TOWARD A RHETORIC OF READING:
TWO CASE STUDIES FROM THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Within contemporary composition scholarship, few studies address the ways that teachers' identities—cultural, institutional, and disciplinary—shape the theories, histories, and teaching practices of the discipline. Within basic writing scholarship in particular, an inordinate amount of time has been spent defining and categorizing basic writers while the identities of their teachers have remained uninterrogated. This dissertation examines teacher identity issues within composition studies theoretically, historically, and ethnographically. Using the basic writing classroom as a case in point, the study analyzes the ways teachers' identities affect their readings of student-authored texts.

This project consists of two case studies. The first is a historical study that considers how composition teachers in general and basic writing teachers in particular have represented themselves and their reading and interpretive practices within two composition journals, *Journal of Basic Writing* and *College Composition and Communication*, between 1975 and 1990. The ethnographic case study examines the reading practices and cultural and educational histories of two basic writing teachers and describes the rhetorical mechanisms that structure their readings of student-authored texts. This case study posits reading as processes of
identification and evaluative negotiation and traces connections between teachers' identities and students' generic options in the classroom.

Analysis of the two case studies yields an evolving theory of teacher identity as it both affects the reading of student writing and mediates the generic choices students make in the classroom. While the historical study considers the effects of teachers' institutional positions and disciplinary self-perceptions on their reading practices, the ethnographic case study complicates the historical case by demonstrating that teachers' reading practices can constitute acts of revision and/or resistance against institutional constraints. The dissertation concludes by considering the implications of the study upon current discussions of identity, authority, and genre issues within the classroom.
For Winston:
all done.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I remember sitting alone in the worn urban classroom where my students had just written their first essays and where I now began to read them, hoping to be able to assess quickly the sort of task that lay ahead of us this semester. But the writing was so stunningly unskilled that I could not begin to define the task nor even sort out the difficulties. I could only sit there, reading and re-reading the alien papers, wondering what had gone wrong and trying to understand what I at this eleventh hour of my students’ academic lives could do about it.

--Mina Shaughnessy

I’m moved by student texts that in some way echo how I am as a reader and writer. I find students...finding themselves in their writing, and that moves me.

--Deiva, Basic Writing Teacher and Scholar

As teachers, we tend to operate without questioning the extent to which practices deviate from the ideal, socially sanctioned ideologies of society or how our individual processes of self-identity interplay with the self-identity of students. To fail to critically examine the practiced vs. the preached ideologies of society or the student vs. the teacher’s self-identity is to support, through uncritical dysconsciousness, the recycling of attitudes that resist changes that benefit those marginalized in school systems.

--Jerrie Cobb Scott

Some of my earliest thoughts about reading aren’t entirely my own memories. They’ve gotten mixed in with stories I was told.

--Meryl, Basic Writing Teacher and Scholar

Each of the four quotations above functions as a kind of touchstone for this project, signifying various strands of the argument and representing the ways that individual teachers enact their identities—culture, race, gender, regional background,
institutional location, educational history, and disciplinary alliance(s)—in the composition classroom. Clearly those identities affect every aspect of a teacher’s pedagogy, from the ways she imagines her assignments to the ways she evaluates them. The act of naming or describing aspects of teacher identity as they impact the composition classroom is complicated; it becomes even more so when we remember that the classrooms themselves are embedded within specific cultural and institutional contexts: the writing program, the English or rhetoric department, the college of Humanities, the University, the public education system, and so on. In order to pay attention to issues of teacher identity, we must always consider the contexts in which those identities operate.

The discipline of composition studies can benefit from the examination of teacher identity as it affects multiple aspects of teaching. In this dissertation, I examine one pedagogical act in particular that is shaped in important ways by teacher identity: the reading of student-authored texts. The first time a teacher reads a student’s text marks the initial moment of encounter between a reader and a writer. But this moment marks also a student’s introduction to the values of the institution and the discipline. After all, many composition teachers represent, filter, or even control multiple aspects of every rhetorical situation in their classrooms. For example, teachers select textbooks, plan lessons, and assign and evaluate specific forms of writing, which makes them largely responsible for determining the genre and style of students’ textual products. Teachers interpret and represent the written conventions of
the discipline and/or the department, and in doing so they pass on the discursive values of their fields.

Every individual teacher’s identity matters, then, within the web of contexts in which she reads students’ texts. A crucial part of that context is disciplinary. Composition teachers share some sense of disciplinary identity as workers within a field that has focused its energies on the articulation of its goals, principles, and practices via published scholarship for the last three decades. The primary site for such articulation has been the scholarly journal, *College Composition and Communication* in particular. The scholarship published in this and other journals points toward a kind of disciplinary *ethos*, a sense of the very character of the field as it is manifested in multiple locations: journals, conference proposals and programs, stories in hallways.

The *ethos* of composition studies as a welcoming discipline and a Bakhtinian discipline has been alluded to within several CCCC’s Chair’s Addresses, including those written by David Bartholomae and Andrea Lunsford; that *ethos* has been complicated or challenged by the addresses of other past chairs, including Jacqueline Jones Royster and Victor Villanueva. In the most general terms, this dissertation examines the ways that teachers negotiate various representations of disciplinary *ethos* with their own sense of cultural, institutional, and disciplinary identity in the classroom. In order to examine the ways that such negotiations affect pedagogical practices, the study focuses on the interplay of teacher identity and teachers’ reading and interpretive practices. By studying this triangulation—individual teachers’ reading
practices, scholarly representations of those practices, and more global, disciplinary constructions of the *ethos* of the composition teacher—*Toward a Rhetoric of Reading* chronicles disciplinary values and practices over time.

And so I open by sharing the four voices in the epigraph above. The voices belong to composition teachers, and while the voices of Mina Shaughnessy and Jerrie Cobb Scott may be the most easily recognizable and explicitly influential for teachers and scholars of composition studies, I would argue that the other two voices are equally important to listen to. These voices belong to two basic writing teachers, Deiva and Meryl (pseudonyms), who served as research subjects for this project and shared their own cultural, personal, and institutional histories with me. Together, we worked to describe and model the ways that reading practices reflect and replicate certain aspects of teachers’ identities. Their words, like those of Shaughnessy and Scott, remind me of the ways that common disciplinary goals and values often underlie teachers’ reading practices, even though individual differences accentuate those readings. At the same time, teachers such as Deiva and Meryl may, in fact, help to revise composition studies’ disciplinary goals and values in important ways.

*Mina Shaughnessy: Representing Encounters with Student Texts*

Mina Shaughnessy’s study of basic writers and their texts, *Errors and Expectations* (1977), argues that such texts are indeed worthy of scholarly attention. Her study of approximately 4,000 placement essays written by students during the open admissions period at CUNY demonstrates that logic governs the errors made by basic writers, whom she defines as “beginners [who] must, like all beginners, learn by
making mistakes” (5). This study not only challenged prevailing assumptions about “remedial” writers—students deemed cognitively deficient in some way—but also initiated a disciplinary conversation about the nature of a basic writing teacher’s work. In retrospect, the text stands now as a representation of the person Mina Shaughnessy was, establishing her as an icon in the field of composition studies.¹

I begin my own project with Shaughnessy and her words because of my interest in the ways that both her work and her identity as a teacher have been read by other members of the discipline. In other words, I ask what values and beliefs of the discipline seem to find expression via the representation of Shaughnessy as teacher. In particular, how does the discipline read the image of Shaughnessy as she describes herself in the epigraph? “I could only sit there,” she writes, “reading and re-reading the alien papers, wondering what had gone wrong and trying to understand what I at this eleventh hour of my students’ academic lives could do about it” (vii). What is at stake for teachers of composition when they interpret this particular act of self-representation? What does it mean for Shaughnessy to choose this moment in her teaching life and cull it out, sharing it with her colleagues via the preface to Errors and Expectations?

Here Shaughnessy depicts herself as both teacher and reader. In terms of my project, the moment she describes is important because it is an initial moment of encounter between a teacher and her students’ texts. The discipline’s understanding of what happens at such moments—before the pen takes to paper and margin comments appear, before the teacher assigns a grade to the text, before the student begins to
revise—is cloudy, at best. Few studies exist that trace the ways that teachers read their students’ work without moving into the discussion of how they evaluate that work.\(^2\) And yet, this reading moment, as represented by Shaughnessy and others, has captured the disciplinary imagination of composition studies and resulted in one kind of representation of composition teachers in general and basic writing teachers in particular. The teacher is represented as a lone reader—often a woman—who faces a stack of troubling student papers and tries to manage a range of emotions (fear, dismay, empathy, sympathy) in what is often portrayed as a “worn” or otherwise barely appointed classroom or office.

That part of the image is telling because the setting establishes a kind of institutional context. Such teachers, the “sad women in the basement,” as Susan Miller refers to them in *Textual Carnivals* (1991), lack institutional power and position. Their offices and classrooms are often located away from the “regular” business of the English department (teaching literature courses) and the university (teaching “traditional” students). Their institutions are often “urban,” rather than located within the idyllic small towns represented by films such as *Breaking Away*. Finally, we must notice that this institutional context is not a highly collaborative or dynamic one; Shaughnessy represents herself as distinctly alone in that classroom.

In addition to suggesting an image of the institutional context for teaching composition, Shaughnessy’s quotation conjures images of both basic writing students and the texts they produce. Here the mechanisms of representation are complex: Shaughnessy’s audience is positioned to “read” the students via the texts they write.
She tells us the texts are "stunningly unskilled" and "alien." Thus readers may assume that the students who produced those papers come from communities different from Shaughnessy's. A common trope within basic writing scholarship involves shifting notions of insiders and outsiders. In other words, while many articles about basic writers discuss the students as marginalized outsiders to the academy, the (usually white, middle-class, female) teacher is a cultural outsider in the classroom. Furthermore, the texts Shaughnessy encounters trouble her because they seem to have a logic all their own; they resist the conventions that seem so fundamental to her as a result of her training as a literary scholar. Shaughnessy does not address that training explicitly within *Errors and Expectations*—nor does she address her own cultural, racial, or gender identity.

Shaughnessy's voice, then, is important for this project because it represents a particular image of the basic writing teacher. This teacher wonders how she will balance her increasing sense of discomfort with the whole business of evaluating student writing with her desire to bring the students to voice. She wants others to know that basic writers are simply beginners, learning to use a new discourse in a strange, academic setting. At the same time, she recognizes that a once-familiar academic setting is suddenly made strange by the students' presence. Still, she wants to help them. She is most often a white woman trained as a literary scholar. She senses that her students' papers are somehow "alien" and her sense of separation from them may allow her to take such a usefully critical stance toward their work. This idea that the teacher apprehends the student as alien contributes to the ethos of the
composition teacher, even though it is tempered by representations of her well-
meaning empathy.

_Deiva: Reading Ourselves Into (and Against) Student Texts_

While Mina Shaughnessy’s example suggests that differences between teachers
and their students may be communicated via “alien” texts, Deiva, a basic writing
teacher and scholar at Midwestern State University (a pseudonym), tells a different
story. Deiva served as a research subject for my ethnographic case study of two
teachers’ reading practices. Like Shaughnessy, Deiva was trained initially as a literary
scholar, but she found herself increasingly intrigued by the basic writing context and
became a basic writing teacher by choice. And while Shaughnessy, like many of her
CUNY English Department colleagues, had to sink or swim when the entrance gates
swung wide in the late 1960’s, Deiva accepted her position eagerly with the
Midwestern State University’s Writing Workshop, an innovative and highly
collaborative basic writing program. Deiva is thus positioned in different ways from
Shaughnessy for several reasons.

First, Deiva notes countless times during the course of our interview sessions
that she is somewhat of an alien herself; she came to the United States from India to
study Shakespeare and post-colonial theory. Although trained as a Shakespeare
scholar, Deiva quickly found postcolonial theory and other theories addressing issues
of agency and subjectivity to be the most intriguing parts of her work. Now Deiva
teaches her courses--basic writing and advanced composition alike--with a popular
culture focus, urging students to theorize the ways that popular culture, particularly
consumer culture, impacts their lives and shapes the ways they represent themselves to others. This work renders her doubly “alien” within a traditional English department, though she is a leader within the Writing Workshop sub-unit. Finally, when Deiva faces stacks of basic writers’ papers on a daily basis, she is rarely alone. She is surrounded by colleagues in a collaborative environment in which teachers regularly discuss the ways that they plan their courses and evaluate their students.

But, as I learned while teaching for the program and conducting research there, even these teachers do not spend much time talking about the act of reading itself. Nor do they talk about what it means to read a student-authored, rather than a literary, text. What the majority of these teachers do agree upon, however, is that their students’ papers do not seem “alien” to them at all. Deiva in particular does not view her students’ discourse as fundamentally different from her own. Instead, as I discuss in Chapter Five, she finds that reading student writing is a bit like walking into a hall of mirrors; student papers seem to reflect her own struggles to render her experiences in language. Thus, as she notes in the epigraph above, the student texts that “move” Deiva are those that “echo in some way” her own reading and writing practices. The transcripts of the interviews I did with Deiva, in which she speaks candidly and provocatively about her own reading practices, provide a valuable model for understanding the ways that teachers read themselves into—and sometimes out of—the texts of their students. What I find most valuable about Deiva’s epigraph, then, is the way that it represents a particular mechanism for reading student writing that quite literally depends on a teacher’s identity for animation.
My study of published representations of basic writing teachers engaged in the act of reading their students' texts suggests that such teachers often see themselves as connected to their students. Wendy Bishop’s “We’re All Basic Writers: Tutors Talking About Writing Apprehension” contends that “we all have writing tasks that make us apprehensive, tentative, reluctant, and so on” (34). Mike Rose’s often-read and often-taught study of his own educational experiences, *Lives on the Boundary* (1989), clearly posits Rose as a basic writer who makes connections to his own basic writing students largely because of his experiences growing up.³ This general representation of the empathetic reader who is like the basic writer--or student writer, for that matter--contributes to the ethos of the composition teacher.

While composition teachers commonly describe their sense of connections to student texts, I believe a candid statement like Deiva’s above—“I’m moved by student texts that in some way echo how I am as a reader and writer”—is rare. Here Deiva might open herself up for criticism by admitting that her own reading and writing practices and preferences serve as what Kenneth Burke would call a terministic screen for her reading and valuing of student texts. She does not espouse belief in a particular set of standards or conventions of academic discourse as her primary way of making evaluative judgments. Deiva’s voice, then, stands for two important arguments raised in this dissertation. First, teachers must explore what it means to make their own values and assumptions explicit to their students; and second, the process of reading student writing is very much a process of reconstructing and deconstructing our selves and mapping those selves onto the text. In other words, each student text that a
teacher encounters may grant her entrance into that hall of mirrors just as easily or as
often as it repels her from that reflective place. Reading student writing is a process of
reading ourselves into and against the texts (and the lives) of students.

*Jerrie Cobb Scott: Encounters With(in) Institutional Contexts*

Jerrie Cobb Scott's voice was one of the first to urge me to consider my own
identity—to take into account what it means to be not just a woman in the classroom,
but a white woman, a southern woman, a suburban woman, a young(ish) woman, a
mother, a graduate student. Scott urges teachers to consider the ways that their
multiple identities interact within specific cultural and institutional contexts. Perhaps
most importantly, Scott asks: What role(s) does the teacher play in maintaining the
status quo? What does the institution expect of her? How might she be complicit in
fulfilling the institution's expectations?

In her essay, "Literacies and Deficits Revisited" (1993), Scott problematizes
both traditional definitions of literacy and teachers'—particularly white teachers'—lack
of self-awareness regarding their own contribution to the reification of the dominant
group's values. Scott suggests that basic writing teachers themselves contribute to the
continuing power of deficit theories of literacy within the field and problematic
representations of students in the literature. This problem persists particularly within
scholarship about basic writers. Scott's term "uncritical dysconsciousness" refers to
the unconscious acceptance of seemingly well-meaning "culturally sanctioned beliefs
that...defend the advantages of insiders and the disadvantages of outsiders" (47). The
term offers a way to describe the sometimes unquestioning allegiance that teachers
offer to pedagogies that allow them to uphold their own insider status (47). According to Scott, when teachers practice uncritical dysconsciousness, they resist change—they refuse to interrogate their own identities in relation to the identities of their students.

Such an interrogation is crucial for basic writing teachers, particularly when we take into consideration that image of the teacher who encounters the "alien" student texts that is so prevalent within basic writing scholarship. Scott reminds me that it is necessary to question what constitutes "alien" in the first place and how a particular institution—such as the university, an English department, or a composition program—naturalizes a set of conventions that stand for the "normal" or "natural." Such conventions are then represented to students as though they have always been valued, and rightly so, due to their correspondence to The Natural Order of Things at This University. Perhaps most importantly for this project, I am intrigued by Scott’s suggestion that scholars and teachers flip the "marginalization coin" (51) in order to consider "problems, ideologies, identities among insiders" rather than simply performing close explorations of the problems of the "disadvantaged," such as basic writers (52).

_Meryl: Disciplinary History as Narrative_

The fourth voice in my epigraph belongs to Meryl, the second participant in the ethnographic study of basic writing teachers at Midwestern State University. She is another woman trained as a literary scholar—she wrote her Masters thesis on Faulkner—and another teacher who found herself drawn, like Deiva, to the basic writing classroom. Meryl now not only teaches basic writing at Midwestern State University,
she runs the program. Under her care and supervision, the Writing Workshop has flourished, gaining a national reputation for its challenging curriculum, collaborative teaching staff, and commitment to innovative projects such as service learning and computer-assisted instruction for basic writing students.

I talked with Meryl about her own history as a reader and the texts that seemed most memorable to her as a child. Meryl replied, “Some of my earliest thoughts about reading aren’t entirely my own memories. They’ve gotten mixed in with stories I was told.” Meryl is right. So much of what we know about ourselves, about our lives, comes from listening to the stories that others tell about us. And so much of what we know about our teaching lives we first came to know through disciplinary stories. While teachers may work hard to isolate and interrogate the aspects of their identities that shape their ways of reading and assigning value to student writing, often their own autobiographical narratives are part of larger cultural, institutional, and disciplinary narratives that have structured their experiences in the first place.

As Meryl tried to remember her own experiences as a small child reading, she was struck by how many memories had actually been told to her. The narratives were conveyed by her mother. Likewise, I argue in this dissertation that there is a direct and important link between the stories basic writing teachers are told—stories of Shaughnessy, Rose, and others which are authorized by virtue of their publication—and the ways that teachers write themselves into larger disciplinary narratives every time they step into a classroom. At the same time that I suggest the power of the discipline’s sanctioned stories, I realize also that a term like “the discipline” belies the
power of those individuals who make it up; in this sense, Deiva and Meryl's voices are just as much a part of the disciplinary voice of composition studies as Shaughnessy's or Scott's. We must also remember that ethnographic data is no more "true" than other kinds of research data. As I inscribed the words of Deiva and Meryl within this dissertation, they became a part of the larger disciplinary narrative of composition studies; indeed, their experiences became story.

I examine several kinds of readers and readings within this dissertation. First, in the most immediate sense, "Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" explores what it means to be a basic writing teacher reading a student-authored text in a particular classroom context. Second, the project investigates the ways that scholars represent, or read, such acts when they publish accounts of their own readings of students' texts. Third, the project considers how these published accounts might be read collectively as a construction of disciplinary ethos for composition studies. Finally, all of these instances of reading point toward a larger question: How does teacher identity—in terms of individual teachers and in terms of the discipline’s collective identity—impact all of these instances of reading? In what ways does identity matter for teachers as readers?

Overview of the Study

While composition scholars have produced scores of studies of teachers in the act of responding to and evaluating student writing, they have produced surprisingly few studies of how teachers read their students' texts. In particular, we know very little about how the act of reading student writing differs from the act of reading
literary texts or other kinds of writing outside the classroom. How, for example, does the fact that many composition teachers are trained first as literary scholars affect their reading practices in the classroom? Has the discipline of composition studies challenged its teachers to think more critically about the ways that reading practices change to accommodate such different rhetorical situations? For that matter, what happens in that initial moment when a teacher’s eyes first meet the paper (or computer screen) upon which the students’ words are inscribed? What factors affect the teacher’s act of reading in such a moment?

“Toward a Rhetoric of Reading: Two Case Studies from the Composition Classroom” approaches such questions by tracing prevalent images of the basic writing teacher historically and challenging those images from an ethnographic standpoint. In the process of interrogating teacher identity from both disciplinary and individual perspectives, I raise questions about the ways that teacher identity affects the kind of rhetorical authority students can construct in the classroom and limits or makes possible certain generic options.

Although virtually ignored by the field of composition studies, teacher identity is a pivotal factor affecting the ways that teachers solicit, read, and assign value to student writing. I critique this lack of attention to teacher identity as it shapes the process of reading student texts and argue that the act of reading serves as the primary moment of encounter between a teacher and a student text. Without explicit attention to teacher identity as it shapes this moment, composition scholars cannot understand fully the rhetorical mechanisms that fuel the production and reception of student
writing. Furthermore, I argue that insufficient scholarly attention to identity issues has resulted in the lack of an adequate critical model for reading and analyzing student writing. In the concluding chapter of "Toward a Rhetoric of Reading," I offer such a critical model based upon the intersection of identity, authority, and genre issues within the composition classroom.

I contextualize the study within the contemporary basic writing classroom, a site where teachers are often represented as different from their students in terms of ethnicity, race, educational history, and institutional status. Basic writing then becomes a case in point for my exploration of teacher identity through the two case studies mentioned in the title. The first is historiographic in nature and considers the ways that teachers represent themselves reading basic writing students' texts within journal articles published between 1975 and 1990. The second case study is an ethnographic exploration based on a series of interviews and reading protocols with two basic writing teachers. "Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" posits an important relationship between a collective, disciplinary sense of teacher identity and more localized, individual portraits of teachers as readers. This dual methodology results in an evolving theory of teacher identity as it both impacts the reading of student writing and mediates the generic choices students make in the classroom.

As a writing teacher who has turned to composition scholarship in order to conceptualize my own basic writing, first-year writing, and advanced writing courses, and as a graduate student who has depended upon published scholarship to model my own work in composition theory and pedagogy, I have paid careful attention to the
ways that teachers are represented—or represent themselves—within scholarly journals, particularly *College Composition and Communication* (CCC). Within the academic context, the professional journal is a powerful site for the production and dissemination of disciplinary values and knowledge. For composition studies in particular, the most influential journal is *College Composition and Communication.*

According to the “CCC Guidelines for Writers,” the journal asks its contributors to add to, extend, inflect, or revise current work on composition and its teaching. At the same time, this should not result in work that is of interest to only a small subset of specialists in the field. Instead, the reader of most CCC articles might best be imagined as a teacher and a scholar who is familiar with the broad range of issues discussed in the journal, but perhaps not deeply conversant with the specific topic being addressed—so that the task of a writer for CCC involves both making a point about a particular aspect of work in composition, and relating that point to more general issues and concerns in the field. (136)

The journal thus constructs a sort of “Everyteacher” as its audience, a teacher who is in tune with his or her colleagues and whose teaching is affected by the pedagogical, historical, and theoretical arguments made within the journal. Thus to examine representations of composition teachers from a historical perspective by studying professional journals like CCC is to examine the theories and practices of that discipline, as well as its *ethos*. Such examination allows us to see how a discipline, to quote rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke, “selects/deflects/reflects” the reality it will make available to its constituents and for what purpose (“Terministic Screens” 45).

An examination of textual representations of a discipline’s members is an examination of that discipline’s history and values.
One primary goal for this dissertation is to explore teacher identity as it gets constructed within this particular textual location. To that end, I consider the most prevalent images of teachers that emerge from the journals and the ways that such images help to construct an *ethos* for the discipline. I traced these images while studying published representations of teachers, particularly basic writing teachers, reading students' texts. I argue in Chapter Four that several existing images of basic writing teachers send conflicting messages to newcomers to the field about the nature of composition teaching and the character of its workers.

A second goal for this dissertation is to consider the ways that individual teachers negotiate the interplay of their own identities with the texts of their students and the selves that those texts come to represent. Using ethnographic methods, I explore and collapse that "Everyteacher" identity mentioned above by sharing the results of a series of interviews and reading protocols with two basic writing teachers at Midwestern State University. The dissertation thus uses ethnography to point to the importance of an individual teacher's identity as it impacts the process of reading and valuing student work. The ethnographic study freeze-frames the moment of encounter. Deiva and Meryl, two basic writing teachers who participated in my study, allow me to theorize the classroom rhetorical situation as something different from other reading moments teachers experience outside the classroom context.

The third goal for this dissertation is, perhaps, a bit more complex. This study aims to persuade teachers to rethink the mechanisms by which a student-authored text becomes meaningful to them as readers. In other words, the dissertation suggests that
teachers must reimagine what I call their rhetorical responsibility in the classroom. An individual teacher's identity—comprised by all the categories of identity she embodies and/or selects, as well as her sense of herself as a member of a specific discipline—radically impacts the ways that she reads and values student texts. This is a given within my project. As a result, individual teachers must also question the ways that they invite, anticipate, or even demand specific rhetorical forms that are most pleasing—aesthetically, politically, even ideologically—to them. Thus I am calling for teachers of writing to question the very notion of "convention" that operates within their classrooms. The study of identity as it impacts the ways teachers read student texts effectively denaturalize the forms most valued within the classroom, forms privileged by the discipline and communicated to students via textbooks, curricular guides, assignment prompts, and so on. Surely, the notion of an "ideal" text—critiqued by Cy Knoblauch and Lil Brannon in Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing (1984)—simply explodes if we accept that every individual teacher imagines differently what constitutes clarity, coherence, or even interest within written discourse.

My initial experiences as a new teacher of basic writing as well as an inexperienced student of contemporary feminist and rhetorical theory led me to the three goals outlined above. Before teaching basic writing for the first time, I read widely in the discipline, learning that scholars such as Shaughnessy, Mike Rose, David Bartholomae and others share a common belief: that basic writers are somehow outsiders to academic culture and that academic discourse might act as a means for
gaining access to that culture. Likewise, these scholars and others clearly pay attention to students’ identities—culture, race, class, gender, institutional placement—and the ways that students’ writing both reveals and reflects such identities. I noticed that they seem most concerned, however, with the discursive forms that represent those identities within the classroom. Little, if any, attention is paid within this scholarship to the identities of the teachers who read, respond to, and evaluate those forms, or how such identities might impact such processes. As a white, middle class woman, I was untroubled initially by that lack of attention to teacher identity. I don’t think it occurred to me to question who was actually rendering these images of basic writers and their texts. I simply joined in and worked to formulate my own definition of The Basic Writer.

Thus in that initial period before I taught my first basic writing class, I shared with many basic writing scholars and teachers a belief in the powers of academic discourse as a way to help basic writing students enter a university community that might prefer to exclude them altogether. My own process of becoming fluent in the academic discourse conventions of my own field—which resulted in my eventual access to a prestigious graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition—rendered me a rather willing believer in the power of such discourse. In fact, unable (or unwilling) to recognize just how differently my basic writing students and I were positioned within the university, I imagined that because I had once viewed myself as a bit of an outsider to academic life at the graduate level, I could somehow understand the literacy shifts
they were experiencing. I told my basic writing students that I had been rejected by two prestigious English departments when I first tried to enter a graduate program.

I went on to complete my M.A. at my alma mater, a school with a small terminal masters program in English literature, but I was terrified of more rejection when I decided to pursue the Ph.D. and painfully aware that my former training might be deemed inadequate by those I most needed to impress. As a Ph.D. candidate I was a "long shot" from a southern school where the liberal arts were simply an afterthought. After the earlier rejections, I wanted explicit instructions for my application materials the second time around. I needed to approximate the academic discourse expected by doctoral programs in my field. My mentor professor, a recent Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition and a feminist scholar, helped me to learn the vocabulary of my field. She and several colleagues workshopped six drafts of my personal statement and challenged me to see the conventions of academic discourse as enabling a different kind of thinking, rather than stifling a "genuine" voice. I experienced a sense of triumph when not one, but seven Ph.D. programs accepted me.

I did not question either the efficacy or ethics of accommodation in this instance. Nor did I question for a moment whose responsibility it was to make my application materials meaningful to the Graduate Studies Committee members who would read them. Clearly, it was up to me. Accommodation in this instance led to acceptance. Accommodation really felt like a subversion of the system, given the fact that I was a woman wielding the language of high theory, traditionally a male-
dominated arena. The very idea of accommodation was clearly complicated by identity issues, as well as contextual ones.

Once admitted to the Ph.D. program, I enrolled in a course to train teachers of basic writing. I read the discipline's published accounts of how basic writing teachers helped their marginalized basic writing students—students depicted almost exclusively as racially and/or culturally "other" within the literature—make the transition to the center of university culture. When I finally began to teach basic writing, I relied on my ability to make the conventions of academic discourse explicit to my students. I valued students' writing based upon how closely they adhered to such conventions. I rarely questioned where such conventions came from; I never considered that conventions, like any other values, were products of particular social and cultural contexts. My study of basic writing theory, history, and pedagogy during graduate school had consistently emphasized the importance of teaching students to accommodate to the conventions of Academic Discourse (and here academic discourse was almost never defined and almost always treated monolithically).

I also enrolled in rhetorical theory courses, and one of my first courses featured a feminist focus. Here the writers defied conventions and blurred boundaries, directly challenging the conventions valued by basic writing scholars as potentially empowering for their students. Feminist rhetoricians urged me to think critically about the relationships among my own identity, my sense of authority as a writer, and the actual genres that I choose in order to enact those identities on the page. Helene Cixous calls for women to write the body, suggesting that one's gendered identity
shapes her rhetorical choices. Judith Butler’s work requires a willingness to theorize our reading practices even as we enact them. Gloria Anzaldúa teaches me that one’s identity—a site where culture, sexuality, gender, class, and race construct us—in turn constructs the genres we write. Anzaldúa describes her text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, this way:

I see a mosaic pattern (Aztec-like) emerging, a weaving pattern, thin here, thick here. I see a preoccupation with the deep structure, the scaffolding. If I can get the bone structure right, then putting flesh on it proceeds without too many hitches. The problem is that the bones often do not exist prior to the flesh, but are shaped after a vague and broad shadow of its form is discerned or uncovered during beginning, middle and final stages of writing... This almost finished product seems an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work with several leitmotifs and with a central core, now appearing, now disappearing in a crazy dance... (66-7)

For Anzaldúa, the notion of a “body of text” is, perhaps, more corporeal than metaphorical. In this description, rhetorical choice-making is entirely bound to identity construction, the building of a spirited body via the written text. Anzaldúa’s “assemblage,” with its “central core refusing to sit still,” challenged my steadfast belief in the powers of academic discourse conventions. I found all of the women’s texts mentioned above maddeningly difficult to read.

Yet read them I did, spurred on partially by the belief that it was my responsibility as a reader to make those texts meaningful to me. Important things were at stake: my own authority as a student of rhetoric and a feminist; my desire to please the professor who assigned the texts and whom I admired very much; my own lack of confidence in myself as a reader. Surely, I thought, if these texts seem difficult to read, if they seem inaccessible to me, it’s my own fault for not being smart enough
to read them. Another issue was at stake in addition to the notion of accessibility: the very definition of academic discourse. Anzaldúa’s work, as well as the work of the other women mentioned above, is hardly conventional in the ways that we use to describe “conventions” to composition students. Was this still academic discourse? Clearly scholars study these women writers within academic settings, and the work impacts academic discussions. Most importantly, the work of these women writers demonstrates the integral connections among a writer’s identity, her authority, and the genres she constructs and proves that academic discourse can not be defined monolithically.

When I read my first batch of basic writing students’ papers, shortly after completing the course in feminist rhetoric described above, I expected my basic writing students’ texts to be, as Shaughnessy deemed them, “stunningly unskilled” and “alien” (vii). But after reading my first stack of fifteen student papers, I wondered what these students were doing in my basic writing class. Granted, their texts exhibited markers of the various rhetorical traditions my students represented. A young African American man from Youngstown, Ohio, often called upon a sermonic voice in his reader response logs. Another young man who had recently come to the United States from China wrote circuitously, calling upon poetic imagery to describe his experiences and avoiding argumentation. A white woman from the suburbs of Cleveland was puzzled by my requests for more detailed evidence to support her arguments. Why couldn’t I just take her word for it? 6 Certainly, there were grammatical errors, spelling errors, usage errors. But regardless of these errors,
regardless of the rhetorical techniques used by my students, I found their texts to be perfectly understandable, readable, accessible.

In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Edward Corbett describes the texts that are deemed most acceptable (and accessible) to a general audience as marked by "purity, propriety, and precision of diction" (389). I had a long history of academic reading and writing experiences that had taught me precisely such virtues; my initial encounters with Cixous, Butler, and Anzaldua clearly challenged my expectations and defied what my reading history taught me. When I first began to question the concept of textual accessibility, I did so by revisiting my own reading history. That reading history demonstrated that I had entered graduate school with precise generic expectations linked to notions of logic and coherence. Those expectations had been developed without interrogating the ways that a reader's identity might affect her reception of texts.

I, like my basic writing students, believed that there was a "right way" to draft an essay, and that all writers, regardless of their personal and educational histories, needed to learn that "right way" in order to succeed. Most importantly, my students and I instinctively recognized that certain rhetorical forms were privileged more highly than others in the classroom. In thinking long and hard about the notion of an accessible text, about the possibility or impossibility of a rhetorical form that might be equally accessible to any reader, regardless of that reader's identity. I worked to reconceptualize accessibility as something negotiated by readers and writers working in specific contexts, rather than a kind of universally recognized feature of well-
written texts. This dissertation reframes questions about accessibility as questions of readers' and writers' responsibilities. "Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" considers how readers determine what their responsibilities are, and how those responsibilities shift to accommodate different texts in different contexts.

Chapter Overviews

The chapters which follow this one focus scholarly attention upon the teacher's identity—which I treat as fluid and performative, strategically embodied and highly contextualized, a depiction based largely upon feminist and multicultural theories of identity—and the ways that identity affects the reading of student texts. This refocusing makes possible the generation of an ethically responsible model to guide the reception of student writing. I pay particular attention to the ways teachers read themselves into and against the texts of their students, both within the published texts that comprise the history of the discipline and within the individual classrooms that comprise my ethnographic study.

"Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" consists of six chapters, all of which work to theorize teacher identity on individual and disciplinary levels. Chapter Two, "Valuing Multiple Perspectives: Methodology for the Study," argues that the trio of methodologies that underlie the project—rhetorical analysis, historiography, and ethnographic case study—allow me to study teacher identity in a particularly fruitful way. The chapter critiques Stephen North and others who fear "methodological pluralism" and suggests instead the necessity for such pluralism as a means of theory generation. Drawing upon discussions of feminist research methodologies, I argue that
the ethnographic study of two basic writing teachers (Chapter Five) not only
challenges the historical portrait of disciplinary identity (Chapter Four), but also makes
clear the ways that disciplinary values can become naturalized by individual teachers.
Thus, working in tandem, the two methods point to the relationship between
disciplinary and individual teacher identity.

Chapter Three, “Disciplinary Ethos and Teacher Identity: Contextualizing the
Study,” identifies the key images of the teacher that have emerged from my study of
three decades’ worth of published representations of teachers reading student texts.
Drawing upon feminist and multicultural perspectives, I define “teacher identity” for
the project as fluid, contextualized, and performative, contrasting this depiction to
existing scholarly discussions of teacher identity. The chapter concludes with a review
of the ways that composition scholarship has addressed identity issues, with specific
attention focused upon the discipline’s construction of “cultural difference” since
1968. I argue that the discipline has depended upon a weak version of
multiculturalism in order to do the work of paying attention to issues of identity from a
disciplinary perspective.

Chapter Four, “Imagining Basic Writing Teachers: A Historical Case Study,”
traces prevalent images of composition teachers in general and basic writing teachers
in particular within two scholarly journals, *College Composition and Communication*
and *Journal of Basic Writing*. I analyze three strands of scholarly conversation: one
about shared perceptions of the composition teacher’s disciplinary values and
institutional status; a second about shared perceptions of basic writing teachers and
their identities; a third about writing teachers’ interpretive practices as they read
students’ texts. The end result of the chapter is the construction of a disciplinary
portrait of basic writing teacher identity.

Chapter Five, “Two Basic Writing Teachers’ Reading Practices: An
Ethnographic Case Study,” complicates the portrait painted above by focusing upon
two individual teachers who defy such representations. Utilizing ethnographic data
gathered during a series of interviews with the two teachers, I describe the ways that
multiple aspects of the two teachers’ identities shape their reading practices. The
chapter posits teacher identity is a primary mediator for the reception of student
writing and describes the rhetorical mechanisms at work as Deiva and Meryl read
student-authored texts.

Chapter Six, “Toward a Rhetoric of Reading: Implications for the Study,”
argues that teachers should make their ways of reading more explicit to student
writers, resulting in a more ethical means of reading and evaluating their work.
Furthermore, the chapter names an important connection between issues of identity
(for teacher and student), authority (for student and student text) and genre (those we
assign and how we receive them) in the classroom, exploring the implications of such
a triangle for generating assignments and responding to student writing.

The discipline’s understanding of how teacher identity affects the reading of
student texts—as well as the generic choices made available to students in the first
place—will be enriched if compositionists study two critical moments: the teacher’s
encounter with a student text and the representations of such encounters in scholarly
journals. Furthermore, I argue that such investigations should foreground issues of teacher identity as it is constructed within individual classrooms and within composition’s disciplinary history. In doing so, both the individual values of teachers and the collective values of the discipline will be highlighted, and composition teachers and researchers will be able to view the mechanisms that shape the reception of student writing more fully. Most importantly, by focusing on teachers as they read and represent the texts of their students, we are less likely to essentialize the students we teach and discuss. This shift of attention from student to teacher is a necessary one, particularly for those who work within the context of the basic writing classroom. As I suggest in Chapter Three and discuss further in Chapter Four, compositionists have spent too much time naming and defining basic writers and too little time considering the values and beliefs of the teachers who read, respond to, and evaluate those students’ work daily.
CHAPTER 2

VALUING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

In the Introduction, I argued that the field of composition studies has not paid adequate attention to teacher identity issues—broadly defined—in its contemporary scholarship. Such a problem might be addressed in multiple ways. Historians could return to university and college archives to find the journals, writing prompts, and lesson plans of individual teachers. Other researchers could survey institutions across the country in order to ascertain who we are demographically or study academic journals and count the numbers of articles published by men, women, part-timers, graduate students, and so on. Ethnographers could engage in projects that describe and define composition teachers at different institutions: two-year colleges, four-year private colleges, HBCU’s, technical schools, research institutions. All of these projects could yield insights which will be most valuable if we use them in order to consider the ways in which such individual and collective ways of naming ourselves (or having others name us) affect composition theories, pedagogies, and histories. Merely naming demographic imbalances within the field does not necessarily change the way things are in the field—or the way things might be. The next, necessary step
involves the kind of scholarship that both accounts for and alters disciplinary values and practices.

It is my goal for this study to stand as one example of such scholarship. Using the contemporary basic writing classroom as a case in point, I explore the ways that teachers' disciplinary and institutional identities and their cultural and personal identities—which intertwine to construct a teacher's ethos—affect pedagogical practices. In order to provide a specific example, I pay close attention to one pedagogical act: reading a student-authored text. While I do not infer a one-to-one correspondence between a teacher's identity and her reading practices, I do believe that foregrounding the importance of teacher identity at this interpretive moment directs attention to the passing of values from teacher to student. Indeed, the moment of reading may constitute a fruitful site for imagining institutional and disciplinary change.

My project, then, is a rhetorical study that is at once historically and theoretically driven with an emphasis on new and different directions for pedagogical development. I am interested in thinking historically about disciplinary trends in the ways teachers represent themselves and in the ways they read and interpret students' writing. At the same time, I use a more theoretical lens to explore the politics of reception, the mechanisms that guide classroom rhetorical situations, and the relationship between a discipline's collective ethos and individual teachers' identities. This project asks three central questions: 1) In what ways has composition studies approached questions of teacher identity—both collectively and individually
constructed—in its contemporary scholarship? 2) How have basic writing teachers represented themselves and their work within that same contemporary period?

3) How might attention to teacher identity inform theories of reading and interpreting student-authored texts? I approach these questions by utilizing a multimodal methodology, directed toward case studies related to teacher identity in the basic writing classroom. The first case is a historical consideration of disciplinary portraits of teachers and their reading strategies; the second case consists of interviews and reading protocols with two basic writing teachers. The need for such a multiple methodological perspective developed as I struggled to answer many of the questions that were emerging in my own classrooms—both the classrooms in which I was the teacher and those in which I was the student. My solution in addressing this need was to use both historical and ethnographic case study methodologies to interrogate what I identified as the critical moment, the intersections of teacher ethos and classroom practices.

_Dual Case Studies, Multiple Scenes of Reading_

There’s a cliché among rhetoricians: everything is rhetoric. From the moment we begin to work in this field, composition and rhetoric specialists struggle to define what rhetoric is and to consider what the study of rhetoric encompasses. I have become increasingly aware that the term is complex, that it clearly indicates more than “persuasive language” or “finding the available means of persuasion.” Rhetoric is more than empty, bombastic language (as in “mere rhetoric”). Rhetoric is more than political discourse. Instead, many of us who work in rhetoric and composition use the
term *rhetoric* to indicate discursive systems of representation or the ways that a particular epistemology is evidenced in or through language.

In scholarly work, the term *rhetoric* has most often been employed within the context of discussions of textual production. I argue, however—along with scholars such as Doug Brent, Linda Flower, Wayne Booth, Ross Winterowd, Donnalee Rubin, and others—that the term rhetoric might be applied also to discussions of textual reception. If, as many scholars argue, the act of reading is interpretive, an act of meaning-construction, then that act is governed by systematic ways of representing that meaning. As such, it is possible to consider rhetorics of reading, or the systems of representation that govern the ways in which we construct meaning for ourselves when we receive discourse.

In describing my project as one that aims toward a rhetoric of reading, I am assuming that there are systems of representation by which readers apprehend the texts they read, and that it is possible for us to describe and analyze those systems. Moreover, I am stating that identity—both individual identity and a teacher’s sense of disciplinary *ethos*—is a key mediating factor that shapes the rhetorics of reading I describe. The two case studies, Chapters Four and Five, trace possible relationships between teacher identity and a given rhetoric of reading, suggesting that greater awareness of our interpretive practices may be gained if we pay more attention to the histories of those practices. From that awareness, I believe, possibilities for altering those practices become more apparent.
“Toward a Rhetoric of Reading” considers teacher identity in multiple ways at several scenes of reading. In Chapter Three I study composition’s disciplinary history broadly, rereading several historical moments as they have been represented in College Composition and Communication and analyzing the field’s primary ways of dealing with issues of cultural identity. In Chapter Four I read two scholarly journals, *Journal of Basic Writing* and *College Composition and Communication*, in order to analyze constructions of composition’s disciplinary *ethos*, images of basic writing teachers, and discussions of teachers’ reading and interpretive practices during two contemporary historical periods. In Chapter Five, I consider the ways two basic writing teachers’ cultural, institutional, and disciplinary identities affect their readings of students’ texts. All of these scenes of reading demonstrate that teachers’ disciplinary and institutional locations as well as their own cultural identities affect pedagogical practices.

To paraphrase—and counter—Walter Ong, the audience in a classroom is *never a fiction*. In fact, perhaps no other rhetorical situation brings with it such an obviously present kind of audience: the teacher-reader. In making this claim, I do not mean to suggest that students “should” always write exclusively for their teachers. Rather, I want to emphasize that despite efforts to de-emphasize the teacher as audience, the teacher is audience. Certainly, as Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford have argued, student-authored texts suggest the presence of an implied audience and an invoked audience as well as this addressed one. At the same time, I believe the teacher-reader may embody all of these audiences. Indeed, several conceptualizations
of audience are synthesized in powerful ways within student-authored texts as student writers construct their audiences: particularly as they construct an evaluative teacher-reader. Imagine the layering of anxieties here. The implied audience for a student writer—particularly a new, first-year student—might be that teacher of freshman English that friends and parents have warned them about. Or, perhaps they conjure the image of the caring, yet dynamic teacher-reader embodied by Robin Williams' character, Mr. Keating, in *Dead Poets' Society*. Likewise, students may invoke images of teacher-readers from the media and their personal experiences. And, of course, students will address the teacher-reader whom they have already met directly; they will consider that teacher’s values and beliefs, which have been reflected within her selection of texts and construction of assignments for the course.

