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BASIC WRITING (UN)WRITTEN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND GENEALOGY OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH IN TEXAS

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BASIC WRITING (UN)WRITTEN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND GENEALOGY OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH IN TEXAS

by

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Dedication

To my strong, smart, and beautiful daughter, Harper.

May you live life to the fullest.

May you give freely and find yourself in love's embrace.

May you seek questions more profound than answers.

May you always have the courage and resilience to follow your dreams.

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Of course, I never would have gotten this far without the love and support of my family—my parents, Ken and Gisele, who taught me to be strong and persevere, my husband, Scott, who always listened and let me know how proud he was of me each step of the way, and my daughter, Harper, the reason for all of my hard work. I love you and thank you all.

Preface

Conducting research within the field of developmental education is very important to me because in many ways, through my own lived experiences, I have been at odds with the dominant discursive practices that operate through the university. Such practices continue to present challenges for the many students who do not readily conform to the institutionalized norms of the academy. I am particularly interested in programs that serve large numbers of first generation college students or state as a goal their intent to provide what they term an intervention for students who are labeled at-risk because they are less likely to be assimilated into the academic discourse community. I am the first in my family to obtain a college degree and, although I had the opportunity to attend a prestigious university, I did so as a scholarship recipient whose educational experiences were unlike many of her peers.

Although I am currently middle-class, I grew up in a working-class family in a small steel town in the northeast. My father is a mechanic and my mother has worked at the same department store for the past 27 years. I identify as a White woman, but my family is racially diverse. Many of my aunts and uncles and cousins on my mother's side identify as Cuban, Puerto Rican and Black. As a young person I was not very aware of these differences or of class inequities. There didn't appear to be huge discrepancies in wealth in my hometown, and we all seemed pretty much alike. However, education was always stressed as something that was very important, the key to get out of that small town. My mother did not allow me to miss a single day of school between kindergarten and the twelfth grade, and I did fairly well. I was accepted at a small, private liberal arts university in the south, and even though I thought that I was a good student, it soon became evident that my scholastic record and extracurricular experiences paled in

comparison to most at this college. Many students were educated in private schools, had several AP credits, and followed generations of relatives who had preceded them in attaining a university education. They had access to a wealth of resources—financial, social, cultural, and academic—that I felt I lacked. For the first time in my life I began to realize the depth and breadth of the inequities that plague our society, albeit in small ways.

I was very lucky to be a part of a Preschool Program, one which entailed extensive advising and follow-up, because I struggled tremendously during my first two years of college. I barely passed some of my classes and was weeded out of my intended major. Half of the time I had no idea what I was supposed to be doing, even when it came to what now seem like simple things such as following a degree plan. When I met with my advisor, I didn't know what questions to ask when everyone else seemed to know exactly what to do or at least had someone to call who did. The one-on-one attention from the advising staff and the faculty in the learning center really made a difference in my life. They stood by me and were always there to help, sometimes even in an intrusive way. When it was time to choose a career, I gravitated toward student services because of the differences those individuals made in my life. In many ways, I credit them for my persistence, and I began my career with the intention of playing a similar role in the lives of my students, particularly those who felt out of place in the university setting. Although I realize that it is presumptuous to compare my experiences with many of the students who are mandated into developmental courses and understand the potentially harmful implications of doing so, I do feel I would be amiss if I did not mention that I gravitated toward these students in my work because I felt solidarity with them. In my own ways, I have felt the normalizing gaze of suspicion that, however

implied, conveyed the message that I was underprepared or unworthy, an outsider to the university community.

For the past seven years I have been advising, tutoring, teaching, and administering support services for students enrolled in basic writing classes. In 2001, I began my first professional job out of graduate school as the Coordinator of Advising and Supplemental Education at a small, urban Historically Black University in Texas. At that time I had little to no knowledge of developmental programs or their collective histories and practices. Because I was tasked with administering the placement test and advising all first-year students at my institution, however, I soon learned that over 65% of them were required to participate in developmental education and I became interested in learning more about their experiences. As I spent time conducting research at that college, I discovered the following: (a) the percentage of students required to take at least one basic course at this school, notably one where over 90% of enrollees were persons of color, was substantially higher than the state average of 41%; (b) many students who enrolled in basic courses experienced difficulty passing those classes and in some instances decided to leave school when they were not successful; (c) several of the students who were getting stuck in the cycle of developmental education were, in my estimation, bright and dedicated students; and d) there was a general, if unspoken, agreement that students enrolled in basic classes really weren't college material, that all of them were at-risk, or that they needed to be remediated before they were deserving of the benefits of a higher education.

I share these observations not so that they might be considered as objective data but rather because it was these perceptions, along with my aforementioned desire to help students, that motivated me to return to school to research best practices within the field of developmental education. Through my professional experiences, I concluded that

many students who had to participate in basic writing were being disenfranchised within the arena of higher education. I began to question whether this might be due to elements of practice within developmental programs.   I approached my work, therefore, with the assumption that the policies and procedures governing basic writing—mandatory placement based on a single, standardized assessment and so called drill and skill grammar instruction—might not be in the best interest of my students. Guided by liberal-humanist intentions, I was determined to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that offered suggestions for reforming development education to ensure student success. My main focus was to identify ways to strengthen pedagogical approaches to basic writing and, drawing on the work of scholars who view literacy through a sociocultural lens, I began to research classroom practices that capitalize on the "funds of knowledge" that students bring to their learning environment (Moll, 1992).

My early scholarly activity was undergirded by a rhetoric of progress, although I did not recognize it at the time. I believed that the many conflicts among truth, knowledge, and power manifest in educational practices could be overcome *solely* through a reasoned understanding of our students and that, through research, we were constantly improving upon our work. I did not understand that it was also important to explicitly question the foundational tenets or a priori assumptions that governed how I understood my work and reproduced inequitable practices in the university until I considered the research of Lather (1991), Britzman (2003), and St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) late in my doctoral studies. The texts of these scholars, among others, led me to an understanding that, as noted by St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), "we haven't quite gotten it right yet, but tend to replace one regime of truth with another" (p. 4).

While reading the books of the aforementioned authors, I began to recognize the importance of exercising researcher reflexivity, and I acquired methods for positioning

my work discursively by pointing out its conformity to particular conventions, norms, and values. I also came to view my research as a relative, social construction rather than an objective phenomenon. Furthermore, I questioned my emancipatory intentions for the first time, conceding that they might be oppressive to my students. To proceed with my work, then, I needed to closely examine my motivations for working within this profession. This was a difficult process, one which continues to this day as I struggle to reconcile my professional efforts with my own experiences as a student.

This being noted, however, it is urgent for me to convey that I do not view humanist modes of inquiry as errors that need to be replaced by a new regime of truth, nor do I privilege my chosen theoretical frames above traditional critical perspectives. As St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) contended, we should view our projects not as correctives to humanism but rather as "opportunities for limit-work, work that operates at the boundaries of the possibilities of humanism" (p. 6). Thus, I remain hopeful that praxis-oriented research is possible, that "it is in both our parallels and our differences across the various feminisms, Marxisms and poststructuralisms that we can begin to move toward a future that transcends our present limitations" (Lather, 1991, p.49). It was with these understandings and experiences that I began this investigation, one which represents a concerted effort to both recognize and rupture the discursive practices that govern the disciplinary administration of basic writing as well as to promote inquiry that advances the best interests of our students.

BASIC WRITING (UN)WRITTEN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND GENEALOGY OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH IN TEXAS

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the discourses that author basic writing in Texas and question how instructors of basic writing at a community college are constructed as well as constructive through discursive practices. Elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (Luke, 1995-1996; Faircloth, 2000) were employed to analyze primary source documents, publications, presentations, meeting minutes, public forum transcripts, professional literature and policies pertaining to the practice of developmental English since the adoption of the Texas Academic Skills Program and the Texas Success Initiative. The discourses of failure, economy and science were identified as authoritative systems of conventions and norms that operate through the practice of basic writing. A Foucaultian genealogical lens was then applied both to explore the power relations and categorizations processes that undergird the material consequences (Valle, 2005) of the

discourses as well as to identify how the narratives of basic writing faculty intersect with the discourses.

Findings suggest that the discourses of failure, economy, and science function in a reciprocal manner to promote distorted truth claims about students and basic coursework that effectively limit possibilities for and lend to increased governmental control over the future practice of developmental education. The instructors' stories, however, provide critical disruptions to the discourses. Viewing their alternative understandings of basic writing alongside the recurrent statements that have constructed popular understandings of developmental English, this study foregrounds the urgent need for more research from practitioners within the field and better channels of communicating their scholarship and professional experiences in the public arena.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Enrollment in basic writing courses continues to rise in colleges and universities across the country (Chung, 2005), requiring the allocation of augmented resources and attracting increased attention from state and national policymakers as well as higher education administrators. In the state of Texas, since the inception of the Texas Academic Skills Program in 1987, funding for basic classes and support services has more than quadrupled from an original investment of $38.6 million to over $184 million. The number of students registering for developmental courses has also increased over 81% (THECB, 2002). Interested stakeholders seek to question the purpose and efficacy of basic writing programs, with an eye toward directing future implementation and organization. Concurrently, professionals who administer, teach, and research developmental English struggle to maintain and to promote the discipline's legitimacy and to develop a professional identity, while seriously considering the implications, consequences, and outcomes for students who are placed in basic courses (Chung, 2005). Each of these endeavors requires an engagement with the history, definition, and purpose of the discipline as well as a consideration of the present state of affairs within the field. The purpose of this study was to contribute to these ongoing conversations through the construction of a genealogy of basic writing in Texas since 1980 by way of a careful examination of primary source documents, publications, presentations, meeting minutes, public forum transcripts, professional literature, and policies.

Certainly, there are many notable scholars who have undertaken the tasks of documenting the history of composition and basic writing in the university and exploring the roots of the professional identity of practitioners within the field (Berlin, 1987; Bloom, Daiker & White, 1996; Boylan, 1988; Casazza, 1999; Harris, 1996; Miller, 1991;

Lindemann & Tate, 1991; Lundell and Higbee, 2002). In fact, Stahl (2002) noted there is no shortage of "historical chronicles, summaries and timelines, and topical or era-oriented papers" and that "broadly oriented sweeps of the historical landscape abound" (p. 3). Narratives about the beginnings of basic writing programs point to several milestones and key events, which are said to have functioned as catalysts for inception and evolution. As summarized by Collins (2002):

> developmental education traces its many roots to Reconstruction, to Morrill Land Grant Acts, to the Progressive Era, to the Workers' Colleges of the Great Depression, to the GI Bill of Rights, to the Civil Rights Movement, to the Community College explosion of the late mid-twentieth century, and to the Open Admissions movement. (p. v)

Such projects, while interesting and informative, tend to assume what Lather (1991) termed a "linear, teleological rationality" in their assertion of the truth of "observable facts and transparent language" (p. 104). This represents just one way of doing history in contrast to other possibilities noted by Lather (1991) that include "chaos models of non-linearity (Gleick, 1987) and an emphasis on historical contingency (Foucault, 1980)" (p. 105).

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1965, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1985, 1986), this project investigated the discourses that author basic writing in Texas and questioned how practitioners of one basic writing program at a community college are implicated and constructed, as well as constructive, through discursive practices. Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse extends beyond simply that which is said, to approximate a system of conventions or norms, produced through power relations, that define or dictate that which can or cannot be uttered, who can considered as a speaking

subject, and what might be understood as truth or knowledge. I chose to examine documents related to the emergence of basic writing in Texas using elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Luke, 1995-1996; Fairclough, 2000)—which treats historicized narratives as texts and questions the multiplicity of forces through which they are shaped, constructed, and legitimated while simultaneously offering up for interpretation not the origin but rather "numberless beginnings" of phenomena (Foucault, 1977, p.145). I then focused my analysis through a genealogical framework, a theoretical paradigm that offers a means for assessing the *present* by collapsing grand narratives of discursive regimes and refiguring accounts in terms of subjugated and neglected knowledges. Instead of reaching outward for an objective truth that captures a "reality" of the past, genealogy explicitly explores the conditions that bound the (im)possibilities of present thoughts and actions through an acknowledgement of contingent turns in history and political interests. Further, genealogy entertains localized narratives and dissenting opinions as it seeks to map the power relations that undergird prominent policies, procedures, and practices.

Simultaneously utilizing elements of CDA and Foucaultian genealogy allowed me to present a stereoscopic vision of the landscape of developmental education and the discourses constituting it—to both reconceive the past and theorize a richer understanding of the present. Texts that were examined came from various sources including the media, researchers, colleges and universities, professional organizations including the Texas Association of Developmental Education and local chapters of the College Reading and Learning Association and Two-Year College English Association, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. They were retrieved through systematic archival and database searches. I also analyzed interview transcripts of my

recorded meetings with basic writing instructors at a community college and artifacts provided by the study participants as detailed in Chapter 3.

TERMINOLOGY

The terms used to describe the classes and activities that a student is required to participate in when he or she does not attain requisite scores on college entrance composition examinations include *remedial writing, developmental writing* and *basic writing*, among others. Arendale (2005) noted these labels are increasingly "used interchangeably, regardless of whether they mean the same thing" (p. 66). For this project, I primarily utilize *basic writing* and *developmental writing*, although several cited quotes and participant narratives opt for *compensatory*, or perhaps even *remedial*. I deliberatively avoid the latter in my authoring practices due to their deficit and prescriptive connotations and their positioning of students within a medical model of education (Clowes, 1980).

Although *developmental writing* and *basic writing* are both amenable to me, and I use them interchangeably throughout this document for the sake of convenience, I do not view them as synonymous. Both terms became popularized in the 1970's. *Developmental writing* was borrowed from the field of college student personnel. Cross (1976) explained, "The notion of the developmental sequence is the kingpin of developmental theory…a goal of education is to stimulate the individual to move to the next stage in the sequence" (p. 158). According to Arendale (2005), "proponents of developmental education view it as a more comprehensive model regarding the student because it focuses on development of the person in both the academic and affective domains" (p. 73). In their publications, the community college where I conducted this study as well as the government agencies that sanction the Texas Success Initiative utilize *developmental education* as a blanket term that encompasses mandated coursework in

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reading, writing, and mathematics as well as the supplemental instruction, tutoring, and advising that, in concert, form comprehensive support networks for students. Therefore, in my literature review and interviews with administrative professionals, *developmental writing*, denoting one element of this conglomerate, appears frequently.

Basic writer/writing was adopted by professionals in the field of English composition to highlight "disciplinary knowledge and pedagogy" through signature questions that "locate students centrally in the enterprise…—who is the learner and how will that learner achieve competence?" (August & Mlynarczyk, 2006, p.1). Because this project is focused explicitly on writing, both its history and the discursive practices that shape it, and does not attempt to reconstruct the historiography of reading, mathematics, ancillary services, or developmental theories and perspectives, I have chosen to identify basic writing as the focus of this study. This does not mean, however, that I intend to disregard the tensions that come into play during terminological choices, naming processes, and acts of delivering educational services. I recognize that terminology both reflects where authors locate their primary interests as well as denotes alignment with particular discourses and regimes of truth (August & Mlynarczyk, 2006), and it was necessary, then, for me to consider and question my own allegiances and positionality throughout the analytical process.

Furthermore, this project interrogates what I term the traditional or official histories of basic writing. Many of the texts I draw on to situate the study, however, do not differentiate entirely between the histories of basic writing and composition or the histories of developmental education and developmental writing, and relying on them may call into question the object of my study. I contend, however, as do many scholars (Halasek & Highberg, 2001; Horner, 1999a; August & Mlynarczyk, 2006), that the historicized narratives of each of these fields are intimately entwined and inseparable. In

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fact, the practices of silencing of certain narratives, blurring of disciplinary boundaries, or paying exclusive attention to particular elements of educational praxis may be in service to particular dominant discourses or power plays, and I explicitly sought to uncover these technologies of discursive dispersal. Consider Horner's (1999a) scholarly objectives:

> It can be and has been argued that the teaching of basic writing…long predates the *term* basic writing, discourse associated with that term, and CUNY's late-1960s-1970s Open Admissions policy. While this is true, my interest is in exploring how and why basic writing discourse has effectively eclipsed that other extensive, fluid and heterogenous work. My aim is to contest such a displacement by highlighting the conditions leading to it…Examining this process should serve not to repress other stories but to make their emergence more likely, to provoke, if you will, their recovery, circulation and application. (p. 5)

Following Horner's lead, this project engages with basic writing's efforts to work both within and against the larger discourse and historiography of composition and developmental education by problematizing unified metanarratives of origin and teasing out the effects of dominant discourses operating through disciplinary texts.

RATIONALE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the state of Texas, 41 percent of students entering college for the first time are mandated to enter basic coursework. At community colleges, which serve 39% of total college enrollees (Boswell, 2005), this percentage rises to 50 percent (THECB, 2005a). Current research claims that students who are placed in developmental education have a graduation rate that is about half the graduation rate of their peers who are not required take basic classes (Powers, 2006). Additionally, when students who require basic classes

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persist to graduation, they graduate an average of a year behind their matriculating cohort. A key factor remains that basic coursework rarely bears college credit toward graduation (Powers, 2006). In addition to this data, consider that students of color, particularly African-Americans and Latinos, continue to be disproportionately placed in developmental classes as compared to their White peers. In Texas, 54 percent of first-year African-American students and 54 percent of first-year Latino students enroll in basic courses, while only 32 percent of White students do so (THECB, 2005a). As noted by Boylan, Sutton, and Anderson (2003), "developmental education is a curriculum in which most minority students entering higher education are very likely to participate" (p. 12).

Horner and Lu (1999) claimed it is statistics such as the aforementioned that have set many administrators into action and motivated a number of scholars to research the individual characteristics of students enrolled in basic writing, develop new pedagogical techniques to attend to their daily needs in the classroom, and pilot a myriad of support programs in search of model initiatives. A wealth of research within the field of developmental education is focused on the creation and evaluation of placement and assessment tools, strategies for teaching and intervention with students in basic courses, and the enhancement of ancillary services. In the words of Horner (1996), recalling Shaughnessy's (1977a) evaluation of the discipline, "practitioners and their lore are 'concerned with what has worked, is working, or might work in teaching, doing or learning writing'" (p. 21).

