

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BASIC WRITING, BINARIES, AND BRIDGES:
DIFFERENCE AND POWER IN THE
PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF
REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENTS
Maurice C. Champagne, Doctor of Philosophy, 2008

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Difference and power produce powerful, damaging representations of students. Those representations of students affect representations of teachers, writing instruction, and English studies as a whole. Damaging representations of students come from competing definitions of literacy. Because literacy definitions vary, representations of students vary with some students perceived as the “Other.”

This study analyzes difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students, especially writing students. It also analyzes competing definitions of literacy, connecting them to conflicting representations of students. Furthermore, this study promotes alternative representations of students through interview with six variously situated teachers and program administrators. This study concludes that before writing teachers can improve the field, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

BASIC WRITING, BINARIES, AND BRIDGES: DIFFERENCE AND POWER IN
THE PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF REPRESENTATIONS OF
STUDENTS

by

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To my parents, William and Lenora Champagne. Your undying support, your unconditional love, and your unwavering belief in me have made this possible.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I think that it would be useful, if only as an exercise, to imagine a way of talking that called the term “basic writing” into question.

David Bartholomae
“The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum”

The first thing we would need to do to change the curriculum would be to change the way the profession talked about the students who didn’t fit.

Mina Shaughnessy
As cited in “The Tidy House.”

As an African-American male who attended parochial school in the 1960s, I didn’t fit. Often times I was the only student of color in my classes, and I barely participated in my classes because of fear. My teachers treated me differently. My first grade teacher, for example, suggested to my parents that I belonged in a remedial class because “Maurice doesn’t say anything.” My mother—who holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing—countered, “Have you asked him anything?” Once that teacher questioned me about the material taught in class, I responded intelligently and coherently, proving that I did fit. Many of my subsequent experiences from elementary school through graduate school have been continuous exercises in proving that I do fit.

Before I began working on this study, I had made no connection between the concepts of “students who didn’t fit” and the “Other.” In fact, I had never heard of the term the “Other.”

However, when my dissertation advisor gave me a copy of Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu's *Representing the "Other": "Basic Writers" and the Teaching of Basic Writing*, I identified. I identified because I understood that my first grade teacher had thought of me as the "Other." I also identified because I realized that when I taught freshman composition, I had thought of and spoken about some of my students as the "Other."

When I began teaching freshman writing, I was curious, on the one hand, about teaching "basic writers."¹ On the other hand, when I would commiserate with some of my colleagues over the challenges of being a graduate student who must teach, I would talk about some of my students in unflattering ways. I said some things about my students that I would not want anyone to say about me. When I looked at some of the things that I had said about my students, I realized that I was doing the same thing that I had condemned. I felt bad. At the same time, I found a reason to commit to a new way of thinking and a way to complete my dissertation. In *Representing the "Other,"* Horner and Lu call for a study that analyzes "difference and power in the production and reception of representations of all students" (192). When I first read that idea, I thought that I should concentrate on difference and power in the production and reception of representations of "basic writers."

I also thought that I would find a technique or methodology for examining the way that some people represent "basic writers." After months finding no technique or methodology, I consulted with Rhetoric and Composition Scholar Bruce Horner; he

¹ Throughout my writing process, I have struggled with using and simultaneously challenging the term "basic writer." My dilemma with the term parallels the quandary expressed by Mike Rose in "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University." Rose talks about how "composition specialists must debate and defend and interminably evaluate what they do" with "words that sabotage our argument." Nevertheless, I use the term in this text because I lack a more appropriate one.

suggested that I think of my study as an investigation into “competing definitions of literacy.” I had not realized that definitions of literacy could compete. I thought literacy was literacy; you either had it or you did not. Nevertheless, I made progress in my research after taking Bruce Horner’s suggestion because I discovered that definitions of literacy shifted from one context to another.

I also noticed that there are politics, i.e., social relationships involving difference, power, and authority that determine how some people define literacy and how some people define students. In other words, I understood that literacy could be defined to separate the “literate” from the “illiterate,” giving a measure of supremacy to the “literate.” This revelation, though not news to some composition specialists, was news to me. At this point, a rush of feelings came over me, some of which were connected to the fear that I felt from being the only African-American in my parochial school classes in the 1960s. I also struggled with my self-limiting beliefs about my own sense of “literacy” that had taken root in my psyche from that time.

I now see that those politics of representation—the process of othering—hurt not only the students, but also the instructors who engage in them as I had done when I began teaching freshman composition. Just as there has never been a common definition of literacy, so there has never been agreement about the definition of basic writing. Keith Gilyard reminds us in “Basic Writing, Cost Effectiveness, and Ideology” that “there is no uniform set of practices, or even definition, of Basic Writing” (40). Although this account of my experiences may sound naïve, I speak of this situation to chronicle my learning process and contextualize my purposes in this study. As I gathered more information, I wondered how this lack of a “uniform set of practices, or even definition of

Basic Writing” affect the ways that some scholars think and talk about their students.

In other words, I questioned the connection between the lack of agreement on defining literacy and basic writing and the sometimes harmful representations of students. Next, I turned my attention to how writing students are represented and made some interesting discoveries. For example, I discovered that Andrea Lunsford in “Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer” represents “basic writers” as students who “have not attained that level of cognitive development which would allow them to form abstractions and conceptions” (449). Similarly, Charlotte Brammer in “Linguistic Cultural Capital and “basic writers”” represents “basic writers” as ‘linguistic outsiders’ who are “not consubstantial with us” (17).

Brammer refers to literacy as “linguistic cultural capital” and talks about “the constant change that permeates cultural literacy of our current society” (25). I squirmed when I read these representations of students based on what they lack because I know what it means to be spoken about in that way. I have never liked that feeling. It does not feel good. I thought there has to be a better way of thinking and talking about students—one that empowers students and teachers too.

If definitions of literacy are constantly changing, would it not make sense to represent students, as a group, as constantly changing? How can anyone fairly represent students who do not fit a certain definition of literacy if what it means to be literate is constantly changing? Furthermore, since the representations of students seem to come primarily from educators, is it not fair to say that any harmful representations of students are a reflection of the educator’s paradigm rather than the student’s weaknesses? Laura Gray-Rosendale in *Rethinking Basic Writing: Exploring Identity, Politics and Community*

in Interaction argues for alternative representations of students by looking at their own practices within their own peer group (11). Gray-Rosendale moves away from the politics of representing students by asking “What can the so-called basic writer do?” instead of “Who is the basic writer?” (11).

The politics of representing students invites exploration into the “contact zone” between students and those who teach them, conduct research on them, and administratively categorize them.² It seems that the contact zone could be mutually beneficial to students. On the other hand, according to Pratt’s definition, the contact zone could harm students because it connotes an area of conflict and struggle where cooperation and teamwork should exist. Basic writing students have been associated with a contact zone. For example, in “The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum,” David Bartholomae expounds on Mary Louise Pratt’s understanding of a contact zone where differences are highlighted in a positive way that leads to an understanding of goals and values (13). Difference and power, however, sometimes flourish in negative ways not only in the contact zone but also in the representations of students.

This study examines difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students, in general, and basic writing students in particular. A complete analysis of representations of all students lies beyond the scope of this study. However, because the idea for this study came from a text that discusses basic writers and the teaching of basic writing, I give attention to the representations of basic writing

² In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt, coined the term “contact zone” to describe the intersection between writing and literacy. She characterizes the contact zone as the “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other.” Difference and asymmetrical power, adds Pratt, thrive in the contact zone.

students while acknowledging that this issue of difference and power can apply to representations of all students. The main argument of this study is that before writing instructors can improve the field they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

The material in this chapter is organized like other studies of basic writing. The following headings and subheadings make up this chapter: purpose of the study; research questions; rationale for the study; definition of key terms; assumptions; theoretical underpinnings; limitations of the study; foundations of the study; significance of the study; and summary. Also, this first chapter outlines the contents of the subsequent four chapters. The purpose of this study is next.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study is to analyze difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students (192). This purpose from Horner and Lu suggests that this study should look at how some writing instructors think and talk about their students, instead of how some writing instructors use certain classroom practices. Classroom practices are important, to be sure.

However, classroom practices, like representations of students could be influenced by difference and power. It could be said that if any classroom practices are supported by difference and power, then those practices probably contain disempowering assumptions about students. Therefore, it is critical to look at those disempowering assumptions about students because they make up the harmful representations of students. Those disempowering assumptions affect the ways that teachers think, feel and act toward students.

The second purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between competing definitions of literacy and representations of students. In other words, this study looks at the connection between how literacy is defined and how students are characterized, especially those characterized as the “Other.” Additionally, this study discerns the connection between literacy and representations of students and present examples in this text. The benefit of this study emerges in that it addresses an issue that seems to lie just below the perception of some writing teachers. Some writing teachers may unknowingly use behaviors associated with difference and power in the way that they think and talk about their students. The main point of this study is to point out that before writing teachers can improve the field of basic writing, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

The analysis of the connection between competing definitions of literacy and conflicting representations of students comes in chapter three of this text. Horner and Lu say that a study like this can equip those concerned with students’ welfare with the tools to combat powerful but damaging representations of students and teachers that appear to be “objective facts”(192). The lives of students and writing teachers could improve if teachers operated under Patricia Bizzell’s definition of literacy from “Literacy in Culture and Cognition”—as that ability which “confers a reasonable degree of educational and economic success and political participation”— (135). At the very least, Bizzell’s definition could provide a basis from which to define literacy and represent students.

Finally, the third purpose of this study is to “promote alternative representations” of students (193). Chapter four contains interviews and analyses that work toward this objective. Horner and Lu’s work illustrates the existence of harmful representations of

students. This study continues with Horner and Lu's work of promoting alternative representations by locating any new representations within their particular contexts (193). Specifically, chapter four presents transcripts of interviews with six writing teachers on the best way to represent students. The alternative representations are situated within the contexts and universities from which the descriptions come. Harmful representations of students overlook their positive, unique characteristics. Those characteristics deserve emphasis. This study contributes to the scholarship on basic writing by promoting representations of students that empower them and accentuate their unique characteristics.

Research Questions

The main link between the following research questions and the purposes of this study is to promote alternative representations of students. In other words, these questions were designed so that they could be solution oriented and so that they could move toward new, student-empowering representations. The questions, however, touch on the problem by exploring what Bruce Horner and Min Zhan Lu describe as the "powerful but damaging representations of students and teachers also being offered as the 'objective facts' about them" (192).

Let us now consider the research questions in detail.

1. What effect does difference and power have in the production and reception of representations of students?

2. What effect does difference and power have on the production and reception of representations of teachers of writing?
3. What are the differences between nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century representations of students?
4. In view of the preceding information, what is the best way to represent students?

The research questions are open-ended so that they can uncover several possibilities for improvement and further research. The first research question revolves around the results of how difference and power affect the representations of students. Inasmuch as the connection between difference, power, and the representations of students seems to lie just below the perception of some writing teachers, it would seem that the effects of these elements would also reside at that same level. These issues, therefore, warrant exploration. Research question two considers the consequences of difference and power on the representations of teachers. Research question three seeks to account for the evidence presented in chapter three—a look at the history of competing definitions of literacy and representations of students. This level of historical depth seems necessary because, according to Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu, “historicizing the representations of students can equip those concerned with the welfare of students to combat powerful but damaging representations of students and teachers also being offered as the ‘objective facts’ about them” (192).

Additionally, this level of historical depth is necessary because, as Horner and Lu suggest, “locating current representations of students in the ongoing history of conflicting

representations of such students can enable us to benefit from that history” (192). This study endeavors to find an improvement in the ways that some scholars have represented students throughout history. Finally, question four is the key to the whole study because it seeks to promote alternative representations of students. These are the connections or the relationships between the following research questions and the purposes of this study.

Rationale

This study is useful because it concentrates on a single underlying issue in a field where there is little agreement. As Gilyard, DeGenaro, and White affirm in “Going Around in Circles: Methodological Issues in Basic Writing Research” “it is hard to come up with other examples of professional consensus on matters in Basic Writing, since the researchers in the field do not seem to listen much to each other or to build on each other’s findings” (23). This situation is not new. Nevertheless, it deserves attention because the multiple uses of the term “basic writing” undersell the importance of writing instruction and the abilities of some of the students. As a result, some scholars create what Horner and Lu describe as “powerful but damaging representations of students” (191). The controversy over how best to represent students is sometimes framed in the basic writing debate as either an argument “for” or “against” basic writing. Bruce Horner says that debate on basic writing “sometimes echoes in troublesome ways the polarized debate during Basic Writing’s ‘birth’ seeming to allow for only two positions, for or against” (191).

The debate between David Bartholomae and Karen Greenberg in the spring 1993 edition of the *Journal of Basic Writing (JBW)* illustrates how debates in basic writing can

be polarized as either for or against. Their debate also speaks to the foundation of this study. In that issue of the *JBW*, Bartholomae says that basic writing courses represent students as “the ‘other’ who is the incomplete version of ourselves” (18). At the same time, Bartholomae continues, basic writing courses reproduce “existing patterns of power and authority, reproducing the hierarchies we had meant to question and overthrow way back then in the 1970s” (18). Greenberg, on the other hand, argues that if more scholars present arguments like Bartholomae’s, basic writing programs will be eliminated (65).

Bruce Horner notes, the debate between David Bartholomae and Karen Greenberg alludes to the “ongoing struggle over how best to represent students and writing now commonly referred to as ‘basic’” even though their debate was framed as a “for” or “against” argument (193).³ Instead of engaging in the “for” or “against” argument, this study concentrates on how some scholars think about and represent their students.

The representations of students ultimately affect the way some people perceive writing teachers and writing instruction. Marguerite Helmers says in *Writing Students: Composition, Testimonials, and Representations of Students* that writing has always been perceived as a marginalized discipline that is subservient to literature. Since writing and literature classify as English studies, I suspect some scholars outside of English studies hold it in low regard because of the infighting, the difference, the power. That is why this study is important: because it moves away from the infighting and focuses on the thinking that fuels the “for” or “against” argument and the damaging representations of students.

³ For more on the debate between Bartholomae and Greenberg see David Bartholomae “The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum” and Karen Greenberg “The Politics of Basic Writing.” Both articles can be found in the Journal of Basic Writing Vol. 12, No.1, 1993.

Definitions

The definition of difference that guides this study is adapted from Cornel West's definition of "difference." West's definition parallels the understanding of former Frederick A.P. Barnard Professor of Education at Columbia University Lawrence Cremin. Cremin knew how harmful an emphasis on "difference" in education can be. In *The Genius of American Education*, Cremin says that America must "afford every one of its citizens a maximum opportunity for intellectual and moral development" (48). "No society," Cremin adds, "that calls itself democratic can settle for an education that does not encourage universal acquaintance with the best that has been thought and said. Any lesser goal, it seems to me, is narrow and unlovely, and ultimately destructive to democracy" (48-49). Like Cremin, Cornel West understands that an emphasis on "difference" in education is "ultimately destructive to democracy." The following is Cornel West's definition of "difference."

Difference: West defines difference as the attempt "to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity; to reject the abstract, general, and universal in light of the concrete, specific, and particular; and to historicize, contextualize, and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting, and changing" (93). "Difference," West continues, "consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment—especially those of marginalized First World agents who shun degraded self-representations, articulating instead their sense of the flow of history" (93). Finally, difference is "neither simply oppositional in contesting the mainstream (or *malestream*) for inclusion, nor transgressive in the avant-gardist sense of shocking conventional bourgeois audiences"

(94). Rather, difference corresponds with the “distinct articulations of talented (and usually privileged) contributors to culture” (94).

West’s definition suggests that there is something disingenuous in the concept of “difference.” “Difference,” on the one hand, seems to highlight diversity and uniqueness. On the other hand, “difference” performs the same function that bell hooks identifies in *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*. In *Yearning*, hooks says terms like *difference* and *the Other* have replaced in academic thought “commonly known words deemed uncool or too simplistic, words like *oppression, exploitation, and domination* (51-52). In other words, “difference” eschews a student’s uniqueness and separates her from her classmates in a way that is narrow, unlovely and ultimately destructive to democracy. “Difference,” therefore, is a trope, a construct that masks what West calls the “tragically schizophrenic visions” that could be a part of academic thought.

Some of the “tragically schizophrenic visions” that could be a part of academic thought and that interact with “difference” are born out of what West describes as “the contemporary terrors, anxieties, and fears of highly commercialized North Atlantic capitalist cultures (with their escalating xenophobias against people of color, Jews, women, gays, lesbians, and the elderly)” (93). As he deconstructs “difference” West interrogates “what constitutes difference and the weight and gravity it is given in representation” (93). When it comes to representations, “difference” is equated with deficiency. Difference, however, does not equal deficiency, and West knows this. That is why West’s definition is useful. Although “difference” attempts to highlight diversity, it concentrates on certain distinctions between people that ultimately produce harmful representations of the “Other.”

In this study, difference refers to the space created between teachers and students when teachers produce harmful representations of students. Difference separates identities; it deletes, distorts, and generalizes characteristics of students. Through difference, binary distinctions materialize and teachers represent students as being either one way or the other. Difference consists of extended metaphors, ambiguous syntax, and special vocabulary used to produce representations of students. Difference is a construct that is always in need of interpretation.

Power: In *Teachers as Intellectuals*, Henry Giroux says that power must be understood in relation to knowledge. Power and knowledge produce work together to produce power itself “and those who benefit from it” (xviii). Giroux adds that “every form of knowledge can be located within the specific power relations; as time passes certain forms of knowledge are transformed by ruling groups into regimes of truth” (xviii). Power between teachers and students, Giroux maintains, is “inextricably linked to the teacher’s allotment and distribution of grades” (38). Giroux’s description of power being transformed into regimes of truth can connect to competing definitions of literacy.

The connection between Giroux’s understanding of power and mine is elementary. Just as power is present when someone produces something, it is present when writing teachers produce damaging representations of students. Giroux equates power with knowledge; the representations that writing teachers produce of students suggests knowledge, even though the knowledge can be rooted in generalizations of difference. With knowledge, accurate or inaccurate, comes power. For these reasons, the

representations of students are often generalized and arbitrary. Harmful representations of students are constructs. A writing teacher may have some experience working with students who are under prepared for the rigors of college level writing.

However, that experience disqualifies any writing teacher from producing harmful representations of their students that are rooted in difference and power. Thus, it is important to recognize that before writing teachers can improve the field of basic writing, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

In this study, power refers to the advantage or benefit gained through emphasizing difference; it indicates a hierarchy that sets up competition instead of cooperation. Therefore, power, for our purposes, refers to the ability to create a representation of a student and then bring that representation into reality. Power is rooted in tradition and connected to literacy and language. Power looks for characteristics in students, interprets them as deficiencies, and accentuates the opposite characteristics in the powerful. Like difference, power determines those students who fit in and those who do not.

Representation: When discussing identity and representation in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow refer to “the question of social power that resides in the specific arrangement and deployment of subjectivity in cultural and ideological practices in schooling and society” (xvi). Representation, for McCarthy and Crichlow raises “questions about who has the power to define whom, and when , and how” (xvi).

In this study, representation refers to a description or characterization of students; some representations cast an unfavorable light on students and others have the opposite

effect. The term “basic writer,” for example, is a representation of students that casts an unfavorable light on the students and leaves broad room for interpretation. The term “basic writing” also represents a style of writing and a course; the term leaves broad room for interpretation. Just as a map of a territory is a representation of that territory that differs from the territory itself, representations of students can differ from the students themselves. Representations of students could depict the weaknesses of some students.

On the other hand, representations of students could ignore the virtues of some students. The representations of students in this study seem to come from one paradigm. Representations of students can overemphasize the differences between one group of students and another or between the teacher and the students. I provide examples of how these representations work in chapter three.

Literacy: In chapter three of this text, I offer several definitions of literacy, demonstrating how they compete across a wide variety of spectrums. These definitions can allow an individual to perform certain functions within certain contexts, yet they can also restrict the freedom of an individual within other contexts if that individual’s literacy skills are out of alignment with that standing definition. In some instances, the term “literacy” may not be used to express a set of skills or talents that one needs to function effectively within a given context. Nevertheless, literacy is a term that denotes necessary abilities that must be mastered in order to take part in the activities surrounding a particular context.

The examples and contexts of literacy are numerous. If a person has the ability to read and understand financial statements, then she is said to possess financial literacy. If

someone seeks skill and proficiency with software programs such as Microsoft Windows, then she could be described as searching for computer literacy. Priests, deacons, preachers, and other clergymen could be said to possess biblical literacy. Moreover, if someone is knowledgeable of the details of a particular culture, then she could be said to enjoy cultural literacy.

For this study, literacy refers to more than just the ability to read and write. Literacy refers to the knowledge and skills that students need to perform effectively within a particular environment. Literacy is an amorphous term that changes with various contexts. A construct that influences representations of students, literacy serves to differentiate those who fit in an academic environment from those who do not. To be literate is to be “in the know.”

Dominant: I adapt my definitions of dominant, residual, and emergent from the work of Raymond Williams.⁴ In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond defines the dominant as “the effective, the hegemonic” (121). Williams places the article “the” in front of the term “dominant,” suggesting that the term itself can apply to a number of situations. He says that characteristics of the dominant are best understood by understanding characteristics of the residual and the emergent (122). Williams maintains that the chief feature of the dominant, as it relates to the residual and the emergent, is that “no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhaust all human practice energy and human intention” (125).

He suggests that his claim about the dominant is “not merely a negative proposition, allowing us to account for significant things which happen outside or against

⁴See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

the dominant mode” (125). “On the contrary,” Williams continues, “it is a fact about the modes of domination, that they select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice” (125). In this process of selection and exclusion, Williams concludes, “what the dominant has effectively seized is indeed the ruling definition of the social” (125).

Advanced capitalism, according to Williams, provides the best example of how the dominant works to seize the ruling definition of the social. Williams says, “in advanced capitalism, because of changes in the social character of labour, in the social character of communications, and in the social character of decision-making, the dominant culture reaches much further than ever before in capitalist society and into hitherto ‘reserved’ or ‘resigned’ areas of experience and practice and meaning” (125-126).

I use the term “dominant” in this study to describe definitions of literacy that prevail over others. Dominant definitions of literacy may come from a common understanding, a legislative act, or a task force assigned to create a definition. Although a definition of literacy may dominate all others at a particular time, it may remain unknown to some members of a population because definitions of literacy change. As a result, a dominant definition in one setting may be subordinate in another. Just as representations of students fail to describe all students, dominant definitions of literacy fail to describe all instances of literacy. Later, I discuss how dominant definitions of literacy change and how those changes affect representations of students.

Residual: Williams says that the residual means “something different from the ‘archaic,’ though in practice these are very often very difficult to distinguish” (122). The

residual, Williams adds, “has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past but as an effective element of the present” (122). As a result, residual “experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of residue—cultural as well as social—of some previous social and cultural institution or formation” (122). “A residual cultural element,” Williams notes, “is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but some part of it, some version of it—and especially if the residue is from some major area of the past—will in most cases have had to be incorporated in the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas” (123).

One example of the residual is organized religion. Organized religion, Williams asserts, “is predominantly residual, but within this there is a significant difference between some practically alternative and oppositional meanings and values (absolute brotherhood, service to others without reward) and a larger body of incorporated meanings and values (official morality, or the social order of which the other worldly is a separated neutralizing or ratifying component)” (122). The idea of the rural community, Williams adds, is another example of a residual idea in that it provides an “idealization or fantasy, or as an exotic escape from “urban industrial capitalism” (122). Finally, although monarchy is an idea that is inactive in a country like the United States, Williams claims that monarchy is a residual function that “has been wholly incorporated as a specific political and cultural function—marking the limits as well as the methods—if a form of capitalist democracy” (123).

In this study, I use the term “residual” to describe definitions of literacy that come

from the past but still thrive in the cultural present. Residual definitions of literacy reside in our cultural process not as elements of the past, but as active elements of the present. Residual definitions of literacy conflict with the dominant definition. On the other hand, residual definitions of literacy may combine with the dominant one. Residual definitions of literacy will be at some distance from the dominant definition; however, some part of it will have had to been incorporated into the dominant definition if the dominant is to make sense. Practices of selection and exclusion explain how some residual definitions of literacy merge with dominant ones.

Emergent: Williams says “by ‘emergent’ I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created” (123). He further explains “since we are always considering relations within a cultural process, definitions of the emergent, as of the residual, can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant” (123). Williams remarks that emergent elements “are alternative or oppositional to the dominant elements” (124). He gives the example, from Marxist theory of “the formation of a new class, the coming to consciousness of a new class, and within this, in actual process, the (often uneven) emergence of elements of a new cultural formation” (124).