The concept of an evaluative teacher-reader only complicates everything even further. The reader is, after all, *paid* to read that text. Likewise, she is hired on the basis—according to our students—of her ability to find out what’s wrong with students’ papers. For this work, she is both evaluated and compensated by administrators outside her classroom. Her effectiveness as a teacher is in turn evaluated based upon the relative success—in structure, content, argument, style—of the textual product produced by the students whom she evaluates in her classroom. This evaluative reader is a living, breathing teacher whose multifaceted identity is comprised by her culture, race, gender, religious beliefs or lack thereof, region of origin, educational background, institutional position, political beliefs, and a variety of experiences that color her readings of every text she encounters.
In Defense of Methodological Pluralism

In The Making of Knowledge in Composition, Stephen North suggests that composition studies has adapted a variety of research methodologies uncritically, and he fears that the mish-mash of methods employed within the field may cost us our methodological integrity. His study of composition’s methodological communities was undertaken in response to his own sense that the field was “centerless” and had “no way to frame its central problems, nor any method by which to set about trying to resolve them” (iii). After surveying and categorizing the work performed by composition professionals, North is left with the sense that the co-existence of multiple methodological communities—Practitioners, Scholars, and Researchers—cannot bode well for composition studies’ disciplinary health. I suspect North wouldn’t enjoy my dissertation at all. In casting two distinctively different kinds of case study—historical and ethnographic—as ways to examine teacher identity issues across several scenes of reading, I risk, in North’s view, misaligning project and process, mismatching means and ends.

I am more persuaded, however, by feminist arguments in favor of methodological pluralism, as made by Patricia Sullivan, Gesa Kirsch, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, and others. These scholars claim that, for instance, multiple research methods might be synthesized, placed in conversation with one another, used to illuminate one another, resulting in more diverse perspectives, more voices represented, more theories examined. More importantly, as Bridwell-Bowles suggests in “Research in Composition: Issues and Methods,” by stopping the endless search for the “best”
research paradigm altogether, composition studies might achieve what she calls the "ultimate paradigm shift": "the loss of belief in the term 'paradigm' as a useful metaphor for what we are seeking" (112). In other words, multiple methodologies remind us that there are many ways of constructing knowledge and that the methods we choose not only affect the act of constructing knowledge but also shape our ways of understanding what counts as knowledge in the first place.

In order to think most constructively about disciplinary ethos, teachers' identities, the basic writing classroom, and the rhetorics of reading employed by teachers within those classrooms, I needed a method of research that could permit me to look in several directions at once, to conceive of a given rhetorical situation—the teacher reading the student text—as multilayered and complex. I needed to permit focus on both text and context, on individual teacher and institutional values. The multimodal methodology I developed draws from the specificity of ethnography, with its emphasis upon context, thick description, and individual subjects interacting within communities; and the more sweeping, categorizing practice of historiography, which both surveys the landscape of the discipline from a distance and stakes an individual surveyor's narrative claim. Together, my two case studies help me to pay attention to the ways that pedagogical and interpretive practices shift—from a distance and up close.

In Chapter Four the methodology is historiography. I have long been persuaded by Nan Johnson's discussion of historiography in the much-cited Rhetoric Review Piece, "Octalog: The Politics of Historiography" (1988). In that essay,
Johnson draws upon both rhetorical theory and poststructuralism, noting that historical research can be viewed as both archaeological and rhetorical. For Johnson, the archaeological aspects of the work involve more than engagement with material artifacts. Instead, such a way of imagining historical work “recognizes the heuristic and epistemic nature” of that work (17). In other words, the historian is involved in the actual building of the categories and interpretive structures that will shape not only the presentation of the research, but the ways of imagining how that research might affect those who come in contact with it. Likewise, the “methodological activity itself becomes the means of coming to know the past in a particular way” (17).

The work is rhetorical, Johnson argues, because the historian actively shapes—through structure, style, grammar, argument, and imagery—the narrative that will emerge from the archaeological dig. Still, Johnson acknowledges, recognizing that the history is constructed does not mean that readers disregard history’s persuasive power. Instead, Johnson recognizes that

Although we can know that the nature of reality of past and present is negotiated, although we can know that what historians do is to compel an act of attention to a text which is itself an act of attention, although we can know that histories are just stories, historians and readers alike tend to believe and subsequently proceed as if some stories were truer than others. It is the energy of this contradiction that fuels the political impact of historiography and makes this business of accounting for the past a baffling responsibility. (18)

Indeed, my own historical case study clearly compels readers’ attention to a particular “artifact”: the scholarly journal (CCC and JBW, to be more specific); in turn, it compels attention more specifically toward constructions of teacher identity within those journals. Some stories of teacher identity—involving race, gender, institutional
position, and level of expertise—have clearly become more persuasive, more commonly shared, than others. My historical case study identifies the rhetorical mechanisms that have contributed to this kind of disciplinary reception for those stories.

Chapter Five, on the other hand, is an ethnographic case study. This viewpoint complicates the stories I mention above by drawing attention toward individual, rather than disciplinary, constructions of identity in the basic writing classroom. If Chapter Four compels readers’ attention to identity issues within the discipline, Chapter Five analyzes the ways in which teachers juggle multiple aspects of their identities in the classroom every day. It is the blending of historical and ethnographic case study methodologies, however, that is most valuable here. With the merging of the two, I am better able to consider, for instance, the ways that published scholarship—which carries with it a particular kind of disciplinary authority—influences teachers’ practices, as well as the ways that teachers might resist that authority by revising those practices. I can trace the effects of chronologically documented ideologies on contemporary classroom practices. I can interrogate the ways that disciplinary values influence individual teachers’ actions and, quite possibly, interrupt the very act of values transmission. The blending of historical and ethnographic methods, in other words, allows me to examine more fully the ways that teachers negotiate their identities and their work within particular institutional, disciplinary, and cultural locations.
The Historical Case Study

Chapter Four focuses on teacher identity in a collective sense and characterizes the most common ways that basic writing teachers in particular name themselves and their work. In this chapter, I study teacher identity by characterizing shifting constructions of disciplinary ethos as it has been constructed within two composition journals, *Journal of Basic Writing* and *College Composition and Communication* between 1975 and 1990. As I analyze these journals, I pay particular attention to the ways that the act of reading students' texts is represented and theorized during particular time periods in order to highlight possible dynamics of the relationship between teacher identity and disciplinary interpretive practices in the classroom.

By examining the ways that composition scholars locate themselves within their institutions and disciplines from a historical perspective, I can contextualize more fully teachers' accounts of their reading practices and their pedagogies. Indeed, the dominant representations of basic writing teachers that have emerged in composition scholarship published since 1975, when Mina P. Shaughnessy edited the first issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing (JBW)*, provide readers with a sense of the ethos—or competing constructions of ethos, that basic writing teachers share. That ethos reflects both composition's disciplinary history and its teachers' tension-filled relationships to the student (as) writer and the institutional contexts in which they work.

Chapter Four looks toward shared and contested perceptions of what it means to be a basic writing teacher. Chapter Four traces constructions of the ethos of the basic writing teacher in JBW and CCC from 1975 to 1990, and investigates possible
connections between such issues and teachers’ interpretive practices when they read the texts of their students. Moreover, in Chapter Four I suggest that much can be learned from individual teachers’ representations of their interpretive practices as they read student-authored texts, especially when we read them with in light of composition’s historical, political, and institutional history. Such essays as David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University,” for instance, have captured the disciplinary imagination by positing a particular rhetorical stance that teachers might take toward their students’ essays. While “Inventing” demonstrates one reader’s interpretive practices, we read the essay less as a portrait of David Bartholomae than as an articulation of a theoretical/ pedagogical perspective for the field. Bartholomae’s essay has affected our ways of reading and interpreting students’ texts in multiple ways. Here Bartholomae’s interpretation of the problems faced by these student writers is that they cannot yet create the “necessary and enabling fiction” that they are a part of the academic community already (274). This essay alters the interpretive landscape in several ways: it re-defines the basic writer as an outsider to academic culture—not just a beginner, but a specific kind of beginner—and reimagines the pedagogical goal of the basic writing teacher as helping students to learn new discursive conventions and cross over into “our” community.

Such representations tell us less about individual teachers than the disciplinary values they share. Much can be learned about ourselves and our ways of reading and valuing student writing by paying attention to how we render our students and their texts. In Writing Students, for example, Marguerite Helmers, critiques the ways that
compositionists have represented student writers in the Staffroom Interchange pages of College Composition and Communication (1994). I tend to agree with Helmers, who suggests that compositionists need to pay attention to the ways that the field benefits from or makes use of certain kinds of recurring images of students. I might add, though, that compositionists must pay equal attention to the ways that the field benefits from or makes use of particular images of teachers. Chapter Four constructs several disciplinary portraits of The Composition Teacher, many of which suggest tension-laden relationships among teachers and their students, their departments, their discipline, and the institution.

Selecting Texts

I studied several contemporary book-length studies before moving to a more focused, chronological study of basic writing scholarship in CCC, JBW, and College English. The book-length texts that I paid most attention to include: Mina Shaughnessy’s Errors and Expectations, Deborah Mutnick’s Writing in an Alien World, Marcia Dickson’s It’s Not Like That Here, Mike Rose’s Lives on the Boundary, Horner and Lu’s Representing the Other, considering the ways that the writers of the texts represented themselves as basic writing teachers.

My increasing interest in mapping disciplinary values led me to focus my historical case study on CCC and JBW exclusively. Both are highly influential and prestigious journals within the field of composition studies, and both are intended for a scholarly audience of composition and rhetoric specialists. JBW is geared most specifically to basic writing specialists, many of whom carry a higher emphasis on
teaching than other composition specialists. As such, articles in JBW tend to be focused on classroom issues and/or use classroom examples in order to make their arguments. Articles in CCC are often less explicitly focused on classroom practice, though it is customary for most scholarship in CCC to at least point toward pedagogical implications for the theoretical, historical, or rhetorical issues being discussed. I studied the journals from 1975—the year of JBW’s first issue—to 1990.

Quite simply, the scholarship published in both journals informs disciplinary theories and practices in both explicit and implicit ways. These articles and essays are taught often in graduate seminars, and many of them—such as the series of essays on basic writing by Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, for instance, which later were bundled and published as the book-length text Representing the Other—become larger projects and are published by highly respected presses. Explicitly, then, work published in CCC and JBW influences the teaching of new rhetoric and composition specialists. In addition, the essays published within CCC and JBW are produced by those who work within institutional contexts that offer teachers enough financial or research support to produce scholarship; in turn, these writers are most likely to obtain tenure and promotion at their institutions and, through more implicit channels, they continue to influence the ways in which basic writing is theorized, historicized, and taught.

Analyzing Texts

Several texts that appeared in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, including James Berlin’s Rhetoric and Reality, Stephen North’s The Making of Knowledge in
Composition, Sue Ellen Holbrook’s “The Feminization of Composition,” and Susan Miller’s Textual Carnivals, provided me with the most commonly used ways of describing composition professionals and their work: in theoretical terms (Berlin), methodological terms (North), and institutional terms (Holbrook and Miller). I then used these three categories as frames for my own investigation of the ways that composition teachers name themselves and their work.

I focused my analysis in three ways, moving from the most broad to the most specific categories. First, I read both journals chronologically in order to make generalized comments about historical and cultural context; I also used rhetorical analysis in order to characterize the primary metaphors used to name writing teachers and their work within a given time period. Second, I studied the two journals’ discussions of the nature of basic writing work and the ethos of the basic writing teacher. For instance, Editors’ Notes, Chair’s Addresses, and Personal Perspective essays in CCC were particularly useful; likewise, editorial comments in JBW, as well as issues that paid tribute to Mina Shaughnessy and her work after her death, were illustrative in many ways. The moments in which a journal passed its editorship from one scholar to the next are almost always accompanied by some shift in editorial policy; I chronicled these moments as well. Third, I performed close readings of essays from both journals that featured teachers reading student-texts, discussing their reading and interpretive strategies, or otherwise paying attention to the notion of reception within the context of the basic writing classroom.
The Ethnographic Case Study

Chapter Four focuses on disciplinary, collective ways of thinking about basic writing teachers' identities and considers their impact upon teachers' interpretive practices. In other words, Chapter Four offers a disciplinary portrait of basic writing teachers engaged in the act of reading students' texts. Chapter Five asks more specific individualized questions: what are the implications—ethical, pedagogical, rhetorical—when teachers read their students' texts? What rhetorical mechanisms structure and/or mediate those readings? In this chapter, I consider what it means to read as a teacher, to encounter the texts of living, breathing writers within the actual, material spaces of basic writing classrooms and to represent such encounters within academic journals. Neither reader response theories, traditional rhetorical theories, nor theories of authorship can account for that peculiar rhetorical situation that occurs every time a student writer creates a text in response to a particular teacher's or institution's request. Furthermore, while a great deal of attention has been paid to teachers in the act of responding to and grading student texts, very little is known about how teachers actually read them—before they must write comments in the margins.

I use the term "ethnographic" here because while I did not engage in long-term, naturalistic observation of the teachers, I have emphasized several aspects of ethnographic inquiry in the project. My research stance was that of a participant-observer at the Writing Workshop, and the dissertation is the product of a long-term inquiry process (three years, including data collection and writing). In "Research in Composition: Issues and Methods," Lillian Bridwell-Bowles cites Amy Zaharlick and
Judith L. Green’s discussion of ethnographic inquiry as a “deliberate inquiry process guided by a point of view or cultural theory” (107). According to that definition, my project is ethnographic in nature: I began with a theory of teacher-reading practices that views such practices as mediated by teachers’ identities, and I engaged in an inquiry process that was deliberately designed in order to interrogate that theory.

At the same time, Zaharlick and Green emphasize that the ethnographer is a participant-observer within a specific culture, often a culture to which s/he does not already belong. Clearly I was already a member of the Writing Workshop culture; as such, my ethnographic case study does not address questions of entry and assimilation into the culture. In “Still Life: Representations and Silences,” an essay that appears in the much cited collection *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Research* (1997), Brenda Brueggemann notes that she has used the term “ethno-oriented case studies” to describe the kinds of case studies that focus on individuals, rather than communities, but draw upon “ethnographic techniques” for data collection (35). This term seems appropriate for my work as well.

My ethno-oriented case study was based on a series of ten interviews with two basic writing teachers, both of whom are my colleagues and both of whom were invited to participate in my study. Each subject was asked to read a series of texts, several of which were authored by her own students; several of which were authored by another basic writing teacher’s students; and several of which were authored by professional writers. Briefly, the first interviews centered around the discussion of preliminary reading history questionnaires that I had provided to each subject. The
second round of interviews focused on the teachers' readings of three student-authored texts produced within a colleague's (Steve's) class, and the next round focused on their readings of three of their own students' texts. The fourth interviews focused on the subjects' readings of two professionally authored texts, one written by a published creative writer who happened to be a colleague, the other written by a composition scholar with whom the subjects had no relationship. Finally, the fifth interview sessions were actually self-conducted; each subject read and responded to a professionally-authored short story at home, audiotaping her response. I audiotaped each interview and reading session, prompting subjects to describe and reflect upon their reading and interpretive processes in each case.

The Human Subjects Review Board deemed my project appropriate for exemption status before I began interviewing subjects; the exemption approval notification form copies are available upon request. I use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation to name the teachers, students, and institutions described or included in the research. The study took place at the Writing Workshop of Midwestern State University, a highly collaborative basic writing program with national recognition. The Workshop consists of a full-time, non-tenured administrator, her graduate administrative associate, a core of four full-time, non-tenured senior lecturers, a fluctuating group of part-time lecturers, and a small number of graduate student teachers. The Writing Workshop offers several intensive first-year writing courses: English 109.01 and 109.02, a two-quarter basic writing sequence, and English 110 W, an intensive version of first-year writing that also includes a peer tutoring component.
At the time of the study, I had worked within this context as a teacher of basic writing for roughly two years; during the drafting of the dissertation, I alternated between teaching at the Workshop and serving as its graduate administrative associate. Detailed description of the Writing Workshop and its pedagogy appears in Chapter Five.

**Selecting Subjects**

I invited two colleagues, Meryl and Deiva (pseudonyms), to serve as my research subjects because both have completed their dissertations—one in basic writing, the other in literary studies—and both define themselves as basic writing professionals, rather than literary scholars who are temporarily “doing time” in basic writing. They offered me some variety in terms of cultural background; Meryl is a white woman born and raised in a small town in Ohio, while Deiva left Delhi, India to study in the United States as a beginning graduate student in the 1980’s. Both are women, which seemed an appropriate choice, given the ratio of women to men staff members at the Writing Workshop (13:6, including undergraduate work-study students, as of May 2000).

A distinct advantage in choosing these two colleagues was that I admire both of them as teachers and as scholars. I wanted an opportunity to talk with them as teachers whom I believed already exhibited interpretive practices that were ethical, theoretically sophisticated, and pedagogically sound. Ultimately, my desire was to produce a generative study that might be suggestive, in particular, for teacher training methods. At the same time, a caution was that my relationships with both women
clearly affect my renderings of their reading practices. In “Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research,” Thomas Newkirk notes that many qualitative researchers wrestle with “the ethics of bad news,” moments when researchers must face the fact that they may find themselves in “moral difficulty” when their findings reflect less than positively on their subjects (3). Newkirk links this problem to a dynamic in which subjects may be “seduced” by researchers, many of whom gain their trust and “disarm” the subject with well-intentioned warmth and interest (3). In this case, I found myself wrestling with my own fear of encouraging my two colleagues, both of whom trusted me and offered me unflinchingly candid information about their reading practices, to reveal too much about themselves as they read student-authored texts.

Collecting Student Texts

I introduced my project to the full Writing Workshop teaching staff in September 1998, and I provided them with copies of my dissertation abstract. I knew that I wanted my two subjects to read texts written by their own students, but I also wanted them to read texts produced within another teacher’s classroom. Having Meryl and Deiva each read texts written by their own students would provide me with very different information, much of which would be shaped by their relationships with their students. By having them read the texts produced by students within a third teacher’s classroom, Meryl and Deiva could read a common set of student-authored texts to which they had no pre-existing relationship, providing me with a valuable opportunity to compare their reading strategies under similar conditions. I accepted another colleague, Steve’s, invitation to visit his class and include his students’ texts in the
study. Steve (a pseudonym) was also an experienced teacher whose work I admired, and I had served as a research subject for his dissertation as well.

I visited the three 109.01 classes in October of 1998. At that time, I explained the study to the students and texts. Signed forms indicating students' permission to use their texts for my study are available upon request. Students agreed to submit drafts—early and final—of each of three writing projects that they would undertake in 109.01 that quarter. All three teachers submitted copies of their syllabi and assignment prompts as well, and I selected five final drafts of texts from each of the three classes—seven authored by women and eight by men—to serve as focus essays for the interviews. All of these texts represented students' responses to the first assignment prompt in each teacher's course; I had access to early, middle, and final drafts of all essays, but my subjects worked only with final drafts.

In selecting the student-authored texts that would, in fact, serve as foci for interview discussions, I tried to make my selections randomly, ensuring only that the five texts from each class were typed and xeroxed clearly and that I achieved the balance of authorial gender that I mention above. I then narrowed the pool of student-authored texts to three from each class in order to ensure that Meryl and Deiva would have enough time to read not only the student-authored texts I selected, but professionally-authored texts as well (see below). Initially, I intended to have Deiva and Meryl read three of Steve's students' texts, three of her own students' texts, and three of her co-subject's students' texts. Time did not permit this to happen, and in the end, Deiva and Meryl did not read the texts produced by students' in each others'
classes. Thus the interviews which focused on student-authored texts required each
subject to read three of Steve’s students’ essays (interview two) and three of her own
students’ essays (interview three).

Selecting Professionally Authored Texts

Initially, I wanted to compare the ways that teachers read student-authored and
professionally authored texts; as the study proceeded, however, I became increasingly
focused on teachers’ readings of student-authored texts in the classroom context.
While I did transcribe and analyze the audiotaped interviews based on Deiva and
Meryl’s readings of professionally authored texts, this data does not appear in the
dissertation. In other words, the project became increasingly less about the act of
reading and more about the ways that teachers’ identities affect their classroom
practices. Still, it seems important to describe why I chose professionally authored
texts and the ways in which those texts were used.

First, I selected professionally-authored texts after I selected students’ texts; this way, I worked to complicate or extend conversations about the student-authored
texts by choosing professionally-authored texts that might help us further our
discussions of the students’ texts later. Issues central to my investigation included: the
ways in which a relationship with a writer affects a teacher’s reading practices; the
ways in which genre affects a teacher’s reading practices; the ways in which the very
position of teacher affects reading practices. Thus, Deiva and Meryl each read one
professionally-authored creative text that had been written and published by a Writing
Workshop staff member; one scholarly essay written by a compositionist with basic
writing expertise that dealt with questions of teacher identity and ideologies; and one
short story written by a Nobel Prize winning author who complicates questions of race
and identity within that story.

Pilot Study for Protocol

In October of 1988, I conducted an abbreviated pilot study with Writing
Workshop staff members during a planned staff meeting. I provided each staff
member with a copy of a former 109.01 student’s paper and asked each of the staff
members to a) read and respond with their own system of marginal notation; b) survey
and categorize briefly their responses; and c) engage in large group discussion of
possible ties between their educational and cultural histories and their responses. The
pilot study was rather unsuccessful in some regards; for instance, it was nearly
impossible for any staff member to separate the act of reading from evaluating/
responding. Thus most participants responded to the essay as they would to one of
their own student’s papers, offering suggestions to facilitate revision. This suggested
to me that the terms for my study needed to be clarified for participants so that they
might be able to articulate the difference between reading and evaluating in the
classroom. Likewise, it suggested that our reading practices as teachers may be
predetermined or even scripted by our own sense of institutional position when we
read in the classroom, so that we may have difficulty reading student-authored texts
without engaging in particular kinds of judging or evaluating activities.
The Interviews

In the first interview session, each subject discussed their responses to the preliminary reading history questionnaire (Appendix A), which I distributed to them roughly one week prior to our first interview. This questionnaire was designed to help them reflect upon the ways their educational and personal histories may have shaped reading practices. Meryl and Deiva drafted brief responses to this questionnaire, e-mailed the responses to me, and I used those responses to prompt our first interviews in mid-October of 1998.

Interview Two took place in mid-November of 1998. Deiva and Meryl each read and responded to three papers authored by students in Steve's 109.01 class. I asked them to read these texts before reading their own students' texts so that we could develop a shared vocabulary for discussing such texts that did not depend upon each teacher's highly contextualized knowledge of the student writers or the classroom context. Deiva and Meryl (in separate sessions) read each text, verbalizing any responses they had as they read, categorized their responses, and discussed them with me in an interview process guided by my own list of questions, which were designed to promote discussion of the mechanics of reading, the challenges of reading, and the connections between teachers' personal histories and reading.

In early December, I interviewed Deiva and Meryl a third time. During this session, they each read three of their own students' papers; the protocol described above was repeated. Our discussion was extended, however, as Meryl and Deiva discussed the ways in which their relationships with the students affected their
readings. Likewise, we spent some time in this interview discussing the relationship between teachers' prompts and students' responses.

In January, Deiva and Meryl each completed their fourth interview, which focused on their readings of two professionally-authored texts, one a creative piece written by their colleague and published in a well-known literary journal, and the other a scholarly article written by a well-respected compositionist. Again, Deiva and Meryl underwent the same process described above, reading the two short texts during the interview, responding with marginal notations, characterizing those notations and discussing their readings with me. We also discussed at length the ways in which their reading practices in this rhetorical situation differed from those performed during interviews two and three. In February, Deiva and Meryl each took home a personal copy of a Nobel Prize winning author's short story and a blank cassette tape. In the comfort of their own homes, both subjects read the story, responded to the story, and puzzled through the process without me.

**Analyzing the Data**

I transcribed the first two interviews in January of 1999, and I provided copies of the transcripts to both subjects. With the support of a Corbett Dissertation Research Award, I had the remaining audiotapes transcribed. After completing the first round of reading and analysis of transcripts, I developed the following categories for the next phase of analysis:

1) mechanics of the readings (i.e. physical processes);

1) interruptions of the readings (nature and frequency);
2) ways of naming or describing the students while reading;
3) ways of categorizing and explaining personal connections to the reading;
4) ways of constructing generic categories for the texts being read;
5) metaphors for talking about the reading process.

From this list of categories, I selected three main areas of focus: 1) description of the physical and rhetorical processes that subjects used to read student-authored texts; 2) ways of imagining students who authored the texts; 3) ways of constructing generic categories for the student-authored texts. The result of this process is the ethno-oriented case study in Chapter Five that suggests multiple ways in which a teacher's identity affects her reading practices in the classroom.

**A Word About Feminist Research**

"Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" is also intended as a feminist project, both in subject and in method. In *Beyond Methodology*, Fonow and Cook offer these tenets of feminist research: "reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and use of the situation-at-hand" (Fonow and Cook 2).

"Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" exhibits each of these characteristics. First, my project grows out of my own self-reflection about the rhetorical problems I have faced as a reader of theoretical and student-authored texts. I refer often to those personal experiences as a reader and use them as a starting point from which to theorize. By making visible and explicit the ways that my research methods and subject(s) grow out of a personal exploration of my own teaching identity, "Toward a Rhetoric of Reading" provides a model for feminist inquiry that is at once personal and theoretical.
Chapter One in particular establishes my project as one that grows out of personal experience and a need to theorize accessibility and textuality in particular ways.

Second, the project is action-oriented in its efforts to influence teacher training and reading and evaluation methods within the field. In Chapter Six, I articulate a method of reading student-authored texts based upon the analysis of authority, identity, and genre issues that emerge in student-authored writing. I also endorse the use of particular kinds of writing assignments that allow for more room for students to develop multiple classroom personas, to explore identity as it shapes their reading and writing.

Third, I call attention to affective components of research by speaking frankly of my relationship to my interview research subjects (see Chapter Five) and by representing these subjects in generous and generative ways. In other words, my goal in selecting subjects for this part of the project was to demonstrate the sophisticated and rhetorically responsible ways that excellent teachers of basic writing read their students' work. Furthermore, the entire project is really about relationships, relationships between teachers and students, students and texts, teachers and texts, teachers and their discipline, etc.

Last, the project clearly takes advantage of the situation-at-hand by using the Midwestern State University Writing Workshop as a primary site for research and the basic writing classroom as a case in point. While the issue of how teacher identity affects teacher reading strategies might be explored fruitfully within a variety of locations, I had access to the basic writing classroom at Midwestern State; my
experiences there were among the most powerful of my teaching career. Those experiences led me to see my academic work as well connected to the field of basic writing, and that viewpoint led me to situate the study in a basic writing context.

I realize that the study is not "of" or "about" women, and some might exclude my study, then, from feminist categories by this criterion. But I see the study as very much enacting feminist principles of research, such as those discussed above, and ethical principles of research, such as those delineated by Gesa Kirsch, Peter Mortensen, Patricia Sullivan, Thomas Newkirk, and others. In "Feminist Research and Composition Studies," the first chapter in Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication, Gesa Kirsch reviews the work of those who make a distinction between "work that explicitly employs feminist principles of research and work that implicitly incorporates such principles" (Kirsch 5). Here Kirsch looks to Elizabeth Wheatley:

There is an abundance of work that can produce feminist possibilities, or exert variously feminist effects, even though the researcher/author does not explicitly designate the work as feminist. In light of this, I think it is helpful to distinguish between work that is self-consciously feminist in its aims, claims, and intentions, and work that can be feminist in its effects or in its production of possibilities. (Wheatley 411 qtd in Kirsch 4-5)

While the language of rhetorical theory provides a useful term for thinking about how speakers construct authority for themselves in the presence of an audience--ethos--that term falls short when students write for an audience that is always already placed in the position of evaluator. This complicated rhetorical problem is multifaceted, with implications extending not only into the classroom but also into composition studies' disciplinary history. In blending methodologies as I do in this
dissertation, my viewpoint becomes enriched as I am enabled by the merger of analyses to see the problem of the discipline’s lack of attention to teacher identity issues as one with historical, theoretical, and practical implications.
CHAPTER 3

DISCIPLINARY ETHOS AND TEACHER IDENTITY:
CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

In the Introduction, I argue that teacher identity shapes the ways that student texts are received in the composition classroom and represented within composition scholarship. Furthermore, I suggest that the study of teacher identity in composition studies is most fruitful when it emphasizes the ways that an individual teacher’s identity reflects, responds to, or even challenges the sense of disciplinary identity communicated to her via composition scholarship. In thinking about constructions of teachers in the discipline from both individual and disciplinary perspectives, I am better able to offer a fully articulated theory of how teacher identity—multiply constructed and defined, as I explain below—affects the reading of student writing.

In this chapter, I contextualize both the historiographic and ethnographic case studies of teacher identity by considering broadly the ways that identity issues have been treated within composition scholarship. I then define ethos and identity by drawing upon feminist and rhetorical theory; review the discipline’s responses to questions of identity from a historical perspective; and introduce the context of the basic writing classroom, the site for the two case studies, as a case in point. This
movement from the theoretical (defining ethos and identity) to the historical (studying representations of teachers and identity-related issues) to the ethnographic (arguing why the study of individual teachers' reading practices is crucial within the basic writing context) mirrors the chapters that follow as each adds a methodological piece to the fuller image.

**Defining Ethos for the Study**

I use the term ethos in this study to refer to a collective, disciplinary sense of identity for composition studies and its teachers. I view this kind of ethos as constructed by the discipline's scholarship and reinforced by teachers' readings of that scholarship. In other words, as members of the discipline call upon scholarly work in graduate seminars and professional conference presentations, they institutionalize messages about the nature of composition studies and its workers. Most importantly, given the complicated nature of the relationship between composition studies and literary studies, a term such as ethos—in its most contemporary sense, as I explain below—is particularly useful for thinking about composition's disciplinary identity. Ethos implies that composition's "character" can change to serve its persuasive needs in different contexts.

Ethos has shifted in meaning historically. The term has alternatively been associated with either the actual character/person of the speaker (Plato, Quintilian), understood as constructed within the text itself (Aristotle, Augustine), or viewed as a process of negotiation among speakers, writers, audience members, and texts within specific contexts or locations (sophists; contemporary feminists). I call largely upon
the third category of definitions of *ethos* for this project in order to highlight that composition studies is comprised by teachers and researchers who employ multiple methods of research, undertake their work in a variety of contexts, and represent that work in several different ways.

In “Positioning *Ethos* in Historical and Contemporary Theory,” James Baumlin maps out several treatments of *ethos*. The most familiar conceptualization, perhaps, comes from Aristotle, who considered *ethos* a means of appeal to character; a rhetor could persuade his audience by constructing himself as a credible, trustworthy speaker. For Aristotle, the emphasis is on the act of persuasion itself, and he acknowledges that there may, in fact, be a gap between the rhetor’s representation of himself as a good person and the “actual” moral identity of the rhetor. For Plato, on the other hand, “*ethos* defines the space where language and truth meet or are made incarnate within the individual. A Platonic definition of *ethos* and ethical argument... is premised on the moral and, ultimately, theological inseparability of the speaker-agent from the speech-act” (xiii). Likewise, Quintilian equated *ethos* with the speaker and posited the *vir bonus*, or “good man speaking well” as the ideal rhetor.

While classical rhetoricians disagree upon the question of correspondence between the *ethos* of the speaker and his actual moral character, all associate *ethos* with issues of character, credibility, and authority. These issues are of primary importance to contemporary feminist rhetoricians such as Nedra Reynolds, Susan Jarratt, Krista Ratcliffe, and Kate Roald, who have reread and redefined the term by returning to a more sophistic definition. In “*Ethos* as Location: New Sites for
Understanding Discursive Authority,” Reynolds points to the Greek roots for **ethos**, “habit, custom, and character” (327), and she expands the term to include “the individual agent as well as the location or position from which that person speaks or writes” (326). This way, Reynolds is able to consider the character of the rhetor as a construction that shifts according to context and she is able to include the context itself as a kind of character-maker. Feminist rhetoricians use this conceptualization of **ethos** to make a space for those who have not been traditionally positioned as authorities (i.e. marginalized rhetors such as women, African Americans, working class speakers) to construct authority from the margins. Reynolds acknowledges that **ethos** “like postmodern subjectivity, shifts and changes over time, across texts, and around competing spaces”; it is not merely “embodied” or “crafted alone” (326).

Given this feminist redefinition of **ethos** as a kind of location occupied, a construction that encompasses both the speaker and the position from which she speaks, the notion of a **disciplinary ethos** for composition studies is quite important. Studying the **ethos** of the discipline involves considering how the discipline constructs authority for itself in conversation with other academic disciplines. It also means paying attention to the ways that the discipline’s individual members are positioned within their departments, colleges, and institutions. Such individual positions affect how the discipline is viewed, and teachers’ positions or locations in turn reflect the ways their institutions value composition’s disciplinary character. In other words,
perceptions of the relationship between the discipline and its workers can make or break an individual scholar's chances of being perceived as authoritative and credible.

Defining Identity for the Study

In Chapter One I foregrounded my own identity as a student, a basic writing teacher, a white woman, a graduate of a large, southern school where English studies was clearly not privileged. As I reflected upon my experiences as a student of both rhetorical theory and basic writing theory and pedagogy, the aspects of my identity that mattered most shifted according to my need to establish a context for the narrative. My identity is not fixed or stagnant; my experiences are varied and I adjust my positions to suit the negotiation of those experiences.

The conceptualization of identity that I utilize for my study is based upon an understanding of identity as highly contextualized, multiply constructed and enacted. This is a distinction made most often by feminist critics, many of whom draw upon postructuralism or postcolonial theory as a way of denaturalizing categories such as gender and race. In Gender Trouble: Feminism And The Subversion Of Identity (1989), Judith Butler posits gender as performed, rather than embodied. In Simians, Cyborgs, And Women: The Reinvention Of Nature (1991), Donna Haraway troubles the distinctions among animals, humans, and machines, positing a cyborgian subjectivity. In Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa posits a "mestiza consciousness" to name the borderland identity that is formed at the intersection of several locations, all of which converge within/through her and her language, including Tejana, Chicana, Lesbian, Mexican, American.
While poststructuralists and feminists may encourage us to denaturalize forms of identity, to think more critically about how categories are constructed and to resist speaking from naturalized, essentialized positions, I do not discount such categories, nor do I pretend that race and gender do not exist in the "real." Clearly the critique of poststructuralist approaches to identity mounted by many African American critics is well taken: white critics decide "race" doesn't exist at the moment when African American literature, literary theory, and literary critics and authors are gaining a voice. In "The Splitting Image: Contemporary Feminisms and the Ethics of Ethos," Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds raise similar concerns from a feminist perspective. While the assumption of a poststructuralist subjectivity provides a critique of the Enlightenment self (which naturalizes and universalizes white male experience), feminists may gain that critique at great expense, suffering the "loss of any grounds for political action in a totally textual world" (38).

Part of what my project resists is this notion of the totally textual world. The impetus for my study of teacher identity, after all, was my own classroom experience as a basic writing teacher and rhetoric and composition graduate student. As a basic writing teacher, I placed my briefcase on the desk at the front of the room each day and surveyed the terrain. I saw seven students of color: Hispanic, African American, Asian, Indian. I saw eight white students from rural towns such as Chillicothe and Circleville, Ohio. And I saw myself, the white, middle-class class woman from Virginia, a graduate teaching associate standing at the front of the room. Such
categories of identity as race, ethnicity, class, and institutional status were quite real for me and for my students.

Thus I find it useful to consider identity as multiply defined, enacted, represented, and even embodied—but selectively so. I recognize the importance of subjects naming themselves, rather than receiving the names that others would give them. As Jacqueline Royster suggests in her forthcoming composition reader, Writing and the Public Good (working title), it is possible to talk about identity in multiple ways that signify whether we have chosen membership within a particular group or had that membership mapped onto us. In addition, Royster encourages students to think about how they value their own membership within the groups to which they belong.

Finally, I draw attention again to feminist discussions of ethos as a way to think about identity for this project. Discussions of ethos, as I have explained already, pertain to the politics of location and help me to think about identity as a series of locations or spaces occupied as subjects move through the daily business of their lives. Jarratt and Reynolds, whom I mention above, relate ethos to “the admission of a standpoint, with the understanding that other standpoints exist and that they change over time” (53). In “Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research,” feminist composition scholars Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie urge other researchers to “theorize locations by examining [their] experiences as reflections of ideology and culture, reinterpret experiences through the eyes of others, and recognize our split selves” (8). Kirsch and Ritchie hope to help others construct
more ethical ways of doing femininist research in composition studies. I would argue that it is this act of personal theorizing, this moment of examination that considers both experience and representation, ideology and culture, that yields the most fruitful understanding of how a teacher’s identity impacts her reading and valuing of student-authored work.

I define identity for this study, then, as the nexus of positions occupied—by choice or by external categorization—by an individual. Here acts of self-definition are placed into conversation with the representations that others place upon us. For a composition teacher, identity may include the sum of any number of positions, from place of origin to gender to academic title. My ethnographic case study of two basic writing teachers reading student texts (Chapter Five) offers a way to trace the ways that these positions affect the reading of student writing and breaks down the various positions that construct a particular identity. It is important to note that I do not advocate a model of identity that begins and ends at the occupation of one demographic category. In other words, I do not suggest that we study women readers, for example, in order to describe commonalities among their strategies and posit a “woman’s way of reading.” Yet, when we consider composition studies’ disciplinary history in terms of its treatment of identity issues, the larger narrative that emerges might suggest precisely such an approach.

**Contextualizing the Study from a Disciplinary Perspective**

As composition studies celebrates the fiftieth issue of *College Composition and Communication*, it is uniquely primed for self-reflection in a disciplinary sense. In
the special dual anniversary issue of *CCC, A Usable Past: CCC at 50*, scholars reflect upon the discipline’s history and point toward possibilities for future scholarship. In particular, scholars of color—including Geneva Smitherman, Victor Villanueva, Keith Gilyard, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and Jean C. Williams—use this occasion as an opportunity to urge others in the field to intervene into the discipline’s often exclusionary historiographic practices. Likewise, they remind us that there is a direct relationship between those historiographic practices—how a discipline determines whose stories will be told and in what ways—and its ethical and pedagogical practices.

In their introduction to *Getting A Life*, a study of how autobiography functions in contemporary cultural sites, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note that "only certain kinds of stories become intelligible as they fit the managed framework, the imposed system" of the institutions that solicit those stories (11). Smith and Watson’s quotation resonates for me on several levels. First, given the discussion of the critiques of composition studies mounted by Villanueva, Gilyard, Royster, and other scholars of color, I often question what constitutes an “intelligible” disciplinary narrative about teachers of composition studies and their students. More specifically, I think about the ways that basic writing students are discussed within composition studies literature, as well as within the discourse of public education: they are the producers of unintelligible texts; they seem to have little, if any, control over their own discourse.

This dissertation shares the stories of several basic writing teachers, as well as their students, whose texts also appear here.9 Thus it is crucial to pay attention to the
various institutions or agents that solicit those stories. Those of us who teach composition are primarily positioned as the solicitors of our students’ stories, although we continue to function also as solicitees when we publish, making our stories intelligible to the institutions—or disciplines—that solicit them. In Chapter Five, I describe in detail the Midwestern State University’s Writing Workshop, the institution that solicits the basic writing students’ texts utilized for the reading protocols in my ethnographic case study. This institution employs Deiva and Meryl, my research subjects, and produces a very particular curriculum, which in turn invites teachers to draft particular kinds of prompts and assignments. The students whose papers appear in my study, then, drafted those papers in response to the Writing Workshop’s curriculum, the Midwestern State University’s core requirements, and so on.

Before considering the Writing Workshop specifically, however, I want to think more about Smith and Watson’s notion of an institution as a soliciting body that invites particular textual forms. If I consider composition studies as a soliciting institution, I can point to ways that the discipline’s institutional context has invited or “solicited” the production of scholarship that represents composition teachers, students, and their texts in problematic ways. That scholarship exhibits a real imbalance as researchers and teachers engage in the act of defining and categorizing students, often eliding their individual differences and rarely, if ever, suggesting their own complicity in the ways that students are named and categorized. For that matter, composition scholarship rarely addresses teacher identity at all; and it certainly does not do so within the context of the reading situation.
Composition studies has been quite busy responding to other critical questions raised in response to the political and institutional contexts in which it operates. Since the late 1960's, for instance, the discipline has had to deal with issues of student identity—particularly racial and cultural identities—in response to shifting demographics in university classrooms. In addition, both the conservative call for a return to "basics" and public outcry regarding the "literacy crisis" (or crises, as scholars Maureenourigan and John Schilb argue) have necessitated a collective disciplinary focus upon politics, advocacy, and composition curricula.

Further, for the last thirty years, composition studies has also worked actively on issues of professionalization, establishing disciplinary goals and methodologies for teaching and research, graduate programs, and tenure-track positions at a variety of universities. The discipline has worked to define itself and its work, particularly in relation to literary studies, and has aligned itself with well established disciplines, such as psychology, classical rhetoric and critical theory. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, with cognitive studies of the writing process, researchers demonstrated that compositionists practiced a legitimate scientific method, and cognitivist approaches to the writing process became key topics for discussion. In the 1980's, a move toward realignment with classical rhetoric sought to legitimize composition studies as a discipline by associating it with a centuries-old tradition, and the rhetorical theorist, rather than the practitioner, rose to prominence in the professional discourse. In the early 1990's, compositionists called upon postmodern critiques of subjectivity, and edited collections such as Patricia Harkin and John Schilb's *Contending With Words*
demonstrated that the professional discourse of composition studies could depend quite heavily on terminology and concepts from literary theory and cultural studies. Discussions of teachers, students, student writing, and classroom practice in general often seemed buried within overarching discussions of the nature of language, experience, and the postmodern condition.

In the last thirty years, then, composition studies has focused most of its energies on the need to establish itself as a discipline. During that time—in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, in particular—when composition studies has most actively worked toward the construction of disciplinary ethos, the concept of identity has been important primarily for scholars interested in exploring how gender and culture impact the ways that students and other writers compose. I would argue, however, that such discussions are only beginning to touch upon teacher identity as a factor capable of shaping students’ composing processes. In other words, students continue to be the subjects of these types of research projects, while teachers continue to be positioned as the researchers.

Elizabeth Flynn, for instance, has considered possible intersections of feminism and composition studies, with particular attention paid to feminist research on women’s moral and ethical development, women’s methods of communication, and women’s composing styles (1988). Sue Ellen Holbrook (1991), Eileen Schell (1998), and Theresa Enos (1996) urge others in the field to consider how gender has shaped the discipline and to consider the ways that what many call the “feminization” of composition studies has impacted the status of professionals within the field. Scholars
such as Gesa Kirsch, Patricia Sullivan, and Joy Ritchie, interested in pursuing feminist methodologies of research, have considered how the identities of both researcher and subject necessitate a more equitable, collaborative model of composition research.

Terry Dean has written about what it means to be a “monocultural” teacher in a multicultural classroom (1989), and Min-Zhan Lu’s work with historical, theoretical, and pedagogical issues within basic writing has often pointed to the need to consider more carefully how the cultural identities of students and teachers position them in particular ways within the academy (see “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone,” 1994). Victor Villanueva has described his own life and work as an academic of color (1993), and Keith Gilyard has urged us to “flip the script” in thinking about issues of race, culture, and language in the classroom (1996).

While texts such as Gilyard’s and Villanueva’s point our attention toward the ways that identity issues affect professionals within the field, the issue of identity is most often considered in relation to students. Several ethnographic studies of student writers have been produced in the last ten years (see Balester 1993; Mutnick 1996; Dickson 1995), and student identity is a constant topic of discussion. Helmers reminds us in *Writing Students*, though, that students are often essentialized in highly troubling ways, particularly African American students, who are almost always discussed within the confines of basic writing scholarship. Otherwise, these students are the subject of debates over dialects and their place in the academy (see Delpit 1988; Royster and Williams 1999; Scott 1993; and Jones 1993).
Perhaps the very idea of the student writer is a kind of paradox for composition scholars. After all, the study of the act of production, rather than reception, is what distinguishes composition studies—to a certain degree—from literary studies. Indeed, for some scholars, the study of student writers and their texts is what makes composition studies what it is, and student writers exist in some kind of opposition to “real” writers. Yet, as Kay Halasek argues in *A Pedagogy of Possibility: Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies*, many compositionists have tried to “empower” their students by encouraging them “to name themselves as writers” (50). This act, Halasek feels, is not as empowering for students as it appears to be.

In “The Student as Writer,” Halasek argues that composition studies must critique the practice of naming students as “writers,” which she believes “continues to marginalize students from what and why they write” (30). Halasek traces the metaphor of student as writer as it shifts across various theoretical emphases, analyzing what notions such as “student voice,” “student writer as knowledgable peer,” and “student writer as initiate” suggest about the discipline’s ways of imagining writers and the act of writing. In other words, Halasek reads the metaphors as ways in which compositionists map their own values regarding the nature of their work onto their students.

There is a long history of distinguishing the producers of literary or other “professional” texts from the texts of students. In the 1970’s, the difference between professional writers and student writers mattered both in terms of product and process. In “Teach Writing as a Process, Not Product” (1972), Donald Murray maintained a
solid line between literature and student writing. Ken Macrorie coined the term “Engfish” in *Telling Writing* (1970) to delineate the “phony, pretentious language of the schools” that constitutes a student’s writing (1). In *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (1971), Janet Emig noted that while literature specialists may be able to locate drafts of an author’s texts, or even journal entries, to help them study an author’s writing process, composition researchers had no such data to support the study of student writers in the act of composing. Thanks to researchers such as Emig, such data are now available, but contemporary compositionists still struggle to find a way to talk about the student as writer and classroom essays as text—or they wonder, as Halasek does, whether such talk is even useful or responsible.