Some scholars, including Rose (1983), have warned that prior attempts to "help college remedial writers," however "well-intentioned and seemingly commonsensical," have been ineffective and even "counterproductive" (p. 109). In the worst cases, "institutions have created deplorable conditions for our remedial writing programs and

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students—labeled intellectually substandard, placed in conceptual basements of English departments, if placed in the department at all, ghettoized" (p. 126). Perhaps the most salient point of Rose's work, however, acknowledges that although there is certainly work to be done to change curricula, strengthen institutional policies and procedures, and develop sound pedagogical practices with the higher education arena, there is an equally urgent need to challenge the assumptions that lend credence to common interventions and lead administrators to believe that they are a requisite feature of higher education.

Echoing this point, Bartholomae (1993) argued that basic writing, its assessments, and curricula have become fixtures within academic institutions, maintaining a "distinction (basic/normal) we have learned to think through and by" (p. 8). This project sought to further explore the basic/normal binary presented in prominent higher education discourse and began with the assumption that the "distinction," alongside the particular categorization processes that have constructed it, is problematic. According to Grego and Thompson (1996), institutional hierarchies and histories, politics, and public relations govern our notions about what is natural, conventional, and acceptable. As we adopt particular ideas regarding the usual order of things, we then reproduce the original standards and status quo. Recognizing this cycle and working to interrupt it requires that we question the discourses through which basic writing functions and upon which we construct our ideas as to how to approach students placed in basic writing courses. Employing elements of CDA and genealogy as dual lenses has provided a vehicle to access and interrogate these metanarratives and, further, critically re-examine them alongside current practices and procedures, exposing the monuments that may be already assumed as givens.

For example, some might argue that the statistics mentioned at the beginning of this section that reveal the dismal graduation rates of students required to take basic

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classes can be expected, because students placed in these courses are generally underprepared to participate in college in the first place (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2000); but this requires an a priori assumption of what it means to be "underprepared"—*underprepared for what?*—and a shared, if unspoken, agreement as to why this "what" is important. According to Bartholomae (1993), the dominance of liberal humanism in education often orients our understanding of students in terms of a particular set of standards while concealing other ways of thinking about what it means to be accomplished, intellectual, or literate—"prepared." Additionally, data like the aforementioned direct the gaze of suspicion upon the students, and the ways in which they do or do not conform to a particular norm, rather than figuring the location of the institution or exploring how its administrative practices author students as aberrant (Horner, 1999a). Beginning with a genealogical framework, one can question categorical assumptions and simultaneously situate knowledge within historical contexts.

A genealogy of basic writing could be approached from several angles. For example, one might view basic writing discourses and their material consequences in light of how students, or the discipline as a whole, have become positioned within the higher education arena, as Horner and Lu (1999) illustrated in *Representing the "Other"* (discussed in length in Chapter 3: Literature Review). In the style of Britzman (2003), one could question how the practice of teaching basic writing, replete with the politics that surround the hiring and retention of instructors for basic coursework and the discursive practices through which the discipline has become professionalized, has constructed a professional identity and reproduced an instructional status quo. Alternative approaches could examine how scholarship functions within the discipline and how we have come to know what is "valuable" research within the field.

For this study, I chose to focus on the narratives and experiences of instructors at a community college alongside a critical analysis of basic writing history in Texas. Because community colleges in Texas currently serve the largest number of developmental students with the most comprehensive range of services (THECB, 2005a), they are suitable choices for study sites. Also, given that the recorded histories that inform institutional policies and procedures typically reflect the perspective of the "powerful," analyzing the ways in which the dominant discourses surrounding basic writing acknowledge and validate the instructors' roles and actions and concurrently questioning whether their performances reenact discursive structures might allow for a new understanding of both past and present practices within the discipline. Further, with the repeal of the TASP law and the adoption of the Texas Success Initiative in July 2003 by the Texas State Legislature, individual institutions in Texas have regained purview, at least theoretically, to determine whether or not a student participates in basic classes and to develop "individual plans for student success" (THECB, 2003). Instructors of basic programs, viewed as institutional experts, have been tasked with directing the implementation and evaluation of the new initiative and, thus, are uniquely positioned within the discourse of basic education in Texas at this time (see Chapter 2: Literature Review).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research utilized elements of Critical Discourse Analysis to look closely at both historicized texts and narratives of instructors at a community college and frames the discourse samples analyzed through the genealogical lens in order to address the following questions:

1. How is basic writing constructed/constructive through discourses and discursive practices in Texas across time and multiple texts?

2. How do the narratives of instructors at a community college intersect and represent the larger discourse of basic writing in Texas?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Along with its counterparts—including reading and mathematics coursework, supplemental instruction programs, and ancillary support services—basic writing has attracted intense public scrutiny, manifesting in public, legislative, and institutional debates over whether or not such classes and services should exist at the postsecondary level. The most pervasive arguments contend that the continuance of developmental programs means that taxpayers pay twice for students' education, both in high school and college, for the same set of skills. This line of reasoning frequently leads to decreases in funding or the eradication of coursework options, particularly at public four-year colleges, despite the fact that increased numbers of students are not meeting college-readiness scores on standardized assessments (Damashek, 1999). As basic coursework becomes increasingly limited or eliminated, enrollment in higher education is restricted for many students, particularly persons of color and those not English-dominant, who comprise higher numbers of students not meeting requisite scores on placement examinations (Damashek, 1999). One preferred mechanism for impeding access involves moving all developmental programs to community colleges, which in turn means that students who are mandated to participate in basic classes would be denied admission to four-year schools until they complete basic prerequisites. Colorado, Missouri, Florida, and South Carolina currently prohibit developmental education at four-year institutions. Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, and Virginia are considering the elimination of programs (Shields, 2005).

Eliminating basic programs or relegating them to community colleges has severe consequences for students, but counterarguments suggest that the ways in which many

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basic programs have been administered also create deplorable conditions for students, contributing to "institutional insularity, to second-class citizenship and fragmented education, to a limiting of our students' abilities to grow toward intellectual autonomy" (Rose, 1983, p. 126). Arguably, such a climate can lead to rapid attrition and, thus, basic writing programs themselves have been labeled as barriers that primarily serve a gatekeeping function.

Noting the grave implications for already marginalized populations of students, many developmental educators have responded by participating in extended dialogues about the state of affairs and the future potential of programs (Arendale, 1998; Blue Ribbon Commission, 2006; Boylan, 1995; Damashek, 1999). Recently, representatives from several professional organizations including the College Reading and Learning Association, National Association for Developmental Education, National Center for Developmental Education, National College Learning Center Association, and National Tutoring Association were invited by the American Council of Developmental Education Associations to conduct a strategic analysis of the work of the field. They formed an ad hoc committee, the Blue Ribbon Commission (2006), which made recommendations back to each of the professional organizations regarding a shared vision for the future.

The commission's report points to a clear desire for the discipline to be viewed as a legitimate field within the academy and to strengthen the development of professional organizations. In a section that identifies the major weaknesses of the field it includes "negative perceptions," "ineffective ability to clearly define the field for stakeholders," and "lack of a unified voice for the field," among other challenges (BRC, 2006, pp. 3-5). Although it is vitally important to continue to reflect upon, assess, and improve practices within higher education, particularly when implications for access become grave, Gehrke (2003) warned that "hopes of providing coherent or progressive narratives of [a]

discipline omit many opportunities, tensions, detours, and contradictions" (p. 1). Furthermore, during comprehensive cataloguing of practices, there is an increased tendency to disregard the contingent nature of conventions and the discursive practices that they are built upon (Gehrke, 2003).

One of the most remarkable consequences of Foucault's work is that it allows us, according to Luke (1995-1996), "to shift our view from a perspective on text and discourse as constructed artifact explicable by reference to essential characteristics of its producers and productive contexts to the study of how texts are *constructive* of social formations, communities, and individuals' social identities" (p. 9). In *Discoursing Basic Writing*, Horner (1996) enumerated some of the reproductive effects of basic writing discourse and set a precedent for genealogical work in the field through an analysis of the "key terms and assumptions operating in a range of public debate on open admissions in general and at the City University of New York in particular" (p. 200). Illustrating how basic writing discourse produces cultural difference as much as it is produced by it, Horner (1996) pointed us to a passage in Bartholomae's (1987) seminal piece *Writing on the Margins: The Concept of Literacy in Higher Education*:

> As a profession we have defined basic writing…by looking at the writing that emerges in basic writing courses. We begin, that is, with what we have been given and our definition is predetermined by a prior distinction; by a reflex action to sort students into groups (groups that look 'natural' or 'right')…We know who basic writers are, in other words, because they are in the class we label 'Basic Writing'. (p. 67)

In this instance we recognize that knowledge and power are produced through categorizing processes, that "discourse systematically constructs versions of the social

and natural worlds and positions subjects in relations of power" (Luke, 1995-1996, p.8). The discourse of basic writing functions, as many other educational practices do, by working in terms of a norm. Usher and Edwards (1994) further explained, "By 'naming' the adult in terms of 'scientifically' validated capacities and ways of behaving, a norm of the adaptive learner is created" (p. 49). During this naming process, specific pedagogical traditions are transformed into something beyond a mere consequence and, subsequently, reproduce the positive effect of a lasting standard.

This is exactly why we should be interested in a genealogy of basic writing. Current conversations regarding the present state of affairs and future trajectory of basic writing programs have yet to seriously consider the implications of the reproductive discourses surrounding the discipline, despite the fact that many have explored its history, purpose, and function. Boylan and White (1987) characterized developmental education as:

> simply the modern version of past efforts to respond to the fact that…many college students are unable to succeed without some sort of special assistance. It also represents the most recent version of American higher education's long standing commitment to providing access for all the nation's citizens who might prosper from it. (p. 1)

This description is quite distinct from Russell's (1990) evaluation of basic writing programs, which states that "exclusionary policies in language instruction allowed universities and departments to achieve selective admission de facto though they may have forbidden it de jure" (p. 64). Rose (1985), theorizing on the myth of transience, recognized basic writing as an apparatus that precludes academia's recognition of the structures and attitudes that preserve the status quo. He noted a pervasive assumption

within the academy that claimed, "If we can just do x, y, and z, the problem [of poor student writing] will be solved—in five years, ten years, or a generation—and higher education will be able to return to its real work" (p. 355).

These three statements alone echo the many dissenting opinions about the purpose, mission, and value of developmental education, yet provide only a snapshot of the rhetoric and power relations at play within disciplinary discourse. They represent merely the surface of the myriad of commentaries that constrain the actions of instructors and lend credence to particular processes. The tensions and gaps in the stories of basic writing deserve further consideration, particularly because the ways in which situate our work may serve to undermine the success of or further oppress marginalized student populations. Although developmental education, through its history, is typically cast as an opportunity that provides the greatest number of students with the ability to benefit from a college education, Usher and Edwards (1994) cautioned, "Emancipatory intentions may be caught up with the will to power, becoming oppressive…We as educators, therefore, need always to question any discursive practice, no matter how benevolent, for the configurations of emancipation/oppression within it" (p. 27). The intent of this project is not to create a new metanarrative or pose comprehensive, overarching theory but rather to open the field to further questioning and to explore the foundational discourses that operate through basic writing practice.

Further, the localized narratives of instructors are a key component of this genealogy, because they allow us to establish knowledge of struggles, discontinuous accounts, individual needs and desires, and social and cultural context—all which can serve to interrupt the claims of a unitary history or body of theory. They also reveal the "forces of history in motion…the endlessly repeated play of dominations" (Foucault, 1977, 150) that is often obscured in the presentation of a coherent, comprehensive

history. Kafala and Cary (2006) asserted the importance of "small, localized narratives that exercise self-knowledge and self-validation in the construction of truths/fictions," which are "more likely to be accepted for [their] 'pure voice' by which real events can speak themselves, in sharp contrast to the historical reconstruction that relies on trope and technique to simulate narrative authority" (34). Again, the motivation for this project is not to re-establish truth or claim the possibility of such a task but rather to complicate that which we know about basic writing, to rupture the dominant discourses, and to provide a model for reflecting on our work in the field.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Because a genealogical approach is not particularly interested in the canonized version of history or the reproduction of coherent metanarratives, it is entirely possible that this study does not deal explicitly or comprehensively with all of the texts nor does it effectively address every monument or milestone that has affected the emergence of present practices pertaining to basic writing within the state of Texas. As noted by Gehrke (2003), "reliance upon institutional and disciplinary memory that today guides the choice of canonical thinkers and texts would undermine the genealogy's central goal of exploring the possibility of remembering our histories differently" (p. 19). To construct a genealogy is to privilege new voices and lost records and to question how contingencies of history have allowed for certain discursive practices to prevail with reproductive consequences for present concerns. The genealogical approach is neither systematic nor panoptic but rather can be understood as one vehicle that allows us to "ask questions that produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently, thereby producing different ways of looking at the world" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.1).

It is also important to note that this investigation did not ultimately seek to provide categorical solutions to the myriad of practical challenges within the field of

developmental education. Although many educational researchers strive to develop and implement best practices or construct grand theories of learning and development, I chose to offer an alternative assessment of current policies and procedures—one that explicitly pushes against the positivist, essentializing paradigms that govern practices of schooling and limit possibilities for understanding students and their learning processes.

The key to such inquiry is to vivify interpretations and generate more questions. Such a move serves to undo expectations set up through normative models and to redefine data, not as "facts" but rather as descriptive terms, both contextualized and relativised (Scheurich, 1997). The end result is typically a challenge to relations of dominance, which allows practitioners to escape the limitations of categorizing systems. This work serves to interrupt metanarratives, foreground a lack of innocence, and make overt how power legitimates knowledge. Ultimately, it draws attention to hegemonic forms of discourse in counter-hegemonic work.

Finally, it is important to note that a project built on a stated distrust of master narratives is, in many ways, belied by a reliance on Foucault and a utilization of his texts in their aggregate as a primary theoretical guide. Lather (1991) cautioned, "in this process of exploring the implications of postmodernism for our practices in the world, we need to be cautious that dissembling the master narratives…is not replaced by Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lacan, etc. as new master discourses" (p. 49). In a project such as a dissertation, where it is expected that reputable scholarship and theoretical frameworks will foreground and situate all new research, it is difficult to avoid invoking the "name of the father". Thus, in both the analytical and practical production of this text, authority and power are always already entrenched.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

In order to situate this study it is necessary to discuss both the traditional or official narratives of the field of basic writing as well as existing scholarly projects that set a precedent for genealogical work within the field. This chapter presents a review of the literature in both categories. The first three sections explore the historical narratives of the discipline writ large, including stories that frequently appear in landmark essays and touchstone texts, such as Casazza's (1999) *Who Are We and Where Did We Come From*. Casazza's article "explores the essence of developmental education by looking at its roots in the American higher education system and how it has evolved into what it is today" (p. 1) I refer to these accounts as the official histories of basic writing, because they are the narratives that have gained acceptance and legitimacy within the field and, thus, lend credence to the discursive practices that work on and through basic writing. They reflect a constructed description of the activities, events, and decisions that have in many ways determined what we know about basic writing. Further, they tend to be presented as a unified and coherent narrative, which neither effectively entertain dissenting opinions about the origin of particular practices nor address the contingent nature of the contexts through which they have emerged.

In the telling of the official narratives, I begin with a summary of the earliest programs in the United States that have been recognized by scholars (Casazza, 1999; Stephens, 2001; Arendale, 2005; Connors, 1997) as developmental, basic, or remedial— the programs that many point to as the roots of the field. As previously noted, sections of this account may be familiar to many as a historical chronicle of the discipline of composition or developmental education as a whole, as these accounts are intimately

entwined. Readers might also recognize portions of the text as a history of higher education. As noted by Halasek and Highberg (2001), "historians generally agree that a quick changing cultural and educational environment in the late 19th century was instrumental in the eventual development of basic writing courses" (p. xi).

What follows the national history is an outline of the accounts of developmental programs in Texas from 1980 to the present. This time period was chosen because the early 80's marks an era when Texas, like many other states, began to mandate placement examinations and standardize evaluation processes for basic coursework in public higher education—changes that complimented the larger accountability movement gaining momentum within the K-12 system (Griffin & Meyer, 1999). Thus, 1980 is a time one might recognize as schism or a branch in history, when developmental education in Texas experienced significant transformations in both governance and implementation.

The remainder of the chapter, following the official histories of basic writing, is dedicated to a review of the literature that sets a precedent for genealogical work within the field of basic writing, upon which this study builds and extends. It includes an analysis of Fox's (1999) book *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education*, which questions the coemergence of a standards movements and limitations of access into higher education while emphasizing the rhetoric embodied in a prevailing discourse of exaggerated claims that increased access equates with or necessitates a lowering of scholarly standards. The literature review also explores Horner's (1999a) piece, *The "Birth" of "Basic Writing."* This text most closely approximates a genealogy from within the field and includes both an investigation of how basic writers were positioned within higher education as a result of the debates surrounding the commencement of Open Admissions at CUNY in the early seventies as well as a reinterpretation of this process of emergence. These pieces, alongside others that present

a critical analysis of basic writing practices and procedures, frame the discussion of this dissertation study and situate my research amid other scholarship in the field.

OFFICIAL HISTORIES OF BASIC WRITING

COLONIAL TIMES THROUGH THE 19TH CENTURY. Traditional histories of basic writing claim that the practice grew out of a larger aspiration to "provide access for all learners who have the desire to be educated" (Casazza, 1999, p. 1). The earliest opportunities for higher education in the North American colonies in the eighteenth century were reserved for the country's elite males whose families could afford to remit tuition without any form of financial assistance. Typically, higher education served one of two purposes. Church-affiliated seminaries offered instruction to prepare young men for the ministry. Other institutions existed as "schools of higher culture for laymen" that focused on "the development of good moral character" and the teaching of the Greco-Roman canon (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976, p. 6). Before arriving to early colleges like Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale, young men typically enjoyed the privilege of attending subscription academies, being homeschooled by personal tutors, and focusing on training in the classic languages of Latin and Greek—a curriculum similar to the one they would encounter in the university.

