broader patterns, affinities, or policies or to form alliances for public, political purposes.

This public, outward-looking face of basic writing is precisely where Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington focus their analysis in "In the Here and Now: Public Policy and Basic Writing." Examining the premises of several influential policy documents, they argue that BW professionals must learn how to address such public statements effectively. Extending a line of thought developed by Stanford Goto in his 2001 *JBW* article, " Basic Writing and Policy Reform: Why We Keep Talking Past Each Other" (21.2: 1-20), Adler-Kassner and Harrington advocate eschewing academic complexity in favor of courses of action that are strategic, evidence-based, and—most urgently—immediate.

In "Reasoning the Need: Graduate Education and Basic Writing," Barbara Gleason traces the history of the master's degree program in basic writing at City

College, CUNY, initiated by Mina Shaughnessy. Although policies, both local and national, come and go and programs shift and evolve, BW students remain—in degree programs, college preparatory programs, GED programs, and secondary schools. In arguing for the importance of master's programs to prepare not only the instructors but also the administrators, researchers, and scholars of basic writing, Gleason makes the case for the significance of BW scholarship and the necessity for it to be recognized by the larger field of composition and rhetoric and by the institutional bodies where it is studied and formulated and where it is implemented in practice.

The next two articles look at specific basic writing curricula that have been developed by thoughtful and well-informed faculty with the goal of better meeting students' needs and, at the same time, responding to evolving institutional circumstances. In "Arrested Development: Revising Remediation at John Jay College of Criminal Justice," Mark McBeth begins by reviewing the history of basic writing within the CUNY system and then goes on to describe a new course at his college that provides students with a rich intellectual experience while also acknowledging their need to pass the gatekeeping writing exam. This curriculum, according to McBeth, "gives students and instructors a curriculum that does not teach *to* the test but, instead, *with* it."

Working within quite a different context at Texas A&M University at Commerce, Shannon Carter, in "Redefining Literacy as a Social Practice," describes an innovative new curriculum designed to help basic writers develop "rhetorical dexterity." Based on both the New Literacy Studies and activity theory, this carefully sequenced approach begins by having basic writers analyze a discourse they know well, such as fan fiction or football. Students gradually build on this work until they are eventually asked to apply what they have learned from analyzing familiar discourses to understanding the relatively unfamiliar conventions of academic discourse. In her conclusion, Carter argues that through participating in this pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity, students gain "a new understanding of the way literacy actually lives—a metacognitive ability to negotiate multiple literacies."

The multilingual, multicultural nature of student populations at colleges across the country—one of the defining features of the early Open Admissions era—is even more pronounced in 2006. In "Teaching Multilingual Learners: Beyond the ESOL Classroom and Back Again," Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack take a close look, through the lens of their own qualitative and longitudinal studies of former ESOL students, at how such students fare in so-called mainstream courses. They highlight the students' resourcefulness in fulfilling course requirements and emphasize just how much these students have to gain from being asked to do a

substantial amount of writing in courses across the curriculum. Their conclusion is one that all of us should find heartening: "when faculty transform their pedagogy to meet the needs of ESOL students, all students benefit."

Despite the signs of renewed energy and activity that are evident in this special issue of *JBW*, it is important to remain vigilant. The political climate in the United States in 2006 is a conservative one. With politicians and boards of trustees increasingly involved in decisions on educational policy, we should not be too sanguine about the future of basic writing. As Gray-Rosendale and Adler-Kassner and Harrington urgently remind us, teachers, researchers, and administrators who share a commitment to providing educational opportunity and sound pedagogical practice for a diverse student population must be actively, strategically, and passionately involved in the decisions that will affect the future of basic writing and basic writers.

With this issue, we welcome a new Associate Editor, Hope Parisi of CUNY's Kingsborough Community College. Hope's career has centered on basic writing and composition in her work as the Academic Director of Kingsborough's Reading and Writing Center since 1995, as instructor of a graduate practicum for KCC teaching interns, in her published articles, and currently, in her contributions to a soon-to-be-launched central-CUNY website on the CUNY ACT Writing Exam. She will be closely involved with editorial processes and will be working directly with authors of accepted manuscripts. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, a Research Associate at New York University's Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, will be joining our Editorial Review Board.

Finally, it is with regret but also pride that we say goodbye to Johannah Rodgers, one of our two editorial assistants. In fall 2006, Johannah completed her Ph.D. in Composition at the CUNY Graduate Center and accepted a position at Manhattan College. Congratulations, Johannah, and thanks for your many contributions to *JBW* in the past three years!

—**Rebecca Mlynarczyk** and **Bonne August**

Back to the Future: Contextuality and the Construction of the Basic Writer's Identity in *JBW* 1999-2005

Laura Gray-Rosendale

ABSTRACT: Gray-Rosendale continues a project begun with "Investigating Our Discursive History: JBW *and the Construction of the 'Basic Writer's' Identity" (*JBW *1999) in which she employed a Foucauldian archaeological perspective to trace the dominance of as well as the disruptions within the three major metaphoric allegiances of basic writing studies: developmental, academic discourse, and conflict. In this piece, Gray-Rosendale argues that three new constructions of basic writing student identity that have gained prominence in the journal from 1999-2005: the basic writer's identity constructed as in situ; the basic writer's identity constructed as a theory, academic discourse, and/or history reformer; and the basic writer's identity constructed as a set of practices in action. All are part of what she terms a "contextual" model. Identifying both beneficial and detrimental aspects of this contextual model, she calls upon basic writing teachers and scholars to work to combat some of the problematic elements within this latest metaphoric allegiance.*

KEYWORDS: history of basic writing; student identity; developmentalism; academic discourse; conflict/contact zone; contextual.

The *Journal of Basic Writing* has undergone many significant changes during its thirty-year history—shifts in general focus, editorship, theoretical allegiances, and pedagogical approaches. However, from Shaughnessy's original vision to its present form, the journal, its editors, and its readership have maintained a deep and sustained commitment to learning from and teaching

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Laura Gray-Rosendale *is Associate Professor of English and Director of the S.T.A.R. (Successful Transition and Academic Retention) Summer Writing Bridge program at Northern Arizona University. Along with over thirty articles and book chapters, Gray-Rosendale has published* Rethinking Basic Writing: Exploring Identity, Politics, and Community in Interaction *(Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000),* Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition *with Sibylle Gruber (SUNY Press, 2001),* Fractured Feminisms: Rhetoric, Context, and Contestation *with Gil Harootunian (SUNY Press, 2003), and* Radical Relevance: Toward a Scholarship of the "Whole Left" *with Steven Rosendale (SUNY Press, 2004). Her textbook on rhetoric, argument, and popular culture is forthcoming from McGraw-Hill Publishers in 2006. Gray-Rosendale's current research revolves around two major interests—identity and autobiography as well as examining the marginalized voices of basic writing students from the Southwest.*

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our so-called "basic writing" students. Always encouraging an examination of the crucial interconnections between practice and theory, *JBW* continues to be one of the primary sites that call upon us to be better teachers, better thinkers, and better members of our intellectual community.

This history—*JBW's* history—is something that has long intrigued me personally and intellectually. So when I was invited to contribute to this important anniversary volume, while I considered tackling funding, mainstreaming, teacher training, online teaching, ESL, placement, and outsourcing concerns, my attentions were most captivated by how examining our recent past and present might illuminate the questions of our future. This essay might be considered a continuation of my 1999 *JBW* piece, "Investigating Our Discursive History: JBW and the Construction of the 'Basic Writer's' Identity." The original essay offered an historical study of the ways in which basic writing students' identities had been constructed in the discipline from the 1970s to the late 1990s, choosing the journal as my primary site of inquiry. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's view that the formation of identities and practices are themselves a function of historically specific discourses, I provided an archaeological account that I hoped could advance critiques of the present era, show the historical constitution of present modes of social domination, identify historical continuities and discontinuities, reveal progressive and regressive features of our history, and unearth the forces of domination and liberation therein. In an effort to resist the construction of history as a meta-narrative, I instead furnished readings of specific historical texts and their disruptive effects, examining how some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status and currency of "truth" while other alternative discourses became marginalized and subjugated. I reasoned that examining such a history might also foreground discourses and sites through which hegemonic practices could be contested, challenged, and even resisted.

Taking my cue from Joe Harris's research, my 1999 essay followed some of the main moments in the journal during which paradigm shifts in the basic writing students' identity constructions occurred. I made note of disruptions within the developmentalist metaphor in Louise Yelin's 1978 text; challenges to and the beginnings of the initiation metaphor in the Kogen-Hays 1986-1987 debate; and the creation of the conflict model in texts proposed by Min-Zhan Lu, Pamela Gay, and many others throughout the 1990s. My conclusion raised my growing concern that all of these approaches delimited the basic writing student's identity "according to a deficit theory model, an etiological 'problem' that the Basic Writer endures, be it cognitive,

discursive or social, in spite of professed efforts to work outside a diagnosis/cure model" (126-27). Wondering about what the journal's next metaphoric investments might be, I mentioned the beginnings of some new patterns I was noticing—1) a growing attention to students' own interactions and self-presentations, and 2) a greater attempt to challenge the conflict model's dominance "through contesting and disputing how oppositional politics function, through suggesting the contextual nature of politics' functions, and through students' own construction of their politics" (129). In the end, I suggested that we continue to study our history—to look at its disruptions and contradictions, to examine changes in metaphoric allegiances, and to notice similarities in approach across paradigm shifts. I then closed the essay with the following sentence: "Increasingly, this is the path our research must explore, and the *Journal of Basic Writing*, given its complex and interesting history as well as its proclivity for self-reflection and self-historicizing, is precisely the territory within which this will continue to occur" (129).

The present essay—written seven years later—traces several new key approaches for constructing basic writing students' identities that I believe have gained prominence in the meantime, ones that now co-exist, co-mingle with, and sometimes contest one another. In order to do this project any sort of justice I have immersed myself in the excellent essays that have appeared in the journal since 1999. These essays appear to fall into three major categories—the basic writer's identity constructed as *in situ*; the basic writer's identity constructed as a theory, academic discourse, and/or history reformer; and the basic writer's identity constructed as a set of practices in action.

As was the case with my 1999 essay, such a study does not come without its obvious flaws. First, I cannot help but offer these thoughts *in medias res*. As a result, they are partial, interested, and themselves steeped in the metaphoric investments that now dominate basic writing studies. This is the case with most historical scholarship, especially work that reflects on the recent past. Second, while I cite essays as belonging to one category, many could easily be listed under several, and some take up elements of all three. Such is the nature of tracing themes and relationships—they may overlap each other in places and resist the very act of categorizing itself. Despite these problems, I think that examining the recent past and the metaphoric allegiances that dominate our scholarship can provide insight into the past, present, and future of the *Journal of Basic Writing* and basic writing studies as a discipline. And, at the very least, this kind of investigation may influence how my contemporaries and I think about our participation in this history

as well as the most fruitful directions for our own scholarship. For better, for worse, and for now—these are my views from here.

The Basic Writer's Identity As *In Situ*

During the last seven years the notion of the basic writer's identity as in situ—or context-dependent—has emerged more fully than I ever could have anticipated.[1] In fact, over this period it appears to be the intellectual project that has occupied the journal more than any other. This has been a critically necessary tactic used to combat the disease-cure models that earlier metaphoric approaches sometimes relied upon. Rather than providing developmentalist, academic discourse, or conflict model tactics, this new approach indicates that discussions of the basic writer's identity should be accomplished by exposing the local conditions of various basic writers and basic writing programs. Doing this will itself dictate the appropriate pragmatic and theoretical responses, this strategy suggests.

From 1999-2005 there are many examples of this approach in *JBW* to which we might point. I will briefly discuss some representative essays here. From 1999 into 2000 the focus on in situ examinations can be seen in interesting discussions about research universities and basic writing, mainstreaming, creating environments to foster student agency, understanding differences between basic writing taught at two and four year schools, finding new ways to teach grammar, and teaching basic writing in an electronic environment. Gail Stygall's "Unraveling at Both Ends: Anti-Undergraduate Education, Anti-Affirmative Action, and Basic Writing at Research Schools" examines the University of Washington as an example to argue that we should not discount the research university. Citing the emergence of these new intensive, stretch, turbo courses (5), Stygall expresses the conviction that we need to "participate vocally in the available university and political forums" (7), and we ought to be more involved with legislators, lobby professional organizations, and talk with reporters in local media. Likewise, Judith Rodby and Tom Fox's "Basic Writing and Material Acts: The Ironies, Discrepancies, and Disjunctures of Basic Writing and Mainstreaming" exposes the effects of mainstreaming students at California State University, Chico. They reveal the ways in which the category of basic writer disappeared at their institution and how students learned to write effectively by being part of a critical workshop involving writing and literacy learning. Next Mary Kay Crouch and Gerri McNenny's "Looking Back, Looking Forward: California Grapples with Remediation" argues that high school and college links can

reduce the need for remedial instruction. Using Freirean approaches, they view the California state system as a way to accomplish this, tracing its history and problems. Then Joan L. Piorkowski and Erika Scheurer's "'It's the Way That They Talk to You': Increasing Agency in Basic Writers Through a Social Context of Care" considers students associated with the Academic Development Program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, contending that an ethic of care is critical in order to get basic writing students to seek out available resources.

Next Deborah Rossen-Krill and Kim Lynch's "A Method for Describing Basic Writers and Their Writing: Lessons From a Pilot Study" compares basic writers across two and four year colleges. They study students' backgrounds, respond to students' interpretations of the surveys, and analyze students' particular discourse features. Their research centers on three institutions, Cambridge Community College (two year); Minneapolis Community and Technical College (two year), and Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science (four years). Patricia J. McAlexander's "Checking the Grammar Checker: Integrating Grammar Instruction With Writing" investigates the use of grammar lessons and checkers to improve student writing and responsibility for student writing at the University of Georgia. Finally, Judith Mara Kish's "Breaking the Block: Basic Writers in the Electronic Classroom" explores how computers can help basic writing students to work on writer's block and discusses the "stretch" class at Arizona State University from 1997-1998. In answer to students' problems with genre and linearity, Kish draws upon hypertext theories.

The local context interest can be seen in 2001 as well with thoughtful analyses of particular students' interactions, discussions about teaching students of color at a specific institution, and thoughts about how one instructor negotiates the feminization of composition within particular programs. Ann Tabachnikov's "The Mommification of Writing Instruction: A Tale of Two Students" looks at two students' work and her interactions with them at CCNY, determining how maternalism works in the teaching of basic writers. Raul Ybarra's "Cultural Dissonance in Basic Writing Courses" exposes how Latino and other disenfranchised basic writing students, particularly at California State University at Fresno, experience disparities between their own cultural backgrounds and their academic lives in composition classrooms. Wendy Ryden's "How Soft Is Process? The Feminization of Comp and Pedagogies of Care" uses personal narrative to reflect upon her own experiences teaching basic writing over a ten year period in both university and community college settings as well as in sciences-based and humani-

ties-based programs (particularly the humanities department of an institute of technology and CUNY), identifying the gendered nature of how she is constructed by students as a "hard" teacher and then a "soft" one.

The *in situ* approach continued to build momentum into 2002 with essays that focused carefully on creating public discourse models for specific students, examining particular teacher-student interactions, and providing an account of pedagogies at work in an intensive ESL Program. Eileen Biser, Linda Rubel, and Rose Marie Oscano's "Be Careful What You Wish For: When Basic Writers Take the Rhetorical Stage" examines the circumstances of one deaf student at Rochester Institute of Technology as she tries to produce public writing. The writers conclude that "we need to reframe and emphasize the purposes and practices of research when going public" (62). Contending that we need to create assignments and activities that "give our students the confidence to go beyond their comfort levels and to propel them into thorough research" (63), the writers caution against using electronic discourse as a mode of public discourse without critical reflection. Likewise, Shari Stenberg's "Learning to Change: The Development of a (Basic) Writer and Her Teacher" offers such a contextual approach from Creighton University. Stenberg asks not "Who is the basic writer?" but rather "How do particular basic writers construct their own identities?" (38). She studies her own interactions with her student Linda as well as the "pressure Linda exerted" on Stenberg's own construction of a basic writer. Stenberg's self-reflections about her student-centered teaching expose the ways in which dominant metaphors and ideologies can sometimes undermine our best intentions. Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk and Marcia Babbitt's essay titled "The Power of Academic Learning Communities" reveals how important active, student-centered learning communities have been in retaining ESL students at Kingsborough Community College and how they may have implications for retaining all students. As the authors state, it is crucial to create learning communities that are "both social and academic" in order to best aid our students (83).

The strategy of attending to local context can also be seen from 2003-2004 in crucial discussions concerning teaching basic writers about belief spaces and homophobia, case studies of basic writers in online environments, examinations of writing and healing in specific contexts, and investigations of a basic writing classroom environment in Japan. Tom Peele and Mary Ellen Ryder's essay, "Belief Spaces and the Resistant Writer: Queer Space in the Contact Zone," reveals that we often do not have the adequate tools to deal with receiving student arguments that may be troubling to us—whether

sexist, racist, or homophobic. They analyze two student essays from Boise State University, revealing the degree to which ambiguity is a problem in basic writing students' compositions. Peele and Ryder promote employing the idea of "belief spaces" or textual spaces "created by a writer that marks the content of that space as belonging to someone else's beliefs" (28). In the end, they assert that "helping students to identify their belief spaces allows us to talk about controversial viewpoints with which we might strongly disagree without silencing the student; it allows us to examine language from an apparently neutral position" (39). Peele and Ryder also disclose the ways in which "belief spaces" can be used as critical tools for revision. In addition, in "Issues of Attitude and Access: A Case Study of Basic Writers in a Computer Classroom" Catherine Matthews Pavia at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst contemplates the work of two basic writers and their interactions with technology. She outlines the students' attitudes toward computers and how this affects her pedagogy. Pavia also exposes how computer use reveals disparities in their backgrounds with regard to technology, closing with a discussion of how computer use will affect her pedagogy. Then Molly Hurley Moran's essay "Toward a Writing and Healing Approach in the Basic Writing Classroom: One Professor's Personal Odyssey" centers on her own experiences and the strength that personal writing afforded her—as well as her choice to bring personal writing strategies into her work with basic writing students at the University of Georgia. Moran advocates that this preliminary project has shown the degree to which "emphasizing personal writing in a basic writing course and encouraging students to explore painful personal issues can launch them on a journey toward psychological integration and academic success" (111). Finally, in "'Because We Are Shy and Fear Mistaking': Computer Mediated Communication with EFL Writers" Martha Clark Cummings describes her own work at several universities in Japan with computerized communication in two English as a Foreign Language writing classes, charting the various successes both students and teachers encountered. Cummings reveals that computer mediation can help to develop relationships between teachers and students that might not have otherwise been possible.

This *in situ* strategy is also exemplified in more recent 2005 conversations with crucial auto-ethnographic approaches to analyzing pedagogical structures as well as important assessments of innovative programs. In "It's Not Remedial: Re-envisioning Pre-First Year College Writing" by Heidi Huse, Jenna Wright, Anna Clark, and Tim Hacker, the writers examine their struggle with institutional difficulties as well as student needs at the

University of Tennessee Martin. They discuss building new courses, creating placement mechanisms, and integrating a writing center. The writers close by making an assessment of the program as well as providing commentary about how their program works: "Our hope and expectation is that by providing under-prepared students with college-level work in reading and writing rather than a more conventionally 'remedial' approach, the UTM pre-first year college-level composition program will offer these students the opportunity to achieve the academic, personal, and professional success they seek" (50).

While there are clearly many differences within and among these many essays—investigations of programs at specific institutions, debates about mainstreaming, discussions about how constructing basic writers' identities work in particular locations, overviews of pilot studies, thoughts about integrating technology, attempts to analyze how our students come from marginalized social groups as well as how they sometimes marginalize others, and assessments of specific programs—they depend upon and evidence an important development in our scholarship, the refocusing upon the basic writer's identity as *in situ*—or as context-dependent. Such significant attempts to reveal the local conditions of various basic writers and basic writing programs have effectively renewed our focus on our students and their immediate environments in critical ways.

The Basic Writer's Identity as Reformer of Theory, Academic Discourse, and/or History

In the last number of years we have also begun to concentrate our efforts away from developmentalist, academic discourse, or conflict model approaches in terms of how we research and potentially reform our theory—our discursive/terminological investments[2]—as well as our field's history. The basic writer's identity is not just context-dependent and thus resistant to broad theoretical analyses. It also begs for its own context-dependent theorization. As such, the basic writer's identity is sometimes represented implicitly or explicitly as holding the power to reform our theories, our discursive/terminological investments, themselves, as well as to solve problems within the representation of our field's history. These important texts contend that only in better understanding basic writing scholarship and politics can we fully enable changes in the construction of basic writing students' identities as well as our pedagogical options.

This trend toward viewing the basic writer as a theory, academic discourse, or history reformer can be seen in 1999 through a sustained focus on how academic discourse operates both in terms of its possibilities and problems, and also as an examination of our discursive history. In Jane E. Hindman's critical 1999 essay titled "Inventing Academic Discourse: Teaching (and Learning) Marginal Poise and Fugitive Truth," she suggests that transformative pedagogies are not yielding the expected results. Rather, Hindman contends that "breaking this cycle of institutional denial requires recognizing that the source of academic discursive authority is academic disciplinary practice" and thus we have to disrupt our professional disciplinary practice itself (24). Hindman also makes the point that, "illumination of the source of discursive authority of language does not, of itself, subvert that authority; it simply reveals the authority for what it is" (25). Instead, we need to keep a "watchful eye" on our own practices and approaches. We require an ethics for transformative pedagogy that makes students central to the task of challenging academic discourse and evaluation strategies such that basic writing students can be agents and curriculum builders. Likewise, my aforementioned 1999 essay "Investigating Our Discursive History: *JBW* and the Construction of the 'Basic Writer's' Identity" focuses on offering a reading of how we have constructed basic writers' identities historically (the developmental, academic discourse, and conflict models). The essay argues that revisiting this question of how basic writing student identities are constructed over time might itself proffer one critical avenue or solution to the problems of our history.

In addition, the focus on the basic writer's student identity as potentially reforming our theories and discursive/terminological investments can be witnessed in the 2000 Special Issue that gathered together some of the most thoughtful and vibrant voices within basic writing studies. This issue was dedicated to challenging the dictates of academic discourse and calling upon us to view basic writers as those who might best confront their own material barriers. In Patricia Bizzell's 2000 essay, "Basic Writing and the Issue of Correctness, Or, What To Do With 'Mixed' Forms of Academic Discourse," she argues for a rethinking of issues of correctness and, as a result, of academic discourse itself. Bizzell reassesses her earlier position validating "hybrid discourse forms" (which implied that academic discourse was static previously and may have ignored local structural inequities) and instead calls for "mixed" forms. In the end, Bizzell contends that "if basic writing pedagogy is to shift to fostering variant forms of academic discourse, I believe we will still be obliged to try to encourage these variant forms to be done

well" (11). Moreover, Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner's essay "Expectations, Interpretations, and Contributions of Basic Writing" inquires "how might the field of Basic Writing challenge the academy to turn its paper ideals into lived realities?" (44) They ask for "more research on the contributions of basic writers to the academy, not just in terms of body counts in statistics on racial, ethnic, gender, and age ratios, but more importantly, as writers and thinkers with experiences, ambitions, and perseverance for living in the kind of borderland the academy is vowing to become" (46). Lu and Horner also assert that "we need more research which treats basic writers as real historical agents and acknowledges the extent to which many basic writers are already living (out of social necessity and/or personal choice) in the borderlands of dissonant cultural sites when learning to read and write" (47). They call for critical self-reflection on the part of teachers and scholars of basic writing and encourage our students to challenge material barriers, to work from the "ground up."

Others added to this perspective by furnishing useful reflections on the current state of basic writing education, urging that we resist conservative forces while acknowledging both our many failures and the successes of our students. Deborah Mutnick's "The Strategic Value of Basic Writing: An Analysis of the Current Moment" argues that we need to understand such issues in terms of larger socio-political forces around open admissions. She states that "if we are committed to democratizing education, as I believe most basic writing teachers and scholars are, we need to fight back against conservative efforts to reverse affirmative action, end open admissions, eliminate academic support programs, and thus resegregate higher education" (78). In effect, Mutnick indicates that we should position ourselves strategically within our present political and historical perspective and choose our battles carefully. In addition, Lynn Quitman Troyka's open letter to George Otte and Trudy Smoke, "How We Have Failed the Basic Writing Enterprise," argues that we have failed the goals of basic writing—that we have not attended to public relations, did not make our case to the popular press, have not resisted our appropriation by traditional academic culture, did not get involved enough in the Black English controversy, have not dealt with research outcomes consistently, have not publicized our results enough, and did not have broad understandings of what classroom research should look like. Our major success, however, has come from our students and our roles as their teachers.

This notion that the basic writing student identity has the power to reform our theories themselves, our discursive/terminological invest-

ments, as well as to solve problems within the representation of our field's history continued through a series of strong essays from 2001-2003. Laurie Grobman's "(Re)Writing Youth: Basic Writing, Youth Culture, and Social Change" uses research in critical pedagogy to view how basic writers respond to rhetorical constructions of their generation and youth culture. Grobman asserts that we need to encourage our students to use their own knowledge to dismantle these constructions. Likewise, my essay, "Rethinking the Basic Writing Frontier: Native American Students' Challenge to Our Histories," works in this vein. My co-authors and graduate students, Judith Bullock and Loyola K. Bird, and I try to consider the situation of Native American basic writers in a Summer Bridge Program at Northern Arizona University. Weaving between academic and personal voices, we outline the language of frontierism, make note of the strange absence of many basic writing students in our research, and demonstrate how we are all still learning how much we do not know about how to best reach and teach our students. Examining and learning from the work and lives of our students may help us to rethink how Native American basic writers have yet to be addressed seriously by our scholarship. We close by contending that "teachers of Basic Writing need to become settlers on Indian lands, much as [Scott] Lyons encourages all Rhetoric and Composition scholars to do—challenging and disrupting the once comforting images of ourselves as pioneers" (100).

This approach to the basic writing student identity as reformer of our theories, discursive/terminological investments, as well as problems in the discipline's history can also be seen during the more recent years from 2004-2005, especially in Jeffrey Maxson's compelling piece, "'Government of da Peeps, for da Peeps, and by da Peeps': Revisiting the Contact Zone." Maxson indicates that "when students create texts that don't afford easy subjectivities for their teachers to inhabit, these texts challenge some of the notions we as teachers and as engaged citizens hold most dear" (26). This has the possibility of shifting power relationships between students and teachers—thereby influencing basic writing studies altogether. Maxson reveals how he solicits oppositional discourse, encourages translation exercises that require students to examine academic prose in their own language, and asks students to parody academic language itself. He closes by stating that the "student texts more than fulfill any promise inherent in the assignments.... In them, students are seen to have written themselves into authoritative subject positions" (45). As a result, Maxson contends that these students end up critiquing the very ideology upon which the privileged discourse forms we teach them are premised. In doing so, Maxson asserts that a "teacher is

just as likely to be moved and changed as a student" and asks pointedly, "Oughtn't this to be the promise of a principled pedagogical endeavor in the first place?" (45).

All of these essays tackle different content issues that encompass acknowledging the limitations of our political approaches, revisiting the history of the discipline, rethinking academic discourse, calling for an examination of basic writers' material realities, investigating our current historical moment, observing basic writers and youth culture, considering our disciplinary history and Native American students' absence, and rethinking the contact zone; however, they share a common thread. They indicate directly or indirectly that basic writers' identities need their own context-dependent theorizations. In addition, in various ways they point to basic writers themselves as a force that can help us to reform our theories, our discursive/terminological investments, as well as to solve problems inherent within the representation of our field's history. This attention to refocusing on our students not just as students we teach but as people who should inform our theories as well as give rise to new theories is very significant. It provides a return to the idea that students themselves should dictate our theories rather than theories dictating how we view our students. Importantly, each of these contributions considers the basic writing student identity as capable of aiding us in these efforts.

The Basic Writer's Identity As A Set of Practices In Action

Thus far I have argued that the basic writer's identity has been newly constructed as context-dependent and as holding the power to reform our theories themselves, our discursive/terminological investments, as well as to solve problems within the representation of our field's history. It should not be surprising, then, that the final construction of the basic writer's identity that I have noticed over the last seven years appears not to be about identifying who the basic writer is but rather watching her/his actions as a set of practices to be studied. Recently the basic writer's identity has been constructed more and more in terms of students' own approaches. In resistance to the sense that we have over-theorized the basic writing student's situation—perhaps a backlash against the poststructuralist and postcolonial turn of the conflict metaphor's dominance in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s—this model looks for the most part at what basic writing students do and what they say about what they do.

In 1999 two crucial essays worked in this vein, aiming toward a more

student-centered scholarship—the first by calling upon us to look more closely at basic writers' own writing practices and the second by asking us to realize that while we claim to care about our students, we know far too little about them. Linda Adler-Kassner's "Just Writing, Basically: Basic Writers on Basic Writing" traces history of basic writing research and contends that we need to return to the question of who our students are, looking at the role of being a basic writer in specific institutional contexts (72), and privileging students' own reflections on themselves and their identities. In her "Modest Proposal" Adler-Kassner argues that we should unpack what we mean by basic writing to our students as well as have students look at the actual documents that landed them in such classes in the first place. This can lead to the beginnings of a crucial dialogue, she asserts, though she warns us against using this method to produce a view of the basic writing student as a "typical 'client' (or set of clients) to which we market" (85). Likewise, Susanmarie Harrington's "The Representation of Basic Writers in Basic Writing Scholarship, or Who is Quentin Pierce?" exposes the gap in our scholarship between our professed care for basic writing students and how little we really know about them. She looks back at earlier issues of *JBW*, categorizing our research according to various types: teaching techniques, theory, text analysis, student-present (attention to student voices), student-qualities (analysis of students' attitudes or other personal qualities), and miscellaneous (96-97). Harrington contends that while over time our greatest focus has been on teaching techniques, this category and student text analysis have become less common, instead giving way to a greater focus on theory. Harrington calls for even more of what she terms "student-present scholarship" and "student-present case studies."