Often, contemporary scholars go to great lengths in order to undertake such discussions. Dissatisfied with the speaking subject who is the hero of classical rhetoric, Susan Miller proposes an alternative history of rhetoric in *Rescuing the Subject* (1989) in order to make a space for students as subjects (in) writing. She must literally rewrite the discipline’s history in order to consider students as subjects, rather than objects, within it. In *Fragments of Rationality* (1992), Lester Faigley considers postmodernity and its effects on student subjectivity, asking what kinds of texts can be produced by the postmodern subject. This study looks toward the electronic classroom as one of the few discursive spaces that offers students the opportunity to be treated as postmodern subjects at all. In other words, if composition studies finds it difficult to consider students as subjects, rather than objects, how can the field begin to think of students as writers and the writing they produce as texts worthy of study and analysis?
For that matter, if the field has such difficulty considering student identity critically, how might it take the next step toward fuller interrogation of its work by considering issues of teacher identity? What might such an interrogation teach us?

**(Re)Considering Composition’s History**

Having considered briefly the disciplinary context for the two case studies of this dissertation by reviewing composition studies’ ways of talking about identity issues broadly, my focus now shifts toward a more specific analysis of identity issues in composition scholarship. The following section of this chapter offers a close reading of the scholarship produced at several key moments within composition’s history. These moments, ranging from Ernece Kelly’s “Murder of the American Dream,” an address originally given to the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1968, to the publication of Jacqueline Royster and Jean Williams’ 1999 article “History in the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies,” construct a micro-history of the discipline, highlighting its understanding of cultural identity in particular for the last three decades. The revisiting of disciplinary history yields specific insights about the values of those who make up the discipline, about their writing and representational practices, and about the kinds of master narratives that may be at work in the field today.

In revisiting these moments, I filter my analysis through the rhetorical strategy of call and response, borrowing from the rhetorical tradition practiced within African American churches. I suggest that Ernece Kelly, one member of the composition community, issued a call or challenge to other community members to examine their
own complicity as professionals working, albeit implicitly, to uphold an educational system stratified by issues of race, class, and culture. I suggest that most of the composition community’s members have not yet responded satisfactorily.

Ernece Kelly’s “Murder of the American Dream,” 1968

In May of 1968, *College Composition and Communication* reprinted Ernece Kelly’s address to the CCCC, which she delivered shortly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. Kelly’s “Murder of the American Dream” expresses not only deep sorrow at the “loss of a dream of black and white people living and working together” (106), but also frustration with the discipline’s treatment of African American students and the organization’s treatment of African American professionals. The speech addresses directly the problem of uninterrogated cultural and institutional identities:

Here in Minneapolis we meet to discuss composition. Here we meet to discuss the dialects of Black students and how we can upgrade or, if we’re really successful, just plain replace them. . . . Here we meet in a body with just a sprinkling of Black folk: so few that it could be called “tokenism,” but enough so that the charge of exclusion can’t be leveled. . . . Why aren’t there Blacks here who will talk about the emergence of an image among Blacks which does not permit them to even bother with the question of whether or not the white man understands their dialect?

Why aren’t there Blacks helping to plan this conference who have access to the papers which deal with the Black aesthetic and its relationship to composition or the Black image and why it does or does not rest in the anthologies we use or the richness and values of the language of the Black ghetto? . . . You must work to understand the terrible depth of the racism that rages through this land, and must find out where it has touched you. It’s imperative--if it’s not too late—that you work, really work to undo the damage you may have done in trying to reshape the Black student in your own image. . . . I am tired, very tired of being the object of studies, the ornament in professional or academic groups, the object to be changed, reshaped, made- –over. I feel sure that thousands of Black students could echo those words. (107-8)
Kelly's piece could have begun a conversation within the discipline about how we construe the identities of teachers and students. Sadly, few compositionists have entered the conversation in quite this way. Kelly does not simply challenge the organization to take a long, hard look at its demographics (i.e. "hire more Black teachers"), and she does not view those demographics as static indicators of the identities that make up a discipline. Instead, Kelly asks her audience to consider their own cultural and racial identities as they have been instrumental in constructing hers and those of students.

Kelly urges white teachers in particular to acknowledge their own culpability in the creation of essentialized identities of African American students and professionals. In other words, she is mindful of how racial identities depend upon one another for their very existence. Kelly recognizes that African American students are described in particular ways by white teachers and that sometimes, the work of those white teachers--particularly teachers hired to help students of color and other "nonmainstream" students to learn and practice "standard" English--depends upon the very "differences" that mark their African American students. Likewise, Kelly notes the objectification of both African American teachers and students and openly castigates white teachers who have sought to "reshape the Black student" in their own images (107). Thus Kelly recognizes that classroom identities--those of teachers and students--are mutually constitutive in a variety of ways.
The dynamic understanding of identity is akin to a similar concept articulated by Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Working in the context of American Literature, Morrison creates a critical approach to trace “the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanlike (or Africanist) presence or persona was constructed in the United States, and the imaginative uses this fabricated presence serves” (6). In other words, Morrison’s study considers how American writers have used Africanism to indicate “the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify” (6). Thus Morrison pays careful attention to images of blackness and whiteness in several canonical texts and argues that we can “discover, through a close look at literary ‘blackness,’—the nature—or even the cause—of literary ‘whiteness.’ What is it for? What parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as ‘American?’” (9).

Ernece Kelly recognizes that the white composition community depends upon the presence of African American students and teachers in order to have objects to “change, reshape, and ma[k]-over”(108). Morrison contends that “the imaginative and historical terrain upon which early American writers journeyed is in large measure shaped by the presence of the racial other” (46), and she asks: “In what ways does the imaginative encounter with Africanism enable white writers to think about themselves?” (51). Likewise, Kelly challenges her white colleagues to recognize how often she and other African American compositionists and students have served as the object of the discipline’s study; the discipline’s identity rests--at least partially--upon the existence of that “sprinkling of Black folks” in the field.
Kelly makes such an argument by utilizing several rhetorical traditions, weaving rhetorical choices into a genre that carries with it a great deal of authority. The genre she creates, then, results from a variety of factors stemming from her own identity as a speaker and helps her to construct rhetorical authority that is multifaceted. Kelly speaks as a member of the organization, a professional among professionals who points to the lack of presence of African American voices in every aspect of the conference: its program, the planning of conference events, and the actual conference panels. She speaks as an African American scholar, reminding conference participants that African American scholars like herself have indeed addressed "the richness and values of the language of the Black ghetto," and she tells her colleagues that African American scholars are already authoritative within their own communities.  

As a Black woman speaking to a roomful of largely white compositionists, Kelly notes, "Oddly, I didn’t come to this conference as a Black woman. I came as an English instructor with a curiosity and interest in methodology. I grew more Black as the Conference proceeded, and as I watched the awful resistance of white participants to the challenges to recognize their biases and to work to defeat them" (107). Each of these identities—that of the professional/conference member, the African American scholar, the African American woman—enables the kind of authority Kelly constructs within the piece. Her identity both constitutes her rhetorical choices and affects the ways those choices will be received by a largely white audience.

Unfortunately, the students of and for whom Kelly speaks of are not granted authority, though clearly they, too, enter their composition classrooms with equally
complex identities. Interestingly, that lack of authority appears to stem from the intersection of who they are and what they write: their identities as African American students who are, by definition, outside the mainstream; and the genres they produce within the classroom, which are often marked (or represented as marked) by dialect. African American students, some of whom exhibit a dialect that challenges the dominant, mythical dialect of Standard Written English by their largely white teachers, often draw from multiple rhetorical traditions. Yet, for the white teachers who most often read their texts, the African American students’ writing serves as a kind of textual embodiment of a challenge to the very notion of “standard.”

In response to Kelly’s piece, a special issue of CCC appeared titled “Intergroup Relations and the Teaching of English.” I would argue that this disciplinary response illustrates a lack of understanding of how some approaches to inclusivity can, in fact, simply reify the original structures of stratification that exist in the field. The following editor’s note by William Irmscher appears on the CCC issue’s Table of Contents: “I wish to thank Miss Ernece Kelly and Mr. Hoyt W. Fuller, managing editor of Negro Digest, for their interest in this particular issue. As a result, four black writers are represented among the contributors.” The immediate response of CCC to Kelly’s comments is an attempt at inclusivity; the journal tries to represent African American concerns by soliciting articles from African American writers. Kelly’s initial contribution to the conversation about identity, and the ways that attention to identity often necessitates a discussion about authority and genre issues as well, helps us to see the intersection of these terms as complicated and multifaceted. The discipline’s
official response (marked by the journal’s offering), however, seems to oversimplify the issues at hand. This issue of CCC illustrates one major trend within composition studies that persists well into the present: the move to define and categorize students according to essentialized understandings of race and ethnicity and to read their textual products (often marked by dialect) as the physical representation of cultural difference.\footnote{1}

In its effort to enact such representation, CCC’s special 1968 issue suggests a problematic approach to the issue of racial and cultural diversity, an approach that I would characterize now as a weak multicultural stance. According to critical multicultural theorist Peter Erickson, understanding the difference between a “weak” or “strong/radical/critical” multiculturalism might help scholars to understand multiculturalism—in its strong incarnation—as a transformative power, an active force. According to Erickson, weak forms of multiculturalism often involve attempts to “add” diverse cultures to a curriculum by adding texts written by members of those cultures. The rhetoric of authenticity often shapes such efforts; thus, teachers, textbook editors, and others who produce curricula try to represent diverse cultures textually. A similar enactment of weak multiculturalism in literary studies has resulted in what Gerald Graff calls the “cafeteria counter” approach to curricular reform, as texts written by women, minorities, and gays and lesbians are quickly added to our universities’ course offerings in order to provide some sort of coverage (Graff 135).

A “strong” (or critical/radical) multiculturalism, on the other hand, is a more active force that seeks to change institutional structures, rather than curricular content.
In her essay "Multiculturalism: Negotiating Politics and Knowledge" (1992), theorist Wahneema Lubiano defines multiculturalism in active terms. She writes:

Multiculturalism . . . is an intervention into the construction of new knowledges and the transformation of older knowledges. It can be driven by what one does with pre-existing disciplinary formations--using them by focusing with them on previously unexplored areas--and/or by modifying them or going beyond their parameters to reconsider older knowledges differently. Theoretical engagements in multicultural explorations of disciplinary dynamics is a way to explain, to give an account of what has happened. Theoretical engagement in multicultural areas of knowledge, for example, helps us think about and predict where identities converge and diverge, about how the instability of identity is played out as well as where strategic activation of identity does specific intellectual, cultural, and/or political work. (16)

In composition studies, weak multiculturalism (particularly in the 1970's and 1980's) drives a rhetoric that directs attention toward students' cultural and racial identities--perceived as static, unchanging, essentialized--and its relation to the processes and products of textual production. As Ernece Kelly points out in her address to the CCCC, this approach results in conversations about dialects and how teachers might "upgrade" or "replace" them. And the field’s response to Kelly's address would fall under the rubric of weak multiculturalism: the resulting special issue of CCC posits racial and ethnic difference in totalizing terms, introducing compositionists to the authentic raced self as the object of study (and necessary recipient of instruction in Standard Written English). The issue features a pair of essays designed to help white instructors better understand their minority students' dialects and classroom behaviors: James Banks' "A Profile of the Black American: Implications for Teaching" and Lorraine Misiaszek's "A Profile of the American Indian: Implications for Teaching."

Banks relies on sources such as Thomas F. Pettigrew's A Profile of the Negro
American for his sociologically driven description of the “social personality of the black American” and its impact upon pedagogy (289). Interestingly, Banks considers the canon issue, arguing that works by Lorraine Hansberry and Ralph Ellison should take the place of Shakespeare’s plays and other canonical texts because “at the present time it is far more important for black students to read literary works with characters with whom they can easily identify than to read works which will not facilitate their quest for an answer to the query, ‘Who am I?’” (294-5).

“The Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” 1974

In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication adopted “Students’ Right to Their Own Language.” Painstakingly researched and earnestly marketed, the resolution statement was mailed to all CCCC members as part of a special issue of College Composition and Communication. The resolution was accompanied by a lengthy discussion that defined the word “dialect,” described how dialects are acquired, summarized current research linking dialect issues to acquisition of language skills (both reading and writing), discussed standardized tests and the issue of employability, and offered an annotated bibliography to spark further reading. This resolution sought to provide a different kind of disciplinary answer to Ernece Kelly’s call, a more encompassing response than that provided by the CCC issue discussed above.

It is important to note the speed with which this resolution became the key issue of the decade: the CCCC Executive Committee passed the resolution in March of 1972; the Executive Committee then approved the background statement that would
accompany the widespread dissemination of the statement to CCCC members in November of 1973; the resolution is mailed en masse to members with the background statement in February of 1974 (Pixton 247). The resolution ignited a three-decade long conversation that continues to spark debate among compositionists today. In its entirety, the resolution states:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

This resolution might be considered the field’s first formal attempt to recognize the relationships among one’s identity, the ability to construct rhetorical authority, and the genres that communicate this authority. This triangulation is a particularly fruitful one for discussing the reception of student writing; indeed, it might inform the reception of writing in multiple contexts. Consider, for instance, the implications of the resolution for the students who are its subject. The students’ collective identity is linked to issues of race and culture and expressed via dialect or “style.” In other words, the dialect itself becomes a kind of discursive representation of the student; body of text is read as a metonym for the body of the student. In turn, the students’ ways of constructing authority for themselves in writing get linked to issues of heritage, cultural identity, and race. The genres that students produce, then, are the physical, written artifacts that
embody their identities and construct their authority. What gets lost within this
triangulation, unfortunately, is the identity of the teacher who reads the text, who
interprets the genre and who ascribes or denies the rhetorical authority constructed.

The notion of teacher identity, which is a factor in Ernece Kelly's address, is
subsumed by the issue of student identity within the document. There are, however,
brief moments where teacher identity is mentioned. For instance, the background
statement ends by pointing directly to the issue of teacher identity:

Teachers need to ratify their book knowledge of language by living as minority
speakers. They should be wholly immersed in a dialect group other than their
own. Although such an opportunity may be difficult for some to obtain, less
definitive experience may be obtained by listening to tapes and records as well
as interviewing sympathetically speakers who use minority dialects. Empathy
with the difficulties often faced by such speakers can be appreciated in indirect
analogies with other situations which make one an outsider. But the most vivid
sense of the students' problem is likely to come from direct experience. (18)

Indirectly, then, the writers of the resolution acknowledge a fundamental problem (and
I use the terminology of the document here): minority students are being taught,
overwhelmingly, by white teachers. But the potential solution to this problem implied
by the background statement is troubling. While the intention of the quotation above
is clear, that white teachers should place themselves in the same rhetorical situation
their students of color face daily, the approach recommended to accomplish this is
problematic. White teachers are urged not to examine their own beliefs, values, and
identities within the academic sites in which they presently work. They should instead
dislocate themselves altogether and immerse themselves in the culture of the Other to
obtain the necessary experience for teaching “minority” students.
Unlike Ernece Kelly’s "Murder of the American Dream," the resolution does not end with a call for scholars and teachers of color (and it is important to note here that the resolution implicitly suggests that dialects belong primarily to students of color, rather than to rural or urban white students) to share their authority on the topic. Instead, teachers and students of color must continue to "teach" white educators about themselves. The very concepts of margin and mainstream are maintained. Finally, the call to engage in "sympathetic interview" situations with members of minority communities seems to ignore the words of Ernece Kelly in 1968, who so clearly abhorred being constantly placed in the position of research subject by white researchers. Thus, even in 1974, the field appears to believe that it is the responsibility of those who do not identify themselves as part of the "majority" culture to educate white teachers.

While I clearly find the resolution most intriguing because of the implications for the ways that the discipline imagined the intermingling of student and teacher identities in the classroom, members of the CCCC in the mid-seventies seem most eager to respond to generic implications; they do so by focusing upon linguistic elements. In other words, the discipline--as represented via the responses published within CCC--decides that the issue of textual product itself--the genre(s) authored by students--is the most crucial one to focus upon. Responses to the 1974 mailing are heated, with most of the respondents who reject the resolution doing so because it challenges the notion of an ideal, accessible, student-authored text--a text that is clear, coherent, accessible and intelligible to all readers, regardless of who they are and
where they come from. If, as the resolution argues, there is "no validity to . . . the myth of a standard American dialect," then perhaps there is no validity to the myth of the standard classroom rhetorical forms valued within American universities: clear, coherent, five-paragraph essays, thesis-driven research reports. Composition teachers might find themselves being forced to ask why such forms retain power within most first-year writing programs.

In the October, 1974 issue of CCC, William Pixton of Troy State University in Alabama argues against the resolution, claiming that not matter how the field interprets the resolution, its call is to deny the teaching of Standard English--"alluded to as the dialect of oppression"--to students (247). Pixton clearly equates dialect with deficiency, and claims that teachers must tell their students the "truth" about how Standard English is valued in the business world: "Teachers must not allow their students to remain linguistically different and deficient, thus insuring that their communicative attempts as well as their comprehension will be inadequate" (252). Pixton continues his argument, claiming that students need to be "liberate[d] from the narrow consciousness of self and region" (252). Here Pixton clearly views a student's generic choices as an embodiment of his/her identity, and the construction of rhetorical authority is only made possible for the student if s/he rejects the language of home, of region, and adopts a universal, accessible written language.

The conversation about the resolution continues throughout the October, 1974 issue. Opposing Pixton's viewpoint is Lou Kelly's essay, which asks, "Is Competent Copyreading a Violation of the Students' Right to Their Own Language?" While
Pixton bases his rejection of the resolution upon the assumption that dialect equals linguistic deficiency, Kelly focuses her endorsement of the resolution upon the relationship of one’s language to one’s identity. Kelly argues, “Teachers who reject a person’s language reject that person. Teachers who cling to their obsession with grammar are not serving the student or the educational system; they are preserving the notion that, though all men are created equal, the language you learn in the home and community where you are created stamps you inferior if it is not ‘correct’” (254-55).

The dialect debate rages on in 1974, represented in CCC by a variety of articles utilizing multiple methods. Marilyn Sternglass’s “Dialect Features in the Compositions of Black and White College Students: The Same or Different?” reports the results of her dissertation research, a study of Freshman remedial writers at the University of Pittsburgh in 1973. Sternglass finds that while there is no “qualitative difference in the nonstandard features produced by white and black students,” there is a “qualitative difference” in the number of errors: the black students demonstrated a higher frequency of error (259). According to Sternglass, “the major pedagogical implication of this study is that separate language materials are not needed for black and white students in remedial college-level writing classes” (263). Identity is defined here as a fixed category, and race is the only marker that matters. I would argue that this article also suggests a major implication for my dissertation study: Sternglass’s article, by focusing upon nonstandard features of African American students in remedial classes, contributes to the now-naturalized image of students of color as basic or remedial writers.
Discussions about dialect, a word that is nearly always applied to African American rather than white students, persist until the late 1970’s, when the transformation is complete: African American students and the pedagogies used to teach them become almost exclusively the province of basic writing scholarship, published primarily in Mina Shaughnessy’s newly founded *Journal of Basic Writing*. In *CCC*, however, the 1980’s bring a burst of scholarship focused upon ESL students. Thus, the issues raised by “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” continue to shape disciplinary discussion, but in different terms: a rhetorical shift occurs in the late 1980’s, and *CCC*’s publishes no essays with titles featuring the words “minority” or “nonstandard” after 1984. Instead, essays published in the journal posit difference in terms of “diversity” and begin to examine that diversity in the context of “discourse communities.”

By the end of the 1970’s, the very category of racial difference had been mapped onto basic writing scholarship; cultural difference became the province of ESL specialists, and the very notion of “difference” had been transposed consequently to a kind of theoretical construct rather than a racial or cultural descriptor. Compositionists of the 1980’s and 1990’s have paid attention to issues of gender difference in the classroom and the “politics of difference” as they shape classroom discourses surrounding politicized issues. Compositionists have theorized ideological differences between “us” and our students. I see this shift linked to the age of social constructivist theories of composition—the rise of scholars like Bruffee, Myers, Trimbur, and others who urge teachers to think of discourse conventions as socially
constructed. In other words, the focus upon notions of social construction
denaturalizes earlier attempts to talk about “all ESL students” or even “all African
American students” because the field is more focused on how difference gets
constructed in the first place. Likewise, this shift moves compositionists from a focus
upon the individual student and his/her writing processes to consideration of groups of
students (or other writers) constructing discourse in a particular context. But the shift
to what may, in fact, be deemed a more sophisticated theoretical position also brings
with it a shift to less materially-centered position--differences are discursive, not
physical; bodies get de-emphasized and theory gets glorified and imported (often
uncritically) into the pedagogical arena.

*Maxine Hairston’s “Diversity, Ideology, and the Teaching of Writing,” 1992*

Perhaps no example from composition studies history better illustrates the
field’s embrace of a weak multicultural stance than that of the curricular debates at the
University of Texas, Austin, where a group of faculty pushed the boundaries of
traditionally accepted writing course curricular content. In a move that literally split
the faculty at the University of Texas, a group within the Department of English
proposed a curriculum for English 306. According to Linda Brodkey, the new course
“focused on argumentation and required students to read and write critically about
‘difference’ in the context of anti-discrimination law and discrimination
lawsuits”(236). In other words, the syllabus for 306 was designed to help composition
students focus upon rhetorical practices within public discourse by studying legal and
political documents. The curriculum was deemed politically charged (as well as “politically correct”), and the proposal eventually failed.

In the wake of the debates over the curriculum, Maxine Hairston, a University of Texas faculty member and former CCCC Chair, published “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing.” Concerned about her increasing sense that ideology, not composition, was rapidly becoming the subject matter of many college level writing courses, Hairston writes:

> With changing demographics, we face an ethnic and social mix of students in our classes that previews for us what our institutions are going to be like in the year 2000. These students bring with them a kaleidoscope of experiences, values, dialects, and cultural backgrounds that we want to respond to positively and productively, using every resource we can to help them adapt to the academic world and become active participants in it. The code words for our attempts to build the kind of inclusive curriculum that we need are “multiculturalism” and “diversity.” They’re good terms, of course. Any concerned educator endorses them in the abstract. The crucial question, however, is how one finds concrete ways to put them into practice, and also how one guards against their becoming what Richard Weaver calls “god terms” that can be twisted to mean anything an ideologue wants them to mean. (186)

I point to this passage in Hairston’s essay to help me illustrate the difference between weak and strong multiculturalism. Hairston and Lubiano speak different versions of the tension-laden, multifaceted term that has rocked the curricular boat of composition studies during the last twenty years, but these versions differ not so much in definitional content as they do in linguistic function, in grammar itself. Hairston’s multiculturalism is an “ism,” a noun, an entity that is somehow fixed. It is subject matter, easily fashioned into a curriculum and wielded by leftists as a dogmatic means of disciplining student beliefs. It is not the active force of rereading, re-seeing, re-imagining and re-telling that Lubiano suggests.
Hairston rejects the Texas curriculum for its overt attention to political issues, bemoaning ideologically charged composition courses as well as leftist trends within composition studies research. Hairston instead advocates an approach that creates “a culturally inclusive curriculum” without making overt statements about multiculturalism. Instead of looking to texts that foreground gender and racial oppression and other politically charged issues from historical perspectives, as the University of Texas 306 syllabus proposed to do, Hairston suggests that compositionists concentrate upon student experiences in the classroom as a primary source of diversity. She argues, “They are our greatest multicultural resource, one that is authentic, rich, and truly diverse” (190). Thus Hairston argues for a first-year writing course that assumes cultural diversity can be represented through writing about experience, that the students in classrooms will be culturally diverse, and that the experiences represented by students will be culturally authentic.  

Hairston’s 1992 essay received more responses than any other essay published in CCC to that point. The respondents whose arguments appear in the May 1993 issue of CCC’s “Counterstatement” section speak largely to Hairston’s belief that political advocacy can be avoided, claiming instead that no curriculum can be ideologically neutral. Interestingly, several of Hairston’s respondents critique her definitions of the proposed composition course at the University of Texas, arguing that it is not a course “about” politics or racism and sexism, but a cultural studies or rhetoric course. In that “Counterstatement,” William Rouster likens what Hairston calls multiculturalism to cultural criticism (253), while John Trimbur describes the University of Texas course
as a rhetoric course devoted to "how arguments--forensic and deliberative--are framed to adjudicate problematical situations of social and cultural discrimination" (248).

What I wish to emphasize here is that Hairston and her respondents all equate the term *multiculturalism* with curricular content. Consider Hairston's comments above: multiculturalism is a "code word" that stands for curricular inclusivity, a response to "changing demographics" in an increasingly culturally and socially diverse world (186). But though curricular content may change, and the students themselves are no longer exclusively white (or middle class), the institution and its disciplinary formations remain fundamentally the same. Hairston notes that the students must "adapt" to the values and discourses of the (unchanged) university system (186).

When Hairston publishes "Diversity, Ideology, and the Teaching of Writing," the discipline’s understanding of identity remains rather singular: identity is equated with one’s race or culture, and diversity or difference may be enhanced by the presence of culturally authentic students in the classroom (Hairston), or the study of texts that engage issues of race, gender, or culture in the classroom (Trimbur, Rouster). Either way, a particularly static way of thinking about identity is firmly entrenched. Likewise, Hairston suggests that students’ authority is automatically present and somehow enabled by their identities in the classroom. She does not consider the possibility that a particular student’s cultural, racial, or other identity might actually prevent him or her from writing authoritatively or being deemed authoritative by a teacher or classmate.
Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams’ “History in the Spaces Left”: 1999

As composition studies celebrates fifty years of disciplinary legitimacy, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams remind us that there is much work to be done if composition studies is to imagine its history as complex and dynamic and recognize its practices as exclusive to some, even when speakers within the field declare its inclusivity. Royster and Williams’ essay reviews existing histories of mainstream composition studies, shares those histories located outside the composition “mainstream,” and explores projects that both recover and revise multiple composition histories. In doing so, Royster and Williams engage in historiographical acts that exhibit the tenets of strong multiculturalism. As Lubiano suggests, they “reconsider older knowledges differently” by rereading the history of composition studies and interrogating “pre-existing disciplinary formations” (Lubiano 16).

Royster and Williams discuss how students and teachers of color are left out of traditional histories of composition studies, such as those written by Kitzhaber, Berlin, and Brereton. They also describe problematic ways that students and teachers of color are asked to take part in the construction of such histories. The essay critiques representations of students, particularly students of color, within composition histories and problematizes the conflation of race and basic writing. For example, Royster and Williams describe Sheryl Fontaine and Susan Hunter’s puzzled response when few, if any, minority compositionists respond to their invitation to contribute to the edited collection, Writing Ourselves into the Story: Unheard Voices from Composition Studies. Royster and Williams suggest the possibility that teachers of color may have
been troubled by the invitation to discuss basic writers rather than students more broadly categorized which, as I suggest earlier in this chapter, suggests the problem of basic writing being represented as synonymous with “minority student” within composition literature.

By revisiting Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations*, and then moving forward to consider other sites where remedial--now deemed “basic”--writers matriculated, Royster and Williams remind us that remedial writing programs have “existed for ‘traditional’ students in historically white colleges and universities well before 1960’s protest movements and the establishing of open admissions policies and well before Shaughnessy popularized the term ‘basic writing’...” (571). Royster and Williams do not simply work to demonstrate that white students were and continue to be basic writers. They also offer a historical review of African Americans in higher education, paying particular attention to early twentieth century figures such as Carter G. Woodson and Mary McLeod Bethune and historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s). In the final section of the essay, Royster and Williams discuss the importance of recovering the contributions of African American teachers and scholars and review briefly the work of Alain Locke, Hallie Quinn Brown, and Hugh M. Gloster. Thus, as Lubiano suggests, the essay revisits existing knowledge, explores areas that have been “previously unexplored” by most white composition historians, and helps readers to think more critically about several disciplinary structures, including basic writing. Most importantly, the essay focuses attention upon the act of rendering, the historiographical act, itself.
“History in the Spaces Left” synthesizes consideration of identity, authority, and genre issues as well. Clearly the issue of identity—for teachers and students—underlies every aspect of the essay. Royster and Williams raise visibility/invisibility issues, asking questions like these: Why are students and teachers of color left out of existing histories of composition studies? Why are students of color almost always represented as basic writers? They also raise questions regarding disciplinary identity or ethos: How can composition studies better recover and share existing histories of the teaching of writing at historically black colleges and universities and other sites? What constitutes an “official” history for a discipline? Who is authorized to tell and retell that history?

This essay initiates an important conversation for those members of the field who are eager to question the roles played by students and teachers of color in the development of our pedagogical, theoretical, and historical disciplinary identities. I also believe it continues the conversation begun by Ernece Kelly in 1968. Kelly issued a call for white compositionists to recognize the roles they play in constructing both their colleagues and students of color. Royster and Williams, like Kelly, ask their readers to consider their own cultural and racial identities as they have been instrumental in constructing the collective identity of the discipline. Finally, Royster and Williams urge all of their colleagues to recognize the teachers, scholars, and students who have always been a part of the field’s history and identity. Work remains to be done, however, if we are to take yet another step toward reaping the results of their strong multicultural critique of composition studies’ treatment of identity issues:
we must consider the implications of Royster and Williams' revised history for classroom practice.

*The Basic Writing Classroom as a Case in Point*

In this dissertation, I consider teacher identity as it impacts classroom practice by calling upon the basic writing classroom as a case in point. Within basic writing classrooms, the invitation to write (or solicitation, to use Smith and Watson's terms again) comes to students laden with baggage. For every basic writing student and teacher, the issue of placement, which is highly contentious for many basic writing specialists, looms large. Likewise, basic writing students and teachers are constantly made aware of the gate-keeping function of basic writing programs, first-year writing programs, and university offices of admissions. Scholars within basic writing have written about the problems of racial, cultural, class, and regional differences between basic writing students and their teachers, or conversely, the problem that such differences are over-emphasized in basic writing literature.

Basic writers have traditionally been figured as culturally and/ or racially other, marginalized, cognitively deficient producers of unintelligible texts. I agree with William Jones, who argues in "Basic Writing: Teaching Against Racism," that the label “basic writer” has become a “euphemism and code word for minority students” in many scholarly publications (74). This has happened despite the work of scholars such as David Bartholomae and Patricia Bizzell, neither of whom explicitly link minority students to basic writing when they forward their own definitions. Likewise, this image persists despite historical evidence to the contrary, including the
fact that Harvard University, not an institution known for its overwhelming enrollment of minority students, was among the first universities in the nation to institute a basic writing program.

The Royster and Williams essay, discussed above, is particularly useful for my project because it critiques problematic representations of basic writing students from a historical perspective. Royster and Williams point out that in *Errors and Expectations*, considered by most composition scholars to be the most influential and informed study of basic writers and their texts to date, Shaughnessy actually constructs basic writing students “broadly,” rather than “contribut[ing] to the conflation of students of color and basic writing” (570). Clearly the open admissions period at CUNY, Shaughnessy’s context, did bring large numbers of underprepared students of color to the university; however, Shaughnessy reminds us that countless white students, including Jewish students who spoke languages such as Yiddish and Russian, Asian American students, and other dialect speakers who hailed from “one of New York’s ethnic or racial enclaves” enrolled at CUNY during the open admissions era (Shaughnessy 3). Royster and Williams suggest that the field inaccurately associates the entry of African Americans into higher education with open admissions practices at universities like CUNY in the 1960’s, without recognizing the long history of African Americans in colleges and universities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s). These inaccuracies have contributed to the conflation of basic writing students with students of color.
Within basic writing scholarship, several threads of scholarly discussion call upon other reductive notions of the identities of basic writers; when we consider the issue of the conflation of basic writers with students of color, the scholarship discussed below is all the more troubling. In the mid- to late 1970's, for instance, scholarly conversation about basic writers addressed the relationship between orality and literacy (Ong, Farrell) and cognition and basic writers' composing processes (Lunsford, Perl).

In the early 1980's, though, aided by a body of quantitative and qualitative data produced in the late 1970's, basic writing scholars began to further theorize the notion of the Basic Writer. Bartholomae and Bizzell tackled questions involving the relationship between basic writing students and academic discourse, particularly in terms of the margin/center relationship; David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky shared with the composition studies community Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts (1986), a sophisticated seminar-based basic writing curriculum they constructed for their own students at the University of Pittsburgh. Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Losey Fraser, and Marisa Castellano challenged cognitivist assumptions about basic writers and used a blend of social science methods and composition theory to challenge previous definitions of basic writing students and their texts. Scholars in the 1990's, such as Min-Zhan Lu, Bruce Horner, Deborah Mutnick, and Jane Hindman, have complicated earlier scholarship, challenging earlier definitions of basic writers from critical multicultural, poststructural, and feminist perspectives. Despite their desire to complicate earlier definitions of basic writing students and their texts, though, none of
these scholars has fully interrogated the role played by the basic writing teacher. The identities of the renderers remain in shadow.

Given the discussion of identity as it has been treated by composition studies within the last three decades, then, it seems important to pay particular attention to the ways that teacher identity is treated within the context of actual basic writing classrooms, a site where teachers are, more often than not, represented as “different” from their students in terms of race, class, and institutional position. In Chapter Five, I share the results of an ethnographic study of two basic writing teachers reading student texts in an effort to balance the more global, collective study of teacher identity I offer in Chapter Four.

All of the historical examples discussed in this chapter suggest the need to pay attention to teachers’ and researchers’ identities, which clearly affect the ways that students and their texts are rendered within professional journals and other publications. Perhaps nowhere is the problem of representation more acute than within the context of basic writing scholarship. Scholarly representations of basic writing students enter into a dangerous cycle of replication of values; articles about basic writers are used to train new teachers of basic writing, who enter the classroom expecting to see the faces of students of color rather than those of white students. The “problems” faced by basic writers are coded in racial and cultural terms; teachers and scholars assume their goal must be to move a marginalized student from the borders of academic culture to its center. If, as I suggest, our pedagogical models are sometimes based upon demographic inaccuracies, what can we use to help us generate an
understanding of how identity impacts classroom practices? Furthermore, if composition studies has embraced a weak, rather than strong, multicultural approach to its work, how might we revise our understanding of how identities are constituted in the first place? Finally, how might we draw upon more sophisticated analyses of identity and ethos in the field in order to generate a fuller understanding of who we are as readers when we approach student-authored texts?
CHAPTER 4

IMAGINING BASIC WRITING TEACHERS:
A HISTORICAL CASE STUDY

As teachers of English or Language Arts we are defined by our preoccupation with language, most particularly the language of this nation... we break through the lonely barriers of bodily sensation to share our lives by means of language. We know we CAN know our companions when "we talk the same language." When we become teachers of our language, we claim a place in the absolute middle of things, but many of us still feel isolated and unappreciated.

--Richard Lloyd-Jones, "What We Will Be"

In this chapter, I discuss a historical case study focused upon teacher identity in a collective sense as it has been constructed within two composition journals, *Journal of Basic Writing* and *College Composition and Communication*. I use a historical lens as a way to suggest the need for further study of the intersection of teacher identity, disciplinary location or *ethos*, and pedagogical practices, with the reading of student-authored texts constituting the focal point. While I do not presume that there is a one-to-one correspondence between teacher identity and teacher reading practices, the discipline of composition studies might theorize the act of reading student-authored texts in more complex ways by exploring this intersection.

For example, disciplinary discussions of composition studies as a disempowered step-child of literary studies have become a part of composition
teachers' understanding of how their colleagues in English Studies value them and their work (Hairston 1986; T. Miller 1990; Crowley 1998). Likewise, historians have questioned how the process movement of the late 1970's may have widened the gap between perceptions of the compositionist as "teacher" and the literature specialist as "scholar" (Harris 1997). Such discussions originating from within the field of English Studies have contributed to composition teachers' sense that their own agency and authority are limited within academic institutions and individual classrooms.

Teachers' reading and interpretive practices, then, might reflect that limited sense of authority or constitute attempts to reclaim some of that authority in the classroom.

Existing ways of thinking and talking about teacher identity in composition studies have focused on aspects of disciplinary identity—the literature/composition split, for instance—rather than other ways of thinking about teachers' identities. Since 1975, compositionists have described themselves and their work in three primary ways. First, they have used categories based on espousal of a particular theoretical "camp" or position (Berlin; Faigley; Bizzell). Second, they have used categories based on the practice of a particular research methodology (North; Lauer and Asher; Kirsch and Sullivan; Kirsch and Mortensen). Last, they have named themselves in terms of their institutional position or status within the university (Miller; Holbrook; Enos; Schell). Central to many of these discussions is the articulation of an oppositional or secondary relationship to literary studies (Berlin; Crowley; Connors; Miller). By framing their work in these terms, scholars have helped limit the ways that composition teachers think and talk about identity issues.
It has become nearly impossible to describe composition pedagogies, textbooks, teacher training practices, or curricula, for instance, without calling upon terms such as “expressionist,” “current-traditional,” or “social-epistemic,” terms most often associated with James Berlin’s work in *Rhetoric and Reality*. Likewise, many composition and rhetoric professionals align themselves with “experimentalists” or “philosophers,” using Stephen North’s terms, to describe their own research methodologies. Berlin’s and North’s texts in particular—often cited or required within composition and rhetoric graduate seminars—exemplify a trend within 1980’s composition and rhetoric scholarship to look back, survey the territory, codify, categorize, and legitimate. These texts are important markers of a particularly self-reflexive moment in disciplinary history.

I am less interested in categories such as Berlin’s or North’s than I am in the ways such categories have been received. In his foreword to *Rhetoric and Reality*, for example, Donald Stewart discusses the significance of Berlin’s work: “Professor Berlin establishes at the outset the legitimacy of rhetoric and composition as a field of study and the absurdity of demeaning it as essentially remedial work”(xi). Here Stewart calls attention to the self-perceptions of professionals within the field and to the shared goal for composition specialists: disciplinary legitimacy, separation from the notion of remediation. We can survey the terrain in a different way by studying work published in two important composition journals during an intensive period of disciplinary formation and specialization for composition studies and basic writing, respectively. This period, from 1975 to 1990, is ripe with scholarly conversation.
concerning just what it means to be a teacher of composition and/or basic writing. Moreover, by focusing such study on one teaching context in particular—the basic writing classroom—I am able to complicate the rather limited ways that the discipline has thought about teachers throughout its contemporary disciplinary history.

In this chapter, I trace two journals' scholarly conversations about teacher identity issues and point to what is missing in those conversations: attention to teachers' cultural, racial, and gender identities and consideration of the ways that those identities, too, affect how teachers read their students' texts. Specifically, I analyze three strands of scholarly conversation about teachers within *JBW* and *CCC*. I divide the analysis into two historical periods, from 1975 to 1982 and from 1983 to 1990, and then I suggest the ways in which this study responds to and extends the conversation. Within each time period, I discuss identity issues that affect the discipline broadly and basic writing teachers specifically, and I analyze connections between those identity issues and teachers' reading and interpretive practices. I recognize that the two time periods do not split equally. Certainly, I acknowledge that nothing magical happens in 1983 that marks a new historical epoch. However, this division calls attention to two key disciplinary agenda in composition scholarship, each of which is made particularly evident within the journals.

First, basic writing professionals argue for the worth of their basic writers and basic writing programs from 1975-1982, demonstrating their concern with issues of advocacy and definition for students and with pedagogical approaches. By the early 1980's, the need to advocate for basic writing programs was superseded by a desire to
more clearly define and theorize them as the discipline turned its attention increasingly toward the goal of professionalization and disciplinary legitimation. Second, from approximately 1983 to 1990, compositionists established disciplinary histories, theoretical schema, and research methodologies. While these two periods overlap in important ways, with a move for professionalization apparent in the late 1970’s and with acts of definition persisting even today, the shift in attention after 1982 represents a collective decision for composition studies to focus first and foremost on disciplinary formation.

I recognize that I depend more heavily on articles from CCC than JBW in many instances. This is largely due to the fact that JBW did not publish at all during 1982-1983; furthermore, JBW published fewer issues than CCC between 1975 and 1990, usually publishing one or two issues per volume. CCC published four issues per volume. Moreover, my analysis of a collective sense of disciplinary ethos for composition studies draws most from articles published in CCC because the topic of disciplinary identity itself constitutes a great deal of CCC scholarship between 1983 and 1990.

*Introduction to the Journals*

In 1949, the Conference on College Composition and Communication convened for the first time, beginning to publish *College Composition and Communication* shortly thereafter (Berlin 105). In 1975, *Basic Writing* (later titled *Journal of Basic Writing*) was founded by Mina Shaughnessy and a group of her colleagues at City College. Shaughnessy desired a way to help other teachers across
the country develop theoretically and pedagogically responsible methods of teaching the students whom she termed "basic," rather than remedial or developmental, writers. Shaughnessy served on its Editorial Board until just prior to her death in 1978. When *JBW* offered its first issue in 1975, *CCC* (under the editorial leadership of Edward P.J. Corbett) published a special issue featuring the resolution "Students' Right to Their Own Language," which inspired rather passionate responses from teachers across the country and raised important questions about teacher identity in the composition classroom. I discuss the resolution and the responses to it in Chapter Three.

The first issue of *JBW* is quite rooted in the open admissions context, since all contributors—who also served as the founding Editorial Board members—were CUNY faculty. Shaughnessy and her colleagues' open admissions experiences are well documented and beyond the scope of my own project (see Horner and Lu 1999; Maher 1996, 1997; Laurence 1993). Likewise, other scholars have already argued that the conflation of basic writers with students of color—who did not, after all, make up the majority of open admissions students that Shaughnessy encountered at CUNY—is problematic. I do want to emphasize, however, that *Basic Writing*'s founding Editorial Board was quite concerned with the needs of minority students, returning Vietnam veterans (a racially and culturally diverse group), and other academic outsiders.

Sarah D'Eloia Fortune became *JBW*'s editor in 1980 following Shaughnessy's death. By 1981, according to current editors George Otte and Trudy Smoke, *JBW* was "no longer purely a CUNY publication," and members of a new national advisory board included Edward P.J. Corbett, Janet Ernig, and E.D. Hirsch (118). After this
shift, the journal does succeed in broadening images of basic writing programs and their students by discussing, for example, basic writing programs at Harvard, large state-supported universities, in prisons, and other locations.

In 1980 CCC, too, shifted editorial leadership from Edward P.J. Corbett to Richard L. Larson. As these new editors began to articulate their own visions for the journals, changes in JBW’s and CCC’s regular features, including calls for manuscripts and editors’ notes, also offer some evidence of changing disciplinary values. In the mid to late 1980’s, the scholarly conversations taking place in JBW and CCC reflect common goals for both composition studies and basic writing teachers: to argue for an institutional and disciplinary plan to accommodate underprepared (usually figured as minority) students, explore pedagogical approaches that might best serve them, and begin to build a professional community of scholars and teachers with enough institutional and disciplinary authority to get the job done.

The two journals’ scholarly agenda diverged by the mid 1980’s. While essays published in JBW—with the exception of 1982-1983, when no issues were produced—continued to focus on pedagogical and institutional issues most pertinent to basic writers and basic writing programs, those published in CCC turned often toward consideration of the emerging disciplinary legitimacy of Composition Studies. CCC published CCCC Chair’s Addresses, a variety of resolution proposals, and retrospective essays called “Personal Perspectives,” all of which provide a valuable record of changes in the discipline’s collective self-perception. I draw most heavily on
these features of CCC in discussing the construction of disciplinary ethos for the field between 1983 and 1990.

The founding of JBW and what I call the "morning after" effect of the publication of "Students' Right" makes 1975 a particularly fruitful place from which to begin my own analysis since the field is so clearly concerned with issues of identity—student identity, to be specific; minority student identity to be exact—in its literature. A great deal of scholarship published in both CCC and JBW between 1975 and 1982, the first historical period that I analyze, argues for the need to develop new pedagogies to help minority students and other academic "outsiders" accommodate to the world of the university. As such, that scholarship addresses rather explicitly what it means to be a minority student; it assumes implicitly what it means to be a writing teacher who works with those minority students.

Much of the work published within the two journals between 1983 and 1990, the second period that I analyze, defines the field as a scholarly, rather than pedagogical, discipline. Throughout the early to mid 1980's, members of the discipline debated what, exactly, should constitute composition scholarship: its questions, methods, and theoretical frameworks. The scholarship appearing in both journals in the middle to late 1980's thus varies widely and encompasses multiple methodological perspectives. Often, particularly in the early to mid 1980's, scholars published in both journals. In the mid 1980's, for example, both JBW and CCC published essays by Andrea Lunsford, Mike Rose, Nancy Sommers, Tom Newkirk, Linda Flower, Sondra Perl, David Bartholomae, and Patricia Bizzell. All of these
studies were well theorized and drew upon current research trends within the field, such as studies of cognitive development, revision strategies, and current theories of discourse communities.

Essays that address the basic writing context continue to be published in *CCC* today, and well-known scholars of composition studies—many of whom began their careers in basic writing—often contribute to *JBW*. Despite such instances of crossover, however, by the late 1980's clear lines separated the new discipline of composition studies and the specialty of Basic Writing. The analysis of the journals that follows points to that growing separation. While I am able to analyze disciplinary ethos, constructions of basic writing teachers, and reading and interpretive practices across both journals from 1975 to 1982, after that time I focus my analysis on *CCC* when discussing broad disciplinary questions and *JBW* when considering images of basic writing teachers. I also utilize examples of teachers reading and interpreting students’ texts from both journals during the first historical period, but I rely more heavily on *CCC* after 1983.