To understand how the concept of the emergent works, think, for example, of the creation of a new socioeconomic class. Williams says, “the emergence of the working class as a class was immediately evident, (for example, in nineteenth-century England) in the cultural process (124). A new socioeconomic class, Williams suggests, “is always a source of emergent cultural practice, but while it is still, as a class, relatively subordinate, this is always likely to be uneven and is certain to be incomplete.

In this study, I talk about emergent definitions of literacy that form within various contexts. The meaning of emergent definitions of literacy, like residual ones, evolves in relation to the dominant. In other words, a person can better understand a dominant definition of literacy through an understanding of an emergent one. Emergent definitions of literacy sometimes appear when a new social class or counter culture appears. Emergent definitions of literacy blend with dominant definitions of literacy to the degree that people understand and use the dominant definitions.

The “Other”: My definition of the “Other” from the work of Lawrence Cahoone.⁵

In *From Modernism to Post Modernism: An Anthology*, Lawrence Cahoone explains the concept of the “Other” as an “*analytic strategy*” that

“is central to the politics of post modernism. The apparent identity of what appear to be cultural units—human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations—are maintained only through *constitutive repression*, an active process of *exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization*. A phenomenon maintains its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or “*other*” through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is *privileged* or favored while the other is *deprivileged* or devalued in some way” (11).

As a term the “Other” refers to the social and psychological ways that some groups of people exclude or marginalize other groups of people by stressing the ways in which the “Other” is dissimilar or different. Oftentimes, it seems that the “Other” is represented in extreme and stereotypical ways.

⁵ See Lawrence Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996): 11.

In this study, the “Other” refers to the ways in which some writing teachers think and talk about their students. The “Other” also refers to the students who are marginalized and whose scholastic weaknesses are emphasized in the academic literature. Representations of writing students receive the chief emphasis in this study. In this study, I also use “the Other” to talk about students who are represented as basic writers.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The key source that informs my analysis of the competing definitions of literacy presented in chapter three is Raymond Williams’ *Marxism and Literature*. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams presents the concepts of dominant, residual, and emergent, which can apply to a number of concepts, and outlines his own approach to cultural studies, entitled “cultural materialism”. Williams dedicated much of his scholarship to understanding the relationships among literature, language, and society. His method of historical analysis is relevant because it takes into account not only the different processes of a culture and its social definitions, like literacy, but it also considers, at every point, the connections between what can be seen as historically varied and variable elements. Those varied and variable elements are the things that are either the residue of previous cultures or the emergent elements of current cultures that sometimes have an effect on ruling social definitions.

Another benefit from using Williams’ methodology is that it recognizes the complex interrelations between particular movements within a society and the tendencies or responses to those movements within that same society. Williams’ methodology allows the user to understand the complexity of a culture through authentic historical analysis; “basic writing” as a term can best be understood by analyzing the complexity of

the culture that produced the term. Williams' methodology also allows the user to probe beyond the immediate circumstances in academia that produced the term "basic writing" to the cultural process that produced it. That cultural process involved socioeconomic trends, popular movements, dominant tendencies and thought process both within and beyond academic circles that could have accounted for the ways of representing students.

Williams's worldview was that in order to understand dominant elements within a society, it is important to recognize the residual and emergent elements within that society and how they relate to the character of the dominant. Williams also believed that within any society no dominant group ever completely exhausts all human practice, human energy, or human intention.

Assumptions

In this section, I present the assumptions that drive this study. In *Representing the "Other,"* Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu say that a study like this "can equip those concerned with students' welfare to combat powerful but damaging representations of students and teachers also being offered as the 'objective facts' about them" (192). Their claim suggests that college writing instructors and students have an equal stake in the powerful but damaging representations that are made about them. Therefore, I assume the following four things about college writing instructors:

1. College writing instructors are concerned about welfare of students.
2. College writing instructors are interested in the writing instruction; they also are interested in how their actions affect the perceptions of writing instruction.
3. College writing instructors and literature scholars understand that what

affects one phase of English studies affects all phases of English studies.

4. College writing instructors and literature scholars are always looking for way to improve themselves, their students' lives, and English studies as a whole.

I base my assumptions about college writing instructors on the published books and articles on the subject. Notwithstanding any damaging representations of students, the majority of the books and articles that I have read on basic writing concern themselves with the students' welfare. Those scholars who came up with the term "basic writer" attempted to organize their work and make sense of rapid change instead of harm students with a term that represented them in damaging ways.

Writing teachers can resolve the "for" and "against" arguments that come up in debates on basic writing by looking beyond difference and concentrating upon the things that they and their students have in common. One of the first things that writing teachers and students have in common is their interdependence upon each other.

Writing teachers need students and students need writing teachers. Writing teachers and students also want excellence in education. Excellence in education can only be achieved through practicing democracy in education. Democracy in education, according to John Dewey, comes alive when, "the interests of a group are shared by all its members" and when the fullness and freedom of a particular social idea interacts with other groups (115). If we think of a definition of literacy as a social idea that interacts with other groups within our society, then the competing definitions of literacy that I discuss in chapter three restrict the fullness and freedom of some groups in our society

because the interests of the restricted groups were overlooked when the definitions of literacy were created.

Furthermore, if we think of harmful representations of students as a particular social idea that interacts with other groups within academic society, then any harmful representations of students go against the democratic ideal in education because they, as Dewey suggests, “set up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience” (115). I go into greater detail about how definitions of literacy compete and how they relate to harmful representations of students in chapter three.

For now, it is important to remember that writing instructors and students share some common characteristics and some of those characteristics lie at the heart of the democratic conception in education as outlined by John Dewey.

On the other hand, Dewey appreciated the multi-faceted characteristics that make people unique. However, he, like West and Giroux, knew that the array of social affiliations that constitute difference and generate power are constructs. If writing teachers embraced the teachings of Dewey and concentrated upon the things that they and their students have in common, they could move beyond the “for” and “against” arguments that come basic writing debates.

Limitations

The following are the limitations of my study:

1. The representations of students analyzed came from books, interviews, and two journals: *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*.

2. The representations that I analyze in this study are of writing students only.
3. The respondents presented in chapter four come from mid-Atlantic and mid-western institutions.
4. The respondents presented in chapter four are from four-year institutions.

Given the four limitations listed above, anyone could expand on my topic by interviewing college writing instructors from two-year colleges and by looking at representations of students from other disciplines.

Another researcher could also look at representations of students from academic journals other than *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*. The politics of writing instruction is a fertile topic that offers several avenues for further research.

Foundations of the Study

In this section, I discuss the debate that lies at the foundation of this study and how that debate relates to representations of students.

As discussed earlier, this study evolved from a debate in the Spring 1993 edition *Journal of Basic Writing* (*JBW*) between David Bartholomae and Karen Greenberg. Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu say that the debate between Bartholomae and Greenberg demonstrates that there has never been agreement about the definition of basic writing (192).

Horner and Lu add that the Bartholomae-Greenberg debate also refers to the

“history of competing representations” of students (192). Because of this history of competing representations of students, it is important, according to Horner and Lu, to analyze difference and power in the production and reception of all representations of students by historicizing those representations (192). Such an analysis, Horner and Lu maintain, can equip those concerned with the welfare of students with information to fight the damaging representations of students and teachers of writing that are often presented as “objective facts” (192). Furthermore, such an analysis can be a forum to promote alternative representations of students.

Significance

This study is significant because it adds to the knowledge of writing teachers who may unknowingly misrepresent their students in speech and writing. Writing students are a part of higher education; so is writing instruction. Writing instruction suffers, however, when instructors produce harmful representations of students. That is why it is important to recognize that before writing teachers can improve the field of basic writing, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

In this study, I point to ways that negative representations of students come from teachers. These representations silence the students’ voices, rendering them powerless to avoid conflict and improve their communication. This situation occurs because the entire process of representing students the “Other” gives power to the teacher who creates the representation. This is not to suggest something nefarious on the part of the writing teachers. However, these representations of students reflect the beliefs and expectations that some writing teachers have about their students. Those expectations could ultimately

affect student performance. Writing teachers must be aware of how an unintentional yet harmful representation of students could shape the depictions of themselves and English studies as a whole. It seems that such representations about students have become commonplace in academic thought. I believe, however, that all scholars want the very best for themselves and their students. To that end, this study provides writing teachers with awareness of the history of how some scholars have represented writing students.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the purpose, research questions, and rationale for analyzing difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students. I also stated the definitions, assumptions and limitations, foundation, and significance for this study. In the next chapter, I offer a review of the literature on basic writing that is pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the scholarship on basic writing, and attempt to show how this study adds to it. The chapter comprises the following categories: definitions of basic writing, definitions of students, and literacy and basic writing.⁶ Since this study addresses difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students, the literature surveyed in this chapter concentrates on the history and theory of basic writing instead of pedagogical issues, curriculum development, and administrative efforts.

Some of the literature in this chapter consists of multiple entries from the same author. On these occasions, the authors have published articles or books in different years. The literature in each section of this chapter is in chronological order. However, in order to preserve the chronological order of this chapter, there may be times when the same author is mentioned in different sections of the chapter. This literature review demonstrates how this study differs from others and contributes to the scholarship. The first section presents some of the literature on the research of basic writing definitions.

Research on Basic Writing Definitions

The research of basic writing definitions offers some insight into the origins of the various ways of categorizing students. It also provides some perspective into the connection between basic writing theory, representations of students, and definitions of literacy.

⁶ I adopted these categories from The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing. See Linda Adler-Kassner and Gregory R. Glau. The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002): 8-45.

Mina Shaughnessy understood that the problem with composition studies begins with the politics of defining both students and basic writing programs. As a resource for basic writing teachers Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* (1977), captures some of the history and theory of basic writing definitions. At the same time, *Errors and Expectations* addresses the ways that some writing instructors think and talk about students. Shaughnessy challenges the representations of students as "handicapped" or "disadvantaged" by exploring the types of mistakes that some students make in their essays and showing the logic or "grammar" behind those mistakes.

Instead of falling back on the dominant and harmful representations of students, Shaughnessy re-presents her students when she maintains that they "write the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes" (5).

The definitions of literacy, remediation, and writing, according to Mike Rose, determine the representations of students. In "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University," Rose (1985) analyzes the language used to discuss writing instruction in American colleges, which too often depicts students as being in need of remediation (445). Beneath the language, Rose points out, are assumptions that demonstrate how scholars use a "behaviorist model of the development and use of written language, a problematic definition of writing, and an inaccurate assessment of student ability and need" (445).

Rose traces some of the history of writing instruction and notes that some writing teachers have applied harmful representations to "students from lower classes and

immigrant groups” (445-446). He adds that some writing instructors had taken an approach to students that came from the world of medicine and constructed the representation of the remedial student who suffered from some disability, deficit, or defect. Afterwards, the writing instructors attempted to *remedy* the student who suffered from diseased writing (452-453). Rose challenges writing instructors to abandon the remediation metaphor and represent students and their writing in ways that constructively approach language use and development (456).

Asserting that the discipline of basic writing should define itself as more than a study of student errors, David Bartholomae (1985), in “Inventing the University,” also challenges the representation of students as those who make many mistakes in their writing. Rather, says Bartholomae, students are those who must invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy and personal history (460). Using essays written by his students to support his claims, Bartholomae notes that students are aware of the shifts in rhetorical contexts when they must write for their teachers (462). He also points out that students attempt to write their way into a position of privilege by asserting their authority or expertise with certain topics (465).

In “Basic Writing,” Shaughnessy (1987) recognizes that the some of the challenges for students begin when students are ignored, disrespected, passed on, and never encouraged in some of their elementary and high school classes (180). She adds that some of the difficulties for students also emerge from never understanding what the teachers are saying and from feeling bored in school (180). Shaughnessy understands

that the one of the challenges with composition studies begins with the politics of how scholars represent students and define basic writing.

In “Defining Basic Writing in Context,” Lynn Quitman Troyka (1987) cautions her audience about making gross generalizations about students and oversimplifying the understanding of basic writing. Troyka celebrates her students’ unique characteristics and concludes, “Basic writers are a diverse group”...who “need to immerse themselves in language in all its forms” (12-13). Troyka also advises her audience to describe the student population to whom they are referring and qualify any observations when writing about students” (13)

David Bartholomae (1993) in “The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum” and Karen Greenberg (1993) in “The Politics of Basic Writing” define the strengths and weaknesses of basic writing programs.⁷ Although Bartholomae and Greenberg disagree about the benefits of basic writing programs, both of them are concerned about the politics of defining basic writing. Instead of calling for the elimination of basic writing programs, Bartholomae challenges his audience to define students and basic writing programs in ways that would question the use of the controversial term (20). Bartholomae believes that if all basic writing programs were eliminated, institutions would represent basic writing programs and students in disparaging ways (20). He reminds his audience of Mina Shaughnessy’s assertion about the politics of representation: “the first thing we need to do to change the curriculum would be to change the way the profession talked about the students who didn’t fit” (21).

⁷ I begin my literature review with Bartholomae and Greenberg because Horner and Lu remind us that the Bartholomae/Greenberg debate in *The Journal of Basic Writing* refers to the “history of competing representations” of students and the “ongoing struggle over how best to represent students and writing now commonly represented as ‘basic’” (192-193).

Greenberg, on the other hand, demonstrates her concern about how basic writing is defined when she urges programs and instructors who “define student writers as ‘basic’ based on their ability” to identify and correct the errors in someone else’s sentences and texts (67). Because some of the basic writing programs that Greenberg challenges are based on deficit or remedial models of learning, she questions the assessment procedures of these programs (67). Like Bartholomae, Greenberg fears that without the programs designed to help students, institutions will not only return an elitist ideology, but also represent students in harmful ways that undermine the teacher-student relationship (66). Greenberg urges basic writing teachers and administrators to “take charge” of the profession by refining the language and vocabulary used to assess a student’s ability and create subsequent representations (70).

Noting that some scholars placed great emphasis on not only representing students, but also defining basic writing, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Rebecca Greenberg Taylor (1997) change the discussion to representing teachers in “Constructing Teacher Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom.” Royster and Taylor point out that basic writing teachers create representations by frequently associating their students’ writing characteristics with their students’ personal characteristics such as class, age, race, gender, and ethos (214). As they attempt to understand how teacher identity is constructed, Royster and Taylor analyze Taylor’s teaching journal, which captures how both Taylor and her students come to see or represent her. Taylor also adds to the journal her perceptions as a teaching assistant and new scholar to basic writing (218). Royster and Taylor close their article by suggesting that basic writing teachers could benefit from

a dialogue with their students about how their students see them as well as how the teachers see the students (227).

While placing basic writing in its social and historical contexts, Deborah Mutnick (2000) explores the political attacks on basic writing, open admissions, and affirmative action in “The Strategic Value of Basic Writing: An Analysis of the Current Moment.” Mutnick emphasizes the need to defend basic writing programs and warns of the hazards that come from tracking, stereotyping, and misrepresenting students (71). She also underscores how important it is for writing instructors to recognize the way that they continue to view students as “alien” and “other.” Mutnick does this in the hopes that there is a chance “to overcome the sort of social and linguistic prejudices that often determine our response both to students and their writing” (77).

Reaffirming her commitment to democratizing education, Mutnick urges writing instructors to resist attempts to eliminate basic writing programs, open admissions policies, and affirmative action initiatives (78). She also calls writing instructors to remember why these initiatives emerged in the first place, especially if writing instructors are to respond effectively to the efforts to wipe out those programs (78). Finally, Mutnick suggests that supporters of basic writing place any attacks on basic writing programs in their historical and social contexts and carefully select the issues that they will engage (79).

Ira Shor (2001), in “Errors and Economics: Inequality Breeds Remediation,” warns his audience that to define basic writing as a discipline that enforces correctness in composition studies endangers the definition of students, the definition of society, and the definition of the discipline (30). Shor argues three other points: 1) that writing

instruction serves the elite, not the majority of students and teachers, 2) that writing instruction reproduces inequities and preserves hierarchies, requiring mass failure, and 3) that writing instruction perpetuates mass miseducation and maintains the inequalities that founded, finance, and drive basic writing (30-31). Using data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Digest of Education Statistics, Shor examines economic and class differences in America to suggest that there is a connection between the way that schools are set up and the ways that society is set up (40-43). Shor also traces the history of college writing instruction in America, from Harvard in the nineteenth century to America's universities and community colleges in 2001. In doing so, he notes not only the ways that students have been defined, but also the ways that freshman composition and basic writing have been defined as gate-keeping disciplines (44).

As he builds his case to eliminate basic writing programs, Shor critiques the scholarship for its top-down approach to learning, its misuse of graduate students to teach writing, and its failure to look at the big picture containing gross economic inequalities (42). Shor closes his article with a call to revive the Wyoming Initiative, to set basic writing in its social and historical contexts, to follow some of the suggestions offered by Peter Elbow in *Composition in the 21st Century*, and to implement some of the mainstreaming practices like those at City College of New York and South Carolina (47).

Research on Definitions of Students

In “Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer,” Andrea Lunsford (1979) represents basic writers as people who are mentally incapable of forming abstractions and conceptions (38). In other words, Lunsford claims, students lack the mental capacity to analyze academic material and apply the principles of analysis to anything outside that

specific task (38). Lunsford creates her representation from her interactions with students at Ohio State University. After she acknowledges Shaughnessy's work, Lunsford turns away from any logic that could be found in students' errors and asserts that "they are able to formulate spontaneous concepts, but not able to remove themselves from such concepts, to abstract from them, or to define them into scientific concepts necessary for successful college work" (39). Lunsford adds that "while these writers may have little difficulty in dealing with familiar everyday problems requiring abstract thought based on concepts, they are *not aware of the processes they are using* (Lunsford's italics). She says that students lack the ability to infer principles from their own experience (39).

Lunsford acknowledges the futility of using drill exercises in the classroom. However the only reason she gives that drill exercises fail is students are "operating below the cognitive level at which he or she could abstract and generalize a principle from the drill and then apply that principle to enormously varied writing situations" (41). Lunsford closes her article with a series of exercises for students designed to help them recognize and characterize verbs, analyze and draw inferences from data, and bridge what Lunsford calls their "cognitive gap" between imitating and generating academic writing (41-49).

David Bartholomae (1980) argues for a new representation of basic writing scholarship and students in "The Study of Error." He shows the usefulness of error analysis and the logic behind the errors that students make in their essays. Bartholomae agrees with Shaughnessy's representation that students are "beginning writers" and that their writing can be seen as "an approximation of conventional written discourse" (254). He adds that students "are writers who need to learn to command a particular variety of

language—the language of a written academic discourse—and a particular variety of language use—writing itself” (254). As he discusses the logic or the language systems that students use, Bartholomae says that “basic writers *are* competent, mature language users” who “can conceive of and manipulate written language as a structured, systematic code” (257).

Bartholomae concludes this essay by suggesting that teachers distinguish between writing performance and writing competence and develop strategies to help students develop both.

As she attempts to answer the question posed by the title of her essay, “What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College,” Patricia Bizzell (1986), like Mike Rose, addresses Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. Bizzell represents students as people whose worldview differs from the academic worldview (18). She adds that students resist changing their world view and their resistance accounts for the problems that they experience upon entering college (18). Bizzell concludes by defining basic writers as people “who are least well prepared for college” (15).

Bizzell’s representation comes from her theory of a language community, which represents a community as cohering because of common language-using practices (17). Bizzell concludes her essay by privileging the academic world view over her students’ world view because the academic world view trains students to question the theories presented to them and draw their own conclusions based on personal allegiances and academic training (19).

Recognizing some of the harmful ways that teachers can represent students, Mina Shaughnessy (1987), in “Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing,” offers four

metaphors of teacher development. These metaphors include Guarding the Tower, Converting the Natives, Sounding the Depths, and Diving In. Shaughnessy argues that the teachers, not the students need to change their way of thinking in order to help the students to learn (234). Shaughnessy acknowledges that even she was trained in a method of teaching that was designed to highlight the students' problems and suggest that they must change because something is wrong with them (235). Throughout the article, Shaughnessy represents the students as being more intelligent, sophisticated, and talented than the scholarship discusses (237). She also charges that basic writing teachers frequently underestimate the complexities of writing and the influence of native dialects on it (237-238). Shaughnessy closes her article with a call for basic writing teachers to "dive in" and remediate themselves by becoming students of new disciplines and of the students themselves (238).

Mike Rose (1988) understands that if writing instructors apply cognitive science theories to writing instruction, they can produce harmful representations of students. In "Narrowing the Mind and Page: Remedial Writers and Cognitive Reductionism," Rose analyzes four theories—field dependence/independence; hemisphericity; orality-literacy; and Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development—and exposes how some writing instructors draw broad, general conclusions about students if they apply these theories without considering other factors like class, race, and gender (267). Rose warns his audience about applying these theories beyond their original domain, and he discusses the oversimplified cognitive distinctions that become apparent when writing instructors attach value and hierarchy to these sweeping dichotomies (268).

Noting that these theories hide individual differences in cognition while moving away from an analysis of student writing, Rose concludes that human cognition is complex; therefore, writing instructors should test these cognitive science theories against that basic assumption about human cognition as they analyze their theories of learning, their research methods, and their classroom assessments (297).

Tom Fox (1990), in “Basic Writing as Cultural Conflict,” says that basic writing programs misrepresent the language and the communities of its students and that nearly all of the representations of students are inaccurate (66). Throughout his article, Fox dissects three pedagogical ideologies that support basic writing programs—deficit theory, initiation theory, and discourse community theory. Fox shows the assumptions behind these pedagogies that underestimate the students’ abilities. At the same time, these pedagogies guide writing instructors to teach to students’ deficiencies. Fox argues that the initiation theory is troublesome because it represents the students’ communities and the academic community as homogenous and exclusive (69).

He also maintains that the deficit theory approach is problematic because it represents students as ignorant and unable to learn (66). Fox proposes that students should be represented as negotiators of cultural conflict (81). Doing so, Fox concludes, will point to the educational practices that lead educators to believe that there is a great disparity between what students know and what they need to know (81).

Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Losey Fraser, and Marisa Castellano (1991) in “Remediation as Social Construct: Perspectives from an Analysis of Classroom Discourse” warn their audience about defining their students’ abilities based on classroom interactions and deficit theories of learning. The authors assert that scholars

must analyze their assumptions about students and literacy because some basic writing teachers unconsciously participate in the construction of remediation while misrepresenting their students (300). As a result, these teachers limit the types of classroom activities that could move the teacher and the students beyond what the teachers perceive to be deficits in the students. The authors argue that basic writing teachers need to rely on more than just process pedagogy and classroom practices as they attempt to represent their students accurately (318).

Furthermore, basic writing teachers should question the assumptions that support their pedagogies and misrepresent students (318). At the same time, say the authors, basic writing teachers should re-evaluate how they think and talk about cultural difference because their discussions contain erroneous assumptions and harmful representations of students (324).

After analyzing 19 sections of freshman writing: 16 regular and 3 basic writing, Walter S. Minot and Keith R. Gamble (1991) argue in their article “Self Esteem and Writing Apprehension of Basic Writers: Conflicting Evidence” that not all students suffer from writing apprehension and low self esteem (121). Minot and Gamble also maintain administrators and teachers must avoid oversimplifying their representations of students (121).

Rather, they should offer individual pedagogies for this multi-faceted group of people (121). Minot and Gamble used the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test to measure their students’ feelings about writing, giving pretests on the first day of classes and posttests during the last two weeks of the semester (120). Their evidence refutes previously held notions that students suffered

from writing apprehension and low self esteem. Minot and Gamble conclude by reminding their audience to test early for writing apprehension, use the same assignments in basic writing classes that are used in non-basic writing classes, and remember that students are people too (123).

In “Theory in the Basic Writing Classroom? A Practice” Victor Villanueva, Jr. (1997) emphasizes that teachers should disregard the representations of students as cognitively deficient (79). Villanueva adds that teachers should approach their students as people who need to join their knowledge with academic knowledge. He briefly recalls the history of college writing discourse from when he began teaching; Villanueva also discusses how the scholarship sought some of its justification in cognitive psychology (80). Troubled by the representations of students that emerged from what he calls “composition’s romance with cognitive psychology,” Villanueva questions how he could encourage his students in their endeavors while making the most of their knowledge (79). Villanueva demonstrates his point by presenting in detail an exercise that he uses on the first day of class. In this exercise, he hopes to show his students that they are legitimate college students who simply need to learn the conventions of written academic discourse (81-88).

In her article “The Representation of Basic Writers in Basic Writing Scholarship, or Who is Quentin Pierce?” Susanmarie Harrington (1999) argues that writing instructors should create a larger space in the scholarship for students’ voices to be heard. After reviewing all of the articles published in the *Journal of Basic Writing* from its first publication until 1999, Harrington classifies the various articles into five categories: theory; text analysis; student-present; student-qualities; and miscellaneous; noting the

conspicuous absence of students' voices (96-97). She remarks that writing instructors represent students so that they, the scholars, can ultimately represent themselves; however, in doing so, they leave out critical insight regarding what their students think about what they, the teachers, do (95).