A number of essays from 2000-2005 continued this trend in the journal by arguing on behalf of centering attention upon students in action. In "Meanness and Failure: Sanctioning Basic Writers" authors Terence Collins and Melissa Blum state that they "fear the focus of this set of essays—the 'state of Basic Writing'—may be alarmingly beside the point" (13). Rather, they concentrate on looking at their students' experiences and practices, instead examining the "state of access to higher education among disenfranchised students" (13). They note how impoverished women are falling away from higher education under the banner of welfare reform at the University of Minnesota, indicating that we can no longer rest at the level of "abstract argument"—but rather speak about students as they are—as "twelve distinct people with aspirations, children, sweet writing voices, and no place in our university" (20). Similarly Anmarie Eves-Bowden's "What Basic Writers

Think About Writing" involves observing and recording what basic writers have to say about themselves and their own writing processes. After surveying and interviewing basic writing students, she indicates that a structured writing process model can be helpful to them as can crucial reflection upon their own writing processes.

Each of these essays—though rather different in strategy (calling for examining what it means to be a basic writer here and now through an examination of their own thoughts and practices, asking for more student-present scholarship, suggesting that we focus our energies not on abstract arguments but on particular students and their own lives, and indicating that we need to discover what basic writers have to say about themselves and their own writing processes)—appears to concentrate on studying the basic writer's practices in detail. The concentrated focus on what basic writing students do as well as what they say about what they do has further reinforced the contextual model's goal of putting the student at the forefront of everything the discipline does. Rather than making the basic writer incidental to how we consider her/his practices, these essays assert emphatically that the basic writer's thoughts, ideas, and practices themselves are perhaps the most significant sites worthy of inquiry.

Past, Present, and Future: Some Reflections From Here

As we can see, this move away from developmentalist, academic discourse, and conflict model approaches of the past has been quite necessary and positive in many respects. These models, as mentioned earlier, have sometimes risked delimiting the basic writer's identity according to a deficit theory model, a "problem" that the basic writer endured, be it cognitive, discursive, or social. Sometimes this occurred in spite of professed efforts to work outside a diagnosis/cure model. Likewise, even when such work purported to be motivated by a desire to de-center the classroom or to shift privilege, the teacher's expertise and pedagogy were frequently suspiciously central to the answer provided to solve this "problem." Theoretical and metaphoric investments risked not only being instrumental in constructing basic writers' student identities, but also in providing the solutions to the very "problems" these identity constructions occasioned in the first place. The deficit approach gave basic writing students far too little say in the construction of their own identities or the kinds of assertions we made about those constructions. Similarly, the dependence upon narrow theoretical investments obscured how students themselves deployed their own constructions of their identities through their composing processes.

Since then the contextual approach has become the new dominant paradigm. It has done much to challenge the deficit theory model and to encourage caution about the ways in which our metaphoric and theoretical investments that constructed basic writers' student identities also, interestingly enough, provided solutions to their problems. The work of many of my contemporaries and my own work have certainly in many ways conformed to this new model—and the benefits have been important to all of us engaged in such study.

However, our strides to revise the deficit model and to challenge broad theoretical investments—to move away from developmentalist, academic discourse, and conflict model approaches—have not been without some significant drawbacks. As we mark the twenty-fifth volume of the *Journal of Basic Writing* it is equally important that we take stock of what we have lost in adopting such a contextual approach.

First, our very understandable desire to turn away from applying theory to basic writers' situations has meant something of a compromise— we may have lost some of our ability to describe relevant institutional, political, and social trends in broader, general terms within basic writing scholarship. This increased difficulty in conceptualizing and connecting across interests and discrete student populations, while the understandable fallout of adopting the contextual model, may unwittingly reinforce a sort of insularity amongst people and programs. As a result, the contextual approach has the possibility of making it rather hard to form crucial coalitions, coalitions that are increasingly not very positive in terms of relationship-building but may also be utterly necessary to basic writing's livelihood and continuation in the face of what we are all experiencing right now—drastic cutbacks to education, the overwhelming growth of outsourcing and edu-prise, and the too often unreflective push to technologize.

Such attempts to work across institutions and interests as well as to launch innovative programs, design curricula in concert with one another, or effect larger political, cultural, and policy changes often do not get examined as much as they could be and may well need to be right now. While focusing on the minute specifics of basic writers' situations has allowed us to gather a great deal of crucial local knowledge, focusing so much of our energies on these projects may leave us in danger of abandoning the important national and global concerns that have defined our discipline for many years and have been fundamental to making successful arguments on behalf of our students.

Second, in implicitly or explicitly constructing the basic writing stu-

dent identity as the entity capable of overhauling our theory, the problems within academic discourse, and our troubled history, we may inadvertently risk putting too much burden on our students to make basic writing effective and too little on ourselves. In contrast to times past, one might argue that now the teacher/researcher has been recast somewhat as the flailing victim in need of rescue—our students in this new narrative now acting as our figurative, if not our literal, saviors. This flip on the typical formulation may do little more than reverse the terms as opposed to challenging and disrupting the very idea that our theory, problems within academic discourse, or troubled history can indeed be finally solved or rescued by the student-teacher relationship alone. It may keep us from seeing how history, politics, and cultural changes are impacting, shaping, and even changing that relationship.

Instead, we might consider also turning our attention to creating theoretical approaches, new understandings of academic discourse, and new formulations of our history that expose their partial, contingent nature and yet make consistent attempts at broad connections in ways that will further inquiry across institutions, theoretical investments, and different student populations. I acknowledge that such an awkward approach may feel rather unfamiliar. We have familiarity with both a focus on broad issues and a focus on local issues—but perhaps too little practice with the combination. But maybe this uncertainty about approach is indicative of where we find ourselves at this historical juncture right now as much as anything else—at the edge of one model (the contextual) and yet not quite seeing the shape of the next on the horizon. Still, there might be some good in beginning to stretch the limits of this model, to push its boundaries a bit, and to move into territory that seeks inventive—even if ultimately failed—approaches to working on local and global issues simultaneously.

Third, the turn to students' own practices as the site of knowledge in basic writing research and teaching runs a significant risk that we should not ignore. In sometimes unreflectively privileging direct student voices, actions, practices, and perspectives, we may seem to assume their transparence. Our research sometimes elides the notion that such voices, actions, practices, and perspectives are never simply just that. They are always mediated by our students' previous experiences, their oftentimes incredibly complex and conflicted cultural positions, the multi-layered institutional spaces within which their discourses are produced, and their generational affiliations, as well as the investments informing how we frame our questions and how our students interpret those investments and questions.

At first glance our failure to adequately address the already always mediated nature of students' actions and practices adequately may seem slightly odd. After all, the conflict model (informed by Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone"), an approach particularly concerned about the perils of essentialism, is part of our very recent past. One might reasonably wonder how we could even chance treating our students' commentary in essentialist ways. However, the reason why this may be occurring makes a great deal of sense: we believe that our students' approaches need to be more central to our theorizing. The problem is that in trying hard to honor students' self-constructions of identity we now may be in danger of relying upon a new view of the basic writer—a person whose pure practices can be read transparently as significant. We can and should applaud these new efforts to expose the ways in which external theoretical or political lenses have negatively shaped our understandings of basic writers' student identities historically. But, in doing so, we cannot ignore the fact that any representation of basic writers' student identities—even their own—is still always highly mediated.

These three problems in the contextual model are crucial to consider. In mentioning them, however, I want to be absolutely clear on one point. I make no pretense to having adequately thought my way through these concerns myself. As much as any (and perhaps more than most!) my own contributions to our discipline have been shaped by and been in concert with this contextual model. Simply put, I am guilty as charged. My goal in relaying these cautions is to encourage greater reflection amongst all of us (including my guilty self) engaged in basic writing research about our current historical moment and our future. Our contextual approach has done much to put the basic writing student at the center of our inquiry and to help us focus our energies on issues of local context—but it appears to have done much less to help reinforce some of the crucial dialogue necessary to maintaining cross-institutional as well as larger political connections, to help create new approaches to linking local and global basic writing concerns, and to help us understand both the importance of students' practices to all we do as well as the always-already constructed nature of those experiences. And these issues remain as important today as they have ever been—perhaps even more so given our increasingly conservative educational and political climate.

It was the case thirty years ago, seven years ago, and it remains so today—the *Journal of Basic Writing* is the key location that exemplifies Shaughnessy's vision for basic writing inquiry, one of the most critical spaces where we can all write and rewrite our collective pasts, presents, and futures. I thank the readers of the journal and the journal's editors for allowing this

writer—basic as she was once categorized to be by various educational institutions and basic as she most surely remains with regard to the preliminary thoughts raised here—the chance to try to do a bit of this with her intellectual community and with herself here and now.

In drawing this piece to a close, I will not attempt to leave us with answers to the concerns raised here. I believe that any such endeavors at closure would ring false and be far too premature. Likewise, I admit to being much too wrapped up in and influenced by this model myself to have much more to contribute on the question of solutions. In short, I mean my comments to begin as well as to facilitate dialogue—not to offer anything like the last word on any of the subjects raised. I choose instead to leave us all to look at these curious, messy, loose ends. As we examine them together, I have every confidence that graduate students and professors reading this will have far more fully formed thoughts than I do about how we might best work as a group to pull them apart, reorganize them, and/ or integrate them. I very much look forward to hearing others' ideas related to the issues I have raised here—whether in agreement, disagreement, or various combinations. I also welcome related and much more far-reaching conversations about these issues than the one I have begun here, conversations that will surely be had among *JBW*'s pages.

In the next thirty years we will see just how the contextual model's various strands grow and develop as well as what other models begin to supplant this approach. And, I very much look forward to watching these changes—as well as building whatever these new approaches may be—as we always have, together.

Notes

1. In Latin *in situ* literally means "in place." Here I mean to echo the use of this term in two disciplinary spheres—biology and archaeology. *In situ* in biology suggests the examination of a phenomenon exactly in the place where it occurs without removing it from its medium. Similarly, *in situ* in archaeology references an artifact that has not been moved from its original place of deposition so that it can be interpreted accurately in terms of the culture that formed it. An artifact that is not discovered *in situ* may be considered out of context and incapable of providing an accurate picture of its associated culture.

2. By "discursive/terminological investments" I mean to suggest those discourses that have shaped and created meaning systems in our scholar-

ship and have gained the status and currency of "truth," dominating how we define and organize our research, our understandings of the discipline, and our relationships to our students. I am also referencing the fact that this phenomenon operates at the level of our specific language choices. For example, in "Terministic Screens" Kenneth Burke indicated that "any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention to some channels rather than others" such that what we take to be "observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (45-46). The very words we utilize, Burke cautioned, often necessarily limit and constrain our ability to pursue our intended agendas.

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In the Here and Now: Public Policy and Basic Writing

Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington

ABSTRACT: Recent public policy discussions and documents reflect frames that will have profound effects on questions central to teachers of and students in basic writing courses. We argue that if basic writing instructors/administrators want to have a voice in these discussions, we must develop strategies and gather data to support our positions; we then propose some potential strategies and possible questions for research.

KEYWORDS: assessment, public policy, framing, advocacy, change

In 2002, we finished *Basic Writing as a Political Act: Public Conversations About Writing and Literacies,* based on a two-year investigation of the perception of "basic writing" by those involved in the enterprise *of* basic writing—students, teachers, and institutions—as well as coverage of basic writing in mainstream newspapers. We concluded our study with some recommendations for curricular change that we thought important and that we both implemented after the book was published. This research was motivated by our commitment to students. We recognized a blind spot in our professional discourse, and we took steps to make sure that student voices were included and honored in discussing definitions of basic writing. In juxtaposing students' understandings of BW with faculty understandings of BW, we wanted to reveal disagreements among educators about BW and show how students' often rich understandings of out-of-school literacy could feed a richer notion of classroom experiences for academic writing.

Since that time, things have changed for both of us, as they have for the field. At four-year colleges and universities, and even at some two-year colleges, basic writing courses and programs are being mainstreamed into

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Stretch programs, for example, as at Susanmarie's campus; Guided or Directed Self-Placement is increasingly used as a process by which students choose where they want to start their writing coursework, as at both of our institutions. (For excellent examples of curricular innovation in basic writing, see, for example, Glau, Grego and Thompson, McNenny, Rodby and Fox, Soliday, Soliday and Gleason.) Both of our roles have shifted, too; we've taken on administrative work that has led to a reduction in the amount of time we spend in the classroom and increased the amount of time we spend meeting with higher-level administrators. From these different vantage points, we see another spot—perhaps not blind, but certainly obscured—that this article attempts to address: the framing of "basic writing" and "basic writers" in public policy documents. In this article, we examine that framing in two recently issued reports and propose strategies for basic writing instructors and administrators to affect those frames and the policies that stem from them.

We say we are addressing an "obscured" spot because others have issued the call that we repeat here. In 2002, for instance, Stanford Goto argued that in a time when "reform has come crashing back into basic writing . . . if we remain aloof from policy-oriented discussions, we leave basic writing open to future ideological attacks from outside critics" (2). Lynn Troyka's moving open letter to readers of *JBW*, published in 2000, also charged that "Our first failure was [that] we didn't tend to public relations" (114), and Troyka took herself and all of us in the field to task for failing to realize that those outside the field "would be frankly repelled by what aspiring college students clearly did not know" (114). She argued, "Clear information with specific supporting evidence, along with compelling stories, are vital for any new, semi-revolutionary movement to take root and grow" (115). Deborah Mutnick similarly called for basic writing teachers committed to democratizing education to engage with the forces cutting away at support for our enterprise ("Strategic"). Basic writing teacher-scholars have long articulated the need to make the case for what we do.

The need to return to this argument and go beyond it to reframe the concept of "remediation" seems particularly salient to us right now. Recently, Linda had an up close and personal experience with the American Diploma Project (ADP) and Project Achieve, an organization working to affect high school curriculum and testing across the country. According to ADP, 22 U.S. states educating 48 percent of the nation's high school students (among them Indiana, which is held up as a "model" ADP state, and Michigan, which is not) have partnered with ADP to "reform" their secondary English and math-

ematics curriculum (ADP). The goals for ADP's work are outlined in a report, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Works*. Additionally, as we have drafted this article, the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education has released three drafts of its report. This group, formed by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in 2005, has been charged with "developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education that will meet the needs of America's diverse population and also address the economic and workforce needs of the country's future" ("Secretary"). Both of these documents signal an even more urgent need for educators concerned with access to develop a strategy for public action–right here, and right now.

They also reprise three themes that run through contemporary discussion of education generally, and writing specifically: that students aren't prepared for college or work during their high school years; that this lack of preparation is costing institutions and, directly or indirectly, taxpayers; and that these first two problems are rooted in a system that requires outside agents to come in and repair it. Like strands of DNA, these themes wind around and through one another in story after story about students, education, and learning. And unfortunately, like DNA, they are dictating the growth and development of education. Unless compositionists of all stripes—those teaching basic writing, those who work with first-year composition and graduate students—are able to shift the direction of this discussion, it will have significant and deleterious effects on our work, affecting everything from the students who sit in our classes to the lessons that we design.

LITERACY CRISES, "THE SYSTEM," AND BASIC WRITING

A fundamental premise shared by *Ready or Not* and the drafts of the Commission reports is that students are not being adequately prepared for life after education—in the case of *Ready or Not* for life after high school; in the case of the Spellings Commission, life after high school *and* college. The idea that students are coming or going from school under/unprepared is certainly not new, but the way that this "crisis" is framed in these documents presents the first challenge of representation to writing instructors.

In *Representing Remediation,* Mary Soliday argues that, until and including the period when her book was written, "literacy crises" were situated in what she terms the "discourse of student need." Borrowing from Sharon Crowley, Soliday contends that this discourse is often invoked in response

to remediation because in it, standards for writing are always stable. It's the students—and more importantly, students' abilities—that change (passim). Thus, something like a "literacy crisis" does not stem from the institution (whose standards remain stable); instead, it comes from the students (who cannot achieve those standards). And while focusing on individual students' needs is an essential part of teaching, the discourse of student need shifts attention away from the institution and onto the student. The problem, in this discourse, is that students don't come to college equipped with the right skills, and require the development of basic writing (or basic math, or basic reasoning) courses and programs. These crises, she says, "help[ed] to justify the institutional decision to stratify by admissions, curriculum, and mission" (107). And while compositionists have not always been wildly successful at refuting allegations of "literacy crises," defined in this way, we have at least thoroughly theorized the notion that "students can't write."

Beginning with the shift toward cultural research in basic writing in the early 1980s (see Adler-Kassner and Harrington 1998, 2002), composition and basic writing researchers began to conceive of academe as a culture and to examine connections (or lack thereof) between academic culture and students' own (Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" is a classic example of this analysis). The idea that there were differences between students' literacy practices and those expected/required in school, and that these differences might be construed as "illiteracy," became one of the field's best-rehearsed arguments (see, for example, Heath, Bartholomae, Bizzell, Mutnick, Gray-Rosendale, and our own work). This approach, which by now is a commonplace in the field, deflects the discourse of student need and situates issues around student performance in students' own cultures as well as the culture of the academy. As Soliday notes, this frame is distinctly different from the one reflected in the "literacy crisis" documents (*Politics* 107-108).

It was a different frame . . . until now. In fact, the ADP's *Ready or Not* and the Spellings Commission Report, which echo many of the recommendations set out in the ADP document, adopt a frame that works *away* from the discourse of student need, and toward what we will refer to here as a "discourse of institutional need." Rather than make the case that individual students are transgressing norms, these documents argue that education, as an institution, has somehow veered from its historically determined path. "Three hundred and seventy years after the first college in our fledgling nation was established to train Puritan ministers," the first and third drafts of the Commission Reports open, ". . . it is no exaggeration to declare that higher education in the United States has become one of our greatest success

stories" (1, 1). Colleges and universities, the first draft says, "are the most American of institutions. Their history is our history, from the founding of the first settlements . . . through the westward expansion of the 19th century to the emergence of today's network linking public systems of higher education, private colleges and universities, and specialized post-secondary training institutions" (3). But, switching from the metaphor of American expansionism to a business model, drafts one and three of the Report explain that "American higher education has become what, in the business world, would be called a mature enterprise: increasingly risk-averse, frequently self-satisfied, and unduly expensive" (3, 4).

The Commission's reports and *Ready or Not* lay out a clear problem that lies in the system. Individual learners have problems, in the frame laid out here, insofar as they are products *of* that system. The problem, then, is not with the student (as it would be cast in the discourse of student need), but with the institution. *Ready or Not* explains that

> our education system sends a confusing set of signals to students about how they can reach the goal [of going into post-secondary education]. High school students earn grades that cannot be compared from school to school and often are based as much on effort as on the actual mastery of academic content. They take state and locally mandated tests that may count toward graduation, but very often do not. College-bound students take national admissions exams that may not align with the high school curriculum the students have been taught. . . . The troubling result is that far too many young Americans are graduating from high school without the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. (2-3)

Similarly, the first draft of the Spellings Report describes a system that has moved away from its "core public purposes" (3).

A key facet of the problem, the reports say, is the lack of alignment within and between schools, especially from high school to college. According to the Spellings drafts, "Shortcomings in high-school preparation mean that an unacceptable number of college students must take costly remedial classes: Some 40 percent of four-year college students and 63 percent of two-year college students end up taking at least one remedial course" (draft 1, 5). Similarly, *Ready or Not* observes that "More than 70 percent of graduates enter two- and four-year colleges, but at least 28 percent of those students immediately take remedial English or math courses. Transcripts show that

during their college careers, 53 percent of students take at least one remedial English or math class. The percentages are much higher for poor and minority students" (3).

In the discourse of institutional need, the *Ready or Not* and the Spellings reports are careful to point out—in an argument that sounds much like those advanced by compositionists—that the institution, not students, bears responsibility for these problems. However, it is a foregone conclusion in both reports that institutions have failed to successfully remedy the problem; thus, the responsibility, in their estimation, should fall to states (and pressure applied to those states through the accreditation process, thus including public *and* private institutions in the prescriptions). "In the culture of postsecondary education," *Ready or Not* asserts, "students bear the lion's share of the responsibility for their success or failure, while the institutions themselves bear little" (15). Similarly, the third draft of the Spellings Commission report states that access to higher education is limited, in part, by "inadequate preparation.... compounded by poor alignment between high school and colleges, which often creates an 'expectation gap' between what colleges require and high schools produce. The result is a high level of remediation by college ... a process that is both costly and inefficient" (10).

The answer in both reports is to reform the system, not the student: *Ready or Not* calls for policies that effectively mandate the states to "Hold postsecondary institutions accountable for the academic success of the students they admit, including student learning, persistence, and degree completion" (*Ready or Not* 15), while the Spellings report recommends that "colleges should be held accountable for the success of the students they admit" (draft 1, 18).

The first step in this proposed solution is to align the standards that are used for college admission and placement. Such work is already underway in many places. In Indiana (one of the American Diploma Project's model states), Project SEAM, funded by the Lilly Foundation to create a seamless transition from central Indiana high schools to area colleges and universities, aimed to "close the gaps between high school and college curricula in the content areas of math, science, and language arts" (Project SEAM). The California State University system, lauded in the Spellings Commission Report for its exemplary approach to issues of access, issued a report called the "CSU Plan to Reduce Remedial Activity, 1985-1990" that proposed reducing the number of remedial courses needed in colleges by raising the number of high school courses required for admission (Crouch and McNenny 48).

A second solution proposed in both documents has to do with aligning college admissions and placement standards (which are presumed to

stand for the expectations of college-level coursework) with high school completion standards. "The state can and should encourage . . . diverse approaches [within classes]," *Ready or Not* contends. But it should also ensure "that schools and students participating in them are held to the same state English and mathematics standards and are assessed using the same [NCLB mandated] state standards-based tests" (10). Additionally, those tests should be consistent from state to state. "Although high school graduation requirements are established state by state, a high school diploma should represent a common currency nationwide. . . . States owe it to their students to set expectations for high school graduates that are portable to other states" (4). And they should be used for college admission and placement. "Little justification exists for maintaining completely separate standards and testing systems for high school graduation on the one hand and college admissions and placement on the other," according to *Ready or Not*. "Postsecondary institutions need to reinforce efforts to raise standards in K-12 by making use of standards-based assessment data for admissions, for course placement, and/or for the awarding of merit based scholarships" (15). In other words, *Ready or Not* recommends that the same tests required under NCLB—tests that have been widely criticized by educators and educational researchers alike (see, for instance, Sacks; Traub; or Meier et al.)—become the standard by which college students are admitted, placed, and rewarded with scholarships. The Spellings Commission Reports, particularly the third draft, also call for increased assessment and accountability. Norm-referenced evidence of student learning that demonstrates "value added" to a baseline, the third draft says, will demonstrate the effectiveness of higher education (5, 15, 20-23).

Ironically, the very perspectives that locate the need for remediation in a failure on the part of high schools to prepare students for college, simultaneously support the movement of college into high schools. The CSU report supports high schools' using college tests in order to tell students about their "deficiencies" early (Crouch and McNenny 48), and the first and third drafts of the Spellings Commission report call for "the expansion of college experiences in high school through Advanced Placement, early college enrollment, dual enrollment, Early College on-line programs, etc." (20). The juxtaposition of the allegations that high schools are graduating under-prepared students and the call to move college experiences into high schools is striking, particularly when the reports offer few concrete suggestions for supporting that movement. Even those who accept the proposition that first-year college experiences should be off-loaded to high

schools would be rightfully concerned that the factors creating the "under-prepared" graduates must be addressed before college experiences can be successfully offered by high schools.

While we certainly react to the ways that "remediation" (and, by implication, "basic writing") is framed in these reports—particularly *Ready or Not*—we are hardly arguing against the idea of aligning K-16 education or assessing student learning. Rather, the issues that we raise—and must address as a field—concern who will define the terms of that alignment and assessment. This is particularly crucial for language arts/writing instructors, since our curriculum is characterized more by increasing levels of sophistication in student performance than by stratified content (students may read *Hamlet* in tenth grade and in the senior year of college; students discuss organization or use of sources in elementary school and in college. Math and science curricula are considerably more stratified and unified.) As Larry Brasskamp and Steven Schomberg argued in an *Inside Higher Education* editorial, these terms must be defined in ways that are appropriate for the contexts where they are used. A "culture of evidence," they argue, not one of "outcomes," will best attest to what kind of "value" is being "added" to students' educations. "Assessment should be informing . . . various publics about how the educational experiences of students or of the institutional engagement in the larger society is bringing value to the students and society," they write. "All parties need to get used to the idea that education can be conceptualized and interpreted in terms of a return on investment. But this can only be accomplished if we know what they are aiming for. . . . For some, the primary goal of college will focus on guiding students in their self discovery and contributing to society; for others it will be more on making a living; for yet others on understanding the world in which we live" (3).

But "alignment" and "accountability," as they are defined in these documents, do not reflect the notion of "evidence-based learning" outlined by Brasskamp and Schomberg. Although the alignment process prescribed by American Diploma Project/Project Achieve involves holding sessions where college faculty and business leaders review the standards developed by states for secondary education, these sessions are held separately—college faculty at one time, business leaders at another. Linda participated in the Michigan content review meetings that followed the development of new English Language Arts standards that were guided by this ADP/Achieve process; despite questions from the college faculty in the room, that group never learned who the business leaders were who participated in the parallel session, how it worked, or what they said (or would say). And although *Ready or Not* calls for secondary content standards to be determined by these "end

users" of high school education, it also makes clear that college *teachers* aren't providing useful input: "The academic standards that states have developed over the past decade generally reflect a consensus in each discipline about what is *desirable* for students to learn," the report explains, "but not necessarily what is *essential* for them to be prepared for further learning, work, or citizenship after completing high school" (8).

But if, as *Ready or Not* recommends, nationally standardized high school exit exams are used for college admissions, placement, and merit awards, not only will high school teachers teach to these exams, but college teachers will need to teach from and to them. Just as these exams will represent the "ceiling" of the high school experience, they will also be used as the "floor" of the college one. When colleges and universities are held accountable for student success (through measures built into the Higher Education Act), as the ADP report recommends that they should be, students' progress on the measures assessed by these exams also could signal their "progress" in college, as well (*Ready or Not* 16). While the Spellings Commission reports (particularly the third draft) do not go as far as *Ready or Not* in recommending state-mandated exams as *the* baseline, they do call for *a* baseline from which nationally normed assessments should proceed (draft 3, 21-23).

There are alternatives, of course. In fact, compositionists and high school teachers have described successful high school-college collaborations that have had important effects on teaching and learning for students and teachers in both settings. There is an important difference, though, between these projects outlined by *real* teachers and those envisioned by policy makers who are *thinking about* teachers. People on the front line—those in the classroom—know that the kind of sweeping change that these reports call for not only doesn't happen overnight, but also doesn't really happen at all. Indiana's Project SEAM fosters school-based collaborations involving university partners and high school teacher leadership targeting specific issues for groups of teachers. In Michigan, Heidi Estrem (a college professor) and Kristine Gideon (a high school teacher), who have collaborated with one another for the last three years, describe the first kind of change as "revolution" and the second as "evolution," and argue that it's *evolution* that really affects their teaching practice:

> What's been more long-lasting, more significant, and more unsettling [for our teaching] has been the ongoing evolution in our understandings of what it means to teach English/Language Arts in the 21st century. Evolution means adaptation to change. It means trying to ensure that the ways we teach at this moment, in response

> to our particular environment and purposes, are appropriate and robust; it also means living with the knowledge that there are unknown places ahead that we need to be willing to grow into. (1)

While evolution isn't as sexy or dramatic as revolution, it's considerably more enduring. It works against what a teacher, writing under the pseudonym "Wendy Darling" (of Peter Pan fame), called "the magic of never-never land" invoked when she and her fellow teachers were told at a workshop that the achievement gap was their fault, but that all they had to do to ensure that all students passed the twelfth grade exit exam was believe in students and work with the seven "strategic strategies" and "core values" distributed by the district (313-314). Contrast this with the California project directed by Crouch and McNenny, which opened with dialogue in which high school teachers "identified key impediments to student progress and preparation for college level writing. They determined what kinds of collaboration and intervention would work best for them . . . and they let us know exactly what they needed from us as university colleagues to help them improve student writing" (62). Such an equitable relationship sets up the potential for real change, the kind of evolution Estrem and Gideon name as fundamental.

Under the terms laid out in *Ready or Not*, however, there is no room for this kind of evolutionary collaboration. The good news is that the drafts of the Spellings Commission Report *might* create a space for this kind of work. They call for states to "provide incentives for higher education institutions to make long-term commitments to working actively and collaboratively with K-12 schools and systems to help underserved students improve college preparation and persistence" (draft 1, 18) and the revitalization and re-funding of FIPSE (draft 3, 24). (It should be noted, too, that the first draft of the Spellings reports and *Ready or Not* also call for "states" to provide support for this work. In states like ours, where the economies are in decline, the idea that states can provide support for the myriad initiatives outlined in these reports also seems to be a form of wishful thinking.)