*Constructing the Composition Teacher, Imagining Basic Writing Teachers, and Reading Their Interpretive Practices: 1975-1982*

Between 1975 and 1982, both journals reflect composition teachers’ increasing realization that they were moving collectively toward an identity as a scholarly discipline. While conversations in *JBW* often tried to synthesize two competing identities—that of the “English teacher” and that of the “composition specialist”—scholarship published in *CCC* seemed to accept or advocate the separation of composition studies from other aspects of English studies, particularly literary studies.
This tension between composition teachers’ sense of themselves as connected to or separated from their colleagues in English studies underlies much of the scholarship published in both journals between 1975 and 1982.

*Constructing the Composition Teacher*

Both journals point to the construction of the composition teacher as a literature scholar, untrained for the composition classroom. By 1983, however, such constructions were replaced by the figure of the composition teacher as an educated researcher, knowledgeable about composition theory and practice, but inadequate as a respondent to student writing. An increasing focus within the field’s scholarship on professionalization and disciplinary authority, rather than pedagogy, may be responsible for the shift.

My analysis of *CCC* during this time period suggests that four major issues concerned composition teachers collectively. Essays in *CCC* addressed the ways that teachers function ideologically; the ways that teachers articulate their relationships to other academics, particularly those in literary studies; the health of the growing discipline of composition studies and its newfound authority; and finally, the construction of the composition teacher as fundamentally different—culturally, racially, and even cognitively—from the composition student.

In 1976, *CCC* published Allen N. Smith’s “No One Has a Right to His Own Language,” in which Smith draws upon social definitions of language in order to recast the discussion of the 1974 resolution. In that essay, Smith points to the ways that teachers function ideologically. He defines them as “custodians of the past” and
notes that “our particular role in any society is to gather and disseminate the standards and values of the past for the coming generation in our respective chosen fields” (156). Here the teacher is positioned to maintain the status quo, rather than to facilitate institutional and/or ideological change. The question of how teachers define themselves in relation to the cultures within which they teach is central for much of the scholarship published in CCC during this time period.

In 1976, CCC published Roberta M. Palumbo’s poem “Reading What Students Have Written,” in which Palumbo seems to revel in the teacher’s role as cultural guardian and educational gatekeeper. The poem, which refers rather sarcastically to the passing of the resolution “Students’ Right,” reads as follows:

Stretched slowly on a
Rack of tortuous prose
Mind aching, limbs numb...

I shall not submit:
“Students have a right
To their own language.”

Never. (247)

This poem counters directly those composition specialists who argued that the resolution affirmed the field’s commitment to the democratization of higher education. Whether we read the piece as the “honest” expression of frustration uttered by a teacher who does not support the resolution “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” or a parody of such a teacher, the teacher constructed here views the resolution as emblematic of lower standards and a weakening of the stronghold of academic principles.
Both Palumbo’s poem and Smith’s essay suggest that the composition teacher’s position has political, ideological, and institutional ramifications. Janice Lauer’s 1976 CCC essay, “The Teacher of Writing,” not only recognizes this unique position but also encourages teachers to make use of it. Lauer describes the location of writing teachers this way:

we... find ourselves whirling in the vortex of three worlds—the world of rhetorical theory, the world of the classroom, and the world of our departments. In these worlds there is no still place, no comfortable corner, but also no dull rut, no dead end, no routine pedagogy. The only refuge is retreat into times past. (341)

As she reviews accomplishments in the field, Lauer also calls for her colleagues to be “more critical” (342) and to strive to imagine new ways, better ways, of teaching writing. Likewise, she urges her readers to become more critically and theoretically engaged with the emerging Discipline of Composition, to engage in research projects, and to benefit from others’ innovative work. As the discipline moved into the early 1980’s, Lauer cautioned those who had gained some status as compositionists not to fall into the trap of romanticizing the discipline’s ties to classical rhetoric or other “times past.” Already cognizant of the changes in store for composition studies as it professionalized even further, Lauer pointed to the changing construction of who the teacher of writing was and who s/he would be in future decades.

Richard Lloyd-Jones’ 1978 CCC essay “A View from the Center” tried to stop that “whirling vortex” of positions that Lauer identifies and solidify one view of what a composition teacher’s position should be: that of the humanist, central to all academic endeavors. Lloyd-Jones explores several “architectural” metaphors in order
to describe the work of composition teachers (26). Dissatisfied with discussions of
writing courses as “foundational” or “basic” or “skeletal” because so few composition
teachers are able to agree on what, exactly, such foundations, basics, or skeletal skills
should be, Lloyd-Jones posits the idea of composition studies as a discipline that is, in
fact, “central” (26-27). This construction, which Lloyd-Jones refines in subsequent
publications in the next ten years, persists in the perception of the composition teacher
as firmly entrenched in the humanities tradition and therefore situated at the very
center of higher education.

George Bramer’s 1977 CCC essay, “Comp. vs. Lit.—What’s the Score,”
emphasized the agonistic relationship that had already developed between composition
and literary studies. Still, like Lloyd-Jones and others, Bramer suggests that
possibilities for change exist within departments of English, particularly when the
expertise of composition specialists is recognized. Bramer describes his sense that “in
the conflict between Comp. and Lit., the score really is changing” (33), but his
narrative actually does little to corroborate. When describing his experiences on two
hiring committees at different institutions, Bramer notes that while non-literature
specialists were hired by both departments—which he reads as an indication of
positive change—neither compositionist was offered a tenure-line contract. In
addition, the other faculty members in the English departments were disturbed by both
hires.

In 1977, David Hamilton’s “Writing Coach” utilized a sports metaphor to point
to the relationship between institutional and material conditions and composition
teachers’ disciplinary authority. Rather than focusing on the relationship between composition and literature, however, Hamilton responds to broader societal criticism of writing teachers inspired by articles such as Newsweek’s “Why Johnny Can’t Read” (1975). While we might expect him to use the metaphor of coach to point to the facilitative nature of a composition teacher’s work, or to highlight that good writing is a result of a “team” effort between students and their teachers, Hamilton instead offers readers a critique of the lack of prestige, power, and resources afforded most teachers of composition. He notes, “As a coach, I would command the budget of the football program and have license to deploy my talents as they do theirs” (154). Hamilton’s essay stands as a reminder that considerations of teachers’ professional identities are tied to equal considerations of institutional context and social, political, and economic position.

In juxtaposition to this image of the composition teacher as disempowered institutionally and blame-ridden culturally is that of the composition specialist as gaining in power and prestige within the university because of the field’s growing disciplinary status. In May of 1980, CCC published a high-spirited account of CCCC Program Chair Lynn Quitman Troyka’s experience selecting presenters for the 1980 convention. In “The Pulse of the Profession,” Troyka writes of her urge to “testify—enthusiastically and firmly—to the health of our profession” (227). As evidence for her declaration, she notes that she had to turn down 500 proposals for the convention that year. In addition, she reports that 600 new CCCC members attended the 1980 convention, and that “an unprecedented” number of sessions focused upon research
methods and research projects in writing (229-30). This data helps solidify Troyka’s confidence that “we have a renewed, dynamic sense of ourselves as influential teachers, researchers, and scholars who are eager to explore fresh ideas and to map new terrain” (227). Troyka’s essay contributes to an emerging disciplinary spirit of euphoria as compositionists rushed to the challenge of testing the process pedagogy and theories of composing that emerged in the 1970’s.

The scholarly trend in CCC that interests me most, however, contributes to the disciplinary construction of the teacher of writing as different—in terms of race, class, culture, and/or ethnicity—from the student, particularly if that student is a basic writer. First, the volume of responses to the resolution “Students’ Right” suggests that the question of dialect—or, more specifically, the question of how to teach students of color who spoke some form of BEV—was one of the most central of the period (see Chapter Three). Scholarship published in both journals during this time period equated the term “dialect” altogether with students of color; I found no mention of Appalachian dialects or other dialects more commonly associated with white rural students.

In the CCC issue published in May of 1975, for instance, Michael Linn notes that “English teachers, particularly composition teachers, constantly face the problem of teaching writing to speakers of... Black English Vernacular” (149). Linn then compares students’ use of BEV to Shakespeare’s use of middle-class forms, and proceeds to argue that English teachers face the “problem” of BEV speakers in the classroom precisely because they do not share knowledge of their students’ language...
communities. The composition teacher is figured as a member of a different discourse community than the student, most often a white one. This way of imagining the composition teacher is fairly common in CCC. Essays such as “Dialect Literature: Positive Reinforcer for Writing ‘In’ and ‘Out’ of Dialect,” by Marilyn Sternglass (1975) and “No One Has a Right to His Own Language,” by Allen N. Smith (1976) infer also that the composition teacher is white.

Troyka’s 1981 Chair’s Address, which CCC published in 1982, also contributes to the construction of composition teachers as different from their students and suggests that they are representatives of “traditional” literacy practices and dominant culture(s). In “Perspectives on Legacies and Literacy in the 1980’s,” Troyka declares her belief that “the Decade of the Non-Traditional Student’ undoubtedly will be among the labels given to American higher education in the 1980’s” (252). Troyka imagines the composition teacher as engaged in the task of teaching these non-traditional students, and she figures the teacher as one who is willing to teach them, but who lacks familiarity with non-traditional students’ cultures and experiences. The work of the composition teacher in this regard, according to Troyka, will involve “temper[ing] our good intentions with information and experience not usually a part of the conscience of college faculty” (252).

Troyka does not simply equate the non-traditional student with the student of color. Instead, Troyka mentions that they are older, often first-generation college goers who tend to be employed and who may already be parents. Likewise, Troyka notes that the non-traditional student may or may not have completed high school, that
many are women, and that many are foreign-born (253). When she moves into closer
description of her own non-traditional students at City University of New York,
however, she notes that "thirty percent of my students were black, and twenty percent
were from Hispanic roots" (254). The other fifty percent, ostensibly, were white.

In the second half of the essay, Troyka addresses cognitive differences between
teachers and students. According to Troyka, non-traditional students come to the
university with several "legacies" that are "derived from situation and from language"
in their home communities: 1) they are "gregarious and social"; 2) they are "more
comfortable in an oral rather than a written mode"; and 3) they are "holistic thinkers"
(257-8). In considering the implications for composition teachers' identities, then,
Troyka's essay suggests that teachers are not often encouraging of their students'
social interactions; that they tend not to value oral communication as much as written;
and that they are "inductive thinkers" whose cognitive styles probably do not match
their students' (259). In short, Troyka says, these students will behave, communicate,
and think differently than their teachers.

This construction of cognitive difference prevailed in CCC until the middle
focused on studies of writers' cognitive processes and constructed student writers,
particularly basic writers, as cognitively different or deficient. By the early 1980's,
CCC had published so many essays rooted in cognitive psychology or other social
science theories and methods that some feared the discipline might become a social
science altogether.
Richard Lloyd-Jones' 1982 CCC essay, "What We May Become," cautions readers not to embrace social-scientific research methods too closely, particularly when such empiricism results in "texts... decorated with charts and numbers which are sometimes translated, often times best ignored" (203). Instead, Lloyd-Jones argues that writing teachers are, above all, humanists, and that their research methods should reflect this shared identity. Lloyd-Jones says:

Teachers of writing should write with some elegance. ... A scholar of writing must first love the language; one must craft it as one would a fine cabinet, caress it as sculpture, live in it as architecture. To be sure, one must also know it as a clinician might know a patient, analytically, and one must think about it ultimately by means of it, as a philosopher does. Language in all of its aspects is our study, but especially as it is written. ... Those pragmatic teachers and consultants who claim to deal with practical writing and sneer at literature doubtless deliver useful goods for their pay, but I can't believe they should define what we are, for they sell us short. We must picture ourselves as humanistic scholars building on discoveries of the long past refined by traditional methods, elaborated by new techniques, but still concerned with the largest question of the nature of humanity. (203)

In using the term "teacher of writing" rather than "compositionist" or "composition teacher," Lloyd-Jones suggests the link between several kinds of writing—writing that is literary/creative, writing that is critical or scholarly, and writing that is authored by students—and then aligns all three with the trivium (206). In addition, Lloyd-Jones aligns the work of actual compositionists—"those pragmatic teachers and consultants"—with an increasingly consumerist model of higher education.

He ends his essay on a hopeful note, however, and urges readers to stick together, tough it out in the English departments in which they work, and resist separating from departments of English.
In CCC, an emerging sense of disciplinary *ethos* for the composition teacher reflects several tensions, many of which suggest her precarious position within her department, institution, and culture. Essays published between 1975 and 1982 demonstrate that the composition teacher faced ideological and political issues such as democratization for underprepared students, gatekeeping and the public demands for academic excellence, cries of literacy crisis, and a difficult relationship to literary studies. Still, some essays were increasingly optimistic about the discipline’s new status and authority. Finally, essays in CCC also point to the debate between composition specialists, who viewed themselves as humanists first and foremost, and those who aligned themselves more with social scientists.

In JBW, two competing constructions of *ethos* for composition teachers—basic writing teachers in particular—prevail. The first is that of a writing teacher who has no real preparation for her job. Figured either as a well-intentioned “beginner” or an ill-prepared grammar tyrant, these composition teachers were trained to teach literature but required to teach writing. The second construction is that of a composition teacher who defines him or herself as a humanist or “English teacher.” The essays published in JBW, like those in CCC, point toward some real tensions concerning who teachers of writing are, how they will be trained, and how they will identify themselves to others within their institutions.

In her 1975 introduction to the inaugural issue of JBW, Mina Shaughnessy constructs her audience for JBW as those “teachers who came into their departments of English to teach poems or novels, plays or criticism,” and she urges such teachers to
"take a closer look at the job of teaching writing" (3). Shaughnessy directs the journal toward an audience of literature specialists who found themselves, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, thrown into the Open Admissions classroom with underprepared students. The informed (i.e. professionally active reader of academic journals) basic writing teacher is presumed to be a literary scholar by avocation and a reader of student texts by vocation. This highlights a tension between what basic writing teachers do and what they are trained to do with their professional lives.

The team of CUNY teachers and scholars who wrote and edited the first issue of *JBW* represented themselves as well-meaning beginners while positing “other teachers out there” as the ill-prepared grammar tyrants. They used words such as “unaware,” or “ignorant,” or “simplistic” to describe the ways that those “other” teachers function in their classrooms. In “Dialect Interference in Writing: A Tripartite Analysis,” for example, Barbara Quint Gray claims that “student problems may be compounded because their teachers are also unaware of the role of dialect interference in their students’ writing” (15). In the same issue, Patricia Laurence’s “Error’s Eadless Train: Why Students Don’t Perceive Errors,” declares that “teachers create the monster by being more preoccupied with recognizing than explaining student errors and, pressed for time, by offering simplistic solutions to complicated linguistic problems” (23). In general, those who published in early issues of *JBW* tended to imagine their students’ previous (and even future) English teachers as inflexible and ill equipped for the job.
Two pieces published in *JBW* countered that construction and defended teachers of composition against it. In his 1978 essay, "What We Know Now and How We Could Know More About Writing Ability in America," Rexford Brown, who served as the Director of Publications for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, laments the image of the English teacher as associated with "precision and icy objectivity," perceptions that arise largely from the emphasis on grading (1). In 1980, Shaughnessy counters such perceptions in her posthumously published essay, "The English Professor's Malady." In that piece, Shaughnessy calls upon the humanist tradition in order to declare that

> I have always liked English teachers... The have seemed to me a particularly human group of professionals, with more self-irony and grace than the run of academicians, with even a kind of seasoned and pleasing worldliness that I have always supposed to be one of the results of spending so much time reading and talking and writing about great works of literature. (91)

In order to recuperate the writing teacher as something other than the icy, objective grader that Brown refers to, Shaughnessy must recast herself and her peers as *English teachers* in the humanist tradition. Here Shaughnessy makes a similar move to that made by Lloyd-Jones in "What We May Become."

E.D. Hirsch, too, makes such a move in his 1980 essay, "Culture and Literacy," which appeared in the *JBW* memorial issue for Mina Shaughnessy following her death in 1978. In that essay, Hirsch mourns the split between the MLA and CCCC—a moment that many composition historians cite as a powerful one for the discipline of composition studies. According to Hirsch, it is a "move into disunity" (44) that signals "a very unfortunate and regressive development. Every teacher of writing
should ideally be also a teacher of literature in its broadest sense. The teacher of literacy needs also to be a teacher of cultural literacy” (45). Hirsch imagines the writing teacher’s job as helping to foster the dominant culture’s literacy practices within the writing classroom.

Despite its inclusion of essays by critics such as Hirsch who long to heal the composition/ literature split, *JBW* demonstrated its acceptance of composition studies as a discipline by 1981, when it offered a special issue devoted to the training of teachers of basic writing. In this issue, scholars from the University of Louisville, Ohio State University, Wayne State University, and other institutions, including a liberal arts college, described the programs that train students for careers in composition studies and basic writing. Here, *JBW* suggests a collective desire to address the problem of the underprepared basic writing teacher in more substantive ways.

In *JBW*, the composition teacher shifts from underprepared beginner to competent professional. In the process of moving toward the construction of the competent professional, *JBW* forwards images of the composition teacher as a rigid grammarian overly concerned with student error and as a traditional humanist who seeks to maintain her status as an English, rather than composition, teacher. I also noted that none of the essays published in *JBW* countered *CCC’s* construction of the composition teacher as racially, culturally, and cognitively different from her students.
Imagining Basic Writing Teachers

Several prominent images of basic writing teachers emerge from both journals during this time period, many of which exemplify the disciplinary constructions of composition teachers discussed above. Competing constructions of the “new” basic writing teacher as haphazard but well meaning, or untrained and wrong-headed, appear in both journals from 1975 to 1982. In addition, both journals represent basic writing teachers as usually white, usually middle class, and often female. Teachers were often pictured working within urban open admissions campuses, and many claimed their goal was to help basic writers gain entry into the middle class. Finally, I noticed that in JBW, basic writing teachers appear as teacher-activists; in CCC, they are figured more often as teacher-researchers. In both cases, however, the activists and researchers represent themselves as somehow new to their tasks.

The 1975 inaugural issue of JBW features several essays that bring images of basic writing teachers into focus. Two essays in particular, Marie Ponsot’s “Total Immersion” and Patricia Laurence’s “Error’s Endless Train,” offer competing images of the underprepared basic writing teacher. While Ponsot represents herself as enthusiastic, well meaning, and committed to the cause of teaching basic writers, Laurence imagines three categories of basic writing teachers, none of which responds appropriately to the task of teaching basic writers.

The basic writing teacher that emerges from “Total Immersion,” is an enthusiastic beginner whose teacher-activist work helps her to bring great literature to the masses. Ponsot describes her experiences working with open admissions basic
writing students at Queens College in the College Skills Center. During a summer
course, Ponsot and her colleague, Sandra Schor, spent six weeks teaching basic writers
the literature of the Western oral tradition, moving students through the study of
folktales, *The Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and other texts. Students in turn drafted their own
rhymes, poems, and riddles, and essays, mimicking the forms of the Western tradition.
While Ponsot served as the lead teacher, Schor participated as an anonymous
 correspondent to the students; they knew her only as “Ms. Mystery” until the sixth
week of the course.

Ponsot calls the experience “a celebration,” and she recalls the “high spirits I
imagine among those newly recruited to work out with the Yankee farm team or just
admitted to the heady and rigorous practices of the Royal Ballet School. Perhaps such
festive enjoyment is what we should expect of work which is human, intense, and
visibly productive”(31). Despite her initial lack of training—she is a literature
specialist—Ponsot is energetic and committed to work that she compares to achieving
one’s childhood dream of baseball or ballet stardom. These metaphors suggest a
dreamlike quality to the experience, as though what takes place in the basic writing
classroom is somehow outside the “real” world and safely encapsulated in a place
where inner city students—immigrants and United States natives alike—might soak up
Western culture while practicing their writing skills.

“Error’s Endless Train,” on the other hand, offers images of basic writing
teachers across several broad categories of classroom behavior according to their ways
of dealing with students’ errors. Laurence’s categories include: the Myopics, who “see
errors as flashing lights [and] concentrate minute attention with red marks which swell up all over the student's paper at the expense of any thought or feeling ventured" (26); the Romantics, who are "bleary-eyed [and] believe that if teachers can motivate students to open the floodgates of the self, to liberate the voice, then all mechanical and careless errors will disappear" (27); and the Graces, who "look heavenward [and] are horrified that the basic skills of spelling and grammar are woefully lacking in student writing and keep insisting that correcting errors is a very small and trivial affair" (27). In each case, the construction of the basic writing teacher is related directly to the ways in which she reads and interprets student writing, but the essay itself speaks most to the ways that teachers affect the academic institution itself rather than their students. Myopics perform a gatekeeping function for the institution; Romantics are committed to democratizing the institution, and so on.

A view of the writing teacher as more concerned with pedagogical, rather than institutional, effects, was offered by Rosemary Hake in her 1978 JBW essay, "With No Apology: Teaching to the Test." Hake foregrounds her experiences as a teacher at Chicago State University, which served a large African American student population (65% at the time the essay was written), and she discusses her goals as a teacher in economically oriented activist terms: "the function of an institution like Chicago State, and of its required program in basic English composition, is to serve as a means of entry to the middle class" (39). For Hake, this student population, "perhaps more than others with less pressing needs and concrete ambitions, makes one feel accountable as the instructor in a required writing course and the judge of an essential
skill" (39). Hake's comments suggest direct correlation between perceptions of student identities--this population of mostly African American students is seen to have "pressing needs" and "concrete ambitions"--and pedagogical practice. Hake feels more "accountable" to these students and responds by using a pragmatic approach to teaching writing as "essential skill."18

These three examples from *JBW*—essays by Ponsot, Laurence, and Hake—present differing images of basic writing teachers. All three serve a similar ideological agenda: to help basic writing students, who are most often figured as working-class and/or African American or other students of color—enter the middle class by assimilating its discourse conventions in order to succeed economically. Thus Ponsot introduces her students to great oral works of Western civilization; the teachers that Laurence imagines respond to student writing in particular ways; and Hake emphasizes the conventions of Standard Written English in her classroom.

Indeed, many essays published in *JBW*, including "Dialect Interference in Writing: A Tripartate Analysis" by Barbara Quint Gray (1975), "Putting Error in its Place" by Isabella Halsted (1975), and "A Design for a Developmental Writing Course for Academically Underprepared Black Students" by Dianna S. Campbell and Terry Ryan Meier (1976), and a host of essays about helping ESL students acquire the conventions for writing Standard Edited English espouse—implicitly or explicitly—the goal of helping basic writers gain entry to the middle class. In each case, that goal seems to coincide with the figuration of basic writing teachers as culturally and/or racially different from their students and, in most cases, it contributes to an emerging
image of a white teacher working with students of color in the basic writing classroom.

A final prominent image of the basic writing teacher that appears in *JBW* is that of Mina Shaughnessy herself, who died in 1978. In 1980, *JBW* published a special issue titled “Toward a Literate Democracy,” which contained proceedings of the First Shaughnessy Memorial Conference, as well as several of Shaughnessy’s talks and essays, previously unpublished or published elsewhere. In memorializing Shaughnessy, the contributors to this volume, including Sarah D’Eloia, Robert Lyons, and E.D. Hirsch, posited her as a role model for other basic writing teachers.

D’Eloia’s preface to the issue claims that Shaughnessy saw “the inevitable connection between teaching the rudimentary skills of writing and imparting the knowledge which forms the culturally literature person, that extraordinary combination of practical and moral sensibility she bequeathed us” (2). This construction of Shaughnessy as the basic writing teacher implies a necessary and natural marriage between the “rudimentary skills” approach (i.e. composition teaching) and a more traditional literary approach (i.e. English teaching). In “Culture and Literacy,” Hirsch calls Shaughnessy an “Arnoldian Figure” (27). He continues, declaring that she was a poet, essayist, critic, even an inspector of schools, and at the same time a person who integrated all these roles not just in service of a powerful cultural mission, but also in exemplification of literate culture at its best: social purpose, integrity, eloquence, and something very Arnoldian—a sense of style (27).

Hirsch’s construction of Shaughnessy allows space for the image of the activist — she engages in a “cultural mission”—as well as the image of the English teacher forwarded by Lloyd-Jones in “What We May Become.” Indeed, Hirsch calls upon the
example of Shaughnessy as evidence of his “renewed . . . sense of the rightness of training composition teachers in subject matters, including literature, and the wrongness of sustaining a separate class of composition specialists” (47).

Shaughnessy was presented rather paradoxically, then, as an ideal basic writing teacher as well as the embodiment of a reason not to train others to be composition or basic writing specialists. This figuration of Shaughnessy suggests, moreover, that a basic writing teacher needs only strength of character and commitment to great literature to succeed, not extensive training in composition studies.

Fewer images of basic writing teachers are found in CCC than JBW, but those that do appear suggest a proactive basic writing teacher who, although relatively new to the work, is increasingly well prepared to undertake classroom research and other scholarly projects. In CCC, activist work was also undertaken, but the form of activism was the scholarship itself; this work then influenced other basic writing teachers, administrators, and researchers. Mina Shaughnessy’s “Diving In” (1976) introduced readers to basic writing classroom cultures and suggested ways teachers could study their own classrooms and learn how to function most productively within them. David Bartholomae’s “The Study of Error” and Andrea Lunsford’s “The Content of Basic Writers’ Essays” (both published in 1980) forwarded images of teachers who had taken the “dive” and who now functioned optimally in basic writing classrooms as researchers.

In “Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing,” Shaughnessy encourages teachers to reimagine themselves as capable of change, rather than as stagnant,
disempowered victims of literacy crises. Shaughnessy presents teachers as positioned on a developmental scale that measures their progression toward positions that allow them to “dive in” to the democratizing project of teaching basic writing, particularly at open admissions institutions. The process Shaughnessy describes is a lengthy one and she recognizes that teachers’ positions toward their students and their work will change dramatically when they reeducate themselves. Shaughnessy suggests that new basic writing teachers must become researchers of their own classroom cultures, taking time to both observe and participate in them much like an ethnographer observes and participates in the cultures that s/he studies.

Shaughnessy uses several metaphors to describe the stages of the journey from defensiveness to openness: “guarding the tower,” “converting the natives,” “sounding the depths,” and “diving in” (234-5). Much has been written in critique of these metaphors (see Lu, Horner, and Mutnick), particularly from a post-colonial perspective. The metaphors suggest a teacher’s relationship not only to the basic writers she encounters, but to the institution that asks her to encounter them in the first place. By publishing this piece in CCC, rather than JBW, Shaughnessy attempts to convert the natives who inhabit her institution, as well as the hundreds of other institutions across the United States. In this way, Shaughnessy functions as both scholar and activist, seeking to describe and change the academic institutions she encounters.

Lunford’s and Bartholomae’s CCC essays model even more explicitly the ways that teachers can operate as researchers in basic writing classrooms. In “The Study of
Error,” Bartholomae urges compositionists to “study basic writing itself—the phenomenon, not the course of instruction” (254). Bartholomae offers error analysis as one way in which to engage in more “systematic inquiry” into the ways that basic writers operate in classrooms (253). “The Study of Error” is posited as such a systematic inquiry, emphasizing Bartholomae’s role as teacher-researcher in the process.

In representing himself within this role, however, Bartholomae still uses a construction of the English—rather than composition—teacher. For example, he suggests that error analysis constitutes the kind of close reading of students’ texts that should be comfortable to one trained as a literary scholar. Shaughnessy’s Errors and Expectations, he suggests, is an ideal model for such work. Most often, Bartholomae argues, English teachers have not “read as we have been trained to read, with a particular interest in the way an individual style confronts and violates convention. We have read, rather, as policemen, examiners, gate-keepers” (255). Bartholomae urges teachers to resist those constructions of composition teachers by reclaiming the close reading methods of English scholars.

Finally, Bartholomae’s essay also offers us an image of a basic writing classroom researcher who listens empathetically and carefully to his students. He involves basic writing students—not just their texts—in his scholarly projects. “The Study of Error” features an exchange with John, a basic writer. When Bartholomae finishes his initial analysis of John’s paper, he notes the discrepancy between what he has found and the kinds of errors present in the text when John reads aloud.
Bartholomae then weaves John’s voice into his scholarly project, using John’s reading of his own essay and snippets of their conversations in order to explain John’s errors and choices. In the process, Bartholomae constructs himself as a caring listener, an image present generally in much basic writing scholarship of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.  

Andrea Lunsford’s “The Content of Basic Writers’ Essays” also contributes to the images of basic writing teachers as both active researchers and empathetic listeners. She calls her research “an exercise in listening” to the voices of basic writing students via their essays (278), but she admits that her early years as a basic writing teacher and researcher left her “awash in a sea of uncontrolled variants, error counts, and tests for statistical significance” (278). Lunsford offers readers a representation of her present teacher-researcher self as an enlightened one, while her former teacher-researcher self had not yet learned to combine her training as a humanist/English teacher with her training as a specialist/composition teacher. 

Lunsford credits Mina Shaughnessy herself with helping her achieve some synthesis between the two professional identities. Lunsford begins her essay with a brief narrative in which she describes asking Shaughnessy for advice about a previous research project. Lunsford writes, 

In 1976, when I was struggling with a bewildering explosion of figures gathered in relation to a study of basic writers, I wrote to Mina Shaughnessy. ‘Help,’ I said, ‘I am awash in a sea of uncontrolled variables, error counts, and tests for statistical significance. Now that I’ve started counting things, I can’t seem to stop.’ As always, Mina somehow found time to write back, and she gave me some eminently sensible advice: ‘Cut the list of countable items in half,’ she said, ‘and then begin to narrow from there. But while you count and categorize, don’t forget to listen to what the students are telling you’” (278).
Here Lunsford’s narrative accomplishes several ends. First, the narrative complements the image of the basic writing teacher as both researcher and empathetic listener. Second, it helps complicate representations of Shaughnessy as a humanist rather than a composition specialist, as she was presented by Hirsch and others, and recuperates her as both humanist and composition specialist, demonstrating that the two identities are not mutually exclusive.

These three examples from CCC, “Diving In,” “The Content of Basic Writers’ Essays,” and “The Study of Error,” combine to figure the basic writing teacher as a persuasive classroom researcher who listens empathetically to students and studies their texts carefully. When considered in connection with the variety of images from JBW—the enthusiastic but underprepared beginner, ill-prepared grammarian, economically oriented pragmatist—the image of the empathetic classroom researcher that emerges from CCC suggests that by 1982, the two journals’ representations of teachers had begun to differ. JBW continued to emphasize teachers as concerned first with pedagogical issues and CCC imagined teachers to be equally adept at research. Both journals shared one important construction of the basic writing teacher, however: s/he was represented often as middle class, white, and somehow different from the students s/he teaches, or else s/he was not really described at all.

Reading and Interpretive Practices

Explicit discussions of reading and interpreting students’ texts published in JBW and CCC were surprisingly few between 1975 and 1982. Interpretive acts are implicit, however, in every essay that considers error, evaluation, or dialect
"interference," and several essays mention _Errors and Expectations_ as a model for the kind of close reading of student writing that seems appropriate for scholarship in basic writing. While several scholars mention close reading as a method suitable for those who have been trained as literary critics, in general, close reading of students’ texts was not typical of the scholarship I analyzed in _JBW_ and _CCC_. Rather, when scholars included a sample of student writing in their articles, that student writing—usually just a snippet of an essay or very, very brief writing sample—most often exemplified a rhetorical problem, which scholars could then name and codify and for which they could prescribe pedagogical treatment.

In _JBW_, for instance, essays such as "Dialect Interference in Writing: A Tripartite Analysis" by Barbara Quint Gray (1975), "Total Immersion" by Marie Ponsot (1975), and "Coaching Writing" by Paul Pierog (1975) read small snippets of students’ texts in order to demonstrate the kinds of errors students make. "Coaching Writing" is particularly useful for thinking about this way of using students’ texts. Pierog shares several drafts of a student-authored paper called "Trinidad Beaches," demonstrating to readers that "students can progress from an inability to write at all to talented and moving confidence" (76). Pierog tells readers what "the worst part of the paper is," and he notes the ways that the writer is "careless" and "wasting and misusing attention" as he describes the first draft (71).

_JBW_ had been premised as a journal concerned with the ways that teachers read students’ texts. In the first issue, Shaughnessy’s introduction provides readers with two examples of student writing, both written by high school graduates from the same
city and school system. Readers are then positioned to be surprised to learn that the students exhibit radically different levels of facility with written language. The first example, which readers are meant to consider highly competent, is a stark contrast to the second example that Shaughnessy offers as the example of a basic writer’s text. Shaughnessy then asks readers to imagine that they are the teachers who encounter the second writer’s text in their open admissions classroom for the first time. She imagines such teachers will be unprepared for the challenge that lies ahead, and she notes, “it is to such teachers that the *Journal of Basic Writing* is directed” (3). Here the act of reading and interpreting student texts is quite constitutive of the entire project of *JBW*; the act of reading students’ texts helps teachers identify the identities of basic writers and describe the nature of the basic writing teacher’s work. Indeed, I argue that the very concept of the basic writer is dependent upon the act of reading; a basic writer exists only in the moment of encounter between teacher and student-authored text.

Speaking generally, essays published in *CCC* discussed issues of reading and interpretation more explicitly than essays in *JBW*. In “Aesthetic Distance and the Composition Teacher,” published in *CCC* in 1975, Donald Stewart spoke broadly to the rhetorical situation of the composition teacher’s encounter with a student text, drawing on Francis Coleman’s articulation of the “aesthetic point of view” in order to explore the possibilities for such a concept for composition teachers. In particular, Stewart ponders Coleman’s notion of the “Man of Sensibility,” a reader who, through
the construction of a kind of “psychical distance” from a work of art, is able to appreciate it without being subsumed by his own personal associations to it (238-9).

I am oversimplifying both Coleman and Stewart here; however, Stewart’s examination of such a concept as the “Man of Sensibility” for the composition classroom indicates that he values particular kinds of readings of students’ texts. Borrowing directly from Coleman, then, Stewart notes that a composition teacher who aspires to read students’ texts like a “Man of Sensibility” will “be well acquainted with the history and various schools and traditions in the branches of the fine arts”—rhetorical theory, literary theory, and history (240). Likewise, that composition teacher would be a member of CCCC (rather than ignorant of its existence). Here we see in Stewart’s construction of the ideal composition teacher the continued desire to synthesize the notion of a more traditional humanities scholar with a professional compositionist.

Borrowing heavily from Coleman’s language, Stewart suggests that such a teacher would also “‘have no purely personal preferences or dislikes’” (240). Stewart then takes Coleman a step further: “To this qualification we should add ‘which would interfere with the disinterestedness of his response’” (240). Here Stewart images that, ideally, a composition teacher should aspire toward such disinterestedness. Finally, Stewart notes that Coleman’s “‘Man of Sensibility’ is able to resist allowing religious or ideological commitments to color his reading (240). While Stewart recognizes that Coleman’s construct is “an ideal,” he does value the notion of aesthetic distance as a way to work toward greater objectivity when reading and evaluating student papers.
This kind of reading helps a composition teacher maintain a clear sense of distance and difference from the student writer (or the basic writer, more specifically) and her text. Given the figuration of the basic writer as a student of color, a speaker of non-standard dialect, a cognitively deficient producer of written texts, and so on, the creation of such critical distance may have further enabled movement toward legitimacy and professionalization for composition teachers in general and basic writing teachers in particular.

In 1976, *CCC* published “The Sense of Nonsense: An Approach to Freshman Composition” by David Siff. In this essay, Siff shares a pedagogical technique that involves asking students—portrayed as underprepared minority students at Brooklyn College, CUNY—to use a kind of “nonsense” writing in which they “forego all thinking, all calculation” as they draft, and then to paraphrase that nonsense paper in Standard Edited English. After analyzing one sample student response to his dual prompt, Siff describes the first response, the “no-nonsense” draft, as “woefully inept” (274). Moreover, Siff says, “in terms of mechanics, it borders on functional illiteracy. To the point of simplemindedness, the thoughts expressed in the paper seem utterly lacking in complexity” (274).

Siff’s reading is dismissive and insulting to the student writer, equating problems with mechanics with illiteracy and attributing cognitive deficiency to the writer. What seems most puzzling, though, is that Siff offers these comments as evidence for a claim that would appear potentially liberatory: that the students he studied possessed more sophisticated writing abilities than we might guess from our
readings of their “regular” or “no-nonsense” papers. In other words, Siff reads each pair of student texts—the nonsensical alongside its paraphrase—in order to demonstrate that the nonsensical is, in fact, more creative, more rhetorically alive, and, most interestingly, more “calculated” than the Standard forms of discourse students produce (275). Rather than redefining the basic writer as capable of producing provocative, creative work when s/he moves away from binding conventions, however, Siff’s essay reinscribes the image of the basic writer is cognitively deficient and incapable of communicating well in writing.

Fortunately, other essays published in CCC take the discussion of students’ texts in different directions. For example, important connections are made between the act of reading students’ texts and the identities of students—and teachers—in Michael Linn’s “Black Rhetorical Patters and the Teaching of Composition,” published in 1975. Here Linn argues that

In spite of what many English teachers say, inner-city students use concrete examples. However, the examples usually imply inductively, rather than state explicitly, the fundamental assumptions. In other words, they depend upon a body of shared knowledge—only the instructor does not usually share this knowledge. As a result, the instructor usually misses the point. . . and usually falls back on old reliable comments such as ‘be concrete’ or ‘be specific.’ (153)

On the one hand, Linn’s analysis does make use of some essentializing notions of inner-city students’ discourses—that they utilize more inductive than deductive examples, for instance. Still, Linn’s analysis does argue that when teachers and students do not share knowledge bases, or communicative practices, or value systems, and so on, misreadings of students’ texts occur. Linn’s essay posits shared responsibility between student and teacher for the making of meaning.
I am most intrigued by essays that address broad questions of disciplinary-wide reading and evaluation strategies. Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch’s “On Students’ Rights to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response,” published in CCC in 1982, considers the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ authority and their ways of reading and responding to students’ texts. Brannon and Knoblauch point to the same contradiction that I describe in Chapter One, the tendency for readers to work harder to read the theoretical or literary texts to which they attribute authority than they do when reading their students’ texts. They argue that,

In general, readers will assume that problematic texts demand greater effort from them, not rewriting from the author. Writers, in fact, depend on readers’ willingness to stay with a text, even a difficult one, without judging it prematurely on the basis of its apparent violation of their own personal lives or impressions of some subject. The incentive to write derives from an assumption that people will listen respectfully and either assent to or earnestly consider the ideas expressed. And ordinarily readers will make an honest effort to understand a writer’s text provided that its ideas matter to them and provided that the writer’s authority is sufficient to compel their attention (157-8).

Their essay proceeds to make an argument for a model of response to student-authored texts that acknowledges students’ authority and permits them to assume that their texts will, in fact, be “earnestly considered” by their teachers. In order to do so, however, teachers must avoid constructing some kind of “Ideal Text” in their heads as they read (160). The essay, then, concentrates more on the method of response than the concept of reading.

Published representations of teachers reading students’ texts in both journals demonstrate connections between professional identities for teachers, current views of student writers in general and basic writers in particular, and reading and interpretive
practices. Shaughnessy's model of close reading, for instance, which stems from a literary studies model of textual analysis, highlights differences in logic, convention, and facility between basic writers' texts and other texts. Pierg's and Siff's readings focus on students' lack of proficiency as writers, going so far as to suggest that the students themselves are illiterate and/or cognitively different or deficient. In these essays, student-authored textual examples help scholars to showcase the discursive evidence of those deficits. Essays by Linn and Brannon and Knoblauch, however, begin to highlight the relationship between teachers' identities, students' identities, and interpretive practices. In all of these examples, the act of reading can emphasize some kind of difference between a student-authored text and other kinds of texts or between the student and the teacher.

*Constructing The Composition Teacher, Imagining Basic Writing Teachers, and Reading Their Interpretive Practices: 1983-1990*

Both *CCC* and *JBW* helped compositionists to publish widely and frequently in the 1980's in order to better their chances for tenure and promotion within departments of English. In the middle 1980's, *CCC* published essays that considered not only process theory and studies of cognition, but also computers and composition, rhetorical theory, histories of composition, collaboration and peer response, ESL students, writing program administration, and the relationship between composition and literary studies. The increasingly diverse tables of contents in *CCC* reflect the
ways that composition specialists were working to redefine themselves as scholars and researchers, rather than "merely" teachers of writing.

*JBW*, too, responded to readers' need to professionalize. In 1986, incoming editor Lynn Quitman Troyka declared that *JBW* would "become a refereed journal, and... move away from single-theme issues so that [it could] publish new material quickly" (1). Essays published in *JBW* focused on teacher training, the social and epistemological development of basic writers, the teaching of learning disabled writers, computer assisted pedagogies, basic writing and ESL students, and many other topics.

*Constructing the Composition Teacher*

In the previous decade, the passage of "Students' Right to Their Own Language" had in some ways situated the field as concerned with the needs of academic "outsiders." In the 1980's, work had to be done to both establish composition studies as an academic "insider" and still preserve the discipline's written commitment to teaching diverse student populations successfully. My analysis suggests that *CCC* was largely successful in helping the discipline to achieve the first goal; several essays speak to the establishment of the field as an academic authority. The journal was perhaps less focused on the achievement of the second goal: preserving its written commitment to teaching diverse student populations successfully.

In *CCC*, essays suggest teachers' collective desire to gain more authority and their recognition of their precarious positions within the academy. Indeed, between
1983 and 1990, many essays published in CCC are very much about the discipline’s methodologies, history, and theoretical orientations. I noticed conflicting constructions of the composition teacher, who is represented within the journal alternatively as a victim of institutional inequity, a disempowered woman, and a newly authorized professional. In addition, the journal continued to contribute to competing constructions of the composition teacher as part of the larger project of teaching English and separate from that “elitist” enterprise. Finally, essays published in CCC reflect a growing split between composition scholars and researchers and composition teachers throughout the 1980’s. All of these competing constructions of teachers are particularly evident when we consider a series of CCCC Chair’s Addresses published in CCC between 1985 and 1990, and I focus on those in this section of my analysis.

In “Breaking Our Bonds and Reaffirming Our Connections,” published in CCC in 1985, Maxine Hairston urged her colleagues to leave departments of English whenever possible and make the necessary “psychological break with the literary critics who today dominate the profession of English Studies” (273). Hairston cites a variety of signs that indicate that the discipline has, in fact, “achieved a kind of national recognition” (272), including graduate courses being taught in the history and theory of rhetoric; more positions defined as composition and rhetoric positions; an “excellent” job market; thriving Writing Across the Curriculum programs; six new journals; a high membership in CCCC (272-3). However, she cautions,

we often find ourselves confronting the literature faculty who dominate so many departments, and we feel that we are fighting losing battles: battles to get hard money to staff the writing center, battles to establish programs for training writing teachers, or battles against staffing composition courses with
underpaid, low-status, part-timers. Fighting that literature faction often makes you feel like you have invaded China. (273)

For Hairston, breaking free of such psychological and material ties to literary studies is a matter of “survival” (273).

Hairston also compares composition studies to a stunted, newborn baby who needs to “cut the cord” (274) and likens composition professionals to victims of the practice of Chinese footbinding: “we have to face the truth that our mandarins think we are ugly because we have short fingernails and big feet” (276). Moreover, Hairston’s essay suggests that compositionists are often defined by their relationship to students and students’ writing; literary critics, she reminds readers, abhor student-authored texts. According to Hairston, it is “an elitist mindset that prefers that which is accessible only to the few and that despises the useful or popular” (276). Here Hairston defines the project of literary studies as elitist and recasts composition teachers as part of a more democratizing process.

In order to underscore the differences between composition and literary studies, Hairston posits a feminized image of the field. First, Hairston likens the emerging discipline of composition studies to the early women’s movement: “one can look at how far we have come and rejoice at our progress, or one can look at the barriers that still exist and become discouraged” (273). When this metaphor is extended, composition studies is a kind of battered wife to a masculinized literary studies that must now “break its bonds” and come into its own as a woman, or as a discipline. The composition teacher who is figured within Hairston’s essay, then, is riddled with contradiction: she is a woman who is both tied to the students she teaches and tethered
unfruitfully to the department of English that employs her. She is not of the “elitist mindset” of the literary scholar, so she must be associated with a more democratic project. While serving those students who need help, however, she must be a “productive researcher and scholar” who publishes in order to “build the self-esteem and confidence that is especially important for beginners in an enterprise” (279).

In “Diversity and Change: Toward a Maturing Discipline” (1986), Lee Odell imagines and appeals to an older, more experienced composition teacher than Hairston does. Moreover, his essay not only acknowledges but also adds to an increasing gap between those who identified themselves as scholars and those who called themselves teachers. Teachers, Odell notes, may find all of the changes in the discipline a bit “chaotic” (396), and he urges them to recognize the necessity for disciplinary revision and to find a way to carve out a space for themselves within an ever-changing field of scholarly work. Odell notes the rising use of “naturalistic observation” and other ethnographic methods in composition research as examples of new directions for teacher-researchers (396). Despite his advice for teachers to resist their urge to be skeptical of theory and engage in scholarly work, the image of the older, somewhat confused composition teacher is less theoretically sophisticated, less well read, and less professionally engaged than the composition scholar.