Harrington adds that if writing instructors represent students simply as people who do not know the conventions of academic discourse, then it becomes difficult to distinguish them from any other group of students, making it even more difficult to create useful programs for our students (100). Harrington wraps up her essay by urging writing instructors to pay attention to their students' voices. In this way, writing instructors can not only create a safe space for their students in their classrooms, but also develop projects for their students that permit them to make meaningful comparisons between student populations (105).

Tracking the development of how students have been represented in the *Journal of Basic Writing* from 1975 to 1999, Laura Gray-Rosendale (1999) in "Investigating Our Discursive History: *JBW* and the Construction of the 'Basic Writer's' Identity" points out that three metaphors have dominated the representations of students: growth, conflict, and initiation (109). Gray-Rosendale examines not only those texts that adhere to those metaphors, but also those texts that disrupt those representations; she challenges scholars to question their assumptions about the way that they represent students (109-126). Those texts that disrupt the predominant metaphors, Gray-Rosendale notes, received little or no attention in the scholarship (109). As she concludes her analysis, Gray Rosendale advises her audience to remain aware of how their attempts to identify and empower students have effectively disempowered them and produced pedagogies that have

restricted their learning (128). She also urges her audience to continue disrupting representations of students that use the three metaphors while exploring the history of those metaphors in basic writing scholarship (129).

Libby Bay (1999) considers the consequences of some basic writing practices on returning students in “Twist, Turns, and Returns: Returning Adult Students.” After she surveys some students aged 24-years and older at Rockland Community College in Suffern New York, Bay suggests that returning students be granted college writing credit for their work and life experiences. She suggests that adult students learn some fundamental principles of time management. These alternatives, Bay recommends, should be applied to returning students instead of eighteen year old, incoming freshman students who could be called basic writers.

In “A Method for Describing Basic Writers and Their Writing: Lessons from a Pilot Study,” Deborah Rossen-Knill and Kim Lynch (2000) present what they call “an instructor-friendly research method” that analyzes their students’ backgrounds, writing, errors, and feedback. Rossen-Knill and Lynch distinguish their research method through “back talk” whereby they share with their students the inferences that the two teachers have drawn about their students from a survey of their students’ backgrounds and their relationship to writing (95). This method allows Rossen-Knill and Lynch to incorporate their students’ voices into their curriculum design through creating representations of their students that avoid the language of deficiency (96). Rossen-Knill and Lynch conclude that it is risky to create sweeping generalizations students; therefore, it is important to understand students as individual writers at a given institution who share certain writing skills (115).

Laura Gray-Rosendale (2000) touches briefly on the question of how scholars represent students in her book *Rethinking Basic Writing: Exploring Identity, Politics, and Community in Interaction*. Rather than dwell on the question of “Who is the Basic Writer?” Gray-Rosendale thinks that it is more important to ask “What can and does the Basic Writer do?” (11). Once classified as a basic writer, Gray- Rosendale briefly steps away from the term “basic writer” in the beginning of her text, only to return to that same term that once labeled her as “deficient.” Gray-Rosendale suggests that the way that students construct their own identities is more powerful than the way teachers construct their identities (29).

Therefore, she analyzes the oral practices of students and how those oral practices inform the texts that her students produce in her classes. *Rethinking* also looks at the ever-changing beliefs, norms, ideologies, and multiple identities of students. Gray-Rosendale reasons that the students created identities might disrupt the thinking that labels them as “deficient” and “the other” (50).

Laurie Grobman (2001) adds to Henry Giroux’s critique of mainstream media and popular culture’s depiction of young people in “(Re) Writing Youth: Basic Writing, Youth Culture, and Social Change.” Grobman analyzes how her students respond to representations of themselves and asserts that they complicate attempts to intervene and mediate conflicting representations of themselves (6). Students complicate things, Grobman maintains, by simultaneously accepting and rejecting those conflicting representations and their implications (6). Choosing to refer to the members of her class as “students in basic writing” rather than basic writers, Grobman maintains that students

in basic writing are capable of challenging and revising society's representations of them (9).

To that end, Grobman presents a strategy that she used in her class to help her students enter the public sphere by critiquing representations of themselves in academic and public discourse (17-18). Grobman concludes by reiterating Henry Giroux's call to writing instructors to include youth culture in critical composition and to establish conditions in which young students can engage issues surrounding the production of their representations (22).

In "Just Writing, Basically: Basic Writers on Basic Writing," Linda Adler-Kassner (2002) returns to the issue of how writing instructors have represented students in their research. She also questions how students understand the label that is affixed to them. Through a series of interviews, Adler-Kassner discovers that many students do not know that they are considered "basic writers," nor do they understand what that label means (75). Adler-Kassner thinks this is a problem because by not informing students of how they are represented, writing instructors are anonymously using them in their research (75). She adds that the anonymous use of the term "basic writer" goes against the previous research designed to help overcome the stigma of being called a basic writer (75-76). Since her research shows that there is no easy answer to the question of who is a basic writer, Adler-Kassner proposes that writing instructors should tell their students how they represent them and what it means to be represented as a "basic writer" at their respective institutions (83).

Adler-Kassner emphasizes the importance of having students confront their representations; to that end, she suggests that scholars begin their courses by having the

students analyze the documents that brought them to the basic writing class in the first place (83). Adler-Kassner concludes by saying that institutions should be accountable to students, especially when it comes to them taking their basic writing classes (85).

Shari Stenberg (2002) adds to Laura Gray-Rosendale's argument in "Learning to Change: The Development of a (Basic) Writer and Her Teacher" by saying that writing instructors should examine how their assumptions about the "growth," "initiation," and "conflict" metaphors of students restrict the development of teacher identity and the possibilities for writing development (38). Throughout her article, Stenberg talks about what her students taught her rather than what she taught her students. Stenberg admits that her students taught her how to look at the ways that she represents students. (46).

After acknowledging that her students do not think of themselves as basic writers in the same way that she does, Stenberg asserts that her understanding of the representation of students is the problem behind her approach to her students and her pedagogical assumptions (39-40). Stenberg's assumptions were based on the "conflict" metaphor, which represents students as cognitively deficient (42). Stenberg concludes by recommending that writing instructors leave room in their classroom practices for students to compose their own metaphors of themselves (53). She urges teachers to change in relation to their students' new metaphors (53).

Laura Gray-Rosendale, Loyola K. Bird, and Judith F. Bullock (2003) argue for broader and more realistic representations of Native American students in basic writing scholarship in their article entitled "Rethinking the Basic Frontier: Native American Students' Challenge to Our Histories." After noticing that basic writing scholarship overlooks issues specific to Native American students, Gray-Rosendale, et.al. present

some of those issues of the students they call the “silenced others” (73). At the same time they trace metaphors that speak of basic writing scholarship as a *frontier* or *unmapped territory* in need of *mining*, addressing how these metaphors result in pedagogical practices that treat Native American students as the “other” of a group of students that is already considered “the other” (73-79).

After the metaphor analysis, each author presents her experience with teaching Native American students. Gray-Rosendale suggests that she possibly learns more from her students than they learn from her (87). Bird discusses the pain that her students experience when crossing between their native culture and academia (88). Bullock tells her story of tutoring Native American students in a dormitory high school (93). The authors close their article with a challenge to writing instructors to reevaluate the way that they construct the identity of basic writing’s “other” (99).

Research on Literacy and Basic Writing

This research considers specific strategies that writing instructors can use in a basic writing classroom and questions whether or not the methods for acquiring literacy simply teach students the conventions of academic discourse without empowering them to understand or challenge the conventions.

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. (1983) claims in “Cultural Literacy” that there is a causal relationship between the decline in literacy rates and the decline in the material that is commonly taught to students (138-139). Claiming that English and literacy studies are dominated by excessive beliefs in diversity and pluralism, Hirsch calls for the re-establishment of a canon within English studies that will produce a state of “cultural literacy” that in his estimation should be commonplace within a literate democracy (144).

Hirsch says that his suggested canon would exist somewhere between a lockstep Napoleonic decree of texts and an extreme laissez-faire pluralism that has plagued English and literacy studies (144-145). By honing the understanding of cultural literacy through a canon like his, Hirsch believes that reading and writing skills can be improved (146). However, the first step would be to dismantle the leading educational assumptions regarding pluralism that have been a part of English and literacy studies for nearly half a century (147).

Andrea Lunsford (1987) responds to the claims of a literacy crisis at that time by placing the observations of some educators and administrators into their historical context in “Politics and Practices in Basic Writing.” Lunsford asserts that it is critical for writing instructors to understand the history of basic writing along with some of the political issues that surround basic writing scholarship (253). Discussing seven good pedagogical practices in basic writing, Lunsford maintains that these practices are appropriate responses to the political issues in basic writing scholarship (257).

At the same time, Lunsford suggests that writing instructors must provide, through example, the answers to some of the political problems or issues in basic writing and literacy studies (257). Lunsford sees her essay and the essays in *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers* as a solution to some of the challenges faced in basic writing studies (257).

Min-Zhan Lu (1991) in “Redefining the Legacy of Mina Shaughnessy: A Critique of Political Innocence” challenges the essentialist assumption of language that underscores Shaughnessy’s pedagogy in *Errors and Expectations*. This assumption, according to Lu, falsely defines basic writing and underestimates the linguistic

sophistication of students (105). As students attempt to write and respond to the linguistic differences between their native dialects and formal written English, their way of thinking about themselves and the world improves, says Lu (105). However, pedagogies like Shaughnessy's overlook the political choices that students make as they develop their thinking and language use (106). They do this by separating meaning from language and by asserting that language only delivers the essence of meaning (106).

Thus, Lu concludes, pedagogies like Shaughnessy's represent students as linguistically innocent—a misrepresentation that ignores the complex linguistic choices that students can make (106). As she looks to preserve the beneficial parts of Mina Shaughnessy's legacy, improve the representations of students, and define basic writing in context, Lu urges readers to challenge the essentialist assumption of language, especially as it is presented in the work of E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s New Right rhetoric. The essentialist assumption, according to Min-Zhan Lu, says that meaning is universal. It is separate from language (105). In other words, the essentialist assumption maintains that the essence of meaning precedes and is independent of language. Language serves as a vehicle to deliver the essence of meaning (105).

Jerrie Cobb Scott (1993) in "Literacies and Deficits Revisited" believes that the harmful representations of students come from deficit theories of learning and traditional definitions of literacy that invalidate students' ways of communicating. The traditional definitions of literacy produce, according to Cobb Scott, a curriculum that represents students as deficient (206). Traditional definitions of literacy also divide cultures into two categories: oral and literate; at the same time, these definitions misrepresent those coming from oral cultures as deficient (206). Noting the persistence of the deficit

pedagogy, Cobb Scott coins the term “uncritical dysconsciousness” to explain how some basic writing teachers fail to challenge the assumptions about how our students represent themselves and how teachers represent themselves (209).

The result of this uncritical dysconsciousness is the recycling of the deficit model of learning and harmful representations of students. Cobb Scott calls for a deeper analysis of how basic writing teachers represent themselves as a way of understanding “the staying power of the deficit pedagogy” (209).

In “Critical Literacy and Basic Writing Textbooks: Teaching Toward a More Just Literacy,” Patrick Bruch and Thomas Reynolds (2000) invite writing instructors to reflect upon the type of critical literacy that will best serve the needs of student called basic writers (Critical Literacy). Bruch and Reynolds analyze two textbooks: *Creating America: Reading and Writing Assignments*, by Joyce Moser and Ann Watters and *Cultural Attractions/Cultural Distractions: Cultural Literacy in Contemporary Contexts*, by Libby Allison and Kristine L. Blair. Next, Bruch and Reynolds emphasize how important it is to engage students in alternative representations of culture that attempt to change the hierarchy of literacy in culture (Critical Literacy). Bruch and Reynolds also contend that scholars should note how some students are underserved by the discipline and how some important authors are absent from basic writing scholarship (Critical Literacy).

In “Reading and Writing: Making the Connection for Basic Writers,” Mary P. Deming (2000) asserts that both reading and writing have a place in the basic writing classroom because one process informs the other (Reading and Writing). Deming aims to help students feel like agents of meaning in what they read and write; therefore, she

suggests that instruction in reading and writing be specific so that students can improve their reading and writing skills (Reading and Writing). Citing the composing model of reading from Robert Tierney and P. David Pearson, Deming supports her claim that students would be harmed if reading and writing were eliminated from the basic writing curriculum (Reading and Writing).

Tom Fox (2002) notes that college composition students have been represented as poor users of language in “Working against the State: Compositions Intellectual Work for Change” Afterwards, he urges writing instructors to resist that representation and work toward greater institutional change. Fox challenges writing instructors to resist the gate-keeping function of freshman writing by modifying some governmental or institutional mandates to meet the needs of the students.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed pertinent basic writing scholarship. I divided the literature in this chapter into three categories: definitions of basic writing, definitions of students, and literacy and basic writing. The purpose of this literature review is to acknowledge the work that has already been done and suggest how this study can add to the basic writing scholarship. This review provides direction for this study by pointing to the need for further research into the ways that some writing instructors represent students. Despite some initial research on representations of students, it is clear that there is a need for research into the influence of difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students.

Rhetoric and Composition scholar Bruce Horner suggested that I consider this study as an investigation into competing definitions of literacy. In the next chapter, I analyze the history of competing definitions of literacy. Specifically, I discuss three definitions of literacy—prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy as presented by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

I analyze those three and the other competing definitions of literacy under the theoretical rubric of “dominant,” “residual,” and “emergent.” I juxtapose my analysis of the history of competing definitions of literacy with an account of conflicting representations of students in writing instructorship. My purpose is to demonstrate how the definitions of literacy influence the representations of students. Finally, I analyze some of the representations of teachers in writing instructorship and suggest that the representations of students affect the representations of teachers.

This observation is important because what affects one phase of English studies directly or indirectly affects all phases of English studies. When a writing instructor produces a representation of a group of students, that instructor produces a tacit representation of another group of students. At the same time, that writing instructor produces a tacit representation of himself and his colleagues. That is why it is important to recognize that before writing teachers can improve the field of basic writing, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOW LITERACY, STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS HAVE BEEN DEFINED

This chapter historicizes how difference and power have been used in the production and reception of representations of students. Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu maintain that a study like this can contribute practically in two ways. First, it can help those who are concerned with students' welfare to fight the powerful and damaging representations of students and teachers that are being offered as "objective facts" about them (192). In other words, by locating current representations of students in the history of conflicting representations of students, scholars can understand how current representations evolved and where they could possibly go.

As mentioned in chapter one, this challenge of conflicting representations of students is not new. However, it is unresolved and ignored. There is a history to this challenge, and if writing instructors can understand that history they can take responsibility for the future of the field and empower themselves and their students to greater heights of self-actualization. In *Life of Reason, Reason in Common Sense*, George Santayana (1905) tells us that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it (284). In "The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum" David Bartholomae (1993) assesses basic writing and finds the past being repeated:

I find myself characterizing basic writing as a reiteration of the liberal project of the late 60s early 70s, where in the name of sympathy and empowerment, we have once again produced the “other” who is the incomplete version of ourselves, confirming existing patterns of power and authority, reproducing the hierarchies we had meant to question and overthrow, way back then in the 1970s (18).

Thus, the first reason why this survey of conflicting representations of students is important is because it equips readers with an understanding of a history that is central to everything in writing instruction.

The second reason why this survey is important is because allows readers to promote alternative representations of students. Any new representations of students need to be situated in their specific contexts so that readers, according to Horner and Lu, can understand “what is being silenced” in the representations and the arguments surrounding them. In chapter four, I promote alternative representations of students. Meanwhile, the historical analysis presented in this chapter leads to the main argument of this study—before writing instructors can improve the field they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

Representations of students are closely linked to definitions of literacy. In order to represent the “Other,” that representation must be based on some standard. The standard for representing some writing students as the “Other” is literacy. Therefore, this chapter examines the history of competing definitions of literacy, looking at how literacy can be defined in any number of ways and how students are misjudged based on an amorphous standard. Finally, representations of students affect representations of

teachers. This chapter probes the connection between representations of students and representations of teachers. Meanwhile, the next section explores the history of competing definitions of literacy.

History of Competing Definitions of Literacy

In order to understand how definitions of literacy can compete, it is important to look at the process through which ideas are incorporated into the dominant way of thinking. Raymond Williams calls this process the selective tradition. The selective tradition, according to Williams, is a process of “reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion” (123). It can best be seen, Williams adds, in the literary tradition, “passing through selective versions of the character of literature to connecting and incorporated definitions of what literature now is and should be” (123).

The same can be said about definitions of literacy. Definitions of literacy compete because they pass through the same process of “reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion.” Some dominant definitions of literacy incorporate new, emergent ideas; others incorporate residual ideas from the past. Dominant cultures, Williams maintains, cannot allow too many residual ideas outside itself to flourish from “without risk” (123). Risk of what? Risk of losing its dominance. It is also important to note that Williams says that dominant cultures cannot allow too many ideas to flourish “outside itself.” Why? Because an idea that flourishes outside of the dominant culture could pose a threat to it. It could weaken the hegemonic grip that the dominant group holds. That is why Williams argues that “no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention” (125)

Thus, when it comes to the idea of “competing definitions of literacy,” what we are saying is that definitions of literacy do more than just differ. The dominant definitions of literacy come from the dominant group in any society, yet they contest or compete with each other because of the selective tradition and these definitions sometimes work against each other in order to maintain the status of the dominant group. Williams claims that these facts are not simply negative propositions. Rather, they are truths about any mode of dominance.

Literacy Prior to 1900

According to Irwin Kirsch and Ann Jungeblut in *Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults*, literacy before 1900 was defined by either the ability to sign one's name or by one's response to a Census survey question which asked if the person surveyed could read (I-5). These indices defined literacy until the law required that post-Civil War blacks and European immigrants be educated. At that point, say Kirsch and Jungeblut, policy makers redefined literacy to mean the years of school that someone had completed, a person's score on a standardized test, or a person's reading grade level scores (I-6).

Once the legislation passed requiring post-Civil War Blacks to be educated, black literacy rates rose. Keith Ng, author of “Wealth Redistribution, Race, and Southern Public Schools, 1880-1910” reports that black literacy rates increased “from 10 percent in 1880 to 50 percent in 1910.”- The National Center for Education Statistics reports in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) report that black enrollment rates in school rose rapidly “from 10 percent in 1870 to 34 percent in 1880.” Moreover, Dr. Ronald L.F. Davis, author of “Surviving Jim Crow: In-Depth Essay,” says that against

overwhelming odds black literacy rates rose in the two and three generations following the Civil War from “seven percent at the end of slavery in 1865 to 44 percent in 1890 and 77 percent in 1920.”

Background Information

According to a report from NCES entitled *Adult Literacy in America: A First look at the Findings of the National Adult Literacy Survey*, (NALS), in 1988 Congress asked the Department of Education to report on the definition of literacy and the extent and nature of adult literacy skills in America (1). A panel of experts from business, industry, adult education and research guided the NALS report and worked with the Educational Testing Services (ETS) to create not only a definition of literacy, but also the tools to assess adult literacy (2).

At the same time, a second committee, the Technical Review Committee was formed to ensure that the NALS Committee and ETS provided fair and accurate information (2). As a result, the panel of experts and the subcommittees created the definitions of prose, document, and quantitative literacy for the 1989 NALS report. Prior to the formation of the NALS Committee, two efforts had been made to measure and define literacy: one in 1985, the other in 1989-90. The 1985 Young Adult Survey attempted to extend the definition of literacy, avoid some of the previous criticisms of literacy measurement and definition, and benefit from the new advances in assessment methodology (2).

It is important to note this history of competing definitions of literacy because there seems to be a direct connection between how literacy is defined and how students

are represented. Over the years, literacy seems to have been defined broadly across a variety of contexts; as a result, student representations have changed, depending on the particular context in which literacy was defined at that moment. This study evaluates the ways that difference and power have affected the ways that students have been represented.

Before 1985, standards for literacy included signing one's name, completing five years of school or scoring at a particular grade level on a school-based measure of reading achievement (2). In 1985, as in 1992 and 2003, literacy was defined as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." Several factors influenced the changing definitions of literacy throughout the twentieth century, including federal intervention. For example, it was not until the early 1960s, during the Kennedy administration, that poverty and adult literacy became a concern in America. Dr. Gary Eyre, author of an online article entitled "History of Adult Education" argues that although the federal government had been involved in literacy for over 200 years, their action towards measurable results had been minimal (History of Adult Education Act).

In 1964, Eyre says, President Johnson signed the Adult Education Act, and for over 20 years, the Act underwent various changes and amendments, including an amendment 1988 signed by President Reagan (History of Adult Education Act). This amendment, according to Dr. Thomas G. Sticht, author of "The Rise of the Adult Education and Literacy System in the United States: 1600-2000," expanded literacy services to permit partnerships between businesses, labor unions, and educators to provide workplace literacy skills to employees with limited basic skills (Rise of the Adult

Education). As a result of these partnerships, the definition of literacy changed so that citizens could learn those necessary skills to function in the workplace.

Ultimately, the Adult Education Act was repealed in 1998 and replaced by the Workforce Investment Act. This new legislation, Sticht continues, marked a conflict between those individuals favoring liberal education and those favoring human resource development. The definition of “adult” also could have influenced the changing definitions of literacy over time. Sticht points out that under the Workforce Investment Act a person 16 years of age or older, who was out of school and had not completed 12 years of education qualified as an adult (Rise of the Adult Education).

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, Sticht continues, literacy came to be viewed as the product of charitable education for the lower and working classes rather than a method of self improvement. This change in perspective, along with a steady flow of immigrants into the United States could have affected the ruling definitions of literacy. As more immigrants came to the United States, remarks Sticht, from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, literacy came to be known as having an understanding of English and American culture (Rise of the Adult Education).

The US military also played a part in the changing definitions of literacy during the late twentieth century. As more and more young adults joined the military, Sticht suggests, from the Revolutionary War to today, they received their literacy training through the Adult Education Literacy System [AELS]. The presence of these young people in the military and their new functional literacy skills affected the definitions of “literacy” and “adult.” Finally, the way that literacy workers spoke about their work

could have changed the definitions of literacy. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and up through the mid 1980s, most people used terms like “illiterate” and “functionally illiterate,” Sticht says. However, during the 1990s, many literacy workers began speaking of degrees of literacy rather than “literate” and “illiterate” (Rise of the Adult Education). These are just a few of the factors that could have driven the changing meanings of literacy.

What is important about the various factors that could have affected the definitions is the fact that the definitions of literacy competed from context to context. For this study—a study of difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students and, in this chapter, a study into the competing definitions of literacy—it is important to think of literacy as more than simply having the ability to read and write. Literacy also means “being in the know” or having information and skills that allow one to operate skillfully, not minimally, in a particular environment. Definitions of literacy can compete or differ with each other on several levels. They can contend with each other from context to context, from institution to institution. They can also struggle with each other as they come from different sources. That is, definitions of literacy can spring from a governing body, dominant group, or leading institution; they can also emerge from a new class of people and their consciousness. They can also be the residual definition from a previous era.

Current Definitions of Literacy

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the 1992 and 2003 National Assessments of Adult Literacy define literacy as “using printed and

written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." This definition resembles the one that the U.S. Congress drafted in the National Literacy Act of 1991 which says that literacy is "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Defining and Measuring Literacy).

NCES measures literacy along three lines: prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. Each of these definitions, presented below, captures an ordered set of information processing skills that adults use to accomplish various tasks.

Prose Literacy

NCES defines two types of prose: expository and narrative. Expository prose, on the one hand, defines, describes or informs; pieces of expository prose include newspaper stories or written instructions. Narrative prose, on the other hand, tells a story. NCES adds that "prose literacy tasks include locating all the information requested, integrating information from various parts of a passage of texts, and writing new information related to the text" (Prose Literacy).

Document Literacy

Document literacy, according to NCES, is "locating a particular intersection on a street map, using a schedule to choose the appropriate bus, or entering information on an application form." NCES divides document literacy into five levels, with the fifth being the highest, in which a person should be able to "search through complex displays that contained multiple distractors, to make high-level text-based inferences, and to use

specialized knowledge. Tasks require readers to integrate information, compare and contrast data points and to summarize the results” (Document Literacy).

Quantitative Literacy

NCES describes quantitative literacy as “locating quantities, integrating information from various parts of a document, determining the necessary arithmetic operation and performing that operation. Quantitative literacy tasks included balancing a checkbook, completing an order form and determining the amount of interest paid on a loan.” As with document literacy, NCES divides quantitative literacy into five levels with level five requiring “a person to perform multiple arithmetic operations sequentially, when the features of the problem had to be extracted from the text; or when background knowledge was required to determine the quantities or operations needed” (Quantitative Literacy).