And despite the call for improved college preparation in high school, these reports rather paradoxically lay the foundation for a massive shifting of college *into* high school, through an emphasis on advanced placement and dual enrollment courses. Such moves are assumed to solve many alignment issues, often in conjunction with standardized tests. However, the Association of American Colleges and Universities' *Greater Expectations* report notes:

> "College" courses in high school (as well as remedial courses in college) have proliferated, despite the absence of guiding principles about what characterizes college-level learning. Many colleges and universities have begun to encourage more in-depth, investigative, or research-based learning even in the first year, but high school and many advanced placement courses continue to feature broad surveys and superficial "coverage." (executive overview)

Clearly there is work to be done as we define what college work means (for one model, see the Missouri State Department of Education dual credit guidelines, guidelines developed in close consultation with high school and university teachers). As Susan Miller has noted, "What is in dispute is the nature and governance of sites of any writing instruction" (57). Miller's call to expand the site of writing instruction runs directly contrary to the policy critiques of higher education, which would limit and control the sites of writing instruction. To combat this pressure, we need to act differently. We need to develop rhetoric and action that will change the nature of the debate.

CONTROLLING FRAMES, DETERMINING DEFINITIONS

The issues are on the table: what should college students know? Why? And who should decide? *Ready or Not* lays out one response: college students should know what is outlined in nationally mandated, standardized exams because these exams will reflect what "experts" (though not necessarily college professors) and employers want them to know (see other reports, like ACT's *Ready to Succeed*, for more on what these exams might look like). The content should be determined by these experts and employers, and colleges and universities should also be held accountable for "preparing" students using the standards that they set. The third draft of the Spellings Commission report concedes that "faculty must be at the forefront of defining educational objectives for students and developing meaningful, evidence-based measures of their progress toward these goals" (23).

The clarity and seeming simplicity of the recommendations outlined in these reports—particularly *Ready or Not*—highlights the challenge facing instructors of basic and first year writing (or the evolving hybrids of these courses). For too long, we have engaged primarily in *critique* of documents and recommendations like these (in fact, the first part of this article does just

that), but we are less proficient at creating strategies that present alternatives to them. Yet, creating alternatives—alternative metaphors, alternative frames—is exactly what is needed if we are to have any hope of changing the national discussion reflected in these documents. Stanford Goto, drawing on the work of Basil Bernstein, notes that the "ideological rift" between supporters and critics of remediation is manifest in metaphor: critics use vertical metaphors (an emphasis on the seamless pipeline, for example) while supporters use horizontal ones (an emphasis on context and connection, for example). These metaphorical frames talk past each other, Goto argues, and attention to our own discourse is essential if we are to shift frames.

CHANGING FRAMES

Cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall explain the cultural process whereby definitions associated with "events" (such as "remediation") are "constructed into a seamless narrative." Because they reflect and perpetuate the worldview of those participating in the narrative, these definitions become naturalized so that it is impossible to raise new questions or consider alternatives (4). This narrative is encompassed by what cognitive theorists, most notably George Lakoff, call "frames"—"unconscious cognitive models" that shape humans' understandings of the metaphors through which we construct our worlds (*Politics* 159). Naturalized frames powerfully shape current understandings and future actions. The frames invoked in these reports shape the narrative about education that comprises the DNA strands we describe earlier; the actions that are taken (by educators and policy makers, especially) have significant consequences for students and for the broader culture that defines "education" (and particularly "college education") as a virtual requirement for participation in the nation's civic dialogue (a point made repeatedly, for instance, in the third draft of the Spellings Commission report).

Changing frames, then, creates alternative narratives. It is essential, though, to *change* and not *negate* frames (Lakoff)—and negating is what occurs when we engage solely in critique. Take as a case in point *Ready or Not*'s recommendation that the results of a nationally standardized (and mandated) exam be used for placement in college writing (and mathematics) courses. One of the tenets of the case for this practice is that it is *fairer* to students than currently employed practices because it places responsibility for student success (or lack thereof) on *institutions*, not on *students*. Institutions, therefore, should be responsible for developing and maintaining consistent

and aligned standards; this alignment will save students, parents, and taxpayers money because it will eliminate the need for "remedial education."

If the argument that students' lack of experience with academic expectations—or, say, even "academic discourse"—sounds familiar, it should. We've made a very similar case in composition research for years—say, for instance, in analyses of placement testing (see, for instance, Adams; Harrington; Yancey. Our 2002 book, too, makes this argument.) To be sure, there are differences between "our" analyses and "theirs"—huge differences, for instance, between how we conceptualize learning. And when there are solutions in "our" research, they also differ, though "solutions" aren't the baskets where we've placed most of our eggs. But these nuances are important only to us; we suspect they will be erased in the broader discussion.

GETTING OUT FROM BETWEEN ROCKS AND HARD PLACES

What we must do—and not soon, but now—is work to change the frames around these discussions. For that, we find it most useful to draw on outside resources for strategies to define and advance arguments. Some of these strategies require us to define terms for discussion that aren't always comfortable. They require us to peel away the layers of complexity that we find familiar when constructing academic arguments, for instance. After all, as Joseph Harris asserted almost 15 years ago, we love the "walls of our professional consensus," but the problem with those walls is that they deflect the very legitimate queries about our work that are raised in questions about writing (86). Responses to these discussions must be, first and foremost, strategic and pragmatic. We need to set goals, work toward them systematically, and assess them regularly.

Issues Not Problems

Like Eli Goldblatt, we find the work of community organizer Saul Alinsky a particularly useful starting point for this work, particularly as Alinsky's ideas have been developed by Edward Chambers, Ernesto Cortes, and the organizers of the Industrial Areas Foundation. In *Roots for Radicals*, Chambers, Executive Director of the IAF, outlines an important distinction between *problems* and *issues*, and stresses the importance of addressing the latter rather than the former. Problems are things that are huge and that you can do nothing about. Issues are things that you *can* try to affect (Chambers

84). Poor or misguided perception of writers and writing is a problem. An unfair placement test is an issue. Misperception of what writing teachers do is a problem. Imposition of curriculum or grading standards is an issue. Large class size is an issue; unfair grading practice is an issue. *Ready or Not*, especially, does a masterful job at defining a set of *issues* to be addressed, such as misalignment of curricular outcomes and flawed information streams that inform curricular development.

Developing and Deploying Messages

Rather than respond to the issues raised in these reports by framing problems, we need to frame other issues, or re-frame the issues raised by others. We need to do this as clearly and succinctly as these documents have, which is a challenge for people who are typically rewarded for complexity and depth. The use of a message box can be helpful for defining and maintaining a focused message, though. A typical message box looks like this:

What we are saying about ourselves	What they are saying about themselves
What we are saying about them	What they are saying about us

The message box reflected in *Ready or Not* might look like this:

(Fig. 1) Sample ADP Message Box

ADP position Students are failing in the system. The solution is to fix the system with uniform curriculum and assessment.	**What ADP says about themselves** We understand why the system is failing and how to fix it.
ADP says about teachers The job of teachers is to implement our recommendations, not to try to fix the system.	**Teachers say about ADP** ADP's ideas about how to fix the system will only exacerbate problems in the system.

Here might be a message box that compositionists/basic writing instructors would construct (at this point) about the same message:

(Fig. 2) Sample Basic Writing Message Box

Teachers' position ADP's ideas about how to fix the system will only exacerbate the many problems in it.	**Teachers say about ADP** ADP represents a group of people that don't understand the challenges that students face, or the situations that have created those challenges.
What teachers say about ourselves We have a deep understanding of the complexities of this system.	**ADP says about teachers** Teachers are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

The upper left hand boxes here are key. At this point, the hypothetical response outlined to ADP in "our" box (and the "we" here is entirely nebulous—another challenge that we face is that who is included in the professional consensus is unclear) negates ADP's message, rather than reframing it.

Alternatively, we might take on one of the issues raised in the ADP report: placement testing. Recall that ADP recommends that the results of a uniform national exam be used by colleges and universities for placement into writing (and mathematics) classes. Rather than argue against this method, we might work with a message that argues for an alternative. This requires two things: 1) having an alternative, and 2) having data that speak to the effectiveness of that alternative. To illustrate, for example, we'll use the example of Guided Self-Placement from Linda's campus:

(Fig. 3) Locally Developed, Issue-Focused Message Box

Our position Students are more satisfied with their placement and perform at higher levels when they choose their own introductory college writing courses than when they are placed in those courses based on other measures.	**We say about them** ADP's arguments are based in speculation and wishful thinking, rather than in data-driven assessments and decision-making.
We say about ourselves We have gathered data that attest to students' successful performances after they place themselves in introductory writing classes.	**They say about us** Teachers don't have a clear sense of the expectations of "experts" or employers.

The difference between this message box and the one in Figure 2 is that it articulates a position *for* something (Guided Self-Placement), rather than *against* something else (an externally mandated placement test). Additionally the position is supported by data.

While it might seem like defining and taking action on something like placement testing has no relation to the larger problem that's outlined in these boxes, think again. Some of the data supporting the analysis in *Ready or Not* come from the National Center for Educational Statistics, such as a report called "Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000." For that report, the NCES used "selection approaches for remedial courses" as one of *their* data points, looking at the number of students that were given placement tests to determine need. Of course, then, the *number* of students placed into remedial courses was included in NCES data. But so, in a sense, were the *kind* of placement tests given: SAT/ACT scores, placement exams, or—the smallest category—"Other selection approaches," which include "students refer themselves for enrollment in remedial/developmental courses" (NCES study). So while tackling an issue (not a problem) like "what placement test we use" might not seem to touch a problem like "Schools are failing," it actually *does* address the problem, and it does so in a way that may also shape the ways "failure" is defined in important data sources. Developing and deploying messages and advancing them consistently—in conversations with administrators, in program materials—is essential. It's also essential that basic writing instructors and program administrators be mindful about and attempt to work from position statements when we formulate everything from curriculum to program policy. If, for instance, a program works from the position in the upper-left hand box of the GSP strategy discussed earlier, that position carries through into the formulation of curriculum, professional development, even the attitudes that instructors take to their students.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Another phrase that comes up repeatedly in reports like *Ready or Not* and the Spellings Commission document is "data-driven decision making." This raises some very legitimate questions like "How do we know if students are learning? How do we know what they are learning?" Sometimes in the past, compositionists have contended that these complicated questions require answers too complex to distill into concise statements. Joseph Harris, in fact, decries the "ongoing inability of compositionists . . . to explain ourselves . . . admonishing not only our students and university colleagues

but the more general public as well when they fail to [accept] our views on language learning—answering their concerns . . . by telling them, in effect, that they should not want what they are asking us for" (85-86). This is what we think of as the "complexity argument": "It's so complex, I can't possibly put it into a sound byte." But as Travis Reindl, state policy director and assistant to the director of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, puts it: "The gas mileage we're getting out of the complexity argument is about to run out" ("Testing" 3).

An alternative to the complexity argument is to develop the kinds of communication strategies that we describe earlier. But those strategies are hollow—we might even say "empty rhetoric"—unless they are supported by data. In a recent address, Chris Anson drew on a point raised by Rich Haswell that composition no longer produces "RAD research: Replicable, Aggregable, and Data-Supported. We no longer seem," Anson said, "to be attracted to asking the kinds of questions whose answers might be found in research on teaching and learning" (15). But, he argued, these questions produce just the kind of research that is essential. We need more "good, solid research ... on every facet of writing acquisition and instruction" (17). Don't think for a minute, too, that players like ETS are not aware of the push for assessment at the college level. In fact, their Senior Vice President for Learning called *their* recent report, *A Culture of Evidence: Postsecondary Assessment and Learning Outcomes*, an attempt to "help frame the conversation" ("Testing" 1). Let us be clear here: we are not positivists arguing that empirical evidence, whether in the form of the qualitative data with which we are so comfortable or the quantitative data that, we have found, holds considerably more sway with administrators and higher-ups, is "real" where other data are not. We are arguing for pragmatic use of these data and clear presentations of the data to audiences inside *and* outside of the writing program. Collection and presentation of such data are necessarily local matters, but some additional issues that likely cut across campuses, issues that could be deployed strategically to shift the frames of discussion, include:

- *Data about the nature of instruction in the use and blending of source material, accompanied by data about the extent to which students complete and revise researched work in their courses.* Collecting such data would shift conversations inside a program or department as well as outside: the collection of such data would be predicated on common discussions about student performance and classroom instruction. There are any number of ways to set up

an assessment scenario that would get at these concerns—the use of random samples, the use of common portfolios, the use of common assignments, for example.

- *Data about teacher preparation and professional development activities.* Having such information available and public allows the credentials of a faculty to be more visible, and collecting information about professional development activities is likely to spur discussion about applications of professional development activities.
- *Data about student performance and assessment guidelines.* Here, too, the more faculty are involved in the creation of assessment plans, the more likely they are to have force. It is crucial that we define the terms of student performance (as in the first item on this list, work with sources).
- *Data about the validation of local assessments.* We can form useful partnerships with institutional research offices, for example, to use institutional data in relation to program-generated data. This might allow, for example, the comparison of student performance in courses with student performance more generally.

Each of us is in the best position to judge what local issues are pressing and what local information is available for circulation—but the point is that we need to *make* the decisions, *do* the research, and *use* the data we collect in strategic ways. It's time to move beyond academic discussion. We need to take our perspectives and our programs public: it's time to take data in hand, with rhetorical fierceness. We need to assess, and frame, this information for audiences outside of our programs, as well. Our students depend on us, and we must not fail them.

Notes

1. Some readers may wonder why we are including the draft Spellings Commission Report (released in June 2006)—after all, it is just a draft. We realize that the final version of the report may well differ from this draft in tone and substance—as we write, in fact, news reports are emerging about internal critiques. Inside Higher Education, for example, reports that Commissioner David Ward, president of the American Council on Education responded to the draft report in terms that are, given his usual approach, surprisingly

strong. He criticized the report as being based on a "highly selective reading of testimony" and prepared "without the slightest input of commission members." "I believe it is seriously flawed and needs significant revision," Ward wrote. "I am particularly unhappy with the tone and the hostile, almost confrontational, way it approaches higher education. Some of the recommendations are also deeply troubling" (Lederman).

But whether or not Ward's objections influence the final form of this report, the draft is a significant document. As we argue here, its assumptions are in line with those in several other significant reports on literacy, and it signals that the thinking we analyze here is influential among federal policy-makers. We need to take it seriously, even as we wait for the final document.

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Reasoning the Need: Graduate Education and Basic Writing

Barbara Gleason

ABSTRACT: While college composition theory/pedagogy courses are standard offerings in composition and rhetoric graduate programs, specialized basic writing graduate courses lag behind. At the same time, there is a pressing need for highly qualified teachers of nontraditional adult students, especially in community college and adult literacy education programs. This need has recently been articulated in two official statements from the Two-Year College Association of NCTE. It is also being realized by the efforts of individual professors who have collectively offered at least nineteen such courses in recent years. A second argument for offering more BW graduate courses is the extensive BW scholarship revealed by such publications as The Bedford Guide for Teachers of Basic Writing, *2nd ed. (Adler-Kassner and Glau) and* Teaching Developmental Writing: Background Readings, *3rd ed. (Bernstein). This essay argues that graduate programs should augment current commitments to preparing graduate students to teach, research, and administer programs for nontraditional adult students by regularly offering courses on basic writing theory, research, and pedagogy.*

KEYWORDS: basic writing, adult literacy, adult basic education, adult learner, community college, adult education, nontraditional student, graduate education

At the 2005 4Cs, I addressed basic writing's future by arguing that BW scholarship merits increased prominence in graduate education:

> There are two important reasons for us to focus on graduate education: First, basic writing's central mission merits the attention of every professional in composition and rhetoric, not just those who specialize in basic writing. Our mission is not exclusively tied to remedial instruction. It is advocating for student access to higher education, particularly for nontraditional or under-prepared students. A second good reason for our turning to graduate education now is the substantial scholarship that we've produced. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the recently published second edition of *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*. Edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Gregory Glau for the Conference on Basic Writing, this annotated list of BW scholarship provides a useful resource and a testament to a growing profession, which, as

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> the editors suggest, may be emerging as a distinct discipline.
>
> Taken together, our mission of promoting access and our scholarship imply that we should be offering more BW graduate courses of various kinds as well as entire master's programs that prepare future BW professionals. Moreover, since adult literacy education shares so much common ground with basic writing, these two professional orientations can easily be linked in one distinctive master's program. ("Promise" 1) [1]

Though they operate in different contexts, basic writing and adult literacy programs share a similar goal: to enhance adults' educational, vocational, and economic opportunities. Because their goals and also their challenges offer so much common ground, adult literacy education and basic writing professionals have much to learn from and with one another.

While BW usually focuses on post-secondary institutions, basic reading and writing classes also exist in pre-college adult basic education (ABE) and General Educational Diploma (GED) programs located in colleges, secondary schools, unions, settlement houses, community-based organizations, workplaces, and correctional systems. These courses and programs share common curricular and pedagogical aims, with one another and with basic writing and reading college courses. Yet, opportunities to learn about pre-college ABE and GED writing and reading programs are relatively rare within Composition and Rhetoric graduate programs. Given their common educational goals and recent efforts to create links between adult education programs and community colleges (Alamprese, *To Ensure America's Future*) graduate programs can easily justify integrating ABE and GED issues into graduate courses.

In this essay I will discuss the value of BW graduate courses and the possibility of entire master's programs that prepare students to teach, research, and advocate for nontraditional adult literacy learners in diverse educational contexts.

Striving for Heightened Visibility in Graduate Education

When Adler-Kassner and Glau propose that basic writing is both a subfield of composition and an emerging discipline (7), they suggest that BW has a broader base and more far-reaching aspirations than in earlier years. Even a cursory reading of *The Bedford Bibliography* reveals an increasingly wide range of subjects being addressed by BW scholars, especially regarding diversity of

students and teaching environments. In "The Conference on Basic Writing: 1980-2005," Karen Uehling describes students enrolled in basic writing classes as "first generation college students, people of color or speakers of more than one language or dialect, refugees or immigrants, reentry students . . . people who experienced erratic or interrupted high school educations and later earned General Equivalency Diplomas, people with learning or other disabilities, very young parents, and people who work long hours" (9). With this description, Uehling reminds us to pay attention to the diversity among students enrolled in remedial college writing classes.

A second recent publication further illustrates the diversity of topics in BW scholarship. In *Teaching Developmental Writing: Background Readings,* Susan Naomi Bernstein presents essays on teaching college writing alongside essays focusing on teaching immigrants, ESL readers, reentry adult undergraduates, and incarcerated women; one striking example of the diverse student populations represented by Bernstein is Jane Maher's "'You Probably Don't Even Know I Exist'" – an essay on teaching reading and writing to women in prison. More broadly, by including such a wide range of student populations and educational programs in this volume, Bernstein demonstrates very concretely the scope of current BW professionals' teaching and research interests.

The cumulative weight of many fine publications makes a strong case for specialized BW graduate courses and entire graduate programs that prepare students for careers centered on teaching and researching basic literacy education for adults. In fact, there is an ongoing interest in texts recommended for BW graduate courses. In April 2006, Lori Rios queried the CBW listserv about possible texts for BW graduate courses, and soon after posted a list of recommended books and journal articles on *CompFAQS.*[2] The book-length essays, research studies, and edited collections that currently appear on the list are these:

Texts for Teaching Basic Writing in the MA Program (Compiled by Lori Rios and posted on CompFAQS in May 2006)

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Gregory R. Glau, *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing.* 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Susanmarie Harrington. *Basic Writing as a Political Act: Public Conversations about Writing and Literacies.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2002.

Bartholomae, David, and Anthony Petrosky. *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1986.

Bernstein, Susan Naomi. *Teaching Developmental Reading: Background Readings*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. (free professional resource; soon to appear in 3rd edition)

DiPardo, Anne. *A Kind of Passport: A Basic Writing Adjunct Program and the Challenge of Student Diversity*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993.

Enos, Theresa, ed. *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*. New York: Random House, 1987.

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Moran, Michael G., and Martin J. Jacobi. *Research in Basic Writing: A Bibliographic Sourcebook*. New York: Greenwood, 1991.

Mutnick, Deborah. *Writing in an Alien World: Basic Writing and the Struggle for Equality in Higher Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1996.

Nathan, Rebekah. *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2005.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. New York: Penguin, 1990.

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Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. NewYork: Oxford UP, 1977.

Soliday, Mary. *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional and Student Needs in Higher Education*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2002.

Sternglass, Marilyn. *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

To this list, I would add these books:

Balester, Valerie M. *Cultural Divide: A Study of African-American College-Level Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1993.

Haswell, Richard H. *Gaining Ground in College Writing: Tales of Development and Interpretation*. Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1991.

Kutz, Eleanor, Suzy Q. Groden, and Vivian Zamel. *The Discovery of Competence: Teaching and Learning with Diverse Student Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

Maher, Jane. *Mina P. Shaughnessy: Her Life and Work*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

Nelson, Marie Wilson. *At the Point of Need: Teaching Basic and ESL Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1991.

Richardson, Elaine. *African American Literacies*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

As I write, more publications come to mind that would be useful for current and future basic writing professionals. However, even this partial list of publications suggests the breadth of topics in a rapidly growing field. And because its scholarship is both expansive and substantial, BW is well positioned to strive for heightened visibility in graduate education.

BW Graduate Courses of the 1980s

The idea of using existing and new graduate courses in preparing future teachers of basic writing is not new, not in our profession and not in the *Journal of Basic Writing*. Two earlier issues of the journal focused entirely on professional preparation for teachers (Spring/Summer 1981 and Spring/Summer 1984). Both *JBW* issues include essays on the role of graduate education in forming BW instructors. For example, Harvey Wiener, writing in 1981, argued that a stronger emphasis on "skills in literary analysis" in existing literature graduate courses offers the greatest potential for preparing "teachers of writing." Special graduate courses for preparing teachers of basic writing are not warranted, Wiener concluded, due to the "dearth of hard data that would suggest the prototype of a full course of study" (8).

Wiener did, however, view continual writing in diverse genres to be essential professional preparation for aspiring teachers.

A more fully developed approach to the subject is offered by Lou Kelly's "Writing as Learning for Basic Writing Teachers and Their Students." Kelly describes a University of Iowa "seminar-practicum" that involves graduate students in writing about their own composing experiences, observing students' tutorials in a writing lab, discussing these writing lab observations with the writing lab director, and studying basic linguistic theories and research. While reflecting on their own experiences and observing tutorials, graduate students also practice reading student writing in highly participatory graduate seminars. Though developed more than twenty-five years ago, this curriculum is still a useful model for preparing teachers of basic writing and college composition.

Even more ambitious is an effort to revamp an entire doctoral program described by Joseph Comprone, who reports on doctoral curriculum revisions initiated at the University of Louisville to prepare future teachers of basic writing. These changes included a shift from a "remedial" pedagogical stance to a "developmental" perspective, which offered two advantages. First, instructors would be more inclined to acknowledge students' existing language competencies and literacy strengths when viewing students developmentally (rather than within a language deficiency frame). Secondly, the required emphasis on psychological theory would position the BW enterprise more solidly within scholarly goals of a doctoral program. This newly instituted focus on preparing basic writing teachers is summarized in three questions posed by Comprone:

- "What should basic writing teachers be able to do?"
- "What do basic writing teachers need to know?"
- "What kinds of practical experience should teachers of basic writers have?"

These questions would form the core of any program of study aiming to prepare future teachers of basic writing.

Contemporary BW Graduate Courses

Today, however, teacher preparation must share curricular space with other instructional goals and make way for new kinds of courses. No longer can *all* BW graduate courses afford to be focused exclusively on preparing

teachers. Contemporary graduate education must form future BW scholars, researchers, program administrators, *and* teachers. In addition to preparing students for specific professional roles, BW graduate courses should offer opportunities to study widely discussed issues surrounding such topics as students' rights to their own languages, teaching and learning standardized English, ideologies of language deficits and literacy skills instruction, mainstreaming first year college writing classes, writing assessment practices, writing and reading curricula for nontraditional adult learners, on-line instruction, and the implications of representing students as "remedial" or "basic" writers. BW graduate courses should also provide occasions for learning about adult education-community college transitional programs.

In order to learn about contemporary BW graduate courses, I posted a request for information on the CBW Listserv in Summer 2005. Responses were immediate and generous: colleagues from many different states wrote online and offline about studying BW as graduate students or teaching BW graduate courses. Some respondents reported that their graduate programs offered no specific BW courses, so they developed credit-bearing independent studies. Others wrote about graduate courses they had experienced as students or teachers. Karen Uehling sent a list of BW graduate courses she had previously shared on the CBW Listserv in 2004. Lori Rios compiled a new list of BW graduate courses, which she has recently uploaded on the *CompFAQS* web page alongside Uehling's original list.

Collective brainstorming on curricula for BW graduate courses caught fire and questions such as the following were posted by CBW Listserv colleagues:

- How does basic writing instruction at community colleges differ from basic writing instruction in senior colleges and universities?
- Are more basic writing courses offered in two-year colleges than in four-year colleges?
- How often are basic writing courses offered as part of composition programs with composition directors versus being offered in distinct basic writing programs with basic writing program directors?
- What sorts of textbooks, nonfiction books, and novels are currently being assigned for students to read in basic writing classes?
- What texts are available and potentially useful for BW graduate courses?
- What profiles or models of basic writing students have been invented?
- What sorts of expertise and knowledge do basic writing instructors need?

- What forms of graduate education should be provided for basic writing teachers?
- How well prepared are MA and PhD graduates for the political dimension of their work as teachers of basic writers? Are graduate programs educating students about the political nature of BW?

These questions suggest topics that could usefully be addressed in BW graduate courses. We can discover even more topics by reading the actual syllabi of professors who have offered such courses in master's and doctoral programs.

After receiving syllabi from professors on the CBW Listserv and downloading all available syllabi posted on the *CompFAQS-Basic Writing Resources* web site, I had collected syllabi from ten BW graduate courses. Bruce Horner offered two different BW graduate course syllabi, so the work of nine professors is actually represented in this essay. The professors, their universities, and course titles are listed in the following table:

Ten BW Graduate Courses Offered in U.S. Universities from 2000 to 2005

Professor	College/University	Course Title
Linda Adler-Kassner	Eastern Michigan University	Teaching Basic Writing at the College Level
Shannon Carter	Texas A&M University-Commerce	Basic Writing Theory and Practice
Carolyn Handa	Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	Basic and Developmental Writing
Bruce Horner	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Basic Writing in History, Theory, and Practice
Bruce Horner	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Rethinking Basic Writing: Critiques and Alternatives
Donna Nelson-Beene	Texas A&M University-Commerce	The Teaching of Basic and Developmental Writing
Thomas Reynolds	University of Minnesota	Developmental Writing and the College Student: Theory and Practice
Lynn Quitman Troyka	City College of New York	Basic Writing Theory, Research, and Pedagogy
Karen Uehling	Boise State University	The Theory and Teaching of Basic Writing
Mindy Wright	Ohio State University	Teaching Basic Writing

In addition to the courses listed here, nine additional courses are being offered in nine different universities, according to data presented on the *CompFAQS: Basic Writing* web site, a 1999 survey of Composition and Rhetoric doctoral programs (Brown *et al.*, "The Arrival"), and a 2004 survey on Composition and Rhetoric master's programs (Brown *et al.*, "Mapping the Landscape").[3] All of the institutions where I have found *graduate courses explicitly focused on BW* being offered are public universities—which calls attention to the importance of institutional contexts for graduate programs. These contexts include not just the colleges themselves but the wider geographical regions and socio-cultural environments in which universities are located. BW graduate courses may well be more compelling in universities that have or once had open admissions policies—more often found in public, not private, institutions. They may also be found in universities that engage in dialogues/partnerships with community colleges, as in the case at Texas A & M University-Kingsville, where Lori Rios currently teaches an online graduate course called "Teaching Basic/Developmental Writing." This new course is being offered in response to a community college department chair's request for a course that can "certify" teachers of BW at his college (Rios, email). Similarly, Sugie Goen-Salter and Helen Gillotte-Tropp offer a two-semester course sequence ("Seminar in Teaching Integrated Reading and Writing") at San Francisco State University, for graduate students who are currently employed or may soon find employment at one of the nine nearby community colleges (Goen-Salter, email).

The Need to Situate BW Graduate Courses Inside Local Contexts

In a discussion of institutional contexts and graduate programs, Richard Young and Erwin Steinberg argue that "a strategy of comparative advantage" is preferable to a one-size-fits-all approach in planning graduate curricula:

> Every institution offers an environment in which some kinds of programs will do well and others will not; not all plants grow equally well in the same soil. Every institution has distinctive strengths and resources; a program that exploits them is likely to be stronger than one that does not. The effect of the assumption nationally is to diversify program design; not 'one size fits all,' but no one size fits all. We are arguing programs are not intrinsically desirable; they are more or less desirable, depending on their relation to their context.

> What works well at Harvard may not work well at Carnegie Mellon or North Carolina State or Michigan Tech or City College of New York. And vice versa. *The assumption opens up the possibility that a school not considered among the elite might do some things better than Harvard* [emphasis mine]. (398)

In view of the "strategy of comparative advantage" approach to program planning, universities with basic writing programs, BW alternatives (e.g., mainstreamed first year writing programs), or community college alliances are likely sites for graduate programs featuring the study of basic writing.