When Richard C. Gephardt became editor of CCC in 1987, his note reflected the changing nature of the journal’s focus:

*CCC should be a journal in which specialists clarify their insights by writing articles for well-informed composition generalists as well as for other specialists. It should be a journal in which well-informed classroom teachers discover insights and approaches from articles by specialists in all parts of the*
profession, including men and women who specialize in face-to-face work with student writers. (19)

A line is drawn here between a “specialist” and a “generalist” in the field. While classroom teachers are expected to be able to read and gain insight from the scholarly work published in CCC, classroom teachers themselves are not posited as the most likely contributors.

Gephardt clarified the distinction between specialists and generalists in order to guide CCC’s future, and he called upon well-respected voices of “distinguished leaders” in the field to reflect upon its past. Gephardt initiated a new CCC feature: “Personal Perspective” essays written by well-respected scholars in the field. The first one, “Finding a Comfortable Identity,” was submitted by William F. Irmscher in 1987. Irmscher claims that “composition has established an identity of its own, not solely as a practitioner’s art, but as a subject for scholarly study” (81). Irmscher also notes that once-enthusiastic composition scholars are not doing so well at tenure time. “This is a season for mourning,” he declares (82). Irmscher does not blame literary studies for composition’s tenure-time woes, however. Instead, he argues that the field has focused too much energy on quantitative research and, in the process, composition scholars have forgotten how to think about all that data. Sounding a bit like Lloyd-Jones in “What We May Become,” Irmscher urges readers to “work toward a model of inquiry appropriate to our own discipline—composition as a part of English studies—consistent with its values, supporting and enlightening it” (84). Irmscher seeks to refigure the compositionist as part of the larger project of English studies.
In 1987, CCC published another “Personal Perspective” essay, this one by Edward P.J. Corbett. In “Teaching Composition: Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going,” Corbett, too praises the “enhanced professionalism and the elevated status” of new compositionists (444). Corbett uses his essay, however, to question the effectiveness of composition teaching and to trouble the correlation between innovative pedagogy and effective pedagogy. Corbett calls for teachers to “assess themselves” each time they import new methods and ideas gleaned from professional conferences, books, or journals; this way, teachers have a chance to ask: “Am I doing my students any good?” (452). Corbett’s suggestion seems rather lost in the crowd of essays pushing compositionists to define themselves as researchers and scholars first and foremost.

Conversations in CCC in the middle 1980’s communicated what composition studies had to gain from its rising status as a discipline, and those of the late 1980’s pointed to what it might have already lost. Some essays suggested that while specialists could enjoy tenure-line benefits, low teaching loads, and graduate research assistants, legions of composition “generalists”—those “face-to-facers” that Gephart mentioned in his editor’s note—were facing the harsh reality of life as adjuncts, freeway fliers, and part-timers.

In her 1987 CCCC Chair’s Address, for instance, Miriam T. Chaplin shares a “piece of personal writing”—a letter from a “Distressed composition teacher in Florida”—that delineates the painful experiences of a non-tenured teacher at a large university (52-3). Chaplin uses the letter as a springboard from which to discuss the
problems composition teachers face, including increasingly diverse student populations, curricular changes, and external means of evaluating teacher performance. In addition, between 1987 and 1990, CCC published several collectively authored professional statements addressing the institutional problems faced by composition teachers—tenure-track and non-tenure track. These statements included: "Draft Statement of Professional Guidance to Junior Faculty and Department Chairs," "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing," and "CCCC Initiatives on the Wyoming Conference Resolution: A Draft Report."

By the time CCC published David Bartholomae's 1988 Chair's Address in 1989, the composition teacher was most often imagined in the journal as a non-tenured instructor or adjunct that worked in the trenches of the classroom. She did her best to keep up with scholarship in the field and continued to attend professional meetings to gain spiritual sustenance from contact with others in the same situation. The subject of Bartholomae's "Freshman English, Composition, and CCCC" is the discipline of composition itself—not the teacher. Bartholomae personifies the discipline, which the CCCC organization itself metonymizes in the essay. Bartholomae writes, "We are at the point now where it has become possible and fashionable to speak of composition as a mature discipline. . . when we are 39 years old, we have passed into a solid, if not completely respectable middle age" (48). Among the benefits of this middle age, Bartholomae counts greater financial stability, large membership, promotions for senior faculty, and thriving publications and presses (48).
Still, Bartholomae notes that scholars such as Stephen North have criticized the interplay of methodologies and critical perspectives at play in the discipline. Such scholars long for a more coherent disciplinary self, a canonized list of texts that every graduate student should know, and a more “unifying tradition” in general (49). Bartholomae urges CCCC members to resist this call and to maintain possibilities for openness in the field. He reminds readers: “In our organizational history as in our research there has been a concerted effort to preserve diversity in academic life—to bring attention to those who would otherwise be ignored. And yet now, as we enter our 40’s, we seem to be desperately trying to become respectable, to make the mistakes of middle age” (49). Here Bartholomae alludes not only to composition’s historical preferences for methodological pluralism but also to the discipline’s relationship to those non-traditional students Troyka spoke of in 1981. His statement exemplifies a common trope in basic writing scholarship: that composition teachers, who are positioned at the center of university culture, see themselves engaged in the process of empowering their basic writing students by helping them move from margin to center themselves.

Andrea Lunsford’s Chair’s Address, published in CCC in 1990, extended Bartholomae’s call for the embrace of plurality and diversity by naming composition studies a “strongly interdisciplinary, . . . non-hierarchical and exploratory, intensely collaborative” discipline (76). In “Composing Ourselves: Politics, Commitment, and the Teaching of Writing” (1990), Lunsford draws upon Bakhtinian and feminist theories of rhetoric and language as she declares the field to be “dialogic, multi-
voiced, heteroglossic. . . radically democratic, committed to maintaining the dynamic
tension between praxis and theoria, between the political and epistemological” (76).
In her efforts to examine such tensions, Lunsford refocuses attention on the
composition teacher as s/he exists within institutional contexts. For Lunsford, who
agrees with Bartholomae’s contention that the field has been “obsessed over the last
decade with defining ourselves” (72), the end result of composition’s disciplinary
quest for self-definition should remain open to revision. Thus Lunsford asks readers
to work toward “composing,” rather than “defining” themselves, both historically and
subjectively (72).

Lunsford refocuses attention on the subject of the teacher of writing and urges
readers to rediscover the countless stories of African American and other teachers who
have shared the “commitment [which] allowed them to stare down political realities
and say I will teach writing, and I will teach a way to write a new story, a new political
reality”(75). In addition, Lunsford points out that the teacher of writing has always
been in constant motion, making and remaking society’s ideas about literacy, power,
and knowledge. In urging composition teachers to question the perceptions that others
have about them and their work and openly critiquing E.D. Hirsch, Charles Sykes,
Allan Bloom, and others, Lunsford reclaims for the field some of the power that
previous figurations of composition as a second-class discipline had denied.

Unlike CCC, JBW focused relatively little attention on the ways that members
of the discipline professionalized themselves, though essays published within the
journal reflected an increasing focus on classroom research and more theoretical
perspectives. Generally speaking, scholars who published in *JBW* during this time period utilized a variety of research methods to study students' composing and revising processes; evaluate the usefulness of grammar instruction, spelling instruction, and other approaches within the basic writing classroom; and to analyze the ways that students' attitudes toward writing tasks affected their success.

One essay published in *JBW* during this time period does, however, reflect and amplify the conversations shared in *CCC*. Richard Lloyd-Jones' "What We Will Be," which *JBW* published in 1986, emphasized the importance of self-definition for teachers. According to Lloyd-Jones, "An act of will requires a conscious decision to BE something in particular: it is not an accident of trends or an object of survival. Not passive to events but active in valuing what is essentially human, we chart a course to define ourselves" (3). Here he urges teachers to take some agency and define themselves and their work in the most productive ways possible. He continues, however, sharing with readers his sense of the ways that teachers are defined by others:

As teachers of English or Language Arts we are defined by our preoccupation with language, most particularly the language of this nation... We break through the lonely barriers of bodily sensation to share our lives by means of language. We know we CAN know our companions when we "talk the same language." When we become teachers of our language, we claim a place in the absolute middle of things, but many of us feel isolated and unappreciated. (3)

Here, the quotation that serves as this chapter's epigraph highlights the contradictions of definition surrounding the composition teacher. She must negotiate her role within an institution that both values and marginalizes her; she must do so amid disciplinary
discourses of agency and self-definition and popular discourses of failure and incompetence.

By emphasizing the need for composition teachers to define themselves, rather than allow politicians, taxpayers, or scholars outside of English studies to do so, Lloyd-Jones suggests that teachers might even reimagine themselves. My analysis of *CCC* and *JBW* during this time period suggests this paradox of definition underlies most constructions of composition teachers: they are simultaneously viewed as central to the project of higher education in the United States and marginal within the academic institutions that employ them.

*Imagining Basic Writing Teachers*

The most common images of the basic writing teacher in both *JBW* and *CCC* during this time period depict a teacher-researcher. Mina Shaughnessy exemplified this figure in the late 1970’s. She considered her own classroom a site for research, utilized her own students’ texts and behaviors as subject matter, and pointed toward pedagogical implications as a primary contribution to the field. Throughout the 1980’s, however, that image of the teacher doing research in her own classroom shift. In both journals, for example, I found representations of basic writing teachers utilizing more distanced perspectives gleaned from the social sciences, engaging in controlled studies of writer apprehension, applying theories of cognitivism to their own—or someone else’s—basic writing students, and so on. Indeed, many essays published in both *CCC* and *JBW* represent basic writing teachers as the *subjects* of research, rather than the researchers. By the late 1980’s, however, researchers utilized
more naturalistic or ethnographic approaches and became participant-observers in their research projects.

In *JBW*, teacher-researchers appeared as enlightened social activists, who channeled their research into advocacy, particularly in relation to arguments about race, literacy practices, and cognition; and teacher-scholars, who represented themselves as theoretically engaged and able to draw from a variety of discourses, including rhetoric, literary theory, linguistics, education, and philosophy. In addition, several essays published in *JBW* suggest that the teacher-researcher or teacher-scholar identities are not equally possible for all teachers. These essays argue that many teachers do not receive enough institutional support to engage in scholarly work, and so they remain marginalized and disempowered.

*JBW* did not publish at all in 1982 and 1983, and when it resumed publication in 1984, the journal continued its topic from 1981: teacher training. This issue (Volume 3 number 4) featured essays such as “The Socialization of Writing Teachers” (Pradl and Brannon), “Choosing Your Doctoral Program” (Hartwell), and “Sensitizing Beginning Teachers of Writing” (Hashimoto). The issue indicates the journal’s continued commitment to the notion of a basic writing professional and its desire to refocus scholarly attention on the classroom context.²⁰

In 1985, *JBW* published two issues investigating basic writing and social science research (Volume 4 numbers 1 and 2). The first issue featured essays that utilized various forms of error analysis, and the second focused on studies of cognitive issues applied to the basic writing context. Within both issues, few images of acts of
teaching appear. Instead, teacher-researchers summarize the results of a variety of projects designed to help them account for basic writers’ errors from social science perspectives. These essays, including “Tracing Errors to their Sources: A Study of the Encoding Processes of Adult Basic Writers” by Mary Epes, “Overfamiliarity: A Cognitive Barrier in Teaching Composition” by Marilyn K. Goldberg, and “College Composition: Recognizing the Learning Disabled Writer” by Amy Richards, feature teacher-researchers who review literature on cognitivism, discourse analysis, linguistics, and so on, applying one or more of these theoretical perspectives to a tightly articulated critical problem. Most notably, the essays that appear in these two issues of JBW do not conjure images of traditional English or humanities scholars in the basic writing classroom.

Perhaps Troyka, who took over as JBW’s editor in 1986, recognized the revision that was taking place and intervened. Troyka’s Editor’s Column that year indicated “a number of changes” to the journal, which would now be refereed by an expanded Editorial Board and, occasionally, external reviewers. Troyka continues:

To assure that JBW would get off to a strong start in 1986, I invited seven outstanding people to write about their current concentration as it relates to basic writing. The result, I think, is fascinating. The authors teach at diverse colleges and did not collaborate on their plans, yet what emerges is a surprisingly cohesive collection that suggests fresh views for scholarship and research in basic writing, ideas that clearly launch basic writing into its second decade of life. (2)

Topics covered within the issue include academic discourse, studies of diversity in rhetorical communities, and the use of critical thinking tasks in basic writing classrooms. This issue implies a shift away from the figure of the social science
researcher and toward a basic writing theorist who could, once again, draw from expertise in the humanities as well as the social sciences.

David Bartholomae’s 1986 essay “Inventing the University” was one of the invited articles for this issue. Here, Bartholomae uses close reading of students’ essays and error analysis as a way to extend the boundaries of literary theory, discourse analysis, and rhetorical theory and challenge existing definitions of basic writers and pedagogical practices. Thus the essay might be seen as a kind of bridge between the former figure of the teacher-researcher and the new incarnation of the basic writing teacher-scholar.

Bartholomae’s essay begins with a conversational tone and inviting gesture: “Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion . . . he has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do” (4). Bartholomae invites other teachers to include themselves in the “us” and “we” of the essay, and he uses informal, conversational transition strategies—“Let me look quickly at an example. Here is an essay written by a college freshman, a basic writer”—to introduce his evidence throughout the piece (5). In addition, Bartholomae cites a wide range of scholars in his essay, including Patricia Bizzell, Aristotle, Michel Foucault, and Mina Shaughnessy. The basic writing teacher-scholar in this example is a synthesizer of theoretical perspectives—many of which stem from the humanities. At the same time, the essay is grounded in a pedagogical experience: reading student-authored texts. When Bartholomae reads these texts, he claims he is “continually impressed by the patience and good will of our students” (5). Here Bartholomae
constructs himself as both empathetic listener and a knowledgeable theorist and researcher.\textsuperscript{21} The two are not mutually exclusive.

In his 1987 \textit{JBW} article "Basic Skills, Basic Writing, Basic Research," Joseph Trimmer focuses attention on more material aspects of basic writing classrooms from a collective standpoint, and that analysis leads him to several conclusions about basic writing teachers. Trimmer triangulates a study of the pedagogical and staffing practices of over 700 basic writing programs with analysis of the impact of basic writing theories and pedagogies on the textbook industry. In other words, his study considers how—if at all—scholarship such as Bartholomae’s affected not only the basic writing programs he surveyed but also the textbook industry that often helped determine those programs’ pedagogical approaches.

In short, Trimmer learned that the textbook industry had been affected only minutely by theoretical and pedagogical innovations. He also concluded that 70\% of basic writing instructors were TA’s, part-timers, or other non-tenured instructors, and that only 7\% of those teachers had been trained adequately to teach basic writing (5). Trimmer’s research leads him to describe three types of basic writing teachers: "talented teachers. . . [who] in spite of their teaching load, somehow manage to work enthusiastically with hundreds of individual students"; "torpid teachers. . . [who are] disgruntled by their assignments and simply direct student traffic through their classroom"; and "truly zealous teachers. . . [who] despite all the evidence to the contrary, firmly believe that teaching grammar is teaching writing" (6). These examples reflect some holdover from the images of the previous decade. The
“talented teachers” are reminiscent of Ponsot and other enthusiastic beginners during open admissions, for instance, and the “truly zealous” sound much like gatekeeping grammarians.

All three examples lead Trimmer to argue that most basic writing teachers are simply too overburdened with work to keep abreast of current research findings. By attributing effective teachers’ success in the basic writing classroom to talent, rather than institutional support, however, Trimmer takes attention away from more material issues and undermines his own research. He leads readers to believe that the truly talented basic writing teacher can overcome impossibly difficult institutional conditions by virtue of that talent, rather than institutional support, fair working conditions, reasonable salary, and so on.

A polyvocal essay edited by Hepzibah Roskelly, “Survival of the Fittest: Ten Years in a Basic Writing Program,” which *JBW* published in 1988, also pointed toward continuing problems of lack of institutional support for basic writing teachers. Moreover, the essay succeeds in once again positing the composition/basic writing teacher as female and marginalized. Roskelly and her former colleagues at the University of Louisville recount in vivid detail their experiences at the basic writing program (which eventually became the Writing Clinic and then Writing Center) from 1976 to 1987. As each former basic writing teacher describes her pedagogy, workload, and office environs during her time at the University of Louisville, she—all the contributors are women—reminds readers of important connections between material conditions and disciplinary and institutional values.
One contributor's portrait of the basic writing program features a "frontier outpost of composition teaching," complete with basement study carrels (13). Another describes flooding in that basement facility. Liz Bell, who ran the program during the flood years from 1977-1979, declares that the staff thought of themselves as survivors on a sinking ship. Other metaphors in this essay are equally provocative. During that flooding incident, staff attempted to dry out the basement offices by dehumidifying the area. The result, according to Bell, was a group of teachers who "walked around looking like Little Orphan Annie with hair curled by humidity fit for a rainforest" (18). This metaphor reflects the tendency to represent basic writing teachers as women. It also infantilizes them. Without institutional parents or patrons, the basic writing teachers and administrators are indeed orphans. The essay also describes the program's space as cockroach-infested and notes that teachers and program directors were often women graduate students. Despite Roskelly's desire to chart the slow, steady process of decentering, recentering, and reconceptualizing of the basic writing program at Louisville, her essay constructs basic writing teachers as long-suffering young women who lack institutional support.

In CCC, images of basic writing teachers differ from those in JBW due, at least in part, to the fact that fewer CCC's contributors could be categorized as basic writing, rather than composition theory or history, specialists. In other words, I suggest that the pages of CCC were increasingly filled with theoretical and historical scholarship. Its contributors, too, define themselves more often as theorists and historians, and they approach studies of basic writing and basic writers from those perspectives. Broadly
speaking, CCC features more images of basic writing teacher-scholars using
traditional humanities methods than teacher-researchers using social science methods.
Both groups, however, represent themselves in pursuit of projects that might be tied to
a liberatory humanist agenda: to improve writing instruction for basic writing students
and provide them with instruction that is both intellectually challenging and
pragmatically oriented. Further, teacher-researchers and teacher-scholars in CCC do
not necessarily posit the classroom as a democratizing space. Instead, CCC becomes a
site from which teachers could argue against particular pedagogical and theoretical
approaches.

Issues of CCC in the early to mid 1980’s were devoted to topics such as
historical studies on the teaching of writing, writing in the academic and professional
disciplines, and scholarship in rhetoric and composition, and relatively few images of
basic writing teachers appeared. In 1985, CCC published Carroll Viera’s “The Basic
Writer and the Working World,” which appeared in the Staffroom Interchange section.
Viera shares the results of her comparative study of the ways that academic and non-
academic readers responded to a group of her basic writing students’ exit essays. She
found that readers from the working world and other academic disciplines often judged
those essays similarly, while English department faculty tended to read the texts
differently. In several instances, Viera learned that the same texts that English faculty
had failed as exit essays were, in fact, considered successful—even clear and
concise—by the other two groups of readers. Moreover, some of the non-academic
readers claimed that students’ writing problems were directly related to the “banal”
choice of topics offered them in the classroom (483). Viera uses her research in order to take an activist stance: “To avoid such injustices, we must become more knowledgeable about the evaluation of student writing,” she argues (483).

In 1986, CCC featured Susan Peck MacDonald’s “Specificity in Context: Difficulties for the Inexperienced Writer,” which also focused on disciplinary shortcomings rather than basic writers’ problems. Instead of discussing inexperienced writers’ difficulties using specific examples in their writing and then offering pedagogical diagnosis, MacDonald critiques the concept of specificity itself. She then uses that critique to argue against the construction of the basic writer as cognitively immature and in favor of reformulating definitions of terms and pedagogical approaches. Both MacDonald and Viera, then, exemplify teacher-researchers using their findings in the service of a liberatory activist agenda.

In 1986, CCC published an issue that featured several essays on questions of cognitive development for students. This issue reexamined the late 1970’s commonplace: that basic writers are cognitively deficient or different from other writers. The dominant image of the basic writing teacher that emerges from this issue is the teacher-scholar. One example is Patricia Bizzell’s “What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College,” which re-examines the relationship between basic writers’ discursive production, the “outlandishness” of their texts, language theory, and the construction of reality (294). In her search for a “more comprehensive approach” to understanding how and why basic writers perform as they do, Bizzell critically reviews three prevalent ways of talking about basic writers and their work (294). She
addresses scholarship that links basic writers to non-standard dialects, problems with
discursive forms and conventions, and cognitive deficiency.

Bizzell utilizes scholarship that arises out of multiple methodological
communities, including cognitive and behavioral science, rhetorical theory and history,
composition studies, literacy theory, and neo-Marxism. Bizzell represents herself as a
teacher-scholar who is willing to revise her own early work, synthesize multiple
viewpoints, and offer new ways of identifying and defining basic writers and their
texts, but she also constructs herself as a bit distanced from the day to day work of the
classroom teacher.22

Between 1988 and 1990, CCC featured several essays rooted in the basic
writing classroom: Mike Rose’s “Narrowing the Mind and Page: Remedial Writers
and Cognitive Reductionism” (1988), Richard Haswell’s “Dark Shadows: The Fate of
Writers at the Bottom (1988), Ann Murphy’s “Transference and Resistance in the
Basic Writing Classroom: Problematics and Praxis (1989), and Glynda Hull and Mike
Rose’s “‘This Wooden Shack Place’: The Logic of An Unconventional Reading”
(1990). Each of these essays depends on a different kind of analytical method,
ranging from Freudian and Lacanian analysis to ethnographic case study, but all
feature a basic writing teacher-scholar who takes a strong political stance and argues
for or against particular theoretical constructs or pedagogical approaches that affect
basic writers.

Unfortunately, despite multiple images of classroom research, relatively few
images of basic writing classroom teaching appeared in either journal between 1983
and 1990. Still, my analysis of both journals does imply two important shifts in images of basic writing teachers. First, I saw a widening divide between representations of teachers and researchers or scholars. As more researchers entered basic writing classrooms (often the classrooms of other teachers), images of basic writing teachers were used to reference pedagogical inadequacies or to discuss institutional inequities. Second, I noticed that both journals suggested increasing interest in the ways that teachers and scholars read and interpreted students’ texts. In the late 1980’s in particular, basic writing scholarship often began with the reading of such texts. The scholar’s articulation of a question about basic writers or basic writing then arose from that reading. Finally, I found that the trend of virtually ignoring the race, class, culture, educational history, or other aspect of the individual teacher-researcher’s identity continued in both CCC and JBW.

*Teachers’ Reading and Interpretive Practices*

From 1983 to 1990, composition scholars articulated their professional and research agendas. They also worked toward greater synthesis of their evaluative practices. They wanted to know what, exactly, constituted good writing and how to make such judgments across contexts and disciplines. The emphasis on a range of writing processes and contexts—fueled by an increasingly important Writing Across the Curriculum movement in the 1980’s—resulted in many scholars’ desire to articulate their standards of evaluation in more explicit ways. Without commonly held beliefs about that, teachers, scholars, and administrators—particularly of first year and basic writing courses—feared that external forces might decide what those values

While I found few extended discussions of teachers reading and interpreting, rather than grading or evaluating, students’ texts, I did notice that many essays depended upon at least partial readings of students’ texts in order to make their arguments. I would argue that the focus on disciplinary values led also to greater focus on teachers’ collective interpretive strategies in both journals. Generally speaking, I found that CCC addressed questions of reading and interpreting students’ essays more frequently and explicitly than JBW.

For the most part, students’ texts functioned in similar ways in scholarly articles published in CCC between 1983 and 1990. These texts served as examples of rhetorical phenomena (i.e. dialect interference or lack of specificity) or as artifacts to which scholars could apply a particular theory of interpretation (i.e. feminist readings). For example, Edward M. White recognizes in his 1984 CCC article, “Poststructural Literary Criticism and the Response to Student Writing,” that many poststructuralist theorists—including Barthes, Miller, Iser, Derrida, and Fish—have produced work that makes a great deal of sense to composition teachers because of similarities between rhetorical theories and poststructural theories of language. For instance, the notion of “misreading” has helped composition teachers resist constructing an “ideal text” each time they encounter student writing (189-91). Still, the actual discussion of the ways in which teachers read and value student-authored texts continues to be an implicit
one, embedded within pedagogical discussions of evaluation and response or more broad theoretical discussions of disciplinary values.

Other essays published in *CCC* considered the basic writing context more specifically, addressing the ways that basic writers’ texts are valued and evaluated within the classroom. Three essays in particular analyzed perceptions of basic writers’ texts outside the basic writing classroom context: “The Basic Writer and the Working World” by Carroll Viera, “Dark Shadows: The Fate of Writers at the Bottom” by Richard Haswell, and “Specificity in Context: Some Difficulties for the Inexperienced Writer” by Susan Peck MacDonald. Both Viera and Haswell, as I discussed earlier, found a discrepancy between the ways that basic writing students’ texts are valued by English teachers and by other readers, academic and non-academic.

MacDonald’s essay, on the other hand, offers a close reading of a particular rhetorical value—specificity—and analyzes the ways in which such a value’s textual embodiment shifts from context to context. In other words, she notes that what constitutes specificity in the English textbook—the use of sensory details, for instance—is considered bothersome by readers in other fields. Thus, to tell inexperienced writers that they need to “be more specific” is a rather vague, even meaningless, command, particularly given the ways that term shifts from context to context. All three of these essays demonstrate the increasing attention to issues of context and rhetorical convention that marks much of *CCC’s* scholarship during the late 1980’s. Most importantly, all three essays suggest the need to complicate the very
concept of “the basic writer” from a rhetorical perspective by re-emphasizing the intersection of context, authority, and ethos for student writers.

CCC did publish one extensive discussion of reading in 1988, and this essay can be linked to the general movement toward making shared disciplinary values more explicit. In “Rhetorical Reading Strategies and the Construction of Meaning,” Christina Haas and Linda Flower report their findings from a research project in which two groups of readers, students and more experienced adults, demonstrated their reading strategies within controlled contexts. Hypothesizing that reading is a “constructive” act, rather than merely a receptive one, Haas and Flower suggest that composition teachers might posit connections between acts of reading and writing in the classroom. When teachers offer students a process-based model for writing, Haas and Flower argue, they should also offer them similar, process-based approaches to the teaching of reading as a critical and constructive act. The essay does not, however, speak to teachers as readers of student-authored texts specifically; instead, the essay is intended as a way to help teachers introduce academic reading and writing strategies as interconnected processes to their students.

Haas and Flower’s work sought to determine what constitutes “good reading” and how best to teach that process (170). I link Haas and Flower’s project in a sense to Coles and Vopat’s What Makes Writing Good (1985), a collection of teacher-selected essays written by students. Each student’s essay is in turn accompanied by the teacher’s assignment and her commentary on the student’s text. By soliciting examples deemed excellent by the writing teachers themselves—advanced
composition, freshman composition, and writing across the curriculum courses—Coles and Vopat were able to work toward a disciplinary articulation of aesthetic and rhetorical values in the classroom.

This book is indicative of the broader movement across the discipline to discuss ways of valuing student writing more fully, a movement that is apparent in CCC as well. In “Judging Writing, Judging Selves,” which CCC published in 1989, Lester Faigley examines What Makes Writing Good alongside the 1931 report “Examining the Examination in English,” which served as an external review of the College Entrance Examination’s admissions practices. By comparing the Coles and Vopat collection to the 1931 report, Faigley Faigley demonstrates that teachers’ ways of valuing student writing are intricately tied to their ways of valuing student selves.

For example, Faigley tells us that the 1931 report suggested that students needed to not only read the “right” works of literature but also to exhibit through their essays that such books had “the right effect” on them (401). Only then would they be deemed worthy of entry to the colleges in question, including Harvard, Vassar, Yale, Cornell, and others (398). Likewise, Faigley learns that, despite the “diversity of viewpoints” represented by a wide-ranging group of scholar-teachers who selected essays for the Coles and Vopat collection, the exemplary student texts found in the book are overwhelmingly alike. Most are “personal experience essays,” he reports, and “only four examples are in the genres of professional writing” (404). Of the few texts that mention literary works, “only two present sustained analyses of other texts”
Moreover, Faigley reports that in describing why they select these successful texts, many of the teachers cite the honesty or authenticity of student voices.

Faigley's essay, then, offers a complicated analysis of the ways that student writing is valued—not just evaluated—across the discipline of composition studies. Faigley reflects on the teacher's role in students' subject formation. He argues,

The teachers' commentaries on the narratives of past experience imply that success in teaching depends on making a student aware of the desired subject position she will occupy... It is this notion of the student writer as a developing rational consciousness that makes most talk of empowerment so confused. (411)

This response is particularly provocative when we consider the basic writing context. Basic writing teachers, as I have already suggested, have appeared as activists and/or gatekeepers, working to either empower their students by offering them access to the university and its rhetorical conventions or to deny them access altogether. Faigley, however, suggests that teachers are actually engaged in a kind of subject formation, reformation, and revision, which may, in fact, disempower all students by disallowing particular kinds of identities to be enacted or performed through their writing.

In JBW, one essay in particular has been viewed as representative of basic writing teachers in the act of interpreting a basic writer's text. David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University," published in JBW in 1986, highlights his argument that basic writers must imitate, approximate and, essentially, invent academic discourse for themselves in order to enter and succeed at the university. Like Shaughnessy's work, Bartholomae's essay utilizes examples from actual students' placement essays at his university, the University of Pittsburgh.
Bartholomae begins with the premise that students, as they navigate the multiple academic disciplines to which they are introduced at the university, must “appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse. . .” (4). Bartholomae continues:

they have to do this as though they were easily and comfortably one with their audience, as though they were members of the academy, or historians, or anthropologists or economists; they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of the discipline. They must learn to speak our language. (4-5)

To demonstrate his thesis, Bartholomae reads and interprets several essays, all of which were written by students who respond to a question that prompts them to define and describe examples of creativity in their own lives.

If we apply Faigley’s theory that teachers tend to value particular kinds of student selves to Bartholomae’s essay, we see that the student selves that Bartholomae imagines are, as critics have suggested, mimetic ones. In other words, Bartholomae reads student texts in “Inventing the University” as attempts to mimic or reproduce voices that sound most like his own, or other academic voices that he values. Bartholomae takes student writing seriously and posits the genres produced by students as worthy of critical study. His analyses of the ways that basic writers and other beginning writers approximate the discourses they consider academic are astute and thorough. He refuses the trap of labeling the basic writers he works with as cognitively deficient (5). Still, Bartholomae assumes that basic writers should learn to invent the university for themselves, to learn its discourse practices and conventions,
to accommodate themselves to its needs and demands, and that academic discourse itself is, in fact, describable and definable.

Bartholomae, like other scholars whose work I have already discussed, argues for the acquisition of academic discourse as a tool of empowerment for basic writers. Underlying Bartholomae's analysis is a troubling "given"—students must become like us, the academics, in order to succeed. And underlying that assumption is still another problem: the "us" remains uninterrogated. When Bartholomae critiques what he refers to as the "version of the pastoral" that operates in many compositionists' belief that it is, in fact, possible for a writer to "build bridges" between him/herself and the audience, he writes, "It is assumed that a person of low status (like a shepherd) can speak to a person of power (like a courtier), but only (at least so far as the language is concerned) if he is not a shepherd at all, but actually a member of the court out in the fields in disguise" (9). For Bartholomae, writers must "imagine and write from a position of privilege" (9).

In this metaphorical example, the courtier (the teacher) maintains full control over the authorization process: whether the shepherd is, in fact, a "real" shepherd is up for the courtier to determine. Likewise, student writers must somehow share the knowledge and the methods of their professors. Bartholomae does not seem to consider the possibility that negotiation might go both ways—that perhaps the academy and its members could, in fact, change to accommodate the needs of students.

Bartholomae's readings of the student essays point toward composition studies' shifting disciplinary ethos in the mid to late 1980's. The continued focus on
the establishment and legitimation of a disciplinary identity for the field provides a kind of analytical lens for Bartholomae, who reads student texts as attempts to approximate the discourse that has helped his colleagues authorize their own discipline. At the same time, Bartholomae’s readings of the student texts at Pittsburgh reflect Basic Writing’s commonly articulated goal of empowering students and helping them move from margin to center. “Inventing the University” implies that the tool for that empowerment is academic discourse.

**Looking Ahead**

By the early 1990’s, both journals had achieved the kind of readership and authority that made it possible for them to publish special retrospective issues focused on pressing questions facing the discipline. In 1997, for instance, *JBW* published a special issue titled “Race, Class, and Culture in the Basic Writing Classroom,” which featured essays by scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster, Victor Villanueva, Ira Shor, Mary Soliday and Barbara Gleason, Gary Tate, and Jane Maher. The issue also included a complete bibliography of all scholarship published in the journal’s first fifteen volumes. Likewise, in 1999 *CCC* published a dual-issue volume titled “A Usable Past: CCC at 50.” The two widely read issues include Braddock Award winning essay “History in the Spaces Left” by Royster and Jean C. Williams, which I discussed in Chapter Three, as well as historical and theoretical essays about the discipline by Villanueva, Keith Gilyard, Patrick Bizzaro, Geneva Smitherman, and others. Both special issues reflect an increasing awareness that questions of teachers’
and scholars’ identities must become a part of the broader historical and theoretical landscapes of composition studies and basic writing.

Since 1990, basic writing research—in the two journals and beyond—has addressed institutional and curricular issues within basic writing as well as definitional and pedagogical ones. This research identifies important theoretical and pedagogical implications for teachers, administrators, and scholars who recognize that, while basic writing programs may be engaged in a kind of stratification system, they also make a space for students whom the university might not otherwise admit. In other words, scholars of the 1990’s view the basic writing context as a complicated one located amid competing (and contradictory) discourses of access, advocacy, empowerment, tracking, racism, and classism. For the most part, books and articles focus on the place of basic writing programs within institutions of higher education, the need for more theoretically sophisticated means of defining what constitutes a "basic writer" in specific institutional contexts, and the drive to reread the field's history by studying key figures and texts from poststructural and multicultural perspectives.

For example, some scholars reread "foundational" texts written by Shaughnessy, Bartholomae, and others and critique these figures' beliefs about language, ideology, or assimilation (Lu, Gay, Hindman). Others critique racism within the field or problematize the conflation of students categorized as "basic writers" with racial, cultural, or class difference (Jones, Scott, Gilyard, Shor). A third group apply complex theoretical lenses to the study of basic writing programs within particular institutional contexts; often such studies consider the future of basic writing programs
in the face of budget constraints (Mutnick, Soliday and Gleason). Last, basic writing scholars describe pedagogical practices that encourage other teachers to envision the classroom as a space for theoretically complicated work or propose curricular innovations that ask students to draw upon the strengths of home literacy practices (Hindman, Creed and Andrews). While all of these examples of scholarship are concerned explicitly with identity issues within the field, none of them focuses specifically on the ways that teacher identity impacts the moment of reading basic writers’ texts.

General Findings

Within each of the time periods discussed in this chapter, constructions of the composition teacher and images of basic writing teachers shifted as composition studies came into its own as an academic discipline apart from literary studies. I suggested in Chapter Three that ethos is an appropriate term for thinking about teachers’ collective identities within the field of composition studies. My analysis of the two journals in this chapter suggests that, indeed, ethos highlights the changing nature of authority and identity for the field and its teachers. By emphasizing the shifting nature of teachers’ sense of themselves as professionals, I draw attention to the ways that basic writing teachers’ “haunts” or “locations”—their institutional contexts, educational backgrounds, disciplinary affiliations—affect their ways of seeing themselves. Perhaps more importantly, I have tied issues of self-perception to issues of interpretation. Specifically, I argue that teachers’ sense of disciplinary ethos does, in fact, affect trends in reading student authored texts.
In each of the examples I have discussed thus far, the institutional context of the university has been constructed as separate somehow from the composition teacher, especially the basic writing teacher. Basic writing teachers have not been viewed as constitutive of their institutions. Rather, they have been depicted standing poised outside its gates, or stretching themselves between it and the “real world” like bridges, or teetering on the diving platform at the edges of its depths. When these teachers do dive in, they must tread water furiously to keep from being swallowed up by its undertow or washed aside carelessly. In most cases, basic writing teachers have been configured as less powerful than the institutions that employ them. That powerlessness, I argue, relates not only to teachers’ perceptions of their relationships to their institutions and discipline(s) but also to their students.

By 1980, composition teachers in both JBW and CCC had responded to their perceptions of institutional disempowerment. If teachers are to do their jobs well, they argued, they must have the necessary resources—financial, spacial, institutional—in order to do so. In “The English Professor’s Malady” (JBW 1980), for example, Shaughnessy writes:

the teacher who wishes to give his best energies to the instruction of ill-prepared freshman must be ready to forego many of the rewards and privileges of his profession. He must be resigned to being an altruistic teacher—and even though the study of literature may well have ripened the moral imaginations of English teachers to such an extent that the profession produces more than its share of generous (or as some would have it, bleeding) hearts, the fact remains that systems do not function efficiently on altruism, and the educational system must offer the same sorts of prizes and incentives that energize people in other systems—money, time, security, and working conditions that encourage excellence—if the teaching of writing is to advance beyond its present state. (95)
Shaughnessy nods—with irony—to the perception of other academics that basic writing teachers are martyrs for their cause: that they are “bleeding hearts” who have been too willing to sacrifice personal and professional comfort in order to help their students. Shaughnessy, like countless other teachers whose images I have chronicled here, believes that institutions must do more to support writing teachers.

Indeed, the relationship between a teacher’s institutional position and ethos seems most clear when we consider images of basic writing teachers specifically. For instance, teachers working with open admissions CUNY students in the late 1970’s represented themselves as undertrained but enthusiastic, and as activists or gatekeepers. Between 1983 and 1990, assumptions and representations of teachers shifted. As composition specialists become more professionalized, a kind of border-crossing—or “cross-dressing,” to better reflect composition’s feminized status—reached the basic writing context as basic writing teacher-researchers in several forms brought a variety of theories and methodologies to the basic writing context. Some were well-funded, engaging in humanistic scholarly work or social science research projects at large state universities, while others—not so well-funded—inherited the “sinking ships” of basement-dwelling basic writing programs. These (usually women) likened themselves to Little Orphan Annie.

What seems less explicitly addressed than the relationship between institutional position and disciplinary ethos, however, is the question of racial and cultural identity in basic writing scholarship. The subtext of many conversations that I trace in this chapter concerns questions of race and culture, as well as class and
gender. For instance, assumptions underlying much of the basic writing scholarship of the late 1970's to early 1980's posits basic writers as cognitively deficient and makes connections between race and cognition, figuring the basic writer as African American and naturalizing the image of basic writing teacher as white. Likewise, the focus on the notion of empowerment in basic writing scholarship of the late 1980's to early 1990's assumes that basic writers are outsiders to academic culture—for reasons related to their race, class, and ethnicity—who long to cross over from marginal communities to the center of academic culture. More work remains to be done, I argue, that interrogates the ways that white, middle class teachers of basic writing imagine their goals and represent their students.

Finally, my historically contextualized analysis of teachers' reading practices in the classroom suggests important correlations between teachers' disciplinary identities and their ways of valuing student selves and student writing. Between 1975 and 1982, few scholarly articles published in *JBW* or *CCC* addressed the ways that teachers read—rather than grade or respond to—their students' texts. Indeed, when student-authored writing did in such scholarship, it was most often used in brief, snippet form to help white teachers demonstrate the "basicness" of a writer's prose or to lapses in a writer's logic or cognitive functions. This scholarship maintains a sense of distance between basic writers and their teachers; students' texts are rarely treated as though they are "like" other texts that teachers encounter.

The discussion of teachers' ways of reading and valuing student texts appeared to expand, however, after 1983. As composition specialists worked to professionalize
themselves, articulate their own research agendas and write their own histories, the field as a whole became far more interested in forwarding discipline-wide theories of evaluation. The result, I argue, is work such as Lester Faigley’s 1989 CCC essay “Judging Writing, Judging Selves,” in which he argues that teachers are often privileging particular student selves, rather than student texts, when they evaluate. In essence, Faigley’s work is, in fact, concerned with questions of reading student texts, and his work complicates our ways of thinking about the relationships between discourses and their producers.

The next necessary move, I argue, is from consideration of disciplinary ethos to that of individual teacher identity as both product and element of that ethos. According to my analysis of these two journals, composition teachers have asked two key questions already: 1) How do we locate ourselves ideologically and politically within the field and within the larger academic culture? 2) How do our particular institutional position—from a very material standpoint—complicate the processes of location? I believe a third question must now be articulated: How do all of our positions—institutional, disciplinary, cultural, and personal—affect our actions in the classroom?

In Chapter Five, I focus on two individual teachers as they negotiate their personal, cultural, disciplinary, and institutional identities—what amounts to, in sum, their ethos—as they read the texts of basic writing students. By doing so, I demonstrate that disciplinary images of teachers can inform our individual identities, converse with those identities, and sometimes counter them. In other words, a sense of disciplinary identity is only one of many that a teacher juggles as she reads students’
texts in the classroom. While the focus of scholarly attention in *CCC* and *JBW* has been upon the need for composition studies to define itself as a discipline and define its students as subjects, that focus may have prevented us from paying attention to the ways that teachers negotiate multiple aspects of their identities in individual classrooms.
CHAPTER 5

TWO BASIC WRITING TEACHERS’ READING PRACTICES: 
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

My responsibility to a student’s text is first to give as clear a description of my reading as possible. And through that description to also help show that writer something about some of the more general or basic conventions or expectations of writing they may encounter here.

--Meryl, Basic Writing Teacher and Scholar

Do you know where the fear comes from? It comes from not believing that when you’re in the classroom, you’re it—you’re the institution. There’s no institution “out there”—you are it. . . I think when I’m in the classroom I am the institution. So that’s the face of the institution my students will get.

--Deiva, Basic Writing Teacher and Scholar

This chapter brings to my project a kind of specificity that enriches the historical perspectives presented in Chapters Two and Four. Chapter Two described the ways that composition studies has conceptualized issues of identity and critiqued those constructions from a strong multicultural perspective. Chapter Four considered both the field of composition and basic writing teachers’ identities as they have been constructed within CCC and JBW, two highly influential composition journals. From these historical perspective, I have analyzed in general terms both a disciplinary ethos
within the field itself and several images of basic writing teachers, basic writing students, and the reading process that CCC and JBW have participated in constructing.

In Chapter Five, I have two primary goals. First, I seek to demonstrate the ways that teachers’ identities affect their readings of student texts. Second, I want to consider connections between teachers’ reading practices and students’ generic options in the classroom. To carry out these goals, I have chosen an ethnographic approach to look closely at the ways that two teachers negotiate their identities as they read student-authored texts. The setting for the analysis is the Writing Workshop at Midwestern State University. This case study focuses on two basic writing teachers at this site, Meryl and Deiva. In the study, I concentrate on the interplay of two teachers’ institutional positions, educational histories, and cultural locations, as these factors are informed by their sense of disciplinary ethos.

As I argued in Chapter Four, most scholarly conversations about the ways that teachers encounter student-authored texts focus upon the act of responding to or evaluating students’ writing. These studies render students’ texts objects to be graded or evaluated or treat them as windows into specific moments of students’ writing processes. Such studies are quite influential on the field’s thinking about the processes of evaluation and revision. This study does not deny the importance of thinking about student-authored texts in these ways. It suggests, however, a different way of thinking about student-authored texts: as a site of reading, a key location from which students and teachers interact and from which pedagogies emerge and might be revised. Indeed, I suggest that there is a direct relationship between a teacher’s reading
strategies and preferences and the generic opportunities that she makes available to students within the classroom. That connection needs to be made explicit and explored further.

This study, then, takes a different approach not only to the act of reading but also to ways of defining student-authored texts. I turn now to three books that address teachers’ ways of reading students’ texts rather explicitly in order to illustrate the nature of this difference. First, Richard Beach’s *A Teacher’s Introduction to Reader-Response Theories* (1993) provides a helpful overview of multiple theories of reading and helps teachers to understand that reader-response is not a monolithic form of criticism. Instead, as Beach argues in his introduction to the book, “writers who have been called ‘reader-response critics’ embrace an extremely wide range of attitudes toward, and assumptions about, the roles of the reader, the text, and the social/cultural context shaping the transaction between reader and text” (1-2). While Beach’s book does assume that a professionally authored (here almost exclusively defined as literary) text is the text being read, the book still helps to make the argument that there is a relationship between teachers’ ways of reading and their pedagogies.

Beach’s introduction explores the implications of studies produced by education specialists that trace the relationships of teachers’ theoretical orientations toward literary texts to their ways of teaching those texts. For instance, Beach cites a 1987 study by Newell, MacAdams, and Spears-Burton that notes one high school teacher’s tendency to have students perform “written formal analysis of [the literary] text” as a result of a “theoretical stance imparting knowledge about literature”(3).
Two teachers who define literary texts as written representations of experience, on the
other hand, asked students to produce largely expressive prose/journal responses in
response (Beach 3). For the most part, however, Beach notes that while
compositionists have theorized the writing process and studied the impact of such
texts on the writing classroom, literary theorists have not considered the pedagogical
arena as a site where literary theory has impact.