The demographics of college students began to shift in the early nineteenth century as nontraditional students began to enter higher education. Because only the richest, most privileged families could afford to send their sons to college in the past, "New denominational 'hilltop' colleges such as Williams and Amherst arose that catered to the poorer students recommended by their ministers" (Stephens, 2001, p.1). Private schools also began to offer a limited number of scholarships or work programs, admitting students who previously would not have been considered for enrollment. Rudy (1996) argued that one reason for the wider recruitment and expanded registration grew from a

need for the institutions to thrive fiscally and avoid the possibility of bankruptcy. Perhaps more importantly, the economic and technological shifts birthed during the industrial revolution, coupled with an increasingly contractarian society, demanded the transmission of new skills and advanced training of the workforce (Brandt, 2001).

Increasing appeals for laborers endowed with technical acuity drove new legislation in the late nineteenth century, which guaranteed a higher education to a broader ranger of learners. The Morrill Acts in 1862 and 1890 were particularly influential in opening the doors of academic institutions. The 1800's also saw an increase in the enrollment of female college students and the founding of the first women's colleges. Although seminaries for women had existed in the 18th century, these institutions did not confer official degrees (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976). The first women's colleges included Wesleyan in Georgia and Rockford in Illinois, founded in 1836 and 1849 respectively. Those opposed to women's higher education frequently argued that admitting them into higher education institutions would force standards to be lowered. Administrators and faculty typically complained, as they did with other nontraditional groups, that these new students had no right to the benefits of a university education (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976).

The nineteenth century also saw marked changes in curricula. Mathematics, including Euclidean geometry and algebra, along with civil engineering and industrial arts became staples in North American colleges by the mid-1800's in response to economic and municipal demands (Stephens, 2001, p.2). Because public primary education was a limited option for many students in the 1800's, however, large numbers of students arrived to college with little to no exposure to these topics. Colleges, therefore, began to assume responsibility for the teaching of these core subjects to their

admitted first-year students. The Department of Preparatory Studies at the University of Wisconsin was a notable early model for such preparatory programs (Arendale, 2005).

Regardless of specific circumstances, many scholars (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Arendale, 2005) in the field of basic writing and developmental education in general note that there have always been students who were considered "underprepared" or "academically weak" attending the nation's colleges and that "bridging the academic preparation gap has been a constant in the history of American higher education" (Arendale, 2005, p. 67). Likewise, there were always faculty and administrators who argued that these new students should not be admitted into college. Professors at Cornell in the 1830's complained that if it was their responsibility to teach spelling, their founder should have built a primary school (Brier, 1984, p. 2). Henry Tappan, president of the University of Michigan, stated in his 1852 inaugural address that it was "absurd…to take unruly youngsters and somehow transform them into professionals" (Stephens, 2001, p.2).

Lamenting students' "bad spelling, incorrectness, as well as an inelegance of expression in writing and ignorance of the simplest rules of punctuation," Charles Eliot, Harvard's president from 1869-1909, demanded a college entrance exam be developed to measure applicants' competency in written composition (Weidner, 1990, p.4).   In response to the perceived deficiencies revealed by such assessments, Harvard University instituted *English A* in 1885 to "remediate" students whose skill levels were viewed as insufficient by the faculty. Connors (1997) pointed to *English A* as the first instance of a basic writing course, even though the term *basic writing* did not emerge until nearly 85 years later with the advent of Open Admissions at the City University of New York.

THE COMMITTEE OF TEN AND THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY. By the late 1800's ,college entrance exams were becoming commonplace in North American universities,

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and secondary schools followed suit with rigorous testing programs including the Regents Exams and the College Entrance Examination Board. In 1892, the Committee of Ten, commissioned by the National Education Association and comprised of college presidents, was tasked with reviewing high school curricula and making determinations as to the preferred requirements for college admissions. As noted by Casazza (1999), the recommendations of the Committee of Ten served to standardize secondary and postsecondary education while demanding student competency in specific areas including: Latin, Greek, and modern languages; physical and biological sciences; history; and algebraic and geometric mathematics. Resultant guidelines also addressed implications for higher education in light of further changes in dominant economies. Institutions of higher education were once again in a position to react to change. In 1901, the first junior college was founded in Joliet, Illinois to address increased demands for skills brought about by industrial transformation. By 1909, over 350 colleges were offering courses in so called remedial reading and the study skills required in many labor domains; by 1929, 25% of colleges offered what they termed remediation in various subjects (Parr, 1930).

Enrollment in college remained steadily on the rise, particularly as soldiers returning from war abroad began to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights. By 1946, over one million veterans were served by the GI bill, which provided student financial support as well as funding to the institution for tutorial services, reading and study skills workshops, and advising and counseling centers. Several scholars (Wyatt, 1992; Casazza, 1999; McCabe & Day, 1998) pointed to the success of remedial and supplemental instruction with veterans as the catalyst for the adoption of widespread, comprehensive basic programs. Maxwell (2000) wrote about the General College of the University of Minnesota and the Special and Continuing Studies Program at the

University of Maryland as examples from this movement, which led so called remedial education to begin to be identified as a legitimate field of study.

Boylan (2002) noted that much of the early research within the discipline was conducted by John Roueche and his colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin. Based on cognitive and learning theories, Roueche's studies revealed that successful instructors of basic classes utilized various teaching methods and accommodated a multitude of learning styles and preferences. Roueche's scholarship also claimed that successful remedial classes were those that were part of centralized programs where all basic courses (reading, writing, and math) were housed in a single department and supplemented with regular tutoring and advising. "How to Study" courses were also supported through research and became a typical paired course offering with basic subject matter. These early analyses and recommendations—which noted that factors beyond academic skill preparation including the availability of learning laboratories, placement and assessment, and counseling held significance in determining the rate of students' successful transition into college—contributed to programs in the field being designated as developmental rather than simply remedial (Boylan, 1995).

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE BIRTH OF OPEN ADMISSIONS. The 1950's and 60's brought victories of the civil rights movement and court decisions such as Brown v. Board of Education that mandated the desegregation of public schools and institutions of higher education. Marable (2005) discussed how desegregation aided the college enrollment of unprecedented numbers of African Americans. In 1960, there were barely 200,000 African Americans enrolled in college, three-fourths of whom attended historically Black universities and colleges. By 1970, 417,000 Black Americans attended college, three-fourths of them at predominantly White institutions. Five years later, the number rose to over 666,000.

The gains achieved through the civil rights movement, however, evoked active resistance on many fronts. Once again, when students who had previously been denied access to educational services began to partake in them, the rhetoric of underpreparedness was refreshed, and many institutions began to exercise discriminatory admissions policies under this guise. Further, as Baby Boomers reached college-going age, universities had the purview to be increasingly selective since the pressure of meeting enrollment quotas was relieved (Boylan, 1995). These circumstances bred further exclusionary practices that erected barriers to enrollment at many colleges and universities. During the 60's and 70's, then, junior and community colleges experienced tremendous growth and often served as a point of entry for students who were denied access to other institutions of higher education.

Interestingly, just as four-year universities were becoming more selective, first-year composition courses were disappearing from the core curriculum. During the 1960's, the percentage of schools requiring Freshman English decreased from 93.2% to 76%. Connors (1997) argued that this reduction was due to an abolitionist movement that considered writing instruction a "luxury that wastes time and money." Composition courses began to return to higher education in the 70's, partially as a result of the Back-to-Basics movement that prompted media awareness of a pervasive literacy crisis. Public discourse at the time reflected the claims that illiteracy was on the rise and that American students were not receiving quality instruction in reading and writing. This meant that there was increased interest in maintaining this type of instruction at all levels of education.

The return of writing instruction to the academy can also be linked to the Open Admissions movement commenced at CUNY. Open Admissions, a response to student protests, mounting racial tensions in the city, and significant political pressure, promised

a post-secondary education to all high school graduates who wanted to attend the university. In a matter of years, the enrollment at CUNY more than doubled to over two hundred thousand, and the influx of students led administrators and faculty to create additional levels of prefreshman courses for students who were deemed unprepared for the rigors of college work.

One of the most devoted advocates of Open Admissions and a pioneer of basic writing whose scholarship shaped the way many practitioners thought about basic writers was Mina Shaughnessy. Shaughnessy's (1977b) work revealed the importance of recognizing that individual differences in student writing often stem from a lack of experience with "formal" or "academic language," not from a lack of intelligence. She encouraged instructors to consider that what we might conceive of as "errors" may be specific and defined practices that students have developed over a long period of exposure to home and community dialects, which should not be devalued or denigrated but rather used as tools in the development of new competencies (Tierney and Shanahan, 1991).

The mid to late 70's was also a time when composition was being legitimized as a specialty within the academy and basic writing was being professionalized. During this era, several master's and PhD programs in composition were established in colleges and universities across the country, which served to strengthen the position of writing instruction within the academy. In 1976, the professional organization now known as the National Association of Developmental Education was assembled and the National Center for Developmental Education opened its doors as a resource and clearinghouse for scholars. Two notable journals were also established during this period, the *Journal of Basic Writing* in 1975 and the *Journal of Developmental Education* in 1977. These

publications served as vehicles for the dissemination of research written by the growing number of credentialed professionals within the field.

Troyka (1987) revealed that as basic writing courses became a fixture in higher education and scholarship in the field progressed, error correction—often interpreted like an illness or deficiency, despite Shaughnessy's (1977b) appraisal to the contrary—became the primary focus of instruction and research. Connors (1997), who conducted a basic writing textbook survey, concluded "as many as 95% broke writing down into a set of subskills and assume[d] that conscious mastery of subskills mean[t] mastery of writing" (p. 270). There is, however, a dominant counternarrative within the field that pushes against a focus on error correction and a deficit understanding of students' literacy skills. Many researchers (Casazza, 1999; Arendale, 2005) cautioned against labeling basic students as remedial or underprepared, because it implies they require fixing or correction. Cassazza (1999) explained that to view students as remedial places them within a "medical model where a diagnosis is made, a prescription is given, and a subsequent evaluation is conducted to see if the 'patient', or student, has been brought up to speed (p. 4). Instead, much scholarship (Sternglass, 1997; Bartholomae, 1987; Higbee, 1996) within basic and developmental education encourages instructors to view students in light of their strengths and utilize their assets to produce further intellectual growth.

A call to examine the growth and, subsequently, the role of basic writing was sounded at the Fourth Annual Conference on Basic Writing in 1992 and debated in ensuing issues of the *Journal of Basic Writing*. This discussion, according to Horner (1999b), resulted:

in part from New Right cutbacks to funding in higher education and simultaneous and consequent increasing reliance on part-timers and other non-tenure-line faculty, heavier teaching loads, less student financial aid, less support staff and

materials for students and teachers, and the decay of schools' physical plants. (p. 191)

This debate, which addressed whether developmental education should continue to exist and how basic writing students should be integrated into the institutional structure, still continues today and is a primary concern of many university administrators and instructors, researchers in the field, and government officials (Chung, 2005; Blue Ribbon Commission, 2006).

Notably, state and federal legislatures have become the battleground for debating many of the issues surrounding basic programs. Stephens (2001) lamented that the arguments are familiar: "admitting underprepared students water[s] down the curriculum and states [are] paying twice for students to learn the same material" (p. 10). In the past 15 years, over 30 states have proposed the elimination of basic coursework; 29 states have voted the proposals down. Other recommendations have included moving all developmental education to two-year and community colleges. As funding levels continue to decrease and the government gains increased control over these programs, there have been urgent calls for researchers, administrators, and instructors to engage legislators in sustained, critical discussions regarding the history, definition, and purpose of the discipline as well as the present state of affairs within the field (Boylan, 1995, Chung, 2005, Blue Ribbon Commission, 2006).

BASIC WRITING IN TEXAS

TASP LAW. In 1987, the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) was established in the Texas Education Code "as a diagnostic tool to ensure that all students in Texas were provided with the basic skills to compete in college" (Griffith & Meyer, 1999, p. 103). Students exiting high school and pursuing higher education at a public institution were required to achieve particular scores on the TASP standardized assessments in three

subject areas: writing, reading, and mathematics. Those who did not earn the requisite scores were mandated to complete basic coursework until they could pass a subsequent examination. The law dictated that students were not allowed to earn an associate's degree or enroll in upper-division coursework prior to meeting TASP requirements. Furthermore, institutions were required to monitor all students who required basic classes and mandated to remove students from all subsequent coursework for noncompliance with the law. Prior to the implementation of TASP, requirements regarding developmental education were left to the discretion of individual institutions within the state of Texas and had a history of sporadic implementation. The TASP project standardized such policies and procedures for public institutions.

The origins of the TASP program are typically traced to the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST), an assessment that all students entering teacher education programs were required to pass. Because an average of 30% of students failed the PPST on their initial attempt, legislators became alarmed (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). Anxiety induced by this statistic, coupled with both an evaluation by the Texas Higher Education Board (THECB) that stated that SAT and ACT scores of rising college freshman were dismal in comparison to other states and complaints from corporate constituents that decried the "disparity between their workforce needs and the supply of qualified people graduating from public education" (Document 72, TBEC, 2006, p.1), led the board to establish a committee on testing charged with "examin[ing] the feasibility and desirability of implementing a test for public higher education students in the state…to provide a measurement of both the quality of teaching and the quality of learning in the system" (Alpert, Gorth & Allan, 1989, p. 13).

On July 17, 1986, THECB's Committee on Testing released an executive summary of their findings entitled *A Generation of Failure: The Case for Testing and*

Remediation in Texas Higher Education. After deliberating over the state of affairs for ten months, the committee advanced several unanimous recommendations based on the premise that:

> Every year more than 110,000 freshmen enter Texas public colleges and universities. Of these, at least 30,000 cannot read, communicate, or compute at levels needed to perform effectively in higher education. Some become college drop-outs—not because they lack the ability, but because they lack the skills. Others receive degrees without ever mastering basic skills. The tragedy is that we often do not know they are deficient until it is too late to help them. We do not know who they are or where they are. But we do know they represent a generation of failure in our educational system. (p. 1)

The recommendations of the committee included (a) assessment of "college-readiness" for all incoming freshmen to public institutions, (b) a newly developed testing instrument for the aforementioned purpose, (c) noncredit skills classes for all students not meeting assessment standards, (d) mandatory advising, (e) annual effectiveness reports from each institution to the state, and (f) legislative funding to support said efforts. These identified solutions were based on existing models of remediation in Florida and New Jersey.

Following this legislation, a partnership was developed between the THECB and National Evaluation Systems in Amherst, Massachusettes, which was tasked with the development and administration of the TASP test (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). Four thousand Texas educators, including seven hundred college faculty from both two- and four-year institutions, provided feedback to the state via surveys and committee service. One-third of the representatives self-identified as a member of a minority ethnic group, and a bias review panel was created to help ensure equal representation in terms of race/ethnicity and gender. Each content area—writing, reading, and math—established

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advisory committees, and additional guidance was sought from academic advisors and student support administrators (NES, 1998). Once potential test questions were developed through this process, they were piloted at colleges and universities and revised based on that data.

Despite the fact that the THECB's Committee on Testing estimated that one-third of Texas students would need to be placed in developmental coursework, the TASP test identified an average of 50% of students during the first ten years of its existence who required basic classes (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). Developmental courses at public institutions were created and funded to serve students who did not receive requisite scores on the TASP exam. Providing these classes required augmented state support amounting to a 350 percent increase over prior amounts (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). Additional costs were also incurred by students who were responsible for the fees of an initial TASP assessment as well as fees for an exit examination in any area initially failed following mandatory coursework. Students also experienced increased financial obligations in the form of tuition for noncredit coursework that did not count towards, and often delayed, graduation.

Several amendments were made to the TASP law over the course of a few years following its implementation. Students who demonstrated academic proficiency by earning certain scores on SAT or ACT examinations were classified as exempt from TASP testing beginning in 1993. Pass scores for the TASP test were increased in 1995, and in 1997 the retest policy for students taking basic coursework was waived for students who earned a "B" or better in their developmental classes. During the 1990's, the designated time period for taking the TASP test also fluctuated. When the law commenced, students had to take the examination before they completed 15 hours of college credit work. In 1993, this timeline was changed, and students were required to

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take the exam before completing 9 hours. During the same year, the test was made "slightly more difficult" (THECB, 1996). In 1999, Senate Bill 103 created the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a high school exit examination administered to eleventh graders that was aligned with the college-readiness standards outlined by the State Board of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

TRANSITION TO THE TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE. During the fourteen years that the TASP law was in effect, the THECB received numerous complaints from institutions of higher education who found the policy to be "cumbersome"—both difficult to implement and ineffective due to its one-size-fits-all approach (THECB, 2004). Additionally, the pass rate for the TASP test steadily declined and reached a low of 49.7 percent in 2000, which alarmed legislators and encouraged new plans that addressed "quality, accountability, and improvement" in the state education system (THECB, 2004, p.2). Thus, in 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature repealed the TASP law and replaced it with the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) through the passage of Senate Bill 286, still in effect at the time of this study from 2007-2008. Claiming to "eliminat[e] the majority of state oversight…allow[ing] institutions more flexibility to take full responsibility for preparing their students for success in college," the TSI has removed the continuous remediation requirement that previously mandated basic coursework and, instead, has tasked institutions with the development of "individualized student plans" (THECB, 2004, p.2) for those whose test scores do not meet established benchmarks.

Under TSI, assessment provisions and protocols have remained generally the same as under TASP. The main mode of testing has been the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) test, which has replaced the TASP but does not vary significantly in form or content from the original exam. The TSI mandate has required all new students

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who do not qualify for exemptions based on SAT, ACT, or TAKS scores, military service, or prior college work to test on the THEA or an equivalent examination such as COMPASS, Accuplacer, or ASSET, prior to enrolling in college-level courses. Students who have not earned requisite scores on assessments have been required to meet with an advisor at their college or university to develop their individual plan.