A good example of a professor capitalizing on his own university context as a site for graduate instruction is Bruce Horner, who used the documents of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee basic writing program as primary sources for a course he has offered called "Basic Writing in History, Theory, and Practice." In his syllabus, Horner explains,

> The purpose of this seminar will be to investigate the strategic value and limitations of compositionists' various attempts to define writing, students, courses, pedagogies and writing programs called 'basic.' Our aim will be to better understand and discriminate among these attempts, UWM's own programs in basic writing, and composition generally. We will examine formative texts in basic writing scholarship, explore their relationship to our experiences as students of writing and writing teachers, and pursue projects in scholarship and teaching in light of these considerations. . . . To ground our exploration of the readings in the immediate context of UWM, I will . . . be introducing samples of UWM student writing, course materials, and institutional documents into class discussions for your consideration.

By combining institutional documents with published scholarship, Horner encourages students to locate their university's courses in the environment of other first-year writing programs and related scholarship.

Horner continued using UWM to contextualize BW studies in a second graduate course, "Rethinking Basic Writing: Critiques and Alternatives." As described in the syllabus, this course includes a particular focus on the criticisms of basic writing courses and alternate structures:

> In this seminar we will examine recent critiques of the formative institutional and theoretical work that has come to define 'basic writing' students, courses and programs, and we will consider recent alternative formulations of courses, programs, and pedagogies in light of these critiques, other scholarship, and our own experiences as writers and teachers of college-level writing. While the immediate, local impetus for offering this seminar is the place of basic writing in the current first-year composition program at UWM, the seminar itself will focus on the range of work critiquing and exploring alternatives to curricular and programmatic arrangements for basic writing nationwide.

The writing assigned in this course included both weekly response writing and a term project, which Horner describes as follows:

> Your term projects should aim at making or evaluating a specific proposal about basic writing, loosely defined, in light of our examination of critiques of basic writing and proposed alternatives to it, and should ultimately take the form of a 20-25 page seminar paper in MLA format that builds on but extends your inquiry beyond the common readings and discussions.

In response to this assignment, Horner's students worked collaboratively to develop a mainstreamed first year writing class, which UWM piloted in the academic year of 2004-2005. Horner describes the pilot and subsequent outcomes:

> The mainstreaming project itself grew out of the work of the seminar as a whole, with virtually all members of the seminar, as well as the Assistant Director Vicki Bott (a lecturer), participating actively in making the proposal for the project to the dean (who had to approve the break from the curriculum, the money for staffing the new course, and the support for the 105 coordinator), developing the 105 curriculum, and rethinking that curriculum and the project as it progressed.... The seminar provided a cohort of us with a common vocabulary and sense of what similarly committed folks were doing elsewhere on which we could base our drafting of the proposal, development of the curriculum, and so on. (Horner, email)

Two of the students participating in this project offered a poster presentation of the class project at the 2006 4Cs in Chicago. When talking with these students (Dylan Dryer and Lisa Riecks), I was positively impressed by the clarity of their presentation and the success of the class project—already approved for continuation the following year at UWM. These two students "were very active in conducting the mainstreaming project at UWM, in part a result of having subsequently been appointed to be '105 Pilot Course Coordinators'" (Horner, email).

Local testing programs offer another context for BW graduate courses. To analyze political aspects of writing assessment, Shannon Carter references three standardized tests in her syllabus for a course offered at Texas A&M:

> Political questions driving this course . . . include the following: What's the history of, justification for, and function of state-mandated, high-stakes testing like the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP), and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)? What are some of the political, economic, ideological, and social consequences of high-stakes testing, especially as those consequences define basic writing and basic writers? (Carter, English 776)

Since writing assessment programs of various kinds are often used to place students in or out of basic writing classes, thereby defining students as "basic writers" or "college-level writers," their inclusion in graduate curricula seems desirable if not essential to the concerns of many BW graduate instructors and students. In fact, writing assessment has become such a specialized subject that a concentrated study of the subject would be particularly appropriate in a BW graduate course. Equally important are the consequences of using particular forms of assessment to screen students for remedial versus college-level courses. For instance, how does placement in a non-credit remedial course affect a student's financial aid or that student's overall economic investment in college—both by having to stay in college a semester longer, which may become necessary, and by a resulting loss of wages? These questions and many more related subjects should be addressed in graduate seminars that are preparing future composition/rhetoric professionals.

A third approach to grounding graduate student learning in local contexts is illustrated by Mindy Wright at Ohio State University. One of

several stated course goals is preparing students to teach introductory OSU writing workshops. Students enrolled in Wright's course were required to observe one writing workshop class four times, interview the instructor, and write an observation report. This ethnographic approach allows students to produce knowledge, not just absorb it from other people's scholarship, thereby bringing students closer to the research writing community.

The BW graduate courses designed by Horner, Carter, and Wright all require students to become researchers while studying BW scholarship. Taking this idea to another level, Linda Adler-Kassner has encouraged her students to publish their collaborative inquiry projects on the *CompFAQS Basic Writing* web site (Adler-Kassner: *CompFAQS/ Best Practices*). This idea of emphasizing student research suggests a potential need for two different kinds of BW graduate courses—one that focuses on teacher preparation and a second that emphasizes reading and writing research. Although not mutually exclusive, these *different* instructional emphases indicate that *two* BW graduate courses might usefully be offered within one master's or doctoral program.

For graduate students aiming to teach in two-year colleges, there should exist opportunities to specialize in issues centrally important to BW and TESL. Various forms of scholarship two-year college faculty can study and prepare to write are described in *Research and Scholarship in the Two-Year College*, a 2004 statement disseminated by the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) of the National Council of Teachers of English. TYCA argues for expanding recognized definitions of research to include teacher research and applications of theory to teaching and learning practices.

Shaughnessy's Contributions to Graduate Education at CUNY

A little known aspect of Mina Shaughnessy's legacy is the graduate program that she initiated in the CCNY English Department. The MA in Teaching College English prepared instructors for newly created full-time lecturer lines at the City University of New York (CUNY) in the earliest years of open admissions at CUNY. Edward Quinn, CCNY English Department Chair from 1973 through 1976, describes the rationale for a pedagogy master's program as being closely tied to the newly hired BW instructors at CCNY and in all the CUNY colleges:

> It was a pragmatic decision, determined by what was in operation at the time and by what we thought would be the case in the future.

> We thought there was a place in the university for instructors who would specialize in and teach basic writing exclusively. There were at least thirty-five full-time basic writing lecturers in the City College English Department of the mid-1970s, eligible after their fifth year for a modified form of tenure, the certificate of continuous employment. (Quinn)

The proposed "pedagogy MA" sparked debate in the CCNY English Department. *Where would this degree be housed? What use was such a degree? Who would want it? What sorts of jobs were available?* (Laurence). These and other questions were discussed among faculty as they considered the proposed program. Perhaps the abundant full-time BW lecturer lines within CUNY helped persuade faculty and administrators that a full-fledged graduate study of subjects such as language, dialect, literacy, and pedagogy merited college sanction and resources. The newly approved program first appeared in the 1975-76 CCNY college bulletin. Ironically, just as this master's program was getting off the ground, New York City experienced a profound economic crisis (highlighted by the *New York Daily News* headline "FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD") in which full-time BW faculty at City College as well as other CUNY colleges lost their jobs. They were a luxury no longer affordable by colleges that were closing entire programs and firing non-tenured (and some tenured) professors.

In addition to starting a new master's degree, Shaughnessy offered to teach a course on basic writing at the CUNY Graduate Center. When a CUNY professor objected on the grounds that Shaughnessy lacked a PhD, Bob Lyons negotiated a yearlong team-taught "Colloquium on the Teaching of Writing," which Lyons and Shaughnessy offered together. Among the invited guests were Sarah D'Eloia and Tom Farrell of City College, Marie Ponsot of Queens College, Carol Reed of Brooklyn College, Harvey Wiener of LaGuardia Community College, and from outside CUNY there were John Wright from Oxford University Press and Janet Emig, who discussed her ongoing composing process research (Maher 176).

The graduate courses that Shaughnessy designed and taught challenged accepted wisdom about appropriate subjects of research for English professors and topics for graduate-level instruction in the CCNY English Department as well as in most 1970s English departments. Rather than studying literature, literary criticism, or creative writing exclusively, graduate students could now supplement the existing English curriculum with courses on language, literacy, and pedagogy. In conjunction with these new areas

of graduate instruction, faculty and administrators had to be persuaded that teaching and learning were valid objects of inquiry for faculty employed in a department of English. This issue arose in English Department discussions of Shaughnessy's promotion to full professor, which was nonetheless approved by a vote of that body and at higher administrative levels in 1977 (Maher 224; Quinn).

The CCNY MA in Language and Literacy: 1985-2007

The MA that Mina Shaughnessy began in 1975-76 continued to offer courses despite her untimely death in 1978. Seven years later in September 1985, eleven students were registered in the MA in Teaching College English, considerably fewer than the 53 graduate students in creative writing and the 30 in literature.[4] New leadership was needed for the pedagogy MA to reach its full potential, an assignment for which Marilyn Sternglass was hired in Fall 1985. Sternglass collaborated closely with newly hired English Education professor Cynthia O'Nore to create one master's program with branches in two divisions—the Humanities Division and the School of Education. With strong support from Humanities and Education administrators, Sternglass and O'Nore named this program "Master of Arts in Language and Literacy" and expanded its scope to include a secondary English teaching certificate in the School of Education and an optional emphasis in teaching English as a second language.[5] The proposal for this new program, distributed to English faculty by Marilyn Sternglass in November 1985, offered a description of its professional orientation and potential student body:

> The proposed MA in Language and Literacy is designed to familiarize present and prospective teachers with the major conceptual and pedagogical issues related to the teaching of literacy skills (i.e. reading and writing) to adult learners in secondary, college, or adult literacy programs. The MA takes as its underlying theoretical orientation the belief that literacy skills can be best understood as deriving from current understandings of language theory, cognitive theory, reading theory, and writing theory. Accordingly, the program begins with four core courses, one in each of the above listed areas (12 credits), as the central requirement for all participants. (Sternglass, *Proposal*)

The most unusual feature of this proposal was the notion that a single

master's program could offer language and literacy theory courses that would serve as a common foundation for multiple professional pathways. Unlike master's programs that prepare students for one primary career path, this MA would provide professional graduate education for students aiming to teach adults in secondary, college, or adult literacy programs (Sternglass, *Proposal*; O'Nore). The proposal was approved by a unanimous vote of the English faculty in December 1986.[6]

During Sternglass's administration (1985 through 1995), adult literacy instructors increasingly enrolled in the L&L MA, and in the 1990s Brooklyn College employed L&L graduate Anita Caref as Director of its Adult Literacy Program. With a full-time position and leadership role in the New York City adult literacy community, Caref called attention to the growing need for graduate level professional education for New York City's ABE and GED teachers, program administrators, and researchers. Her career showcased a specialization that might usefully be expanded within the MA program.

In recent years, however, lack of institutional support posed a real threat to this program. This should have come as no surprise: a program that prepares BW instructors would predictably come into question in a college that had just abolished all BW classes and students. It's no secret that in the year 2000, the City University of New York eliminated all remedial writing, reading, and math courses from its eleven senior colleges, of which City College is one (Gleason, "Remediation Phase-out"), and so benign neglect of a graduate program that prepares BW teachers might appear self-evident, even necessary. Equally problematic was the perception that the English Department MA in Language and Literacy program competed for scarce resources with a long-standing MA in Literature and a prestigious MA in Creative Writing.

Without question, there are challenges for any graduate program that features the study of basic writing and reading, teaching English as a second language, and adult literacy education. However, it is possible and well worth the effort to mount and sustain such a program. The CCNY MA in Language and Literacy has recently made a comeback in large part due to an alliance with an agency outside the college: the union-based Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), one of the largest providers of adult education in New York City. The Consortium's Executive Director, Joseph McDermott, saw a direct link between offering affordable professional education for adult literacy instructors in New York City and improving the quality of instruction at the Consortium for Worker Education. Responding to my appeal for support, he provided off-campus instructional space, tuition reimbursements, and

assistance from a CWE consultant, Irwin Polishook, who had just stepped down from a long tenure as President of the CUNY-wide faculty and staff union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC-CUNY). With his political expertise and a particularly strong commitment to this project, Irwin Polishook participated in jump-starting the MA in Language and Literacy, which was admitting no students between Fall 2000 and Spring 2003.

With external support from the Consortium, internal support from many CCNY faculty and administrators, and a group of newly admitted graduate students[7] the L&L MA came back to life on an experimental basis in Fall 2003 and was ultimately reinstated in June 2005.[8] The newly reinstated program's curriculum reflects its present alliance with the Consortium for Worker Education by requiring all students to enroll in a course that addresses basic writing and reading instruction in pre-college and college environments. The remaining three core courses are Second Language Acquisition, Introduction to Language, and Theories and Models of Literacy. Students may develop individualized programs of study by enrolling in elective courses in areas such as TESL, adult education, sociolinguistics, autobiography, literature, or fiction/non-fiction writing. Most recently, a new elective, "Basic Writing Theory, Research, and Pedagogy," has been designed and taught by Lynn Quitman Troyka, former *JBW* editor and widely respected BW teacher-scholar. Troyka's detailed syllabus illustrates a curriculum that balances teacher preparation with learning to read and write BW scholarship. (See appendix.) This course was offered for the first time in Summer 2006 and will be described by Troyka in a talk at the 2007 4Cs in New York City. This is the first time that a 4Cs panel of speakers will address designing and teaching BW graduate courses.[9]

Online Resources for Developing BW Graduate Courses

For professors and program directors considering BW graduate courses for their own master's or doctoral programs, many online resources offer valuable information. The best primary source documents are sample syllabi that have been compiled and recently posted on *CompFAQS* by Karen Uehling and Lori Rios. A second online resource for learning about graduate curricula is the *Doctoral Consortium in Composition and Rhetoric* web site, which provides a survey of existing doctoral programs. Of special value is a third online resource, the *Conference on Basic Writing (CBW)* web site, which offers well-organized, up to date information on BW as well as directions for subscribing to the CBW Listserv. Equally important are the Listserv and

its subscribers—graduate students, faculty teaching undergraduate and graduate students, administrators, and scholars. Uehling's richly textured historical narrative describes how CBW founder Charles Guilford "posted a sheet on a message board of the Washington Hilton" at the 1980 Conference on College Composition and Communication to solicit members for a fledgling organization that received initial advice and support from Lynn Troyka and eventually came to be known as the Conference on Basic Writing (Uehling 10). Today CBW is a highly participatory organization with many members who respond to queries and engage in online discussions.

BW professionals' interest in Adult Literacy research is evident in the contents of the CBW web page, which hosts links to the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for Adult Literacy. Also accessible on the CBW web site is a link to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy report, *A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century*. This research uses one common approach to study the English language prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy of adults (age 16 through 65 and older) whose literacy scores are analyzed by level of educational attainment, age, gender, and culture and classified by a system of four levels: "below basic," "basic," "intermediate," and "proficient." Not only is the survey comprehensive demographically but it also offers a historical comparison between a group of people studied in 2003 and a similar group studied by the same approach in 1993. This report illustrates the overlapping interests of ABE and BW professionals by assessing the literacy of people who have attained some high school education, a high school diploma, a GED, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, and a graduate degree.

Making a Place for Basic Writing in Graduate Programs

The Two-Year College English Association offers explicit advice on graduate education for future community college faculty in its *Guidelines for the Academic Preparation of Two-Year College English Faculty*. Among the suggested offerings are courses on theories of learning, including basic writers and literacy for adult learners (*Guidelines*). Despite TYCA's call for specialized community college professional preparation, some university professors and doctoral students may view community college employment options as intellectually and professionally limiting. Others argue that graduate education for adult education professionals cannot be justified given that field's over-reliance on volunteers and part-time teachers. However, these lines of reasoning beg the question of why *at least* nineteen BW graduate

courses are already being offered in universities all across the U.S. and why so much creative, carefully researched, often provocative BW scholarship continues to be published despite or perhaps because of reductions in funding and political support for basic writing programs in senior colleges and universities.

Resistance to including BW scholarship and entire BW courses in graduate programs might be interpreted as a common sense decision related to employment options or it might be seen as a new generation of "they don't belong in college" gatekeepers who now offer a more subtle slogan: *the teachers of basic writers don't belong in graduate school.* While literature and composition pedagogy courses are standard fare in English and English education graduate programs, courses on Basic Writing and Adult Literacy remain relatively obscure. The resulting exclusion of BW scholarship from graduate curricula perpetuates a tradition of employing poorly informed graduate students and adjunct instructors from other disciplines to teach classes that, ironically enough, require the most finely tuned pedagogical skill.

Basic writing also merits strong representation in composition and rhetoric graduate programs because BW has made important contributions to the field of composition/rhetoric as a whole. Writing assessment research gained prominence initially for the purpose of BW placement testing; innovative writing curricula were developed for BW courses that could also be used in college composition and advanced composition courses (Bartholomae and Petrosky); and one of the earliest longitudinal research studies (Sternglass) focused on the long-term experiences of students who initially placed into basic writing classes and whose future academic success was being called into question by critics of CUNY's open admissions policy.

Neither the professional prestige nor the direct market value of a career can be the only factor in decisions about graduate curricula. Another approach to making decisions about graduate curricula is to consider the value a knowledge base may have for improving the opportunities and lives of individuals, families, and entire communities. The fact is that full-time employment opportunities *do* exist in community colleges, and adult education is a field much in need of more professionally qualified instructors, administrators, and leaders. Activist teacher-scholars such as those cited in this essay have opened up the BW field and pointed to a broad horizon of possibility. Graduate education can play a vital role in enabling us to apply reason to that need.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Edward Quinn for responding to multiple drafts of this essay and suggesting the title; the CBW as a whole and the Listserv participants who responded to my queries in Summer 2005; all the professors who made available copies of their syllabi; Bruce Horner, Karen Uehling, Lori Rios, and Lynn Quitman Troyka; Sydney Van Nort of the CCNY Cohen Library for assistance with institutional archives; and *JBW* editors Bonne August and Rebecca Mlynarczyk.

Notes

1. The Conference on Basic Writing Executive Committee sponsored a panel ("CBW at 25") honoring CBW's twenty-fifth anniversary at the 2005 College Composition and Communication Conference in San Francisco. Co-chaired by William Lalicker and Thomas Reynolds, panel speakers included Karen Uehling, Gerri McNenny, Greg Glau, Linda Adler-Kassner, and Barbara Gleason.

2. *CompFAQS* is a Wiki site that offers information on composition questions and research. A special site for basic writing includes two lists of BW graduate course titles and syllabi. The URL is <http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/CompFAQs/Home>.

3. The additional eight BW graduate courses are being offered at Ball State University, California State University-Los Angeles, California State University-Fresno, Miami University, California State University-San Bernardino, San Francisco State University, Montclair State University, and University of Louisiana at Lafayette. In addition, a few special topics courses on "teaching nontraditional students," "teaching ESL writing," and "teaching in community colleges" are listed in the *Rhetoric Review* surveys of master's programs (Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer) and doctoral programs (Brown, Stuart, Jackson, and Enos). Steve Lamos, for example, offered a graduate course entitled "Teaching Composition in the Community College" at Illinois State University in Spring 2005.

4. Graduate student enrollments are recorded in the September 1985 CCNY English Department faculty meeting minutes.

5. CCNY Humanities Dean Paul Sherwin leant particularly strong support to the MA in Language and Literacy and to Marilyn Sternglass's administration of the program.

6. The vote is recorded in the December 1986 CCNY English Department Faculty Meeting Minutes.

7. Twelve students who began as non-matriculated graduate students requested and received permission to matriculate in the Spring 2004 term. All twelve of these students completed the program.

8. English Department Chairs Fred Reynolds and Joshua Wilner provided essential leadership for reopening the program in 2003 and securing official reinstatement status in 2005.

9. The other speakers on this panel include Lori Rios, Sugie Goen-Salter, and Helen P. Gillotte-Tropp.

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Appendix

City College of the City University of New York
MA Program in Language and Literacy
Basic Writing Theory, Research, and Pedagogy
ENGL B8108, Section 2YY
Professor Lynn Quitman Troyka (LQT)

Thursday, 6 July through Thursday, 27 July 2006
Lynn Quitman Troyka (LQT) e-mail: troykalq@nyc.rr.com
LQT's Administrative Assistant: Ida Morea

Official Course Description

How does "basic writing" (BW) differ, if at all, from garden-variety "writing"? How are basic writers (BWs) different, if at all, from other first-year writing students? To explore these and related questions, we will use a practical approach to debate the conceptual frameworks underlying theories of BW, including those of cognitive development (Vygotsky), critical literacy (Shor), psycholinguistics (Smith), and experiential models (Hillocks). We will critique the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative research designs, including those for assessing writing and drawing conclusions about effective BW pedagogy. We will craft cases and simulations for BW classroom use; analyze and share productive responses to provided samples of the writing of BWs; define our visions for potential research, conference presentations, and journal articles about BW; and write reflections on our readings and discussions. Each student will craft a pre-approved final project to explore or apply ideas related to the course.

Books: Selected Readings DON'T PURCHASE THESE TWO BOOKS. They're yours at no charge, courtesy of their publisher Bedford/St. Martins. I'll hand them out at our first class session.

Bernstein, Susan Naomi, ed. *Teaching Developmental Writing: Background Readings,* second edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. [selected readings only]

Stahl, Norman A., and Hunter Boylan, eds. *Teaching Developmental Reading: Historical, Theoretical, and Practical Background Readings*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. [selected readings only]

Supplementary Readings

A. from Dunn, Patricia A. *Talking Sketching Moving.*
B. from Fox, Tom. *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education.*
C. From Hillocks George. *Research in the Teaching of Composition.*
D. from Smith, Frank. *Understanding Reading,* sixth edition.
E. various by LQT re BW (NOTE: Please, please feel free to respond to these openly and honestly even though I wrote them.)

Weighted Elements for Course Grade

Participation 25%; in-class writings 30%; three special projects 45% total (see last paragraphs in section that follows)

The Spirit of Our Enterprise

This course consists of two concurrent strands. One supports our study of theories and research concerning BW. The second supports our concrete, often creative applications of those theories and that research to the BW classroom. My intention is to model, as much as is practical in our three-hour format, good teaching strategies for BW (and other writing) courses.

Never will I talk "at you" for the entire time. When I do, my goal is to pass along background information and set contexts. You'll need to take notes because you'll be drawing on them for in-class writings, group work, and your final course project.

Your robust participation in class and in groups will count for 25% of your final grade. I plan to engage you in organized, lively discussions and activities/projects that [I hope] are engaging. During these times, you'll want to jot down notes so that you can draw on them for your in-class writings. (I'm rather a pro at getting everyone involved, so I promise that no one will dominate—on the flip side, this means that I'll be inviting quieter folks into the conversation.)

In-class writings will count for 30% of your final grade. To start

each class session except the first, I'll hand out a 15-to-20-minute in-class writing prompt at 6:00 PM sharp. Anyone arriving after 6:00 PM sharp will not receive a prompt sheet—see "Attendance" below. The prompts ask you to demonstrate that you've read the assigned readings and are able to think reflectively about them and how they relate to the prior class session(s). I'll talk more about "reflective thinking" in our first session.

To end each class session, I'll hand out a 5-to-10 minute prompt for an in-class writing. They ask for you to react specifically and honestly to the class session or other issues related to our work together. One function of these writings is to help me plan productively for the next session. At the end of each writing session, I'll collect your work. Between classes, I'll respond to, but not grade, your writings.

Combined, three special projects to hand in will count for 45% of your grade, as follows:

A. DUE START OF FIFTH [LATER EXTENDED TO SIXTH] CLASS, JULY 20, 2006. A written simulation/role-playing scenario, composed according to guidelines explained and demonstrated during the third class session. We'll start these in class. Double space required. 10%

B. DUE START OF SIXTH CLASS, JULY 25, 2006. Annotated bibliography of 10 articles not read for class work: 20%

You can take five articles from the two required books, as long as they're ones I've not assigned and are related to our topics. Please take the five others from the *Journal of Basic Writing*, the *e-Journal of Basic Writing*, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, and others that I approve in advance as long as the articles relate specifically to BW.
NOTE: Each annotation must consist of four elements.
Double space required.

1. Complete bibliographic entry for the article (MLA style preferred; APA okay).
2. Summary, with no commentary, of the article.
3. Synthesis—this means blend it in with topics from our class work and our assigned readings. This is a crucial part of each annotation. We'll discuss "synthesis" in class.

4. Your response to the article.

C. DUE START OF SEVENTH CLASS, JULY 27, 2006. A three-page (750-words or so) final reflection paper. Be prepared to read aloud yours and discuss. (I estimate 750 words to be about three double-spaced pages of 250 words, if in 12 point Times New Roman.) Double space required. 15%

Details of class sessions

1. Thursday, July 6 Topics: Introductions and distribution of materials. Topics: Defining Basic Writing (BW); identifying Basic Writers (BWs); structures of BW programs in post-secondary institutions; applied psycholinguistics and its relation to theories of reading and reader response for BWs
2. Tuesday, July 11 Topics: Conceptual frameworks: theories of cognitive development in relation to BWs; alternative theories of reading/approaches to text, critical thinking, and related metacognitive applications for BWs
3. Thursday, July 13 Topics: Experiential models (Hillocks) for teaching/learning; participation in a demonstration simulation/role-playing scenario; start of writing project due fifth session
4. Tuesday, July 18 Topics: Theories of Multiple Intelligences (Dunn)
5. Thursday, July 20 Topics: Reading and responding to BW's writing; evaluating research (especially about grammar teaching); role of grammar(s) in BW
6. Tuesday, July 25 Topics: The politics of BW (Fox)
7. Thursday, July 27 Topics: Sharing of Reflective papers (see assignments) and survey of books about BW

Arrested Development: Revising Remediation at John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Mark McBeth

ABSTRACT: Basic writing has played a large role in the history and institutional identity of the City University of New York (CUNY). From the Open Admissions era of Mina Shaughnessy to the present day, "remedial courses" at CUNY have been revised in response to different colleges' missions, curricular initiatives, university policies, and public opinion. Briefly reviewing a short history of remediation at CUNY and the university policies which affected it, this article then describes an intensive developmental writing course newly implemented at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. It explains the course's strategies, rationalizes its approach, and examines its successes as well as its continuing challenges. Theoretically approaching the basic writing course from the combined perspectives of Mary Louise Pratt and Lev Vygotsky ("the contact zone of proximal development"), this newly revised course takes seriously what Mike Rose says when he suggests "that a remedial writing curriculum must fit into the overall context of a university education." In a pedagogical situation where a gatekeeping exam (over)determines students' educational progress, this course goes beyond skills and drills or test-taking preparation to challenge students' critical thinking and develop their college-level writing abilities. It gives students and instructors a curriculum that does not teach ***to*** *the test but, instead,* ***with*** *it.*

KEYWORDS: developmental writing, remediation, curriculum design, testing

Nearly thirty years ago in the worn urban classrooms of The City College of New York, Mina Shaughnessy recollected about the first essays she read from Open Admissions students, saying:

> But the writing was so stunningly unskilled that I could not begin to define the task nor even sort out the difficulties. I could only sit there, reading and re-reading the alien papers, wondering what had gone wrong and trying to understand what I at this eleventh hour of my students' academic lives could do about it. (*Errors and Expectations* Preface)

Having worked at CUNY for sixteen years, ***Mark McBeth*** *has previously been an adjunct lecturer, a writing program administrator, and a writing center director. He presently teaches as an Associate Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he is also Deputy Chair for Writing Programs and Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator. His scholarly interests intersect the history of education, curricular design, and writing program administration as well as sociolinguistics.*

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I particularly like her metaphor of "alien papers"; it alludes to how language has been abducted, prodded, probed, and then returned to Earth, altered and barely recognizable. Luckily for her students and subsequently for all of us, her close study of their unidentified writing objects has left us more receptive to students' alien papers. Shaughnessy and compositionists who have followed her have considered why students' writing seems to have so much interplanetary interference, and discovered how to introduce entering students to our equally strange academic universe. In "Inventing the University," David Bartholomae suggests why student writing often appears so odd, stating, "The [student] writer has located himself [. . .] in a context that is, finally, beyond him, not his own and not available to his immediate procedures for inventing and arranging text" (514). If Shaughnessy identified the papers as alien, Bartholomae recognizes how the academic community can alienate students, baffling and sometimes intimidating them into silence. Both Shaughnessy and Bartholomae enlighten us about the other-worldly culture of college-level writing, and how students with our assistance can meet the specialized demands and expectations of college composition.

I am also struck by Shaughnessy's apprehension about the "eleventh hour of [her] students' academic lives." She questioned what she and her colleagues could do in a fifteen-week semester that would resolve their deeply ingrained writing interferences. After analyzing thousands of placement tests, she categorized students into three categories: those who "met the traditional requirement for college work," those who had "learned to get by but who seemed to have found no fun nor challenge in academic tasks," and "those who had been left so far behind the others in their formal education that they appeared to have little chance of catching up" (2). Although her taxonomy of student writers may be reductive, what I find resonant is that it remains tangible and recognizable in my own students' writing today. I'm still asking, "What curricular program and pedagogical strategies can be the catalyst to accelerate students' literacy acquisition, especially in the short timeframe of a semester?" Simply, how can I help them "catch up"?