Some researchers suggest that the universal application of literacy standards such as the prose, document and quantitative literacy standards to all members of society will have a positive effect on this country. Daniel P. Resnick and Lauren B. Resnick in “The Nature of Literacy: An Historical Exploration” say, “Our findings suggests that the serious application to the entire population of the contemporary standard of functional literacy would represent a real and important increase in literacy” (132). The key words in Resnick and Resnick’s claim are “serious application” and “entire population.” The following historical survey suggests, however, that functional literacy standards are seldom applied seriously to the entire population.

Residual Definitions in Literacy and Education

For this study, the term “residual” comes from the theories of Raymond Williams’ *Marxism and Literature* and refers to something that has been formed in the past, but continues to be an active part of the present (122). The residual, however, differs from the archaic. The archaic, Williams says, essentially remains in the past; however, it is occasionally observed, studied, or revived for a particular purpose (122). Although there are certain definitions in any society that are difficult to trace to a dominant group, there are active meanings in any society that contain some residual definitions.

Residual Definitions in Education

For example, since the early American educational system was modeled on the British system of education, many current educational terms and their meanings are residual definitions from the British educational system. The British education system, as Williams points out in *Long Revolution*, sought to do three things: 1) train for a vocation, 2) train to a social character, and 3) train a particular civilization (127). This three-tiered approach to education, which was directed at different classes of people in British society, produced three competing definitions of what it means to be literate or in the know. This multi-purpose approach also laid the foundation for a tradition of selection, inclusion, and exclusion in education.

Some of the residual definitions of literacy from the British education system may exist in the American education system today and could also account for the alternative representations of those students who fall short of the dominant definition of literacy, i.e., the “Other.” Williams points out the prohibition and division in the medieval education system:

...the apprenticeship system, in the crafts and trades, and the chivalry system, by which young boys of noble family were sent as pages to great houses and lived through a graduated course of training to knighthood.

The existence of these two systems, alongside the academic system reminds us of the determining effect on education of the actual social structure. The laboring poor were largely left out of account, although there are notable cases of individual boys getting a complete education through school and university, by outstanding promise and merit (131).

Today, there are similarities between the British education system, the medieval education system and the American education system in which the poor are largely left out of account. Jonathan Kozol describes how America's lower and working class children are scorned by the public education system in his bestseller *Savage Inequalities*. His accounts illustrate the stark contrasts between the wealthy and the poor school districts in places like New York City, New York; San Antonio, Texas; and East Saint Louis, Missouri. Kozol's accounts also show how poor children are too often left behind and they suggest how those students who are left behind could be represented as the "Other." It seems that the notion of leaving poor and working class students out of account is a residual idea in the American education system. It may have been formed in the past, but it continues to be an active part of the present cultural process. The same can be said about the notion of "functional literacy."

Functional Literacy as Residual

Functional literacy is the residual element that runs throughout today's dominant definitions of prose, document, and quantitative literacy. It has remained a residual part

of the competing definitions of literacy in America over the years. It is important to trace the history of the term “functional literacy” because an understanding of previous definitions of literacy sheds light on today’s dominant definitions. It is also important to note that although “functional literacy” has been incorporated into today’s definitions of literacy, it was at one time an alternative or oppositional idea to the dominant way of thinking. This understanding of the nature of competing definitions of literacy informs some aspects of the American cultural process, the American educational system, and the methods of representing those students who fall outside the dominant literacy model.

Harvey Graff, in *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City*, claims that in the United States during the 1950s, efforts were made to distinguish between the literate and the functionally literate person, thus changing methods of measurement and evaluation for educators (3).

As a result, a new definition of functional literacy emerged. It was defined as “the essential knowledge and skills, which enable [one] to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in [one’s] group and community, and whose attainments make it possible for [one] to continue to use these skills towards [one’s] own and the community’s development” (3). Lawrence C. Stedman and Carl F. Kaestle in *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1880*, say that in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) seems to have coined the term functional literacy (92). The CCC defined it as “three or more years of schooling” (92). Their rationale, add Stedman and Kaestle, was that a person with that much schooling could read the necessary printed material of everyday life (92). In other words, such a person at that time was considered “functionally literate.” Ironically, at one time in the history of

competing definitions of literacy, “functional literacy” opposed the dominant way of thinking.

Functional Literacy as Oppositional

For example, functional literacy, during the Victorian era, ran contrary to what the dominant class in nineteenth-century Victorian Europe wanted for the masses of uneducated people. W.B. Hodgson, a nineteenth-century educational reformer and political economist, challenged the effectiveness of “functional literacy” in his essay “Exaggerated Estimates of Reading and Writing as Means of Education” because he saw the concept of functional literacy as serving some members of society and not others. Hodgson questioned the Victorian faith in the power and efficacy of functional literacy as a way of improving not only society as a whole, but also the quality of life for all citizens. He observed that in Europe during the nineteenth century the ruling class endeavored to teach the lower and working classes just enough so that they could function in society. Teaching, therefore, was surrounded by various precautions and conditions (382).

As a result, Hodgson added, it was permissible for the lower and working classes to read the Bible; however, the reading of any other literature was discouraged (382). The teaching of writing, Hodgson continued, was also limited to what was called “ciphering” so that lower class students could keep accounts or take business orders (382). Any further use of writing was discouraged because it could possibly lead to forgery, then execution (382). Hodgson pointed to the time in Scottish history when the upper class resisted the idea of teaching literacy to the lower classes:

Not much more than half a century divides us from the state of social opinion which denounced, or dreaded, or ridiculed any and all teaching of

the great masses, which prompted even intelligent and kindly men to predict the entire overturning of society as the inevitable result of the teaching of ‘the lower orders’ as if society depended, for its very existence on the domination of one small class more or less enlightened, and on the unquestioning subserviency of all other classes, whom any glimmering of light could not fail to render discontented, insubordinate insurrectionary (382).

It is important to account for how functional literacy for the lower classes opposed the dominant way of thinking during the Victorian era. That opposition to educating the lower classes can be seen in an account of the elite-technical schools in France during the seventeenth century. In “The Nature of Literacy: An Historical Exploration,” Daniel P. Resnick and Lauren B. Resnick that at the elite-technical schools literacy “meant the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the development of problem-solving capacities. But this criterion was thought to be applicable not to the whole population but only to a small elite” (124). This idea of education and literacy only to a small elite is rooted in difference in power. Dominant groups operate in any society in this way.

It is important to remember Raymond Williams’ claim that that a dominant group in any society cannot allow too much residual experience and practice to exist outside of itself without risk (123). With that fact in mind, it stands to reason in the example provided by Resnick and Resnick that education and literacy would apply or be available only to a small elite because the dominant group in seventeenth century France determined that standard. A dominant group in any society creates the standards or sets

the rules that other subordinate groups follow. Cornel West, in “The New Cultural Politics of Difference” describes the dominant group who creates standards for any society as the “talented (and usually privileged) contributors to culture” (94).

Under West’s definition, it is the dominant groups who create competing definitions of literacy and they do so through the process of the selective tradition. As a result, these definitions of literacy do more than just differ. Yes, it is true that many definitions of literacy are situational. However, the modes of domination that Williams describes apply all societies because those are facts about the modes of domination. Competing definitions of literacy produce conflicting representations of students. Those conflicting representations of students depict either those lack the skills and knowledge to function under a particular definition of literacy or those who Resnick and Resnick describe as the “small elite” (124). It is from this dualistic way of thinking that representations of the “Other” emerge. And these representations of the “Other” are oversimplified characterizations of students that ignore the diversity and the complexities that make each student different, even those students who are classified as the small elite.

If there is any doubt about the connection between competing definitions of literacy and conflicting representations of students, remember that Resnick and Resnick affirm that previous ways of organizing pedagogy, curriculum, and schools “were designed neither to achieve the literacy standard sought today or to ensure successful literacy for everyone” (133). This is a difficult fact with which to reconcile, especially in light of a democratic society that offers continuous claims to progressive education. However, this fact is a part of the history of literacy that scholars like Harvey Graff, James Slevin, and Bruce Horner urge writing teachers to learn. For through this history,

writing teachers can take charge of the future of writing instruction and empower their students and themselves to greater heights of self-actualization. That is why this study argues, that before writing instructors can improve the field of writing instruction, they must change the way that they think about their students, themselves, and their profession. The history of literacy and writing instruction is filled with several examples of exclusionary, undemocratic ways of thinking about students. This social process also happened in antebellum America regarding the education of some blacks.

For example, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), in 1870 illiteracy rates among blacks was 79.9 percent. By comparison in 1870 illiteracy rates among whites was 11.5 percent. Regarding educational attainment, the NAAL reports that in 1991 70 percent of black males and males from other races had completed high school. Similarly 69 percent of black females and females had completed high school. By comparison in 1991 80 percent of all white males and females had completed high school. Thus the data shows that blacks in American have been disproportionately affected by high illiteracy rates and low educational attainment.

Furthermore, regarding literacy, black education and basic writing, Bruce Horner says in “The Birth of Basic Writing, during the Open Admissions period at City University of New York (CUNY), it was assumed that the black and Puerto Rican students, who were ultimately represented as basic writers, “would undermine the value of a college degree” (8). For these reasons, this study now turns to literacy and black education in America.

Literacy and Black Education in America

John Ogbu, in his essay “Literacy and Schooling in Subordinate Cultures,” says that although blacks have had some access to formal education since their arrival America in the early seventeenth century, and although formal education was available to only a few blacks in the South, and although there was strong opposition to black education in both the South and the North, legal prohibitions against educating blacks were instituted in the South from 1832 to 1861 after Nat Turner’s revolt (141). Ogbu adds that black education was often separate and inferior to white education and usually based on white stereotypes of blacks and their socioeconomic status in society (141).

Adrian Bacariza supports some of Ogbu’s claims, asserting in her article “Black Education in Antebellum America” that southern states introduced legislation restricting black schools because whites feared that free blacks would educate the slaves. She also says that whites were afraid that all blacks would ask for their civil rights if educated. Bacariza’s account, however, differs from Ogbu’s in her discussion of the differences between the education of slaves and free blacks. Bacariza points out, on the one hand, that while some slaves in antebellum America taught their children reading, most slaves had to take classes behind the backs of their masters. Most slaves learned fear of their masters, respect for their elders, and how to survive the inhumane acts of degradation that were characteristic of the life of a slave (Black Education).

However, the education of free blacks was much more extensive than the education of slaves, Bacariza notes. Education for the free blacks initially taught spelling, reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. Conversely, the education for the free blacks consisted of many of the same restrictions that had been placed on the education of slaves (Black Education).

Bacariza adds that as the fear of educated blacks grew in the minds of whites, the schools for free blacks regressed into “church style schools” in which Bible study was prominently featured. Prior to that education for free blacks consisted of spelling, reading writing and basic arithmetic. Trade schools also emerged for all blacks and black women were taught sewing instead of spelling, reading writing, and basic arithmetic. Bacariza’s discussion of the church style schools resembles Ogbu’s talk of how some slaves received occasional Biblical education prior to the emancipation because their masters believed that it would make them more obedient and faithful (142). After the emancipation, assert Bacariza and Ogbu, black education in antebellum America declined because the ruling whites believed that that the tenant farming system would break down if black children received the same education as white children (142).

The similarities between Bacariza’s and Ogbu’s accounts of black education in antebellum America bring up a few key points that are central to this study. First, when it comes to functional literacy, there were times throughout the history of literacy in America when the idea of functional literacy for all opposed the thinking of the dominant group in society. Second, fear often influences the thinking of the dominant group just before that group creates a new definition of literacy. Bacariza and Ogbu talk not only about the fear that overshadowed the thinking of the dominant group in antebellum America when it came to the topic of black education, but also how that dominant group redefined literacy to maintain an advantage.

Third, the dominant group produced a representation in their own minds of those seeking literacy that harmonized with certain stereotypes. Fourth, as a result of their fear, the dominant group selectively used the available human energy, human intention, and

human practice and created an educational system that maintained their power and emphasized the differences between themselves and the subordinate groups. This pattern of “othering” continued in the case of free blacks who attempted to distance themselves from the slaves. Bacariza says that “the slaves were at the short end of everyone’s ladder” (Black Education). Finally, this pattern of fear, hierarchy, misrepresentation, and exclusion repeats itself throughout this history of literacy and education in America and accounts for what are arguably the majority of the challenges in the profession of basic writing.

The point of this segment is to point to a thought process that resulted in competing definitions of literacy and alternative representations of those who fell short of the new definition. This thought process seems to take place in the minds of some members of a dominant group in any society and transcends race, creed, and culture. Although the idea of being functionally literate is a residual idea that runs through the dominant definitions of literacy, it is important to note the thought process that precedes the modification of what it means to be functionally literate. Scholars such as Harvey Graff (1979), Brian Street (1984, 1985, 1993), Ludo Verhoeven (1994), and John Trimbur (1986) have all written about how literacy is a complex subject that extends well beyond the binaries of “functionally literate” or “functionally illiterate.”

Graff describes literacy as a “myth” because educators lack consensus on what comprises literacy and what is expected of those who are instructed in and in possession of literacy (323). Another part of the literacy myth is that through literacy one can rise economically. Verhoeven argues that there are multiple literacies that demand language practices that support cultural diversity because literacy is a life-long process in which an

individual's needs vary from time and place (7). Street and Trimbur assert that periodic claims of a "literacy crisis" are not only reflections of a perceived crisis of those in power, but also attempts by those in power to maintain and justify their dominance.

The conclusions of these scholars about the competing definitions of literacy suggest that "functional literacy" is a construct. Just as the term "basic writer" creates an oversimplified, binary representation of some students, the term "functional literacy" produces a dichotomy that inevitably relegates some people to the status of the "Other." In order to emphasize thought process that precedes the creation of competing definitions of literacy and representations of students as basic writers, functional literacy will be described in this study as a construct. It is through an analysis of residual constructs like functional literacy that one can better understand the dominant definitions of literacy.

Residual and Dominant Definitions of Literacy

So what does the residual construct, functional literacy, say about today's dominant definitions of literacy? On the one hand, it says most people believe that it is important for all citizens to be able to operate, perform, or serve in society. On the other hand, if functional literacy is important, why would it be resisted either openly or subtly? Why would a standard that clearly benefits all people be modified to fit certain classes of people? Why would a valuable criterion like literacy be limited to anyone? One argument might be that there are minimum requirements for literacy and that functional literacy might be considered a first step rather than a final goal.

However, the changes that took place in the education of blacks in antebellum America point to the use of power by the dominant groups in society to emphasize the differences between themselves and the subordinate groups. Such corrective measures

might have been unnecessary if the educational system had been more democratic in the first place. In other words, if the dominant groups in Victorian Europe and antebellum America had nurtured all of the human energy, human intention, and human practice that had been available to them at the time by making education egalitarian rather than hierarchical, then there might have been fewer disparities between those needing functional literacy and those seeking advanced literacy.

Because today's dominant definitions of literacy employ a construct that is rooted in the past, the question arises as to the origin of the functional model. Before any construct can become a residual part of a dominant definition of literacy, it has to come from a source. Constructs can emerge from a variety of sources, including a new class-consciousness or a dominant group. The prohibitive and divisive nature of the construct functional literacy invites speculation about its source. Would a new or emerging class of people who seek equal access to information and education create an understanding of literacy that prohibits their own growth? History shows that definitions of literacy change or compete over time, incorporating ideas of what literacy is and what it should be. Those definitions that last seem to come primarily from a society's dominant group.

Although some dominant groups incorporate a few residual ideas into their dominant definitions of literacy, they reject many others. This rejection of some residual definitions suggests that there is a danger in accepting too many residual definitions because those definitions can over determine the character of current literacy practices. As a result, some dominant groups sometimes reject languages or dialects deemed residual. For example, in eighteenth century Scotland, some religious and secular authorities sought to wipe out Gaelic and force Irish students to learn English. Keith M.

MacKinnon, in his article, “Education and Social Control: The Case of Gaelic Scotland,” described how after the Protestant Reformation the dominant group in Gaelic Scotland exercised its authority by prohibiting the development of educational institutions for the native Gaelic people.

At that time, MacKinnon said, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) became the chief agency for establishing schools that promoted English in the Gaelic areas (129). As a result, “Christian Knowledge” was equated in the school curriculum with the English language, the Presbyterian religion, school music and arithmetic,” added MacKinnon (129). MacKinnon also said that in the SSPCK’s minutes there were explicit prohibitions on the use of Gaelic as a medium of instruction (129).

MacKinnon described the sociological model of the language situation as “one of conflict” (129). This language conflict, featuring laws prohibiting the use of Gaelic in schools, meant, as MacKinnon wrote, “the alienation of the Gael from the core society of contemporary Scotland was well under way” (129). Additionally, English rather than Gaelic ruled administration and education (129). What seems to result from this rejection of a language is the designation of that language as appropriate only in what many considered the private sphere. MacKinnon wrote that Gaelic became “the language of the home and the church and the language of everyday relationships at the level of folk-life amongst the lowest social strata in a diminishing area” (129). This interaction between the dialect of an emerging culture and the language of the dominant group in any society often changes how literacy is defined.

Rather than argue about whether the native Scots or the English Scots were the emerging culture, the purpose of this evidence is to point again to how dominant groups

in any society use the selective tradition to appropriate ruling definitions. If one group in a society is controlling another group's language, relegating that language to "the language of the home and the church and the language of everyday relationships at the level of folk-life amongst the lowest social strata in a diminishing area", then that group is practicing the selective tradition and perpetuating the modes of domination. As Raymond Williams argues, dominant groups in any society select from and exclude the full range of human practice (125). In other words, dominant groups in any society practice "reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion" (123). They do this because they cannot allow too much practice within the society to exist outside itself as the dominant group without risk (123).

Look at the similarities between the situation in Gaelic Scotland and the situation in antebellum America. In antebellum America, the blacks—slave and free—were the subordinate group in society. In Gaelic Scotland, the Gaelic Scots were the subordinate group in society. The dominant groups in antebellum America and Gaelic Scotland seized the dominant definition of literacy. On the one hand, the dominant group in antebellum America changed the schooling blacks from reading, writing, and arithmetic to church-style and trade schools. On the other hand, the dominant group in Gaelic Scotland passed laws prohibiting the use of Gaelic in schools. Both cases show a pattern of reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, both cases show the subordinate groups in society being represented as the "Other." These facts are a part of the history of literacy and the history of writing instruction that must be analyzed if writing instructors are to learn from the past and take responsibility for the future.

Emergent Definitions in Literacy and Education

For this study, the term “emergent” comes from Williams’ *Marxism and Literature* and refers to new ideas, definitions, practices, or relationships that are always being created (123). Emergent ideas can come from either a new class of people or a dominant class of people within a particular society. It can be difficult to determine whether an emergent idea is a new phase of the dominant culture or if that idea is an alternative concept that opposes the dominant way of thinking. In other words, it is challenging to clarify whether or not a new concept is emergent in a strict sense or if it is simply novel. Emergent definitions, however, can be made and understood only in relation to the dominant. Emergent ideas that oppose the dominant way of thinking always have a social basis.

When it comes to emergent definitions of literacy, it seems that most subordinate classes in a society rarely come up with an alternative definition of what it means to be literate. Most often, those subordinate classes are preoccupied with obtaining access to the privileges and information that had been denied to them. On the other hand, when lower or subordinate classes come up with emergent ideas, dominant classes sometimes censor, dilute, or heavily suppress those ideas that oppose the dominant way of thinking. Before returning to the issue of difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students of English composition, it is necessary to analyze the process by which emergent ideas become a part of the dominant way of thinking in a society. This social process can be seen in the growth of the popular press in eighteenth and nineteenth century England.

The Growth of the Popular Press

Raymond Williams points out in *Long Revolution* that in eighteenth century England the newspaper was created by the middle class to serve only their professional and personal interests (175). At the same time, Williams adds, magazines and periodicals also served only middle class interests (175). Because the newspaper became a financially independent institution capable of shaping public opinion, governments attempted to control and bribe them. Their bribery attempts failed, however, because of the sound commercial basis upon which newspapers had been built (175). At approximately the same time that the members of the middle-class press were solidifying its foundation, i.e., between the 1770s and the 1830s, the newly organized working class attempted to formulate their own press that challenged government repression (175).

Their attempts, according to Williams, were “beaten down” (175). As a result, a modified or diluted version of the newspaper emerged at that time for the working class. This press became what is now known as the Sunday paper, containing miscellaneous information that resembled popular literature: ballads, almanacs, stories of murders and executions (176). The significant fact here is the process of incorporating emergent ideas that can occur in any society, especially a society that features a class structure. To the degree that an idea emerges, i.e., a newspaper for the working class, and to the degree that an idea is oppositional to the dominant way of thinking, i.e., a newspaper that challenges government repression, the process of incorporating emergent ideas begins. Though it may seem that any emergent, oppositional ideas from the working class are being accepted into the dominant way of thinking, this process of incorporation modifies the emergent ideas into a form that is more in line with the dominant way of thinking.

Thus the working class newspaper in nineteenth century England became apolitical. Unlike the middle class newspaper, which had a strong focus aimed at the middle class interests, the lower class newspapers covered trivial subjects that appeased lower class interests. What's important to note in this example is the incorporation of emergent ideas into the dominant ideology so that the ideas conform to the dominant way of thinking. Those emergent ideas can also include representations of various people or groups.

When people with a healthy concept would produce representations of themselves, it would be reasonable to expect them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and produce balanced representations. This type reasoning could be expected from rational human beings who understand their situation and attempt to summarize it. Most of the representations of students that flourished at the beginning of the discipline were pejorative. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the students, who were striving for equity in education at the “birth” of basic writing, would have represented themselves as “ignorant and disruptive.” Even if those students had taken into account their academic shortcomings, they probably would have created a more balanced categorization of themselves than the “new barbarians.” This scenario warrants reflection on the source and rationale behind the emergence of these disparaging representations. In other word, who created the disparaging representations of students? Why were they created? What role did difference and power play in the production and reception of representations of students?

In her essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak talks about the process of how the subaltern—“the Other”—is represented within Indian colonial historiography.

The term “subaltern” in post colonial theory refers to marginalized groups of people and the lower classes. Spivak discusses a group of lower class women who are silenced under the banner of imperialism and re-presented to the upper class as a deviation from the ideal (27). These women are depicted as participants in an insurgency that challenges the dominant way of thinking. Under what Spivak calls “the phallocentric tradition,” “the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant” (28). At the heart of this conflict between women and men, upper and lower classes lay the issues of difference and power.

Students are similar to the subalterns in that they are represented by a dominant group as being a deviation from the ideal. In their call for articles, *The Journal of Basic Writing* (JBW) defines “basic writer” as “a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse” (Call for Articles). The JBW adds that a “basic writer” is “a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient” (Call for Articles). Both of these representations carry assumptions that could affect the expectations that an educator would have about a prospective class.

Students are also like subalterns in that they have no voice or device through which they can re-present themselves to their respective dominant groups before those assumptions about them can take hold. When discussing the process that presents the subalterns as deviations from the ideal Spivak says, “in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary—not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law” (24). There is no evidence to suggest that students influenced the representation of them that is contained the JBW.

Furthermore, nothing in Bruce Horner's "The 'Birth' of Basic Writing" suggests that the black and Puerto Rican students who sought entry to City University of New York (CUNY) during the Open Admissions period by drafting the "Five Demands" in 1969 were able to change the representations of them that called them "unqualified" (8). Although students have the opportunity to interact with their instructors during a semester and demonstrate their abilities, their efforts usually come after some instructors has made certain assumptions and formulated certain expectations about the students. Another way that students are like subalterns is that people in both groups are more complex than the dichotomies that are set up by their representations. Spivak argues that "the colonized subaltern *subject* (her italics) is irretrievably heterogeneous" (26). In the same way, Laura Gray-Rosendale, in *Rethinking Basic Writing*, pushes for a new analytic model of the social relations among students and sees them as wonderfully diverse (23),

Could it be that the same issues of difference and power that are at work in the representations are also at work in the production and reception of representations of students? This process of producing and receiving these representations of students as basic writers seems to be an exchange that takes place primarily among educators. That is, the representations of the students as basic writers seem to be created by educators for educators. While some of those students who are placed in basic writing classrooms know that they are in a separate class from their peers, some are probably unaware of the representations of themselves that are created by educators for educators.⁸

⁸ See Linda Adler-Kassner's "Just Writing, Basically: Basic Writers on Basic Writing" for evidence that suggests that some students do not know of the representations of them created by writing instructors. On the other hand, see Joan L. Piorkowski and Erika Scheurer's "It's the Way that the Talk to You": Increasing Agency in Basic Writers Through a Social Context of Care for evidence that suggests students do know of the representations created about them by some writing instructors.