Next, Donnalee Rubin's *Gender Influences: Reading Student Texts* (1993) uses
reader-response and feminist theories in order to consider the ways that gender affects
teachers' readings of students' texts. Like me, Rubin utilizes the case study approach
as a way to observe the reading and response patterns of actual teachers, male and
female. Rubin does so initially in order to answer this question: "In a freshman
writing class, what are the effects of gender on the way teachers read and evaluate
student texts?" (1). This question, according to Rubin, is prompted by reader-response
and feminist literary criticism, much of which suggests that a reader's gender shapes
his or her ways of responding to literature. "It seems logical," Rubin states, "that
gender differences might also inform the special occasion of teachers reading the
essays that students compose" (1). I agree.

Rubin's pre-study assumptions and her reading of feminist and reader-response
criticism, however, lead her to posit a teacher's gender identity as something that
biases the teacher, something that prevents male and female teachers from first reading
and then evaluating the texts of male and female students in equitable ways. Here is
where her preliminary assumptions diverge from my own. Citing critics such as Judith Fetterley and Annette Kolodny, Rubin asks:

If female teachers read male student texts in the same way they read male-authored literature, do they become hostile, resisting readers... privileging only feminine concerns? Or do male teachers, unable to identify with feminine issues, devalue women's texts... thus penalizing their female students? (1-2)

I share Rubin’s concerns about the ethical implications of teachers’ reading practices as they affect their evaluation practices. We both believe that teachers’ identities affect their ways of reading and valuing their students’ work. I worry, though, that Rubin’s project depends initially upon rather broad, sweeping assumptions about gender that posited “man” and “woman” as fairly monolithic categories and that reinscribed gender difference in essentializing ways. More importantly, Rubin’s study posits identity as something that readers can somehow circumvent or even overcome as they read.

Rubin does problematize such assumptions within her text, however, and her findings defy her initial expectations. As research projects often do, Rubin’s takes an interesting turn once she begins to analyze the thirty-one first-year writing teachers’ responses to student texts. Quite simply, her expectations are not met. Instead, she discovers that male and female teachers can, when they practice particular pedagogical strategies, overcome such biases and respond to and assess texts authored by both male and female students fairly. The result of her study is the articulation of a pedagogy that combines “process, conferencing, and maternal patterns” of response in order to “help writing teachers overcome innate gender biases and merge gender-based
differences that may be present when they read their own students’ texts” (85).

Rubin’s book concludes with practical suggestions for implementing such a pedagogy.

Rubin’s study affirms one of my own primary arguments: “theory that focuses on the way readers respond to literary texts does not necessarily translate to the rhetorical situation of the classroom” (89). Like Rubin, I argue that the classroom is a unique rhetorical situation that calls for the generation of its own theories of production and reception. Still, the distinctions between our projects seem worth underscoring here.

Rubin and I ground our work in very different assumptions about teachers’ responsibilities to students and their texts. Rubin believes initially that gender bias—or identity itself—is an obstacle and that pedagogy is a medium through which to overcome that obstacle. In contrast, I begin from the assumption that identity not only affects or mediates our reading but constitutes it. My view is that reading takes place when the locus of a reader’s beliefs, assumptions, values, and histories—loosely termed “identity” here—intersects with the assumptions, values, and histories of the writer. That intersection takes place at a particular location; in this case, the site is a student’s text, a linguistic representation of the writer’s experience as constituted by a particular genre: the student-authored essay. Given my definition of reading, I do not believe that it is possible for teachers to overcome any aspects of themselves in order to perform a preferred kind of reading of a given student’s text. Indeed, I’m not convinced that such a goal is particularly necessary in order for teachers to enact responsible pedagogical choices in the classroom.
Finally, a collection edited by Bruce Lawson, Susan Sterr Ryan, and W. Ross Winterowd, *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student Writing* (1989), is a rich, theoretically charged conversation about what it means to read as a teacher. In this collection, contributors account for their own reading processes in the classroom. When the editors solicited these contributions initially, they issued a statement of guidelines to all contributors, including the following note:

The objective of the volume is to present teachers' rigorous, personal descriptions of and reflections on how they read student writing. Therefore, a literal description of how a teacher decodes or grades/responds to student writing is of interest only as it is a part of the entire transaction of reading a student paper... Your own idea of what reading involves will guide you as you draft your essay. Consider the interpretive assumptions you bring to a piece of student writing—the technical and ethical tasks/complexities (perplexities!) associated with your reading, given the total hermeneutical situation, or conditions of interpretation. (235)

Given these guidelines, several well-respected scholars in the field—including Winterowd, James Zebroski, Elizabeth Flynn, Sharon Crowley, Tilly Warnock, and Jim Corder—responded by offering accounts of the ways they read student-authored texts.

Several of the basic premises underlying this collection are the same premises that underlie my own work. The volume's introduction, for instance, notes that the genre(s) of the student-authored text is a unique one, creating "a rhetorical situation quite unlike that produced by any other text" (viii). Likewise, the editors acknowledge the very "presence" of the student writer and address the ways in which such presence does indeed result in "a weight of responsibility" for the teacher-reader (ix). Finally, the introduction to the collection uses the term "coauthor" in its description of how
many teachers enter into the texts of students. Because of the degree to which teachers have already entered into students' texts throughout the writing process, Lawson and Ryan suggest, the production of anything resembling an "objective" reading is already impossible (ix). The end result is a book that offers, for instance, Bakhtinian (Zebroski), Burkian (Warnock), and feminist (Flynn) readings of teachers' encounters with students' texts, as well as thoughtful reflections on the ways that teachers' theoretical orientations and educational histories shape the interpretive act.

In this text, however, attention to the hermeneutical act itself results in a lack of attention to the institutional and cultural contexts in which the act occurs. Encountering Student Texts simply does not describe the where of such encounters. We never learn about the writing programs in which such teachers operate, nor do we receive descriptions of how teachers relate to one another or their students outside of the reading situation. More importantly, the text does not fully address the question of who is writing. While each contributor clearly identifies him or herself by theoretical orientation, delving richly into the intellectual reasons why they read texts as they do, they rarely reflect on other aspects of their identities: race, gender, age, class, religious beliefs, and so on. Thus, while the essays provide us with a real sense of how the contributors read, of what the processes look like, we don't always learn why such readings occur. What's missing, I would argue, is attention to teacher identity issues, institutional context, and reading strategies as interconnected.
Setting the Scene: Meryl, Deiva, and the Writing Workshop Context

The Midwestern State University’s Writing Workshop is a highly collaborative, intensive first-year writing—or basic writing—program staffed by teachers from multiple disciplines: folklore, rhetoric and composition, literary studies, communication studies, creative writing. The staff consists of a full-time administrator who also teaches (in this case, Meryl), a group of Senior Lecturers (non-tenure track faculty with teaching, placement reading, and curriculum development responsibilities), and an ever-shifting group of Graduate Teaching Associates, Lecturers, and Extended Instruction tutors. In other words, those who teach at the Writing Workshop elect to do so at various stages in their professional careers for a number of reasons, several of which I explore in this chapter.

The Writing Workshop at Midwestern State works hard to both theorize its curriculum and hold theory accountable to the rigors of the classroom. The courses offered include English 109.01 and 109.02, an intensive first-year writing sequence that offers underprepared students a chance to do college-level work in composition prior to enrolling in English 110, the traditional first-year writing course; and English 110 W, an intensive version of 110 that carries with it a peer tutorial component. As they conduct these courses, teachers at the Writing Workshop meet for weekly staff meetings, collaborate regularly on course syllabi and other projects, and offer support to one another. All staff members participate in curriculum development, professionalization activities, research, and long-term and short-term planning for the
Workshop’s future. The atmosphere is lively, marked by critical conversation and a general air of good will and humor.

This setting contrasts sharply with other representations of basic writing programs that I described in Chapter Four, particularly the basement-level collection of cubicles depicted by Hepzibah Roskelly and her former colleagues in “Survival of the Fittest: Ten Years in a Basic Writing Program.” The teaching and learning space that the Midwestern State Writing Workshop has created exists for several reasons, including the fact that most staff members define themselves as teacher-scholars rather than as scholars who happen to teach. In addition, the Workshop’s physical distance from the English department’s main building—with its hierarchically organized mailboxes (faculty on top, TA’s on the bottom, lecturers down the hall in the lounge) and often competitive atmosphere has contributed to its staff sense of autonomy. The Writing Workshop at Midwestern State functions much like a center for interdisciplinary study: teachers from multiple disciplines teach common courses, bringing their own ways of reading and interpreting texts into the classroom. The program maintains important relationships to other programs across campus, including the Athletic Department, University College (student advising), the Office for Minority Affairs, and the Office for Disability Studies. Writing Workshop teachers perceive themselves as vital members of the university community as a whole; they do not feel like cast-offs from the English department. This sense of connection to the rest of the institution helps Writing Workshop teachers feel less isolated—a condition mentioned by Richard Lloyd-Jones in “What We Will Be”—than other basic writing
teachers whose relationships with their colleagues in the English department are particularly uneven.

If the teaching space that I describe above sounds rigorous and inviting, Meryl, the director of the Writing Workshop, has a great deal to do with it. Meryl completed her Ph.D. in English at Midwestern State University after earning an M.A. in literary studies from Ivy League University and a B.A. with majors in both English and math from Tiny Midwestern Liberal Arts College. Meryl began teaching at the Writing Workshop as a graduate student in 1978, and then became a part-time lecturer before becoming the Workshop’s director in 1992. She went on to complete her dissertation study of basic writing history and pedagogies in 1996 while directing the program. Meryl’s long relationship with the basic writing program, as well as the fact that she has held several positions within such a program, have contributed to her keen understanding of the politics of her own institution and an abiding interest in Basic Writing’s institutional histories. Meryl’s politically and historically informed perspective keeps her vigilant about the ways she represents the Writing Workshop and its mission to others, both inside and outside Midwestern State University.

Among the Senior Lecturers who work with Meryl, Deiva stands out as a scholar and as a teacher. Deiva earned her doctorate in literature, studying Shakespeare and postcolonialism at Small City University and University of Midwest City, and she draws upon that scholarly expertise in many ways at the Writing Workshop. For example, Deiva piloted a version of English 110 W that focuses upon media autobiography and cultural critique. The materials she developed for this

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course (syllabi, text lists, writing assignments, and web sites) are requested often by other basic writing teachers around the country. Deiva also published an essay in *Journal of Advanced Composition* about the intersections of postcolonialism and composition studies in which she considers the dangers of discursive colonization when teaching basic writing. Most importantly, Deiva is committed to collaboration with peers and students, and she encourages both groups to make connections among theories of subjectivity, cultural studies critiques of media, and composition theory and pedagogy in the classroom.

When Meryl and Deiva agreed to serve as research subjects for my study, both expressed an interest in teacher identity issues and the ways that a particular genre—in this case, a student-authored essay—invites teachers to privilege particular kinds of reading selves. Meryl and Deiva are committed to reading students’ texts generously and critically, and they were eager to examine their own reading practices. To help introduce those practices to me, Meryl and Deiva drafted responses to a reading history questionnaire, and we discussed those responses during our first interview sessions (Appendix A). In addition, both subjects drafted a short autobiographical statement. I used those written and oral responses as initial critical lenses through which to analyze their readings of student-authored texts. These data demonstrate Deiva and Meryl’s differing ways of articulating both their cultural identities and their relationships to the institutions that employ and authorize them.
Meryl: “A Different Kind of Person in the Field”

Meryl grew up in a small, predominantly white Protestant town in Ohio. She is Protestant, white, middle class, and single. In her autobiographical statement, Meryl noted that she has lived her entire life in Central Ohio, with the exception of a one-year period during which she attended an Ivy League University on the East Coast. She has twenty years of experience working with basic writers at Midwestern State, and during the last five years, she has worked on a number of literacy projects that involve tutoring and teaching in community settings.

My early conversation with Meryl about her cultural, educational, and reading histories spanned a large period of time and focused on the act of reading itself across the chronology. Meryl provided me with lengthy responses to the preliminary reading history questionnaire, and her love of reading as a child became a kind of touchstone for subsequent discussions of Meryl’s reading practices as an adult. Indeed, when I asked her about early memories of reading, Meryl responded in a particularly provocative way; I refer again to one of the four epigraphs appearing in Chapter One of this dissertation: “Some of my earliest thoughts about reading aren’t my own memories. They’re gotten mixed in with stories I was told.”

The stories about Meryl’s childhood reading experiences—stories told by her mother, father, brother, and former teachers—remind Meryl that such narratives shape the ways that we name and describe ourselves. According to Meryl, she learned “how to act, how to be” from the stories her parents shared with her, from “The Ugly Duckling” to their own parental narratives about Meryl’s reading adventures. Meryl
values the stories of composition professionals with whom she most identifies for similar reasons.

For instance, consider Meryl’s list of influential scholars in the field of basic writing: David Bartholomae, Mina Shaughnessy, and Mike Rose. While Deiva listed several of the same scholars as major influences on her work, Meryl’s reasons for choosing these scholars are quite different. Meryl wrote enthusiastically about Mike Rose, for example:

I got a sense of a different kind of ‘person in the field’ than those I’d seen to that point. Eventually, as he wrote more, I began to see the ways I could be a person in this field and not give up parts of my life that didn’t fit the public mold I’d seen so far... Then when I read Lives [on the Boundary], it helped me to integrate all the teaching I’d done—how teaching at different places was integrated into the kind of teacher I’d become to that point, instead of being lots of disparate jobs where I struggled at times, resisted others to hold on to what I felt was important to do with students and writing.

Clearly, this response echoes Meryl’s earlier sentiments: Rose’s story offers her another way of thinking about “how to be” in the field of composition studies.

 Initially, Meryl was concerned that the winding path that she—like many women in the field—took as she moved toward her current position as a basic writing specialist might make it difficult for her to find her place in the field. Meryl finds Rose a welcome role model because his work emphasizes the wide variety of his experiences teaching, learning, and revising the study of literacy over several decades.

Meryl discussed her experiences as a graduate student in literary studies at Ivy League University, where she was first introduced to the notion of an “underprepared” college student. She described her life as the daughter of a teacher growing up in Ohio, and she discussed the lengthy period between beginning her Ph.D. work at
Midwestern State University in the late 1970's and completing the dissertation in the mid-90's. She reflected upon her experiences as a white woman actively engaged in service learning and other projects that bring her into contact regularly with communities outside her own. As she related each experience, I remembered that initial discussion of her early memories of reading and her sense of the ways that stories help us learn “how to be.” As my analysis in Chapter Four suggests, stories and images that emerge from the discipline of composition studies—through scholarly journals such as *JBW* and *CCC*—model particular ways of being teachers of composition and readers of students’ texts. The disciplinary stories of Rose, Bartholomae, and other scholars I discussed in Chapter Four do, in fact, get “mixed in” with the stories we tell about our own teaching selves and reading practices. Teachers form their reading practices in relation to their sense of disciplinary, as well as cultural, expectations and perceptions.

In using my transcripts of these early discussions as a lens, I was able to see that Meryl’s reading practices as a teacher reflect her lifelong preferences for particular kinds of stories. Like many children, Meryl loved series novels because she “liked the fact that the characters continued. When I finished one book, I wasn’t done with those people.” Likewise, as a graduate student, Meryl found herself drawn to the work of William Faulkner, who “created a whole town of characters that [she] could meet and revisit.” This desire to see stories and characters continue somehow became a primary facet of Meryl’s approach to reading. Her pedagogy reflects this as well. Meryl and I spoke at length about her tendency to structure writing assignments, for instance, that
ask students to revisit, complicate, or otherwise extend their thinking about a particular event, experience, or idea across the course. By drafting a series of sequenced assignments that ask students to extend their thinking about or representations of one subject or experience, students in her classes write narratives, arguments, analyses and other essay forms that connect to one another, constructing and reconstructing their own storytelling selves in the process.

Meryl noted that her initial experiences with Faulkner were not always pleasant. And yet, as she worked harder and harder to make Faulkner’s work meaningful, to learn to anticipate his moves, she found that she “had grown so used to his language, to his rhythm, that other writers fell flat.” In other words, as Meryl taught herself to read the Faulknerian genre, she internalized his conventions. Meryl schooled herself to read Faulkner’s work, the focus of her master’s thesis, which in turn led her to read other writers’ work differently and to approach that other work with different generic expectations. In thinking about Meryl’s readings of student texts, then, I focus my attention on how Meryl learns to move into the discursive worlds of her students and how her ways of making assignments help her to make that move more smoothly. This desire for smoother passage, for connection across contexts, for making sense of seemingly disparate perspectives or experiences, is evident as Meryl encounters several student texts within my study.

*Deiva: A Critical Pedagogue with a “Different Flavor”*

Deiva’s discussions of her personal, cultural, and educational histories suggest that she works to synthesize her own theoretical perspectives into every aspect of her
teaching life and to name points of disjuncture—moments when she feels unable to reconcile her beliefs about language or subjectivity with particular institutional practices. Indeed, Deiva works hard to explore the possibilities for a theory/practice synthesis in her own life. At the same time, she searches out both synthesizing and disruptive moments within most of the texts she encounters, including texts authored by her students. As she read one student’s text, for instance, she was quick to note that the title of the essay—“Invasion of the Cockroaches”—exemplified a kind of linguistic “playfulness.” She named among her scholarly influences Min-Zhan Lu (“she’s right on the money about how we cannot be assimilationist in our role”); Henry Giroux (“I learned from him that you’re a public intellectual when you’re a teacher”); David Bartholomae (“to me ‘Tidy House,’ that’s Foucauldian”); and Mina Shaughnessy (“she’s very Lacanian. . . she’s looking at the ideas that are trying to. . . break out of the bounds of the sentences”).

Deiva described herself as a critical pedagogue, but she noted in our first interview that “the flavor is different” from Freire and others who “came from socialism and then became kind of monuments to socialism or socialist ways of thinking.” Deiva is very much aware that she is from a different generation than those critical pedagogues, and she spoke often during the interviews of her experiences growing up in newly post-colonial India, where she loved reading adventure and travel tales. While she recognizes the power of those stories in shaping her perceptions of her childhood, she now understands such stories to be representative of the colonialist project. Indeed, the transcript of our preliminary reading history interview reflects the
ways that Deiva’s self-reflective moments are always tempered by a kind of critical consciousness about the problem of colonization.

While Deiva “thinks of [her]self as an Indian writer,” she also noted the importance of her time in graduate school in the United States as a defining experience for her. “I was having all these epiphanies as a graduate student who was just finding out that she had been schooled to read as a particular kind of reader, so I did not want my students to be ‘schooled’ or conventional readers and writers.” This notion of “schooling” as a way of learning conventions and assimilating to dominant discourses recurs throughout Deiva’s interview transcripts.

For Deiva, teaching basic writing involves resisting conventions that have been naturalized or made stagnant. Moreover, it involves helping students understand that conventions are made, that they are constructed by particular groups of people in order to preserve or promote a particular kind of power. Teachers, as public intellectuals, are agents of change in the classroom—if they are willing to accept a different way of seeing themselves with(in) the institution. In one of our most interesting interviews, Deiva made the statement that appears as this chapter’s epigraph: “When you’re in the classroom, you’re it. You’re the institution. There’s no institution ‘out there’—you are it.” Deiva’s articulation of her position as an integral part of the institution contrasts my findings in Chapter Four. The teachers I describe in that chapter often represent themselves as positioned outside the institution—as gatekeepers or activists—or they imagine that they serve as “bridges” between the academy and other communities.
Deiva’s sense of herself as constitutive of, rather than separate from, the academy affects her pedagogical stance in important ways.

In Chapter Four, for example, I discussed the ways that articulations of separation between teacher and institution may have contributed to their sense of disempowerment. When teachers perceive themselves as working in the service of an institution, they may imagine themselves as merely communicators of institutional conventions—already formed, codified, and naturalized—to their students. Deiva’s sense that she is an integral part of the institution instead of a servant to it implies her belief that she, too, forms conventions, changes them, restructures them. She accepts responsibility for the academic conventions of reading and writing that she teaches her students. She does not imply that she is “passing on” externally imposed expectations to those students.

Indeed, when we discussed the ways that teachers often willingly or unknowingly uphold the status quo by continuing to teach the same formal conventions year after year in their writing classes—a problem Jerrie Cobb Scott addresses in “Literacies and Deficits Revisited”—Deiva shared my frustration with the relative slowness with which conventions for writing change within composition classrooms. Deiva suggested that teachers are resistant to the idea that their classroom might be a place from which conventions could be revised and hybrid discursive forms could be formed. Deiva believes that teachers fear “others” may be watching their practices. Thus, may be afraid to urge students to resist the conventions of academic discourse—which have been naturalized and reified—because they fear
getting "caught" by those with more institutional authority than they have. In this way, as Foucault argues, institutions maintain watchful eyes on those that comprise them.

Perhaps Deiva has been able to reconcile and even make use of her sense of herself as part of the institution by reflecting on her personal experiences, her cultural identity, and the critical lenses she adopted during graduate school. For example, Deiva’s experiences as a graduate student, first at Small University and then University of Midwest City figured more prominently in our preliminary interview than her childhood reading experiences. Her graduate school experiences in many ways sparked her interest in institutional structures and prepared her for the central debates in basic writing scholarship.

For instance, when Deiva arrived initially as an M.A. student at Small University, the English Department denied her a Teaching Associateship after she performed a kind of teaching audition for the rest of the department. Deiva was told she “didn’t have the personality” to be a teacher, and she attributes this judgment to her new colleagues’ reading of her as a “foreign student.” The university forestalled her entry into the classroom because of her colleagues’ perception that her discourse did not yet conform to the conventions of the “American” institution. Later, as a graduate student of postcolonial theory at the University of Midwest City, Deiva grew frustrated by the ways that other postcolonial scholars in her program positioned themselves in order to find success on the job market. She described other graduate students in her field this way:

They ended up being very polemical, both in the classroom and in the departments. But I think they kind of sold themselves a little short, because
they felt there was only one way to enter the discourse, which is this polemical way, so every time they taught, they were talking to their students about dominant cultures and blah blah blah...I think they're exoticizing themselves in a way that is not pedagogically helpful.

Having been exoticized herself at Small Midwestern University, Deiva did not want to continue to participate in the discipline of English Studies in pre-scripted ways. For Deiva, these experiences in graduate school helped her to develop what she calls a "fascination with institutions." This fascination undergirds her syllabi now at the Writing Workshop, where she encourages her own basic writing students to develop a self-consciousness about their rhetorical choices, the ramifications of those choices, and the reasons why particular institutions value particular kinds of discourse.

_Two Teachers, Two Readers: An Analysis_

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Deiva and Meryl each completed five interview sessions, which I audio-taped and transcribed. In addition, Deiva and Meryl recorded one at-home reading protocol, which was also transcribed, and they both completed the reading history questionnaire (Appendix A). Each of our 90-minute interview sessions was anchored by a particular text or group of texts, either student-authored or professionally-authored. My consideration of both teachers' reading practices was, in fact, constituted by my study of the moments where those practices seemed to cease. Instinctively, I had set the reading protocol up in such a way that it focused on moments of interruption—the moments when Deiva or Meryl stopped reading in order to vocalize their responses. During our interview sessions, both subjects used tiny dots or checks to mark every place in the text that caused either of them to stop, exclaim, or otherwise notice something as she read. I then asked both
teachers to characterize those moments when their reading was interrupted, and I based my analysis largely on the patterns we identified together.

For the remainder of this chapter, I draw only from the transcripts of interview sessions one, two, and three, during which Meryl and Deiva read and discussed several student-authored texts with me. My analysis in this chapter focuses on their readings of texts authored by students who were not, in fact, enrolled in their classes. Meryl and Deiva’s responses to texts written by students who were enrolled in Steve’s, rather than their own, classes allowed for more direct comparison of the rhetorics of their readings. With the exception of the three professionally-authored texts, these three essays were the only ones that both Deiva and Meryl approached from a similar position: that of an anonymous teacher-reader. Neither teacher had a greater degree of familiarity with the students, the texts produced, the assignment prompts that invited the essays, or the results of Steve’s evaluation process. Meryl and Deiva did, however, have access to Steve’s prompt and his syllabus for English 109.01.

After reading Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*, a collection of vignettes that chronicle a young woman named Esperanza’s experiences growing up in a poor, largely Hispanic neighborhood, Steve’s prompt invited his students to “write [their] own story” in the spirit of that text:

Describe an event (or series of events) in your life that served as a turning point in your life—a moment of initiation, change, or growth, perhaps. Tell that story as well as you can, in as engaging a manner as you can. Don’t be afraid to experiment some with form (it worked for Cisneros, after all!) if you like. Put your readers—me and your classmates—in these scenes with you. The narration, the telling of the story, is one of your aims here. The other aim is to reflect on the significance of that narrative. For example, if you are writing about being accepted by the other members of an athletic team, you will need
to be able to explain the "rules," the codes of behavior, that you had to demonstrate. In other words, your mission is to place your story in a social context—to be both storyteller and an analyst of the time and place in which that story occurs—to look both inward at the experience you are narrating and outward to the context in which that experience occurred.

Here the prompt echoes the larger theme of this 109.01 syllabus: Coming of Age in America. The prompt encourages students to move beyond the conventions of traditional academic writing as they "experiment some with form," and the resulting four to six page essays would later become a part of a class book.

Deiva and Meryl read three student-authored essays in response to this prompt: "Invasion of the Cockroaches," "My Driver's License," and "Life's Unexpectancies.

I use pseudonyms in this chapter to name the student writers. In "Invasion of the Cockroaches," Sarah Smith describes her experiences facing cockroaches in her dorm room for the first time when she arrives at Midwestern State. The reflection on the experience that she offers in this highly descriptive narrative helps her realize "that being in a dorm is just not all about meeting new friends, but also learning how to take care of our environment along with ourselves, while living on our own." In "My Driver's License," Ted Habola tells the story of obtaining, then losing, and then recovering his driver's license, which is taken away from him after he receives a speeding ticket. This experience teaches Ted that "a car may be more dangerous than a person may think. Finally, in "Life's Unexpectancies," Brad Trainor explores the circumstances surrounding his best friend Grace's pregnancy. When Brad learns that Grace is pregnant, he finds he must wrestle not only with his own mixed feelings but also with others' perceptions of his relationship to the baby. Brad writes, "After time
went on I decided that it did not madder what people thought or said.” All three of these essays are included in this study in Appendix B, and I obtained written permission from each student to use his or her work.

In order to look more closely at the moment of encounter between teacher and text, I use three primary categories for analysis: rhetorical mechanisms that constitute the readings; ways of constructing student identities; and possible connections between identity and genre issues. By drawing from Deiva’s and Meryl’s readings of all three texts, I raise and answer several questions: In what ways do teachers’ reading practices reflect their identities? In what ways do teachers construct or imagine students as they read their texts? How do some student selves—constructed by their texts—invite or discourage particular readings of their texts? What connections exist between teachers’ identities and the generic options made available to students in the classroom?

*Rhetorical Mechanisms*

My initial research question was, quite simply, how do teachers read their students’ texts? In this analytic category, I consider the rhetorical mechanisms at work that help Deiva and Meryl make the three students’ texts meaningful to them, as well as the ways their identities affect those mechanisms. My first category of analysis, Rhetorical Mechanisms, offers two possible ways of conceptualizing teachers’ reading processes: as evaluative negotiation and identification.
Model One: Reading as Evaluative Negotiation

Meryl noted her discomfort as she read the first student's essay, glancing at the tape recorder as she verbalized her reading practices. Meryl read slowly, without stopping to speak to me very frequently. She expressed surprise when she learned that the first student essay, "Invasion of the Cockroaches," was about bugs. "Whoa! This is going to be about cockroaches in my dorm room. I never would've expected that," Meryl noted when she reached the end of the first paragraph. "I didn't even look at the title," she admitted. "I don't think I'm a title person... I know I'm not [a title person] because my students always ask me about titles and I'm always saying I don't care what the title is." Meryl does not need a title in order to orient herself to a text, or else she prefers a different kind of orientation.

In communicating her lack of interest in titles to students, she imparts to them—by virtue of her institutional authority as a teacher—the sense that they needn't give much attention to the titles they write. In this way, a particular convention—leaving texts untitled or rather emptily titled—is passed down from teacher to student. I say this not to imply that Meryl is somehow careless or irresponsible; rather, I call attention to it in order to demonstrate the process by which conventions are both constructed and communicated within the classroom. Meryl is cognizant of the ways that teachers model or otherwise communicate particular kinds of reading and writing.
conventions to their students. In the quotation that stands as an epigraph for this chapter, for instance, she notes that

[her] responsibility to a student’s text is first to give as clear a description of my reading as possible. And through that description to also help show that writer something about some of the more general or basic conventions or expectations of writing they may encounter here.

For Meryl, part of her work as a teacher involves sharing explicitly with students her ways of reading; students then synthesize this information with other observations about how written discourse is received at the university. Meryl’s practices in the classroom model a particular orientation toward texts, and students identify and practice the conventions that arise from that orientation.

While she read the first page of Sarah’s essay, Meryl read more slowly and stopped more often than she did while reading the remaining pages. Very early in the process, Meryl worried that I might be frustrated by the slowness of her reading and the long stretches of silence that I would find on my tape. She explained, “As I’m reading at the beginning, I don’t have any response because I’m trying to get to where I can get what the paper is going to be about.” Meryl expressed a desire for understanding very early in the reading process. She wanted Sarah to do more work in order to let her know what the paper was going to be about.

Meryl exclaimed aloud over word choice issues as she read all three texts, calling attention to the words and phrases that caught her eye: the “virgin-like, pure” image of the campus; the often-parodic use of language in describing the roach; the “downright pissy bitch” of Brad’s narrative. As she called my attention to the examples of the students’ language use and other textual moments that most intrigued
her, Meryl made a series of small, almost imperceptible evaluative judgments. I found that her reading process was a bit like a flow chart, comprised by a series of "if-then" decisions carried out as she read. Unlike a mathematical flow chart, however, Meryl's model continually progressed; she always found ways to negotiate if-then statements so that she could repeat a step—reread—when she needed to work harder to help the text make sense to her.

For example, Meryl seemed to decide that if Sarah could provide her with specific details by the end of the first paragraph, she would continue to read "Invasion of the Cockroaches." Even when Meryl expressed frustration with an early aspect of the text, she continued to read, fully expecting for Sarah to address her concern in some way. In this case, Meryl was longing for more concrete detail and specificity in the first paragraph because she couldn't yet "get" what the paper was about. She continued to read, however, and in the fifth sentence, Sarah offers a "specific" detail about her personal experience prior to arriving at Midwestern State. At that point in her reading, Meryl affirmed Sarah's choice: "I'm going, okay, now we're going to get to something specific. I don't know if that [specific experience] is what the paper's going to be about, but at least now it's not this general stuff that could go anywhere."

Meryl then moved willingly to the next level of negotiation. While that fifth sentence did not provide Meryl with a sense of focus for the essay, it provided her with enough of an invitation for Meryl to continue reading. This series of actions—reading, stopping, questioning, evaluating, and affirming or critiquing the student's choices—typifies Meryl's meaning-making cycle as she reads.
By the time she reached the second page of the essay, Meryl no longer stopped to discuss any meaning-making difficulties. She stopped only to chuckle over humorous moments within the text or to praise interesting choices in phrasing. Her reading process looked quite similar as she read Ted Habola’s “My Driver's License,” but she revised her reading strategy a bit because of the lesson she learned from Sarah’s example: Meryl began reading Ted’s essay by paying attention to its title. “I can’t miss the title here,” she explained, “because it’s in big letters and very bold, so I’m not going to make the mistake of missing what the point is going to be about!”

With determination to make good on that promise, Meryl explained her reading process in great detail:

I’ve read the first paragraph and then I read a couple of sentences in the second paragraph and then I went back to the first paragraph because this one seemed set up to give us the main point there in that first paragraph . . . I’m expecting that it’s not really about the driver’s license, not really about getting the driver’s license, but about a speeding ticket and losing the driver’s license. And that second paragraph starts out kind of traditional like, okay, now I’m going to tell you the story. I’ve just told you what it’s going to be about, but now I’m going to tell you the story—this is kind of different from Sarah’s lead-up, I think.

Meryl’s process is recursive. She moves from textual moment to textual moment, constantly refreshing her own memory as a reader by referring to what she’s just read and making inferences and predictions about what she will read next.

Meryl underwent the same basic process while she read Brad Trainor’s “Life’s Unexpectancies,” but she asked more questions about this text. These questions were, however, embedded within a very text-specific response to the essay. First, she was confused about how to think about baby Spencer. “Is it her kid, or their kid?” she
asked. "Maybe Spencer wasn't his child?" Meryl used the text to search for evidence that could help her establish the nature of Brad’s relationship to Grace: "Ok, it’s his best friend Grace. . . ‘he told me that the girl I loved was pregnant’ . . . hmm... now maybe she’s not just his best friend, maybe he means something fuller than the best friend I was thinking of.” Line by line, Meryl evaluated the text, using close reading to make sense of the relationship between Brad and Grace to solve the mystery of Spencer’s paternity. Meryl eventually decided, despite her search for textual answers to her questions, that Brad’s choice to leave the question of fatherhood unanswered simply “isn’t productive.” This unresolved question did not allow her (or other readers) the kind of access to details she required. She ended her reading of the text by critiquing, rather than affirming, Brad’s choice: “I don’t see a purpose in keeping that [paternity issue] a secret.”

I characterize Meryl’s reading as a process of evaluative negotiation. As an evaluative negotiator, Meryl positions herself as an experienced reader with explicit textual expectations. These expectations are not based upon her sense of externally imposed conventions, commonplaces, or generalized descriptions of what an academic essay is or what it does. Instead, Meryl draws mainly upon the text itself—its promises and premises, its roadmaps and inferences—and she structures her own reading accordingly. For example, as soon as Meryl completed her first reading of each text, she moved into a discussion of the ways that each text fulfills or does not fulfill its potential. In doing so, Meryl makes a slight shift to her reading stance: she moves from focusing her comments on the text in its present state to imagining her
conversation with Sarah, Ted, or Brad about the text’s possibilities for revision. She reads herself into the role of the teacher by imagining Sarah, Ted, or Brad as one of her students.

For example, after reading Sarah’s conclusion silently, Meryl read Sarah’s final statement aloud: “In conclusion, my main goal that I am trying to achieve now is to overcome my fears towards bugs.” Meryl was unsatisfied; this sentence simply did not “conclude” the text that she had experienced. Instead, Sarah’s body paragraphs tell the story of the ways that she has already overcome her fear of the bugs. For example, on page three of her essay, Sarah describes her most recent run-in with roaches. Sarah writes,

I instantly wadded paper towels together and placed them on top of the bugs. Without thinking twice, I picked up the dirty rascals, squashed them, and threw them way in the trashcan in the hallway. Since I did not flush them down the toilet, with my luck, the bastards are probably still alive.

Meryl’s careful reading of this text made it possible for her to spot this inconsistency. Her high expectations for student writers stem from her historical knowledge of Basic Writing and her experiences as a teacher and administrator at Midwestern State. She holds students accountable for their essays; she takes them seriously and pays attention to content, structure, style, and other rhetorical features. Since Sarah’s conclusion does not actually correlate with the actual body paragraphs within the narrative, Meryl holds Sarah accountable for the incongruency. She shifts her ethos, giving up the anonymous reader stance and adopting the rhetorical position of the teacher in order to do so: “If I were commenting on this paper as a student in my class at that point, I might say, ‘boy, you’ve given us a lot of detail but I’m not quite sure that that’s what
you’ve shown us or that you’ve made it clear to us that that’s what some of these
details show.” Meryl only moves into this stance, however, once she understands
Sarah’s text.

Meryl seemed most comfortable reading when she constructed herself as
teacher. By the time she finished reading each of the three essays, she had imagined
herself into that role for all three students and focused her comments on revision
strategies. In the process of making such evaluative comments, however, Meryl’s
ethos shifted, and she spoke also as a basic writing scholar and administrator. I would
argue that each time she reads a student’s text, Meryl evaluates the stakes, taking a
kind of quick mental inventory of the student’s needs, her program’s goals, and the
university’s expectations. She knows that all Writing Workshop students must do
college level work and be perceived by others outside the Writing Workshop as doing
that college level work. Only this continued perception assures the program’s success;
the program has adamantly insisted that it is not “remedial” in any way for years.
Thus, each act of reading a student’s text solidifies Meryl’s desire to hold students
accountable for the meaning that they promise to make within the essay.

Last, it seems important to note that Meryl spent little time discussing any
personal connections (experience-based) to the texts. This practice, commonly
associated with the marginal commenting style that C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon
label facilitative (i.e. “I had an experience like this when I was in school” or “This
reminds me of. . .”) was not vocalized by Meryl during the interviews. Still, her
readings of the three texts were not marked by disproportionate attention to usage,
grammar, style, or other surface-level issues. Meryl read and commented substantively; the substance of her reading was simply not constituted by the discussion of her own personal experiences and connections to the texts.

Model Two: Reading as Identification

The first thing Deiva noticed about Sarah Smith’s paper was the title. “Invasion of the Cockroaches?” Is that supposed to be straight? Or is that supposed to be somewhat a playfulness on something?” Deiva then flipped through the pages of the essay quickly, stopping only to exclaim over particular choices in phrasing or to verbalize her own process of sense making. For instance, she noted, “Okay. The first few sentences, a lot of information. I’m still trying to find out what the topic is and what it has to do with the cockroaches . . . Then I see cafeteria. Okay, maybe there are roaches in the cafeteria.” As she read Ted Habola’s “My Driver’s License,” her early reading process looked nearly identical. This initial series of actions—exclaiming over a title, reading quickly, pulling out interesting examples of phrasing—occurred each time Deiva read one of the three texts.

Deiva described herself as a “very fast reader.” She explained, “I think I’m looking to make sense of the whole topic, and I’m not looking to do a whole lot of work.” Thus Deiva depends on textual features, such as the title, to help orient her as she reads. Indeed, Deiva spoke several times about her desire to be “led” by the student writers, longing, for instance, for more of a bridge between Sarah’s funny and often parodic description of the cockroach incident to reflection about “the everyday, the everydayness of ritual.”

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As she read each of the three essays, Deiva stopped often to exclaim, ponder, or reread aloud. Deiva and I discussed the artificiality of the rhetorical situation I had constructed for the interview. Reading in front of me with a tape recorder running was quite different from the model of reading she employed as a teacher at the Workshop. When she reads as a teacher, Deiva benefits from far more contextual information about the papers she reads and the students who produce them. She, after all, is the designer of the course, the syllabus, the reading list, and the assignments. She is able to reflect on conversations with individual students as she reads their work. While working with me on this study, however, Deiva had to imagine some kind of context for the reading of each paper. She also had to verbalize her responses in such a way to make a seemingly "invisible" process—reading—more visible.

While working with me, then, Deiva was particularly careful to make her responses quite explicit. Whenever she found interesting examples of style or word choice, Deiva repeated the student's language aloud. She reread this sentence from Sarah's paper: "The image I got the first time I came to Midwestern State University was a virgin-like, pure picture." As Deiva culled details from Sarah's paper, she was amused by this description of the campus, as she was by Sarah's way of describing the roaches: "I picked up the dirty rascals" and "the bastards are probably still alive." Brad's paper also caught her ear—though for very different reasons—and she paused to exclaim over its representation of Grace, the pregnant girl: "The idea of mood swings is given new meaning... downright pissy bitch?!" Deiva also noted the "nice description" Brad uses to describe his jealousy when he learns Grace is pregnant.
Clearly, Deiva notices students’ use of language, and in doing so, recognizes students as rhetorical choice-makers, whether she finds their language amusing, disturbing, sexist, or persuasive.

When Deiva reflected upon the lengthy list of textual moments that somehow stopped or slowed her reading, which she indicated with marks in the margins as she read, she noticed that personal connections to the student’s text were being forged within each gap, interruption, or stoppage. Particular instances of language usage did signal the moments of connection; however, closer examination revealed that these interruptions weren’t altogether about issues such as word choice or style. Thus, while Deiva stopped reading to call attention to the word “roach” or “pissy bitch,” these phrases actually served as triggers, inviting her, repelling her, or otherwise beckoning Deiva to enter a text. What Deiva then verbalized was either her personal connection or resistance to textual moments—the entry process itself. Indeed, as Deiva read all three students’ essays, most moments that appeared to be interruptions were actually moments of connection.

For instance, Deiva found herself frustrated by the seeming lack of connection between the cockroaches of the essay’s title and the content of Sarah Smith’s first paragraph. Still, she continued to read the essay because her past experiences growing up in India helped her connect quickly to the image of the cockroach: “I lived with cockroaches all my life, so I find this kind of funny,” Deiva remarked laughingly. In this instance, Deiva’s personal experience with roaches served as both interruption and bridge, helping her to fill in the missing details from the text. Deiva became a kind of
co-author for the text. As Christina Haas and Linda Flower argue in their essay, "Rhetorical Reading Strategies and the Construction of Meaning" (1988), which I discussed briefly in Chapter Four, the act of reading is always an act of meaning-construction, and the reader is, in a sense, engaged in a rhetorical, meaning-generating process each time s/he encounters a text.24

When she finished reading Sarah's essay, Deiva paused to puzzle over Sarah's horrified reaction to finding the roaches, which to Deiva seemed a rather common occurrence. Her perception of the commonness of the experience stems from culturally and geographically specific past experiences. Deiva channeled her puzzlement into analysis, and the act of analyzing led to reflection, and then to a kind of acceptance or understanding based on her ability to empathize with Sarah:

I wonder if she's from a part of the country where there are no roaches? Because I think if you're from India you expect lots of bugs and crawlies... when I was in college and I lived in this graduate dorm, there were lots of roaches, and everybody said it was because of all the Third World people that lived there... and they just left food lying around... maybe because we've made our peace with roaches.

Here Deiva's ability to read generously is quite apparent. Deiva could have dismissed Sarah's essay because Sarah's perspective is so different from her own; indeed, she could have deemed the essay the complaint of a spoiled Westerner who has never had to deal with insects before. Instead of using her personal experience to override or dismiss Sarah's authority, however, Deiva allows space for Sarah's identity and experience to authorize her telling of the narrative. Deiva understands that Sarah comes from a different cultural and geographical context, and she accepts that these contexts shape Sarah's choices about which experiences to discuss in her essay. Deiva
decides to read a part of her own experience into Sarah’s narrative, rather than read Sarah’s narrative against hers. I characterize Deiva’s reading process in this instance as a process that depends on and produces a kind of identification with Sarah and her text.

Feminist scholars from a variety of disciplines, including Joan Scott, bell hooks, and Patricia Williams, have explored the ways that readers identify with the use of personal experience as evidence to support written or spoken argument. Feminist literary critics and other reader-response critics, such as Toni Morrison, Judith Fetterley, Jane Tompkins, Louise Rosenblatt, and David Bleich, have considered the interplay of readers’ identities and experiences and their perceptions of the texts they read. Feminist rhetoricians, including Nedra Reynolds, Susan Jarratt, and Karen and Sonja Foss, have reconsidered traditional models of rhetoric that privilege the use of logos—logical proof—over ethos or pathos, both of which have been associated with the use of personal experience as evidence and identification as an instrument of persuasion. Within composition studies in particular, experiential evidence has been associated with women’s writing and deprivileged within the academy, a problem discussed by Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie, Patricia Sullivan, and Elizabeth Flynn. These feminist discussions of personal experience as it affects both the production and reception of texts informs my interpretation of Deiva’s reading practices.

In addition, I draw from Kenneth Burke’s discussion of identification in A Rhetoric of Motives (1950). In that text, Burke treats identification as a term that describes “the ways in which the members of a group promote social cohesion by
acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another” (1019). Burke’s concept of identification depends upon an understanding of individuals as substantially divided from one another. The rhetorical act is an attempt to bridge that divisiveness so that identification, a state of consubstantiality, might be reached and social groups might be formed. Burke understands that such acts of identification occur in the service of good or ill; he is particularly interested in the ways that Hitler and other political figures have used identification as a rhetorical tool to encourage people to join one another in opposition to particular groups; such is the case for the construction of the Nazi movement (1020).

I draw on Burke’s concept of identification quite broadly in thinking about Deiva’s reading process. If Deiva exists in a state of being substantially different from Sarah, and if she views her experiences as substantially different from Sarah’s, she cannot read Sarah’s essay as anything other than evidence of their differences from one another. If Deiva can enter into a state of identification with Sarah and her text, however, by locating herself and her own experiences within it, even for an instant, she will be able to read Sarah’s essay as evidence of their connection, which in turn will allow for a more generous reading of the text.