In 1970, the City University of New York began its policy of Open Admissions, ensuring that any student graduating with a high school diploma could enroll in one of its degree-granting colleges for what was then a free university education. This grand educational experiment began with minimal systemic or pedagogical forethought or planning on the part of the University, and during those first years of Open Admissions, writing program administrators were making seat-of-their-pants decisions about

the programming of composition courses. Many of the troubleshooting decisions in those days were made to meet the needs of the incoming, underprepared student body; however, the students were not the only exigent factor. Many programmatic decisions were made in response to the voices of threatened faculty, opposing public opinion, and limited financial funding. In accommodating the specific needs of this new student body, the writing programs—specifically basic writing ("remedial") programs—were redefining the identity of colleges as well as the nature of college education (see Soliday). In *Changing Our Minds: Negotiating English and Literacy*, Miles Myers asserts that students' literacy abilities are not just a product of the students' aptitude for learning nor the gifts of teachers to convey the elements of reading, writing, and critical thinking but are also affected by the external pressures of institutional policy decisions which are even more broadly shaped by a culture's value of literacy abilities. His perspective can be no better exemplified than through the ongoing history of writing programming and instruction at CUNY. Policies on literacy are constantly amended, and media coverage, normally negative, is unending (see McCormack[1]). If as argued by Myers, writing programs are responding to both student need and external policy pressures simultaneously, writing program administrators must consider how the two sides of this complex equation must be considered, recalculated, and carefully resolved.

A lot has changed at CUNY since Shaughnessy's era, and new policies have had a forceful impact on both composition curricula and writing program structures. In May 1998, driven by the clamor of publicized opinion, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to eliminate remediation at all of its senior colleges, which meant that any entering student who could not pass the University's entrance literacy exams would be diverted to its comprehensive colleges (offering Associate's, Bachelor's and, sometimes, Master's degrees) or community colleges (offering only Associate's degrees). Having altered the very basis of Open Admissions access, this politically motivated decision brought on a firestorm of protests, debates, and rancorous board meetings (see McCormack 1-20). Accompanying this bureaucratic decision, other policies began to shift: admissions criteria were amended, increasing tuition costs incurred, and University policies around student literacy (and numeracy) were revisited and reconsidered (again and again). The one constant throughout these literacy policy morphs was students' writing with its "tangles of errors and puzzling incompetencies" (Shaughnessy Preface). With the added pressure of the high-stakes (gatekeeping) tests, remediation in the writing classroom became even more highly charged and complex.

This complexity may even be more pronounced at my institution, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where part of the mission statement reads:

> [John Jay College] strives to endow students with the skills of critical thinking and effective communication; the perspective and moral judgment that result from liberal studies; the capacity for personal and social growth and creative problem solving that results from the ability to acquire and evaluate information; the ability to navigate advanced technological systems; and the awareness of the diverse cultural, historical, economic, and political forces that shape our society. . . . It serves the community by developing graduates who have the intellectual acuity, moral commitment, and professional competence to confront the challenges of crime, justice, and public safety in a free society. It seeks to inspire both students and faculty, to the highest ideals of citizenship and public service. (John Jay Undergraduate Bulletin 1)

Obviously, as noted in this statement, the college hopes to prepare students for leadership in public positions, but almost all of the skills it "endows" to achieve these goals are fostered in writing classrooms: critical thinking, effective communication, creative problem solving, information technology, and evaluation. In this mission statement, we see that the college's identity is securely attached to students' literacy development.

John Jay's self-representation has recently become even more linked to literacy with its decision to change from a comprehensive college (offering Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees) to a strictly senior college (where the Associate's degree will be phased out). After the 1998 remediation policy shift, only those CUNY colleges that grant Associate's degrees can offer sub-freshman courses; therefore, senior colleges are by University regulation forbidden to offer remedial courses. At a preliminary town hall meeting of my college's faculty, where we discussed the reasons for sustaining or disbanding our Associate's Degree Program, faculty and staff offered viable arguments for every side of the debate: the educational opportunities that all students deserved, the better allocation of limited funding, the quality of curriculum provided to students, and the possibility of better prepared students. As someone who remains neutral on whether we keep or relinquish the Associate's Degree, I did however prompt my colleagues to acknowledge that what we were really discussing were issues of literacy—our students' abil-

ity to read and write for college-level standards (however broadly defined). I also reminded them that even if we ended the AA degree, student reading and writing difficulties would not magically disappear.

The largest concern I have about Associate's degree students is the quality of their literacy preparation. Many of the students entering as Associate's begin their educational careers in developmental reading and writing courses, and I know that if they are not quickly acculturated to the customs and conventions of college-level writing they will be unlikely to earn Associate's, let alone Bachelor's, degrees. Without improved literacy aptitudes, they cannot pass the high-stakes test that the University has instated. More importantly, they need to gain the literacy wherewithal to achieve the level of writing demanded in future courses. In fact, if readers misunderstood my title to refer to the "arrested development" of students, I've miscommunicated. What needed liberating was the college's approach to addressing student need. In an effort to respond to John Jay students whose literacy skills are identified as developmental, the English Department has implemented a newly devised intensive writing course within the context of current University policies and the particular mission demands of John Jay College. Briefly reviewing a short history of remediation at CUNY and the University policies which affected it, I then describe this new writing course, explain its strategies, rationalize its approach, and examine its successes as well as its continuing challenges.

Out of Uniform: The History and Irony of Testing

At the advent of Open Admissions, each individual CUNY college decided where students would be placed and what types of courses they would provide. In an effort to create a University-wide standard, the central administration requested that an affordable, easily manageable diagnostic test be created that would be administered to all incoming students. The group of University professors who were assigned the task understood how complex the writing process was and the limitations of diagnostic testing, but they likewise wanted to respond to the University's need to assess students' placement efficiently and inexpensively. From its inception, the goal of this test was to place students in courses where their skills and needs could best be accommodated. In most CUNY colleges, this placement depended upon students' scores on the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWAT); students passed the test with a score of 8, determined by two holistic readings. Students who received a lower score were placed in courses which were then designated as remediation.

Originally, students took the University-administered entrance exam to decide their placement, but later, beginning in 2000, the ACT exam replaced the CWAT, and its administration was outsourced to the Iowa-based company. The new exam always asks students to take a side on one of two viably justifiable positions and to write a letter to a designated audience, defending their position. For example, students may be asked to write a letter to the governor recommending that state funding should be allotted to either a new prison education program or to a post-prison housing and drug rehabilitation center. Both of the proposed programs could be useful, but students must choose a position and provide logical arguments to support it. Like the earlier CWAT placement test, the ACT usually results in a brief essay stating the writer's position, supported by several persuasive points. This test is scored holistically by two readers. The minimum passing score is 7, rather than the 8 required to pass the CWAT. The letter version of the ACT, of course, begins with "Dear Whoever," and ends with "Yours truly." Although this writing formula may be effective for this particular test-taking task, it does limit students' writerly repertoire, which I will speak to below.

During the early years of Open Admissions, once students were placed at what was considered the appropriate level, the appropriate writing curriculum had to be devised. Most CUNY colleges developed a sub-freshman tier of courses after which students advanced to the core composition courses. Curricula and programs varied from college to college. John Jay students who did not pass the writing entrance exam completed a series of remedial courses—English 099 and English 100. Students in 099 and 100 received no credit for these courses and, as a result, many students had little motivation to complete them, not realizing the implications the courses had on their eligibility to progress to other courses. Not passing the placement test meant that some students who might have been recognized as competent writers by their instructors in 099 and 100 still could not proceed if they did not pass the ACT exam, which was administered again as an exit exam at the end of the course. Often the English 100 course became a holding tank for students who performed poorly on the timed test which, as a result, affected their pre- and co-requisite courses, their financial aid, their prospective graduation times, their attitudes about education, not to mention their sense of self-worth as writers and burgeoning scholars. Finally, University policy stated that students who failed this remediation twice could be expelled from the college. As a result, retention rates often suffered.

Under this "psychometric paradigm" (see Cook-Gumperz) where the exam over-determined the teaching and learning, teachers worked hard

to prepare students for the high-stakes exam because they realized that if students could not pass it and continue on to freshman composition, their aspirations of completing their degrees would not be fulfilled. There was an ingrained irony, however, to this testing/pedagogical opposition. The test designated where students were placed; if they were placed in remedial courses, they normally followed a teaching routine of skills and drills designed to ensure that they would pass the test at the end of the course; often, other processes of critical thinking and writing were relegated to a position of lesser importance, and, as a result, even when students passed the exam, they enrolled in their freshman composition courses *still* underprepared to complete the types of college-level critical thinking and writing expected in that sequence. The direst consequence of this test's monopoly of the mind occurred because students did not see any reason to engage in writing exercises other than those which they felt would help them pass the exam. What students gained in being able to pass the test, they lost in other more useful and applicable thinking and writing processes. As a result, even if teachers were not teaching to the test, students certainly were learning to it.

Although the University expected its students to master the literacy skills for college-level reading and writing, its policies deterred students from accomplishing the academic tasks truly expected of them. The test (which actually says little about literacy sufficiency) distracts students from the work that would exercise and benefit their literacy development. Moreover in contemporary undergraduate education, more types of literacy are increasingly demanded of students: information literacy, computer literacy, critical thinking literacy, interpretive literacy, graphic literacy, research literacy, etc. The sundry names attached to a term once reserved for reading and writing skills underscore just how diligent students need to be to remain on the tracks of higher education; for those students who enter the educational race needing tutelage with the originary two Rs—readin' and 'ritin'—their need to develop their academic skills becomes more immediate and demanding. Students who arrive at college having never fulfilled former literacy expectations are at a double disadvantage because while "[n]ew literacy practices are always added to a culture's range, old literacy practices rarely or never disappear" (Myers 119). They must hone previously valued literacies (such as reading comprehension and analysis of traditional texts) while also adapting to burgeoning literacies (such as information analysis and synthesis brought on by computer technology). This implication again begs the question: If students do not acquire certain literacy abilities by the time they arrive at the university level, how do we accelerate their learning about literacy to

meet the more demanding learning curve of college and how can newly conceived developmental courses provide that catalyst?

First Respondents: The Newly Revised Course

In an effort to address the literacy needs of John Jay's developmental students as well as the high-stakes test they need to pass, the developmental writing courses have been revised to negotiate the multiple objectives students need to accomplish. Instead of a two-semester sequence in which time seemed never enough (yet never-ending), the two courses have been collapsed into a one-semester course with six classroom contact hours per week, two instructors co-teaching the course, and a required extracurricular tutoring component of six hours per semester. Since literacy is the challenge for these students, issues of literacy become the scholarly topic of the intensive course. Students choose one of the following three themes, which they study throughout the semester: (1) Literacy behind Bars: Prison Education; (2) The Literate Character: Representations of Literacy in Literature; or (3) The University and Literacy: Policy and Politics. Using literacy as a scholarly topic in these courses gives students a content-rich curriculum that simultaneously allows them to self-reflect upon their own challenges of reading and writing. Students are given meaty subjects to consider as they think critically about problems of education in prisons, or the nature of a literary character's literacy, or how University policies affect their own educational opportunities. Furthermore, although CUNY policy stipulates that "remedial" courses cannot be credit bearing, the addition of a content-rich topic justifies giving students three credits. As for any other content course that the college offers and gives credit for, students who are studying the scholarly subject of literacy deserve the accompanying credits.

Literacy as a scholarly topic also gives students ample opportunity to think about how they fit into the literacy conversation or to consider how the characters in the literacy narratives they read gain a place in the world by the acquisition of reading and writing.[2] For example, students in these courses can muse upon how their abilities to express themselves either imprison or liberate them. They can compare how the Frankenstein monster's acquisition of knowledge helps him locate his position in society with their own situations. They can read and challenge newspaper articles that represent the literacy aptitudes of urban university students (many of these are about CUNY students themselves). In each of these thematic branches, students study the breadth of the literacy topic while self-reflecting in depth upon

what that means to their own literate development. Students investigate the actual issue which is their "problem" while articulating it as an exploration of their own improvement. In sum, the theories of the literacy subject meet the literal practice of reading and writing.

Theoretically, this course derives from the ideas of Mary Louise Pratt and Lev Vygotsky. In "Arts of the Contact Zone," Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other [and their ideas]," where processes of "transculturation" occur (496, 500). She states that in the best-case scenarios these contact zones "contrast with ideas of community that underlie much of the thinking about language, communication, and culture that gets done in the academy" (502). In the John Jay course, students begin to understand how their pre-college literacy behaviors and abilities parallel or conflict with those demanded of them in the university. By reading scholarly works about (il)literacy, they revisit the often cliché tropes they know about the value of reading and writing, while also reenvisioning the expert authors' ideas based upon their own learning experiences. Students confront the dangers of illiteracy in Jonathan Kozol's "The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society." They investigate the experiential similarities and differences of diverse authors who describe their literacy acquistion: David Sedaris, Lorene Cary, Malcolm X, Mike Rose. They learn the seemingly obvious, but not so explicit, disadvantages that many illiterate convicts face and the societal options from which they are deprived. All of these literacy topics inform the students' sense of themselves as literate beings. And, as Robert Brooke has suggested, "[W]riting does not have meaning or value in itself. Rather, human beings assign it value (for the self, for the community) when it helps them position themselves relative to one another in ways which are important to them, when it helps them understand and interact in their community" (5-6).

In this course, Brooke's and Pratt's ideas align with those of Vygotsky, whose zone of proximal development considers the "distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (86). For developmental students whose issues of literacy entangle with issues of academic socialization (and often educational resistance), their literacy growth is often linked with their reading and writing behaviors (or, as I like to think, their literacy misbehaviors). These branches of intensive writing courses create a classroom "contact zone of proximal development," a learning environment where students' specific problems of literacy issues are

posed in the reading, in-class exercises, and collaboration they have with their instructor and peers. The "actual development" of students in these courses differs greatly, and their achievements depend on the instructors' abilities to identify students' misperceptions and devise ways for students to negotiate their tricky processes of reading and writing and, ultimately, resolve and master them on their own. During this slow and arduous progression, it is often difficult for both students and teachers to pinpoint the actual improvement being made—also because the progression is often accompanied by moments of regression. As Lee Ann Carroll states:

> When we judge the individual written texts students produce, we may lose sight of the students themselves as writers struggling with the same problems that all writers, including ourselves, face, and we may forget how many years of experience it takes to learn new strategies. (115)

The writing processes we, as accomplished writers, have mastered, internalized, and naturalized may never have been experienced by our developmental students. This exposure to writing methods (in their eleventh educational hour) does not mean that students cannot learn them, just that they need to be given the opportunities to practice them—both to improve them and, frankly, to screw them up.

To support this zone of proximal development, instructors scaffold their course assignments and exercises to lead students through a series of interrelated exercises. Students move from a personal literacy narrative, to another personal experience essay in which they integrate outside sources, to an "academic" essay using all of their readings to argue a focused idea about literacy. In his 1983 "Remedial Writing Courses," Mike Rose advised:

> . . . a remedial writing curriculum must fit into the overall context of a university education: students must early on, begin wrestling with academically oriented topics that help them develop into more critical thinkers, that provide them with some of the tools of the examined life, and that, practically, will assist them in the courses they take. (114)

While entering a structured zone that shapes and nurtures their proximal development, students discover their positions and roles in their new literacy community. They begin to recognize themselves as highly literate

beings; this course creates a literacy situation in which they practice new habits of literacy while simultaneously studying what literacy means to a contributing citizen's role in the academic community and, ultimately, in society.

In considering CUNY students, I would add to Rose's statement " . . . will assist them in the courses they take and the exams they are issued." Our assistance to students demands a two-fold approach: while we certainly do not want to teach to the test, we also cannot ignore it. Amidst the intensive reading and writing these students do for academic purposes, every two weeks teachers give students an in-class exam that replicates the actual test they will take at the end of the semester. During the semester, students take approximately six to seven of these practice exams. Instructors explain the structure of the exam, how it is evaluated, and what constitutes a passing submission. Normally, the first four or five of these exams relate to the readings students have been doing during the semester. The final few address topics which have nothing to do with the course's material, but will prepare students for whatever topic they may be handed at the actual test site.

Obviously, this course exposes students to a huge amount of reading and writing as well as test practice, computer research, and other activities (see the Appendix for the sequence of writing assignments). This abundant workload demands more frequent meeting times between students and teachers. Instead of breaking the course into a two-semester sequence as done previously, this course exposes students to six hours of literacy practice with two separate instructors. Each instructor meets with the same group of students for three hours during the week, engaging in complementary activities. Students may be reading a text in one instructor's session, while in the other they are writing a related response. Or while one teacher assigns a piece of writing, the other may be introducing conventions or strategies that will inform how that assignment is constructed. As a team-taught course, students experience the rhetorical expertise of two writing teachers, who coordinate their efforts to stimulate and evaluate students' work.

This team teaching demands coordination and conversations between the instructors both before, during, and after the semester. Problems have arisen less with the instructors' coordination but more with students' reactions to having multiple instructors. Once when I team-taught an early pilot of this course, I had asked my teaching partner to inform our students to bring their writing assignments to my next weekly session. In that following session when I asked my class to get out these texts, the lack of eye contact in the room alerted me that many of them had arrived without the

necessary draft. When I asked why they had not brought it, they immediately stated that the other instructor had not informed them of my request. Seeing that some of the students actually had the piece of writing and felt squeamish about the excuse, I pulled out my cell phone. I rang my teaching partner, held the phone up to the class, and said, "Say hi to Andi." A nervous "Hello" filled the room. "Hi, Andi. The students have told me that you never asked them to bring the draft of their assignment." Andi quickly retorted, "Absolutely not. I had it written on the board and included it in an e-mail to them." Andi and I later classified this student strategy as the "Mommy-Daddy syndrome," where students tried to play one instructor's words against the other's. (Evidently, in our team-taught course, gender played a prominent role in students' minds.) Luckily, the mobile phone offered the opportunity to foil their crafty efforts. After a short lecture on academic accountability, the students began rewriting their drafts in class. They never again attempted the "Mommy said/Daddy said" strategy. I had to respect their attempt to work the system of this course to their advantage. They were beginning to understand the inner workings of the course and used them to their—in this case—disadvantage.

This course requires a final portfolio, and finishing the compilation of writing assignments is another problem that has consistently cropped up. Students must submit a final portfolio that includes writing that they have completed over the semester along with a final cover letter that describes their literacy progress and challenges during the semester. From the onset, many students thought that they could forego doing the portfolio and merely practice for the exam. In this scenario, students considered that learning-to-the-test was the singular and primary purpose of the course. In a beginning-of-the-semester letter distributed to all students from the program director (presently me), students are informed that a portfolio is required for the course, and, if they do not complete this required compilation of writing, they will not receive an official pass, which allows them to take the end-of-the-semester ACT exam. Instructors also explicitly state this regulation in their syllabi as well. Regardless of how many times this essential piece of information is emphasized, there are always students who feign ignorance. Students, however, who do not complete the final portfolio, are not permitted to take the final exam and thus fail the course. As a way to resolve student selective interpretation of the course regulations, in the upcoming semester each student will need to sign a contract which agrees to these conditions.

Another condition of the course is six hours of tutoring. Throughout

the semester students must attend six sessions (one hour each) of peer tutoring in the college's Writing Center or ESL Resource Center. Both of these centers offer free one-on-one peer tutoring as well as group workshops. Students may attend either type of tutoring to fulfill their supplemental tutoring requirement. After students' visits, both centers send attendance reports to instructors. Those students who do not fulfill their tutoring requirements are not permitted to sit for the final exam. This mandatory tutoring has been one of the greatest difficulties of the course. Students resist devoting the time and effort it takes to attend tutoring sessions (although once students start attending them, they normally return without complaint). In many cases, concessions are made for tutoring requirements. If students complete most of the hours and submit a substantial portfolio, a few missing hours are often overlooked. Yet, normally students who do not attend any tutoring, also are not doing their classroom work and, as a result, their writing improvement suffers both in the assignments as well as the practice tests. In addition to the literacy exposure, students in these courses also need to learn accountability to their schoolwork. For many of the English 100 students, the dos and don'ts of academic customs must be explicitly stated and taught (i.e., time management, direction following, revision techniques, respectful peer critique, and deadline observance). These are not innate skills yet with the highly demanding multi-tasking expectations of English 100, students do "learn" and apply them.[3] Again, socialization to academic customs becomes a crucial element for students' success in this course.[4]

In "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key," her Chair's Address to the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kathleen Blake Yancey proposes thinking about composition education differently in the new millennium. She states, "Suppose that if instead of focusing on the gatekeeping year, we saw composition education as a *gateway*? Suppose that we enlarged our focus to include *both* moments, gatekeeping and gateway?" (306, emphasis in original). Her figurative gate swings both ways, predominantly in a direction that offers educational access to students whose literacy challenges may be, more often than not, met with a difficult rite of entry. Instead of a gated educational community that is reserved for a privileged group of students, Yancey advocates providing a literacy curriculum that will be key to their educational success. Even if my use of her metaphor is exaggerated, I don't believe a call to heed her advice can be overstated.

Yancey's suggestion nicely frames the conceptual underpinnings of the newly revised John Jay developmental curriculum. This course differs from

regular "remedial" courses in that it introduces students to the many literacy behaviors—not exclusively skills and drills—that will ultimately benefit their college writing. Using literacy as the focus for study, students explore where their literate strengths can enable their still existing challenges. This course ignores neither the critical thinking and composing students need to develop as college students nor the test skills they must possess to enter into the freshman composition sequence. Mary Soliday offers sound advice when she asserts:

> Yet remedial English has always been with us in various forms because it has long acted as an ad hoc form of admissions within all types of institutions. Remedial writing was used to stratify students within institutions through the 1940s, and, beginning in the 1920s and accelerating in the 1970s, more markedly to stratify the institutions themselves. I do not question the value of thousands of basic skills programs that may have helped students gain access to the B.A. But I do question the wisdom of using basic skills courses to fulfill institutional commitments and to resolve educational conflicts in a submerged or marginal form. Ultimately, we all need to question remediation's anomalous status within institutions in order to imagine alternatives to it. (22)

Soliday does not deny that developmental courses are sometimes necessary, but advises that their purpose and implementation should be carefully scrutinized—both pedagogically and politically. John Jay's new English intensive developmental course has fulfilled institutional commitments to students by offering them writing assignments that enable them to intermix their personal experience with academic discourse as well as providing them the wherewithal to pass the required exam. Under the constraints of University policy, this course offers students the exposure to composing that helps them launch a successful college career.

A Final Note and a Policy-Driven Development

Thus far in the implementation of this intensive developmental course, our efforts have been successful. In the first semester in which we fully implemented the course, most sections had a seventy to ninety percent pass rate for the test required for the students' progression. For those students who have continued at the college, their academic achievements have been

admirable and sometimes astounding, considering their literacy aptitudes when they entered the University. On an anecdotal note, one student has achieved the dean's list every semester since finishing English 100 in his first semester. Although this one case doesn't prove the validity of the course, it certainly demonstrates that students who begin as "remedial" can progress and succeed in college.

To finish this developmental narrative, my college has decided to eliminate the Associate's degree at John Jay, and, as aforementioned, this change in college identity means that once we gain senior college status, this new English 100 Intensive course will disappear. Students who do not pass the ACT reading and writing entrance exams will be directed to our University's community colleges, where they will be groomed for higher level work. But, frankly, displacing certain students from our college will be no magic wand or pixie dust to make students' literacy difficulties disappear from our campus. On our desks, we will still find essays with uncritical thinking, unconventional writing styles, and "unstandardized" language usage. Removing a selected group of students from the mix of our student body does not remove the problem of student writing difficulties. Furthermore, I am not sure that eliminating a certain student contingent helps to ameliorate the quality of our teaching. Having students who challenge our teaching abilities pushes us to think in more creative and innovative ways about the classroom. I hope that the experience gained in developing this English intensive developmental course will not be lost as we move toward exclusively senior college status. For by creating carefully designed literacy curricula and preparing instructors for the teaching quandaries they may confront, we have encouraged both students and teachers to find insightful pedagogical answers to the student writing challenges that we inevitably encounter in all of our classroom endeavors.

Notes

1. In his dissertation, Tim McCormack writes an extensive and engaging account of the 1998 CUNY Board of Trustees' decision to end CUNY senior colleges' remediation programs. He also chronicles the onslaught of media criticism of CUNY and its students during the 1990s. His detailed record of this history demonstrates the "external pressures of institutional policy-decisions" and how they impact the university writing classroom.

2. For example, the Frankenstein monster does not realize his place in the

world until he lies next to the woodman's shack and learns language and, of course, the next week, reads Milton. For less monstrous narratives, consider Precious in Sapphire's *PUSH*, Malcolm X in "Get a Hold of a Dictionary," or Jimmy Santiago Baca in *A Place to Stand*. In each of these stories, the literacy-gaining character finds a constructive role as a citizen in society.

3. I have to admit that once with a particularly non-responsive group of English 100 students, I lost my cool and announced, "If you are going to continue to remain bovine, you will never succeed at college." "What does 'bovine' mean?" they asked. I could only respond, "MOO." I handed a few students dictionaries to find the meaning, which they then reported to the entire group: vocabulary lesson complete.

4. Many authors have explored the underlying social and personal issues that entering freshmen face during their first year in college. These socialization issues often become most apparent in composition courses because of the normally interactive nature of the course as well as its workload. For other references, see Doug Hunt, Lee Ann Carroll, and Marilyn Sternglass.

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APPENDIX

Assignments for English 100 Intensive

• Students compose a personal narrative that describes a situation in which they found themselves expressing a challenge. (3 - 4 pages + drafts)

• Students write an essay that compares/contrasts their educational experiences to those of an established writer or to the theories of education. (3 - 4 pages + drafts)

• Students research and write an inquiry-based essay that explores an investigative question through the scholarship of outside authors. These outside resources will come from texts read in the course as well as articles students find themselves. (4 - 5 pages + drafts)

• Students write in-class tests throughout the semester that prepare them for the ACT exam that they must pass to advance to English 101. (2 - 3 pages each)

• Students keep a writing process journal that tracks their habits of reading and writing. (approximately 20 pages written throughout the semester)

• Students submit a mid-term evaluation memorandum that records what was discussed during their mid-term conference. This memorandum states what they have completed thus far in the semester, what advice the instructor has given them, what hypothetical letter grade they would assign themselves, and what writing tasks they must complete before the end of the semester.

• Students compose a letter to their English 101 teacher that reflects upon their literate strengths and challenges. They record what they learned in English 100 Intensive as well as what they need to improve in their subsequent writing endeavors. (2 - 3 pages)

• Students compile and submit an end-of-the-semester portfolio of writing which represents their accumulated knowledge and abilities of writing.

Redefining Literacy as a Social Practice

Shannon Carter

ABSTRACT: Despite multiple and persuasive arguments against the validity of doing so, many basic writers continue to be identified by what Brian V. Street calls the "autonomous model of literacy," a model that research tells us is as artificial and inappropriate as it is ubiquitous. This article describes a curricular response to the political, material, and ideological constraints placed on basic writing via this autonomous model and instead treats literacy as a social practice. After a brief description of the local conditions from which our program emerged, I articulate what I call a "pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity," the new model upon which our curriculum is based. Informed by both the New Literacy Studies and activity theory, rhetorical dexterity teaches writers to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one. The final sections of the article describe the assignments included in a recent version of our curriculum, as well as selected student responses to these assignments and readings. Accepting that a curricular solution to the institutionalized oppression implicit in much literacy learning is necessarily partial and temporary, I argue that fostering students' awareness of the ways in which an autonomous model deconstructs itself when applied to real-life literacy contexts empowers them to work against this system.

KEYWORDS: New Literacy Studies, activity theory, politics, curriculum

Like so many Writing Program Administrators, I often find my dogmatic quest to subvert problematic representations of literacy disrupted by the reality of my daily work and the fact that such representations far outnumber the ones composition scholars might endorse. Similar experiences abound among WPAs in general; however, the distance between perceptions seems all the more significant for those of us directing basic writing programs, writing centers, and similarly marginalized learning spaces. Despite multiple and persuasive arguments against the validity of doing so, many basic writers continue to be identified by standards-based assessments of their reading and writing "skills," and basic writing classrooms continue to

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be dominated by skills-based instruction (Del Principe). Unfortunately—and, in my case, even by state mandate—those of us who know better are often no less constrained by the ubiquity of the skills-based model in public representations of literacy learning. From 1989 to 2003, all Texas public colleges and universities were required to assess (via a "state-approved" test) every incoming first-year student in reading, writing, and math: test-takers failing the reading and/or writing sections were subsequently labeled "not ready for college-level literacy" and those of us directing basic writing programs at these institutions were required—again, by state law—to "remediate" them accordingly. (For a provocative discussion of the negative effects of such standards on student writing—especially those from minority groups—and how we can provide space for these writers to work against these effects, see Susan Naomi Bernstein's "Teaching and Learning in Texas.")

Right now, the primary, "state-approved" testing instrument in Texas is the *Texas Higher Education Assessment* (THEA), formerly the *Texas Academic Skills Program* (TASP). According to the official THEA Test Home Page, "The purpose of the test . . . is to assess the reading, mathematics, and writing skills first year students should have if they are to perform effectively in undergraduate certificate or degree programs in Texas public colleges and universities." THEA measures the literacy "skills" deemed necessary to "function" in college according to the test-taker's responses to multiple-choice, "objective" questions about grammar and usage and a single persuasive "writing sample" written within a specific time limit,[1] despite the fact that, as the CCCC Position Statement on Assessment reminds us, "choosing a correct response from a set of possible answers is not composing. . . [and] . . . 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").

Additional problems with standardized measures like these have been well documented—in this journal and elsewhere. Such measures treat literacy as though it were neutral, autonomous, and completely portable. As Mike Rose pointed out nearly twenty years ago, students who fail measures like these "know more than their tests reveal but haven't been taught how to weave that knowledge into coherent patterns" (*Lives* 8). Standardized tests are also wildly unfair, as high-stakes measures like these place students of color and—especially—those from poorer neighborhoods at an even greater disadvantage (see Haney; McNeil "Creating"; Schrag).