Furthermore, when one takes into account the process of selection, inclusion, and exclusion that determines how literacy is defined and how subordinate groups are represented, it becomes clearer how the disparaging representations of students as basic writers could have emerged because as in the cases of Victorian Europe, antebellum America, Gaelic Scotland, the subordinate group in each society was represented as the “Other”.

In “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” Mike Rose notes that freshman composition began in 1874 at Harvard as a response to the poor writing of upperclassmen (342). Harvard’s entrance exam, according to Susan Miller, represented the first students of college composition as “the lower and in some ways the animal order in need of scrubbing” (85). Education at that time was considered a privilege available only to a select few, and freshman composition was designed to test the suitability of the newly admitted students. It is unlikely that the first students of college composition thought of themselves as being in the animal order in need of scrubbing.” Similarly, it is unlikely that the students at CUNY in the early 1970s thought of themselves as “ignorant and disruptive.” Therefore, the representations of the nineteenth and twentieth century students—the “Other”—were probably created by the dominant group of educators, for the dominant group of educators.

What’s more, it seems that no methodology governed the production and the reception of those representations. Rather, it seems that those representations of students as basic writers were produced and received through the selective tradition. The selective tradition resembles the process described by bell hooks in *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*. In her chapter, “Critical Interrogation: talking race, resisting racism,”

hooks discusses how terms like *difference*, *the Other*, *hegemony*, and *ethnography* have replaced “commonly known words deemed uncool or too simplistic, words like *oppression*, *exploitation*, and *domination*” (51-52).

Beneath representations of the Other and an emphasis on difference, hooks suggests, lie “forces of denial, fear, and competition” that undermine the commitment to equity in education that ultimately benefits all members of a democratic society (54). Additionally, the disparaging representations of the “Other” and the emphasis on difference are closely linked to the dominant, residual, and emergent definitions of literacy.

Although one could say that it is necessary to categorize students in certain ways so that they can be provided the education that they need, one must question the assumptions that are made about students when creating such categories. Those assumptions can be based in false information, and they can in due course harm the people to whom educators are supposed to help—the students. Consider the essentialist assumption about language identified by Min-Zhan Lu in “Redefining the Legacy of Mina Shaughnessy: A Critique of the Politics of Linguistic Innocence.” The essentialist assumption, according to Lu, says that meaning precedes and is independent of language; it maintains that language serves only to communicate the essence of meaning (105). The essentialist assumption also says that students are incapable of understanding the political dimensions behind their linguistic choices (105).

Pedagogies that are informed by an essentialist assumption of language, according to Lu, require students to become familiar with the conventions of academic discourse, gain confidence as pupils and writers of academic discourse, and respond to the conflict

between their home discourses and academic discourse (105-106). The challenge, however, with pedagogies that are informed by the essentialist assumption is that they concentrate on only the first two of these three requirements (106). Therein lies the difficulty with categorizing students in certain ways. Some of the categorizations of students present them with teaching practices that leave them to struggle with the discord between their home discourses and academic discourse.

Categorizing students in certain ways also privileges academic discourse over the students' home discourse. Academic discourse, aka standard written English or formal written English, is frequently viewed as the language of public discourse. It seems that the accepted definitions of these terms are as varied as the competing definitions of literacy. Nevertheless, the essentialist assumption behind language and literacy, according to Min-Zhan Lu, elevates academic discourse over a student's home discourse, emphasizing the non-substitutive nature of language and suggesting that academic discourse is a timeless law to which students must comply rather than a historical circumstance from which some inequities in education still flourish (114). This suggestion about academic discourse implies that students can neither interrogate nor change its precepts. Thus, although categorizing students may be an earnest attempt to help them, it is critical to challenge the assumptions behind the categories because those categories may underestimate the sophistication of the students and overestimate the nature of academic discourse.

The critical point to remember in not only clarifying residual and emergent definitions of literacy, but also understanding their relation to the dominant ones is that no dominant group in any society ever completely exhausts all human energy, human

intention, and human practice. In other words, dominant groups in any society typically take just enough of what they need from residual and emergent ideas to modify the ruling definition of the social. They discard the rest. As a result, the dominant groups create alternative perceptions of those who fail to live up to the new standard—the “Other.” In the book *Elementary School Literacy: Critical Issues* there is a chapter entitled “Emergent Literacy: Alternative Models of Development and Instruction.” The chapter presents three different models of reading: representing developmental, cognitive processing, and social cognition perspectives (51).

The three models of reading suggest that the constructs for the recognition of letters, sounds, and printed words need to be learned and that they are best learned under the direct supervision of teachers and competent family members (67). The use of all three models, according to the chapter’s authors, Jana M. Mason; Carol L. Peterman; David D. Dunning; and Janice P. Stewart should help teachers and researchers to understand how children learn to read and how their efforts can best be supported by others (67). Co-editor of the book, Professor Wayne H. Slater says that the work of Mason, et. al., changed some things about how literacy is understood and defined in various circles. In his essay, “What Research Tells Us about Freshman Readers and Writers,” Slater points to one change from the RAND Reading Study Group entitled “Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension.”

In this report, the RAND Reading Study Group presents a heuristic for thinking about reading comprehension that encompasses the sociocultural context for reading. The RAND Group considers the text, the activity and the reader. They also define reading comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing

meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (11). Additionally, the authors take a holistic approach to defining reading comprehension by taking into account all of the “capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experience” of the reader. In doing so the members of the RAND Reading Study Group present an emergent or alternative definition of literacy that is useful in evaluating the progress that teachers and students make promoting literacy.

The issue, however, is that in the face of this outstanding research the current dominant definitions of literacy, i.e., the ones presented at the beginning of this chapter, seem to lag behind this research by excluding the RAND Group’s valuable information designed to help assist students and improve society. Furthermore, this emergent definition of literacy competes with the numerous other definitions of literacy that clarify what it means to be in the know in a particular context. How can these competing definitions of literacy help students? What assumptions and representations could be made about the students who fall short of the dominant definitions? This study seeks to analyze the effects of difference and power in how representations of students as basic writers are produced and received.

What is important to keep in mind about the history of literacy and its implications for policy is that literacy instruction was always meant to unequal. Resnick and Resnick say “the old tried and true approaches [to literacy], which nostalgia prompts us to believe might solve current problems, were designed neither to achieve the literacy standard sought today nor to ensure successful literacy for everyone” (133). Why? In a democratic society, isn’t successful literacy for everyone necessary for the advancement of the society? Educational philosopher George S. Counts would say “yes.” In

Education and American Civilization, Counts argues, “We need an education that will preserve, vitalize, and strengthen the principle of equality in our country” (327). Counts says the principle of equality in our country, is “the most basic principle in our social, political and moral philosophy” (327). In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln declared that at its founding, the United States was “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

However when it comes to competing definitions of literacy that endure “reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion” our country faces the situation described by Resnick and Resnick in which the standard of literacy was never designed to ensure the successful literacy of everyone. Inequity in literacy, inequity in education means, as Counts writes, that our “democracy can have no substance” (327). Yet one painful part of the history of literacy that must be understood if writing teachers are to take responsibility for the future is that the literacy standards of the past were never meant to be equal.

Resnick and Resnick conclude by noting that “there is no simple past to which we can return” (133). Because there is no simple past to which we can return educators must follow Counts’ recommendation and “reveal the deficiencies in our heritage and the dangers threatening the principle of equality in the contemporary world” (335). The reason that there is no simple past to which we can return is because that past is wrought with inequities that go against the fiber of our democracy. Counts knew this. That is why he made his recommendation. This study presents the history competing definitions of literacy, which points to the deficiencies in our heritage and the simple past to which we cannot return. Harvey Graff, in “The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and

Contradictions in Western Society and Culture” declares that “the proper study of the historical experience of literacy...has much to tell us...that is relevant to policy analysis and policy making in the world in which we live today” (77). And Bruce Horner maintains that “the historical experience of literacy...including the historical experience of basic writing” should compel writing teachers “to re-learn what that history should have taught us long ago.”

Since students are probably unaware of how definitions of literacy compete from one context to another, there is a good chance that the students do not produce the dominant definitions of literacy. Additionally, since some students are probably unaware of how they are represented as the “Other,” there is a good chance that they do not produce the representations of the “Other.” In other words, it seems unlikely that some students would consider themselves as the “Other” or produce a harmful representation of themselves.

It certainly would not be in the students’ best interest to modify a definition of literacy that would portray them in a negative light. Furthermore, given the interrelatedness of all groups within a society, it would not be in anyone’s best interest to create a definition of literacy that creates inequality because an inequality anywhere would be a threat to equality everywhere. Nevertheless, dominant definitions of literacy are changed through carefully taking parts of residual and emergent definitions, resulting in alternative perceptions of those who fall short of the ruling definition. Although there appears to be no methodology to the production of representations such as basic writer, there appears to be a methodology to the production of dominant definitions of literacy that sometimes begins with government intervention. Those dominant definitions of

literacy can support assumptions about students perceived as the “Other.” It is imperative to question those assumptions about students and pedagogies because those assumptions seem to contribute to the history of conflicting representations of students. In the next section, I will analyze the history of conflicting representations of students, and I will look at how those representations of students affect the representations of teachers.

History of Conflicting Representations of Students

In this section, I analyze the history of conflicting representations of students. The challenge of conflicting representations of students is not limited to writing students. Some of the following representations refer to writing students, in general. In either case, the representations of the students are harmful. This information is important because the conflicting representations of writing students seem to emerge from the competing definitions of literacy. Furthermore, the representations of writing students seem to affect the representations of writing teachers.

As stated previously, the original student of composition, according to Susan Miller, was represented in Harvard’s nineteenth century entrance examination as “the lower order and in some ways the ‘animal’ order in need of scrubbing” (85). Harvard’s exam, Miller adds, set a standard for placing students in a hierarchy by emphasizing the differences between those students who would receive and assimilate Harvard’s gentlemanly principles through literature and those who would not (85). Miller goes on to say that the student of composition was categorized or represented as having to be corrected or remedied before admission to the regular courses of study (85). Some members of Harvard’s faculty thought very little of the native language or dialect that the original student of composition brought to the classroom. At times, contends Miller,

some of the faculty poked fun at or “snickered over” the language of the original student of composition, thereby creating an ‘Other’ (55). The same nineteenth century process of emphasizing difference, Miller relates, continued at Harvard in the twentieth century with frequent references to students of composition as the “strong” and the “weak” (103).

Also in the twentieth century, Bruce Horner notes, the 1975 Opens Admissions policy represented the black and Puerto Rican students and the student left who were thought to have political agendas as “student militants” (6). This representation, which thrived before the terms “basic writing” and “basic writer” emerged, clearly depicts an “Other” who stands in contrast to the students who were already at the City College of New York (CUNY). The discourse of open admissions posited two representations of students who seemed diametrically opposed to each other. One representation, says Bruce Horner, was the ideal college student, whom it was assumed would achieve excellence in education because he or she was not bothered by political agendas (8). The other was represented as being associated with politics and minority activism (8). A *Washington Post* open admissions era editorial, Horner adds, represented the ethnicity of the open admissions students as “Negro and Puerto Rican youth” (9). At the same time, the open admissions student was also represented as an “ignorant and disruptive contingent” (9). These representations of students flourished not only in publications like the *Washington Post*, but also in the *College Composition and Communications* (CCC) journal.

For example, through some of its testimonials, the *College Composition and Communication* journal (CCC) has frequently represented college composition students as children. In her book, *Writing Students: Composition Testimonials and*

Representations of Students, Marguerite H. Helmers points out that Allan Bloom has represented college composition students as “spiritually and intellectually undernourished” (14). Helmers adds that Bloom has also represented his college composition students as “shallow and removed from serious questions of humanity” (14). To Bloom, says Helmers, students are “palimpsests”, who, on the one hand, are represented as such in his literature at the time in which he, Bloom, wrote, but who, on the other hand, retain some of the characteristics of his previous representations (15).

Another frequent representation of students, especially students, is one that describes lack. Dorothy Whitted, author of “A Tutorial Program for Remedial Students,” characterized her “remedial” writing students in 1967 in this way: “They lack the ability to meet the level of reading, analyzing, and thinking demanded in most of their courses” (41). Whitted went on to represent her students as immature, unstable, and inhibited by their “lack of self-discipline” (42). Whitted attributed the difficulties experienced by her students to having “never developed productive work habits” (42). She added that many of her students are “frustrated by their inability to identify or cope with their problems” (42).

At the conclusion of her essay, Whitted anticipates that some students in her university’s writing program at may fall short of the program’s requirements, “It is too much to expect that all students who have been remanded to our Proficiency Program see the little lamp and release their ability to write in the simple, clear, well-ordered prose that constitutes effective composition” (43). Her only compensation or ray of hope for the students she describes—which speaks to the issue of retention—is “At least we have invited them in and opened the door” (43).

Krystan V. Douglas, author of “Yet Another Reason Not to Write A 500-Word Essay: A Biography Is Better” continues with noting the things that her students seem to be lacking when she writes “they lack the experience in dealing with ideas” (349). In her essay, Douglas encourages her audience to have their students write a biography instead of a persuasive essay because “they often are unable to deal in an original way with the usual topics of the 500-word expository or argumentative essay” (349). Douglas demonstrates her expectations about her students when she harps on their shortcomings, “they wrote very little in high school; having had little training in either mechanics, grammar or structure” (349). There is an ironic element to Douglas’s use of the biography versus the persuasive essay. Although she avoids the argumentative essay because she believes that her students “are unable to deal in an original way with the usual topics of the 500-word expository or argumentative essay” she uses biography even though she says “biography is not a form of writing with which most freshmen are familiar” (349). In either case, Douglas represents her students as lacking.

Dennis Rygiel does the same. Rygiel associate professor of English at Auburn University and author of “On the Neglect of Twentieth-Century Nonfiction: A Writing Teacher’s View,” represented his students as having “a lack of understanding of meaning of words in their context, a lack of sensitivity to the power and limitations of words, and a lack of interest and healthy curiosity about words” (287). As a result, Rygiel says their essays manifest “incorrect, vague, imprecise, inappropriate, uninteresting, and ultimately ineffective diction” (287). Rygiel calls for explicit linguistic study, looking at the use of vocabulary within its context. (288). However, while noting that his suggested curriculum could be useful to a wide range of students, Rygiel returns to the

representation of his students as lacking when he writes, “At least my students need more” (288).

The example in the previous paragraph talks about writing students in general. What is interesting to note is that some of the conflicting representations of students are not limited to students. In either case, these conflicting representations of students are often presented as objective facts that every teacher of writing understands. Also, these representations extend beyond what a student lacks to how a student is deficient, diseased or ill.

For example, Michael Carella, in his essay “Philosophy as Literacy: Teaching College Students to Read Critically and Write Cogently” became so distressed by the content of his students’ essays that he wrote of an “epidemic of higher illiteracy” (57). Carella combines his disease with a representation of lack, describing “the inability of students to read critically and write cogently” (57). A philosophy professor, Carella, continues to discuss what his students lack when describes the results of an assignment in which he required his students to read six classical works in ethics and write an essay about the assigned works. He says that the “students had no conception of the elementary logic of arguments or even of the standard ways of organizing an essay” (57). Carella adds, “A few were blissfully unaware of such basic mechanics as parallel construction, paragraphing, punctuation, and spelling” (57).

Leo Rockas, in his article “Teaching Literacy,” continues with the metaphor of illness or disease when he talks about how students “with remedial difficulties” are regularly isolated or quarantined into “non-credit courses” (273). The illness, according to Rockas, is brought about by something that his students lack, “black students, and

increasingly white ones too, cannot use, and do not even hear, such inflections as the language still has, the final *s*- and *z*-sounds, the final *t*- and *d*-sounds (273). Rockas suggests that one part of the problem lies in the literacy textbooks. Nevertheless, he still represents his students according to what he thinks they lack, saying that many of the books outline a procedure that fails to correct “the deficiency” in his students (274).

Toby Olshin, author of “Introducing Fiction: Training the Student Reader,” combined the metaphors of “children,” “disease,” and “lack” in the representations of his students. Olshin described his class as “beginning students” who are “plagued” by “major errors” that “arrest their development as critical, understanding readers (301). Throughout the essay, Olshin talks about several errors that his students commit when reading fiction. He represents his students as children when he says, “the beginning student’s limited ability to appreciate literature as a complex art” (303). Olshin rounds out his essay with another representation of his students as people who are incarcerated by their own design. He says that his suggested classroom practice should help the student “leave the prison of his current self” (303).

Phyllis Brown Burke, in her review of Alec Ross’ *Writing to be Read*, published in CCC in 1970, introduces the word “terminal” in her description students. The students in this instance are working toward a two-year degree only, and they are marked for death academically because they suffer from the plague of numerous writing errors. (77).

Although the representations of writing students seems to have improved, writing students are sometimes still represented as the “Other” in some academic literature. This “othering” seems to occur sometimes when some writing instructors look for an “authentic” voice in an attempt to celebrate diversity in the classroom. Bronwyn T.

Williams, in “Speak for Yourself? Power and Hybridity in the Cross-Cultural Classroom” admits that he applied a double standard of grading for his male and female students and fell prey to a previous representation of writing students. On the one hand, Williams, a self-described a man from the dominant culture teaching “in an institution of the dominant culture,” confesses that he gave a Nigerian girl an *A* in an essay in which she writes about the rites of passage that a Hausa girl must endure to become a woman because the essay seemed “exotic” (596).

On the other hand, Williams responded with less enthusiasm to an essay written by an Egyptian boy about his passion for jet skiing perhaps because it seemed to lack the “authenticity” of the Nigerian girl’s essay (596). In retrospect, Williams admits that his paradigm or representation of his students influenced in that he “did not receive an ‘authentic’ representation of her (the Nigerian girl’s) experience, but instead a re-presentation that had already been shaped to be understood by me in the dominant culture” (596).

In Kermit E. Campbell’s “Real Niggaz’s Don’t Die”: African American Students Speaking Themselves into Their Writing,” he identifies one of his students as “a college basic writer” (67). This representation comes in the first sentence of Campbell’s essay. He admits that the title of his essay comes from the title of one of the essays that one of his students has written. Afterwards, Campbell discusses how intrigued he was by the title of the student’s essay and argues for the inclusion of vernacular discourses in writing pedagogies (76). Although there is much to be said about Campbell’s arguments, what is significant is how he identifies his student as “a college basic writer” and moves on with the rest of the article as if his audience knows the person to whom he is referring. That

representation of his student is presented as an objective fact; it seems that Campbell assumes that his audience knows what type of student that is. Because that representation is in such close proximity to Campbell's title, anyone who knows the pejorative and vernacular uses of the term "Niggaz" could easily conflate basic writing with African-American Students.

Campbell may be making a larger point. However, he seems to use difference and power in the production of this representation of his student by assuming that his audience knows the person about whom he is talking and that his audience may have had similar experiences with students like the one he is describing.

Vershawn Ashanti Young, in his essay entitled "Your Average Nigga," also offers a representation of his students as an objective fact. Describing the circumstances under which he acquires a part-time teaching position at Columbia College, Chicago, Young says that that he became the only black man teaching literacy at Columbia for "underachieving freshmen" (693). Immediately after that representation, Young goes on to talk about how being the only black man teaching literacy at Columbia was an unfortunate circumstance that worked in his favor. Young afterwards chronicles his encounters with a black student named Cam, and admits that based Cam's behavior and Young's beliefs, he came to think of Cam as "a nigger" (699). What is more subtle, yet striking, about Young's story is not his representation of Cam as "a nigger" but his representation of all of his students in the literacy program as "underachieving freshmen." Furthermore, when Young combines his representation of his student Cam, the title of his essay, and the representation, "underachieving freshmen" in his work, his audience could easily conflate black students with underachievement.

The representations of students have an effect on the representations of teachers. If Cam and students in his class are “underachieving freshmen,” then Young by default is represented as the one who is to help the students achieve. This unstated representation comes out when Young discusses the reason that the hiring committee at Columbia College selected him, “It was clear that the hiring committee wanted what everyone who wants to hire a black male professor from the ghetto wants, for me to make the connections they couldn’t to students they didn’t fully understand and were therefore unable to assist as much as they desired” (696). Young is charged with the seemingly impossible task of reaching students who in the above citation are represented as “unreachable” and “uneducable.” This representation, like the depiction of the students as “underachieving freshmen” is passed off as an objective fact by the hiring committee and by Young.

Because the educational process inextricably links students and teachers, the representations of students affect the representations of teachers. The powerful and sometimes damaging representations of students and teachers often appear in writing instructorship as objective facts. In the next section, I explore the history of representations of teachers in writing instructorship. Afterwards, I present discussion on how best to represent students from variously situated teachers and program administrators.

History of Representations of Teachers

Just as the definition of literacy influences the representations of students, the representations of students affect the representations of teachers. For example, the teachers who supported open admissions, Bruce Horner notes, were depicted as “the

balding, bearded guerillas seeking tenure who taught more about the injustices in society outside the instead of the use of punctuation within it" (9). Marguerite H. Helmers talks about how students and teachers have been perceived in testimonials as "stock characters" whose roles have been predetermined by history (2). Helmers adds that the history of writing instruction supports dominant professional concerns and places those concerns in a schematic of imperialism that has withheld the changing paradigm of how writing is taught (2). In some instances, says Helmers, when students are represented as deficient, lacking, or even savage, teachers are represented as "heroes" who enter the world of freshman composition to rescue the student through some innovative pedagogical methods (19).

In other instances, adds Helmers, writing instructors are represented as "a pedagogical Everyman" who shares the same experiences with most other writing instructors (29). This representation occurs when some writing instructors assume that their experiences are shared amongst all writing teachers. An example of this representation can be found in Suzanne Kistler's "Scrambling the Unscramblable: Coherence in the Classroom." Kistler writes, "As we all know, writing is a two-step process" both "creative and critical—and most beginners find it hard to move into the second stage" (198). Responding to the claims that writing drills are ineffective, Kistler endeavors to connect the gulf between the writing drills and her students' essays that her students produce by employing the "scrambled paragraph" technique, which, according to Kistler, should help her students with issues such as "paragraph coherence, unity, patterns of paragraph development and transitional devices" (198)

Notwithstanding the purpose of the assignment, Kistler silences her students' voices and represents them as cooperative, willing participants in her experiment whose lives have been changed by her intervention. Kistler writes, "Unquestionably, the organization of the new version is dramatically improved, and the student had also become aware of the remaining weaknesses to be worked on" (198). Here Kistler represents herself and any other teacher who would use her suggested technique as a savior who redeems the student from the snare of her writing limitations.

Lila Chalpin, author of "On Improving Opening Paragraphs," makes the same assumption of universal experiences among writing teachers in dealing with students when she writes, "As all English teachers know, the opening paragraph of a typical student's essay is like a bride's cooking—either overdone or underdone (53). Chalpin continues with what she assumes to be the universal experiences of writing teachers who must suffer through the chore of reading a poorly developed opening paragraph, "But whether the reader finishes an essay or not, we, the teachers, must" (53). Chalpin offers eight suggestions for improving opening paragraphs that should also eliminate what she calls the "g&g" or grunting and groaning from her students, (whose complaints could be the result of being represented as "diseased"). Chalpin enhances the success with her students by glossing over any of their specific grunts and groans and noting, "Once the student hurdles the opening paragraph, one third to one half of his task is over. He can proceed with a sense of knowing where he's going and how he's going to get there" (56). By addressing her audience as if they share her same experiences, Chalpin represents herself in the literature as "the pedagogical Every Person" and the "victim" who must bear the cross of reading her students' poorly written opening paragraphs.

Like Kistler and Chalpin, Nancy Grimm, author of “Improving Students’ Responses to Their Peers’ Essays,” assumes the collective experience of writing teachers everywhere when she writes, “As any composition teacher knows, dividing a class into two groups of four or five people does not automatically insure that everyone will receive a useful response” (91). What is important to note is Grimm’s claim “As any composition teacher knows.” This way of addressing the audience situates Grimm as “the Pedagogical Everyman” who assumes that the reader shares her same experiences.

Although Grimm uses this pathetic appeal to draw her audience into her argument, this representation of teachers in this claim stifles any counter arguments that another college composition scholar could make about how that scholar may have different experiences. Grimm suggests that writing teachers divide their students into small groups in order to strengthen the reaction that each student gives to his or her classmates about the content of their drafts.

Next, she outlines her procedures, and then Grimm makes two sweeping assumptions: one about the collective experience of writing teachers and the other about the ability of students to perform well in peer groups. Grimm writes, “Even with carefully written guidelines, students’ ability to function well in small groups improves slowly. Her assertion invites the question, “Why?” Could there be some students whose ability to function well in small groups improves dramatically even with carefully written directions?