Because institutions are allowed to determine when a student is ready to perform college-level academic coursework on an individual basis under TSI, institutions maintain faculty and staff advisory committees comprised of administrators, institutional researchers, effectiveness officers, and experts within the disciplines of writing, reading, and mathematics to help determine model plans that will prepare students for their future academic work (THECB, 2005b). From the inception of TSI, the THECB (2005b) began monitoring the development of these plans statewide and tracking student cohorts in order to study and publish what they determined to be best practices as resources for other schools.

Individual plans under TSI can be comprised of various components in assorted combinations including, but not limited to: basic courses, tutoring, supplemental instruction, computer-based assistance, career development, and advising and counseling services. Because plans are administered on an institutional rather than state level, schools are held accountable for the success of their students. Each year the THECB evaluates the effectiveness of the TSI via institutional reports of student achievement and retention outcomes. Students who are not in compliance with their individual plans often face strict consequences that are agreed upon prior to enrollment, which may include administrative withdrawal from coursework, probation, and suspension.

Although the stated goal of the TSI is to allow for more flexibility on the part of the institution and individual accommodations for students, THECB (2005b) reported

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that changes in the way students' "academic deficiencies" are assessed and addressed have not been dramatic. Surveys indicated "that there have been relatively few significant changes in policies and practices between 2000 (pre-TSI) and 2004 (post-TSI)" (THECB, 2005b, p.13). So, despite the move to "individualize" the developmental process, most students still arrive to college, take a standardized placement exam, and are placed in classes based on their scores, regardless of their specific needs or circumstances.

CONTESTING HISTORIES

Understanding the aforementioned historical narratives as texts, it becomes possible to begin to position these accounts within the intersections of institution, power, and discourse through which they were created. The sections that follow introduce attempts to situate and challenge the traditional understandings of basic writing, taking the "monuments" of the past and transforming them into "documents" (Foucault, 1972). The guiding objective of this review of literature is to reveal the statements, or basic elements of discourse that reflect categorizable ideas, that have governed the emergence of basic writing as a discipline. Specifically, it is a preliminary investigation of the "anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (Foucault, 1972, 116-117). Further, the works examined provide a context and/or precedent for genealogical work within the field of basic writing, both articulating contributions of prior scholarship and pointing to the need for continued research.

RHETORICS OF STANDARDS AND ACCESS. Articulating the "national, race, and universal ideals" enacted through the American agenda of composition instruction, Miller (1993) revealed that we know English as a literary discipline by its "predominant images

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cooperated with developing middle-class values," which encompass "popular images of what it means to write well…upward mobility, imitation of a largely hidden American upper class, and stringent mores, as against improprieties imagined to be shunned by that upper class" (p. 35). These images and ideals, although not always immediately recognizable, proliferate in the traditional historicized narratives of basic writing programs, both nationally and locally. Poignantly arguing that the political history of English in America has been obscured, Miller highlighted the ways in which "abstractions like 'the curriculum,' 'progressive education,' and 'rhetoric' hide many considerations of nationalistic, colonizing, and pointedly political programs" (Miller, p. 35).

Similarly, Fox's (1999) *Defending Access* enumerates the various ways in which social and historical contingencies birth particular definitions of literacy and discursive practices, constrained by covert ideologies, which have serious implications for the governance of what he terms remediation and access to higher education. His argument contends "specifically and strongly" against the "narrow view that the crisis of access is caused mainly by underpreparation or a lack of literacy skills on the part of students of color" and is grounded in the contention that a discourse of standards, tacitly assumed or directly stated, often uncritically dominates the practices that constrain or inhibit access (p.11).

Defending Access also theorizes the coemergence of access and standards and attempts to discredit accounts that claim a causal relationship between the phenomena. Further, it reveals how the discursive practices that dominate conservative criticisms of higher education reflect a "wish for a homogenous past" (p. 2). As examples, Fox included commentaries from Bennett (1992), D'Souza (1991) & Bloom (1987), which speak of the "death of the university" and claim academic standards have been

abandoned. He then explained how such arguments are built on a discourse of standards that, "in the plural singular sense of the word" have come to be understood "like morals or values, you either have them or you don't" (p. 3). Thus, when one invokes phrases like "university standards" when critiquing developmental education, he or she is both inviting and empowering individuals to participate in the language of the academy and providing a sense of action and power, while simultaneously protecting the status quo and its historical precedents. Fox noted the sleight of hand; "If we tell ourselves and our students that they will achieve access if they master writing standards, we are obscuring and underestimating the powerful forces of racism, sexism, elitism, and heterosexism that continue to operate despite the students' mastery of standards" (p. 6).

Considering the official histories of basic writing, then, Fox enumerated how these stories camouflage the circumstances that define literacy standards as a means of exclusion. He contended that popular narratives of the field—such as those authored by Douglas, Connors, Ohmann and Berlin—emphasize "economic pressures that influenced curricular changes," author "current-traditional rhetoric [as] a vocational pedagogy," and argue how "the professional aspects of a college education [came] to rival the social aspects" (p. 19). Positioning composition courses as a response to a growing need for an educated workforce and as a venue for the teaching of expository writing that stresses the mastery of mechanical conventions, however, has produced a "limited conception of literacy education" and has concealed the complexity of the various pressures faced by universities during the early years of composition (p. 20). It is particularly important to weigh, as did Fox, that educational institutions have born the majority of responsibility for the "accretion of cultural markers" and the maintenance of moral, religious, and intellectual systems of power (p. 20).

I contend that Fox's most important contribution lies in his description of how the evolution of the discourse of composition has been "a hegemonic process, not directly oppressive" and how particular practices have employed a rhetoric that made them palatable, reasonable, and seemingly advantageous (p. 27). This rhetoric is the rhetoric of access, one which promises that "all one had to do to be a 'son of Harvard' was to talk and write like one" (p. 27). A rhetoric of access espouses that difference can be overcome through mastery of the ruling-class language, that curricula are neutral or apolitical, and that school success precedes economic and social power, all without question of how authoritative practices reproduce notions of achievement or the ways in which "standards invariably reflect the values of those in power" (p. 41). This discourse continues to govern the academy, particularly in terms of the practices of basic writing and through the proliferation of liberal-humanist ideologies as described in the following section. Nontraditional students arrive to college and are promised full access to the university community if they are able to complete the requisite basic coursework, while it is accepted as a given that said coursework is beneficial, that educated persons speak and write in a particular manner, and that once students can master dominant language practices they will be prepared to negotiate systems of power and advance their position in society.

Although Fox's text is helpful in beginning to understand how particular discourses work on and through higher education in general and basic writing programs in particular, and I by and large agree with his assertions, his critiques and refiguring of the discipline are mainly concerned with deconstructing conservative appraisals of present practice that function in defense of conventions from a more homogenous past. Fox's assessment does not extend to consider the discoursed practices of educators who

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situate themselves in direct opposition to the conservation of traditional ideologies or the ways in which these practices might also facilitate marginalization.

LIBERAL-HUMANISM AND EMANCIPATORY INTENT. Through her book *Errors and Expectations*, Shaughnessy (1977b) was perhaps one of the first in the field of basic writing to contend with traditionally-held beliefs about nontraditional students, such as the notion that students who repeatedly misspell cannot spell or that students who leave off endings do not know how tenses are formed. Shaughnessy argued, instead, that when students exhibit predictable patterns of error, these patterns are evidence that the learners are capable of following specific language blueprints and, therefore, of completing sophisticated writing tasks. Further, her work emphasizes the importance of recognizing that individual differences in student writing often stem from a lack of experience with formal or so called academic language, not from a lack of intelligence. It also challenges the notion of error in student writing, positing that differences in language usage may be the result specific and defined practices, unique to home and community dialects.

Grounded in some of the most influential research in literacy and linguistics studies (Freire, 1970, 1973; Bahktin, 1981; and Gee, 1992), the research of several scholars (Gray-Rosendale, 2000; Bartholomae, 2002; Document 22, Curry, 2003; Sparks, 2002) builds on Shaughnessy's project, both reinforcing the notion that writing skills are not developed independent of sociocultural and emotional influences and arguing that instruction should capitalize on the wealth of experiences that students bring with them into the classroom. As Ferdman (1991) explained, every writer is a member of a specific, defined culture with rules, boundaries, and an identity deriving from and moderating the symbolic and practical significance of language and literacy. Thus, the degree to which basic writers will learn to better manipulate the nuances of written language will be

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directly dependent on how relevant their writing accomplishments will be to their everyday, functional life.

Despite the wealth of research echoing these claims, Scott (2001) argued that such ideas are often not acknowledged, valued, or translated into practice in many developmental education settings. Rather, students arrive at an institution and are immediately evaluated with a standardized assessment test that was designed to measure their mastery of discrete skills. If a student does not obtain the requisite scores on this placement exam, they are registered in basic classes where they are often subjected to worksheet reviews and rote memorization drills until they are able to pass the same assessment or become discouraged and drop out (Scott, 2001). Even when this is not the case and instructors strive to recognize and capitalize on the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1990) that students bring to the classroom, the reality is that the students' unique literacy practices often are not valued so much in and of themselves but rather as a means to an end—the adoption of Standardized English (Bizzell, 1986). Bizzell (1986) explained the underlying assumptions:

> Thoughts are supposedly unchanged by the dialect in which they are conveyed. Advocates of requiring the standard form often argue that although students can think complexity in their home dialect, unfortunately the larger society demands the standard form and therefore if we wish to enable them to get ahead, we have to enable them to use it. (p. 16)

It is evident in claims such as these that instructors have the best interest of their students at heart as they strive to enable them to get ahead, but it is also easy to see how this readily reproduces the rhetoric of access, which espouses that students who master dominant practices they will be prepared to negotiate systems of power and advance their standing in society.

Having recognized that a rhetoric of access is widely accepted within higher education and embraced by many educators (including himself) who view their work as empowering and in service to social justice, Bartholomae (1993) examined how systems of power and oppression have been "produced by the grand narrative of liberal sympathy and liberal reform" and inscribed in the discourse "of outreach, of equal rights, of empowerment, of new alliances and new understandings, of the transformation of the social text, the American university, the English department" (p. 174). He was particularly interested in how the politics of difference have become displaced through the production of a text where specifics disappear and all men (sic) are figured as equals. Specifically, he spoke to "the erasure or oversight of the problems—personal, social, historic—that produce basic writing" and the contingent nature of the practices that we have come to know as basic writing (p.175).

Bartholomae argued that the practice of basic writing functions to maintain a deficient/normal binary that both creates and preserves cultural difference. It has come to be seen as something natural within university communities and within the story of the discipline of composition. In other words, he recognized that basic writing no longer marks a site of contest. The use of standardized testing, required course sequences, and highly systematic ways of dealing with basic writers on an institutional level "enforces a commonness among our students by making their differences superficial, surface-level, and by designing a curriculum to both insure them and erase them in 14 weeks" (p.177). The abrogation of cultural difference is further enacted in classrooms where discussions of race, class, and gender are glaringly absent and instructional time is "dominated by the topic sentence, the controlling idea, gathering together ideas that fit while excluding, outlawing those that don't (the overwhelming, compelling specifics)" (p. 177).

Such practices are employed in the name of treating all students the same, of providing opportunities, of explicitly correcting error, and of teaching skills that will help students, particularly nontraditional students and students of color, to be successful in the discourse community of higher education. I contend that the most provocative element of Bartholomae's argument lies in his assertion that these objectives stem from our liberal desires to emancipate and advocate. Specifically, he cautioned that "sympathy" of this sort can be a "version of imperial occupation" as it erases subjectivities and "reconfigures the relationship of the individual to convention, the writer to writing" (p. 176).

Several other studies within the discipline reiterate how educational discursive practices maintain asymmetrical power relations, despite liberatory intent and a general rejection of deficit perspectives by scholars within the field. For example, Brodkey (1989) discussed how her analysis of letters written between graduate students and Adult Basic Education students revealed that the ensuing conversation was obviously controlled by the graduate students who silenced class differences by reflecting accounts back to the students in terms of middle-class experiences. For instance, a student who witnessed a murder and spoke vividly of the assault in her letter received a reply from a graduate student who avoided discussing the event with any detail and simply referred to the incident as "that problem". Another student who wrote about how she had recently lost her home because her landlord was forced to sell the property received a response inquiring as to the type of house she would seek next and a discussion of the mortgage market, which did not acknowledge or appreciate the experiences and resultant anxiety stressed by the correspondent.

Stygall's (1994) study, which set out to examine discursive practices evident in talk between graduate student teachers and basic writing students about written drafts, explicitly sought to "resist reconstructing [their] correspondents as 'basic writers' by

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becoming conscious of the discursive practices involved in doing so" (p. 322). In evaluating their work, however, Stygall noted "this proved difficult for all of us, in spite of our best intentions" (p. 322). For example, racialized talk and observations on behalf of the undergraduates often went without comment from the graduate students. Furthermore, the view that education has "natural" benefits was heavily promoted and largely unquestioned, and writing was touted as a practice that was inherently good, one which decidedly results in creativity and freedom.

According to Scott (1993), discursive practices within the discipline of basic writing propogate through a habit of "uncritical dysconsciousness" (p. 51).Uncritical dysconsiousness operates through "acceptance, sometimes unconsciously, of culturally sanctioned beliefs that, regardless of intent, defend the advantages of insiders and the disadvantage of outsiders" (p. 51). A lack of awareness of institutional racism and White privilege, in addition to the powerful rhetoric of equality over against equity, lends to the maintenance of uncritical dysconsciousness. Throughout history, Scott argued, the focus of educational practices and policies has been to address the inequities faced by outsiders by creating solutions that will likely assist in their move toward an approximate position of the advantaged. Such interventions, however, mask the inherent power plays that maintain an ideology of otherness and reproduce normalized ideals while ensuring that the practices and proficiencies of the marginalized are never figured as the standard. Specifically, basic writing programs that define target populations based on narrow understandings of literacy and zero in on "deficiencies that need to be remediated" can be understood as a potential force for oppression.

Noting the dangers inherent in the discourses of emancipatory education, several scholars (Lather, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989; Britzman, 2003) have sought to rupture sites of liberal humanism, questioning "the concepts of empowerment, student voice, dialogue"

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(Lather, 1991, p. 43) and asking "which interpretations and 'sense making' do these discourses facilitate, which do they silence and marginalize, and what interests do they appear to serve?" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298). Equally as important as positioning assumptions of truth and objectivity, dismantling vanguardism, and "asking ourselves the hard questions about how our interventionary moves render people passive," however, Lather (1991) noted that deconstruction can serve to problematize practices in ways that might *resituate* our emancipatory work as opposed to destroy it" (p. 47). Thus, invoking Foucault, Lather viewed her scholarship as "always in the position of beginning again," preserving "the emancipatory impulse within a framework sympathetic to postmodernism's resituating of that impulse" (p. 48-49). This understanding of scholarly pursuits and possibilities certainly has provided a guiding principle for this dissertation study.

      REREADING CUNY: A PRECEDENT OF GENEALOGY. Although not explicitly named as such, Horner's (1999a) *The "Birth" of "Basic Writing"* provides us with what might be considered the closest example of genealogy within the field of basic writing in that it both foregrounds "the specific sociopolitical and intellectual contexts of both the production and reception of a discourse dominating the field" and enumerates the positive effects and normalizing technologies "operat[ing] on a range of diverse research and teaching practices concerned with the education of students labeled 'basic writers'…to give the field unity and continuity by privileging some while marginalizing other practices" (Horner & Lu, 1999, p. xi). His meticulous analysis, representing a remarkably unique contribution to our field, also has served as a model for this project. Horner's (1999a) work maps the discursive formation of the field of basic writing through a critical examination of the key terms and assumptions that dominated public discussions about Open Admissions programs at CUNY near the time of their inception.

Specifically, he outlined how the debate on Open Admissions quickly became polarized due to its association with rewarding violent behavior, initiating a quota system that privileged undeserving students, and diluting standards. Horner noted how these accusations in many ways reflect the dominant discourse on education and operate through a system of binaries that sets two types of students in opposition to each other— "the open admissions students, associated with politics and minority activism, and the ideal college students, assumed to be interested in and capable of pursuing academic excellence because they were not distracted by political interests" (p. 8.). The creation of such a binary effectively concealed the existence of students who did not fit neatly into either category and negated the "correlation of campus activism with highly selective admissions standards" (p. 8).

Noting how the discursive positioning of basic writers influences the (im)possibilities of present thoughts and actions in the field, Horner discussed how professionals within developmental education have begun to internalize the limits of practice. This was evident to Horner in the fundamentally reactive nature of basic writing programs, the "bedrock pragmatism" that dominates the literature and research of the field, legitimates skills-based practice, and accepts material constraints—salaries, job security, teaching loads, class size, classroom facilities, office space, and administrative support—as a given. Basic writing students are also figured prominently by this discourse as burdened with "health problems, lack of child care, inadequate financial aid, and a history of inadequate schooling," yet the foundations of these assumptions are rarely challenged or analyzed (p. 21). Despite Horner's conclusion that many basic writing instructors are "impressively devoted" to their students, the discourse of practicality, operating through them, "enables such conditions to remain as unalterable 'givens'" (p. 25). This discourse, furthermore, has been perpetuated by a silence that

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permeates professional literature, an absence of protest or guidance around these issues. In Horner's words, we are guilty of publicly "defining the 'practice' of basic writing in 'academic'—i.e., nonmaterial, nonpolitical—terms," which is "impractical, leaving undeterred the ways in which material constraints, rather than academic theories, come to determine the how and what as well as the why of teaching" (p. 28).