The standards themselves are highly problematic, as well, especially when those standards test "competency" in areas like "appropriateness"

and "unity." Students writing for these standardized tests often attempt to, as David Bartholomae ("Inventing") puts it, "Invent the University." But they are not, by definition, full-fledged members of university-sanctioned communities of practice and, therefore, are often unable to do so in ways test graders are likely to recognize and endorse. As Mike Rose tells us, "if [we] get close enough to their failure, [we] find knowledge that the assignment did not tap" (*Lives* 8). Standardized testing keeps decision makers at a safe distance from such knowledge.

Even though the TASP Law (Texas Academic Skills Program) was repealed more than three years ago, the logic that placed these writers via this system remains. State law also precludes—at least it did until TASP law was repealed in 2003—any public college or university in the state from offering credit for remediation programs serving students who failed one or more sections of TASP (or THEA, the exam that replaced TASP in 2004). Thus, making major changes in placement procedures seems unwise—especially in this environment where raising admission standards might be a more popular and likely choice than any placement procedure I might advocate.[2] In fact, recent debates have again given rise to the rhetoric of exclusion that threatens college access for writers most likely to fail standardized literacy measures—not just in Texas but, in fact, across the nation. At the national level, the first "Issue Paper" in response to the Secretary of Education's "Commission on the Future of Higher Education" (established by Secretary Margaret Spellings in 2005), "set the context" for this "National Dialogue" by treating the very existence of basic writing as a major reason for American postsecondary education's "diminished capacity." As they explain, "[s]everal institutions of higher education are admitting students who lack adequate preparation for college-level work, thus expending precious resources in remediation" (Miller and Oldham). As our own institution struggles with the retention rates of our first-year students, faculty and administrators have begun to ask whether or not these students should even be here. They are not, after all, "college material." I fear that Secretary Spellings' Commission may force us to exclude an even greater number of minority and poor students in order to raise retention rates, in much the same way that Texas public schools raised test scores and graduation rates by dubious means: retaining students, moving at-risk students to special education, or perhaps even "suggesting" they attain General Education Diplomas (GEDs) instead. As Walt Haney, Linda McNeil, and Angela Valenzuela, and others have revealed, such moves have not been uncommon in our state as students in special education programs are not required to take and pass TAKS and those who

drop out but obtain GEDs within a year will not be counted as "drop-outs" on the school's performance record.

It is in this environment that I have learned to live with the test. As we shall see, the test that places students in basic writing here at Texas A&M-Commerce works from a very different set of assumptions than do the courses that make up our Basic Writing Program. Though we do not believe these tests serve as accurate measures of what our students can actually do, I haven't yet pushed for changes to placement criteria nor will I until I am absolutely sure of two things: (1) such discussions won't again raise the issue of whether or not we should be raising admission "standards" rather than continuing to spend "precious resources" to try to "accommodate" those deemed "not ready for college-level literacy," and (2) new measures—if we must have them—will be adequately funded and theoretically sound. Until both of these conditions are in place, I am leery of fighting for changes at levels of program and placement. Instead, we focus our efforts on change at the levels of curriculum, training, and exit criteria.

The remaining pages of this essay describe one curricular response to the political, material, social, and ideological constraints placed on literacy education—particularly basic writing—via the ubiquity of what Brian V. Street calls the "autonomous model of literacy." Rather than perpetuating the autonomous model, this new framework treats literacy as a social practice. According to Street, the autonomous model "disguise[s] the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have the . . . benign effect of . . . enhancing the . . . cognitive skills" of those marked "illiterate," thus ". . . improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their 'illiteracy' in the first place" ("Autonomous and Ideological Models" 1). Rather than perpetuating this problematic treatment of literacy—through which "testing" can be easily accepted as the "cornerstone of reform" (Bush, as qtd. in Hillocks 11)—Street urges us to embrace "the alternative, ideological model." An ideological model of literacy

> posits . . . that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being. It is also embedded in social practice, such as those of a particular job market or particu-

> lar educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts. Literacy, in this sense, is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always "ideological," they are always rooted in a particular worldview and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalise others. ("Autonomous Models" 2)

Thus, according to Street's ideological model, standardized tests of literacy must be understood as not only inappropriate but largely unethical in that they privilege particular contexts, identities, and knowledge while marginalizing all others.

Accepting that a curricular solution to the institutionalized oppression implicit in much literacy learning is necessarily partial and temporary, however, I argue that fostering in our students an awareness of the ways in which an autonomous model deconstructs itself when applied to real-life literacy contexts empowers them to work against this system in ways critical theorists advocate. The primary objective of the current essay is to offer a new model for basic writing instruction that is responsive to multiple agents limiting and shaping the means and goals of literacy education, agents with goals that are quite often in opposition to one another. Doing so requires that I not offer a curricular solution in isolation as any responsible pedagogical decisions must take into account the layers of agents influencing any and all social, political, material, and ideological conditions for learning. The following section will describe the theoretical framework upon which our program at Texas A&M-Commerce is based. I will end with a description of the writing assignments and presentations included in a recent version of our curriculum, assignments that ask students to articulate familiar communities of practice like poker and pyrotechnics and compare the requirements for literate practice within these communities with those required for school-based ones. The final pages of this essay include selected student responses to these assignments and readings.

Theoretical Justification for a Pedagogy of Rhetorical Dexterity

Over the past few years, my teaching and administrative work have become increasingly affected by regular attempts to circumvent traditional representations of literacy and my growing appreciation of vernacular literacies—video game literacies, Star Trek literacies, and Anime literacies, among

others. Such literacies are represented not only by our students but also in the scholarly literature—for example, Deborah Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher's *Literate Lives in an Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States*, Steven Johnson's *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, and, especially, work in the New Literacy Studies (for example, James Paul Gee's *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Literacy and Learning* and *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*). Studies like these force me to take out-of-school literacies seriously and, as I have done so, I have been amazed to find the intellectual rigor and rhetorical sophistication embedded in rhetorical spaces that extend beyond the academy, especially those spaces rarely understood to have anything to do with the kinds of writing students are expected to do at school. This growing knowledge and the conservative political climate in which those of us committed to representing literacy differently often find ourselves have led me to develop what I call a "pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity"—that is, the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice (the academy) based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one. Helping our students develop rhetorical dexterity is the primary objective of our basic writing program at Texas A&M-Commerce and of the project described in this article. By no means do I expect these writers to develop full-blown, "objective" ethnographic studies of their familiar communities of practice, but I argue that we must routinely and explicitly validate the complex systems in which these students are already considered literate by taking them seriously and asking our students to do the same.

What's original about the approach advocated in our program (rhetorical dexterity) is not the basic assumption that, as Katherine Shultz and Glenda Hull put it, "literacy is not literacy is not literacy" (19), nor that academic literacies (Standard Edited English) have much more academic and social currency than vernacular ones (Street *Social Literacies*; Gee *What Video Games, Situated Language and Learning*; Purves and Purves). I'm not the first to assert that basic writers have their own expertise and should be encouraged to draw from it (Soliday "Toward a Consciousness"; Kutz, Groden, and Zamel; Mahiri; Marinara), nor am I the only scholar to argue that basic writers are only "basic writers" within the system that identified them as such (Fox; Horner; Soliday *Politics*; Lu and Horner; Hindman; Hilgers; by implication, Huot; Bartholomae "The Tidy House").

The innovation of this approach is in the ways I propose to teach those writers labeled "basic" to value their expertise, abilities that Kutz, Groden, and Zamel have called "competencies" but that I will call here "literacies." In doing so, we pay particular attention to our students' experience in more vernacular literacies like those associated with work (waiting tables, styling hair, building homes, designing webpages) and play (quilting, painting, playing video games). A pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity thus enables us to represent literacy differently—to basic writers, to tutors, to basic writing teachers, and, through them, to those representing literacy beyond our learning spaces. Via a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity, I have chosen to shape "instruction that enables students to understand how definitions of literacy are shaped by communities, how literacy, power, and language are linked, and how their myriad experiences with language (in and out of school) are connected to writing" (Adler-Kassner and Harrington 98).

In other words, we teach these students that we are all highly literate in at least one other context—even writers who struggle in contexts demanding Standard Edited English. I argue that productive literacies are possible in this environment of high-stakes testing when literacy learners can understand, articulate, and negotiate the similarities (what I call "points of contact") and differences (what I call "points of dissonance") between a community of practice with which the writer has much familiarity and another, less familiar one. Rather than focusing on what these students must do to comply with the standards that tests like these purport to measure, we teach them to examine the ways in which systems like these define literacy and ask them to compare such assessments with the ways in which literacy has and may continue to function in their own lives—in school and in those spaces seemingly unrelated to school. We teach these writers to trust in and make use of their own expertise—their own literacies—by continually asking themselves questions like the following: (1) How do I put literacy to use in my own life among people that matter to me in places I know and understand, especially in those places and among those people where I am taken most seriously, as a meaningful member with ideas that matter? (2) How can I reuse (and reclaim) these strategies in new places and for new people who may have different needs and expectations? In doing so, we do not ask them to develop a "bundle of skills" (Resnick) that can be carried with them from rhetorical situation to rhetorical situation, but rather to develop the "rhetorical dexterity" necessary to read, understand, and make use of a variety of linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical cues in ever-changing rhetorical contexts.

Defining Literacy

The primary objective of a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity is to help our students develop the flexibility and skill necessary to negotiate multiple, always changing literacies. In doing so, we are clearly expanding the definition of literacy to include those activities not typically accepted as "reading" or "writing" in any traditionally academic or school-related sense. To understand the parameters of this more social conceptualization of literacy, David Barton and Mary Hamilton suggest we consider "literate" behavior in terms of "discourse communities" rather than universal standards, which they define as "groups of people held together by their characteristic ways of talking, acting, valuing, interpreting, and using written language" (29). For our purposes, "communities of practice" seem more appropriate than "discourse communities" because the former stresses literacy as an activity rather than a state of being (via membership or ability to meet universal standards).

"Communities of practice" are relations of people who have in common a "shared competence and mutual interest in a given practice" (Choi 143), be that repairing Xerox machines (see Orr), recovering from alcoholism (see Lave and Wenger), teaching writing, or countless other activities in which a person may be involved. The concept first emerged in the Lave and Wenger study of the ways in which various communities of practice teach newcomers the practices valued and reproduced in those communities (midwives, meat cutters, tailors, and recovering alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous). The term has been most popular in managerial and organizational studies, and in recent years many larger, more progressive corporations have made extensive use of the learning theories that have emerged from it.

According to Lave and Wenger, a "community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice." The term "impl[ies] participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities" (98). Embedded in activity theory are two, complementary assumptions: (1) language, literacy, and learning are embedded in communities of practice rather than entirely within the minds of individuals; and (2) communities reproduce themselves through social practices. When these social practices become routinized and interrelated ("just the way things are done") within a community of practice, they may be understood as part of an activity system.

In any given community of practice, some activities will be understood as "appropriate" and others largely inappropriate, and the majority of these activities cannot be understood apart from the activity system in which these actions are perpetuated. That is, actions considered "typical" or otherwise valuable in a given community of practice become a part of the activity system representing that community. These systems are social and cultural rather than individual and objective in that any activity system is made up of groups of individuals who sanction and endorse particular ways of doing things and particular results, identifying some results and processes as innovative and valuable and condemning others as ineffective, inappropriate, or even unacceptable.

Rhetorical dexterity treats learning new literacies as a situated activity; thus, in a sense, this means the basic writing classroom with rhetorical dexterity as its goal offers learners the "legitimate peripheral participation" Lave and Wenger contend is a necessary prerequisite for joining any community of practice. As they explain:

> Learning viewed as a situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process that we call legitimate peripheral participation. By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socioeconomic peripheral practices of a community. "Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about relations between newcomers and old timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. (29)

A curriculum shaped by a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity thus asks basic writers to examine the "process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice" as they have experienced it in an out-of-school context and to apply that process to the ones required of newcomers in academic communities of practice. In doing so, we ask students to consider questions like the following: What are the activities that make up a community of practice with which you are deeply familiar? How did you learn them? What identities are constructed via these activities? In other words, how is who you are shaped by your experiences within this community of practice? What artifacts are produced via the activities of this community

of practice and how might those compare with the artifacts produced in academic communities of practice?

An approach like this forces participants to pay attention to the inequitable ways literacy is represented and how that representation often paralyzes many already marginalized writers. But as I will try to make clear in this essay, it does not stop there. Certainly, such inequities must be acknowledged before students can gain control over the academic literacy measures shaping their student lives. As teachers representing Standard Edited English and proficient users of it, it is imperative that we recognize these inequities and speak to them—*with* our students and *for* our students—especially given that inequities among literacies and among literate users largely determine how one learns new literacies. However, as I discovered myself via different curricular choices and as I have argued elsewhere (see *The Way Literacy Lives*), pointing out and giving students the space to speak back to those inequities will not enable them to subvert them—or even, in many cases, to begin to represent literacy differently to and for themselves. Instead, we must give them the tools they need to *experience* literacy differently—to look again at the ways in which literacy functions in the multiple and intellectually viable lifeworlds in which they are already full-fledged members.

The Curriculum

"I really do not know who I am as a writer, but I know I am a bad writer."

--Dominique, "Thoughts of a Troubled Writer"

Like many programs, we begin each term by working against the myths that shape commonsense understandings of what basic writers need. But in keeping with the findings of the New Literacy Studies scholars like Brian V. Street and James Paul Gee, we do so within the context of what we know about how literacy functions in the world beyond the largely artificial "school" literacies we often celebrate. In other words, we teach basic writing by articulating and helping our students to articulate the way literacy actually lives, which, as Brandt explains in "Accumulating Literacy," places greater pressure on Americans "not to meet higher literacy standards as has been so frequently argued elsewhere but rather to develop a *flexibility* and *awareness*" (651, emphasis mine).

Thus, not unlike many other basic writing programs, we begin by asking students to articulate the ways in which they have experienced lit-

eracy and learning thus far, especially how they understand the "rules" for writing in school and whether those rules have changed over time, from subject to subject, from classroom to classroom, from project to project. Many basic writers tell us that such rules do change, and these changes often confuse and frustrate them. As one writer explained it recently, "I've been told one thing I did in a previous class was wrong in another. When it was said, I became very upset because I'd been doing what I was taught. Once that barrier was broken I had to *start from scratch*" (emphasis mine). As we know, when literacy is understood as a matter of "correctness," the standards by which "correctness" is judged can cause writers much confusion, especially those who, like this student, witness the standard mutating right before their eyes.

In the next three essays, students investigate vernacular or familiar literacies. We discuss the concept of "communities of practice," reading a brief essay I wrote for just this purpose called "What Is a Community of Practice?"[3] that articulates the ways in which "communities of practice" may function as an appropriate framework for investigating familiar literacies and learning new ones. Students are then asked to explore the "rules" that all literate users must come to know, understand, and be able to negotiate in order to be heard, understood, and taken seriously in that particular community of practice (as a plumber, a deer hunter, or a fan fiction writer for example).

In the third writing assignment, they are asked to investigate a familiar literacy of their choice. Students have chosen everything from quilting to playing dominoes to creating Anime, and these early essays are often quite general in their descriptions of "literate ability" within this target community of practice. At this point, many of them are surprised to find that someone could be as "football illiterate" or "Christian illiterate"[4] as they learn I am and as they learn other readers who are not members of that community of practice tend to be. The objective at this point is to learn how expertise (i.e., "literacy") functions when trying to communicate among people whose experiences, interests, and expertise may differ in some rather substantial ways.

Essays 4 and 5 require a more detailed and sophisticated analysis of two different categories of communities of practice: workplace literacies and those most commonly associated with leisure. In preparation for the essay on workplace literacies, students read and present to one another chapters from Mike Rose's recent book *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*—a series of case studies that articulate the cognitive abilities required of electricians, plumbers, carpenters, welders, waitresses,

and hair stylists, among others. In doing so, they consider the special tools, terminology, values, and body movements that might be required to be accepted as members of these communities of practice. Many students draw upon their own expertise in the fields they investigate (previous students include the daughter of a plumber or a Mexican immigrant with fifteen years experience as a building inspector).

In preparation for Essay 5 (on literacies associated with "play"), we examine and discuss excerpts from Steven Johnson's *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter* and James Paul Gee's *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Literacy and Learning*, both of which treat video games as intellectually rigorous spaces that demand much of players—not only those learning to play the game for the first time but also those who are already highly literate players.[5] Previous students have examined the "rules" for membership in communities of practice like skateboarding, photography, basketball, *Halo 2*, and cheerleading. Again, they analyze the specific strategies literate users employ to be heard, understood, and taken seriously among other literate members of this community of practice. Here, they begin to really articulate the specific events that taught them what they needed to know to become insiders in the target community.

The next two essays are revisions of earlier ones. In Essay 6, we return to the literacies the students associate with school, asking them to "think about all we've done in class thus far and consider what it might have to teach us about the 'rules' for writing in school and how they might be established, upheld, and perpetuated. What special terminology is embedded in these rules? How does it change from context to context? How do we learn these rules? What special knowledge do we need to have before we can embark on a new reading/writing project? Why?" In doing so, we hope they will begin to represent their experiences with school literacies in less "autonomous" and more situated terms. Most do. Essay 7 is a revision of one of the three essays exploring vernacular literacies.

The final essay asks students to compare and contrast the literacies needed for a community of practice seemingly unrelated to school with those literacies required of writers at the college level. In preparation for this essay, writers develop a one-page handout comparing these two literacies, which they then present to the class. The presentation itself serves as fodder for the final essay.

The genre these writers use to report their findings is important as it forces them to develop a meta-analysis of a given community of practice in terms that those who are illiterate in that community might need in order

to make sense of it and perhaps to join it. Reporting on the findings of Copeland's 1985 study of the effects of writing on learning, Cheryl Geisler shares Copeland's "warning":

> [I]n using writing to help students learn, one should structure writing activities so that they help students incorporate in their writing those particular ideas they are expected to learn. If students write about a topic but are not asked to do so in a way that helps them focus upon the targeted information, writing may not help students achieve the learning goals set forth. (Copeland qtd. in Geisler 115)

The "targeted information" in rhetorical dexterity is the way literacy lives within a variety of communities of practice, thus the genres themselves ask writers to consider what someone unfamiliar with that community of practice might need to know. According to Marian (a pseudonym, as are all student names in this article), an art major and recent student in our program, this meta-awareness is very useful. As she explains, investigating familiar literacies in this way forced her to articulate things about them that she instinctively knew in some ways but had not been able to consciously apply in new contexts. As she explains, communities outside of school and those related to work

> don't usually have written rules like academic discourse communities, so we had to look beyond words to find out what the rules were. . . . After all the assignments we've done so far, . . . I felt like I know myself better than before. All the rules in the . . . communities we all know that they are there, but writing them down and analyzing them sort of marks their existence in our mind.

Each community of practice is made up of, among other things, behaviors shaped by ideologies particular to that community which may seem odd to outsiders but are merely commonsense to members of the community. From the ideologies informing a particular community emerge the "rules" one should know and apply before she will be considered "literate" by other literate members. The problem is that without working consciously against those things that we instinctively assume to be plain commonsense, the real rules will remain largely unavailable to outsiders and unteachable by insiders. That is the way ideology functions; ideology, as Marilyn Cooper

explains, "just sits there, making the world we think we know" (159). The genre through which these writers are asked to communicate the invisible "rules" users must know and make use of in order to be heard, understood, and taken seriously "marks their existence in [their] mind[s]," which enables them to analyze and make deliberate use of that knowledge base in new, largely unfamiliar contexts.

The curricular choices that might effectively make use of a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity extend well beyond the ones described above. What I offer here is just one option, and we will continue to rework our own curricula as interest and student needs demand it. In the remaining pages of this article, I will attempt to describe student responses to this particular curriculum in ways that I hope will enable readers to see what those students were able to gain from this specific incarnation of it.

School Literacies (Essays 1, 2, and 6)

"They are outrageous with the rules. They've even gotten to the point where they've started combining shit. Like combining a period with a comma and calling it a semi-colon. They even use two upside down commas beside each other known as quotations. I interviewed my friend Jessica. She says, 'I don't like semi-colons. Why can't they just be a damn comma[?]'"

--Lamanda

Student representations of school literacies largely replicate what Adler-Kassner and Harrington describe as a "huge gulf" between "being a writer" and "learning to write." In other words, at the beginning of the term very few of these students see themselves as real writers, despite the fact that many write quite often in their lifeworlds beyond school. Holly, a theater major who describes herself as an "avid reader with severe dyslexia," reads and writes pages of fan fiction each and every day. Fan fiction, as I learned from Holly, is fiction developed to extend the story lines created and reproduced in media outlets like comic books, Hollywood films, television, and even video games. Fans of particular television shows/books/video games/films extract their favorite characters and develop stories around them. These stories must be consistent with the "universe" in which this character first emerged but can take liberties that may not have occurred in the original. Holly describes the appeal of fan fiction this way:

> Fan fiction has now become quite a habit for me. In high school, I'd come home as fast as I could, sit down in front of the computer,

> and read for hours on end, getting drawn into these stories. It takes me away from reality and I find myself becoming a character in one of the many stories.

The stories themselves are generated by fans and circulated among these same fans via Internet sites devoted to the subject. Thus, as Holly is a fan of the Anime series *Techni Muyo!*, she frequents fan fiction sites devoted to that series and its key characters.

Like many students in our basic writing program, however, Holly has never found reading and writing for school at all appealing. Thus, many begin the term by describing themselves as "bad writers" who "hate" writing, a self-assessment they attribute to either a lack of familiarity with "the rules" for writing or an "obsession" with the rules. As one writer, Dominique, puts it, "Beginning writers often want to know what hard and fast rules are, the rules we simply must follow. Sometimes writing teachers and books of advice even provide us with the rules, which we then get obsessive [about]." In his second essay, another basic writer concurs: "Sometimes when I am writing, I get frustrated by minor things. . . . For example: when I'm writing a sentence, I still have ideas or words that still go with that sentence. But I can't finish it, because then it becomes a run-on sentence. *Once again, I become a victim of the rules*" (emphasis mine).

The rules for writing, it seems, are both mysterious and confining. Many express frustration at their inability to learn "the rules" of writing, as well as the ways in which they feel that, once learned, these rules continue to distance what they *want* to say from what they feel they *can* say. Ruben argues that while such rules may be "necessary," they often "tend to stop me from expressing everything I want to say." In her sixth writing assignment, Emilia makes a similar argument: "If you are given certain . . . rules to follow, that limits your ability to express yourself as an individual writer, stripping you of your creative rights." In her second essay, "No Rules, No Pass," Ashley concurs, arguing that the rules, especially what she calls "the five paragraph rule . . . limits my ability to express how I feel about the writing assignment." In fact, she continues,

> . . . I think that rule sucks and should be removed from *wherever the rules of writing are made*. I suggest that teachers of the future should: first, open children minds that there are many different ways of writing . . . and never teach a child that their teaching of the rules is the only way we should know. (emphasis mine)

These students understand, instinctively, that the rules change, but the changes seem unpredictable and largely arbitrary. Steven asserts that "the . . . rules, for some reason, seem to change according to the person grading." Others, like Emilia, locate the source of this change in the circumstances in which school writing takes place. Writing near the end of the semester, Emilia explains:

> Before taking this class, I thought writing was pointless, boring, frustrating, confusing, and had too many rules to follow. All those feelings came from many years of being taught so many different rules and being penalized for using them. The most recent case of that happen was my sophomore year in high school when we had to take a practice test of the new standardized state test, the TAKS. Now we were not given any previous warning of how the test was to be graded or what was expected to be written. . . . [Before the test], I had been making super grades in my English class because I had mastered the art of whatever rules for writing we were expected to follow, so I thought I had that test grade in the bag. When it came down to it, I had scored a one (the lowest grade possible) out of a possible four *because I was following rules that no longer applied to the new writing styles of the present time*. . . . I began to realize the severity of how these rules were affecting my grades as well as my knowledge as a student. (emphasis mine)

Another writer offers a similar reading of his experiences with writing "rules": "There are so many different ways of writing. I learn one way then have to learn another. What I mean by this is what I write really depends on my teacher and my surrounding." From this experience, he likely learned what Emilia describes as "the severity of how these rules were affecting my grades as well as my knowledge as a student." For Emilia, thank goodness, the consequences of not knowing the new rules for the latest high-stakes context would not continue to be quite as negative, at least as far as TAKS was concerned. As she explains,

> Later on in my sophomore and beginning of my senior year of high school, I learned the "correct" way to write for TAKS, and went in knowing what was expected to know in order to pass the writing portion of the test. From taking this English 100 class, I know there really isn't a "correct" way to write and it isn't always pointless.

Like Ashley who argues that the "five paragraph rule sucks" and should be changed, many of the writers in our program view this rule-mak-

ing dynamic as mutable, but they have difficulty locating the persons or institutions responsible for making these decisions. Shatavia asks, "Who created these rules, the government? It's funny how these rules come up but no one knows who created them." Among those who grew up in Texas, where writing "rules" are largely upheld by high-stakes tests—preparation for the tests and the test itself—many hypothesize that these rules were, in fact, made up by the government. In his fourth essay, Ruben tells us, "The government plays a big role in the creation of the rules of writing because of all the tests they make for us to go to college." Speaking of these tests, he explains, "the government was making [things] harder and harder as time was passing." Desmond reminds us how intricately connected are the "rules for writing" as enforced via state-mandated tests like TAKS and THEA and the very courses in which he must enroll:

> As the years continue to go by, the government seems to keep enforcing more and more rules, and laws that you must write a certain amount of essays each year you are in school. Some college classes and high school classes are taken due to requirements of the government even though they might not be needed.

He ends on a note that succinctly expresses the powerlessness writers often feel in the face of further marginalization via institutionalized oppression like this: ". . . if you were to try and fight the government about this issue, then they would probably try to take what ever you already have away and not even give it to anyone else." Caroline responds to this hopelessness with biting humor: "Who invented these rules? The government? If a writer messes up, would the FBI come and arrest them? How dumb can that be? It's like an unexplainable mystery waiting to be solved." It was not until we began exploring other literacies that writers like these would begin to speak of literacy in terms that seemed to free them from the frustrations imposed via artificial and arbitrary writing rules.

Out-of-School Literacies

"Every now and then I am given the opportunity to write about something I am passionate about. I feel like I can express my thoughts in an orderly fashion and feel good about it. I do not think of it as a waste of time or a blow-off assignment to make a passing grade in class. It is a chance like this, which makes me feel like I am able to write and get my point across effectively. It is the only time I really enjoy writing."

--Gretna, "Writing's Hold on Me"

Mike began our program, as he explains in his final reflections near

the end of the term, "a very frustrated twenty-six year old man." His frustration was, in part, a natural consequence of returning to school after several years in the manufacturing sector of the work force, but it was amplified considerably by our requirement that his first paper for us speak directly to his experiences with writing in school. As he remembers his response to the first-day writing assignment several weeks earlier, "writing in school was just a very sore subject for me at the time that paper was written." In the second week of the class when he came to the writing center for assistance with his paper about the "rules" for writing in school, he was understandably frustrated: "Look, I haven't been in school for almost ten years," he said, growing obviously and increasingly more agitated. "I never knew the rules then, and I certainly can't talk about them now."

"Okay, so talk about what you do know," I said. "There are no wrong answers." He remained unconvinced. I asked him to tell me what he did in his spare time. "I don't know. Why does it matter?" He finally told me he did a lot of hunting, so I asked him to talk about the "rules for hunting." How did you come to learn them? Are they written down somewhere? Can you break them? What is their purpose? After quite a bit of discussion about hunting, we returned to his experiences in school. "Tell me a story," I requested. "What's the first thing you remember about school—not necessarily the rules associated with writing but with your experiences as a student." He started to write. Later in the term, Mike would describe our exchange this way:

> Dr. Carter and I went back and forth for at least an hour about why she thought I could write this paper. Finally, I gave in and began writing. I didn't stop until I had 3 pages. Something happened inside me [that day] and I knew I was going to love to write.

But it would not be until he started to unpack the literacies associated with his workplace experiences that things would really begin to change for him as a writer, as he explains in his final essay for the term:

> When I started Literacies at Work, I was so excited. I had a lot of work experience to draw from for this paper, . . . [b]ut after brainstorming for a while I decided that the most interesting job to write about would be injection molding. . . .
>
> This paper was about my employment with Retco Tool Company and all the processes that were involved in manufacturing carbide parts using injection molding equipment. I had several people read this paper and I revised it 3 times before turning it in

> to my teacher. When [my teacher] returned the paper back to me, I could tell that she was impressed with my work. She had probably never heard about most of the information in this paper because this type of work is unique and there are only three company's in the world that have been able to perfect making carbide using low-pressure injection molding techniques.

It was that paper about the literacy requirements of Retco Tool Company that would make the greatest difference for him as a writer. "After writing [the essay about his workplace literacies,]," he argues, "I had pretty well figured out that English writing class was not the only literate community on the planet" (8).

Younger writers may have had fewer workplace experiences from which to draw, but most still found the experience of investigating a familiar community of practice associated with a workplace useful to them in rethinking the way literacy lives in communities of practice beyond school. Many drew from their experience with part-time jobs as a cashier at McDonald's, a shift leader at Jack in the Box, a server at IHOP, or a grocery clerk at the local supermarket. As Derek describes it, his position as a "courtesy clerk" at Brookshire's can be summed up this way: "What I do at my job is talk to people, make them feel comfortable where they are at, and pack the hell out of their groceries while talking to them." Steven chooses to describe his job as a cashier at the same grocery store as decidedly more complex. At first glace, he explains, the job of the cashier may seem simple enough: "The cashier . . . must . . . make sure he hands back the correct change and [that] you walk out with everything you have paid for." However, while this may seem "easy . . . there are many things that are in a cashier's mind while checking out a customer," things like "his scan time" ("how many items he can scan per minute is crucial. A top scan time could earn honors like Employee of the Month"), keeping the cash drawer accurate, and "memorizing the produce codes."