What’s more, if the guidelines are so carefully written, should not those guidelines improve the student’s ability to function in small groups? Rather than take issue with Grimm’s pedagogical practices, what is important to note are Grimm’s

representations of herself and her students. Her representation of herself as “the pedagogical Everyman” springs from her representation of her students. Grimm assumes her audience knows who and what she is talking about, and, in the process, she stifles the voices of her students. Too often, some writing instructors represent their students as incomplete versions of themselves, and Grimm’s representation seems to fit that category.

Richard Williamson also makes claims about the collective experience of English teachers everywhere in his article entitled “The Case for Filmmaking as English Composition,” when he writes, “It is obvious to the English instructor that lack of attention to detail leads to mediocrity in composition” (135). Williamson takes his assumption further when he talks about how English teachers are represented by students and how English teachers must weather the excuses that some students create to justify the quality of their essays. Williamson writes, “English instructors are notorious among students for their stringent grading, and these same instructors are subjected to long explanations of how many hours the writer took to produce a paper and the agony that went into its composition” (135-136).

I. Hashimoto, in his article “Voice as Juice: Some Reservations about Evangelic Composition” points out that some writing instructors embrace the representation of themselves as “saviors” of writing students who write without “voice” or “juice.” After noting the prominence that “voice” holds in the Bible by referring to people like John the Baptist, Elijah, and St. John the Divine, Hashimoto says that some writing instructors tap into the evangelical tendency and represent those students who have “voice” or “juice” as being “saved from damnation” (72). Students without “voice,” according to Hashimoto,

are “coldly rational, calculating: those with ‘voice’ are warm, full of spirit and energy, outgoing, capable of enjoying fun in the sun and roses in the spring” (73). At the same time, the teachers who provide those students with the pedagogy to acquire “voice” are represented as their “saviors,” rescuing their students from “eternal dullness, spiritual death, death by technology” (72).

Although many of the harsh representations of students such as “deficient,” “diseased,” or “savages” seemed to have disappeared from writing instructorship, there, nevertheless, remains what Marguerite Helmers calls “the essential dichotomy of the field: the students versus the teacher” (79). This dichotomy can be seen in what Phillip P. Marzluf describes as the “quasi-religious language of salvationism” (512) that Amardo Rodriguez uses in his book *Diversity of Liberation (II): Introducing a New Understanding of Diversity*. Rodriguez uses terms such as “moral, existential, and spiritual” (67) to describe how diversity is rarely depicted in academic scholarship. Although Rodriguez challenges “otherness” and presents diversity as a way of respecting differences and “forging relations” (xvi), the representations of teachers and students that are suggested in his text can seem to posit an “other” who needs to be liberated through diversity. On the one hand, it could be argued that Rodriguez implies that the teachers are the ones who need to be liberated from any assumptions or disempowering beliefs about diversity and students.

On the other hand, it could also be argued that in Rodriguez’s text, it is the students who are the ones in need of liberation. Given “the essential dichotomy of the field: the students versus the teacher,” it is difficult to ignore the dynamics of difference and power that gird the notion that someone needs to be freed from something.

Rodriguez seems to let his audience determine who needs to be liberated from what. However, when one considers how teachers have traditionally been constructed in writing instructorship as the ones who enter the chaotic world freshman composition to set things right, then Rodriguez's implied representation of teachers seems to follow the same pattern of previous representations in which the teacher saves the student.

In each of the above examples, the authors assume a friendly, familiar approach to their audience, positing themselves as the answer of the students' writing problems. The challenge with this perspective is that it leaves the audience without a position from which to present a counter argument. Furthermore, the teachers present these representations of themselves and students as "objective facts." It is important to note how these representations affect the way that some writing instructors approach their students. Because the representations are supported by disempowering assumptions about the roles of the students and the teachers, it is critical to filter out these assumptions and create new beliefs and about teachers and students that will support the students' growth.

Summary

This chapter presented a history of competing definitions of literacy. It discussed the three definitions of literacy as presented by the National Center for Educational Statistics—prose, document, and quantitative literacy. It also analyzed those three and the other competing definitions of literacy under the theoretical rubric of "dominant, residual, and emergent." The history of competing definitions of literacy stands opposite the history of conflicting representations of students. The purpose of this arrangement is to point out how the definitions of literacy influence the representations of students.

Finally, this chapter contains a historical analysis of some of the representations of writing teachers in writing instructorship, suggesting that the representations of students affect the representations of teachers. The purpose of the analyses in this chapter is to point out that before writing teachers can improve the field, they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

The next chapter presents six interviews with writing teachers and program administrators on how best to represent students. The purpose of the chapter is to promote alternative representations of students and discuss the fundamental nature of the relationship between teacher and student.

CHAPTER 4

PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENTS

This chapter presents six interviews from writing teachers and program administrators on how best to represent or categorize students. The interview methodology precedes the interviews, along with the definitions of the key terms associated with the interview methodology. Also, the details of the specific interview set come before the interviews. The interview questions come next. After the interviews, this chapter presents a summary of the discussion of the emergent themes that come out of the interviews.

The survey in this chapter is a convenience sample. Jim Burroway, author of “The Survey Says...What Everyone Should Know About Statistics,” defines a convenience sample in this way:

A convenience sample is just what it sounds like—a group of people who are readily available to the researcher. Members of this group are selected only according to the specific characteristics that the researcher cares about. These participants may come from any number of sources: patients from a clinic or medical practice, student volunteers, advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and so forth. But no matter how a convenience sample is recruited, the key point is this: since there is no attempt to match the characteristics of the convenience sample to the general population, the extent to which a convenience sample represents

the traits or behaviors of the general population cannot be known—and this is true regardless of how large the sample may be. (The Survey Says)

The data that follows from this convenience sample do not characterize the general population of writing instructors. It would be erroneous to draw a universal conclusion about college writing instructors based on the research from this convenience sample. However, the participants in this convenience sample are experienced, highly-qualified writing instructors, who have been teaching college writing for several years. Therefore, this convenience sample provides important insights into promoting alternative representations of students.

Methodology

The participants in this convenience sample came through referrals. In other words, the interviewees in this chapter came from an informal network of available writing instructors. I began with one person who has taught basic writing and is familiar with the work of Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu. This person referred me to another participant, who referred me to another participant, and so on. I sought participants who have taught basic writing for at least one year, who are currently in writing instruction or administration, who know the climate of writing instruction at their institution better than me, and who had time to be interviewed. I contacted each participant via email and described the origin and purpose of this study, explaining that it derives from *Representing the “Other.”* Once my subjects agreed to participate, I emailed them the following questions.

1. How have you seen representations of students called basic writers expressed in classroom practices? In journal articles? In dialogues among writing instructors?

2. Why do you think that writing students and students called basic writers have often been represented in disparaging ways?
3. What do you think is the best way to represent students?
4. What role does socioeconomic status play in the representations of students? Race? Gender?
5. What do the disparaging representations of students called basic writers say about writing teachers?
6. What are some of the representations of students called basic writers to which you have been exposed?
7. What effects do the disparaging representations of student called basic writers have on the profession as a whole?
8. How do literature scholars view or represent writing teachers? How do scholars in other academic disciplines represent their students?
9. Why is writing instruction delegated to graduate students at some institutions?
10. What is the connection between the commodification of teaching and the disparaging representations of students?
11. To what extent are writing instructors concerned about how they represent students? How they represent themselves in academic literature?
12. What can be done to effectively prepare students for college writing so that they won't need a remedial writing class?
13. How would you represent students called basic writers at your institution?
14. What material constraints affect the teaching of writing at your institution?

15. Discuss the social and historical location of any writing programs at your institution that are designed to help students called basic writers?
16. Describe the social and historical location of students called basic writers at your institution?

Realizing that some of the questions overlap and that some of them concentrate on the problem rather than the solution, I decided to ask my participants the most solution-oriented questions at the beginning of the interviews. I allowed at least 72 hours to pass from the time that I had sent the questions to the participants to the time I had conducted each interview. I explained to the participants that they could refuse to answer any question. I conducted each interview over the phone and I took notes during the interviews.

For clarification, I repeated each participant's response before asking another question. Furthermore, I emailed each participant the transcription of my notes of each interview before including them in this chapter.

The order of the interviews presented in this chapter differs from the order in which I conducted them. In other words, the first interview presented below is not the first interview that I conducted. Nevertheless, with each successive interview, my interviewing techniques became more fluid, and I was able to respond more effectively to participant as he or she spoke.

The research questions in this convenience sample emanated from research and a line of inquiry into promoting alternative representations of students. These research questions were designed to deepen the understanding of how other college writing instructors perceive the challenge of harmful representations of students. The questions

were designed to be open ended. What's more they were designed to bring out the purpose of this chapter—promoting alternative representations of students.

The Interviews

The following is a transcription of my interviews for promoting alternative representations of students. All of my interviewees have reviewed and approved this material. I have included their acknowledgments in the appendix. I asked my interviewees if I could reveal their identities in this chapter. Five of my six interviewees granted me permission to breach their identities. One did not. For that interviewee, I have presented a fictitious first name only, and I have removed any other identifying characteristics for that person. The biographical information about my interviewees comes from their university's websites. My first interview was with Peter Mortensen.

Peter is an Associate Professor of English and an Associate Provost Fellow at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests include the history of rhetoric and literacy in the United States and the ethnographic study of literacy in institutions. He is the co-author of Imagining Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States, and co-editor of Women and Literacy: Local and Global Inquiries for a New Century and Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies in Literacy. He has authored and co-authored several essays appearing in College English, College Composition and Communication, Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Rhetoric Review, Written Communication, and various edited volumes.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

PETER: “In our field’s published scholarship, it’s important for students to have opportunities to represent themselves. In teacher-research, for example, it’s possible for teachers to create instructional spaces in which students can study and reflect critically upon their own writing practices, and the cultural and institutional forces that, in part, shape them. Of course, some students may choose not to accept a teacher-researcher’s invitation to collaborate in scholarly inquiry, and that reluctance or refusal should be respected.”

QUESTION: What can be done to more effectively prepare students for college writing so that they will not need a remedial writing class?

PETER: “Let me start by saying that my teaching experience is limited to large, research-intensive universities, although I have some perspective on college writing instruction in other postsecondary settings by way of my work with Illinois’ state-wide course articulation initiative. What I’ve learned from teaching and administrative experience is that ‘remediation’ is not a very robust concept when it comes to trying to understand the complexity of how students succeed as writers. We could do better by finding ways to engage teachers across institutional boundaries, P-16, in serious conversations about how student writers’ repertoire build over time in various pedagogical contexts. Perhaps those conversations could then be articulated with policy discussions about funding priorities—again, P-16—for the teaching of writing. Also, we need to acknowledge that, beyond the realm of formal education, students learn to write—teach themselves to write—in many ways that serve their needs and interests. It’s important for teachers to know when to tap the talents that students hone in the extracurriculum, and when to respect the privacy of students’ non-academic writing lives.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to prepare teachers to teach students?

PETER: “My experience here is limited to helping English graduate students prepare to teach college writing. It’s important to prepare new writing teachers to succeed in multiple dimensions of their work. They need to understand why they’re teaching what they’re teaching—which means finding points of access to relevant conversations in the literature of writing studies. They need, too, to understand where their students are coming from, what their needs are, what aspirations they have, and where they most need to be challenged. This conceptual and operational understanding of writing pedagogy isn’t something than can be acquired in a week-long orientation or even a semester-long professional seminar after teaching has begun. So if we’re talking about the ‘best’ way to prepare teachers of college writing, I’d advocate intellectual work that moves from reading and discussion, to reflective observation, to tutoring under guidance of an experienced instructor, to closely mentored solo teaching. In all of this, it’s important for new teachers to cultivate a habit of discerning students’ needs and adjusting approaches to instruction accordingly.”

QUESTION: What role do race, gender, and socioeconomic status play in the representations of students?

PETER: “We know that access to higher education varies by race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status—and always has. We know, too, that students experience institutional climates differently depending on how they identify themselves and how they are identified by others. So one question for me is how accurately we represent these issues of access and experience in our accounts of student writing (and students writing).”

QUESTION: What connection do you see between immigration, the war on terror, and the representation of students?

PETER: “There’s no doubt in my mind that public discourse on immigration law and on the nation’s military posture abroad has influence how some majority teachers and students talk about those they perceive as different than themselves. Under the right circumstances, the writing classroom can be a good place where teachers and students together can explore how current events outside the institution change the climate for teaching and learning within it.”

QUESTION: How have you seen the representations of students expressed in classroom practices?

PETER: “In some rhetoric classes here, students are encouraged to research aspects of life at the institution. In such classes, it’s inevitable that students will write about one another. More times than not, students begin writing with an awareness that representing other students requires sensitivity. But translating that awareness into rhetorically effective prose—that’s where there’s plenty of open space for teaching and learning.”

QUESTION: What are some of the current representations of students to which you have been exposed?

PETER: “I pay a lot of attention to how students and their literacy are figured in bureaucratic and journalistic discourse—and in film and literature, too. So many negative representations of students’ literate ability convey a lack of faith in students’ abilities to adapt reading and writing to their—and their communities’—needs. It’s important, then, to understand who benefits from the cultural work that’s done by such representations.

That could well be a starting point for circulating counter-narratives that look at how it's institutions—not students—that most need remediation.”

QUESTION: What do the representations of students say about writing teachers and the profession as a whole?

PETER: “Among other things, representations of students tell us that writing teachers are often expected to lead students to outcomes that simply cannot be achieved given typical teachers’ workloads. We see that some teachers are open with students about the material constraints that affect their teaching. This honesty can be good from the perspective of those advocating for institutional reform. But what students learn from such disclosures, and how it affects their academic progress, is of course a complicated issue.”

QUESTION: What are the material constraints affecting the teaching of writing at your institution?

PETER: “Perhaps the biggest challenge is in preparing graduate students to be effective teachers of writing.. Although the class sizes are reasonable, instructors have a heavy workload, especially in view of their responsibility to make progress toward advanced degrees. I like our pedagogy, but we could do better—the effectiveness of undergraduate teaching would be enhanced—if we had more resources to support graduate student teaching..

QUESTION: How would you represent students at your institution?

PETER: “Students at my institution seem uniformly eager to succeed here and in the careers that await them after graduation. Some enter better prepared than others to attain that success. The undergraduate writing program is fairly responsive to this differential in

preparation. We teach college writing for some students in a two-semester sequence, with enrollment capped at 16. But for many students, first-year writing instruction takes place in a single semester, in courses with enrollment capped at 22.”

QUESTION: What do you think is the connection between the commodification of teaching and the disparaging representations of students?

PETER: “I’m understanding commodification here as pointing to arrangements where workload prevents instructors from doing more than delivering a centralized curriculum that can’t be tailored to students’ needs. In such scenarios, student failure is viewed as inefficiency that must be purged from the system, not as evidence of a system that may need to be changed so that teachers have some latitude, some agency, to address individual student’s needs.”

My next interview is with Phillip Marzluf. Phillip is an Assistant Professor of English and the Director of the Expository Writing Program at Kansas State University. His field of interest is composition and rhetoric. His work has appeared in Rhetoric Review, College Composition and Communication and Writing Program Administration. Currently, Phillip is conducting research on anti-religious rhetoric as well as examining teacher’s attitude toward evangelical literacy in writing courses. Phillip has conducted a pilot study on a diversity-based composition course for his university. He continues to pursue research into how conceptualizations of the ‘natural’ inform rhetorical theory and history, as well as pedagogical practices. Phillip’s other interests lie in ethics, technical writing and teacher training.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

PHILLIP: “I think that institutions need to revise their guidelines for training new teaching assistants, guidelines that one might see in a course handbook. Many of the previous representations of students come from a struggle with teacher lore. Perhaps one new way to represent students is ‘experienced versus inexperienced’ not ‘bad or lazy.’ GTAs and new instructors shouldn’t make snap, moralistic judgments that students are ‘bad or lazy’ when they do not perform to their [the GTAs’] expectations. The previous representations of students are trying to sell what teachers think and believe rather than how students are.”

QUESTION: What do the disparaging representations of students say about writing teachers?

PHILLIP: “The effect that representations of students have on the representations of teachers is that the teachers appear as if they aim to “salvationize” the students. That idea comes from eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric and then how it is translated in the nineteenth century in the United States—Susan Miller’s *Textual Carnivals* makes this point most clearly. Some of the hidden early ethnographic representations put composition studies into a missionary mode. In this way, teachers are made to feel sorry for or be disgusted by the students.”

QUESTION: What is the connection between the commodification of teaching and the disparaging representations of students?

PHILLIP: “In the process of making the teaching of writing a commodity, writing becomes a set of communication skills; errors become things that can be counted, and disparaging representations of students appear because of error counting. Another thing that happens to create disparaging representations of students is that they are

sometimes grouped with students who have different academic needs. For example, I have seen instances where so-called basic writing students are grouped with international students, or students with emotional problems. They are also grouped with students from what has become known as ‘Generation 1.5.’ This type of grouping of students comes from the commodification of teaching and contributes to the production and reception of harmful representations of so-called basic writing students.”

QUESTION: What role do race, gender, and socioeconomic status play in the representations of students?

PHILLIP: “I’ve heard some people describe the writing of black male students as ‘honest’ because it contained some poetic, spoken-word expressions. I’ve also heard some people describe the writing of engineering students as ‘frozen.’ Some people have described some young ladies as ‘a good girl’ or ‘a bad girl’ based on their writing. Some people have also said things like, ‘He writes like a C student’ or ‘That frat boy writes like an engineering student.’” Expressions like these often lead to the exoticizing of students. The style of African-American students, if considered as essential and authentic could lead to this exoticizing...I’ve also seen the ‘country voice’ of white rural males also lead in this direction.”

QUESTION: What can be done to more effectively prepare students for college writing so that they will not need a remedial writing class?

PHILLIP: “It seems like many of the students who become known as basic writers are being set up for failure. Additional tutoring would help. There also needs to be more programs for students who are labeled as ‘at risk.’ These issues that we are discussing overlap with John Ogbu’s research on cultural issues and one way to prepare

students are to reject an incredibly complicated set of assumptions about literacy and performance that are connected to issues of race, gender, and class. There appear to be no simple solutions—basically, we need to find ways for students to navigate what might be vastly different [socioeconomic] class expectations at the university.

QUESTION: What material constraints affect the teaching of writing at your institution?

PHILLIP: “There is a lack of funding. We also get no institutional support for writing students. As a result, graduate students have to work.”

QUESTION: What effects do the disparaging representations of students have on the profession as a whole?

PHILLIP: “The teaching of writing is often viewed as a service discipline, a stepping stone discipline. Some people look at writing instruction as a fundamentally, content-less discipline. One of our most important functions in writing instruction is to deal with ideas, not errors. Many people get that idea confused.”

QUESTION: To what extent are writing instructors concerned about how they represent students?

PHILLIP: “Some people who teach writing are in the field but not in the field.” That is, some people who teach writing are on the perimeter of the profession and they have probably never read a *CCC*’s article. To that degree, those writing instructors are not really concerned about how they represent students.”

QUESTION: Why is writing instruction delegated to graduate students at some institutions?

PHILLIP: “The reasons for graduate students teaching has probably more to do with institutional histories and, especially, how literature graduate programs depend upon graduate-students-as-composition-teachers to survive.”

QUESTION: How would you represent students at your institution?

PHILLIP: “At this university, the majority of ‘basic writers’ will be white males—or at least that’s how it appears the GTAs in the department describe it. Without firm statistics here, there is at least the perception that African-American males disproportionately struggle. When it comes down to it in our final portfolio assessment this is largely due to concerns over editing—and then I am at times need to figure out if these students are being scrutinized because of dialectical issues or for their inability to live up to other middle-class linguistic markers.”

QUESTION: Can you discuss the social and historical location of any writing programs at your institution that are designed to help students?

PHILLIP: “We have a PILOTS program designed for first generation and at-risk students. One of the chief concerns with teachers in our program is that we help our students to fight the assumption that they are dumb. This program is like the Upward Bound program in that we teach our students that they have more ability and that they are increasing it each semester.”

My next interview is with Keith Gumerky. Keith is the Associate Director of the First Year Writing Program at Temple University. Keith is the author of “Repression, Inversion and Modernity: A Freudian Reading of Henry Blake Fuller’s Bertram Cope’s

Year.” Keith has written articles about several well-known authors and a composition reader.

QUESTION: Can you discuss the social and historical location of any writing programs at your institution that are designed to help students?

KEITH: “We had a program called ELECT, which stands for English Language Enrichment Center Training. Under this program there was the ELECT reading and the ELECT writing curriculum. ELECT was a non-credit course; students either passed or repeated the course until they passed. Many students couldn’t get pass the “gate” that had been set up by this program. In the 1990s, we had a course called the Introduction to Academic Discourse. This course was not billed or promoted as a remedial class. It raised the bar for writing students. By comparison, the ELECT guidelines were undefined. The Introduction to Academic Discourse offered students four credits toward graduation. Students had to earn a C- or above in order to pass. Technically, this class was not a part of the curriculum. Because the course is so well structured, students rarely repeat the course. For the most part, our university was pretty much an open admissions institution when I started. Since then, the university has raised the standards and removed the talk of the class being remedial. Students are placed into a writing course rather than dropped in as a result of failing a standardized test. The percentage of students who have taken the Introduction to Academic Discourse has gone up. The course focuses on what we will teach the students, rather than an area in which there would seem to be a deficiency.”

QUESTION: What are some of the representations of students to which you have been exposed?

KEITH: “In our program, we do not speak negatively about our students in the same way some other teachers do outside of a writing class. We forbid our staff to say that our ‘students can’t write.’ I am in charge of the staffing for our first-year writing program and I would not hire or rehire a staff member if he or she thinks or talks negatively about our students. We like to say that our students simply have not been shown what they need to know. Outside of our department, I have heard some senior tenured faculty speak negatively of writing students, but we prohibit members of our department to do that.”

QUESTION: What do the disparaging representations of students say about writing teachers?

KEITH: “In our department, we view our teachers as valued members of our staff. Outside of our department, however, some faculty members say that they do not understand how our teachers can do what they do. So I guess that some of the negative talk about writing students has invited some faculty members outside of our department to question members inside of our department about how and why they do what they do. Our university, however, has worked hard to move away from that model of thinking.”

QUESTION: What can be done to more effectively prepare students for college writing so that they will not need a remedial writing class?

KEITH: “I think that there needs to be more communication between the high schools and the colleges about what is taught in the high schools and what is expected at the colleges. We need to take the college model and work it back through the high schools. There is a program for high school writing students in our city that reaches out to students who have stayed in school and have done reasonably well. The students are

invited to the summer bridge program, which is a six-week college prep course. We try to keep the students most at risk together in dedicated sections of the pre-composition class as this offers directed instruction for their needs. It also increases their chances of retention.

QUESTION: What material constraints affect the teaching of writing at your institution?

KEITH: “We have non-tenured track professors, graduate students, and adjuncts teaching writing. Fully 90% of our Introduction to Academic Discourse classes are taught by non-tenured track professors. Over the years, our classes have grown, making it more challenging to give personal attention to each student.”

QUESTION: How would you represent students at your institution?

KEITH: “Many of our writing students are first-generation commuter students. They are very vocal and opinionated. I think that our curriculum allows our students to speak up on a variety of issues. Within our writing classrooms, we encourage peer review of essays and group work. These activities allow our students to participate in their learning while addressing any number of issues.”

QUESTION: What role do race, gender, and socioeconomic status play in the production and reception of representations of students?

KEITH: “Because of the way that we train our staff, I would suggest that those factors are not as much a factor here at our university. Although we are centrally located within an urban area, we are not a predominantly African-American school, as some people falsely believe. Because of the way that we train our staff and because of the diversity within our classrooms, there are fewer of the “Others.”

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

KEITH: “It is important to change the culture of writing classes from non-credit to credit. It is also important to change the thinking so that students feel like insiders, not outsiders. Another suggestion is to be sure our expectations of writing students are consistent with other university classes. People should resist the term “remedial.” Finally, we need to demonstrate to others how valuable a writing course is in a student’s education.

My next interview was with Eli Goldblatt. Eli serves as an Associate Professor of English and the Director First-Year Writing at Temple University. He works at his university as a composition/literacy researcher and a creative writer. In composition, his focus in Round My Way: Authority and Double Consciousness in Three Urban High School Writers was on authority in writing, but in recent years he has published on literacy autobiography and community-based learning. His essay “Alinsky’s Reveille: A Community-Organizing Model for Neighborhood-Based Literacy Projects” won the 2005 Ohmann Award in College English. Eli’s focus in a recent scholarly publication was on authority in writing, but in recent years he has published on literacy autobiography and community-based learning. Eli continues to explore literacy autobiography and community-based learning in other scholarly projects. Eli’s poems have been published in several magazines; he has written four books of poetry and two children’s books.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

ELI: “I would suggest that the people who run college writing programs need to spend some time in some of the high schools so that they can see what the students have

been told about college. They need to see the curriculum. They need to learn much about the developmental writing process. It seems that some teachers see writing students as non-human. They need to see the students as humans.