Horner's overall contention is similar to Bartholomae's (1993), in that the discourse of basic writing has largely become fixed within the academy and that counteracting its effects will involve "giving voice to different and suppressed stories, finding and sharing in our specific experiences and those of our students as yet untold tales of struggles, defeats, victories, and resistance, thereby teaching and learning from strategies of resistance and outright opposition" (Horner, 1999a, p. 28). There is certainly more work to be done in the recovery of specific historical, material, institutional, and political circumstances surrounding basic writing in particular contexts. Horner's rereading does not represent a comprehensive or exhaustive account but rather restores a site of contest, of which there are likely many others. This close reading of basic writing, however, can serve as a guide for this project as I seek to model Horner's work and provide additional insight into the discursive practices and technologies of domination that operate through basic writing.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

CASE STUDY DESIGN

For this dissertation project I utilized an instrumental case study design to define my scope of analysis. Stake (2005) contended, although "case study research is a common way to do qualitative inquiry…[it] is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what to be studied" (p. 443). This description is different from Merriam's (1998), who did classify case study as a methodology, particularly "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon" (p. xiii). Both scholars agreed, however, it is of the utmost importance to explicitly delimit the object of study, clearly stating the confines of the data to be analyzed, bounding the context or setting, and participating in extensive analysis to bring the case into focus. Beyond concentrating an area of inquiry and pursuing an intrinsic interest of a particular phenomenon, an *instrumental* case study can serve to strengthen theory or add to a body of prior knowledge, "to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Stake, 2005, p. 445). Although the main objective of this study was to explore the conditions of existence for basic writing in Texas and the discourses that operate across various texts, it is my hope that it will also contribute to the larger body of research and theory-building around the analysis of power relations and technologies operating in the educational arena.

Because this project considered both accounts of instructors at a community college as well as the emergence of basic writing programs in Texas, there were two concurrent or "collective" case studies of interest that were analyzed simultaneously, to "lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2005, p. 446). Although each case was bounded by several interlocking

contexts—physical, historical, political, and cultural—the conceptual structure of the study was organized around their complex relationship. Stake contended that when a researcher begins with a topical concern, it is allowable to "pose *foreshadowed problems*, concentrate on issue-related observations, interpret patterns of data, and reform the issues as assertions" (p. 448). This was my goal as I investigated the discourses that govern basic writing programs in Texas and analyzed how practitioners are constructed, as well as constructive, through discursive practices.

The first case was comprised of a body of records pertaining to basic writing in Texas since 1980, including those related to the adoption of the TASP law and Texas Success Initiative, which enumerate multiple interpretations of the origin, purpose, and value of developmental education in the state. The second case concentrated on practitioner narratives gleaned from one community college that—due to its mission and vision, historical precedents, and governance by state mandates—has created a particular cultural climate of basic writing that is quite possibly dissimilar and not generalizable to those at other institutions of higher education both nearby and in different geographical areas of the country.

Although each case was singular, it was also comprised of subsections, dimensions, and domains that needed to be sampled. Within the corpuses of data, both the participant narratives and the historical texts, I utilized purposeful sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which seeks to maintain an interaction between data gathering and theorizing by beginning with broad propositions and subjecting them to investigation through small samples drawn from a wide range of potential sources. For example, one assumption guiding this project was that certain discourses lend to the construction of basic writing in Texas and that we can gain insight regarding such discourses through a close reading of the multiple texts that govern, discuss, analyze, and theorize this

practice. Such a close reading aims to document the syntactical, grammatical, and rhetorical choices that assume particular relationships of power. Purposeful sampling, through a systematic exploration of these claims and positionings, provided a vehicle for identifying the particular documents and excerpts that best illustrate discursive practices at work within the field as well as underscore dissenting opinions and theories.

DATA COLLECTION

Preliminary data collection occurred during the spring and summer semesters of 2007 following approval from the Institutional Research Board at the University of Texas and in compliance with the guidelines pertaining to studies with human subjects. The first phase of data collection involved a survey of documents pertaining to basic writing in Texas in multiple formats, across multiple locations. As noted by Luke (1995-1996), "discourse unfolds unevenly across institutional sites, and often the 'uptake' of particular discourses in local sites and texts is idiosyncratic and unpredictable" (p. 28). Thus, in order to demonstrate how particular discourses work on and through texts, it was necessary to gather various types of documents including: publications, presentations, reports, meeting minutes, public forum transcripts, professional literature, web sites, administrative pronouncements, procedural guidelines, and policies.

The study documents were identified through a series of systematic searches. I began by examining peer-reviewed scholarly journals including *College Composition and Communication, Journal of Basic Writing, College English, English in Texas, Journal of Developmental Education, New Directions for Community Colleges, Community College Journal of Research and Practice,* and *Community College Review*. My main goal was to find articles about the history of basic writing in Texas or research studies conducted in Texas. I performed several searches within the journals using various combinations of terms including *Texas* and *Basic Writing*, *Texas* and *Developmental English*, *Texas* and

Developmental Education, *Texas* and *Remediation*, *THEA*, *TASP*, and *Texas Success Initiative*. Once I located the journal articles I also checked the bibliography of each one for additional texts that met the search criteria. Following the queries in specific journals, I utilized Academic Search Complete to seek out other articles and conducted a general internet search, which located texts from *Community College Weekly, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Black Issues in Higher Education* and *Education Reporter*. All articles found dated between 1980 and the present were considered during analysis. The number of texts from this search totaled 16.

Next, I conducted a similar query within the archives of major Texas newspapers including *The Austin American-Statesman, The Texas Insider, The Reporter News, The Dallas Morning News* and *the Houston Chronicle*. Major search terms included *basic writing*, *developmental English*, *developmental education*, *remediation* and *higher education*, *TASP*, *THEA*, and *Texas Success Initiative*. This second investigation yielded nine articles and was followed by an examination of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board archives, the Texas Performance Review, the Texas Policy Foundation, and the Texas Administrative Code. I was able to gather 24 documents from the agencies and legislation, 19 of them from the Coordinating Board.

Organizations and professional groups also provided many texts in the form of official statements, policies and proceedings, and conference papers and presentations. I downloaded papers from the websites of Texas Business and Education Coalition, Alliance for Excellence in Education, the Texas chapters of the National Association of Developmental Education, National Council of Teachers of English, and the Two-Year College English Association, and the Texas Association of Community Colleges. Again, I utilized the aforementioned terms to delineate the search and analyzed all retrieved texts, which totaled 16. The final set of documents included dissertations downloaded

from Dissertation Abstracts International and books located in the University of Texas library catalog. Using the same set of query terms, I located 25 dissertations and master's theses for analysis and three books. All total, the corpus of data included 94 texts that were considered during analysis. Appendix B contains citations for each of the documents and also denotes its numeric identifier. Throughout Chapter 4 I refer to the texts by their document number in order to clarify when I am discussing my data as opposed to the sources that I utilize to help contextualize and interpret my findings.

The second phase of data collection involved unstructured, interactive interviews—a common practice of text gathering for discourse analysis (Morse & Richards, 2002). For this study, each participant contributed to an initial one-hour session that was audio recorded and transcribed prior to analysis. Each also participated in a follow-up member-check session during which an initial draft of analysis was made available for comment. In the write-up, all names of participants are changed to protect privacy and the community college is also referred to by a pseudonym to further ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Informants were asked to share artifacts with the researcher, including any supporting documents or texts to provide additional insight into the practice of basic writing at the institution. Artifacts collected included official policies, procedural outlines, syllabi, personal communications, presentations, reflective pieces, and research. Both the research site and the participants are described in detail at the close of this chapter.

VALIDITY

Conventional research within the social sciences deems validity as an integral goal of any research project. In accordance with postpositivist traditions of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985), validity may be enhanced through a combination of particular actions including: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer

review and debriefing, negative case analysis, clarification of bias, member checking, thick description, and external audit. The underlying philosophy of validity is to ensure that study findings reflect an estimation of truth(s) or trustworthy interpretations thereof.

Several scholars (Scheurich, 1997; Lather, 1991; Mishler, 1990) have contended, however, that the notion of validity is problematic because it re-establishes both an ontology of truth, however implied, as well as an either/or binary of trustworthiness. Nevertheless, even though Scheurich (1997) argued that conventional "validity practices are unconscious instantiations of a Western philosophical dualism" that both "represent 'reality' as exclusively either/or (Same/Other) and reproduce the domination of the one (the Same) over the Other," he also noted that it is nearly impossible to imagine new constructs of validity without repeating these hegemonic transgressions (p. 88). Lather (1991) asserted, "if illuminating and resonant theory grounded in trustworthy data is desired, we must formulate self-corrective techniques that check the credibility of data and minimize the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence" (p. 66).

Thus, even as I employed traditional verification procedures in this study including clarification of bias, member checking, and triangulation as described in the sections to follow, I did so with heightened sensitivity. I chose these particular validity checks because I believe that they can be utilized in ways that demand vigorous self-reflexivity, deconstruct vanguardism, and open a space for the privileging of multiple texts and the problematizing of metanarratives. As advocated by Reason and Rowan (1981), I borrowed the tools of validity and verification from traditional research while taking care to maintain an "interactive, dialogic logic" (p. 66).

REFLEXIVITY AND CLARIFICATION OF BIAS. There are several considerations to be made when approaching a research interview. From a conventional or positivist perspective, according to Scheurich (1997), the "transcribed text of the interview

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becomes data in a sense very similar to quantitative data…physical nonverbal aspects of communication disappear…variations in tone intensity and rhythm disappear…the words…are totally decontextualized" (p.62). Research from a critical perspective, however, requires a restoration of these various cues and recognition of both the multiple intentions and desires of the researcher as well as the "contextually grounded, unstable and ambiguous" relationship of language and meaning (Mishler, 1991, p. 260).

Thus, in order to reflect on my own positionality, assumptions, and biases as well as interview contexts and interactions, I have included a statement of positionality in this chapter, and I also maintained a research journal throughout the interview process. Although it was impossible to fully capture or categorize "the complex play of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, power, desire, and needs on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee," (Scheurich, p. 73) the journal provided an additional text for consideration, and I chose to include various excerpts from it in Chapter 6 along with a reflective discussion of my interpretive limitations. I used Lather's (1991) guiding questions, listed below, as I documented experiences in my research journal and thought about my intentions, assumptions, and actions:

- Did I encourage ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity, or did I impose order and structure? What elements of legislation and prescription underlie my efforts? How have I policed the boundaries of what can be imagined?

- What is most densely invested? What has been muted, repressed, unheard? How has what I've done shaped, subverted, complicated? Have I confronted my own evasions and raised doubts about any illusions of closure?

- Did I focus on the limits of my conceptualizations?

- Who are my 'others'? What binaries structure my arguments? What hierarchies are at play?

- Did I make resistant discourses and subject positions more widely available? Did my work multiply political spaces and prevent the concentration of power in one point…producing pluralized and diverse spaces for the emergence of subjugated knowledges and for the organization of resistance? (p. 84)

RECIPROCITY AND MEMBER CHECKING. Lather (1991) also foregrounded the necessity of reciprocity in interviewing techniques, which requires both self-disclosure on behalf of the researcher as well as sequential sessions where participants assist with the negotiation of meaning. She contended, "at a minimum this entails recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions to at least a subsample of respondents" (p. 61). In order to provide an opportunity to test conceptual and theoretical formulations, all participants in this study were invited to reflect and comment on a summarized outline of key findings following my initial analysis. Each of the instructors was mailed a copy of this document in October 2007 and encouraged to respond in writing with their evaluation of the study results to date and any comments or feedback, positive or negative, that they would like to share. Participants were also asked to provide any interpretations that they had regarding the ways in which discursive practices operate on and through their institution and their work or discuss how they position themselves within and against particular discourses, thus adding to the coconstruction of knowledge. I considered all faculty comments as I refined the final presentation of data analysis and theoretical as well as practical implications. It is important to note, however, that the responses that I received from the faculty were quite brief in nature due to constraints on their time. Most comments merely voiced the sentiment that my work appeared accurate

in terms of their recollection of our conversations and, thus, the influence of their responses on the final write-up was minimal.

TRIANGULATION. Denzin (1978) identified several types of triangulation. One type involves the convergence of multiple data sources. This study sought to bring together and simultaneously examine the narratives and claims documented in a wide variety of records as well as the participant interviews. It is important to emphasize, however, that the goal of triangulation in this project was not solely to authenticate particular interpretations or highlight the convergence of data but rather to seek "counter patterns," which hold the potential to enhance the credibility of the project (Lather, 19991, p. 67). As previously noted, texts considered as data for analysis during this study included (a) the body of documents related to the emergence of basic writing in Texas, (b) participant interviews, (c) participant artifacts—written policies and procedures, departmental mission and vision statements, syllabi, etc—and (d) a research journal with observations and reflections. Sources for historical data included: Texas residents, the media, researchers, college and university faculty and staff, parents and students, professional organizations including the Texas Association of Developmental Education and local chapters of the College Reading and Learning Association and Two-Year College English Association as well as the Texas Business and Education Council and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Informants were faculty who represented a wide variety of social, cultural, and professional experiences. Both interview data and artifacts were collected from all participants. Further, my research journal provided an additional source of information.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As previously noted, this project draws on the work of Foucault, whose work sought to engage the deep structures, however obfuscated by habit, that underlie the

surface features of phenomena. Building on theories advanced by Saussure and Derrida, among others, Foucault not only questioned how certain actions were constrained by hegemonic ideals but also sought to "demonstrate their historical ubiquity" (Harned, 1986, p. 13). Pointing to the intersections of power, knowledge, and discourse, Foucault enumerated how patterns of conduct "have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done ('jurisdiction') and codifying effects regarding what is to be known ('veridiction')," cumulating in discourses that appear as a form of rationality both inscribed in and governing of practices or systems of practice (Foucault, 1991, p. 75). Much of Foucault's writing was dedicated to the exploration of discourses and discursive practice through his methods of archaeology and genealogy; however, such approaches were often unsystematic and, at times, purported contradictory ideologies.

Foucault's (1972) explanation of archaeology was in direct opposition to traditional ways of writing history, which he described as:

> the work expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) that exists in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form…history, in its traditional form, undertook to "memorize" the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say. (p. 7)

In contrast to traditional history, Foucault's (1970, 1972, 1973) projects emphasize historical ruptures over/against historical continuity, avoid both grand interpretations and causal analyses, and draw out those "traces" that have been lost to silence. Viewing histories as "unities already given," Foucault's archaeologies illustrate the ways in which discourses emerge—how "statements," or presupposed truths that appear to stand alone

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without necessary reference to context, function within particular domains and disciplines, governing not only what can be said and understood as truth but also who could be considered a speaking subject. Such statements comprise discourse, defined not as "the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject but, on the contrary, a totality in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined…a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed" (Foucault, 1972, p.55). Further, discourses are a form of power—that which constructs subject—in that they may reproduce, circumvent, or contest particular social relations.

While Foucault attempted to reintroduce monuments of discourse and to trace certain discursive formations in relation to others through archaeologies, his genealogical method looked to restore the specificity of a statement's emergence. Providing loose guidelines for genealogy, Foucault (1989) advised that discourse should be treated "not as a theme for commentary which would revive it, but as a monument to be described in its characteristic disposition" (p. 40). Furthermore, when exploring a discourse, one should seek "not its laws of construction, as do the structural methods, but its *conditions of existence*" and "refer the discourse not to the thought, to the mind, or to the subject which might have given rise to it but to the practical field in which it is deployed" (p. 40).

Beginning with the assumption that phenomena are not always as transparent as we take them to be, this study sought the "contingencies of history… [that] allow for certain discursive formations to exist at any given time and not others" (Valle, 2005, p. 17). For example, from Foucault's (1991) archaeological and genealogical work he argued, "It wasn't as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn't self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up; it wasn't self-evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through the

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individual examination of bodies" (p. 76). Likewise, we have to consider that the practices of basic writing in Texas—mandatory assessment, individual "Success Plans," particular supplemental support services funded by state appropriations—are not natural or determined but rather may result as "exteriorities of accidents" (Foucault, 1977, 146). In other words, "They are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations…not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault, 1977, 148). Using the following methods, I questioned the various discourses that operate through basic writing programs, their emergence, their reproduction of authoritative structures, and the ways in which they invest local sites, like Bluebonnet Community College.

DATA ANALYSIS AND CONCEPTUAL LENSES

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS. This project employed elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary method of data analysis. One objective of CDA is to grasp "how particular perspectives, methods, and 'truths' are made available, selected, and framed for the work of education" (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 3) through the analysis of "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995, p. 204). Concerned simultaneously with both representation and subjectivity, researchers who practice CDA often seek to trace the production and consumption of texts—explicitly questioning who has access to authorship and control—while concurrently tracing their positive effects, particularly how individuals are "named, positioned, desired, and described" in specific terms of reference (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 6). CDA was an appropriate methodological choice for this project because it allowed for an exploration of the conditions of existence and the reproduction of basic writing in Texas. Specifically, I chose aspects of CDA that allowed me to both question the power relations

inherent in particular narratives and the ways in which we know basic writing and writers as well as examine the material consequences and positive effects of discursive practices.

CDA provides the means to critique dominant institutional practices, such as mandated assessment and developmental course placement or notions of academic standards, by mapping the construction of knowledge (Luke, 1995-1996). CDA allows one to move beyond descriptive research and interpretive approaches that draw content-level themes from transcripts toward a "detailed analysis…showing how large-scale social discourses are systematically (or, for that matter, unsystematically) manifest in everyday talk and writing in local sites" (Luke, 1995-1996, p.11). This type of in depth investigation hinges on the interconnectivity of texts and recurrent statements—claims, propositions, wording—that when taken together construct the discourses that provide options for knowing practices within the bounds of local contexts. For this project, mutliple texts were considered simultaneously—histories, narratives, artifacts, reflections—to highlight how basic writing has become discoursed in Texas and the implications for practitioners at one community college.

Fairclough (1992) provided three guidelines for the application of CDA. The first consideration should be *discourse-as-text*, which focuses on linguistic and organizational features or "techniques of representation" (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 19)—vocabulary choices, grammar usage, text structure, etc.—that serve to obscure or favor particular agents or entities. An example of this microlevel analysis would be to consider how the use of passive verbs removes reference to an actor in a particular process (Blommaert & Bulcean, 2000) or, as revealed in the documents analyzed for this study, to note the significance of how students who do not earn certain score on the THEA exam are repeatedly called failures in order to position various groups of individuals—students,

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teachers and parents—as subordinates in relationships of power that make it seem logical when policymakers wrest increasing amounts of power from schools.