As Derek describes his position, the primary value-sets in the community of practice that is "packing groceries" are activities that make the customer feel "comfortable" and get the groceries packed quickly. The customer's "comfort" is important to Brookshire's management as they must compete with the lower prices Wal-Mart offers just down the road. "Courtesy," according to employees like Steven and Derek, is "what sets us apart." An awareness of the "external design grammar"[6] to use Gee's words, of a given community of practice thus enables Derek and Steven to prioritize activities

within their positions—Wal-Mart offers "low prices" but not the "courtesy" available to shoppers at Brookshire's (no one carries out a shopper's groceries at Wal-Mart, for example). Steven knows that a quick "scan time" and an accurate cash drawer are valuable activities in this particular community of practice as well—a value established and reinforced within this community of practice via "honors" like "Employee of the Month." He is also aware of the "internal design grammar"[7] that affects his ability to meet the objectives valued within this community; things like "memorizing produce codes" are important because looking up these produce codes would reduce his "scan time" considerably.

Speed and accuracy are valuable in Paola's work as a waitress at IHOP as well, and this community of practice also requires "good social skills," a "good memory," and the capacity "to do two or more things at the same time." As she explains, "every job has its own rules, ideas, and its own way to get the job done." The activities required to "get the job done" are reproduced organically by virtue of the "tips" that work as incentive within this community of practice, but they are also reproduced more formally by the specific tools made available to the servers via the restaurant in which they serve and the systems by which the supervisors and the corporation of which the specific location is a part have in place. For Paola, this meant:

> [W]hen I started to work as a waitress, my boss explained to me what I should have to do, how to serve the customers, used the register machine, and write the tickets, that way the cook would not get confused with the order. I had to follow one of the waitresses with more experience to see how to serve, take people's orders, ask for drinks, and give to the customer an appetizer while they are waiting for their food.

Thus, it appears that several of the activities reproduced in this community of practice are learned by newcomers via what Lave and Wenger call "legitimate peripheral participation." While training, Paola "participated" in this community of practice by shadowing a full-fledged member to learn what she does so she can, in turn, begin performing the activities of waiting tables in many of the same ways. Again, the values guiding work as a server appear to be courtesy, accuracy, and speed. She needs a system for approaching the tables in order to keep the customers happy (drinks refilled, food ordered in a timely manner and in such a way that "the cook would not get confused," etc). Her "legitimate peripheral participation" in this community of practice while training enabled her to develop fluency

in the "internal design grammar" of this system.

Some values-sets are reproduced via more formal training materials, as is the case with the large and highly regulated company McDonald's. As Courtney explains, the activities reproduced at McDonald's are much more formalized than they seem to have been for servers at IHOP. According to Courtney, "When working at McDonald's you must be train before be[ing] put in a specific area." She continues:

> You have to watch videos on everything a McDonald's worker have to do. The video might take all day or make two day. You must watch video on how to cook the food from fries, to meat, breakfast item. . . . Also you must know how to clean. You can not clean a McDonald's restaurant like you clean your house. You must have cleaning item that McDonald's get from a company. Such as special Windex, sanitizer for towel and dishes as well.

The systems McDonald's employees must adhere to when completing tasks within this context are deeply dependent upon the corporate structure of which their particular location is but a part. The values reproduced within this community of practice may be accuracy and speed, but of primary importance here is uniformity—in methods, in tools, in the artifacts produced. As Courtney puts it, "McDonalds is a fast food business, but that does not mean we are always fast. Sometimes we might take the wrong order, put the wrong things in the bags, or might not give the right change back." As Steven describes his work as a cashier at Brookshire's, these activities would be grounds for dismissal in the communities of practice with which he is most familiar. At McDonald's, however, at least according to Courtney, they are quite commonplace.

What Out-of-School Literacies Have to Teach Us About Academic Ones

Course Objectives: The student will (1) understand that literacy is context-dependent, (2) investigate one or more familiar communities of practice, (3) articulate the unwritten rules participants must obey in that community of practice if they want to remain/become accepted as members, (4) investigate new literacies in order to articulate the unwritten rules participants must likewise obey (or at least acknowledge), (5) locate and articulate the points of contact between familiar literacies and school-based ones, (6) examine and—where possible—articulate the points of dissonance between different communities of practice, and (7) put rhetorical dexterity to use in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes.

-Course syllabus

Derek doesn't play many video games because of his visual impairment. As he explains, "I cannot see the detail that is needed to play some of them." He does play a lot of *Madden 2003*, however—a football simulation video game. Derek is drawn to this particular video game, he explains, because he's a football player and "the ethics and terminology is about the same. I have found that it is a lot easier to play a game that you will already have some kind of understanding to. It has so much to do with past experiences." In many ways, then, this game parallels for him more traditional education. As he explains, "I feel that video games are very educational, because you have to take time to learn the meaning of the game, . . . the purpose of the game, and . . . the combinations of codes that will have to be used to successfully beat the game." Likewise, approaching a new writing assignment requires writers to take time to learn the internal and external design grammars limiting and shaping the relevant rhetorical spaces, the "purpose" of the assignment itself as understood by the key evaluators responsible for it, and "the combinations of codes" (language use, special terminology, rhetorical moves) that will be required of them as they negotiate this complex writing task. Thus a familiarity with similar activities—particularly as the similarity is based on the new literacy being a simulated version of the one already well known to him—enables Derek to adapt quickly to this new environment. He understands, however, that many times the new literacy being learned will depend on codes, conventions, and rules that are largely unfamiliar to him. While this budding awareness does worry him a bit, he tells us that he is much happier thinking of literacy as "different" everywhere rather than always the same.

In his final essay (entitled "Knuckle Grinding"), Brad argues that, for him, learning new literacies depends not so much on familiarity—as Derek contends—but on a willingness to take risks. Accordingly, as Brad explains, "writing is a lot like playing extreme paintball: When you're on the field and you don't know the game, you're going to get shot down, and it hurts. . . . So when this happen all you can do is sit out that once and wipe the paint off and jump back in, and use the skills you learned from the last game like what to do and not to improve your skills that much more."

Thus, a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity also requires that the learner not only redefine literacy in terms more consistent with the ideological model Street advocates ("Autonomous," *Social Literacies*), but also develop a willingness to take risks to determine the limits and possibilities available within the new context and weigh the consequences of adherence with any desire to resist doing so. The value of risk-taking behavior in learning

new literacies is often much more visible in communities of practice associated with games like paintball and video games than those associated with school, however. In the strange and provocative weblog *The Dancing Sausage*, a recent contributor makes clear that the "video game literate" are those who are "willing to die":

> The ultimate test of video game literacy is this: Are you willing to die? The video game literate generally are. . . . They'll try any button until they figure out what works. They will walk over the shimmering circle which may be a land mine, may be a warp portal; they will chase after the bouncing ball which may turn out to be a health restorative, may turn out to be a bomb. They'll try anything once. If it proves to be lethal, they'll try not to do it again.

According to this contributor's argument, literate players are willing to die for at least two reasons. First, they know "death" is the likely consequence of taking the risks necessary to learn what's possible in this new context; second, because in video games, "death" is relatively insignificant. Each player has multiple "lives" available to her. If her ship sustains too much battle fire to go on, she's issued a new one. No questions asked. If she "dies" more times than the number of "lives" allocated to a given player, she simply starts a brand new game. Players risk death in order to learn from it, and they are willing to "die" because death in this context is rather meaningless.

It is important to note, however, that to the video game literate, a willingness to die is not the same as finding no value in living. Quite the contrary. Actually, death in a video game is no more (and no less) than the ultimate threat—a danger one immediately takes charge of when one is willing to die. Death for the literate gamer is a necessary risk, however; otherwise the player can never really learn what's possible within that virtual context and which activities are too deadly to ever try again. For Brad, "death" in a game of paintball offers him the same opportunity to learn, and in comparing this important prerequisite for learning when playing paintball with the need for risk-taking behavior in developing print-based texts in school, he learns to embrace risk there, too, rather than continue to, in his words, "play it safe." Transference from a familiar literacy to an unfamiliar one is easiest for Derek when the new literacy is not completely unlike the old one; for Brad, this transference is possible once he learns to value and again make use of the same risk-taking behavior that serves him so well in gaming contexts like paintball.

Gretna also chose to compare out-of-school literacies with writing as a learner, paying particular attention to the ways in which she became a "legitimate" member of more familiar communities of practice and how she planned to make use of these lessons in this new context. For Gretna, one of the key issues that continued to affect her perception of herself as a writer was her concern about the constraints of time. But in developing her presentation that compared gaming literacies to what she called "writing literacies," she began to consider the ways in which her success in the video game *Dance Dance Revolution* (*DDR*) also depended on her ability to think fast. As she explains, throughout the game you must think "the steps through," much like she discovered she had to when writing her timed response to the high-stakes test that placed her in basic writing. *DDR* is a console game that uses a floor pad on which players "dance" rather than a control unit with obvious buttons or a joystick. The player (or players) selects a song, then attempts to step where the signals on the television screen tell her to step (signals on screen are color-coded, as is the floor pad).

According to Gretna, this experience requires lots of quick thinking. Apparently, when playing *DDR*, players must ask themselves, "Which foot will they have to move their bodies to dance as efficiently as possible?" She continues:

> It's the same thing with writing. The topic you are writing about requires thinking it through and finding the best way to explain something. Timing is everything [too]. Being able to pace yourself according to the time given to you and the length of a song are definitely a big part of both activities.

Thus, in making these comparisons, Gretna was required to consider the ways in which she had been able to successfully negotiate time constraints in some rather complex spaces (like *DDR*), a revelation that helped her develop much more confidence as a writer in unfamiliar rhetorical spaces. Interestingly enough, she does point out at least one advantage that "writing literacies" have over gaming literacies: "While writing, you are able to think about what you are going to write about. Unfortunately, you are not able to plan out or predict the steps you will be making while playing *DDR*. The screen only shows you a small amount of what you will be dancing to at a time" and you get no choice in the dance steps you are required to mimic.

Rather than examining the "in-the-moment" experiences of playing/writing in contexts like school and video games, Adrian, an avid player of

what he tells us is "futbol" (not "soccer"), chose to compare team "formations" to rhetorical traits of writing like "organization." As he explains,

> . . . when you use formations in futbol you use it so that you have organization on the field in order to develop a play. . . . A formation is all about placement and it does affect all the other player[.] If one player doesn't know it doesn't work. A formation is chosen by seeing what formation an opponent is bringing on the field and then you use a formation that will hurt them. . . . Well with writing you can use formations in order to organize your paper and even develop a well organized paper.

Sports were a common choice among many writers in our program. Danny compares reading for school with his position on the football field as a linebacker.

> In my mind there are many ways of reading. . . . When I played as a linebacker, I would have to read plays. First I would have to tell if it was a passing or a running play. If it was a passing play, I would have to drop back into my zone and cover whoever entered it. If it was a running play, I would have to figure out which side the play was going to, who was carrying the ball, which hole it was going to go through, and what my job was. I had to read all this all within three seconds. I found this very difficult.

Danny "read" the football field in many of the same ways Adrian and his teammates "read" (current formations) and "wrote" (new formations) in response to this reading. As players (of football in Danny's case, of futbol in Adrian's case), both students had to anticipate where the players were going; they both had to "read" and be able to make sense of the logic guiding the opposing team's plays before they could determine the best way to respond to them. They both had to do this quickly, and only the football/futbol literate know how. Danny continues: "In a way this is also how we read books. When you read a book you have to be able to tell who was telling the story, where the story was taking place, when the story was happening, and what the story was about."

In making these comparisons, then, these writers were able to redefine literacy in terms more in keeping with the way literacy lives, (re)produced within a given community of practice with a deeply situated, people-oriented

set of behaviors considered "literate" and very specific consequences for not following the rules. As Marian puts it in her response to Essay 6 assigned late in the term, "No matter what we think of these rules, obey is the only option. Every community formed its own language. . . . If we are in school, this community of practice, then we have to follow the[ir] rules, because that's how this community works. People who can't follow the rules will be left out of the community, no matter how intelligent they are."

By the end of the term, however, most writers understand that these rules change as the context changes—changes that are neither entirely arbitrary nor always predictable. To illustrate, Marian offers an interesting example of the common elementary school lesson "'ain't' ain't a word." According to Marian, we are often taught in school that "[t]he word 'ain't' can never be seen in a formal paper." She finds this lesson highly problematic; as she explains, "[t]he word 'ain't' might not need to be defined as non verbal but" instead as "a word that belongs to another community." This statement alone reveals the ways in which she is beginning to treat literacy as a social practice rather than a universal norm.

In effect, the real objective of the course is not to get students to produce sophisticated academic discourse that is well organized, concrete, and convincing. That is certainly *an* objective, but as one reviewer of an earlier draft of this article asked, "What makes you believe that it is this particular sequence of essays/readings/coursework that helps students toward rhetorical dexterity, rather than the simple fact that they write six college-level essays, with the support of studio-type peer- and mentor-feedback"?[8] From our analysis, it appears that by taking this course students do, indeed, learn how to produce academic discourse that may be judged effective in even the most traditional of contexts. I agree, however, that their abilities to do so are likely the result of smart, constructive "peer- and mentor-feedback" as well as the new curriculum.

What students do gain from a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity and this particular curriculum, I argue, is a new understanding of the way literacy actually lives—a metacognitive ability to negotiate multiple literacies by understanding that "literacy is not literacy is not literacy" (Schultz and Hull 19). The course did not, necessarily, give students "literate strategies" that they could easily translate from one community to the next, at least not automatically or without rereading the unfamiliar community of practice in similarly rigorous ways. In the end, then, making relevant the communities of practice with which they were already quite familiar (often even experts in) helped these students redefine literacy for themselves in more productive ways. As

one writer puts it in her final reflections for the course, "Overall, I learned that academics can be related to everything we do. . . . Some people find it as hard as I did at first to relate their [familiar] communities to academics. As I found out by doing so, everything we do or say is related to academics in some way or else how do we learn to do or say these things?" In other words, how we learn in any community of practice is necessarily going to help us understand how to learn new literacies in academic communities. It appears obvious, once we make it obvious. That is what we must do for our students and—in doing so—help them do for themselves.

Notes

1. The writing sample is often a response to a question of policy (like required school uniforms or recycling programs), where it is expected the writer will take a single position (pro or con) and defend it in prose that exhibits high levels of "competency" in areas like (1) appropriateness, (2) unity and focus, (3) development, (4) sentence structure, (5) usage, and (6) mechanical conventions. Literacy skills measured according to responses to multiple choice questions include the following: (1) "determine the meaning of words and phrases," (2) "recognize effective sentences," and (3) "recognize edited American English usage" ("Section II: TASP Skills").

2. Deborah Mutnick offers some compelling arguments for maintaining deep awareness of the political and institutional forces limiting and shaping basic writing programs, as do Keith Rhodes and Mary Soliday (especially in *The Politics of Remediation).* In *As If Learning Mattered,* Richard Miller offers similar warnings for similar reasons, since nothing we do in the academy ever takes place "under conditions of complete freedom," as much as we'd like to believe otherwise. In fact, there are many "material, cultural, and institutional constraints that both define and confine all learning situations" (7).

3. A copy of this essay, as well as a recent incarnation of this course sequence (for 2006-2007), can be found at <http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/scarter/bwp_introduction.htm>.

4. In a recent presentation for CCCC, I explore the ways in which my own Christian illiteracies have complicated my work with some of my most religious students (Carter "Living Inside the Bible Belt").

5. We also viewed *Trekkies* as an interesting example of how fandom func-

tions as a community of practice, as well as an episode of the British reality show *Faking It* in which a fry cook learns what he needs to pass as a master chef at a top restaurant in London. Future sequences may make use of the cult film *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* as it examines the value-sets, activities, language, clothing, and other elements that mark the activities associated with heavy metal fandom (at least in the mid 1980s). The film is a strange documentary in which an amateur filmmaker simply records the activities of fans "hanging out" in the parking lot before a Judas Priest concert.

6. James Paul Gee defines "external design grammar" as "the principles and patterns in terms of what one can recognize as what is and is not acceptable or typical social practice and identity in response to the affinity group associated with a semiotic domain" (*What Video Games* 30). For our purposes, "affinity group" and "semiotic domain" may be considered synonymous with "community of practice." According to Gee, "People in an affinity group can recognize others as more or less 'insiders' to the group. They may not see many people in the group face-to-face, but when they interact with someone on the Internet or read something about the domain, they can recognize certain ways of thinking, writing, valuing, and believing as well as the typical sorts of social practices associated with a given semiotic domain. This is to view the domain externally" (27).

7. According to James Paul Gee, "internal design grammar" refers to the "principles and patterns in terms of what one can recognize that is and is not acceptable or typical content in a semiotic domain" (or "community of practice").

8. Two hours each week, English 100 students meet with a group of five to seven other writers led by a peer tutor—this in addition to the three hours each week they spend with their English 100 classroom instructor. In these writing groups, students workshop papers and challenge themselves and one another to think of reading and writing in new ways via their Dialogue Journals (as suggested by Ann Berthoff) and their Dialogue Journal Conferences (as suggested by Yancey and Huot in *The Journal Book: For Teachers of At-Risk College Writers),* all of which inform their development of a reflective essay in which they articulate the way the work they generated this term meets the course objectives, as articulated at the beginning of this section. Again, visit <http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/scarter/bwp_introduction.htm> for more specific information about the course, including relevant course materials.

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Teaching Multilingual Learners Across the Curriculum: Beyond the ESOL Classroom and Back Again

Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack

ABSTRACT: Language and literacy are situated in specific classroom contexts and are acquired as students engage with the subject matter and tasks of these courses. Therefore, all faculty—not just those who teach courses devoted to teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL)—are responsible for contributing to multilingual students' acquisition of language and literacy. Drawing on qualitative research studies, including first-hand accounts of students and faculty who discuss their expectations and experiences in undergraduate courses across the curriculum, this article explores how faculty can facilitate the learning of multilingual students. Analyzing a variety of pedagogical strategies that faculty across disciplines have enacted in their own teaching, we find confirmation for our theory that when writing is assigned for the purpose of fostering learning, and when instructors provide supportive feedback in response to what students have written, writing can serve as a powerful means for promoting language acquisition. Significantly, this across-the-curriculum research indicates that when faculty transform their pedagogy to meet the needs of ESOL students, all students benefit. This research also has critical implications for the philosophical and pedagogical perspectives that bear on ESOL teaching.

KEYWORDS: linguistically diverse learners, faculty across the curriculum, language and literacy acquisition, writing to learn

Multilingual learners who study in United States colleges and universities are remarkably diverse. Some are children of immigrants who were born in the U.S. and who learned a language other than English as their first language. Others are immigrants themselves: permanent residents or naturalized citizens who are bilingual and, in some cases, biliterate. Yet other students come directly to U.S. colleges from public high schools or private international schools in other countries. Within these different

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groups, students differ in their linguistic proficiency levels, opportunities to communicate in English, attitudes toward the language, and learning styles. These individual variables affect the process of second language acquisition, as does each student's level of anxiety or self-esteem and tendency to be inhibited or to take risks. Students' age and gender, linguistic and geographical background, social and economic positioning, and racial and religious identity, too, play a role in their educational lives, influencing whether, when, how, and to what extent they acquire a new language and adopt new ways of behaving and knowing.

This remarkable diversity, complicated even further by each student's multiple and shifting identities, defies attempts to make easy generalizations or predictions about individual learners or about particular groups of learners—even those who share the same first language or geographical background. Each student brings to the classroom a multiplicity of intersecting experiences and a constellation of linguistic and cultural factors that will influence how that student responds to classroom conditions and to assigned work. Those who come with strong first language literacy experiences may be able to do sophisticated work and, precisely because of the linguistic richness of their past experiences, may even outperform students who know only English. Those who have had limited academic experiences in their previous schooling may struggle as they try to negotiate unfamiliar literacy practices and new classroom expectations in a language they are still in the process of acquiring. Some students will have greater fluency in speaking English than in writing, while others will demonstrate greater facility in writing than their spoken language would suggest. Some may resist the kinds of tasks we ask them to perform because they are unfamiliar with such linguistic and literacy practices. Others may welcome such opportunities because they view this new way of approaching learning as beneficial or liberating. Even as we acknowledge these possible scenarios, we recognize that students' behaviors and classroom identities are not static. Students can change behaviors and shift identities in response to the different contexts in which their learning takes place.

At the same time that we acknowledge this multiplicity and complexity of experiences and backgrounds across students, we recognize that multilingual learners who are enrolled in college courses share in common the goal of performing competently across the curriculum even as their English skills are still developing. They cannot be expected to have achieved mastery of English before they begin to grapple with the demands of the academy. Nor can instructors of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) be expected

to teach such a complex group of students all of the language they need in order to succeed in all of their courses. Language acquisition takes place not only through the study of language but also when language is used as a means for understanding and constructing knowledge. Language learners' development is thus the responsibility of all instructors, all of whom need to understand the process students undergo in order to acquire academic proficiency in an additional language.

Until recently, our understanding of undergraduate ESOL students' writing and learning processes was informed primarily by research that focuses on teaching students in ESOL contexts (see, for example, Canagarajah; Casanave; Ferris and Hedgcock; Harklau, Losey, and Siegal; Leki, *Understanding;* Silva and Matsuda; Zamel and Spack, *Negotiating*). As colleagues across disciplines have become increasingly concerned about the growing number of linguistically diverse students in their classrooms, and as they have reached out to ESOL professionals for guidance, a number of ESOL scholars have extended their research to address issues that have arisen in the context of courses other than ESOL (see, for example, Leki, "Coping"; Spack, "Acquisition"; Wolfe-Quintero and Segade; Zamel, "Strangers"; Zamel and Spack, *Crossing*). One of the most compelling findings of these studies is that, if multilingual learners experience alienation in many of their classrooms across the curriculum, so, too, do their instructors. Faculty may see ESOL students as lost in their courses, but they, too, may feel at a loss as to how to proceed. Given this finding, it is essential to explore what faculty need to know, and what they can do, in order to facilitate the learning of multilingual students.

Student Perspectives: Obstacles and Opportunities

As we began our explorations across the curriculum, we turned to the students themselves as a way to gain insight into their perspectives about their own experiences in college classrooms. We needed to hear their voices, voices that are rarely, if ever, heard when college faculty make curricular and pedagogical decisions. Through surveys, interviews, and reflective journals, we have asked hundreds of students to share what they think instructors should know about their academic needs. In their responses, students have readily acknowledged their linguistic struggles and cross-cultural disorientation. At the same time, because they do not want their work to be discounted or misjudged in response to their linguistic mismanagements, they have expressed appreciation for instructors who are understanding of their efforts.

Many of the students' responses relate to their concern about their ability or opportunity to express themselves completely and comfortably in spoken English. They fear that their linguistic and cultural differences mask their intelligence and knowledge. Not content to sit in silence, they want to be viewed as important contributors. But, they stress, they should not be expected do all the work on their own. They need to be drawn out, to be invited to join the conversation of the classroom, especially because they are often intimidated or deterred by the sophisticated vocabulary, rapid pace, unfamiliar topics, or unarticulated assumptions that characterize class or group discussions. Here is how one student describes the obstacles to her own participation:

> [The students] all speak with these "big" words and phrases that make me keep silent most of the time during the lectures. I know that they are not doing that on purpose, and I know that the teacher would like to hear my voice during the discussions, but even if I was confident enough in my English to raise my hand and participate in the discussion, the second problem comes to mind. By the time I convince myself that I had to add my opinion to the discussion, the whole issue would be over and the class would start a new subject and my mind would start the same process over again.[1]

The students also express concern about issues related to their academic literacy. They acknowledge that their written work may be replete with errors but emphasize that they devote a great deal of effort in their attempts to locate and eliminate them. In the words of one student, profound in their simplicity, "we don't want a single error in our paper, but what can we do? English is not our first language." The students also challenge the assumption that their written work is deficient, the result of intellectual weakness or laziness. What an instructor sees, that is, the paper that is handed in, rarely reflects the time, effort, and frustration that have gone into the composing:

> Sometimes I have a trouble in writing a English composition. For example when I was writing, I had a lot of good ideas, but I didn't know what word is in English because I was thinking by my native language. I used to take out a Vietnamese-English dictionary. After I found out, I couldn't continue the ideas which I was thinking. I tried to control my ideas by thinking about some ideas which I

> could express in English without seeing the dictionary. This action wasn't helpful because it didn't satisfy what I wanted to write. (Spack, *Teaching* 17)

Just as writing can be an excruciatingly slow process for a language learner, so can reading, especially when texts contain an overwhelming number of unfamiliar words:

> During the last few days I had to read several (about 150) pages for my psychology exam. I had great difficulties in understanding the material. There are dozens, maybe hundreds of words I'm unfamiliar with. It's not the actual scientific terms (such as "repression," "schizophrenia," "psychosis," or "neurosis") that make the reading so hard, but it's the descriptive and elaborating terms (for example, "to coax," "gnawing discomfort," "remnants," "fervent appeal") instead. To understand the text fully, it often takes more than an hour to read just ten pages. And even then I still didn't look up all the words I didn't understand. It is a very frustrating thing to read these kinds of texts, because one feels incredibly ignorant and stupid. (Spack, *Teaching* 18-19)

Our ongoing research indicates that most students are devoting a great deal of extra time to their studies because of their linguistic challenges. At the same time, their responses make clear that they do not expect to be given less work—or less demanding work. But they do ask for assistance in finding effective ways to manage the workload and to gain access to the knowledge and strategies that will ensure success in their courses. Unfortunately, like the students in Ilona Leki's studies ("Coping"; "Narrow"), they are typically left to manage classroom expectations and conditions on their own, and their instructors are often unaware of students' attempts to negotiate the work of their courses.

Eleanor Kutz, too, turned to students as a resource for understanding what actually happens in classrooms across the curriculum. As part of her study of academic discourse communities, Kutz asked students to undertake ethnographic investigations of their own courses. Although the multilingual learners in Kutz's study had initially assumed that their academic progress would be compromised by their linguistic struggles, their concerns about language issues dissipated as a result of researching their classrooms and discovering that their academic success was tied to specific classroom contexts.

Through their own inquiries, these students became aware of how certain courses silenced them, making them feel like "outsiders," while other courses provided opportunities for entering classroom conversations and for unpacking difficult course readings, giving them the sense of being "insiders."

Vivian Zamel's longitudinal study of two undergraduate students, conducted over a six-year period, likewise underlines how particular conditions of courses and specific approaches of individual instructors can benefit or undermine a student's sense of progress and impact a student's sense of engagement or alienation ("Strangers"). The two students in the study, Martha and Motoko, wrote accounts in which they reflected on how they were affected, often in deeply personal ways, by numerous courses, including courses in their respective majors, biology and sociology (for extended samples of their writing, see Muñoz; Kainose). Both students described courses in which they felt encouraged, were engaged in genuine learning opportunities, and participated in meaningful writing and discussion. In the following account, for example, Martha explains how a biology professor made it possible for her to acquire the language of an immunology course:

> The Immunology lexicon was much easier to learn because of the simple and practical examples that he used to illustrate it with. We were exposed to daily situations to relate the meaning of the new words. Before he went into defining and introducing a concept or word, he played with it. He usually broke down words and did not assume that we knew what their roots were or meant. After he dissected the words, he presented the concepts and in that way it was more productive and easy to grasp the ideas. The concepts were perceived, received and learned. He kept on doing this during the entire semester and I kept on learning "the language of Immunology" too! (Muñoz 108)

For the most part, however, even though Martha and Motoko ultimately achieved academic success, they expressed disappointment in the often lifeless atmosphere of classrooms, the purposelessness of much of the assigned work, the passivity of many of the class discussions, and, especially, the absence of the kind of writing that could help them grow as learners. As Martha put it:

> Frustration and lack of interest are the present feelings with my classes because there is no planned "agenda" to encourage the stu-

> dents to improve ourselves by writing. There is no rich opportunity to break barriers and answer questions to others and to myself. There is no REACTION AND INTERACTION. If you become a strong write[r], the writing "skills" will serve you as your personal Bible to summarize yourself. . . . It does not really matter how many courses the students take in order to "improve" skills of writing because what it counts is the responsibility encouraged by the teacher's method. It is an incentive for us to be listened and respected by our writing work! You get into it. Reading provides you grammar. Reading and writing are not separate in the process. It is a combined one. Doble team. Reacting and interacting.

Other longitudinal case studies also trace the jagged path that characterizes students' journeys through the curriculum. Trudy Smoke chronicles the writing experiences of one student over several years, beginning with Ming's initial and not always successful attempts to fulfill confusing or conflicting curricular demands. Smoke shows that Ming eventually succeeded in her academic work, in part through her own determination and effort, but especially when instructors assigned writing that was designed to help her learn the course material and construct knowledge—and when these instructors provided meaningful feedback that contributed to her growth as a thinker and writer. Marilyn Sternglass's case study ("'It Became Easier'") also captures the non-linear and context-dependent nature of a multilingual learner's academic performance. Having twice failed the writing assessment exam before entering college, Dolores was placed in a pre-freshman composition course, and she initially struggled to gain a foothold in her academic studies. But eventually, with the support of her psychology instructors, who encouraged her development as an independent researcher and acknowledged the value of her cultural background—even as they prodded her to strengthen her written expression—Dolores went on to major in psychology and to achieve a Master's Degree in that field.