QUESTION: What are some of the representations of students to which you have been exposed?

ELI: “Though much of the previous language has died, some has remained. I’ve heard some teachers use terms like ‘illiterate students.’ I’ve heard other teachers say things like, ‘The students don’t buy their books or read their assignments. Much of the conversation does not appear to be aimed at a specific group of students. However the language is careful because of the history of ways of talking about students. The language at our university and in our writing program is about need, what the students need. There is never a sense in our writing program that we have to root any students out.”

QUESTION: Can you describe the social and historical location of any writing programs at your institution that are designed to help students?

ELI: “There has been a big change in the writing programs here at our college. We used to offer a complex basic writing course called ELECT, in which a student had to write essays until he or she passed the course. ELECT was a non-credit course, separate from the regular writing classes. It was taught by graduate students and it originated at or around the time of Open Admissions. In fact, although our university is a state affiliated school, it was very similar to CUNY. Some students survived ELECT. Some didn’t. Essentially, ELECT was a course designed to sift students out. Today our writing course is designed to give students experiences with academic discourse that will prepare them

for later courses where expectations for literacy and critical thinking are often unspoken but quite intense. The current course for basic writers is called Introduction to Academic Discourse and is a 4-credit course that counts toward graduation.”

My next interview was with Julie. Julie is a doctoral candidate in rhetoric and composition at a mid-Atlantic university. She has taught freshman composition and literature courses at her mid-Atlantic university, and she has worked for literacy programs, teaching fundamental application of reading and writing principles. She currently works in the writing center at her mid-Atlantic university.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

JULIE: “Writing teachers should try not to remedialize basic writing. It is important to think of all students as having the same talent or skill level. The writing that a student learns in K-12 is one type of writing. College writing is another type that everyone can learn, and the students have not learned those essential writing skills yet. There should also be an emphasis on what students can do rather than what they can’t do. I like to think of the students in basic writing classes as interested, active learners who have never learned certain things.”

QUESTION: How have you seen representations of students expressed in classroom practices, journal articles, and in dialogues among writing instructors?

JULIE: “In disturbing ways. Some ways of talking about non-native speakers of English present a model of deficiency. I’ve also seen some of these ways expressed in the drills as skills classroom practices. In conversations among colleagues, I’ve heard some people say things like ‘those students don’t know how to read; they don’t know

how to write.' There is sometimes a real sense of helplessness in the conversations among writing teachers."

QUESTION: What do the disparaging representations of students say about writing teachers?

JULIE: "In some of the articles that I've read and the conversations that I've overheard, teachers are represented as saviors who must save the students from themselves. At other times, the teachers are re-presented as the ones who must save the students from their backgrounds.

QUESTION: What material constraints affect the teaching of writing at your institution?

JULIE: "Writing is taught by graduate students, adjuncts, and lecturers. Because of this feature, the level of commitment to the students' welfare can sometimes falter. Our program is committed to the development of teachers through training. Some of our graduate students who teach writing study literature and that difference in concentration can affect the understanding of students and what needs to be done to serve them effectively."

QUESTION: What role do race, gender, and socioeconomic status play in the representations of students?

JULIE: "Some of the more negative representations seem to single out men more than women. Some authors depict poor students and students of color as being deficient in writing and thinking."

QUESTION: What effects have the war on terror and immigration had on the representations of students?

JULIE: “I haven’t seen any connection between those issues and the way that some teachers think about writing students. I did see, however, how several teachers in our ESL writing course experienced this phenomenon and reported on it in an assignment at a recent department workshop and conference. The assignment asked the students to discuss their opinions on the Iraq war and America’s moral authority on the world stage. Nearly all of my foreign-born students refused to comply with the assignment. Some people may have misinterpreted their refusal to comply as a sign of writing deficiency. However, I saw the students’ resistance to the assignment as a sign of the anti-American sentiment that is sweeping the world because of the Iraq war.”

My final interview was with Vincent Kling. Vincent is a tenured professor of English and a Fulbright scholar at La Salle University. At La Salle, Vincent has taught numerous courses in freshman writing, basic writing, poetry, and European and American fiction. As a guest professor at the University of Vienna, Vincent has taught a course in literary translation. He is the author of a forthcoming translation of the scholarly work and short fiction of a Heimito von Doderer. Vincent serves as a member of the leadership institute at La Salle University, and he endeavors to improve his teaching by bringing it more into alignment with the principles of the university’s founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

QUESTION: What do you think is the best way to represent students?

VINCENT: “Full-time English department faculty used to teach writing at

our university. There needs to be another policy like that whereby a faculty member who teaches literature would be required to teach one section of writing per year or per semester. In this way, the students would benefit from the faculty member's experience and probably improve their writing skills. In addition, some English teachers need to think of writing instruction as a high-profile position and, as such, teaching portfolios need to be reviewed regularly."

QUESTION: How have you seen representations of students express in classroom practices? In journal articles? In dialogues among writing instructors?

VINCENT: "I haven't seen much differentiation in the way that some people talk about students. I've heard things like 'They don't want to work' and 'They are always unprepared.' When I hear things like that, I often wonder "What are you, the faculty member, trying to do?" "Who are you trying to motivate?" Some faculty seem to do very little to motivate their students. For example, some faculty members don't ask the students to work. In other words, some faculty members don't tell the students what they expect and why it is important."

QUESTION: Why do you think that writing students and students have often been represented in disparaging ways?

VINCENT: "The judgments that are made about basic writers are based on what some people think that the students lack. Those judgments, however, are equally applicable to all students. What is interesting to note is that some of the same faculty members who talk about students in those disparaging terms are the same ones who are unclear in what they expect from their students."

QUESTION: What are some of the representations of students to which you have been exposed?

VINCENT: “They don’t know this or they can’t do that. But why should the students do what a writing teacher asks? Why should the students learn to write in academic prose? The students need to know why. Teachers need to present the reasons for writing in academic prose. They need to tell the student the expectations of a class and they also need to explain the benefits of learning to write this way.”

QUESTION: What do the disparaging representations of student called basic writers say about writing teachers?

VINCENT: “They say that some writing teachers tend to do some ‘othering’ when talking about students. That ‘othering’ reflects badly back on to the teachers. In our profession, however, the high-school teachers are the real heroes. They are the ones who do the difficult work that prepares students for a college writing class. There’s no incentive, however for high school English teachers to do the work they do. Students shouldn’t be penalized for this situation, however. There needs to be some objective for the students and an incentive for the teachers.”

QUESTION: How do scholars in other academic disciplines represent their students?

VINCENT: “I’ve heard professors in other academic disciplines say that their students tend to compartmentalize their thinking about writing. I’ve also heard some professors say the same criticisms about their students that some writing teachers say about writing students. For example, some of them say that their students don’t want to

do anything. In either case or in various disciplines, there tends to be considerable disparagement.”

QUESTION: Why do you think that writing students, in general, and students in particular have often been represented in disparaging ways?

VINCENT: “There used to be an unspoken, unwritten tradition in teaching to which some teachers would adhere that sought to terrify the students. The more insulting that some teachers could be towards students, the better. That tradition comes from a European nineteenth century style of teaching, and there used to be considerable admiration for that style. Unfortunately, there is a history of elitism in education that produced a measure of cultural condescension.”

Analysis

Spradley says that in the search for cultural themes, some cognitive principles appear again and again (189). These principles, Spradley continues, are not expressed by the people within a particular culture “even though they know the cultural principle and use it to organize their behavior and interpret experience” (188). Therefore, researchers must make inferences about these principles (188). I read my interviews several times, as Spradley recommends. As I read them, I looked for things such as similar experiences, ideas, and uses of language. I also looked for relationships between explicit and tacit themes. Based on some of the specific things that my interviewees have stated, I have drawn the following conclusions:

- 1. There seems to be a generally low regard for college writing instruction.**

Many of my interviewees talked about a lack of funding or resources for college writing instruction. Peter, for example, talks about how the effectiveness of undergraduate teaching at his institution could be enhanced “if we had more resources to support graduate student teaching” (109). Phillip asserts, “There is a lack of funding. We get no institutional support for writing students” (113).

“As a result,” Phillip continues, “graduate students have to work” (113). My experience throughout graduate school supports Phillip’s observation, as I have had to complete this study while working two part-time jobs. Arguably, the academic departments that receive the majority of a university’s funds are the probably considered more important than those that receive a lesser amount. This observation recognizes that several other factors go into decisions about budget cuts and resource allocation. Nevertheless, it could be said that human beings spend much of their time responding to things that are urgent and important. And if approximately 40% of the people involved in a study talk about a scarcity of resources for a particular endeavor, one cannot help wonder where the money is going and what it means when college writing instruction gets so little.

Another observation that seems to support the idea that there is a general lack of regard for college writing instruction is the fact that it is delegated to graduate students. Peter, Phillip, Keith and Julie talk about how college writing is taught at their institutions by non-tenured track professors, adjuncts, and graduate students. Why? Notwithstanding the host of replies that could be offered to explain this phenomenon, would it not make sense for some of the best minds in English studies to work with students writers who need their help the most? All of life is a study of attention. Whatever draws an

individual's attention grows because that individual gives it so much attention. The fact that non-tenure track professors, adjuncts, and graduate students teach college writing could suggest that college writing is not worth the attention.

A third factor that suggests that writing instruction is held in low regard is the direct testimony of three of my interviewees. Vincent says, "Some writing teachers need to think of writing as a high-profile position" (123). Phillip says, "The teaching of writing is often viewed as a service discipline, a stepping stone discipline" (113) He adds, "Some people look at writing instruction as a fundamentally content-less discipline" (113). With testimony like that, it is easy to conclude that some people hold college writing instruction in low regard. If some of those who think of college writing instruction as low-profile, service discipline are the adjuncts, non-tenured track professors, and graduate students, then one must ask, "Where does that idea come from?" Does it come from idle conversation among graduate students in a bullpen area? Does it come from scholars in other academic disciplines who value their discipline over others? Does it come from a system that for some students is a "set up for failure" (Phillip, 112)?

Rather than place blame on any one person, place or thing, this study endorses empowerment of writing instructors by promoting alternative representations of students. It could be inferred that a nineteenth century college composition scholar came up with Harvard's representation of college composition students. Nevertheless, it would seem that one step toward a solution is to dispel the seeming low regard for college writing instruction—and that responsibility begins with the thinking of writing instructors.

2. There seems to be a need for improved teacher training.

Peter speculates that at his university “the biggest challenge is in preparing graduate students to be effective writing teachers” (109). He suggests that college writing instruction move “from reading and discussion, to reflective observation, to tutoring under guidance of an experienced instructor, to closely mentored solo teaching” (107). When discussing the best way to represent students, Phillip says, “I think that institutions need to revise their guidelines for training new teaching assistants, guidelines that one might see in a course handbook” (110). Keith and Eli spoke highly of their writing program. They emphasized some of the progress that has been made, while underlining a departure from some writing programs and teacher training that Peter and Phillip address.

Vincent, however, talks about some college composition instructors who “seem to do very little to motivate their students” (124). This portrait of pedagogical potpourri suggests that there is a need for improved teacher training. In *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World’s Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*, James W. Stigler and James Hiebert argue than in America, it is the teaching, not the teachers that must be changed. Although their study is based on the conclusions of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Stigler and Hiebert’s suggestions seem applicable to any classroom subject because they talk about improving how teachers teach rather than updating the facilities in which teachers teach. At any rate, the need for improved methods for teacher training seems to be one of the themes that came up repeatedly in my interviews.

3. The Harvard legacy seems to be present in some of today’s representations of students.

This observation is not new. Nevertheless, it is a conclusion that can be drawn from some of the things that my interviewees said. For example, although Eli and Keith talked about the wonderful work that their institution is doing to promote alternative representations of students, Keith said that his institution endeavors to keep the students “most at risk” together in dedicated sections of college composition (117). At risk of what? Failing? Succeeding? And who are these students who are “most at risk?” If a teacher represents a student as being “most at risk,” then that representation reflects teacher’s expectations of the student.

Moreover, from the work of educators like Robert Rosenthal and Marva Collins one can see that there is a connection between teacher expectation and student performance. I believe that Keith meant no harm. Just as some of the writing instructors at the time of Open Admissions came up with ways of organizing their thoughts and experience, I submit that Keith inadvertently used that term. Nevertheless, his representation points to the nineteenth century stranglehold that Harvard’s entrance examination has on the twenty-first century production and reception of representations of students.

Phillip’s and Vincent’s testimony also points to the Harvard influence. Phillip affirms some of the evidence in chapter three of this study when he says that some of today’s ideologies in writing instructorship emerged “from eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric” (111) and were “translated in the nineteenth century in the United States” (111).

Vincent describes a tacit assumption in writing instructorship as “an unspoken, unwritten tradition in teaching...that sought to terrify the students” (125). He links this underlying belief to a “nineteenth century style of teaching” that demonstrates itself in

representations such as “they don’t want to work” (124) and “they are always unprepared” (124). Julie’s testimony supports Vincent’s and Phillip’s when she says that she has heard things like, “those students don’t know how to read” (121) and “they don’t know how to write” (121).

Can it be assumed that students are in a class because they want to learn to read and write? Is belittling students the best way to get them to learn? Inasmuch as some students appear not to be learning, it seems that any type of destructive criticism of the students detracts from the goal of learning. Furthermore, this destructive criticism holds the scholar down just as much as the student. The savior representation of teachers that Julie talks about on page 121 and Phillip talks about on page 111 pull writing instructors down rather than exalt them to the position of savior. In order to bring the savior representation into reality, teachers must focus on what they do not want or like—the weaknesses of the students.

Additionally, by concentrating on the weaknesses of the students, teachers magnify those weaknesses instead of minimizing them through scholarship and effort. Phillip acknowledged a universal theme from this study when he said, “there appear to be no simple solutions” (112). Nevertheless, since it seems that some writing instructors use power and difference to represent the “Other,” then it would seem that those writing instructors must break the shackles of nineteenth century rhetoric and liberate themselves and their students.

4. In the representations of students, there appears to be a false dichotomy between the teacher and student.

The representations of students discussed in chapters three and four in this study suggest that some writing instructors see distinct lines of separation between themselves and their students. Regardless of how positive or negative the representation, there appears to be a belief among some writing instructors that students are disconnected from teachers, even though both teachers and students are parts of the same endeavor called “education.” That sense of separation seems to present itself in the ways that some writing instructors evaluate their students’ work. Phillip, for example, talks about how some of the writing students at his institution endure critiques based on “middle-class linguistic markers” (114). Those “middle-class linguistic markers” erect hurdles or boundaries between where students are in their development as writers and where they could go. The presence of these middle class linguistic markers supports the notion of a false dichotomy between teacher and student.

Peter’s testimony about “remediation” also supports the presence of a false dichotomy that seems to exist in the minds of some writing instructors. He says, “Remediation is not a very robust concept when it comes to trying to understand the complexity of how students succeed as writers” (106). He adds that writing instructors would benefit if they sought to appreciate “how student writers build repertoire over time in various pedagogical contexts” (106). In light of Peter’s claims, which come from his years of teaching and administrative experience, I wondered why remediation is not a very robust concept among some writing instructors.

In other words, if “remediation” means “help,” why would some writing instructors be unwilling to help their students?” One reason is that some writing instructors accept a false dichotomy that seems to exist between teacher and student.

That false dichotomy could have arisen from the seemingly low regard for writing instruction. That false dichotomy exaggerates difference and power, isolates teachers and students, and fosters division and mistrust. In this chapter, Eli and Vincent praised the efforts of high school English teachers. Vincent hailed high school teachers as “the real heroes” (125). Eli suggests that high school teachers see their students as humans (119). Perhaps some high school English teachers see beyond the false dichotomy and understand the interdependence that all teachers and students have.

Although the right side of the brain functions differently from the left, they are parts of the same organ and one side cannot exist without the other. In the same way, teachers and students function differently but they are a part of the same whole. The concept of teacher exists only in relation to the concept of student. If teachers have no students to teach, then the concept of teaching dies. Similarly, if students have no teachers from whom they can learn, then the concept of learning dies, even if one uses the term teacher abstractly. The dichotomy between teacher and student that seems to exist in the representations of students is false.

5. The challenge of power and difference in the production and reception of representations of students starts and ends with writing instructors.

In the comic strip *Pogo*, Walter Kelly rose to prominence with the politically astute expression, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” Kelly’s words seem to capture the understanding expressed by all of my interviewees—the solution to the challenges of power and difference in the production and reception of representations of students starts and ends with writing instructors. Peter for example, talks about how writing instructors

can and should “create instructional spaces in which students can study and reflect critically upon their own writing practices, and the cultural and institutional forces that, in part, shape them” (105).

Although Peter suggests that students should represent themselves, he alludes to the role that writing instructors can play in eliminating any harmful representations of students. The first step, Peter suggests, is to create “instructional spaces” that thrive without representations of students that are based on power and difference. Those instructional spaces, as Phillip implies, must also be a place where there is no “struggle with teacher lore” (110). That lore must have begun in the minds of some college composition instructors. Therefore, it must end in the minds of any college composition instructors who are concerned about the welfare of students and teachers who contend with harmful representations of them that are presented as “objective facts.” Peter’s and Phillip’s testimony suggests that the responsibility for change rests with writing instructors.

The good work that Keith and Eli are doing at their institution also hints that the challenge of power and difference in the production and reception of representations of students starts and ends with writing instructors. Keith for instance, spoke proudly of how his university “has worked hard to move away from that model of thinking” (116). Moreover, Eli gratefully noted how the writing course at his university, which was at one time a non-credit course, is currently “a 4-credit course that counts toward graduation” (120). These scholars not only know that the responsibility for improvement starts and ends with writing instructors, but they also have taken some steps toward improvement. Eli and Keith’s efforts offer hope to thwarting a long-standing ideology that may have

produced some short-term gains, but seemingly produced more long term damage by giving the impression that “basic writers are being set up for failure” (Phillip 112).

Although she is on the threshold of earning her doctorate, Julie knows that responsibility for improvement rests squarely on the shoulders of writing instructors. Julie points to the need for a different mindset when she says, “Writing teachers should try not to remedialize basic writing” (120). In order to reach Julie’s objective, it seems that writing instructors should adhere to Vincent’s suggestion and “think of writing instruction as a high-profile position” (123). Even though “there appear to be no simple solutions,” as Phillip claims, he Vincent and Julie all seem to agree that challenge of power and difference in the production and reception of representations of students starts and begins with writing instructors, for “we have met the enemy and he is us.”

Summary

In the chapter, I presented six interviews from writing teachers and program administrators on how best to represent or categorize students. Before the interviews, I outlined my interview methodology; defined the terms associated with my interview methodology; and described the details of my specific interview set. Next, I stated my interview questions. After the interviews, I summarized and discussed the emergent themes that came out the interviews. In the next chapter, I present a summary of my study including my procedures and findings, conclusions, and suggestions for further discussion and research. I also offer my thoughts on how best to represent students.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

In this chapter, I present a summary of my study including my procedures and findings, conclusions, and suggestions for further discussion and research.

Summary of Procedures

In this study, I intended to analyze difference and power in the production and reception of representations of college composition students, especially students. I explored the history competing definitions of literacy; the evolution of dominant, residual and emergent definitions of literacy; the history of conflicting representations of students; and the effect of the representations students on the representations of teachers. In this study, I also promoted alternative representations of students by interviewing variously situated teachers and program administrators and locating their representations in the specific material contexts in which the teachers work.

Six writing instructors participated in this study by answering questions that were sent to them via email and asked during telephone conversations. I wrote the participants' responses during the interviews and I repeated their responses for clarity before asking any subsequent questions. Some interviews lasted one hour; others took place in less time. I transcribed the respondents' answers and I noted patterns in their replies.

Finally, I kept notes of from each interview. In the next section, I present a summary and discussion of my findings for each of my research questions.

Research Question One

What effect does difference and power have in the production and reception of representations of students?

Summary of the Findings: Research Question One

When I began this study, I sought a methodology to the production and reception of representations of students. I researched books, articles, journals, and periodicals looking for a system or strategy for how representations of students were produced. After months of finding no leads, I spoke with Bruce Horner, and he suggested that I consider my study to be an investigation into the competing definitions of literacy. I looked into the competing definitions of literacy and reported my findings in chapter three of this study. From my findings, I saw there has never been agreement about the definition of literacy. Furthermore, just as there has never been agreement about literacy, there has never been agreement about the definition of the terms “basic writing” or “basic writer.” It was at that point that I saw a connection between definitions of literacy and representations of students.

Discussion: Research Question One

At the beginning of the teacher/student relationship, the teacher has a measure of power because the teacher is the one who has more knowledge about the subject than the student does. With that power or knowledge, the teacher has the privilege to make a statement or pass on a representation that is assumed true. The examples in this study demonstrate how a representation of student called basic writers can be framed as knowledge and passed on as true especially when that representation is couched in a discussion about pedagogy. Nearly all of the works that I analyzed in chapter three show

how some writing instructors made a statement about their students' identity that was passed on as an objective fact. The knowledge or power that is passed off in the representation sets up an "Other," and because the knowledge comes from someone with a measure of ethos, what that scholar says can sometimes be accepted as truth.

Representations of students are produced within the discourse of articles and conversations. When a college composition scholar produces a representation of a student, that representation becomes powerful when that scholar's audience accepts it as true. The audience that accepts the representation without questioning its authenticity becomes the "other" at the time the representation is transmitted because prior to the transmittal, the audience lacks an understanding of the representation's meaning. Later, a writing instructors' audience can assume the same power as the instructor producing the representation because the audience may have similar beliefs about writing students. In such a case, the power is assumed by the audience, leaving the student called a basic writer as the only "Other." Also, given the correlation between teacher expectations and student performance, when students study under a curriculum that represents them as the "Other," the students assume that representation and surrender any power they could assume in the situation.

Difference separates the identity of the writing instructors from the students. It divides the teachers and students in thinking, time, beliefs, and expectations. Difference empirically separates fact from reason; it assumes that all students need to be placed in one group, category or class with other students who are considered the "Other" without consideration of the students' needs, skills, or experiences. Difference helps some writing instructors to assume a place of power in the teacher student relationship that

extends beyond the nature of the relationship. In the basic writing classroom, difference separates the two parties who should be united in their efforts.

In conclusion, difference and power re-present students. Those two forces marginalize the student in relation to teachers, composition studies, and to the academy. Difference and power ignore the material constraints under which students work in the college composition classroom. They also overlook the conditions that preceded the student's arrival in the college composition classroom by defining or representing students based on standards such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, writing experience, oral v. literate cultures, etc. Difference and power do not take into account the fundamental nature of the relationship between teacher and student, and they seem to divert one's attention away from the one thing that is critical to a college writing classroom—the student's writing. Finally, difference and power seem to represent the students as fixed in an academic landscape where college writing is misrepresented as a huge, arduous rite of passage rather than as a continuous process of learning and growth in which everyone periodically needs help.

Research Question Two

What effect does difference and power have on the production and reception of representations of teachers of writing?

Summary of the Findings: Research Question Two

Anyone who re-presents another person, place, or thing creates a representation of herself at the same time. It could be said that the re-presentation reflects not only that

person's knowledge, but also that person's attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Those attitudes, beliefs, and expectations could be a manifestation of what is going on with re-presenter at that moment in time, or at the time the re-presenter interacted with the things that she is re-presenting. In either case, one argument is being made and one is being silenced.

Marguerite Helmers talks about how in some instances teachers have been represented in writing instructorship as "stock characters," or "heroes," or "the pedagogical Everyman," or "victims." Regardless of representation, it seems that if some writing instructors are re-presenting students in disparaging ways, they are implicitly re-presenting themselves in disparaging ways, too. The implied representation may not be as disparaging as "'boneheads,'" "barbarians," or "not college material."

However, if one looks at the ways that some writing instructors have glibly passed off vague, subjective representations of writing students in general and students in particular, one can see that another re-presentation being made at the same time. Furthermore, those seemingly positive representations such as "hero" are sometimes being passed off as an "objective facts" about the one doing the re-presenting and the one being re-presented. In either case, the re-presentations employ difference and power in harmful ways.

Discussion: Research Question Two

All of my interviewees produced very positive representations of students and came up with wonderful suggestions for improvement. One of the interviewees in this study talked about the need to think of the teaching of writing as a "high-profile position." This claim suggests that the teaching of writing is or could be thought of as a

low-profile position. Some of the other testimonies in this study that spoke of “a lack of funding” and “shabby working conditions” supports this assertion. Although one could rationalize the production and reception of disparaging representations of students based on “knowledge,” it could be challenging to validate the disparaging representations given the competing definitions of literacy, the contending descriptions of basic writing and the conflicting representations students.