A second level of analysis considers *discourse-as-discursive-practice*, which traces the "circulation of concrete linguistic objects" (Blommaert & Bulcean, 2000, p.448). Luke (1995-1996) argued:

> Texts do not simply portray or misportray social relationships of domination/subordination. With their relational functions, texts actually constitute intersubjective relations of power, setting out a social relationship between text and reader, speaker and listener. Critical discourse analysis can make transparent asymmetries in those relations, revealing the textual techniques by which texts attempt to position, locate, define, and in some instances, enable and regulate readers and addressees. (p. 20)

An example of discourse-as-discursive-practice is evident in the ways in which the analyzed documents are utilized to assert the authority of industrial leaders over educational policy by defining basic students solely in terms of their role as the future workforce and by implicating readers through assertions that claim that as taxpayers and voters they will suffer consequences by not supporting specific reform efforts.

Finally, CDA must focus on *discourse-as-social-practice*, centering "the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature" (Blommaert & Bulcean, 2000, p.449). This level of analysis focuses on disrupting the reproductive effects of discourses as they travel through institutional sites, enable material consequences and construct subjectivities. It both examines the articulation of normativity and simultaneously attempts to communicate "strategies for reinflecting and rearticulating discourses in everyday life" (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 20). As illustrated in the narratives about basic writing in Texas, for example, a discourse of science not only has

encouraged the widespread adoption high-stakes, norm-referenced testing and influenced the ways in which students are characterized in terms of medical models, but also it has limited the range of possible conceptions of valid research within the higher education arena, thus reasserting and naturalizing the positive effects of scientific technologies.

CDA, then, can be utilized both to map the constructive forces that position basic writing/writers in relations of power as well as to examine the reproductive effects of past and present practice. It allows us to simultaneously question the seemingly natural ways in which institutions categorize student writers and how these classification processes are implemented in ways that make them seem advantageous to various groups of interested stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and policymakers. Challenging traditional histories, this project utilized elements of CDA in order to emphasize how presupposed truths about basic writing appear to stand alone without necessary reference to function within particular institutions and contexts. Further, by reintroducing monuments of basic writing in Texas and its discursive formations in juxtaposition to participant narratives, I sought to restore the specificity of discoursed practices and discuss implications of their material consequences.

GENEALOGY. The second phase of my analysis involved framing the discourse samples analyzed through a genealogical lens. As elaborated by Foucault (1980), beyond the "analysis of local discursivities," genealogy is concerned with the "tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play" (p. 85). Genealogy, thus, can focus the "technologies" of power relations—"tactics of distribution, reciprocal adjustments of bodies, gestures and rhythms, differentiation of capacities, reciprocal coordination in relation to apparatuses or tasks"—to increase the utilizable effects of the discourses (Foucault, 1978a, p. 220). This focus on body and practice, enabled through a

theoretical framework of genealogy, facilitates a simultaneous discussion of the two cases in question and their implications for action. As noted by Blommaert and Bulcean (2000), "Education is seen as a major area for the reproduction of social relations, including representation and identity formation, but also for possibilities of change" (p. 451). The genealogical lens can be used to foreground and structure a presentation of the material consequences of discursive practices within basic writing and consider questions of agency and praxis as respondents position themselves within or against basic writing discourse.

Scheurich and McKenzie (2005), expanded on the four general rules or "areas of possible work for the genealogist" originally described by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (p. 854). The first rule is to highlight *positive effects* enacted through "normalization of appropriate behavior" (p.854). In other words, genealogy is explicitly concerned with the complexities of discursive mechanisms—not just with the oppressive or repressive tendencies of power but also with how certain patterns of behavior are encouraged or authored as natural. Genealogy, thus, allows us to consider if the constructive forces that shape public discussions about developmental education in Texas and position programs and students in relationships of power influence the daily activities of faculty at Bluebonnet Community College. It also facilitates a discussion of why participants view particular processes as reasonable and legitimate while resisting others.

The second rule advises how the effects of local discursive practices should be interpreted. They should be viewed "not simply as consequences of legislation or as indicators of social structures but as techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power" (Foucault, 1978a, p. 23). Here

Foucault points to the overarching political nature of disciplinary acts. Scheurich and McKenzie (2005) provide an example from their work:

> The new emphasis on student-centered classroom should not be analyzed only as a new and better approach emerging from progressive educational theorists or only as a function of social structures; instead, it should also be analyzed as a practice of power that has emerged and circulates more broadly in society and as a practice of power that is, in many ways, actually more oppressive than teacher-centered classrooms…because the work of this new tactic of power is to imprint the souls of children rather than just their behaviors. (p. 855)

Likewise, the analysis of documents for this study focused less on the punitive measures and state-mandated controls that support particular ideologies and practices and, instead, recognized the efficiency of discursive practices that result in desired material incentives or public acknowledgment, such as conforming to acts that have been deemed "best practices".

The third rule of genealogy encourages the researcher to consider how histories of particular disciplines and discoursed processes are related to the emergence of social sciences and how the social sciences permit the formulation of knowledge. Specific to this project, we must recognize that there might be a "common matrix" of power driving both the practice of basic writing and the ways in which we might know about basic writing (Foucault, 1978a, p. 23). Analyzing the discourses that shape developmental English, therefore, requires an engagement with the common systems of power that operate in the larger discipline of education. For example, we must question how notions such as scientifically-based research and standards-based accountability systems, which determine how many of the analyzed documents characterize basic writing assessment and program delivery, have emerged and have become fixed as esteemed practices via the

prominence of dominant epistemologies undergirding the social sciences and, subsequently, much educational theory.

Foucault's final rule urges discovery of the "way in which the body itself is invested by power relations" (Foucault, 1978a, p. 24). This requires a focus on how discoursed systems not only shape behavior but also effect a change in the way in which the physical body is confined by a political field. Remarkably, however, "power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them" (Foucault, 1978a, p. 25). Through sustained application, the observable phenomena and correctives of a discipline become normalized to the extent that certain practices do not require external surveillance. After repeated description, judgment, measurement, classification, and comparison to others, individuals internalize particular standards and bodies become docile through a process of self surveillance that actuates the reproduction of the initial assertion of power. An illustration of this phenomenon is evident in the ways in which many basic writers have accepted discoursed characterizations of themselves and, subsequently, how they divorce themselves from particular social or cultural language conventions in order to assimilate to establish norms or self-report that they do not belong in the university.

Allowing Foucault's genealogical tenets to focus the discussion of analyzed discourses, then, this research simultaneously has addressed "various systems of subjection" and has considered "the endlessly repeated play of dominations" operating on and through basic writing programs (Foucault, 1977, 148). It has questioned, among other things, how college-readiness assessment and placement have come to be both accepted and expected, why basic classes are viewed as natural or even beneficial options for certain students, and how power is exerted and reasserted not only through mandates and institutional policies but also through systems of rewards (e.g., recognition for model

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basic programs and implementation of "best practices") and self-surveillance (e.g., students who are not mandated to take basic courses but choose to do so because they perceive their skills to be weak). Ultimately, this project aimed to provide a critical space to both rupture and to reframe the knowledge that shapes our discipline and its sites of reproduction.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCHER AND POSITIONALITY

As a researcher who actively engages in the questioning and rupturing of disciplinary narratives, it is necessary for me to acknowledge my own situatedness within the field of basic writing. As noted by Royster (2000), doing so foregrounds "that knowledge is produced by someone and that its producers are not formless and invisible. They are embodied and in effect have passionate attachments by means of their embodiments" (p. 281). Further, as asserted by Glesne (1999), "writing is a political act," and relationships in research projects can be highly asymmetrical, with the researcher possessing a disproportionate amount of power (p.172). Caution must be exercised in order to assure that informants are protected, particularly in terms of confidentiality, but it is also important to contemplate how individuals or groups are portrayed and positioned based on the assumptions and biases of the researcher as well as those of potential readers. Glesne (1999) also outlined several points for consideration including, among others, the need to highlight the complexities of a research situation, to question how analyses could be interpreted and acted on in either a positive or negative manner, and to discuss how the language utilized in the findings might connote or transfer values (p. 173).

One way to address the aforementioned concerns is to include a thorough examination of the subjective lenses through which I have conceived this project and have analyzed the data as well as to openly reflect on my positionality as I present the

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findings of the study. As Scheurich (1997) stated, it is of the utmost importance that researchers "highlight the baggage we bring to the research enterprise" and "foreground the open, indeterminacy" of interactions throughout the project (p. 74). In this regard, I have included a statement of positionality below. Furthermore, during data collection and analysis I maintained a research journal in order to reflect on my assumptions and biases as well as interview contexts and interactions. It is my hope that by drawing attention to my own guiding assumptions and allegiances, I am able to both foreground the context in which meaning is being produced during this study as well as further bring into focus the discursive practices that are at play as I write from within the academy in general and the field of developmental education in particular.

As Lather (1991) contended, often those involved in emancipatory politics "fail to connect how [they] do research to [their] theoretical and political commitments" (p. 80). I believe it is important to do so and, thus, this document commences with a preface that not only introduces the reader to the work that I have done with students placed in developmental education but also draws attention to how that work is intimately connected to my personal history as a first generation college student who was labeled at-risk and felt like an outsider in the college community. Additionally, I noted several assumptions that I held regarding basic writing and writers based on my lived experiences, namely that developmental students were systematically marginalized within institutions of higher education but could persist if I, and others like me, would intervene with care and compassion. This is a viewpoint that I uncritically embraced for a long time before being introduced to poststructuralist theories and began to recognize that, despite my good intentions, I was also reproducing relationships of power by presuming that my students had certain needs and that I had the ability to or was welcome to help them in their journey. This was most evident in the ways in which it was a goal

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of mine to help students become proficient with the discourse of the academic community without critically questioning that discourse or how my encouragement of student assimilation always already implied that maintaining the status quo within the university was something to aspire to.

As much as I now try to assert a critical voice while simultaneously resisting the inclination to privilege the circumstantial and partial knowledge gleaned through my own journey, such is quite a difficult negotiation. Embracing multiple conceptions of my identity, both that of formerly marginalized student and student advocate, both outsider to the academy and one who has arrived to a place where she, through projects like this one, is expected to advance the academy, I constantly struggle with the tensions of my past and present. As Britzman (2003) noted, when one finds themselves facing "the paradox of constructing emancipatory social relationships from an oppressive past," such an act of contending with this historical crisis or "inherited context, while at the same time trying to establish one's authority in a situation charged by power struggles, often finds [educators] embodying the very traditions they hoped to change" (p. 41). It was with this caution in mind that I began this project.

So, thus, even as I knew from the beginning that I would be highly critical of the governmental and institutional bodies whose mandates render students powerless to make decisions about their educational paths or figure them as *others* in the college setting, which is evident in my analysis, I had to take special care when working with the practitioner narratives. Because I feel connected to individuals whose work involves serving students both in and outside the classroom on a daily basis, it is more difficult for me to refrain from privileging their voices over against those that appear to run counter to the philosophies and intentions that many of us share. I had to continuously remind myself that their stories, like mine, harbor tensions that need to be teased out. I also had

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to take care that my presentation of findings did not simply create a binary where the messages of the analyzed documents oppose those present in the interview narratives, to remember that my job was to highlight the complexities across the various texts and the ways in which they intersect and interact. Finally, I had to continue to reflect on my positionality throughout the processes of data collection and analysis. That being the case, I chose to include excerpts from my research journal in Chapter 6 in an effort to be transparent with regards to the biases and ideologies that undergirded my reading of the various documents and interviews as well as introduce ambiguity and a multiplicity of interpretations into my analysis, resisting the illusion of closure. In this regard, I follow the lead of Ladson-Billings (1994) whose research writing offers "a mixture of scholarship story—of qualitative research and lived reality" (p. x).

RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

BLUEBONNET COMMUNITY COLLEGE. Bluebonnet Community College (BCC) is a public, two-year community college located in an urban area in Texas. BCC registers more than 22,000 people each year in academic, occupational, and noncredit courses, offering programs on two primary campuses and one campus annex. Approximately 35% of students at BCC are White, 56% Latino, 3% Black, and 6% other. 61% are female, 39% male. The average age of enrolled students is 22. BCC employs 268 tenure or tenure-track credit teaching faculty, 296 adjuncts, and 16 assistant instructors.

Basic writing classes at BCC are located in the Department of English and Philosophy. In addition to a department chair who carries a small course load, there are approximately 12 full-time faculty teaching basic writing each semester. All basic writing instructors also teach first-year composition and/or advanced English/Literature courses, and their load is distributed differently each semester. Additionally, there are about 8-10 adjuncts teaching basic writing in any given semester. BCC currently offers

two levels of basic writing. The first level is ENGL 0305/0306, a six credit hour course entitled Basic Writing and Mechanics. The second level, ENGL 0307 is titled English Improvement. Students are placed into basic writing or exempt based on their scores on the THEA or equivalent scores on the SAT, ACT, TAKS, COMPASS, or ASSET. All students entering BCC are required by Texas law to take an assessment test unless they declare a non-academic level-one certificate, were honorably discharged or retired from the military, or are exempt due to completion of a degree or qualifying coursework at another institution.

Approximately 1200-1300 students enroll in basic writing courses each year, which equated to 30.8% of the entering first-year class in 2005. Students do not receive credit toward graduation for basic coursework and they can only register for courses for which they have met the assessment levels. Further, students who place into ENGL 0305/0306 or 0307 are required to participate in a one-hour writing lab in the Marymont Writing Center (MWC). The writing lab curricula was designed to reinforce skills taught in the classroom. For the 0305/0306 lab, the emphasis is on grammar; for the 0307 class the lab focus is on writing skills. All labs are taught by full-time, degreed faculty and part-time, degreed lab adjuncts.

Although the state of Texas is a prime location for a genealogy of developmental programs due to its extended history of legislation in the state education code that mandates college-readiness assessment and basic coursework at public institutions of higher education, my choice to conduct research at BCC was dependent on several additional factors. First, I am a Texas resident and have been employed here for the duration of my professional career, which has afforded me the opportunity to become familiar with the various educational policies and historical texts related to the practice of developmental education in the state. Further, I chose to interview faculty at a

community college both because such institutions are the largest providers of basic coursework and offer the most comprehensive range of programs and support services but also because I thought that my employment at one of these institutions would allow me to draw on professional relationships to help recruit a substantial number of research participants.

BCC, however, was not the first community college that I considered during the proposal of this project. I had initially intended to interview faculty from my home institution of Hillside Community College (a pseudonym), and I had permission to conduct the study from the IRB, vice president, and area dean; however, I ran into difficulty during the recruitment process and secured only three potential participants. I was given several reasons why the faculty from HCC chose not to participate. First, I planned to conduct interviews during the summer session, during which time several of the full-time faculty members are off contract. More significantly, perhaps, I was told by the department chair that several scholars had recently initiated projects at HCC and that their write-ups contained negative appraisals of the developmental education areas. The faculty felt that the research reports were either inaccurate and/or did not comprehensively examine the efficacy of the programs due to a heavy reliance on statistical inference, yet such reports were referenced by the administration during performance appraisals and used to reprimand instructors. Although I conveyed that this project was not evaluative in nature, nor would any identifying information about the site or participants be included in the findings, the faculty at HCC were understandably uncomfortable participating in the study.

Once I learned that I would not be able to gather enough participants at HCC, I turned to my supervisor, who was also my project liaison at HCC, for advice. Because he was formerly employed at Bluebonnet Community College and had several connections

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there, he was able to put me in contact with the vice president who was very interested in having me conduct my research there. The vice president introduced me to the department chair who provided me with a list of faculty who were available during the summer, which totaled 12. I contacted each of the potential participants, and seven agreed to be interviewed. We set a date in June of 2007 that was convenient for everyone, and the department chair reserved an office in the English building where I could conduct all of the interviews. The first time I formally met any of the participants was during the initial interview, and I spoke with each of them one additional time during their member checks; however, they were encouraged to contact me at any time with questions, concerns, and supplementary information or observations.

PARTICIPANTS. Participants in this study, each identified in the sections to follow by a pseudonym to protect confidentiality, are former administrators and full-time faculty in the English and Philosophy department at BCC who have taught ENGL 0305/0306, 0307, or one-hour writing labs in the Marymont Writing Center. The seven individuals consisted of six females and one male. Three of the six females identified as Latina/Hispanic and three identified as White. The male identified as Latino/Hispanic. Five of the seven have been teaching at BCC for greater than 15 years, one more than 30 years. Two of the six have served as department chairs either presently or in the past. All have also taught composition, literature, or labs in addition to basic courses. Interestingly, Alita, Carmen, Anne, and Edgar all attended BCC as undergraduates, left to pursue their advanced degrees, and returned to teach at the institution. A brief biographical sketch for every participant appears below. Each excerpt includes the information that the participants chose to disclose when they were asked to tell me about themselves, their work/role at BCC, and their academic and professional background.

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Judy, a Latina, is an Assistant Instructor of English and also serves as Coordinator of the Marymont Writing Center. She has worked at BCC for over 17 years and has earned degrees in English and education. Her main responsibilities include not only the instruction of developmental writers but also the hiring, training, and evaluation of professional writing tutors. Judy strives to ensure that the writing center is viewed not only as a place where students with deficiencies come but as a resource for all students. She enjoys getting to know each of her students personally and noted that she spends time meeting with them over coffee and assisting them with issues and concerns that are not always directly related to writing.

Eva, a White female, is an Associate Professor of English and the Director of the Marymont Writing Center. She currently supervises a staff of over 40 employees and served as assistant director and teaching assistant prior to assuming the director position. Her master's degree is in reading and English. She noted that the writing center is her "first love," (Eva, June, 25, 2007, p. 1) because she has the opportunity to work one-on-one with students. She also enjoys writing grants and is currently in the process of authoring proposals for three projects in addition to a recent grant that she received to implement a summer bridge program.