According to Burke, the “ironic counterpart” of identification is division (Burke, Rhetoric 1021). Since we exist in states of substantive difference from one another, acts of rhetoric might be used to encourage listeners or readers to see themselves as part of a group that is, in substance, opposed to another group. Thus acts of identification can be used to encourage audience members to undergo “millions
of cooperative acts” in order to prepare for “one single destructive act...that ultimate
disease of cooperation, war” (1020). The concept of division also informs my
interpretation of Deiva’s reading practices, particularly in relation to her reading of
Ted Habola’s “My Driver’s License.”

Deiva seemed unable to identify with Ted and could not read her own
experiences through, rather than against, his. While her reading does not constitute
division in the same way that Burke describes it, Deiva does maintain a sense of
herself as ideologically different from Ted, which results in resistance to his text.

When Deiva commented on the title “My Driver’s License,” for instance, she
responded:

Of course, right away I’m thinking, of course! This is a rite of passage. What
could be more American than that? Now I’m picking up on the American part
of the prompt: ‘Coming of Age in America.’ I think getting a driver’s license
has a connotation for this culture that it doesn’t anywhere else.

After reading the first paragraph of “My Driver’s License,” Deiva was clearly
skeptical, sensing herself as divided from Ted and “looking to be convinced” by his
paper.

Ted’s text, unlike the other two essays, positioned Deiva as a cultural critic
rather than participant. Consider Deiva’s characterization of “My Driver’s License,”
which is embedded in the discussion of her own reading preferences:

I like to read about rituals and stuff—I think I have a soft spot for cultural stuff.
So I always read stuff about different cultures. I’m a sucker for that. So I think
the kinds of things I would read are more overtly about cultural issues, you
know, than this kind of Americana.
Deiva does not deem the “Americana” coming of age experience described in Ted’s paper as self-consciously “cultural.” Since Deiva read Steve’s assignment as focused on the notion of a cultural event, and since she assumes that Ted intended to respond to the assignment appropriately, her interpretation of Ted’s experience is fundamentally different from his own. According to Deiva, Ted’s paper exhibits no awareness of itself as about “real culture—like cultural difference” as it affects students’ self-perceptions. Her reading of the “cultural shorthand” that the essay practices makes her particularly skeptical of the writer’s critical intention, which distances her from the text and contributes to a less generous reading.

Deiva reflected far less upon Ted’s use of language—in terms of word choice, sentence rhythm, or imagery—than she did upon that of the other student writers. In fact, Deiva called my attention to individual words and phrases in Ted’s essay only in the context of describing her difficulty reading the text. That difficulty, according to Deiva, stemmed largely from the proliferation of details:

The details are making me a little frustrated, you know? Because in the same paragraph he talks about “writing an English paper, 16th birthday, the farm dance meeting, Marysville, being the oldest one in the family, baseball games, perfect little angel”—and I’m like, what is all this doing in one paragraph? That’s really confusing me.

Deiva’s lack of attention to Ted’s use of language suggests her resistance to the text. She could not pay attention to this text in the same way that she could to Sarah’s.

Still, Ted’s text does exhibit problems with focus, clarity, coherence, and an overuse of seemingly unrelated details. Deiva expressed her frustration with Ted’s essay in these terms as well, reading it two times before explaining: “I’m still trying to
figure out the story.” Like many teacher-readers, including Meryl, Deiva expects student writers to take some responsibility for the making of meaning. She wondered aloud: “I just think, what’s he trying to say here? There’s so much stuff, and I’m trying to piece together his life, and it doesn’t seem to go in any hierarchy, you know?”

In the final analysis, I attribute Deiva’s resistance to two factors. First, Deiva finds “My Driver’s License” difficult to read because she cannot locate herself as a reader for it; she has difficulty identifying with the text and its writer. Moreover, her only past experiences or personal connections with such a text involve her sense that she has read far too many essays just like it: essays written by American students who don’t recognize the culturally situatedness of their own coming of age narratives. This difficulty is evidenced by Deiva’s comments as she reads: “I’m still trying to situate myself in the details”; “I wasn’t into the topic right away [because] I’m thinking, okay, how many papers have I read about getting a driver’s license?”

Second, the text exhibits problems with focus and coherence, and Deiva responded to that problem as well, as her comments indicate: “I didn’t follow the story”; “I think it’s the details. . . there are lots of details, and they’re good, but I don’t know if they’re all equally important.” Here Deiva attributes responsibility to Ted, the writer, for the essay’s lack of coherence and intelligibility. Deiva understands this reading problem as two-sided. She knows the problem results from her own resistance to the writer’s treatment of cultural issues and the writer’s inability to construct a focused and coherent narrative. By articulating the reading problem in two ways, she
recognizes that writer and reader share responsibility for meaning-making in the classroom.

Like Meryl, Deiva assigns intentionality to these texts and reads them rhetorically. In other words, Deiva assumes that students—even those with whom she cannot identify—have something to say and make deliberate choices about how to say it. She also assumes that if students do not meet the needs of a reader, they have further work to do in revision. Deiva continues to read students’ texts, though, even when she is frustrated by a lack of signposting or narrative coherence within them. In other words, Deiva gives those texts (and their producers) the benefit of the doubt as she reads; she exhibits a willingness to keep working, to keep reading, even as she longs for the student writer to guide her more fully. This is Deiva’s understanding of her own rhetorical responsibility as a reader. I argue, though, that it isn’t always easy for Deiva to read this way, particularly when she has difficulty identifying with the student writer and his or her experience.

*Constructing Student Identities*

Just as Deiva and Meryl privileged different aspects of their identities—cultural, educational, institutional—when they read, those readings in turn produced different images of the three student writers. My second analytic category, Constructing Student Identities, pays attention to the variety of student identities conjured during the interview process. In doing so, this section of the chapter points toward the possible connections between teacher identity and student identity in the basic writing classroom.
Meryl acknowledged that Sarah “may have changed a couple of times” within the text. For instance, Meryl first imagined her as a cheerleader because this is one way that Sarah names herself early in the text. Meryl later revised her initial response, however:

But then, when I’m reading about the cockroach incident, I don’t know how I describe her but I think it seems she’s... on one level presenting herself as this kinda silly girl afraid of bugs. But she’s presenting herself that way and she’s kind of poking fun at that... it’s not that it’s fake—she is afraid of bugs—but that kind of overblown language she uses sometimes as well as the more explicit ways that she shows she’s making fun of that... I don’t know how I would describe her as a person based on those...

Meryl spoke of all three writers, in fact, as performers of particular kinds of identities, and she focused most often on describing the writing strategies, rather than the identities, they performed. When I pressed her in order to learn if she could imagine a student writer for these texts, Meryl attributed her fuzzy responses to the fact that she is “not a real visual person.” She then reconsidered that statement and added, “well, Sarah talks about being a cheerleader and her body filling up with joy and excitement and the stereotype that comes to my mind is some little blond white girl that jumps around a lot... but that’s not necessarily a cheerleader at Midwestern State.”

I have already described the ways that Meryl negotiated a series of evaluations of Sarah’s essay as she read it. She also held her own representations of students up to similar scrutiny, undergoing an evaluative process as she considered competing images of Sarah. So many ideas vied for Meryl’s attention in this example: she acknowledged her stereotype of the “little blond girl,” but she also noticed its incongruity with the cheerleaders—several of whom have been African American—at
Midwestern State. Indeed, Meryl circumvented the question altogether when I first asked it; instead, she used rhetorical analysis—attention to the ways Sarah uses language and to what effect—to cast Sarah as a *performer* of various identities within the text. Still, folded into that assessment is a statement that implies a judgment about Sarah’s “real” experience: Meryl notes that “she is afraid of bugs.” Even her sense of Sarah’s voice as a performance in the essay is partially based on a competing construction of the “real” Sarah, who is afraid of bugs.

Meryl described the student she imagined while reading Ted’s paper using similar strategies. “This writer seemed less performed; he’s kind of writing about things as he feels them as opposed to [Sarah]. It felt like she was trying to show us a certain picture of herself.” From this initial reference to performativity, Meryl’s response moved back to the text, and she cited examples of places where Ted seemed to lose control of his rhetorical choice-making process. Meryl’s resistance to my question is well founded. The self that emerges in any written text is, of course, a discursive one, constructed with some deliberation to perform a rhetorical function. However, as studies such as Marguerite Helmers’ *Writing Students* argue, teachers do interpret those discursive selves imagistically (see Chapter Three).

When I called attention to the fact that Meryl had, once again, revised my intended question and spoken about the student in writerly terms, Meryl supplied me with a blurry picture of the Ted she imagined while reading. “Now, Ted comes from Marysville, and he grew up driving a tractor and my guess is he probably is a white kid—it would probably be an unusual thing to have a person of color running a farm
outside Marysville, but you know, maybe not.” As a discussion ensued about teaching students from farming communities, I shared with Meryl my own sense that I exoticized and romanticized such students, attributing to them a kind of strength of moral character or fortitude that I didn’t imagine present within my other students. Meryl recalled past experiences with other teachers who also describe rural students as a bit exotic or different. Unlike those colleagues, however, Meryl has not experienced this response to students from rural communities. “Because I grew up in a small town and knew people raised on farms…it doesn’t seem as foreign to me,” Meryl explained. I don’t think of them as ‘other.’”

Only Ted’s text and my prodding prompted Meryl to speak about her own life in the context of reading the student-authored essays. Meryl provided me with several narratives about her own small-town upbringing and experiences with students from rural areas, and she moved easily from discussion of Ted’s essay to the discussion of her personal experiences. Stories she had been told about her grandfather, for instance, reminded her of moments within Ted’s text. In this way, Meryl identified with Ted through his text, experiencing moments of connection triggered by stories of rural life.

Upon reading Brad’s essay, “Life’s Unexpectancies,” Meryl simply did not respond to my question about the student she imagined as she read. My sense is that she would not engage in the act of imagining Brad. Instead, she continued to address the questions raised by the text—questions about baby Spencer’s paternity and the nature of Brad’s and Grace’s relationship—by analyzing the textual features
themselves. She considered the chronology of the narrative, the strategic (or non-strategic) placement of details, and other rhetorical choices.

Each of Meryl's comments was prefaced by a statement to this effect: "If I were talking to him, I would ask..." In other words, Meryl shifted much more quickly into the rhetorical stance of the teacher as she read this text, a move she made with the other texts—Sarah's and Ted's—only after coming to some sort of evaluative position. This kind of engagement with the text suggests real discomfort with the act of imagining Brad, a discomfort that may stem from her perception that by keeping his relationship to the baby hidden from readers (the question of who Spencer's father is remains unanswered in the essay), Brad suggests some sort of desire for privacy. Meryl's resistance to the act of constructing the students she reads suggests also her commitment to a particular professional stance as a teacher and her desire to privilege this aspect of her identity when she reads.

Deiva, on the other hand, found it rather easy to describe all three of the students she imagined as she read. Or, perhaps she was particularly forthcoming about a process that many teachers, including Meryl, might rather not acknowledge or make explicit. In order to describe these three unknown students from Steve's class, Deiva always turned first to the specific use of language, tone, and style within each piece. Deiva, like Meryl, grounded her representations of the student writers within their texts.

Deiva conjured representations of students by considering their use of particular discursive strategies. Thus the student imagined by Deiva was always a
construction of discourse to a certain degree. Consider Deiva’s reflection on Sarah’s tone:

I think if she had written with a lot of disgust rather than matter-of-factly, I would have probably gotten the impression of a young woman really disgusted with roaches . . . But I imagine somebody no-nonsense and kind of practical . . . she’s not just railing against the university and why don’t they do something about it [roaches in the dorm] or whatever. She’s just saying, this is what’s going on. I have to kill them . . . So I imagine a somewhat strong sort of young woman, you know? She’s not saying, oh, mommy is not there to do my laundry . . . there’s not even one sentence like that in here. . . But I think if she had been a little different from my sensibility, I would have noticed what the difference was.

Here, Deiva reads Sarah’s word choice, tone, and rhetorical positioning as constructing a particular kind of attitude toward the roaches. Deiva then projects that attitude into a kind of character sketch around which she might construct the paper’s narrator. What seems interesting to note here is that, in this particular instance, Deiva calls attention to the identical passage that Meryl pointed to when I asked her to show me why she found Sarah’s conclusion unsatisfying. During the interview process, the same passage served as evidence for two very different readings of the same student’s text.

In addition, Deiva suggests that her reading of Sarah is dependent upon her perception of a shared “sensibility.” Perhaps more important than Deiva’s construction of Sarah as a strong, no-nonsense gal, then, is her reading of a connection between them. As I argued earlier in this chapter, because Deiva reads her own history with the roach experience through, rather than against, Sarah’s narrative, Deiva is able to achieve an important point of identification with Sarah’s text. Sarah’s own identity as a white, former cheerleader who has never encountered roaches before does not make her an “other” for Deiva. Indeed, Deiva seemed quite able to know Sarah:
There’s a great deal of presence here, you know? And she does say at one point, “this story may seem kind of strange to be considered a turning point,” and I almost want to say, why don’t you start that way, you know? Instead of the place where she starts: “As a person starts to grow and mature... because that’s not really her! She’s the one who’s calling the roaches “bastards” when she flushes them down the toilet! So talk about the authentic self! I think that’s her!

My initial response to this final exclamation about the “authentic self” had to be tempered by careful study of the entire interview transcript. Here Deiva does not fall into the old trap of imagining that there is a “real Sarah” who emerges in this text. Rather, Deiva draws (tongue in cheek) upon common composition and rhetoric jargon, revealing her familiarity with composition scholarship in several ways and demonstrating that such scholarship—as I argued in Chapter Four—does indeed enter into her consciousness as she reads students’ texts.

When Deiva points to the phrase “As a person starts to grown and mature,” she is aware that composition theorists from Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow to David Bartholomae have described, for various reasons during various decades, such discourse as a kind of approximation of the discourse of the academy. She could simply follow suit and read Sarah into a discursive tradition that marks—according to composition scholarship—a basic or inexperienced writer’s text. Yet, Deiva resists those commonly held constructions of basic writers by pointing to Sarah’s use of a different kind of rhetoric: she points to Sarah’s enthusiastic use of the word “bastards” as she completes the empowering act of flushing the roaches down the toilet. That combination of language and act, according to Deiva, indicates that Sarah can, in fact,
control her own discourse and speak in a voice that is her own. Deiva’s reading seeks to put Sarah back in control of her discourse.

Deiva’s ways of imagining Ted, the writer of “My Driver’s License,” reflect her initial resistance to the text and her inability to identify with the writer. First, Deiva argued that Ted’s decision to use a driver’s license story for his essay suggested his dependence on “cultural shorthand.” According to Deiva, that choice of narrative subject is evidence of Ted’s desire to avoid the analytical work of the assignment. She argued that Ted had assumed that all of his 109.01 peers, as well as his teacher, Steve, would have shared the experience upon which he bases his “Americana” coming of age ritual: getting a driver’s license. Indeed, Deiva implies that the student is a little lazy. “He thinks just because the topic is so—and I’m constructing him now—that just because the topic is so... it’s so easy to see how that’s a rite of passage, he doesn’t think he has to do all that work on it, you know?” Since she does not see Ted’s paper as exemplifying much critical thinking or reflective writing, she constructs Ted as a student who took the easy way out.

Second, Deiva clearly defines Ted in terms of his embrace of rural experiences, perceiving the lack of similarity to her own life. “I think he’s different than me, you know? He grew up in Marysville... he goes to a Farm dance at the Ohio State Fair... I wouldn’t be caught dead there.” During our interview, Deiva recognized this moment of division between them, and she attempted to recuperate some connection to Ted. She identified with him by recognizing that he is “like a lot of [her] students.” Deiva painted a fascinatingly detailed portrait:
I'm picturing these daredevil kids, who build their own go-carts, who do crazy things like jumping off cliffs, and swimming in waters, and doing stuff that's, you know, wild. And they live in a very conservative community, so they know they're going to get into trouble, but that's their stage of life, you know?

After describing him so fully, Deiva again revised her own construction: “And he called himself a daredevil, too, but he's kind of not a daredevil. All he got was a speeding ticket! That's not very devilish, you know?”

When I pointed out that the student got the ticket for doing 92 in a 55 zone, she responded laughingly, “Yeah, but it's a Bronco. I couldn't go 92 in my Tercel, but I would go 92 in a Bronco.” I point to this rather humorous interchange not to suggest that Deiva is harsh in her reading or overly daredevilish herself. Instead, I want to emphasize that Deiva's assessment of what “counts” as daredevilish behavior is—albeit laughingly—clearly premised upon her own experiences.

Deiva’s reading of Ted is shaped by her sense that he mishandles the topic. She believes, furthermore, that he does not work hard enough to make the familiar, commonly told “Americana” coming of age story into a cultural narrative. Second, her perception of herself as both culturally different and ideologically divided from Ted affects her construction of him. She can only identify with him by reading him and his essay through her experiences with students like him whom she has encountered in her classes. I want to emphasize that in characterizing her reading of Ted, Deiva was fully conscious of the problems of representation at work. Likewise, she was willing to share her ways of imagining Ted with me—a risky move—because of her genuine intellectual interest in thinking about how teachers’ representations of students affect their readings of students’ texts.
Deiva described her image of Brad Trainor, the writer of "Life's Unexpectedancies," in ways that suggested particularly important connections between teachers' personal histories, cultural backgrounds, and textual expectations. First, Deiva's reading of this text led to the most explicit discussion of both race and sexuality that I recorded during the project. Deiva imagined Brad as an African American student, she read him as Grace's sexual partner, and she pointed to several places within the text in order to illustrate her reading. As she considered such textual moments, Deiva was again self-conscious of the act of representation. First, she pointed out the phrase "two of my boys" as a common colloquialism used by her male African American students to indicate their peers. She then discussed her perception of Brad's "attitude" toward sexuality within the text. Using a combination of interpretations, Deiva then constructed Brad as an African American student.

"Two of my boys and me went to Target"—see, I think I'm stereotyping, big-time. There's something about the attitude, you know... towards the woman, and the whole situation is like, you know, "somebody is taking my respect away." And I think that it never crosses his mind... I mean, he doesn't think it's his baby!

Here, then, issues of sexuality, race, and representation converge for Deiva as she imagines Grace as a woman with a few sexual partners, of whom Brad is one; likewise, she reads Brad as unaware (or unwilling to recognize) that the baby is his. Indeed, for Deiva, baby Spencer is Brad's son. According to Deiva, who uses the essay prompt's emphasis on "coming of age" to read Brad's text as a sexually charged rite of passage narrative, it is naïve to read the relationship between Brad and Grace any differently.26
In Autobiographies, her study of acts of self-representation by women writers, feminist critic Leigh Gilmore considers the ways that the genre of autobiography is read as some kind of representation of the “real” life of the text’s producer. In particular, she critiques readings of autobiography—specifically, women’s autobiography—that assume a one-to-one correspondence between the gendered body that writes the text and the body of text or genre produced. According to Gilmore,

Whether and when autobiography emerges as an authoritative discourse of reality and identity, and any particular text appears to tell the truth, have less to do with that texts’ presumed accuracy about what really happened than with its apprehended fit into culturally prevalent discourses of truth and identity. (ix)

Gilmore argues, in essence, that narrative frames—even commonplaces--about truth and identity, all of which are produced within particular cultural contexts, act as terministic screens for readers of autobiography.

Gilmore’s project speaks specifically to the ways that cultural narratives about gender and identity shape the reading of autobiography. This involves three important steps: 1) considering both how culturally prevalent discourses of truth and identity call into being the genre of autobiography that she critiques; 2) studying the ways that culturally prevalent discourses about gender and sexuality in particular affect women’s acts of self-representation, and 3) trying to “interrupt the regular toppling of dominos” that “translate the fact of sexual difference through the experience of gender to its subsequent representation” (11-12). In other words, Gilmore wants readers to resist that seemingly natural correspondence between gendered identity of the writer, written interpretation of the life, equation of text with the life.
Brad’s paper illustrates precisely how difficult it is for teachers to topple those dominos when they read the texts of students in the classroom. After reading Brad’s text, Deiva’s primary question—Who’s the father of this baby?—was premised upon assumptions about the “real” person who produced it, the living, breathing student author who wrote that text. Deiva read Brad through the lenses of popular culture representations of teenagers—African American teenagers, in particular—on television programs hosted by Jerry Springer, Jenny Jones, and others who prod guests to examine their relationships in public. She also constructed Brad through her personal experiences with her own African American male students and friends, recalling their conversations about sexuality and race as she read his text. Deiva even expressed her frustration with Brad and claimed that he was kidding himself into believing that he was not the father of Grace’s baby. “If they’re [Grace and Brad] in an exclusive relationship, if he is the only one who’s had sex with her, then he should already be thinking, oh, what is it going to mean to be a father?” she argued.

*Teachers’ Generic Repertoires and Student Performance*

In this analytic category, I posit connections between a teacher’s reading strategies and her generic preferences and expectations. After reading each of the three student-authored essays, each teacher described any generic connections she could make between the student’s essay and other forms of discourse she had encountered. In this way, I charted connections between Meryl’s and Deiva’s ways of reading and their own generic repertoires and expectations. I draw from two primary definitions of genre, both of which appear in the introduction to Aviva Freedman and
Peter Medway's edited collection, *Learning and Teaching Genre* (1994). Freedman and Medway describe first the "traditional view," which suggests that genres are: "primarily literary; entirely defined by textual regularities in form and content; fixed and immutable; and classified into neat and mutually exclusive categories and subcategories" (1). Second, Freedman and Medway call upon the work of Carolyn Miller, Chuck Bazerman, Mikhail Bakhtin, and other contemporary language theorists in order to redefine genres as "typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations" (2). In the third analytic category, Teachers' Generic Repertoires and Student Performance, I use both of these definitions of genre in order to demonstrate ties between teachers' reading practices and the generic options made available to students in the classroom.

For Meryl, reading Sarah's paper invoked only two other generic forms. First, Meryl likened the essay to a Keystone Cops movie. Meryl cited images of all of the women in Sarah's dorm running around like mad, bumping into one another as they try to kill the cockroaches as evidence for her interpretation. This seemingly light-hearted comparison is an important one, since it signifies that Meryl recognizes she could read the piece as a comic one if she chooses. She does not consider Sarah's essay in purely academic terms; she does not label it a "descriptive essay" or "expository essay" to indicate adherence to a traditional modes-based approach to talking about student writing. Moreover, in being able to reimagine the coming of age narrative paper in terms of slapstick comedy, Meryl might privilege very different aspects of Sarah's text. She could choose to value the presence of comic timing or tightly executed
description, for instance, rather than Sarah’s analysis of the significance of bug-killing.
In other words, by placing Sarah’s essay into a generic category other than the coming
of age narrative, she is able to alter her selection of rhetorical issues that matter most
when she responds to it.\textsuperscript{27} The shift in perception of generic category carries with it
implications for reading and evaluation.

Meryl acknowledged some difficulty discussing generic categories for Ted’s
essay. She noticed, however, that Ted’s essay (as well as the other two) seemed to
offer some kind of personal narrative leading up to a didactic moment, a phenomenon
David Bartholomae describes in “Inventing the University.” Before discussing the
generic implications of this rhetorical move, however, Meryl returned to Steve’s
prompt for a better sense of what genre had been solicited in the first place. This
demonstrates one of Meryl’s key assumptions in the classroom: teachers’ pedagogical
choices and students’ performances are intricately related. Meryl knows that prompts
function as generic maps by guiding students toward particular textual forms. She
found that, “in the prompt, [Steve] starts talking about rituals and ceremonies that
mark coming of age, so that’s what I take as the center of the assignment . . . but there
are some other things that the students seem to be focusing on more.” For instance,
Meryl noticed that each of the three essays seemed to teach a sort of “lesson” about the
experience it describes. This troubled Meryl.

Meryl turned next to the literary text that Sarah, Ted, and Brad had been
assigned, \textit{The House on Mango Street}. Meryl had already evaluated Steve’s prompt
as a kind of generic solicitation; next she wanted to consider the literary text as a
generic model and trace some connection between Steve's pedagogical choices and the students' performances. She considered the connection, but remained unconvinced that Cisneros' text had invited the students to practice this kind of "lesson-telling" within their essays. Meryl seemed frustrated by what she perceived as the three students' sense that their texts "had to" offer some kind of lesson as a conclusion, but she limited her consideration of why they made that choice to the classroom context itself.

Ironically, Meryl told me that she rarely talks about questions of genre in explicit ways in the classroom. "I think that I don't talk about general forms of essays, or at least I don't think I do. We generate questions about what the assignment seems to be asking and of course, I'm involved in that." I would argue that Meryl's response indicates that while she does not discuss genre according to Freedman and Medway's first definition, as "fixed and immutable literary categories," she does treat generic issues in terms of rhetorical patterns that emerge in recurring social situations, Freedman and Medway's second definition.

For instance, Meryl described a lengthy process during which students produce multiple drafts, meet in conference with her and their peers, and answer a series of questions. When they discuss each draft, students pose different kinds of questions, and the form(s) of their essays solidify as the students respond to their readers' questions. In this way, students shape their essays in response to readers' perceptions of what rhetorical situation the essay seems to answer. This model seems quite fitting for Meryl's class, since here the students must act as evaluative negotiators—like their
teacher does when she reads—as they generate rhetorical forms that respond to collaborative efforts to refine their work with their teacher and peers.

While Meryl’s responded to questions of genre in ways that were pedagogically contextualized, Deiva discussed the students’ essays in terms of generic categories that stemmed from popular, ethnic, and academic cultures. Deiva placed “Invasion of the Cockroaches” within several generic traditions, including a hunting ritual, an initiation or coming of age narrative, adolescent literature, and “Best Student Essay.” All of these generic categories carry with them particular sets of textual expectations, and Deiva illustrated that she could read Sarah’s essay with differing sets of expectations in mind. As Deiva discussed why she placed Sarah’s essay within each category, the interplay of personal, professional, and institutional identities was quite evident.

Deiva’s childhood memories of reading colonialist adventure narratives and killing real, live flies with her friends informed her choice to consider “Invasion of the Cockroaches” as a hunting ritual. She also drew from a more traditionalist (to use Freedman and Medway’s term) conceptualization of genre to discuss how issues of style, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and voice also contributed to her placement of “Invasion” within this generic category. Likewise, when discussing the essay as an initiation or coming of age narrative, Deiva located examples from both her own experience and from Sarah’s text to support her reading.

In reading “Invasion” as an example of adolescent literature, Deiva drew from her knowledge of the literary genre as well as forms of popular culture. She noticed, for instance, the essay’s use of detail, melodrama, and parody. Like much adolescent
fiction, Deiva suggested, the essay relies on Sarah’s ability to portray the mundane as the fantastical. This generic convention is also typical of films for adolescents, such as John Hughes’ “Sixteen Candles.” Within films for adolescents, however, the melodrama and parody are located in characters’ language use and in sight gags, music, or even costuming. Indeed, in this example, both of Freedman and Medway’s definitions of genre are useful. First, adolescent fiction and adolescent films do exist as categories (one found within the ERIC bibliography, the other within the Blockbuster database). Second, adolescent fiction and adolescent films seek to allow readers and viewers to empathize with adolescent characters who experience the pains of growing up. Sarah, like Molly Ringwald’s character in “Sixteen Candles,” convinces readers that what may seem like not much of a big deal (finding cockroaches in the dorm) can be a Huge Deal to a young person having the experience for the first time.

Deiva shifted reading positions again when she placed Sarah’s essay into the “Best Student Essay” genre, a form most often associated with contests sponsored by textbook publishers such as St. Martin’s Press. In this case, her position as composition specialist was foregrounded, and she discussed the ways that Sarah’s essay conformed to the generic expectations that “other teachers” may value across the country—descriptive language, humor, self-reflection about personal experience, clarity.

Deiva found only one way in which Sarah’s text did not meet her own generic expectations. Her personal reflections about her run-ins with roaches evolved into a
discussion of convention and genre fairly quickly. Indeed, Deiva’s expectations for
Sarah’s text—particularly for some kind of satisfying conclusion—stemmed from her
own personal experience: “My mother has a ritual about roaches. She sprays the
kitchen every night, because that’s the only way to keep the roaches down, and I was
kind of expecting the last part [of the paper] to have that kind of ritual.” When Sarah
does not provide a conclusion that satisfies Deiva’s desire to experience that ritual
again through the text, she decides that the essay does not meet her full range of
generic expectations.

Deiva had much more difficulty discussing Ted’s essay, “My Driver’s
License,” in generic terms: “I think I couldn’t tell the main genre of the story for all the
details.” In other words, she did not receive the necessary information from Ted—
signals from the text that might help her focus her attention or select a generic
blueprint—and so she was left to make those decisions for herself. For example,
Deiva chose to read “My Driver’s License” as an initiation ritual narrative.
Unfortunately, as I discussed earlier, Deiva’s definition of this genre—a narrative that
makes explicit the workings of a cultural practice—does not suit Ted’s essay. Ted
cannot describe “a moment of initiation” in a satisfactory way for Deiva, who finds
this kind of “Americana”—the driver’s license story—too easily constructed, too pat,
to be critically engaging. Fortunately, Deiva was quite aware of her own resistance to
the essay and the incompatibility of her generic definition. She acknowledged that her
resistance to the text was making it “hard for [her] to look at the specifics.” Deiva
knew that Ted had tried to offer the kinds of specific details that he believed most
teachers expect from such an essay. However, he had mistakenly assumed that he shared cultural values and experiences with his audience.

Deiva also noticed multiple stories competing for her attention within Ted’s essay:

Well, the stories [in the essay] are about how he’s educated to be a driver, his family, his birth order in the family, how he’s the last one to get a license. . . then there’s the speeding, the encounter with the law story. . . Then there’s the parents punishing. . . So it seems as though there’s a public story about how he’s learning to be a responsible adult and getting punished for it, and there’s a family story, where you’re not an adult yet, you get this ticket. . . There’s like two or three competing stories. . .

Deiva simply could not wade through all of these stories in order to locate a primary generic roadmap for making sense of Ted’s narrative. For Deiva, then, Ted’s multiple foci resulted in real frustration: “I want my mean, modernist story here,” Deiva stated.

Finally, both Meryl and Deiva recognized Brad’s story as an individual narrative existing within a very specific cultural frame: the tell-all television talk show. Brad’s story reminded them both of the narrative of a jilted lover on “Jerry Springer” or “Jenny Jones” in a way that allowed them to read as studio audience members, actively engaged, eagerly awaiting truth from the guest of the day. Indeed, the cultural script of the talk show drew Meryl and Deiva into Brad’s text so completely that it was nearly impossible for them to have the same kind of “academic” critical responses to “Life’s Unexpectedancies” that they had to the other two texts. While both Deiva and Meryl commented upon the essay’s use of dialogue, for instance, neither reader placed the piece within the generic context of a drama or other piece of fiction. Instead, Meryl and Deiva initially read themselves into familiar roles: they became spectators,
watching Brad’s tale of an unwed mother and, possibly, his unrequited love for her, unfold.

"Life’s Unexpectancies" positioned Meryl and Deiva as spectators by making them partially privy to what appears to be a highly personal, emotionally taxing experience in Brad’s life: learning that his “best friend,” the woman who he called “the most important thing in my life,” was pregnant. In fact, while Deiva and Meryl agreed that Brad’s was the least traditionally proficient or conventionally correct paper of the three, they also agreed that his was the most engaging. Before either subject spoke about issues of structure, style, imagery, dialogue, or even adherence to the prompt, they asked me if I knew the “truth” about Brad’s paper. While Deiva and Meryl had used the word “performance” to describe the ways that Sarah and even Ted represented their experiences in their essays, neither teacher used such language in significant ways to name Brad’s work or to describe Brad himself. Instead, both addressed Brad’s textual self in such a way that implied a one to one correspondence between his life and his essay, the same problem that Leigh Gilmore identifies in Autobiographics: the reading of a discursive autobiographical act as a linguistic representation of a “real” life. Any discussion of Brad’s adherence to formal conventions was completely subsumed by the two teachers’ interest in the subject of the essay itself.

General Findings

In analyzing the interpretive practices of two basic writing teachers, Meryl and Deiva, as they read three student-authored essays, I paid particular attention to the
ways the two teachers’ cultural, educational, and disciplinary backgrounds shaped their readings and foregrounded a view of identity as constitutive of, rather than separate from, each teacher’s reading process. Using three analytic categories, I described and analyzed the rhetorical mechanisms underlying each subject’s reading process; I considered the ways that each subject constructed the identities of the three student writers; I discussed the relationship between teachers’ reading practices and the generic options made available to students in the classroom. The analysis in each category highlighted a distinct relationship between a given teacher’s identity and her ways of reading and valuing students’ texts.

I used ethnographic case study research methods for data collection and analysis, constructing a study of two individual teachers reading within an institutional and disciplinary context: the Writing Workshop at Midwestern State University. Deiva and Meryl read “Invasion of the Cockroaches,” “My Driver’s License,” and “Life’s Unexpectancies,” three essays written by students enrolled in a colleague’s basic writing course, while I recorded their responses to the essays and interviewed them about their readings. I then triangulated data collected during personal interviews, my transcriptions of those interviews, and my subjects’ responses to the reading history questionnaire in order to highlight connections between their cultural, disciplinary, educational, and institutional identities and their reading practices.

Meryl, the director of the Writing Workshop, demonstrated reading strategies in all three instances that seemed quite dependent upon her identity as a teacher, administrator, and scholar of basic writing. Meryl, who read each text quite slowly,
made few "personal" connections to the texts. She rarely spoke of ways that student
experiences reminded her of her own, nor did she make many moves toward personal
identification with the students. I characterize Meryl's reading as a process of
evaluative negotiation, marked by a series of almost imperceptible decisions as she
reads. Meryl's reading strategies are quite text-driven, and her evaluative decisions
are based largely upon her sense of how well the writer has, in fact, written the text
that the text itself promises to be. Meryl's process of evaluative negotiation is
 premised upon the belief that student writers should be held accountable for their own
ways of representing their rhetorical goals, their subject matter, and their feelings
about that subject matter within their written texts. This belief stems largely from her
position as a basic writing program administrator and Basic Writing scholar.

Meryl has learned important historical and institutional lessons about the ways
that basic writers' texts are used to represent the quality of their minds; likewise, she
knows that basic writing students' texts have been used to justify the continued
funding or termination of basic writing programs. By reading basic writing students'
texts closely and holding the students accountable for their rhetorical choices, she is
responding to those historical and institutional lessons above and privileging aspects
of her identity that I label institutional.

Meryl reads students' essays with a rhetorical gaze and she assumes students
write with rhetorical goals. In doing so, she affirms and enacts her beliefs about basic
writers and basic writing: that basic writers exist within particular institutional
contexts; that what counts as "basic writing" at one university will not be labeled as
such by another; that students—all students—bring with them into the classroom a full repertoire of rhetorical strategies; that they are already proficient communicators; that basic writing students should do college-level work that requires them to think critically, write critically, and read critically. As such, her readings of student-authored texts reflect her sense that much is at stake every time a basic writing student drafts an essay.

Meryl seems unwilling to talk about—or even engage in—the act of constructing student identities beyond discussing the ways that they perform textually. In other words, Meryl was able to construct writerly identities for the three students during the study, and she discussed her perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses or made connections between their writing strategies and those of students she has taught in her own courses. My sense is that, again, Meryl’s institutional position and disciplinary identity as a basic writing scholar, teacher, and administrator shape this aspect of her reading in important ways. Meryl is highly aware that composition scholarship has essentialized student identities in ways that suggest, for example, that basic writers are usually African American students, or students from underfunded city school districts. Likewise, she is aware of commonly held public misperceptions about Basic Writing—that such programs are remedial, designed to make a space for scholarship athletes or students who simply do not “belong” at the university.

Existing studies of students at the Writing Workshop undertaken by Meryl and her Administrative Associate have countered each of these misperceptions. By conducting self-assessment inventories, for instance, Meryl and her staff have learned
that many Writing Workshop students consider themselves well prepared for the challenges of college-level writing and that many come from well-funded school systems in suburban areas, as well as poorer districts in rural and urban areas. Some Writing Workshop students are athletes. Many students are active in academic, service, and social clubs and organizations. Most hold some kind of job outside of school. Many have family obligations that require them to spend a good deal of their time—during weekends and holidays, for example—at home with their families. In short, Meryl knows that Writing Workshop students are a diverse lot, racially, culturally, geographically, and economically. Meryl has schooled herself to resist categorizing or imagining students whom she has not met—just as she schooled herself to read Faulkner as a graduate student. Moreover, the fact that she has read the placement essays of hundreds of first-year students—students who remain relative strangers to her, unless they actually enroll in one of her basic writing courses—has contributed to her ability to resist or put aside the images of students that arise as she reads.

Deiva, a Senior Lecturer at the Writing Workshop, exhibited reading strategies that were quite different from Meryl’s. Deiva flipped quickly through the pages of all three essays, stopping often to vocalize a series of interruptions, places where a word, image, sentence, or idea triggered her to make a particular kind of connection to the text. Most often, these interruptions signified convergences and ruptures, places where her own experiences—filtered by a variety of factors including her cultural identity, educational history, and institutional position—served as lenses for viewing
the texts. I characterize Deiva’s reading process as comprised by a series of acts of *identification*.

Deiva’s readings of the three students’ papers were affected most by those moments where memories of her own personal experiences brought her to points of identification with each text. She identified more easily with some texts than others; likewise, no two readings depended on the same kind of identification. But she seemed best able to offer a text a full, rich reading when she could, in fact, read herself into that text somehow. For example, Deiva’s experiences battling insects as a child in India helped her identify with Sarah Smith’s “Invasion of the Cockroaches,” and her participation in and study of popular media, such as television talk shows, helped her engage in identification with Brad Trainor’s “Life’s Unexpectancies.” Brad’s essay positions its readers as spectators as it leaves them questioning the nature of his relationship with Grace, his best friend.

At the same time, Deiva resisted identifying with Ted Habola’s essay, “My Driver’s License,” because Ted’s lack of self-consciousness about his experience as a cultural event positioned Deiva to read with a doubting eye. Furthermore, the proliferation of details, none of which helped Deiva to read the essay as a “cultural text,” contributed to her sense that the essay was not an appropriate response to Steve’s prompt. Still, once Deiva realized her own resistance to the text, she found a way to achieve identification: she began to search for ways into Ted’s text by rereading it through the lens of other students’ experiences. Ted’s essay reminded her
of so many other coming of age "Americana" narratives that Deiva was able to "plug in" her reading of Ted’s essay to her understanding of those other students’ examples.

As she read each essay, Deiva drew upon her identity and experience as a woman, an Indian, a cultural critic, a basic writing scholar, a teacher, and a former dorm resident. Each identity that she performed afforded her a new way into each text, a new point of connection or resistance to each essay. For Deiva, the most useful way to think about students and their writing is to look for the connections to her own ways of being/writing/thinking at the university. In fact, Deiva shared with me her belief that "basic writing students are me, you know? They are people who . . . have not for one instant believed that education is empowering them. But they do believe that education is making them fit in to somebody's idea of what they should be." This statement is particularly powerful, given Deiva’s early experiences auditioning for her T.A. position at Small Midwestern University, where she was denied that teaching position because of her colleagues’ perceptions of her as culturally different and therefore "lacking" in "personality."

As a basic writing teacher and scholar, Deiva knows that basic writers, too, have been construed as those who lack—cognitively and culturally—in the classroom. It was not unusual, then, for Deiva to construct student identities in terms of their similarity to or difference from her. Regardless of whether the student’s essay invited her to experience identification (Sarah) or division (Ted), Deiva noticed the ways that teacher and student identities converge in the classroom.
Deiva was also able to imagine the three students rather easily, constructing identities for each of them based on her readings of their texts and her own instincts about the nature of their experiences. As Deiva read, she was able to see herself reflected in students' texts and to describe, quite critically, the effects of the identification mechanism on her ways of valuing each text. Deiva spoke quite candidly about issues of race, culture, sexuality, and gender, all of which arose for her at one time or another as she read. Deiva’s scholarly work in postcolonial theory, as well as her identity as a “postcolonial person” has made her critically aware of the ways that individuals are both represented and co-opted by others within institutional settings, and she worked hard to make that cycle of representation visible to me as a researcher.

Indeed, it seems important to underscore the two teachers’ differing ways of articulating their relationships to the institution itself. Meryl’s position as director of the Writing Workshop, which offers her access to countless committees, sub-committees, and other sites of decision-making at the university, has helped increase her understanding of the ways that student performances are evaluated after they leave the Workshop. Hence, her statement about her own ways of modeling conventions of reading and writing for students as a means of sharing her knowledge and experience with them and widening their points of entry into the institution makes a great deal of sense. Likewise, as a postcolonial theorist and literary critic, Deiva recognizes the ways that the same institutions that bestow well deserved degrees upon the students who enter the Writing Workshop also divide and categorizes those students, limiting
their access to particular courses or slowing down their progress toward the degree. When Deiva states in her epigraph to this chapter, "I am the institution," she makes the radical move of placing the teacher at the center of convention making and holds herself accountable if the possibilities for institutional change are not realized in her classroom.

Finally, I want to emphasize that both Meryl and Deiva's reading practices rely upon one important shared assumption: both teachers assume that rhetorical responsibility for meaning-making in the classroom should be shared by the student-writer and teacher-reader. This means that both Meryl and Deiva approach every student's text with focused willingness; they want to follow the text wherever it promises to lead them, and they allow the student writers to take responsibility for drafting the necessary generic blueprints to guide them as they read. I want to end this chapter—and look ahead to my conclusion—by reflecting upon my findings regarding teachers' reading practices and students' generic options.

As Deiva and Meryl read each essay, they found themselves able to think about different generic categories for each piece. "Invasion of the Cockroaches," seemed to elicit the most discussion of genre, and Deiva and Meryl likened the essay to a Keystone Cops film, an initiation ritual, and an adolescent novel, among other genres. Because they were able to think in such various ways about Sarah's essay, both teachers were able to value different rhetorical features of the text. If Meryl read the essay as a Keystone Cops routine, she could privilege Sarah's comic timing and precise description. When Deiva read the essay as an initiation ritual, however,
Sarah's conclusion fell short because it didn't provide enough attention to the elements of ritual itself. I argue that teachers' identities determine to a certain degree what kinds of genres they have access to in their repertoires; therefore, attention to issues of genre in the classroom is crucial, particularly when we consider how strongly generic expectations may color our ways of evaluating an essay's success.

Given my argument that a teacher's generic repertoire affects her process of determining what, exactly, to value within a given student's text, the possibility for mismatches of teacher repertoires and student performances do exist. If a student does not—or cannot—provide the necessary "reading directions" for his or her teacher, that teacher is left to draw from generic options most readily available to him or her. If the teacher chooses a genre from her own repertoire as a guide, and that genre is, in fact, incompatible with the student's subject matter, style, or other aspect of her text, the teacher's reading and evaluation of that text may be affected negatively. By the same token, if a teacher readily recognizes a particular student's genre selection as familiar and/or comfortable, she may allow her understanding of the form itself to "fill in the blanks" of the essay. For instance, both Meryl and Deiva were quite captivated by Brad Trainor's "Life's Unexpectancies" because the genre itself was so very familiar. Deiva, for instance, easily read herself into the role of talk-show spectator in order to "fill in the blanks" and imagine an identity for Brad, about sexuality and relationships that Brad's essay raises, but does not answer. Clearly, the concept of student-generated genres as a product of particular institutional locations and disciplinary and cultural values must be explored further.
CHAPTER 6

TOWARD A RHETORIC OF READING:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

The moment when a composition teacher reads a student’s text is fraught with the potential for misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and misapprehension. It is also rich with possibilities for revising traditional models of reading, re-examining discursive conventions, and reimagining the relationships between teachers and students. Whatever composition teachers tell ourselves about the act of reading a student-authored text, we must acknowledge two things: first, the process is extremely complex; and second, the process is affected in a number of ways by teachers’ cultural, institutional, and disciplinary identities. Composition studies needs to generate models for reading student-authored texts that allow for the complexities inherent within that process.

In this dissertation, I have argued that teachers’ identities—which include teachers’ ways of naming themselves culturally and professionally as well as the ways they are named culturally and professionally by others—shape their reading and interpretive practices. Acknowledging this relationship—naming—takes us one step closer to a more fully realized theory of reading students’ texts rhetorically. Fuller
articulation of the complexity of classroom reading situations must go beyond issues of individual teachers’ personal and professional identities. We can benefit from paying more attention to how individual teachers’ identities are informed by a more collective sense of disciplinary ethos, and we can look to that interplay of identities as a product of the cultural, disciplinary, institutional, and political contexts in which teachers read.

To add another layer of complexity, I argue that teachers often perceive students’ texts as reflections of their—our—work. We may look to students’ texts to find evidence that the work we did in the classroom has mattered. And, as Lester Faigley suggests, we may assign value to students’ texts based on our perceptions of particular kinds of student selves constructed within them. I want to take Faigley’s argument one step further: I believe we also value students’ texts based on our perceptions of the images of our selves that those texts invoke.

My analysis of teachers’ interpretive practices in the late 1970’s suggested that teachers read students’ texts in ways that created or preserved teachers’ perceptions of themselves as different from students—racially, culturally, and cognitively. My own study of Deiva’s reading practices, on the other hand, suggested that she valued students’ texts based on her own ability to locate herself and her experiences in relation to those texts. In both cases, however, there is a relationship between teachers’ self-perceptions and their ways of reading students’ texts. Moreover, in both cases, teachers’ articulations of themselves reflect their cultural, institutional, and
disciplinary identities, identities informed by contemporary critical discourses (or lack thereof) on race, gender, disciplinary authority, and so on.