However, given the seemingly low regard for writing teachers, writing students, and the teaching of writing, it would seem that a disparaging representation of students could emerge from someone with a measure of power or knowledge who is possibly held in low regard by others. In a situation like this, the one with the power or knowledge could be seen as the “Other” by her peers or colleagues. In any event, the process of selection and exclusion, the process of difference and power, grinds forward and rolls over the ones who are powerless—the students. It seems that difference and power have the same effect on teachers of writing as the students of writing. Programs such as the one described by Keith and Eli offer hope for eliminating disparaging representations of students and teachers that are presented as objective facts. This study attempted to help in those efforts by providing a historical look at the competing definitions of literacy and the conflicting representations of students *and* teachers.

Research Question Three

What are the differences between yesterday’s and today’s representations of students?

Summary of Findings: Research Question Three

By all accounts, the representation of the writing students in Harvard's nineteenth entrance examination was harsh. One can only imagine how the writing students at Harvard may have felt if they had known that their some of their professors or administrators had considered them as "the lower order and in some ways the 'animal' order in need of scrubbing" (85). It would be nice to think that the representations of writing students would have changed from such a medieval description. But they haven't.

When one considers the twentieth century, open admissions representations of the students at City College of New York who became known as basic writers, one can argue that very little has changed between the nineteenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-first centuries. Is it any less damaging to the student to represent her as a "barbarian" instead of as an "animal?" Is it any less damaging to the student to represent her as "exotic" instead of as a "barbarian?" Is it any less damaging to writing instructors and composition studies to represent students in disparaging ways?

Since the issue of conflicting representations of students has been around for a long time, the challenge to improve the representations of writing students in general, and students in particular, will be around for a long time. The first step in addressing this challenge is to acknowledge its existence and to identify all of the possible causes that brought it about in the first place. Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu have done an outstanding job in completing that task. They have also done a masterful job in identifying the possible solutions and the opportunities for growth within the challenge. This study is an attempt to respond to their call for solutions.

Discussion: Research Question Three

After noting the similarities between the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century representations of writing students, perhaps another question to ask is “Why haven’t the representations of students improved since the nineteenth century?” This challenge of difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students is fraught with so many issues that are beyond the scope of this study.

Although today’s representations of students have become a little more politically correct so that today some writing instructors are not calling their students “animals,” the harm that is being done to the students because of the pejorative nature of those representations is still the same. To call someone “deficient,” “underachieving” or “basic” is not much different than calling them “animal” because in either case an “Other” is created and the students are harmed the most by these negative, conflicting representations. The testimony in chapter four demonstrates that very little has changed in the ways that difference and power are used in the production and reception of representations of students.

Marguerite Helmers says that the story of composition is such that it has always been conceived as a “marginalized discipline” that is subservient to literature (134). If that is the case, it is any wonder that difference and power would be used in the production and reception of representations of writing students in general, and students in particular? Perhaps one part of the solution is to modify the ways that scholars perceive composition studies, especially since there is little difference between the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first representations of writing students.

Research Question Four

What is the best way to represent students?

Summary of Findings: Research Question Four

One of the participants in my study suggested that students should represent themselves. This suggestion presupposes that the space in which students would be a safe space, not a space of conflict. Some of the other answers to this question that came from my interviewees call for looking at college composition from the students' perspective, thinking of students as humans, improving the perception of college composition, resisting previous paradigms of college composition, and accentuating the good within students.

Although the idea of allowing the students to represent themselves relieves writing instructors of some responsibility, there is clearly a need to change the ideas, expectations, and beliefs, about college composition and students, and that need or responsibility rests with writing instructors. This claim is not to suggest that the scholar who recommended that students represent themselves sought to avoid any responsibility. However, it is clear that future of college composition studies belongs in the hands of those scholars who concerned with representations of teachers *and* students that are presented as “objective facts.” It would seem that the solutions are to be found within the capable, creative minds of writing instructors.

Discussion: Research Question Four

Those graduate students, adjuncts, and lecturers who meet the daily challenges of college composition studies, and who ultimately advance in their scholarship, hold priceless ideas that can improve the perception of college composition studies. Publications such as *College English*, *The Journal of Basic Writing*, and *College Composition and Communication* illustrate the abundant supply of valuable ideas to

improve college composition studies. Thus, there is no shortage of ideas. In order to tap into those priceless ideas, however, it seems that the thinking within the minds of those who meet the daily challenges of college composition studies must change.

Although writing instructors have no control over their students' behavior, or the opinions about college writing from scholars in other disciplines, they do have control over one thing—their thoughts. Writing instructors can begin today to think differently about teaching writing. Writing instructors can begin today to think differently about student called basic writers. Just as easily as anyone can change her mind about foods to eat or what words to say, writing instructors can change their minds about how they think about the work that they do. Just because college writing has always been perceived as a “marginalized discipline” does not mean that it must continue to be perceived that way. Writing instructors can simply decide to think differently about the work they do and then cut themselves off from ever thinking about college writing as a “marginalized discipline.”

Next, writing instructors must follow their new way of thinking about college writing with massive action. That action would include putting some of those priceless ideas found in college composition journals into effects so that other scholars would see the value in college writing. However, no scholar in any other discipline will think of college writing as valuable until writing instructors think of college writing as valuable. This suggestion may seem oversimplified, but any positive change that has ever taken place in history was preceded by a change in thinking followed by massive, consistent action toward a clearly defined target or goal. The starting point is in the way that

writing instructors think about the “Other,” whether that “Other” are the students or the discipline itself.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study is to promote alternative representations of students by locating those representations in their specific contexts. To do so suggests that it is problematic to use the term “basic” to describe a student or group of students, a course, or a particular style of writing. Each of the interviewees in this study offered a slightly different representation of the students at their institutions based on the conditions under which the students learn. On the other hand, each of the interviewees discussed similar characteristics among their students, and some of those characteristics, i.e., race and socioeconomic status, are the same ones that have been attributed to writing students from Harvard in the nineteenth century through the “birth” of basic writing until today.

The debates on basic writing are not new. Neither are some of the things that have been discussed in this study. One of the purposes of this study is to equip those scholars who are concerned students’ welfare with material that can help them to interpret and offset some of those disparaging representations of students *and* teachers that are presented as “objective facts.” By placing some of the current representations of writing students in general and students in the history of conflicting representations of students, I sought to help my readers to see how some things have changed and how some things have remained the same. Bruce Horner reminds us that the term “basic writing” is a term that was created to offset some of the dominant representations of students such as “boneheads,” “barbarians,” and “not college material” (192). It seems, however, that nearly three decades later, some scholars can glibly use terms like “basic

writer” and “underachieving freshmen” to describe their students. Their students deserve a better representation than that.

One remarkable thing in this complex issue is that the discipline called basic writing, like the students, also seems to be held in low regard by some scholars, administrators and students. Bearing that fact in mind, anyone could reasonably see how the students *and* teachers within the discipline would be held in low regard if their discipline itself is held in low regard. One can see the evidence of the low regard for the discipline basic writing in the material constraints described by the interviewees in this chapter.

Nearly all of the interviewees spoke of graduate students, adjuncts, lecturers, and non-tenured faculty being placed in charge of the students, who as Peter stated, need the guidance and wisdom of experience faculty (Peter). Phillip talked about a “lack of funding” (Phillip). He also described how his university gets no institutional support for writing students (Phillip). Any writing student would find it difficult to master the conventions of edited American English under these conditions. Moreover, if that same student arrived at a university that offered these 1970-like conditions from a high school that underserved him or her, then that student could end up in an overcrowded writing class where that student and the class are described, for lack of better words, as “basic.”

Throughout this study, I sought to avoid oversimplifying my argument as either “for” or “against” the discipline called basic writing. By exploring how difference and power interact in the production and reception of representations of representations of students, I called some discursive practices into play which could be interpreted by some as an “against” argument. The research in this study suggests that the debate within basic

writing is much more complex. At the same time, while continually using the phrase, “students” I implied that the term “basic writer” is a construct. A suggestion like that could possibly be interpreted, as Bruce Horner notes, as an elitist gesture, an irresponsible admission, or another reason for those “against” basic writing to eliminate basic writing programs. As someone who is concerned about the welfare of students, I endeavored to eschew those interpretations and constructively promote alternative representations of students.

One thing that my analysis of the writing instructorship revealed is that those articles that used difference and power as described seemed to overlook the fundamental relationship between teacher and student. While talking about students in some of the ways presented, the writing instructorship failed to address how teachers and students need to relate to one another. Peter makes an excellent point in his interview when he talks about students representing themselves. Students can think for themselves. They can also express themselves. Why not allow them to represent themselves? It would seem that a question like that one is the topic for another study.

On the other hand, if a college composition scholar insisted on producing a representation of students, one way to begin producing that representation is to place students at the center of the educational enterprise. The concern of writing instructors is not simply the passing on of knowledge.

Rather, students are an extension of writing instructors, taking on the scholar’s convictions, commitments and practices. Writing instructors have a personal interest in students since the students represent all that the college composition scholar imparts to

them. Students represent all that is good in the teachers themselves. Writing instructors should honor the good in their students just as they honor the good that is in themselves.

Beneath the misplaced modifiers and comma splices, students are human beings whose stature exceeds any errors. The high school experiences of students have left many of them weary. As a result, they come to our college composition classrooms seeking direction, support, and guidance in a confusing world of competing definitions of literacy. Our call to teach them is both a great gift and a great responsibility. We show our gratitude for this great gift by thinking and talking about our students in ways that honor the good that is in them, the good that they represent in us. One of the things that we must pass on to our students is the faith that someone had in us when we were in our undergraduate years.

That faith is the gift that has been placed in our hands, and we must pass that gift on to our students, especially our students. Writing instructors must be co-workers with educators like Dewey, Counts, and Kremin. They must be guides to all students, and they must guide students to be responsible productive members of our democratic society. Writing instructors must turn to the good that is in themselves. That good that helped them through their undergraduate years and it will continue to help them interact with students to find the skills that will touch their students' lives.

Furthermore, writing instructors need to have values such as seriousness, silence, humility, and prudence when working with all students. Students need instructors who embody wisdom, patience, piety, and generosity. The relationship between teacher and student is one that should be based on a strong sense for the welfare of the students.

There should be no compromising on this issue. The students' education is more important than the teachers' learning and education. The corrections that a college composition scholar makes on their students' essays must be given with complete detachment and thorough charity. Those corrections must give students the opportunity to learn what they have to do to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Through a sense of compassion and a connection to the good within their students, writing instructors should represent their students in ways that emphasize similarities rather than differences. This way of thinking is not the same as sentimentality or emotional attachment.

Rather, it is a way of thinking that leads the students to a love of self and an appreciation of the talents that they bring to the college composition classroom. All that writing instructors do should lead students to an understanding of the good that is in them. A methodology like that is the best thing writing instructors can do for students.

Finally, based on the literature reviewed in chapter two, the history explored in chapter three and the interviews presented in chapter four, I would like to offer four suggestions for better ways to represent students:

1. It is suggested that writing teachers should use the principle of equality in their representations of students.

In basic writing literature, Ira Shor has written articles such as "Our Apartheid: Writing instruction and Inequality," and "Errors and Economics: Inequality Breeds Remediation." His arguments have been challenged by scholars such as Terrence G. Collins and Karen Greenberg. Notwithstanding the strengths and weaknesses of Shor's, Collins', and Greenberg's arguments, the histories of competing definitions literacy and

writing instruction show consistent cases of inequality—inequality in how literacy has been defined, inequality in how writing has been taught, inequality in how students have been represented. If writing instructors are to improve the field of composition, they can begin by infusing their representations of students with the principle of equality.

George Counts defines equality as “the doctrine that the individual, regardless of ancestry or previous condition, should be judged only by his own industry, talents, and character and that he might properly aspire to the highest positions in the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation” (83). He adds, “Recognition of the supreme worth of the individual leads inevitably to the principle of equality among members of society. No man can be regarded as superior or inferior to another by reason of the work he does, the social rank of his family, the color of his skin, or even the altar at which he worships” (222).

With this definition of equality, writing instructors can begin thinking of their students differently. The opposite of equality is difference, and too often, difference has been equated with deficiency. With an understanding of how difference has influenced the thinking of about students, writing instructors can replace any thoughts of difference about their students with thoughts of equality. Writing teachers can affirm that regardless of a student’s race, socioeconomic status, educational background, or current academic classification (honors, basic writing, etc.) all students are created equal and that our instruction of them is designed to mold excellent citizens who are capable of functioning at their best in a free and democratic society.

The best way to accomplish this objective is through embracing the principle of equality in the production and reception of representations of students. The testimony

from Eli Goldblatt and Keith Gumery suggest that writing teachers can think differently about students, thereby moving away from the inequality about which Ira Shor and David Bartholomae have written. In the long term, the health of our democracy and the liberty of its citizens rest on the principle of equality. Thomas Jefferson knew this to be true. That is why in his writings entitled “Social Welfare” he argued that only popular education can safeguard our democracy” (133). The safeguarding of our democracy, however, comes through equity, and if writing instructors are representing their students as the “Other,” then that thinking about students goes against the very principles upon which our democracy is based. All that is required is a change in thinking. It is just that simple. Yet a simple change in the way that representations of students are produced and received can have long-term positive consequences for writing students and writing instructors for generations to come.

2. It is suggested that writing teachers use the principle of democracy in the production and reception of representations of students.

George Counts says “Democracy affirms the worth of and dignity of the individual. It declares that every human being is precious in his own right and is always to be regarded as an end, never as a means merely. Democracy declares that in a most profound sense all men are created equal; democracy is the social faith of common people” (281). Democracy in the representations of students allows all students to participate equally in the good of the academy. It gives all students a stake in the social relationships and power structure of the academy while allowing for the flexible readjustment of the long-standing academic thought. Democracy in the production and

reception of representations of students gives all students the opportunity to give from and maximize their natural talents.

Difference and power are undemocratic. Whether a writing instructor represents students as “the lower and in some ways the animal order in need of scrubbing” or “underprivileged,” the representations are undemocratic because they undermine the worth and dignity of the individual. That is why in “Basic Writing as Cultural Conflict,” Tom Fox argues that basic writing theories and pedagogies continue to marginalize new students to the university, especially speakers of non-standard English and African Americans” (71). Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu wrote *Representing the “Other”* and called for this study because they know that difference and power in the production and reception of representations of students is undemocratic.

3. Writing instructors should learn the history of literacy and writing instruction as part of their training to teach.

One purpose of chapter three of this study is to present the history of competing definitions of literacy. There is much to be learned from that history. Jerrie Cobb Scott knows that there is a story that needs to be told in the history of literacy. That is why she wrote “Literacies and Deficits Revisited.” Cobb argues that traditional definitions of literacy have concentrated on how well a student can communicate privileged discourses. As a result, these traditional definitions of literacy oversimplify content and label marginalized students as deficient” (46). Cobb’s observation supports Resnick and Resnick’s claim that traditional definitions of literacy “were designed neither to achieve the literacy standard sought today nor to ensure successful literacy for everyone” (133). George Counts also knew the value of learning from the history of education, of which

literacy and writing are a part. That is why Counts argued, “We need an education that will reveal the deficiencies in our heritage and the dangers threatening the principle of equality in the contemporary world” (335).

It would be useful to include one or several lessons on the history of literacy and the history of writing instruction in the training of college writing instructors. Several of the people interviewed in chapter four called for revisions in teacher training. One part of those revisions could involve an analysis of the history that Cobb, Counts, Resnick, Horner and Lu suggest is so important to improving writing instruction. How can writing instructors know where the field is going if they do not know where it has been? As painful as it may be to look at how the selective tradition has influenced the history of literacy and writing instruction, writing instructors should learn from that history so that they empower themselves and their students to greater heights of self actualization.

4. Writing instructors could improve the ways that they represent students if they established a written statement of the mission and goals of their writing departments.

Many successful businesses have clearly written mission statements and goals. In *The Mission Statement Book*, Jeffery Abrahams “Every company, now matter how big or small, needs a mission statement as a source of direction, a kind of compass, that lets its employees, its customer, and even its stockholders know what it stands for and where its headed” (8). Many colleges and universities have mission statements. Would it not be a good idea if writing departments and writing instructors had a set of clearly defined goals and a mission statement?

With a set of clearly defined goals and a mission statement, writing instructors could concentrate on equality and empowerment, not difference and power, in the production and reception of representations of students. Keith Gilyard knows the importance of equality and empowerment in the production and reception of representations of students. That is why in “Basic Writing, Cost Effectiveness, and Ideology” he maintains that the future of basic writing scholarship should challenge its ideological, political, social, and cultural beliefs and practices (42). A clearly defined set of goals and a mission statement could help to eliminate the harmful rhetoric that Mike Rose identifies in “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University.” Rose knows that the metaphors of difference, deficiency, and remediation, must be eliminated from basic writing scholarship (359). A clearly defined set of goals and a mission statement would be a step in the right direction.

All of the above recommendations call for a change in thinking. Harmful representations of students are preceded by thought. Before writing instructors can produce or receive harmful representations of students, they must think of harmful representations of students. Before policy makers can produce competing definitions of literacy, they must think of reasons for definitions of literacy to compete. The work of scholars such as Harvey Graff, John Trimbur, John Ogbu, and Adrian Bacariza suggests that there is a challenge with the thinking about literacy. Min-Zhan Lu’s “Redefining the Legacy of Mina Shaughnessy” and Jerrie Cobb Scott’s “Literacies and Deficits Revisited” suggests that there is a challenge with the thinking about literacy and basic writing. Furthermore, articles such as Andrea Lunsford’s “Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer” and Laura Gray-Rosendale, Loyola K. Bird, and Judith F. Bullock’s

“Rethinking the Basic Frontier” suggests that there is a challenge with the thinking about representations of students.

Contemporary, harmful representations of students come from a history of competing definitions of literacy and conflicting representations of students. The thinking about students that produces representations of the “Other” is long-standing, insidious, and undemocratic. It is from the literature surrounding the history of competing definitions of literacy and competing definitions of students that aforementioned recommendations are made. Additionally, it is from the literature surrounding the history of competing definitions of literacy and competing definitions of students that this study argues that before writing instructors can improve the field they must critically assess the ways in which its least prepared students are represented.

APPENDIX

Consent from Interviewees

RE: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Tuesday, May 6, 2008 7:24 AM

From:

"Mortensen, Peter Leslie"

To:

Dear Maurice,

Congratulations on the successful defense of your dissertation. I'm comfortable with the revised interview transcript that I returned to you on 12/20/07. The identifying blurb you showed me reads:

Peter is an Associate Professor of English and an Associate Provost Fellow at a mid-western university. His research interests include the history of rhetoric and literacy in the United States and the ethnographic study of literacy in institutions. He is the co-author of Imagining Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States, and co-editor of Women and Literacy: Local and Global Inquiries for a New Century and Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies in Literacy. He has authored and co-authored several essays appearing in College English, College Composition and Communication, Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Rhetoric Review, Written Communication, and various edited volumes.

That pretty well calls me out . . . so I don't have any problem with you using my full name and institutional affiliation. You might want to drop the reference to "Associate Provost Fellow," which isn't germane to your work.

Cheers,

Peter

RE: Summary of Our Interview

Thursday, December 20, 2007 3:59 PM

From: "Mortensen, Peter Leslie"

To:

"Maurice Champagne"

Message contains attachments

Peter Interview + plm clear.doc (37KB), Peter Interview + plm rev.doc (44KB)

Dear Maurice,

Attached are two files: one shows changes I've made in the file you sent me, and the other incorporates those changes into a clean document. I hope you don't mind that I revised and elaborated upon what you had gleaned from our phone conversation. I think the transcript is a fair representation of my thinking on the important subject you're researching.

Best wishes for a successful end of the semester . . . and for continued good progress toward your doctorate.

Peter

Re: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Tuesday, May 6, 2008 10:05 AM

From: "Phillip P. Marzluf"

To:

Dear Maurice:

Congrats on the dissertation defense. I'm fine if you use my "real" name, though the request from your committee is a bit unorthodox, as your initial impulse to protect anonymity and confidentiality, according to IRB rules, was the correct one. Good luck in your next position.

Regards,

Phillip PM

Re: Summary of Our Interview

Monday, December 10, 2007 11:29 AM

From:

"Phillip P. Marzluf"

To:

"Maurice Champagne"

Message contains attachments

Phillip Interview with Comments.doc (32KB)

Dear Maurice:

I've added a few comments (in red) and have attached it. Good luck! If you're also on the job market, good luck on that stressful activity as well.

Regards,

Phillip PM

RE: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Tuesday, May 6, 2008 8:14 AM

From:

"Eli C Goldblatt"

To:

Hello, Maurice. I have no problem with your reporting my real name. It's probably better for the sake of understanding institutional histories to have real names in the case of people running large programs. I'm a little surprised your committee wants you to breach anonymity, but I'm happy to oblige.

You can use this email as evidence of my consent.

Best,

Eli

Re: Summary of Our Interview

Sunday, December 9, 2007 8:26 PM

From:

"Eli Goldblatt"

To:

"Maurice Champagne"

Hello, Maurice. Yes, this is fine, tho my answers seem a little flatter & less complete than I remember them. The last line in particular is a little underdeveloped—we do more than "help students out"--we try to give them experiences with academic discourse that will prepare them for later courses where expectations for literacy & critical thinking are often unspoken but quite intense. The current course for basic writers is called Introduction to Academic Discourse and is a 4 credit course that counts toward graduation.

My book is out now from Hampton Press. The final title is Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum. You might as well use my last name because many in the field will know who you are talking about by the biography you include. The first book is from U of Pittsburgh Press.

Good luck--

Eli

RE: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Monday, May 5, 2008 11:04 PM

From:

"Keith Gumery"

To:

Message contains attachments

Dear Maurice:

Of course you may. I give my permission for you to us my name in your dissertation.

Good luck!

Keith

Dr. Keith Gumery
Associate Director
First-Year Writing Program

RE: Summary of Our Interview

Monday, December 10, 2007 9:30 AM

From:

"Keith Gumery"

To:

"Maurice Champagne"

Hi Maurice:

Congratulations on being ready to defend.

The only thing I would ask you to change is the section about the Russell Conwell Program.

This is a program for Philadelphia High School students who have stayed in school and done reasonably well (it is more a reward for endurance than anything else). The students get invited to the summer bridge program which is a six-week college prep course. We try then to keep the students most at risk together in dedicated sections of the pre-composition class as this offers directed instruction for their needs, and it increases the chances of retention.

Best wishes,

Keith

*Dr. Keith Gumery
Associate Director
First-Year Writing Program
Temple University*

RE: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Monday, May 5, 2008 8:56 PM

From:

To:

Cc:

Hi Maurice,

Congratulations on defending! I defended in March – it's such a lovely feeling, isn't it?

I'm really uncomfortable with the idea of having my real name used. I shared some of those details (particularly about the material constraints at my institution) with the understanding that they would be anonymous. I'm honestly a bit surprised that your committee would ask people to revoke that protection, particularly given the fact that you were interviewing graduate students and asking them to essentially complain about their schools. You might want to consult your school's IRB for clarification – I know Temple's IRB would have a conniption fit if I wanted to use people's real names.

I'm sorry I can't be more helpful, but I really don't want to be identified.

Best wishes for your revision,

RE: Summary of Our Interview

Wednesday, December 12, 2007 11:12 AM

From:

To:

"Maurice Champagne" Cc:

Hi Maurice,

It looks good to me!

Best,

Re: My Dissertation and Your Identity

Tuesday, May 6, 2008 7:53 AM

From:

"Vincent Kling"

To:

Dear Maurice,

Of course you may use my real name and give any contact information (e-mail preferably, since I'm in Europe) to anyone who requests it.
Many blessings as you go through the process, and best of luck for the outcome.

Be well!

"Ein Mensch fuehlt oft sich wie verwandelt,
Sobald man menschlich ihn behandelt."

-- Eugen Roth

Vincent Kling
English Department
La Salle University

Re: Summary of Our Interview

Tuesday, December 11, 2007 11:32 AM

From:

"Vincent Kling" To:

"Maurice Champagne"

Message contains attachments

Vince Interview.doc (28KB), Acknowledgements 2.doc (28KB)

Dear Maurice,

It was good to hear from you, and I'm very pleased to have had a chance to look over the interview. I'm in complete agreement with its content, so just go ahead.

Keep me posted, best of luck, and blessed holidays to you.

"Ein Mensch fuehlt oft sich wie verwandelt,
Sobald man menschlich ihn behandelt."

-- Eugen Roth

Vincent Kling
English Department
La Salle University

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