Regina, a White female, is the Writing Lab Coordinator at BCC. She handles the administration of all of the one-hour writing labs required for students enrolled in developmental English courses and also teaches some of the lab courses each semester. Regina holds a bachelor's degree in English and history and has taken several graduate level courses in various fields. She has been employed at BCC for over 10 years, 7 full-time in her current capacity. Regina chose to teach developmental students because she was inspired by her own children who have faced academic struggles. She enjoys the challenge of finding creative ways to help students learn and achieve.

Alita, a Latina, began her career at BCC in 1981. She is a full professor in the Department of English and Philosophy and holds a master's degree in literature. Alita chose to teach basic writing because she finds it personally rewarding and has many success stories about past students who have returned to tell her about how she helped make a difference in their lives. Alita believes the key to teaching developmental education is maintaining high expectations for all students. She is very passionate about her work and animated when describing her interactions with students.

Carmen, a Latina and sister of Alita, is also a full professor with a master's degree in literature. She has been at BCC since 1989 and began her career as an adjunct instructor. Carmen was inspired by her sister to teach developmental courses and names Alita as her professional role model. Her goal is to actively challenge assumptions about basic writers whom she refers to as her "305/306 honors' students" (Carmen, June 25, 2007, p. 1). Carmen is also very interested in integrating technology into her basic English classes and is always experimenting with new software.

Edgar, a Latino, is a full Professor who has worked at BCC for 38 years and has taught developmental classes from the very beginning of his professional career. His master's degree is in comparative literature. Edgar has served as department chair and has been honored with the departmental teaching award. He feels that he has a special connection to many of his students "because of [his] ethnicity and language background" and because of the fact that he grew up right down the street, "never leaving here" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p.1). Edgar sees himself as somewhat of a pioneer in the field of basic writing because when he started the concept of developmental education was something very new, and he had to "teach [himself] what to teach the students" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p.1).

Anne, a White female, is a full Professor in the Department of English and Philosophy and has also served as department chair. She earned her doctoral degree in American literature and has taught basic writing and composition at BCC for the past 10 years. Early in her professional career Anne worked alongside Mike Rose and considers him a strong professional influence. She enjoys coteaching paired courses with developmental math instructors and health occupations faculty, which were initiated as part of a title V grant. Like Edgar, Anne grew up very close to BCC, and she considers the college as part of her extended community.

During the interviews, I felt warmly welcomed by each of the participants. I met Edgar early in the faculty lounge, and we enjoyed coffee together. Eva invited me to the writing center to have lunch with faculty and staff who were training to implement a summer bridge program. Although I did not have the opportunity to get to know each of the instructors on a personal level, I felt that our conversations came easily and that no one appeared apprehensive or anxious about sharing their story. In fact, at the end of the allotted hour time periods, I had to purposefully end the interviews—which had evolved into spirited, organic conversations—so that I would have time to meet with everyone. All of the participants stated that they looked forward to contributing to the analysis of data during member checks and to reading the findings of the completed dissertation project.

Chapter 4: Discourses and the Construction of Basic Writing in Texas

Just as Horner (1999a) illustrated how Basic Writing at CUNY in the 70s represented a "response to another, powerful public discourse on higher education and students deemed unprepared for college," (p. 4) I also contend that basic writing in Texas has been constructed through particular discursive practices across time and multiple texts. This chapter discusses the various discourses operating through basic writing, as revealed through a Critical Discourse Analysis of historical documents. In addition, the theoretical lens of genealogy is also applied to focus the technologies of discursive practices that help author basic writers and basic writing practice. The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, I enumerate several discourses that connect the language of basic writing in Texas to larger patterns of power through a presentation of the linguistic and organizational features, relational functions, and ideological processes that are abundantly present in the corpus of analyzed documents. Further, as the discussions of the discourses unfold, I take care to address dissenting opinions and theories that refigure the grand narratives of the discipline in terms of the subjugated knowledges that are made available through the texts. For organizational purposes, I have treated each of the various discourses revealed in the documents separately in order to discuss them in detail. Doing so comes at the expense of creating an illusion that each is a separate phenomenon when, in fact, these articulations of power that set parameters for knowing basic writing/writers interconnect, overlap, and work in concert to define a complex system of conventions that reproduce particular hierarchical organizational structures.

A DISCOURSE OF FAILURE

A GENERATION OF FAILURE. On July 17, 1986, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Committee on Testing released an executive report on developmental education entitled *A Generation of Failure: The Case for Testing and Remediation in Texas Higher Education* (Document 83). The findings and recommendations of this report were used to create the Texas Academic Skills Program, the first manifestation of a state-mandated basic skills program. The pandemic language that appears throughout this text is reminiscent of the rhetoric utilized in the A Nation at Risk campaign, yet perhaps stronger as *A Generation of Failure* is indicative of realized crisis beyond simply an imminent, grave possibility. Specifically, *A Generation of Failure* speaks of the "systemic decay" of education in the state of Texas—highlighting the supposed incompetencies of students, of teachers, of K-12 schools and higher education. It is a story consistently reproduced in the analyzed texts of this study, one fueled by a rhetoric of standards, that at once both justifies and vilifies the need for basic writing. Developmental programs are simultaneously cast as interventions "central to averting a looming national crisis" (Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001, p. 780) and as markers of the "deterioration of postsecondary programs" (Document 26, England, 1993, p. 24).

The 1986 report opens by succinctly describing the problem at hand, the basis for its declaration of the failure of the present generation. "Every year more than 110,000 freshmen enter Texas public colleges and universities. Of these, at least 30,000 cannot read, communicate or compute…our colleges and universities graduate thousands of students each year who cannot write a clear sentence" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1). In this regard, *A Generation of Failure* echoes the figureheads noted in the traditional histories of basic writing such as Henry Tappan and Charles Eliot, who

lamented that many students were arriving to their universities without basic literacy skills. Although the report repeatedly makes claims about the deficiencies of prospective and current college students, what is unclear is whether the committee on testing has evidence to support these conclusions. We do learn the following:

> The committee held nine meetings, visited two states that have implemented testing programs, interviewed representatives of the business community to hear the views of employers, and conducted five hearings around the state to obtain the views of educators, students, concerned citizens, and policymakers. (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1)

> During the aforementioned interviews and hearings, the committee gathered data, which it reports as the "findings of its study" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1). These findings, however, appear to be little more than anecdotal assessments, which highlight the dissatisfaction of Texas employers. For example:

> A bank vice president told the committee that while job applicants are well-trained in finance, they often fail to pass a screening for oral and written communication skills. He told of countless letters and resumes that are discarded on the basis of spelling, grammatical errors, or poor sentence structure. (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p. 4)

Other employers stated their need to hire full-time instructors to teach basic language and writing skills to their staff, including college graduates. One journalist reported "journalism graduates don't have a broad enough education; their basic skills are insufficient, they lack a real world perspective, they have low reporting and writing skills" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p. 5).

> Despite the committee's claims that such problems are "pervasive," the reports' truth claims regarding the failure of students and schools do not appear to be supported

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by any sort of systematic research. Rather, they are built on the opinions and complaints of certain members of the Texas business community. Also of great significance, the committee reports that they conducted several hearings with educators, students, citizens, and legislators, yet these voices are mysteriously silence, never appearing in the report. The production and maintenance of a discourse of failure operationalized through the creation of the TASP program, thus, can be directly connected to the influence of concerned parties within the business sector. A handful of individuals' narratives, therefore, has served as a constructive force to position various groups of individuals—teachers, students and policymakers—as subordinates in relationships of power. Certain policies and procedures, ones that would be advantageous to individuals within the business community, were implemented based on flimsy truth claims about students' and graduates' writing abilities, regardless of the lack of data to support such assertions.

A close reading of the report reveals another potential point of interest. *A Generation of Failure* chronicles the formation of the Committee on Testing, the report's authoring body, in 1985. It states that the THECB chairman, Larry Temple, commissioned the study to "consider the merits of a state testing program that would measure the basic skills of college students and provide the means for improving the quality of higher education in Texas" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p. 3). Further, the report notes that Temple posed several questions for the committee to consider upon commencement, namely:

> (a) What purpose should the tests serve? (b) What tests would be appropriate? (c) How would a statewide test affect institutions and students? (d) In what ways can institutions best assist students both before and after testing? (e) How should a test be selected or developed? (f) What are the costs of a testing program and who

should bear these costs? (g) What uses should be made of the test data by institutions and the coordinating board?

It is important to critically examine the nature of these questions. Consider that they do not inquire as to whether a test or some other means of student skill assessment is necessary but rather appear to assume that some type of examination is required by strongly urging a consideration of instrument comparison, preparation, cost, and outcomes. The particular wording of the questions implies that the only assessment measures to be considered are tests, which indicates a predetermined assumption on the part of the chairman that this is the only way to accurately measure student skill levels and that such diagnostic data will be sufficient for use in determining the parameters of developmental programs. So despite the fact that readers are told that the committee "studied the need for identifying and assisting students who are qualified to enter college" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1) through various interviews and hearings, the language of the report itself supports the notion that the necessity of a state-mandated testing program was a foregone conclusion prior to the occurrence of any inquiry of this nature. The fact that the group was named the Committee on *Testing* also points to these preconceived beliefs on the part of the chairman. This is not altogether surprising, however, as the regime of testing has deep roots. We can see in the traditional histories that college entrance exams were becoming the standard in North American universities in 18th century when commissioned bodies such as the Committee of Ten endorsed rigorous testing procedures. Instead of challenging such conventions, chairman Temple and the Committee on Testing followed suit, effectively reproducing the status quo.

The Coordinating Board's claims of student and school failure and its subsequent recommendations for increased testing may be anecdotal at best; however, similar assessments appear repeatedly in the texts studied for this dissertation. In fact, several

researchers (Document 90, Turkel, 1995; Document 18, Combs, 1996; Document 19, Combs, 1999; Document 24, Dodge, 2001; Document 42, Le, 2002; Document 91, Turpin, 2003; Document 21, Crowson, 2004) directly quote *A Generation of Failure* as evidence of both the present crisis in education and the need for augmented evaluation measures. The discourse of failure is so prevalent in the accounts of basic writing in Texas, and central to the ways in which basic writers are positioned within the academy, that it merits an analysis of why such a representation of students and educators is pervasive, attractive, and easily reproduced.

THE NUMBERLESS BEGINNINGS OF FAILURE. Throughout the analyzed texts and participant narratives, certain perspectives and truths about basic writing and writers, their teachers, and their schools are made readily available. Concerning students, the overwhelming message is that "too many are not learning the basic skills needed to succeed in college or work" (Document 1, Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006, p.1). The documents also convey that this problem is getting worse and has been for quite some time. In 1996, Combs wrote in Document 18 "for more than a decade, it has become increasingly apparent that many Texas students find themselves entering college without the skills they need to succeed" (p. 1). Almost a decade later, Hammons (2005) claimed "a growing percentage of Texans lack basic reading, writing, and math skills" (Document 33, p. 5). These assertions regarding increases in student failures are present despite the fact that the Developmental Education Statewide Data Profile shows the number of students required to enroll in developmental education has remained steady for several years (Document 82, THECB, 2006). Such recurrent statements serve to provide options for knowing students, who have been primarily authored as "deficient," (Document 15, Burley, 1997; Document 50, McGehee, 1999; Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 77, THECB 2002a; Document 21, Crowson, 2004; Document 87,

THECB Division of Participation and Success, 2005;) representing the "generation of failure in our educational system" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1).

Within the examined documents, this negative characterization of students can be traced to another source beyond the original allegations proffered by particular leaders within the business community, namely statistics revealing that anywhere from one-third to one-half of prospective college students in Texas do not earn requisite scores on state-mandated assessments. These assessments, the TASP and THEA, have been repeatedly positioned as the only reliable tools to "gauge college academic readiness" (Document 93, Venezia, 1999) and to "provide students with achievement diagnoses" (Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001, p. 768). The regime of testing remains largely unchallenged in the narratives of developmental education in Texas with few exceptions (Document 5, Bernstein, 2004a; Document 6, Bernstein, 2004b). In fact, in Document 13 Boylan & Saxon (2004) identified "a strong commitment to assessment" in developmental education programs as a "research-based best practice" (p. 8).

There are some scholars (McNeil, 2000; Document 51, McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001) who have challenged the merits of a centralized, high-stakes system of testing for youth in Texas, claiming it has "reduced the quality and quantity of education offered to children" (Document 51, McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001, p.2). Furthermore, several researchers within the fields of basic writing and composition (Sternglass, 1997; Shor, 1997; Gleason, 2000; Behrman, 2000) have argued that standardized, norm-referenced, and content-general tests do not provide an accurate measure of student ability. This is because the exams do not account for domain knowledge, are artificially situated, and culturally-insensitive at best or culturally-biased at worst.

Despite the aforementioned dissenting opinions on standardized testing, an overwhelming majority of the texts examined for this study cite low scores as conclusive

evidence of student failure, as enumerated in the section entitled *The Discourse of Science*. I contend that the continued prominence of placement and assessment examinations points to the staying power of discursive practices and structures of domination. Specifically, a discourse of science, through which these systems of testing are operationalized, promotes high-stakes exams and subsequent narratives of student failure. Although the discourse of science is explored more fully in a separate section below, I believed it was important to introduce up front the interfacing of the two discourses and to re-emphasize that multiple discursive practices often work in concert to strengthen the utilizable effects of one another, reproducing desired conventions.

Having already adopted the stance that the current generation of prospective college students is deficient, many of the analyzed texts attempt to locate a source of blame. By extension, thus, the documents implicate teachers and schools as primarily responsible for students' inadequate skill levels through a discourse of failure. It is repeatedly articulated that "high schools do a terrible job of preparing students for college…students leave with all sorts of misinformation about rules of grammar and composition" (Document 33, Hammons, 2005, p.24-25), particularly because of the "weak curricula, vague standards and lack of alignment between high school content and the expectations of colleges" (Document 1, Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006, p.4). In these two citations alone, one can begin to see how the narratives serve to both invoke a discourse of standards as described by Fox (1999), which privileges a particular definition of literacy and writing competency—knowledge of the *rules* of grammar and composition—as well as fix the expectations of colleges as if they were universal absolutes.

The analyzed texts further purport that "there is not enough consistent, high quality information for prospective students to use to prepare for college" (Document 93,

Venezia, 1999, p. 4) and that "public schools have failed to demand of [students] basic skills mastery," (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.2) which is indicative of the "widespread failure of public education" (Document 26, England, 1993, p. 20). The overarching implication is that if students were taught "what they need to know" in high school, developmental courses could be eliminated and they would be successful in college. This notion confirms Rose's (1985) assertion that basic writing is viewed by many as a transient phenomena, that "the problem [of poor student writing] will be solved—in five years, ten years, or a generation—and higher education will be able to return to its real work" (p. 355) if we just strengthen the curriculum and increase accountability measures. This myth of transience is further supported by participants in Wiese's (Document 94, 1999) study who expressed that the reason remedial education is offered in college is because "teachers are not doing their job" (p. 101). Furthermore, in Document 25, Eagle Forum (2007) reported criticism of the developmental education that claims "deficiencies should have been addressed before graduating high school" (¶ 1), and Burley's (1997) study revealed in Document 15 the presence of "strong messages about raising standards and motivating students to reach these new standards…shifting more of the responsibility to primary and secondary education in the state" (p. 84).

THE POLITICS AND POWER OF FAILURE. Claims regarding the failure of teachers and schools abound in the narratives of developmental education programs in Texas, and critics contend basic programs are bound to be unsuccessful because they "cannot compensate for 12 years of inadequate schooling" (Document 66, Smith, 1993, p. 78). But as one dissenting opinion has suggested, evaluations of the education system "must come to terms with the complicated nature of developmental studies, the students involved, and the politics and policy that drive the whole system" (Document 15, Burley, 1997, p. 82). The discourse of student and school failure persists in part because its truth

claims reflect a causal relationship that often is not critically interrogated. When students are unable to pass a standardized test, they and those viewed as responsible for their education are authored as aberrant without a discussion of the many other complex variables that influence teaching, learning, and the evaluation of student ability. Such variables may include the availability of equitable funding and resources, the adoption or rejection of particular ideological assumptions guiding definitions of intelligence and competence, and psychometric limitations or inherent biases of testing instruments, to name a few. One can see how a discourse of failure has become fixed, as it is no longer necessary for its truth claims to be substantiated. The assertion that students, teachers, and schools are failures has become normalized.

The texts analyzed for this study not only reveal particular relationships of power but also point to how they are constructed and maintained. One can see how government agencies, business professionals, researchers, and reporters, among others, have all claimed the role of expert and the right to name students and teachers as failures. Close examination of the documents reveals how a discourse of failure serves to certify the authority of the sources that have been doing the positioning, effectively allowing them to wrest increasing amounts of power away from local school districts, colleges, and universities.

We have seen that the discourse of failure is partially characterized by a recurring pronunciation that schools are in a state of disaster. Policymakers increasingly point to this so called emergency as justification for intervention. In Document 1 The Alliance for Excellent Education (AFEE) (2006) reported, "Americans are beginning to recognize that many of the nation's high schools are in crisis, as policymakers, business leaders, and celebrities call attention to…the trouble plaguing the country's secondary schools" (p. 1). Additionally, THECB Commissioner Ashworth commented:

The TASP is not only testing deficiencies and prescribing remedies for individual students, it is also sending a message to students, teachers, parents, administrators and the general public. The message contains the bad news about how poorly our students are prepared. But it also sends good news that there are things that can be done about what is wrong, both in terms of helping those who enter college underprepared *and in terms of the policy steps that can be taken to correct deficiencies in the educational system* [italics added]. (Document 93, Venezia, 1999, p. 18-19)

Over the past several years in the state of Texas, corrective action to what is viewed as weaknesses within the educational system has been applied by the legislature, and the legitimacy of this body to exercise such authority has been normalized. An examination of a recent statute further supports this claim. In 2007, House Bill 1 was adopted as an amendment to the Texas Education Code. House Bill 1 requires, among other things, that the Commissioners of Education and Higher Education create vertical teams to recommend college-readiness standards and communicate expectations to secondary schools. The intent is to send a clear message to high school teachers as to the demands of college-level work and the specific skills graduates should have mastered. The rhetoric follows, as it has in times past, that implementing these "improved standards" will relieve the costs of failure (Document 8, Boswell, 2005, p. 54). Notably, public action to control the actions and minimize the "damage" of current schooling practices is not confined to Texas. Adler-Kassner and Harrington (2006) acknowledged that the themes that run through contemporary education, and particularly those that claim that students aren't being adequately prepared for higher education, "are rooted in a system that requires outside agents to come in and repair it" (p. 29).