And in yet another longitudinal case study, Ruth Spack ("Acquisition") documents how, over a three-year period, Yuko transformed unproductive approaches to academic work into productive strategies that increased her academic self-confidence. Over time, Yuko grew as a learner as she was immersed in the subject matter of her courses, as she learned to construct knowledge through her own reading and writing, and as her instructors provided her with guidance inside and outside of the classroom. Based on her numerous interactions with effective teachers across the curriculum,

Yuko identified several responsive teaching strategies that supported her learning, such as (1) building a course on the foundation of students' background knowledge and experience, (2) making connections between course content and real life, (3) relating course material to multiple social and cultural situations, (4) providing handouts to help students follow what is being presented, (5) reading aloud and analyzing excerpts from the assigned readings in class, (6), encouraging classroom interactions, (7) being accessible outside of class, (8) arranging student groups for study or research, (9) assigning informal writing tasks that help students make sense of the reading and tap into students' multicultural knowledge, (10) providing ongoing feedback on writing in progress that addresses content and helps students improve their writing style (Spack, "Acquisition" 52).

Taken together, these in-depth and long-term case studies of the experiences of multilingual learners give us a rich and complicated picture of the struggles and accomplishments of these students. The trajectory of their experiences was uneven, with progress in one course offset by a sense of frustration in another. Yet, despite their difficulties in certain classrooms, and despite early assumptions or indications suggesting they might be unable to negotiate the academic work they were expected to undertake, these students persevered and managed to achieve success. Finally, these studies, like much of the research on other students' experiences in college classrooms (see, for example, Chiseri-Strater; Herrington and Curtis; Sternglass, *Time*; Walvoord and McCarthy), demonstrate the critical role that supportive classrooms and responsive instructors can play in fostering students' academic success.

Faculty Perspectives: Errors and Changed Expectations

As we gained insight into students' perspectives and experiences, we soon realized that we needed to explore, as well, faculty perspectives and their experiences in their own classrooms across the curriculum. As we began to work with faculty who asked for our input, at our respective institutions and beyond, we adopted the kind of investigative stance that has always informed our research with ESOL learners. We wanted to discover why these teachers were struggling in the ways that they were reporting. What assumptions did these teachers have about the students? How had their previous teaching experiences shaped their expectations? What concerns did they have about students' performance and progress? How did the classroom dynamics and learning conditions within their courses affect students' work and partici-

pation? What kinds of writing were students assigned, and how did faculty read and respond to students' efforts to fulfill these assignments?

A number of prominent themes emerged in faculty responses to such questions. Of course, several instructors reported having had positive experiences working with ESOL learners in their courses. But even those instructors expressed concern about their interactions with many of the students. Instructors referred to students' silence, on the one hand, and to their incomprehensible language, on the other. They were concerned about students' written or spoken language, which they perceived to be inadequate for undertaking the work assigned in their courses. They were troubled by students' misreadings and erroneous interpretations of the texts assigned. Many faculty assumed that students' cultural or educational backgrounds prevented them from engaging in classroom discussions or from taking a critical stance in their writing. Those who focused on what they perceived to be students' linguistic deficiencies saw little potential in the students and had little hope that the students would be able to manage the assigned work. And few faculty entertained the idea that they could or should contribute to students' acquisition of language and literacy.

As our work with faculty proceeded, we were eager to get a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their concerns, confusions, and resistances. Our interest in this work eventually led to publication of *Crossing the Curriculum: Multilingual Learners in College Classrooms* (Zamel and Spack), a collection that includes chapters written by faculty across the curriculum who describe how they developed productive ways of working with the ESOL learners in their classrooms. As we invited faculty from different disciplines to contribute to this volume, we discovered that their initial experiences with ESOL learners echoed the themes that had emerged in our earlier explorations with other college faculty. Several professors, for example, speak of their earlier preoccupation with students' language errors, a preoccupation that prevented them from engaging meaningfully with the students' work. As anthropology professor Tim Sieber puts it, "I used to think that my major responsibility as an evaluator of writing, with respect to ESOL students, was to be a grammar policeman, to screen for errors, and to mark down students' grades accordingly, regardless of the content of their ideas" (140-41). Some of these professors initially questioned whether these students were capable of doing the work of their courses or even whether they should have been admitted to the college in the first place.

With the help of composition and ESOL specialists in their own institutions, these faculty examined their assumptions and expectations, and

they began to shift their perspective and reorient their thinking. Initially, their risk-taking path was uneven as they attempted to view and teach multilingual students in a different way. But with time and practice, they grew more comfortable with newly adopted pedagogical approaches, especially when they began to see the positive impact these approaches had on students' progress. They came to recognize that their preoccupation with ESOL learners' linguistic difficulties had not only shut them off from the students' insights and perceptions but did little to enhance students' progress or build their confidence. As these faculty acquired greater facility with a variety of approaches that made it possible for students to find their way into assigned texts, to take risks making tentative responses, and to feel acknowledged for their analyses and interpretations, they began to appreciate the richness of students' thought in spite of persistent error.

These changes occurred in large part because these faculty asked students to engage in informal writing-to-learn assignments such as reflections, response papers, letters, and journals that provided opportunities for students to react to, pinpoint themes in, make personal connections to, or raise questions about assigned texts. Anthropology professor Tim Sieber, for example, left behind his role as a "grammar policeman," invited students to draw on their own cultural histories and perspectives, and came to view ESOL learners' "complex multicultural competence [as] a positive resource in the learning of cultural anthropology" (135). Sieber notes that their "eloquent writing"—language errors notwithstanding—raised the expectations and standards he sets for all students, leading him to "encourage them to strive to reach the same levels of criticality and authenticity in their writing as ESOL students commonly do" (142). This shifting perspective on the part of college faculty is reflected in the experiences of other instructors as well. The account of Charlotte Honda, a professor of health and physical education (Abbott et al.), for instance, echoes the stories of the instructors with whom we have worked. Honda initially questioned ESOL students' intelligence on the basis of their language errors, but as she engaged students in writing assignments that were designed to promote their learning, her expectations about writing and about learners of English as a second language (ESL) changed: "The inclusion of [writing] keeps altering my traditional perceptions about teaching, as well as biases about ESL students" (104).

Other instructors, too, are sympathetic to multilingual students' struggles, but they may be reluctant to make curricular changes in order to accommodate students' needs. They may feel constrained by the perceived need to cover a body of material or, as in the case of the nursing

faculty interviewed by Ilona Leki, by the external demands imposed by an accreditation board ("Living"). Though Leki does not offer suggestions for the particular case she examined, she recommends that faculty "stay alert to possible openings that present themselves" for transforming the classroom (96). We see such openings in innovative collaborative programs that create opportunities for engagement and that introduce writing-to-learn pedagogy across the curriculum. At Hunter College, for example, in her role as coordinator of the writing across the curriculum program, ESOL specialist Trudy Smoke works with graduate Writing Fellows from a variety of disciplines whose role it is to partner with faculty as they integrate writing into their courses. Under Smoke's guidance, the Fellows develop productive strategies for working with ESOL learners. Another collaborative initiative of this sort is Kingsborough Community College's Intensive ESL Program, which provides English language support in conjunction with credit-bearing courses across the curriculum. All faculty members involved in this cross-disciplinary program meet regularly to develop productive approaches to the students' course work (Mlynarczyk and Babbitt).

We see such openings, too, in the slowly emerging body of scholarship on linguistically diverse learners produced by college faculty across disciplines. Much of this scholarship is informed by collaborations with specialists in ESOL and writing across the curriculum, by the literature on teaching multilingual learners, and by consultations with the students themselves. These publications document some of the pedagogical adjustments and innovations that instructors and institutions in the United States, South Africa, and Australia have enacted in their classrooms and programs in order to foster students' academic success in several fields, including psychology (Winter), biology (Ambron; Feltham and Downs; Rosenthal), human services (Kanel), and nursing (Caputi, Engelmann, and Stasinopoulos; Choi; Klisch; Shakya and Horsfall). The very existence of this body of work testifies to the growing acknowledgment across the curriculum that finding productive ways to teach linguistically diverse learners is necessarily a shared responsibility.

Language Acquisition Across the Curriculum

Faculty who teach in disciplines across the curriculum, like many of the students they teach, come to the classroom with background knowledge and skills that may be inadequate when they are faced with unfamiliar language and linguistic practices. And like their students, they need opportunities to

reconsider their assumptions and expectations in order to engage meaningfully with the work they are challenged to undertake. In short, these instructors are often as "underprepared" to work with multilingual learners as multilingual learners are to work with them, and they can benefit from the very principles that inform ESOL instruction.

Fundamental to these principles is an understanding of the process of language acquisition. Contrary to what many faculty may assume about linguistic competence, language is not a decontextualized skill that is learned once and for all time in courses devoted to the study of language. Rather, the acquisition of language and academic literacies—which, too, are languages—is a long-term and evolving process. Language learners progress through various, somewhat predictable, stages as they slowly achieve closer and closer approximations of the target language. Throughout this constructive process of acquisition, students continue to formulate and test out hypotheses about the unfamiliar language they encounter in new contexts, as well as the norms and conventions associated with this language. Students may acquire facility with some aspect of language or literacy in one situation only to be set back when faced with new linguistic challenges. This natural, inevitable process reflects what occurs when anyone attempts to acquire a language, as we remember when we recollect our own study of a foreign tongue. It is therefore counterproductive to conflate linguistic performance with intellectual competence. Yes, second language features of writing may persist. But this phenomenon exists precisely because language errors represent linguistic patterns that are logically derived and that therefore may be resistant to change or corrective measures. Students are capable of undertaking complex academic tasks and making original and significant contributions to the disciplines they are studying even when they show signs of struggling with language and even though their language acquisition process is not smooth and straightforward. Furthermore, because language is acquired over time, none of us can make safe predictions about students' competence or potential on the basis of testing results or their early performance in college courses. Even students whose initial college experiences are marked by failure, frustration, or fear can make progress and excel, as studies of students' actual experiences have demonstrated.

Crucial to this perspective on language and literacy acquisition is an understanding of the contextualized, embedded nature of this process. Language and literacy are situated in particular classroom contexts and are acquired while learners engage with the subject matter and tasks of these

courses. It is instructive, in fact, to view each classroom as a culture in its own right, with its own language practices, norms, and conventions, in order to understand the dynamic interplay between learning and context. When the classroom culture is conducive to learning, students can make progress. In the very process of struggling to understand course material, students develop new strategies for learning unfamiliar subject matter and for acquiring the language of that subject matter. Indeed, studies of the classroom experiences of both multilingual and monolingual learners underline the contingent nature of learning and point to the ways teachers' intentions, expectations, and approaches promote or undercut students' performance and progress and either contribute to students' sense of accomplishment or silence them.

Yet another principle relates to the critical role writing can play as students negotiate the academic work assigned in courses across disciplines. Arguing that the benefit of writing in college courses has not been demonstrated for multilingual learners, Leki ("Challenge") raises questions about whether the role of writing is "overrated" in the academic progress of these students. We, too, would be concerned if the kind of writing students are asked to produce is not designed to promote their learning—or if writing is not assigned at all. But the research on multilingual students' experiences across the curriculum clearly demonstrates that when students are given multiple, meaningful opportunities to write (not just to read) as a way to learn within their courses, they can engage actively with the material they are studying, make sense of their texts, generate ideas and interpretations, make connections, experiment with unfamiliar language and literacy practices, and construct new knowledge. Precisely because writing gives students the safety and time to deliberate and reflect on their thoughts and interpretations, it can lead to insights and understandings that students might otherwise not have had.

This time and safety also make it possible for students to consider not just what they want to say but how they will say it, a major concern of many multilingual learners, whose silence may belie their engagement or their willingness to participate. The opportunity to shape ideas in writing before a class discussion begins can reduce the resistance and fear ESOL learners may be experiencing. And because writing engenders students' understanding and language acquisition, because it allows students to rehearse and articulate their thoughts, it can enable students' classroom participation and make it possible for otherwise silent students to be heard. Furthermore, such an opportunity allows for the possibility of students' taking risks with

language—which in turn leads them to acquire it. In addition to benefiting students, writing gives faculty opportunities for gaining insight into students' thoughts and interpretations and for responding to and drawing on students' written work in order to promote further learning. A prime example of this phenomenon is captured in the following student commentary:

> The first day of the [philosophy] course, the professor gave us an ungraded paper assignment: The subject was about our image toward philosophy. On the second day, he posed the same question to the class, and started to call on the students from the first row. Since I was sitting in the left corner of the front row, he called on me by verifying my first name. I was nervous to speak up in front of everybody whom I had not yet known, but because I already organized my idea and image toward philosophy last night in my assignment, though it was far from the fluent English, I somehow managed to bring myself to the end.
>
> After I finished, the professor briefly summarized what I just said by using more sophisticated and philosophical sounding words. Then he raised two important issues from my statement and wrote down on the blackboard. I felt so delighted. I felt I was included. I felt my existence was affirmed. The reason why I was and still am hesitated to raise my voice in the classroom is because I am always intimated by two big worries, which are "Will everybody be able to understand what I say?" and "Is my idea important enough to be raised?" Most of the time, these two questions envelop my mind so that I cannot release my words; especially when I sense that the class circumstance is neither comfortable nor worthy enough to take the risk.
>
> But this time, the professor displayed very warm and sensitive conduct before me. Perhaps that was a really trivial matter for other people, but because I was always worried about my English deficiency, even such a small matter became a big deal in my mind. A kind of hope was gradually growing in my mind. . . . (Kainose 114)

Given how writing contributes to the progress of multilingual students and allows them to play a more active role in their classrooms, we believe that the term *basic writing*, the very name of this professional journal, needs to be understood not as a description of some less developed level of literacy but as an affirmation of the principle that *writing is basic to learning.*

A final principle that is shaped by and informs our ongoing work with students and faculty underlines the role that faculty, regardless of content area, can play in fostering students' ongoing progress as learners, readers, writers, and language users. While multilingual learners can make remarkable progress in ESOL programs, instructors in courses beyond ESOL cannot expect that these students will have acquired all of the language and literacy they need in order to undertake the work of these courses. Faculty beyond the ESOL classroom, too, can promote students' learning and acquisition of language and literacy by building on students' understanding, viewing students' contributions as valuable to the work of the course, seeing students' struggles as a mark of learning in progress, offering students multiple opportunities for rehearsing unfamiliar tasks, and providing meaningful feedback and guidance in response to students' work. Recent large-scale studies provide documentation to show that active and deep engagement in absorbing and challenging work has a critical, positive impact on students' academic progress, and that this outcome is especially true for diverse learners who enter college with limited academic experiences (Bain; Cruce et al.; Kuh et al.). The assumption that such progress is possible positions linguistically diverse learners to take on the demands of intellectually sophisticated work, make significant gains in their learning, and—it needs to be underlined—acquire language. The findings of these extensive studies underscore our point that the issues that arise out of linguistic diversity need to be viewed not as problems but as opportunities for both faculty development and student learning.

Teaching diverse learners can push faculty to question unexamined assumptions, see their disciplinary practices in a new light, and adopt new ways with words. But such a changed perspective on teaching does not mean that instructors need to lower their expectations, compromise their standards, or reduce the rigor of the academic work they assign. On the contrary, the pedagogical approaches that many instructors have enacted ask more of students, requiring students to make a deeper and more genuine commitment to their academic work. This pedagogical shift can thus serve to drive expectations and standards higher. And while the shift may be catalyzed by the challenge of teaching multilingual learners, it is critical to recognize that this reconceptualized pedagogy does not promote the learning just of ESOL students. Precisely because the presence of multilingual learners requires teachers to examine and reflect on the work they do, all classroom participants—students and teachers alike—benefit. This view is echoed by Linda Caputi, Lynn Englemann, and John Stasinopoulos, who address the

needs of nursing students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and who conclude that "as a teacher implements teaching strategies that will benefit EAL students, most of these strategies will benefit all students enrolled in nursing courses, making the reason to implement these strategies even more valuable" (111). And as literature professor Rajini Srikanth comes to understand, learning how to teach the multilingual students in her courses has transformed her into a more "thoughtful teacher" overall (194).

Back to the Future of the ESOL Classroom

Our explorations of the experiences of faculty and multilingual students in courses across the curriculum have brought us back full circle, for they inform the philosophical and pedagogical perspectives that bear on the role we play as ESOL writing instructors and the work we envision for ESOL composition classrooms. What we have learned from these explorations underlines how crucial it is that we continue to "dive in," as Mina Shaughnessy puts it, investigating students' composing processes and literacy histories; examining the effect of our course content, assignments, and feedback on students' ongoing work; exploring what happens when writing becomes a means for risk taking, generating ideas, and engaging in intellectual work; and analyzing the logic of students' interpretations and language use.

One particular issue that merits far greater attention in ESOL teaching is the central role that writing can play in *any* ESOL course, a finding that is reflected in the studies of college classrooms across disciplines in which multilingual learners have achieved academic success. Most ESOL instructors and researchers, like other faculty and scholars across the curriculum, have yet to recognize that writing does not just *display* language acquisition, writing *promotes* language acquisition. One recent illustration of the lack of understanding of the vital role writing plays in language acquisition is reflected in Eli Hinkel's "Current Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills," which appears in *TESOL Quarterly*'s 40th Anniversary Issue, a publication that was meant to provide a state-of-the-art account of developments in the ESOL field. While Hinkel acknowledges the importance of integrating writing with reading and with the study of content, she nevertheless represents writing as a "skill" that is acquired through the study of grammatical, lexical, and discourse features of texts. Such a narrowly conceptualized view of writing limits possibilities for teaching and learning, for it fails to take into account how writing facilitates language use.

One reason that this limited perspective persists in the ESOL field is that

second language acquisition researchers have by and large not considered or investigated "how students learn a second language through writing," as Linda Harklau points out (332). In our own ongoing research, we have been collecting anecdotal evidence that attests to the generative role that writing can play in students' linguistic development. As the following student comment illustrates, writing can promote growth in vocabulary:

> Something that I've just noticed is that I just use a new word or a more complex sentence structure in my spoken language after I've used it many times in my texts. My writing works as a laboratory where I try out new language, I test its usage, and it slowly becomes part of my spoken language. It's funny, but the first time a new word comes to my mind when I'm speaking, I avoid its use. Let's say the word "barely" is new for me. I'll use it several times in my written language before it becomes part of my spoken language. Even thou[gh], the first time this word comes to my mind when I'm speaking, even knowing its meaning and the proper circumstances to its use, I'll be afraid to use it. So one day, unconsciously, "barely" will escape through my mouth in conversation, and it becomes part of my speaking.

Writing can also contribute to the ability to speak and to participate in classroom conversations:

> Writing . . . makes my voice heard. As a non-native speaker of English, I find it hard to use spoken speech as a means of meaningful communication in front of many people. Similarly, I do not think I can convey all the ideas I want to express in oral communication. Writing can fill this gap of mine. In writing, I have a good time to communicate with myself, then to write down what I want to share with others. The information I bring to the discussion of the reflection on a certain reading is hardly misunderstood. Being a member of the class, I do want to get involved in class activities and to be heard. Writing is a form of class participation, an act of how I communicate with the authors of the materials and of how I make my thoughts understood and myself be heard.

And writing can facilitate reading:

> The more I write about the readings, the more I can see a part of myself or my experience reflected when I understand what the writers wanted to say. That is the real meaning of reading.
>
> Another important reason that I like reading and writing about reading which I only recognize when I read and write in English is I learn more about power of language. I could not see or put myself in the readings so I could understand or sympathize with the writers when I read in Vietnamese. I had such a hard time with that job that I could not imagine doing it in English. Especially English is my second language which I thought even makes the situation more difficult. It would be a surprise to say that I have a better job with reading and understand the readings in English more than I did in Vietnamese but that is what I feel right now.
>
> I could not recognize why I like reading until my first class of writing about my ideas. . . . I learn that there is no right answer for what we know about readings which gives us more chance to open our ideas. The more we are open to express our ideas, the more we want to learn power of the words we use.

Not only does writing promote language acquisition, it can also lead to the adoption of new "textual identities," a phenomenon that has been demonstrated by students whose writing (rather than speaking) in English (rather than in their first language) becomes the source of their academic authority and security (Kramsch and Lam). Precisely because writing engages students in language that they are consciously thinking in, thinking about, and manipulating, it allows students to acquire a linguistic authority and authorial identity that they otherwise might not have acquired. A number of well-known authors for whom English is an additional language have written eloquently about this process (see their accounts in Lesser; Novakovich and Shapard). And students, too, have acknowledged how writing in English has transformed them into writers (Zamel, "Toward"). After chronicling her own frustrating, embarrassing, and "suffocating" experiences as a writer in China, for example, this student explains how writing in English has given her a new identity:

> My path in English made a 180-degree swerve when I started to encounter writing in English. My interest in English writing accumulated day by day. Accompanied by this cumulative learning process, my resentment toward writing was lessened and my affec-

> tion toward writing started to grow. I reknew writing in another way. I played with English words with more ease when I was writing, which was quite different from the way I used to labor in Chinese writing. I turned into another person when I was writing in English. Amazingly, learning English altered my concept in writing as well as myself as a writer. It was totally unbelievable progress in writing to me even though English was my second language. I felt I had such a special connection to this language that even my mother tongue could not tantamount to this connection. English gave me the confidence and faith in writing. Without learning and writing in English, I would never come to realize that I would like writing and that I could become a good and confident writer.

Our work across the curriculum challenges deficit models of language and learning that foreground students' linguistic mismanagements and misunderstandings, drive skills-based and form-focused assessment and placement procedures that do not allow for genuine demonstrations of students' competence, and become the basis of programmatic policies that may exclude students from the very courses they want to enter. These deficit models draw on idealized and normative representations of language and behavior, what Mary Louise Pratt calls "linguistic utopias," and serve to justify a research agenda and pedagogical orientation that frames ESOL students' difference as deficiency. Such an exclusionary perspective is illustrated, for example, in an oft-cited review of research on the writing of ESOL students, a review that represents the "distinct nature" of ESOL students' writing as problem (Silva). Tony Silva's summary of the literature indicates that, when compared to monolingual students, ESOL students write texts that are "simpler . . . less fluent, less accurate, and less effective"; compose in ways that are "more constrained, more difficult, and less effective"; and are incapable of performing as well as or meeting the same standards on writing tests as their monolingual counterparts (668-70). Yet, as Suresh Canagarajah points out, Silva does not critically question these findings or the framework of the comparison, which leads to a representation of ESOL student writing as lacking. Moreover, by not challenging the use of monolingual students' writing as a standard of measurement, Silva's review perpetuates the notion that a stable and uniform standard of writing exists. Finally, Silva fails to cite any evidence that demonstrates positive aspects of ESOL students' writing. Paradoxically, in a later article, while reaffirming the value of the research findings of his earlier review, Silva and his co-authors critique studies of

ESOL writing that "tend to portray L2 writers as 'problems' or as producers of problematic prose" (Silva et al. 94).

We welcome this critique. Focusing on students' limitations, we strongly believe, keeps us from seeing the richness and intelligence of students' understandings and leads to decisions that can pre-empt or undercut students' progress. Such a perspective is enacted not only when students' language or writing is viewed as problematic or wanting. The tendency to make generalizations about students on the basis of assumptions about their cultural background, and then to make predictions or draw conclusions about their performance on the basis of such generalizations, shuts us off from understanding the full complexity of students' potential, identity, and sense of agency. Such an essentializing stance, whereby cultures are reduced to idealized and normative models, to *cultural utopias*, leads to culturally determined explanations about students' learning and behavior. Furthermore, when cultures are viewed as monolithic and static entities, and when multilingual students are measured against individuals representing an idealized target culture, difference, again—as is the case with language—is perceived as deficiency. As David Watkins and John Biggs have found, such a perspective can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, blinding instructors to students' actual competence, adaptive strategies, and critical thinking skills. Several scholars have challenged this practice of cultural essentialism and determinism—which, they show, continues to be perpetuated in the ESOL field—and call for research and practice that takes into account the complexity and hybridity of culture when students literally and figuratively cross borders (Canagarajah; Kubota; Kubota and Lehner; Leki, "Cross-Talk"; Spack, "Rhetorical"; Thesen; Tucker; Zamel, "Toward").

What we have learned from longitudinal studies of students' across-the-curriculum college experiences attests to the fact that students' previous educational or cultural experiences, initial linguistic struggles in their courses, or inadequate performance on proficiency tests, do not reflect what students are capable of accomplishing. The following student comment reminds us that the conditions for learning that students may have been accustomed to do not necessarily limit their potential or performance in their new learning environments. Indeed, having experienced her earlier educational settings as limiting, this student welcomes courses that allow for students' contributions and active participation:

> I succeeded in my studies in Haiti by doing what the teachers asked without thinking about what I myself wanted or needed to

learn. I always thought that whatever the teachers asked to study was all there was to know. I substituted memorization of obscure information for learning. I learned not to open my mouth in class to ask questions or make comments. It is hard to comment on teachers' lectures because the teacher thinks he or she is always right and know everything. He might even reprimand a student for correcting him or her.

I now personally love classrooms where students are not very restricted. Although I do not feel free expressing my ideas all the time but I certainly like to listen about what others think and compare ideas. Concerning my not feeling free to express my ideas, I'm only that way because in my early learning years I was not used to have the chance to do so. That is why I feel it is necessary. I like it a lot when students share opinions and give their interpretations to what is being taught. When more opinions and ideas are shared in a classroom, a student gets a chance to look at the subject from other angles. It creates a suited environment for diversity. Also, when students get a chance to give opinions about a certain subject, it helps other students to grow and complete their ideas even more. A student might have had an idea but do not know how to word it but a hint from another student's interpretation may help. Students should be allowed to give their objections also in every subject matter because more interpretations of the same matter may increase the chance of understanding it better. There is a French saying that says *"au choc des idées jaillit la lumiere"* more or less in English would say, where a lot of ideas are met there is illumination. I totally agree with it.

As this student's account suggests, as even her use of two languages demonstrates, what may be "different" about ESOL learners is not that they are deficient but that they are uniquely resourceful. Multilingual students may struggle in English, but they may also be able to draw on another language to develop their ideas. Their writing may be "unsettling in terms of grammar and syntax," but that same writing may be original in both style and content (Spack, *Teaching* 53). Their knowledge may be incomplete in some subject areas, but they may have significant background knowledge in other spheres. In short, students draw on their particular linguistic backgrounds and cultural knowledge—their "differences"—in order to succeed as learners.

The findings about what can and does happen across the curriculum raise critical questions about the service ideology underlying the teaching of multilingual students, an ideology that suggests that "the literacy demands made in a range of real academic contexts should drive instructional planning" in ESOL courses (Grabe 258). But the multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of the academic work students are asked to undertake across disciplines, and the specific and often unpredictable ways individual faculty frame that work—even in courses within the same discipline—make clear that the goals of the ESOL classroom cannot be determined by unexamined assumptions about the demands and features of other academic courses (Spack, "Initiating"; Spack, "Acquisition"; Zamel, "Questioning"; Zamel, "Strangers"). As investigations of courses across the curriculum have demonstrated, the academic work that students encounter is rarely amenable to generic or monolithic representations of discipline-specific work that students can simulate in ESOL classrooms. Students come to understand and engage with the cultural ways of the classroom—its language, practices, norms, genres, and conventions—through immersion in that classroom. Language and literacy practices are not static but rather are embedded in content and tied to specific contexts. Language is acquired, and will continue to be acquired, through meaningful engagement with content, as students have ongoing opportunities to use language. ESOL courses are as "real" as any other courses across the curriculum when they offer possibilities for content-saturated activity. ESOL writing instructors should therefore develop their own intellectually challenging curricula whose content, texts, and assignments involve students in authentic and meaningful work and thus facilitate their acquisition of language and literacy.

Explorations and investigations across the curriculum have yet another critical implication for the positions ESOL professionals hold in their institutions and the pedagogical commitments they make in their classrooms. Our own work with faculty in other disciplines reveals how such collaborations can subvert the hierarchical and disciplinary divisions that permeate educational institutions and that typically relegate ESOL and writing programs to a service position. Such dialogic, reciprocal, and generative relationships make it possible for all of us who teach multilingual students to engage each other in new ways as we share concerns and insights. This work across the curriculum underlines the need for instructors in academic institutions to work together to change academic institutions so that we can find ways to be more responsive to the diversity of learners. Just as Mina Shaughnessy called for writing teachers to "remediate" not students but themselves, so

too do institutions need to be transformed if they are to meet the challenges of teaching students in meaningful ways.

Our awareness of how students can come to feel marginalized, discouraged, or silenced in their courses across the curriculum has strengthened our conviction that the academic work assigned in ESOL writing classrooms cannot be dictated by and ought not to replicate the problematic and unsuccessful approaches often adopted in such courses. At the same time, our awareness of how instructors in a range of courses have enacted pedagogical approaches that contribute to multilingual learners' academic success confirms the value of actively engaging students in work, especially written work, that promotes the acquisition of language and literacy and the construction of knowledge. These across-the-curriculum discoveries, about obstacles and opportunities, errors and changed expectations, illuminate the work before us, both in ESOL classrooms and beyond.

Note

1. Unless otherwise noted, the excerpts from student writing that appear throughout this article are previously unpublished texts drawn from our ongoing research on multilingual learners' experiences in our ESOL classrooms and beyond.

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