Complicating matters is the fact that the act of evaluation itself is intrinsic to the discipline of composition studies, not only because composition teachers must evaluate their students but also because composition studies itself is a discipline whose work is evaluated constantly, both inside and outside the university. Ironically, while the teaching of writing at the college level may be devalued by academics who specialize in literary studies, a host of others care a great deal about composition teachers and their work: university administrators; secondary school teachers and administrators; taxpayers, private businesses and supporters of higher education; parents, guardians, and others who assist students financially; politicians; members of the media.

Perhaps Richard Lloyd-Jones was right when he suggested in his address to the NCTE in 1985 that English teachers are positioned in “the absolute middle of things” (3). Composition teachers in particular teach the only course almost universally required by universities across the country (Crowley 1997). Instructors across academic disciplines expect their students to master the discursive conventions of their prospective fields, and many look to teachers of composition to help students achieve that mastery. And yet, as so many composition scholars have pointed out, many teachers of composition are untenured part-timers who find themselves at the bottom of the academic pecking order, especially within their own English departments. That tension between teachers’ perceptions of themselves as both central and marginalized
affects their pedagogical actions. In this dissertation, I have examined the ways that teachers’ competing constructions of their positions or locations affect one action in particular: the reading of a student-authored text. As such, the implications for my study concern not just an assessment of students and their performances in writing, but also the discipline’s ways of thinking about the readers of those texts; the kinds of authority those readers have; and the characteristics of the texts that are read.

*Rethinking Questions of Identity*

First and foremost, my study suggests that attention has been too narrowly placed upon students’ identities—particularly in basic writing scholarship—while teachers’ identities have remained virtually uninterrogated. One key implication for my study, then, is that the field must shift critical focus to bring critical attention to both student and teacher identities and the interplay between the two locations. The challenge in a differently rendered view of identity is to avoid positioning students as incidental or secondary within our scholarship and to keep both sets of identities in useful balance. I do not advocate that kind of focusing. Composition scholars should make explicit the ways that their own identities—cultural, institutional, and disciplinary—shape their research agendas, pedagogies, and representational practices while continuing the conversation about the ways their research, teaching, and other scholarly practices affect students.

Second, both the historical and ethnographic case studies suggest that when the field has considered questions of identity in its scholarship, it has done so in narrowly defined ways, paying attention primarily to issues of disciplinary or professional
identity rather than cultural identity. For example, by situating the majority of our
discussions of disciplinary identity around the literature/composition binary, we have
affirmed—over and over again—the belief that composition studies is in the
institutional position of being acted upon, rather than acting in concert with others. I
am a firm believer in the power of representations—within academic and popular
contexts—to actually alter our perceptions of reality. Our scholarship has, in the last
twenty years in particular, succeeded in naturalizing the image of composition teachers
as second class citizens. Those images are then communicated to newcomers to the
field. For example, when new teaching assistants—who may be students of literary
studies, folklore, rhetoric, linguistics, women’s studies, and so on—are introduced to
the field of composition studies via essays such as Hairston’s “Breaking Our Bonds,”
they may be encouraged to identify with either victim or victimizer. When their only
introductions to institutional history are North’s The Making of Knowledge or Berlin’s
Rhetoric and Reality, they may assume they have no choice but to align themselves
with particular categories. They may name themselves practitioners or expressivists
and stop short of searching out the rich, multiple possibilities for professional
engagement in the field.

I do not advocate ignoring the very real presence of institutional inequities
facing compositionists. I do not believe we should bury our heads in the sand and
imagine that tenure battles will be easy or that our literature colleagues will
automatically assume our work is valuable. I also do not believe that new teaching
assistants should avoid reading texts such as Berlin’s or North’s. I do, however,
believe that these are only some of the possible texts that may be used to introduce students to the discipline. I am always in search of richer alternatives.

For example, newcomers to composition studies might be invited to engage in qualitative studies of composition professionals working in a variety of institutional locations—both historically and in a more contemporary sense. They might be invited to “sit in” on listserves such as smallcomp or WPA, which feature conversations about teaching and administering composition at small colleges—public and private—as well as large research institutions. They might be invited to study the ways that writing has been taught at HBCU’s, normal schools, and other sites that have not been traditionally viewed as part of the Composition Landscape—at least as that landscape has been reflected in the pages of journals such as CCC. They might read beyond North and Berlin—or they might read North and Berlin differently, positing other ways to codify the field, or critiquing the act of codification altogether. Most importantly, new teachers of writing must be encouraged to see themselves as constitutive of, rather than in service to, academic institutions. New teachers of writing need to think about possibilities as well as limits.

Third, when the field has broadened its considerations of identity to consider questions involving race, culture, gender, and class, it has done so from a weak multicultural perspective. That perspective assumes that diversity implies, on the one hand, an “appreciation” for multiple cultures and perspectives. This appreciation gets enacted via the use of multicultural composition readers, the publication of special issues of scholarly journals featuring invited African American speakers, the
implementation of programs such as “scholars for the dream,” which helps people of color attend the CCCC convention each year, and other measures. All of these disciplinary attempts to value diversity suggest the belief that changing the “face” of the field means adding more culturally diverse faces to the field. Looks can be deceiving. I advocate studying the ways that those composition readers allow the discipline to continue other kinds of practices, such as requiring first year composition almost universally and presenting students with stagnant models of “academic conventions” in their handbooks and essentialized examples of “women’s essays” or “African American essays” in their multicultural readers.

Existing disciplinary efforts to foster diversity in composition studies have been helpful to a certain degree, they have not necessarily interrogated or revised the kinds of inequities that are structured into our discipline via its histories, theories, and pedagogical practices. Instead, like Wahneema Lubiano and other critical multiculturalists, I advocate a strong multicultural perspective, which requires more active intervention at multiple levels. A strong multicultural perspective encourages all teachers and scholars of composition—not only teachers and scholars of color—to consider the ways their own identities affect all of their pedagogical choices. Such interventions involve changes to hiring practices and to discursive conventions, scholarly representational practices, historiographical methods, evaluation strategies, and interpretive practices.

Most importantly, we need to think more critically about what constitutes “diversity” in the first place. By isolating categories of identity, such as race, class,
gender, and so on, we ignore the ways that those categories not only interanimate one another but are also part and parcel of a much larger series of categories, including: age, region, institutional location, educational background, religious background, sexuality. Chapter Five in particular demonstrates that teachers name themselves in a variety of ways that do not begin and end with the declaration of race, class, or gender. Indeed, both Deiva and Meryl’s examples suggest that their perceptions of their own identities shift over time and according to institutional and disciplinary contexts.

This dissertation demonstrates that multiple aspects of our identities affect all of our pedagogical practices in complex ways. Deiva and Meryl read, for instance, in ways that challenged essentialized notions of identity. Deiva did not resist Sarah Smith’s text because, as a native of India, she could not understand why Sarah was so shocked by the presence of roaches in her dorm room. Meryl did not prefer Ted’s essay because she, too, grew up in a small Ohio town. Those aspects of the two teachers’ cultural identities did affect their readings, but they did not determine them. Just as Donnalee Rubin discovered when she undertook her own study of teachers’ reading practices (see Chapter Five), all women teachers do not find themselves positioned to resist male students’ texts; all white teachers do not exhibit difficulties reading African American students’ texts.

And, of course, all African American students do not write in a non-standard dialect; all basic writing students are not African American, or undereducated, or politically active, or producers of “alien” or unintelligible texts. Indeed, all basic writing students are not different in the same way from their teachers. But all students
are different from their teachers and one another in a variety of ways which are often rather invisible in the classroom. And those differences do matter. We need to think more critically and be more explicit about how they matter. Only then can we make decisions about whether and when it is appropriate to respond to those differences.

**Rethinking Constructions of Authority**

The metaphors that emerge from my historical study of disciplinary *ethos* and collective identities point often to questions of institutional and disciplinary authority. Teachers of basic writing, for instance, have been figured as enlightened activists; religious zealots and devoted followers; gatekeepers; economic pragmatists; good listeners; empathetic readers; visionaries; cognitive scientists; marginalized victims; survivors of sinking ships; and even orphaned girls. Given my position that there are distinct relationships between pedagogical and representational practices in this field, a key implication for this study is that when teachers imagine themselves as disempowered, they tend to make the kinds of pedagogical choices that demonstrate that perception. For example, in Chapter Four, I discussed Joseph Trimmer’s study of basic writing pedagogy and the textbook industry. Trimmer found that, without institutional support, teachers perceived themselves as overburdened and unable to take advantage of innovations in basic writing theory and pedagogy. Hence, most of the teachers he surveyed chose sentence workbooks as the textbooks for their basic writing class. These choices, as Jerrie Cobb Scott argues in “Literacies and Deficits Revisited,” uphold the status quo of the academic institutions.
Second, by figuring themselves as positioned as bridges between home and academic discourses, or as gatekeepers or protesting activists poised outside the academy's walls, many composition teachers have reinforced their sense of themselves as separated from or in service of—rather than integral to or constitutive of—the institution itself. Again, such constructions of teachers' institutional locations may encourage them to deny their own complicity in upholding the status quo or make them feel as though they are too "outside the system" to engage in changing it. For example, consider common arguments made in favor of various methods of formal evaluation in composition programs. How many times do we overhear our colleagues say—or say ourselves—that "my department is required by the college to submit grades for students" or "the university expects for us to assign grades to students."

While I do not advocate abolishing systems of formal evaluation, composition teachers need to accept their responsibility to determine what kinds of evaluations are appropriate for the writing classroom context.

At my institution, for example, the basic writing program was recently charged with removing the placement testing process from the summer orientation context. Some administrators suggested to the basic writing coordinator that such placement testing should occur online. Our coordinator resisted that suggestion, however, citing a variety of research in basic writing and technology, as well as her program's studies of the composing habits of its students, in order to posit other alternatives. Using her authority as a basic writing expert to argue that her program should be given enough time to come up with their own alternative plan, she took responsibility for her the
new placement testing plan, channeling disciplinary and professional authority into an opportunity for more decision-making power.

In addition, we need further study of the ways that the establishment of composition studies as an authoritative field with its own professional organizations such as CCCC, graduate programs, scholarly journals, books, and presses has affected the ways teachers are trained and students are taught. We have now reached an era in our history where large groups of graduate students are being trained distinctly for careers in rhetoric and composition from the M.A. level. That shift makes a difference in the classroom, particularly in terms of theories and practices of reception. We need to study what happens when teachers do not bring generic expectations to their readings of students' texts that are based in a purely literary aesthetic.

Perhaps most importantly, my dissertation suggests implications for students' constructions of authority in the classroom. As my analysis of interpretive practices in both case studies suggests, students' possibilities for constructing authority when they write are dependent in many ways upon their teachers' reading and interpretive practices. Each time a teacher approaches a student's text, she must synthesize a variety of interpretive perspectives, including her discipline's most commonly held beliefs about student writing, her own culturally specific textual expectations, and her understanding of the conventions of her specific institutional setting. Those perspectives inform her reading of every student's text in a number of ways.

We need to study how teachers synthesize those perspectives in order to make room for students' discourses. But I urge us to do so with the assumption that such
generous syntheses are possible. How do teachers already read and value the texts of students who do not share their cultural backgrounds? How do they already read and value the texts of students who work primarily in disciplines other than English studies? How might we channel observations and analyses of those processes into teacher training efforts in order to better prepare new teachers of composition to be decision makers, rather than decision implementers, in the classroom?

*Rethinking Definitions of Genre*

The least investigated aspect of my study is the student text itself. “Toward a Rhetoric of Reading” raises a variety of questions about the relationship between students’ generic options and teachers’ generic preferences—a relationship mediated by issues of cultural, institutional, and disciplinary identity. In Chapter Five, I delineated two primary definitions of genre within the field today: first, genres as fairly traditional literary categories with predetermined formal and rhetorical features, such as epic poem or sonnet; and second, genres as rhetorical responses to recurring situations (per Carolyn Miller’s definition in “Genre as Social Action”). Neither of these definitions, however, fully accounts for the complexity of the student-authored text or the kind of hybridization of genre that seems to be taking place (e.g. within electronic classrooms). As composition teachers find the lines between academic and popular cultures blurring in the 1990’s, their generic expectations need to shift in order to accommodate changing conceptualizations of what constitutes good—or even acceptable—writing.
Student-authored texts fall into all kinds of generic categories if we consider the most traditional definition of genre: students write poems, and stories, and reports, and essays. Deiva and Meryl, for instance, read students’ texts in relation to films, such as “Keystone Cops” and “Sixteen Candles,” as well as cultural initiation rituals. Moreover, students blend even the most traditional generic forms. They argue in their narratives and narrate in their research papers. Moreover, they work in email and hypertext, producing new genres that have not been catalogued. Likewise, students respond to the recurring rhetorical situation of being evaluated in the classroom. And they respond to the recurring rhetorical situation of being asked to demonstrate what they know, or show how they came to know something. They respond to the recurring rhetorical situation of having to write as though they care about something that they really don’t, and they respond to the recurring rhetorical situation of having to write about something they really care about as though they do not care at all.

The student text itself—in all its multiple forms—arises out of the intersection of a variety of definitions of genre. These definitions include the two I discuss above, but they also extend to include other conceptualizations. As I suggested in Chapter Five, the genre of the student’s text is often received as a textual representation of a student’s experience. In other words, the problem that Leigh Gilmore articulates in Autobiographies—that texts are often equated with the “real” lives of those who produce them—is, in fact, a primary generic feature of student-authored texts. The rhetorical situation of the classroom implies that student-authors are sharing something with teachers—experience, knowledge, authority—in order to demonstrate
that they are particular kinds of people—observant, creative, competent, objective, and so on. Teachers then evaluate students based on their success in sharing information and constructing selves. Such texts position teachers to read them as representations of students’ life experiences. I am much persuaded by Lester Faigley’s arguments in both *Fragments of Rationality* and “Judging Writing, Judging Selves”: the genre of the student text often serves as a way to evaluate the kind of student “self” who produced it. Whether or not this concept of genre is ethical is not at issue. Rather, the issue facing teachers is how to respond to and evaluate such texts within this kind of generic system.

An important implication for my study in terms of genre involves the possibility for mismatch: What happens when a teacher seems to be operating within a different generic system than a student? What if she has no generic roadmap, so to speak, that she can use in order to read a student’s text? What will guide the teacher as she reads? In other words, the act of reading student writing is one way in which teachers assign value to particular kinds of rhetorical forms, rhetorical responses, and textualized identities and behaviors. I want to redefine genre in a way that includes all three concepts: I view genre as a mode of behavior in writing.

Teachers approach student texts with specific generic expectations—regarding the ways in which they wish students to “behave” through written language—and they read those texts by depending on generic roadmaps to guide them. Those maps, of course, emerge from the teachers’ generic repertoires, the collections of rhetorical forms they have encountered and internalized from their educational, cultural, and
other personal experiences. By redefining genre as a mode of behavior for the
classroom context, we might begin to ask different kinds of questions: What textual
behaviors are most valued, by whom, and in what contexts? What is at stake when we
ask students to change those modes of behavior? How might it be possible for
teachers to re-evaluate those modes of behavior? Indeed, if we were to chart the ways
that conceptualizations of genre have changed in composition scholarship over time
and evaluate the effects those changes on students' generic options in the classroom,
we might denaturalize the genres that seem so ingrained and open them up to new
possibilities.

**Limitations of the Study**

My decision to study only *CCC* and *JBW* in the historical case study limits the
classes of representations of teachers to which I direct readers' attention. Both journals,
as I mention in Chapter Two, are considered to be prestigious in the field and both
publish work written by a fairly limited number of scholars, many of whom work in
research universities. My study would be enriched by consideration of other journals,
including, for example, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, a journal that
addresses a large audience of compositionists who define themselves first and
foremost as teachers, rather than scholars. Likewise, the study would benefit from
careful consideration of textbooks, placement essays, curricular plans and outlines, and
other pedagogical artifacts.

The study could also be expanded by considering a larger period of
composition's disciplinary history. In this dissertation, I offer a limited exploration of
composition studies’ recent disciplinary history. My reading of the historical moments just prior to and just after the open admissions era at CUNY has helped me to trace changing representational and interpretive practices. Still, the field would benefit from a longer study of what the disciplinary ethos has been for the field and a longer view of what constitutes basic writing.

My ethnographic case study, too, is limited by my own decision to study only two teachers’ reading practices. Clearly the field could benefit from a wider study that considers a larger group of teachers’ reading practices; that group should certainly include men as well as women, graduate students as well as faculty, and teachers of a wide variety of writing courses outside the basic writing context.

Moreover, my study was both complicated and enriched by the fact that I had a collegial relationship with both Deiva and Meryl. My admiration for their work and affinity for their methods clearly underlies my analyses of their reading practices. While some might argue this is a liability for the study, I choose to emphasize my original goal: to produce a generative study of good teachers at work, a study that might help those who are new to the classroom reimagine what it means to read and evaluate a student’s text.

Taking Responsibility

I close by returning once more to the work of Jerrie Cobb Scott, who urges teachers to question the implications of their pedagogical choices within specific sites. This quotation from Scott serves as one of the four epigraphs for Chapter One:

As teachers, we tend to operate without questioning the extent to which practices deviate from the ideal, socially sanctioned ideologies of society or
how our individual processes of self-identity interplay with the self-identity of students. To fail to critically examine the practiced vs. the preached ideologies of society or the student vs. the teacher's self-identity is to support, through uncritical dysconsciousness, the recycling of attitudes that resist changes that benefit those marginalized in school systems. (51)

Scott suggests here that teacher attitudes contribute to the reproduction of dominant ideologies in the classroom, and she directs our attention to the interplay of identity and ideology. Scott is interested in how the attitudes and actions of teachers may actually replicate societal practices that uphold insider/outsider binaries, privileging the habits and values of "insider" cultures. These are the same insider cultures that Lloyd-Jones alludes to in "What We Will Be," the culture of teachers who are "in the middle of things" (3).

Scott's work prompts us to pay careful attention to the web of relations that connect individual teachers, their definitions of literacy, their beliefs about students and their literacy practices, their pedagogical choices, and so on. In fact, when we consider the multilayered influence of a given teacher's identity in any classroom, the effects are rather dizzying. Within the context of the basic writing classroom, as Scott suggests, the stakes are particularly high. I believe they are high in all composition classrooms.

The practice of uncritical dysconsciousness may cause teachers and researchers, especially those who focus upon the act of defining and articulating the identities of so-called "outsiders," to urge marginalized students to simply become more like insiders, to replicate their own literacy practices and values, without
stopping to problematize how the very notion of the “insider” in this sense is constructed.

One reason this practice persists is that teachers do not understand their own power. They do not understand that they are making a choice when they privilege the same generic forms, the same modes of discourse, the same rhetorical moves, year in and year out. By paying attention to both individual teachers’ identities and a more collective sense of the ethos of the composition teacher—the locus for choice-making—I place the individual in conversation with the institution. I have grown frustrated by the ways in which the word “institution” is used to distance us from the contexts in which we work. Teachers need to take responsibility for their individual choices within their institutional contexts and understand that our collective choices quite literally constitute the institution itself.

I agree with Deiva, who declares in Chapter Five her sense that, when she is in the classroom, she is the institution. Each time she reads and evaluates a student’s text, she embodies the institution’s values and beliefs, its practices and privileges. When she demonstrates through her reading of student-authored texts her understanding that meaning is negotiated by readers and writers, she alters a particular rhetorical commonplace: that it is the student writer’s responsibility to make meaning for a reader. When she demonstrates through her reading that teachers bring their own experiences to their students’ texts, she authorizes students to do the same and deauthorizes another rhetorical commonplace: that readers experience texts in uniform
ways when the text is clear, coherent, and able to speak to “all readers” and their experiences.

At the same time, I agree with Meryl, who views the reading moment in the classroom as an opportunity to model for students the kinds of reading and writing conventions that are most valued by others within the academic context. Meryl works hard to demystify those conventions. She helps students understand that conventions are made and to position themselves in ways that might allow them to engage in the process of making them. Meryl’s work, too, is a part of a revisionary project precisely because of the location in which it occurs: the basic writing classroom at a large, state-supported university. In this context, a student’s ability to practice accepted academic conventions for reading and writing increase her chances for success at the university. That same student’s ability to practice, question, and revise those conventions increase her chances for success in other contexts as well.

Just as Deiva’s and Meryl’s perspectives are not mutually exclusive, I am able to posit this dissertation as both critical and hopeful. While Chapter Three contextualizes the study as an analysis of the field’s practice of weak multiculturalism in the last thirty years, that chapter also maintains that critical, multiculturalism can, in fact, function as a viable strategy for revising disciplinary approaches to identity-related issues in the field. Chapter Four, the historical case study, is both a critique of existing ways of representing teachers and their interpretive practices and an example of the richness and complexity that underlies that scholarship. Chapter Five, the ethnographic case study, is a demonstration of the ways that teachers read their
students’ texts both generously and critically when they accept shared responsibility for meaning-making in the classroom.

Teachers must pay attention to the processes by which we communicate our values and beliefs to students. In this dissertation, I have explored the act of reading and valuing student-authored texts as one site where uncritical dysconsciousness is enacted and one site where it can be overcome. By doing so, I have highlighted the ways that teacher identity not only shapes our ways of reading and valuing students’ texts but also mediates the generic options made available to students in the first place. In other words, by paying attention to teacher identity issues—an individual teacher’s ways of identifying herself, others’ ways of identifying her, and her own perception of her relationship to the institution that employs her and the discipline that authorizes her—while she reads students’ texts, we discover that identity issues affect the assignments we make and the genres we expect in response.
NOTES


2 See Donnalee Rubin’s *Gender Influences: Reading Student Texts* (1993); Tom Newkirk’s *The Performance of Self in Student Writing* (1997); William B. Coles and James Vopat’s *What Makes Writing Good: A Multiperspective* (1985); and Xiao-Ming Li’s “Good Writing” in *Cross-Cultural Context* (1996). These studies engage questions of teachers’ disciplinary and aesthetic values as they affect the reading of student-authored texts.

3 It is important to note that Rose was “misplaced” as a basic writer initially, which may cause readers to question whether or not he speaks from an “authentic” position as a former basic writer in the first place. This problem, because Rose points it out, opens the door for a reading of his text in which the reader is positioned to evaluate the rhetoric of authenticity in the text.

4 See David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University” in *JBW* (1986); see also Rubin (1993); Li (1996); and Newkirk (1997) in note two, above.

5 See Patricia Bizzell’s collection, *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness* (1992), which traces her often ambivalent feelings about the ways that acquiring academic discourse is posited as the desired end of composition pedagogy.

6 For further discussion of the teaching journal that I kept that year, see “Constructing Teacher Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom,” by Jacqueline Royster and Rebecca Taylor in *JBW* (1997).

7 For a fuller discussion of the Writing Workshop environment and its staff, see Chapter Five.
8 It seems important to note here that one of the reasons I asked Deiva and Meryl to
complete this protocol at home was because I was nine months pregnant and I became
less comfortable walking around our icy campus. A talk-aloud protocol at home
seemed one way to accommodate my desire for a shifting rhetorical context and my
need for no-slip surfaces.

9 See appendix for student-authored texts read and discussed by Deiva and Meryl in
Chapter Five.

10 While it would appear that Kelly herself has essentialized Black students as urban
dwellers who speak the language of the ghetto, it is important to note that she does so
in response to the field’s figuration of Black students in these terms. In other words,
the primary image of the Black student available to CCCC members at this time is that
of the ghetto-dweller; thus, this is the identity Kelly calls upon in order to construct
authority for those students.

11 In her essay, “CCCD’s Role in the Struggle for Language Rights” (CCC 1999),
linguist Geneva Smitherman notes that Kelly herself co-edited this special issue of
CCC. Smitherman emphasizes that the special issue’s inclusion of articles by four
African American writers is a “first for CCC” (355). Thus I do not wish to downplay
the importance of this move in terms of its attempted inclusivity; rather, I want to
focus upon the disciplinary tendency to assume that such moves are enough to “solve”
the diversity “problem.”

12 For responses to Hairston, see CCC 44.2 (1993): 248-257. Hairston’s reply appears
here as well.

13 See Soliday and Gleason (1997) for discussions of mainstreaming projects.

14 See Royster and Taylor (1997); Royster and Williams (1999); Helmers (1994); Jones
(1993); and Scott (1993).

15 Troyka covers definitions offered by scholars such as Patricia Bizzell, David
Bartholomae, and other prominent basic writing scholars. Shaughnessy first redefined
the remedial or developmental writer as a “beginner” or basic writer in the mid-1970’s
(see Chapter Four).

16 See also Lester Faigley’s “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a
Proposal” (1986).
17 Studies by Nancy Sommers (1982) and C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon (1982) suggest the ineffectiveness of teachers' comments on students' papers, particularly when the goal is to facilitate revision.

18 In 1975, William G. Clark offered a provocative CCC "Counterstatement" response to The Students' Right that takes a similar position to Hake's. He declares that the resolution does not rise to its ethical and pedagogical responsibilities, allowing teachers to "trade nobility for students' employability" (217).

19 See also Bartholomae (1986); Neuleib (1993), Rondinone, Rose, Mutnick.

20 It is important to note that I was unable to locate the issue, despite my efforts to utilize two major state universities' library systems and interlibrary loan systems. In fact, the issue itself is not offered by JBW as a back issue, though it is included in Otte and Smoke's cumulative index to the first fourteen issues of JBW (see "A Brief History" in Volume 16 number 1, 1997).

21 Bartholomae's work has been critiqued for precisely the welcoming, inclusive ethos I describe. The "we" of this essay, after all, is a clearly academic "we": Bartholomae imagines that basic writing students will, in fact, both desire and work to attain access to the academic communities that "we" belong to. He does not, however, interrogate who constitutes that we or how one becomes a member of the academic community in the first place.

22 In 1987, however, CCC published an essay that features images of basic writing teachers in the classroom. In "Collaboration of Teacher and Counselor in Basic Writing" (38.4), Patrick Bizzaro and Stuart Werner describe a course in which a counselor was invited to class to help basic writers sort through their personal problems and work through those problems through writing. They describe an exercise called "the lifeline" that "help[s] students set goals that are both reasonable and achievable as well as products of past experiences and interests" (459). Here the basic writing teacher-researchers are also pop psychologists, working to diagnose and cure their students, who are portrayed as emotionally immature.

23 I do not wish to imply that Deiva's childhood is somehow less important to her than her graduate school experience. Rather, I believe it is important to note that when the conversation was framed as one about reading practices and personal and educational histories, Deiva shared her educational experiences as an adult most readily; these narratives seemed to be shaping her own basic writing classroom pedagogy most apparently.

24 For teacher-readers, that reading process is particularly collaborative in nature. I found that when Deiva and Meryl read essays produced by their own students, for
instance, they often used the pronoun “we” in describing who made particular rhetorical choices. Likewise, both teachers reported some awareness of reading their own voices and suggestions within the final drafts of their students’ essays. Likewise, when they expressed disappointment with a student’s final product, they often attributed the lack of success to “our” decisions during revision.

25 I acknowledge that Meryl spoke of such performativity much less often when she read Brad Trainor’s paper.

26 This conversation lasted, in fact, for quite a long time, and it became clear to me that Deiva’s reasons for representing Brad as she did were complex and often highly personal. My sense is that it would not be ethical or appropriate to share the details of this conversation, but I want to underscore that Deiva was quite aware of the ways that she constructed issues of race, sexuality, and representation in this instance.

27 Meryl also noted that the subject matter of Sarah’s essay reminded her of *Metamorphosis*, but she quickly acknowledged that she would not call the text Kafkaesque. In this case, despite the similar subject matter—bugs—Meryl knew that it would not be appropriate to place Sarah’s essay into Kafka’s generic tradition. Her knowledge of literary studies simply will not allow her to make the comparison.
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APPENDIX A

Preliminary Reading History Questionnaire

1. Describe briefly your earliest memories of reading as a child. What kinds of texts really captured your interest? Why?

2. Choose three significant reading moments or encounters in your life and describe those encounters, contexts as well as the texts. What makes these encounters memorable?

3. Describe your earliest memory of reading a student’s text once you became a teacher. What was that experience like? What kinds of expectations guided your reading of those texts?

4. Describe the last student text that troubled you as a reader. What troubled you? Why?

5. Describe the last student text that really moved or impressed you. Why?

6. Are you aware of any specific reading processes that you engage in as a reader of student texts? What do those processes look like?

7. Are you aware of any processes that you engage in as a reader of professionally authored texts? What do those processes look like?

8. How do you see your reading practices in the two rhetorical situations described above (#6 and #7) as similar or different? Can you compare and/or contrast your work within these situations?

9. When you read a student’s text, how do you imagine your responsibility to that text? How does the role of reader differ from the role of evaluator (if at all)?

10. Can you think of any published accounts of basic writing teachers reading and responding to student texts that are particularly interesting to you? What do you remember about those accounts?

11. What is the nature of the relationship between published accounts (see above) and your own reading practices as a teacher? How has/ hasn’t basic writing scholarship influenced your own reading practices?

12. How do you describe yourself to your students?

13. How do you believe your students describe you to each other?

14. How would you like your students to describe you to each other?
APPENDIX B

STUDENT AUTHORED TEXTS

Invasion of the Cockroaches

As a person starts to mature and grow older, they learn to experience and deal with many different changes. These good or bad changes may result as a turning point in that person’s life. As an eighteen year old, I have been confronted with many life changing experiences. This not only helped me discover who I am, but also gives me the chance to deal with many hard struggles and exciting times in my life. For example, the first time I became a cheerleader my body was filled with joy and excitement, while coping with the tragic losses of both my grandmothers put me through a different phase of life. The image I got the first time I came to Ohio State University was a virgin-like, pure, picture. While at orientation, the perception that the university tried to pass to everyone was that of an ideal college. They made college be the total opposite than expected. Everything around was clean, from the dorm rooms to the atmosphere of the whole campus. Even the taste of the cafeteria food was worthwhile. To my surprise, the life of college which they portrayed was totally different. The first two weeks of school everything was still the picture they painted in our minds. Since then, things on campus have started to turn around. For instance, the food in the cafeteria has deteriorated in taste, the bathrooms have wedged their way in becoming dirty, and some people consider campus a big trashcan. As each day moves on, many more turning points approach in my life. The most recent occurrence that has affected me is the roaming of cockroaches in my dorm room.

Tired as can be and not wanting to go to class, I awoke at the sound of my alarm clock. I slowly emerged from my warm bed and shook my roommate, Amanda, telling her it was time to get ready. She crawled out of her bed, still half asleep, complaining that it was too early to get up and go to class. Time was ticking away for us to leave so we embarked on our daily routine. Our daily routine consisted of washing our face, brushing
our teeth, combing our hair, and jumping into a comfortable outfit for class. Everyday was
pretty much consistent for us, except that morning on October 22, 1998. When Amanda
and I finished getting ready, we started to head out the door to go to class. When all of a
sudden we saw this enormous, black shelled, ugly looking insect dart across our dorm
floor. When I looked at it up close I knew exactly what kind of bug it was - a cockroach. I
instantly screamed at Amanda for her to kill the nasty thing. She flung open the closet door
and raised her foot to step on the dirty old roach. When she raised her foot up again we
both thought the sucker was dead, but when we looked at the ground he suddenly got up
and ran away. We started screaming our ever living heads off without a doubt when we
saw the roach trying to escape. There we were nervous, frightened, and scared out of our
minds of a bug that was twenty times smaller than the size of us. With all her might
Amanda was raising her voice at me to find the cockroach and giving me orders to squash
its guts out. Well, I did find the enormous roach. It was on the wall, but the only bad
thing was I could not kill it. I am petrified of insects and that was the reason I could not
take his poor life. I told Amanda not to move her eyes and to watch the roach on the wall,
while I went down to my friend Jody's room, asking her to kill it. When I came back to
the room, Amanda was frantic and all shook up, but sprinting down the hall right behind
me came Jody and her sister, Jackie, ready for their mission. They rushed into our room
with a big black shoe ready to destroy this bug's life. With a huge smack against the wall,
the life of the dirty cockroach was taken away forever. Our hearts beating and trembling
after the execution, made us wonder if there were any more cockroaches infesting our
dorm room.

As the day went on, we carefully would examine our room, waiting to spot more of
our lovable friends crawling around. Later that night, we found two more cockroaches
crawling outside in the hall and along the walls of the hall. Without thinking twice, but
scared out of our minds, we knew we had to take care of these infesting insects before they
snatched their way back into our room. With courage, fear, and might we killed them at
once. This little incident made Amanda and I realize that being in a dorm is just not all about meeting new friends, but also learning how to take care of our environment along with ourselves, while living on our own. What we were experiencing was a taste of what goes on in the real world.

This story might seem kind of strange to be considered a turning point in my life, but it has made me realize that being on your own is a lot different from living at home. This incident with the cockroaches has made me a more petrified person towards insects. Every night when Amanda and I go to bed, we put the covers up to our face and we check the walls in our room for moving objects. On the other hand, this has built up my confidence not to depend on other people about my fears. For instance, when I lived at home I would always rely on my parents to kill any insects that came to my attention. When I see a bug, I am the type of person who expresses all my fright. I will practically not move a single bone in my body, or take my eyes off the creature until someone has destroyed the life of the annoying pest. Despite my fear of insects, I have slowly started to overcome my phobia. Over the past week two enormous bugs found their way into our room. Slowly but surely, I managed to build up the courage and confidence in myself to kill them. I quickly ran over to the sink and grabbed some paper towels. Then I instantly wadded the paper towels together and placed them on top of the bugs. Without thinking twice, I picked up the dirty rascals, squashed them, and threw them away in the trashcan in the hallway. Since I did not flush them down the toilet, with my luck, the bastards are probably still alive. Later that night, it appeared that the whole fiasco with the cockroaches was starting over again. When I opened my door, there stood Amber and Abbey, two girls that live next to me, screaming at one another to kill the cockroach. I told them to step on the roach before it escaped and traveled its way into our rooms. Finally, Amber stomped on the evil insect with her big black boot, leaving the remains of the bug’s insides on the floor of the hallway.
In conclusion, my main goal that I am trying to achieve now is to overcome my fears towards bugs. If I succeed this may prove that being an insecure person about certain things can be defeated if you believe in yourself.
My Drivers License

Everybody says that a drivers license is a privilege and a responsibility, and they're right. I was 17 when I got my license, and five months later, I got my first speeding ticket. But now I've got it back and everything's doing fine, so far.

It was the spring time, before my 16th birthday. I was staying after school to work on an English paper. I had told my Mom that I would call when I was done. But she decided that she was going to come to the school ahead of time. By that time I was done anyway. I had called home to see if Mom was there, I got no answer. Little did I know was that she was just down the hall, looking for me. When she did come down to where I was at, I had gone outside to look for her. When she went out side to look for me in the parking lot, I had gone in another entrance to wait for her some more. Since my Mom didn't see me there, she left without me. So I waited there until about 5:00 that evening. Then I decided that I was tired of waiting and I walked into town and waited at the Sheriff's office in Marysville. When Mom showed up, it was about 7:00 that night. I also had to get to a Union County Junior Fairboard meeting, which little did I know was down the street from where I was at. So Mom took me down the street to the meeting and after that I had to walk another block to where my Dad was having a Marysville Junior Baseball Association meeting. I waited for the meeting to end and Dad and I went home. After we got home, we all had a big argument about the situation. As usual it was Mom and Dad against me. It always seems that my parents were are against me. Sure they tell me that it will be for my
own good, but I always want to say, “screw that, I want to find out on my own.” I may be the oldest in my family, but I'm the oldest of 6. And if something were to happen to me, I always thought, “no big deal, they'll always just make a replacement for me.” That would leave the next one down the oldest, which is Mom and Dad's perfect little angel. Sure they yell at him, just not as much, and they seem to do more things for him than me. If he wanted a new golf bag to show off to the team, Mom and Dad would buy it for him. If I wanted something, “you have a job, it's not my fault you used your money on other things. You need to learn to save up.” Well, it's not my fault that my boss didn't pay me enough for the work I did. Plus I used the money I had to pay for gas and to buy lunch when I worked a whole day. I tried to put my points and my side of the story down, but as expected, I lost the fight, as I always do. It never seemed fair, but I had to take it like I was supposed to, or they would add on to my punishment. So it was my punishment that I wasn't to get my license until they said so. Later on that year, when Mom and Dad noticed that almost all of my brothers were going to be playing baseball at the same time this next year. They decided that it was time that I had to get my license whether they wanted me to or not. If I would have picked a different day, or maybe did the assignment ahead of time, I would have probably avoided that situation, argument, and punishment. My self-discipline and organizational skills weren't exactly the best then.

In December of that same year, I started my driver's education course. It was a one week lecture class and an 8 hour in-car training period. The lecture part of the course was basically common-sense instruction. It covered the general knowledge, rules, laws, regulations, possible incidents, safety, and everything else that I happened to know already. It pays off to be raised on a farm. A lot of the essentials of driving are acquired from learning to drive a tractor. I also
had the chance of learning to drive a regular vehicle numerous times to my grandparents' house, since they lived right next door. The in-car training wasn't much harder than the lecture part of the course. Like I mentioned before, I had the chance to drive a regular vehicle, so I was pretty relaxed in the car. The only thing that made me nervous was that it wasn't the vehicle that I was used to. The vehicle that I drove at home was a Ford Bronco II. The car that I was driving for my training was a Chevrolet Corsica. So my dilemma was that I wasn't used to being so close to the ground. I found out that that's one of the learning experiences when a person is driving. They must get used to whatever car they're driving as quick as possible. It would be the same problem if I were to get a new car. But, I still passed my driver's education with flying colors.

After my driver's ed, I had practiced my driving quite a few times. Then the day of my test came. It was 3 days before my 17th birthday. The trooper that was giving my examination checked over the Bronco and checked the tail lights and turn signals, then, we were off. We went down the block from the BMV and then came back. After that, we went to the back corner of the parking lot where the maneuverability part of the examination was taking place. When the examiner told me to start I began very carefully. Right then, I tried to rely on my training, and I bumped a cone. So the examiner told me to go again. This time, I tried to rely on my instincts. I was almost though and I thought, "I'm going to make it." Wrong again! I hit another cone, but it was just with the mirror. Apparently, the examiner let that go, because she said for me to stop and that I had passed. As I looked at the score sheet, I had noticed that I passed by just one point. I felt good that I passed, but I felt weird because I only passed by that one point. I drove home that afternoon. After that, I didn't really get to drive for about another month.
On August 8th, I was going to the Ohio State Fair, by myself to a dance night put on by the Ohio Farm Bureau Youth Committee. Well since I've been to the Northwest Region Youth Leadership Conference, which is also put on by the Farm Bureau during the summer, I was one of the Farm Bureau Youth, so I was kind of entitled to go. I had my fun at the dance night, and when it was over at about 11:00, I called home to let my parents know that I was on my way home. As I was on my way home I started to get in a hurry, due to the fact that it was getting late and I was getting tired and eager to arrive at home. I got to Marysville at about 11:40, and my home is about 10 minutes from town. So I decided that if I take one of the back roads really fast, it would be a quicker way home. So I took the back road with no problem at all. I knew that I was going faster than I should've been, but I didn't realize that there was an downhill slope that would make me pick up so much speed, because as I came over a hill, so was a Sheriff's Deputy. When he told me how fast I was going I was shocked and didn't really think that the Bronco would actually go that fast. The Deputy had clocked me going 92 in a 55. My parents weren't exactly understanding about it either. They thought that I was lying about the downhill making the Bronco able to pick up that much speed, but I knew it was true, and that's all that mattered. So my punishment from the city of Marysville was a loss of license for 30 days and 76 dollars worth of total court costs, but my Dad decided that it wasn't going to end there. After the 30 days, he took my license away for the rest of the year. That particular punishment was to make me think about the ramifications of speeding that fast. "What if I were to get in an accident? 'No more Tim.'" Now I know I'm not going to keep speeding all of the time.

And now as a whole year has gone by, there have been no other incidents and I have my own car now as well. I don't speed as much anymore. I usually go that 5 mile an hour limit over
to get a little bit of speed in my life. The only times that I really “lay it on the floor” so to speak is probably is when I’m really mad or late for work. And even then I don’t go that much faster than anyone else in a hurry. Maybe 70 in a 55 is a little too much, even for myself, so I slow back down to 60 and I feel better for a while. But once I get out on the highway, I turn into the little speed demon again, just still not as fast. The limit is usually 65. Yet, everyone else on the highway, including myself insist on going at least 75, maybe even pushing 80. But, once everyone sees a cruiser coming, all you would see is a whole line of cars, trucks, vans, and other vehicles all slow down at the same time. It’s rather funny if you think about it. And I also now know that I have to be careful when I’m driving as well. It is getting toward deer season, and the deer can do some really serious damage to a car, even if you are going the exact speed limit. So it’s better off to watch out and do the speed limit, maybe even a little less than that. I’ve grown to learn that a car can be more dangerous than a person may think.
LIFE'S UNEXPECTANCIES

I was on the phone with a friend from school when they said,

"is Grace pregnant?"

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I heard that she is pregnant."

"What are you talking about? Well who ever told you that is crazy. Well let me call her and find out the truth." After this conversation I was very disturbed. I then called her and confronted her with what I had heard. When she answered the phone I said "So what is this I hear, that your pregnant?" She replied "I am not but what if I was."

"Well if your not then we don't have to deal with it now we will deal with it when the time comes. I have to go and call the person back that told me and fix them."

As time passed the topic was never brought up again until one day two of my boys and me went to Target to visit my best friend Grace. When we got to Target we realized that there was some stuff that we needed to pick up. So we went and found what we needed. As we got to the checkout counter the girl at the register next to me
turned and told me that the girl I loved was pregnant. This news was disturbing yet I blew it off. As we were walking out of the store Grace came up to me and told me that she was on break. She said, "She would walk us out." When we got out to the car I stopped and leaned up against Travis's car. Grace stood in front of me while Travis and Josh were flipping shopping carts over and surrounding a friend from school's car with the carts. I confronted her with the news that I had just heard. She told me that it was true, she really was pregnant. Trying not to loose it I made her aware of the fact that no matter what happened I would be there for her. I gave her a hug and sent her back to work. We left target headed for Josh's house. After we dropped Josh off Travis and I started to talk about what just happened. All that I could really say is "I love her so much."

We would sit and talk but the idea of mood swings was given a new meaning. When she started it would be great she was in a good mood and very perky. She would tell me things like how much she cared about me. She would also talk about how she wanted to spend the rest of her life with me. As the conversation continued her mood would shift in many different directions. They would vary from sad
to a down right pissy bitch. I can remember one of our conversations where she said, "You are a complete and total asshole and if I ever have to talk to you again it will be to soon." The mood swings got so bad that I could not talk to her. It was not that I did not want to but I could not stand the way she made me feel. So the only way that I could find out how she was doing was to ask her mom. She and I were really close. I started only calling when Grace was not home so that I would only get her mom.

When her parents found out her mom asked her how I took the news. Grace told me that it almost seemed as if her parents cared more about how I was taking the new than how she was doing. So this created some conflict between Grace and me. When we were talking about this situation I told her, "No matter what they say you still are the most important thing in their life. You are also the most important thing in my life." Every time that I would talk to her I would make sure that she knew that I loved her. This was one of the only times that she made me feel good. Well, that was the moment in our conversations that she said, "You don't know how good that makes me feel."
The first time I saw her kid I was sitting on the couch in their family room when in walks her mom with the newborn. He was asleep but woke promptly when he heard my voice. As he awoke she tried to get me to hold him, but I declined. I knew then that it would take time before I would love him. The reasons for this are because I was jealous and scared of him. Jealous in the sense that he was the main objects in her life not me. The scared part would have to do with the fear of hurting him. I was and still not sure if she knew this or not. I don't think she did because if she did our relationship between us would have been a lot different. She probably would have a little more resistant toward me. As time went on I got more and more comfortable with him. He started to become a major part of my life.

A few weeks latter I was over visiting Grace when her mom came out carrying Spencer. I just about to leave when her mom told me that if I did not hold him then I would never be able to leave. So I took him from her. When I held him I was uncomfortable about how I should be reacting to what was going on. This day started the process of me getting used to and being comfortable with holding him.
The first time that Grace, Spencer, and I went out in to public, we went to the mall. While we were there I ran in to a lot of people that I knew from school. They would all come over to me and ask questions. The questions would range between "Is it yours?" to "How old is he?" I would always try to act as if these questions did not bother me for the sake of augment with Grace. Yet, I was still uncomfortable with the whole idea of people thinking that he was my kid. They would get this idea from seeing Grace, Spencer, and me together all the time. After time went on I decided that it did not madder what people thought or said. The only thing that mattered was that I was with her and that I was starting to love him.

After I became comfortable with him and the idea of Grace, Spencer, and me I fell in love with the idea of him thinking of me as his father. I have never asked him but I feel that I was his fatherly figure for the first part of his life.