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The rationalization for increased governmental control in Texas is backed by fear-inducing claims that if control remains with the schools, we "will lose ground in the percentage of its workforce that is college educated" and "personal income per capita will decline relative to other states which will also have a negative impact on the tax base of Texas and its ability to provide services to its citizens" (Document 8, Boswell, 2005, p. 35-36). The assertion that underprepared students are an economic as well as an educational concern has been noted in several sources (Document 83, THECB, 1986; Document 26, England, 1993; Document 93, Wiese, 1999; Document 91, Turpin, 2003; Document 63, Shapiro, 2006). In fact, a discourse of economy—which was alluded to earlier in this discussion when the narratives of certain actors within the Texas business community were revealed as a source of evidence implicating students and teachers as deficient—operates in concert with the discourse of failure to reinforce the relationships of power that dominate practices within basic writing and other developmental arenas.

A DISCOURSE OF ECONOMY

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION AS ECONOMIC NECESSITY. I argue that the discourse of failure and economy are inseparable as they draw on one another to reproduce the truth claims that sanction certain entities as credible reformers. The main recurrent statement that binds the two discourses contends that the ultimate burden of failure is borne not by schools but by the industry sector and, ultimately, the American taxpayer (Document 83, THECB, 1986; Document 94, Wiese, 1999; Document 8, Boswell, 2005; Document 33, Hammons, 2005). Widespread adoption of this notion in Texas has contributed to the sanctioning of what Homer (1997) described in Document 39 as a "subtle but fundamental structural shift of school control from the local to the state level" (p. 23).

Through a discourse of economy, developmental education is authored as an economic necessity. The sole purpose and function of basic coursework, thus, is defined by its ability to adequately prepare students to meet "workforce needs for the high tech 21st century" (Document 59, Ray, 1997, ¶ 21). While the discourse of failure operates primarily to empower the state to address alleged shortcomings of students and schools through widespread assessment and mandated coursework, the discourse of economy serves to quantify those losses by tying them to fiscal consequences and, ultimately, to reinforce this power structure by convincing individual voters that they will personally suffer consequences if they do not support educational reforms. Consider the claims of AFEE (2006) from Document 1:

> Because too many students are not learning the basic skills needed to succeed in college or work while they are in high school, the nation loses more than $3.7 billion a year. This figure includes $1.4 billion to provide remedial education to students who have recently completed high school. In addition, this figure factors in the almost $2.3 billion that the economy loses because remedial students are more likely to drop out of college without a degree, thereby reducing their earning potential. (¶ 2)

In Document 1 AFEE also asserted that colleges and universities are being forced to require basic courses in order to hedge unemployment losses, effectively defining higher education as career preparation without which one would be unable to compete in the job market. Upon close examination, one can see a similar characterization throughout the traditional histories of basic writing. The founding of the first junior college in Joliet has been described as a solution that addressed the demands of the skilled trades brought about by industrial transformation, and early remediation programs recognized as a necessity for the labor domain (Document 56, Parr, 1930).

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AUTHORING DEBTS AND DEFICITS. The discourse of economy, thus, limits how both higher education in general and basic writing specifically might be understood. Further, it establishes narrow parameters for understanding identities and encourages market-driven policies and practices. Consider the following quote from Boswell (2005) in Document 8 describing why developmental education is important:

> In today's economy, access to higher education has become the threshold requirement for individual career success…Ours is a society based on work. Those who aren't equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs tend to drop out of mainstream American life. (p. 39)

One can see clearly from Boswell's statement both how a college education is described as a precondition of acquiring meaningful employment and, perhaps more importantly, how being college educated is equated with being a mainstream American. Even though less than 30% of the populace in the United States has earned bachelor's degrees (Toppo & DeBarros, 2005), the attainment of this distinction is conveyed as a requirement for job achievement and the maintenance of a status quo existence. This particular manner of representation subtly establishes a social relationship that regulates who might be acknowledged as a typical citizen, replete with all the benefits that that position might entail. In other words, narratives such as the aforementioned define a linear, teleological path of normalcy, which subsequently also construes as deviant those who neither master basic skills nor seek advanced degrees beyond high school. In the same vain, consider that the analyzed documents repeatedly note that those who will ultimately suffer are the "taxpayers" (Community College Week, 1998; Document 77, THECB, 2002; Document 88, Black Issues in Higher Education, 2003; Document 1, AFEE, 2006). This directly opposes taxpayers with those who are determined to be candidates for basic coursework,

making it appear that there is little overlap between the two categories of people and, again, positioning developmental students as the delinquent other.

Furthermore, proponents of the ideology that the value of learning is realized in economic outcomes seldom consider alternative benefits or the possibility that success can be achieved regardless of whether or not one has participated in higher education. More often than not, the texts are focused on enumerating the consequences that follow for individuals and their communities when college going rates are low or students are underprepared. The most common assertion is that without developmental education, Texas will lose ground in the percentage of its so called "educated workforce," which will necessarily have a "negative impact on the tax base" (Document 8, Boswell, 2005, p.36). Boswell and others (Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001; Document 33, Hammons, 2005; Document 71, TBEC, 2005) further extended this argument by claiming the converse, that "successful developmental education programs [are] central to averting a looming national crisis" (Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001, p. 780).

The framing of basic writing and writers in economic terms is not unique to public policy discussions in the state of Texas but rather appears to be happening at a national level as documented by Adler-Kassner and Harrington's (2006) article *In the Here and Now*. This article critiques the efforts of and professional responses to the American Diploma Project, Project Achieve, and the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which are focused on "developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education that will…address the economic and workforce needs of the country's future" (p. 29). Adler-Kassner and Harrington noted the "fundamental premise" driving the work of these initiatives—that a lack of preparation among high schoolers "is costing institutions and, directly, taxpayers" (p. 29). So as we

explore the utilizable effects of a discourse of economy in Texas, we must also consider that its influence is extensive and not a localized phenomenon.

Similar to the fear-inducing rhetoric of the discourse of failure, the discourse of economy indicts students and schools for the many problems encountered when a student leaves high school ill-equipped to pursue a college education by making claims about potential widespread, negative effects. Hammons (2005) attempted to name such problems in Document 33:

> When Texans leave high school but fail to learn basic reading, writing, and math…the financial impact on the state manifests itself in a variety of ways—lower earning potential and poor productivity of workers, increased spending on social programs, direct costs of remediation by institutes of higher education and employers, and personal losses that may affect individuals for a lifetime and the state for generations. (p. 3)

Several of the other analyzed texts are more specific. Heinauer and Haurwitz (2005) claimed in Document 36 that the absence of college-readiness programs could lead to "a society that needs more social services, but generates fewer tax dollars to pay for them…less able to attract economic development…it has more crime and more disease" (p. 5). In Document 59 Ray (1997) contended, "Without the needed help, TX will soon be faced with burgeoning welfare rolls that are already overcrowded and a demand for an educated workforce that cannot be met" (¶ 14).

There are a few dissenting opinions among the authors of the analyzed texts regarding the value of basic coursework, such as one presented in Document 25 by Eagle Forum (2006) that "all students are not college material, and the demands to accommodate such students are counterproductive" (¶ 8). The editors of *Black Issues in Higher Education* claimed that "with the state facing a record budget shortfall, dollars are

being ill-spent on the remedial program [TASP]" (Document 88, Black Issues in Higher Education, 2003, ¶ 5). In general, those who oppose developmental education do so because they feel taxpayers are paying double for the same skills. Instead of highlighting, as many others do, that basic programs alleviate income gaps and resource shortcomings, they invoke the discourse of failure and demand reform of K-12 schools. As AFEE (2006) pronounced in Document 1, "Ensuring that all secondary students are prepared to succeed in college and work is a giant step in the right direction for this country and will benefit individuals and society for decades to come" (p. 5). Regardless of where the responsibility is located, however, the general message being conveyed in the texts is that without college-level skills, many students will miss out on the opportunity for a college education, which means they are more "likely to depend on welfare, experience addiction, experience prison, experience violence" as opposed to degree holders who are "more likely to be employed, to pay taxes, to vote, and to provide for their family" (Document 8, Boswell, 2005, p. 45).

Despite the plethora of assertions that basic programs are an economic necessity or even a "moral mandate" (Document 93, Venezia, 1999, p. 2), without which one might be "defenseless in this complex, industrialized society" (Document 76, TBEC, 2006, ¶ 1), it is difficult to discern how the authors of the analyzed texts have arrived at such conclusions or what data they have to support their assertions that the students who graduate from high school who do not meet college-readiness scores on assessments are more likely to become criminals, addicts, or welfare recipients. Just as a discourse of failure positions students and teachers as deficient based on the anecdotal assumptions of a few individuals within the business community, the evidence driving the discourse of economy is equally as flimsy. Distorted truth claims about developmental students

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oppose them to middle-class taxpayers and mainstream, responsible citizens, even in the absence of scholarly research to support these contentions.

The analyzed texts repeatedly fail to provide evidence when advancing the ideology that basic programs exist to protect against societal and economic dissolution or the creation of an underclass of citizens. Instead, what appears frequently are (a) several estimates of the costs of basic programs to taxpayers in Texas, which range from $100 to $183 million per year (Community College Week, 1998; Document 77, THECB, 2002; Document 88, Black Issues in Higher Education, 2003), (b) approximations of average lifetimes earning, "$1.2 million for people with a high school diploma and $2.2 million for workers with a bachelor's degree" (Document 93, Venezia, 1999, p. 2), and (c) projections that up to 80% of the fasting growing jobs will require a college degree (Document 1, AFEE, 2006)—upon which the authors appear to have drawn the aforementioned conclusions that students requiring basic coursework are destined to live in poverty and commit criminal acts if colleges do not actively intervene.

Like the discourse of failure, a discourse of economy is often championed by professionals within the business sector. In Document 33 Hammons (2005) study, which purported to "calculate the financial impact on the state when Texans leave high school but fail to learn basic reading, writing, and math" (p. 3) drew conclusions about the future of the state and social programs based at least partially on the opinions of industry executives. He detailed his sources and a key finding in the following manner:

> Using federal and state data, as well as surveys mailed to 1000 employers in the state, this study concludes that Texas loses over $13.6 billion a year when students leave high school but fail to acquire basic skills. The education deficit could cost Texas $174.2 billion in ten years and $390.8 billion over the next 20 years. (p. 3)

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Although it is perfectly logical that businesses would be interested in securing access to a highly skilled workforce pool and would be concerned about their investments in schools and communities, their rhetoric uncritically indicting the educational system for a variety of social ills may be unfounded or exaggerated—a technology that serves to position developmental programs solely as economic initiatives while simultaneously encouraging the transfer of power over these programs to particular interested parties.

REPRODUCING THE PRODUCTIVITY PARADIGM. This study is not the first to recognize the prominence of an economic discourse or the increasing authority that some members of the business community are asserting over educational practices in Texas. When searching for texts to analyze, I located an article by Salinas & Reidel (Document 62, 2007) that is described in the abstract as a "critical policy examination of the economistic discourses that control Texas' accountability reform" (p. 42). Their research examined how the policy process, power relationships, and educational value conflicts were co-opted by the Texas business elite to focus educational reforms on accountability measures. Salinas and Reidel found that in Texas the purposes of schooling are "defined by demands of open market and values associated with excellence and efficiency" as opposed to principles of "distributive justice and the values of equity and access to opportunity" (p. 42).

One of the main effects of the economist discourse, according to Salinas and Reidel (Document 62, 2007) is the transference of a particular set of values through prescriptive legislative initiatives, which in turn reproduce the discourse along with a variety of material consequences. Such a "performance-driven model" demands "accountability, efficiency, management, productivity, and competition…without attention to the value of equity such as pupil expenditure, class size, and teacher quality" (p. 46). Thus, certain ideals, highly regarded for many years in the business sector, have

been introduced to the legislature to guide educational reform; However, there has been neither serious consideration of whether these values make sense in the realm of schooling, which claims equal opportunity and access for all, nor question of whose standards are privileged in the advancement of the business elite's principles and why the views of these particular individuals count.

Although a productivity paradigm that promotes efficiency and competition in the educational setting is neither neutral nor natural, it has been authored as such through the recurrent statements of the economic discourse. In Document 62 Salinas and Reidel (2007) contended "business-crafted solutions to public schools has become so thoroughly embedded in policymakers' thinking that these policies are taken for granted as common sense" (p. 42). Within the K-12 system, the material consequences of an economic discourse include outcomes-based testing agendas tied to fiscal appropriations, open reporting of results that can prompt human resources repercussions, as well as curricular changes and restricted funding of electives to maximize time spent on task with certain preferred subjects (reading, writing, math & sciences), among others. The analyzed texts of this study reveal how the same economic discourse operates on and through basic writing in Texas.

Several documents show that the influence of the dominant ideologies that appear to govern business and ndustry on developmental education policy has been pervasive for over two decades. After initial efforts in 1983 to rally support for educational reforms, spearheaded by corporate executive Ross Perot, the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) was institutionalized in 1989. Although TBEC (2006) stated in Document 72 that its main goal was not to lobby but to implement programs, objectively analyze policy issues, and engage educators in a constructive dialogue about how to improve education, its founders and leaders also formed Texans for Education (TFE),

which has provided a lobbying outlet to support their interests in educational matters. Early on, TBEC and TFE proved to be highly influential in directing educational policy and particularly in aligning school management practices with recognized business management practices—promoting quality control, efficiency, and productivity. TBEC (2006) documented their initial involvement:

> When business people realized there was no statewide uniform measure of students and schools, they began to advocate for student testing and accountability for performance. Once those measures were taken, the business community reacted by pushing for fundamental change. The group's focus evolved to concentrate on accountability and standards and then to curriculum and delivery. (Document 72, ¶ 5)

TBEC's push for statewide assessment and accountability directly impacted basic writing programs in Texas as the organization was instrumental in supporting the development and implementation of the TASP program. Kenneth Ashworth, Commissioner of Higher Education in Texas from 1976-1997, recognized TBEC in an interview with Hodges, Corkran, and Dochen (Document 38, 1997) as a key advocate of the initiative, both at the time of its inception and through periods of multiple reforms. Ashworth proclaimed:

> The Texas Business Coalition has gone to bat for the program during the 1995 legislative session and again in this current session. They represented the business community of employers [who] say that for the first time Texas has a minimum standard of performance: that when a student earns a degree, it means something… and any effort to get away from this, to dismantle or dilute it by allowing students to proceed with their coursework merely because they've taken and failed the TASP test a certain number of times and gone through remediation

would damage the integrity of higher education in Texas…If we don't prepare

young people for these jobs, then they become a burden to our society (p. 16)

This quote reveals not only TBEC's persistent call for performance standards, which is reminiscent of industry language, but also shows the connection between the ideology that appears to govern the business community and the rhetoric that developmental education serves both to ensure a pool of skilled workers and to prevent the deterioration of community resources.

The influence of the industry standards is evident not only in the historical narratives of the field but also in the adoption of a particular vocabulary within developmental education that reflects the philosophy of the corporate world. Citations of this lexicon are numerous within the analyzed texts, and I have provided a few examples here. First, consider how the Texas Administrative Code defines college-readiness standards in Document 70 as "the knowledge and skills expected of students to perform successfully in the workplace and in entry-level courses offered at institutions of higher education" (¶ 4.173). It is important to note that this definition is somewhat vague—it claims that students should be qualified to enter into a career but is never specific as to what type of career, even though skill requirements for different jobs vary significantly. This type of ambiguity is prevalent throughout the analyzed documents, however, and it implies that particular discursive practices have become fixed. The reader is supposed to know already, without being told, that the ability to perform means one must read, write, and compute at competency levels as determined by the standardized examinations.

The analyzed documents also speak to the need for a "P-16 strategic action plan" (Document 82, THECB, 2006, ¶ 4.174) and "statewide performance standards" (Document 1, AFEE, 2006), which may be understood as an educational equivalent to a planned economy. The guiding principles of the developmental education system,

according to Haycock (2005) in Document 35, should be "quality, consistency, and rigor" (p. 82), and "an internal audit should be used to determine accountability" (Document 18, Combs, 1996, ¶ 21). In Document 77 the Finance, Campus Planning, and Research Division of THECB (2002b) encouraged "centralized mechanisms for sharing best practices" (p. 8), and in Document 36 Heinauer and Haurwitz (2005) spoke of enrolling increased numbers of college-ready students as "meeting projected targets" (¶ 9). Numerous authors have addressed the need for increased accountability (e.g. Document 18, Combs, 1996; Document 15, Burley, 1997; Document 35, Haycock, 2005; Document 8, Boswell, 2005), efficiency (e.g. Document 50, McGehee, 1999; Document 14, Bricker, 2005; Document 80, THECB Division of Participation and Success, 2005b), and quality control (e.g. Document 26, England 1993; Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 16, Burley, Butler, & Cejda, 2001; Document 13, Boylan & Saxon, 2004) so that we might be responsible "for the *product* [italics added] we are promising the taxpayer" (Document 94, Wiese, 1999, p.104). The aforementioned examples illustrate the various ways in which talk about developmental students and basic programs has become saturated with business speak, revealing how a discourse of economy constructs new meaning and establishes authority by naturalizing language that did not originate within educational circles.

The influence of dominant ideologies from the discipline of business can also be recognized in the dollar-driven mentality of institutions of higher education. A main concern of several of the analyzed texts is the allocation of funding for developmental programs (Document 15, Burley, 1997; Document 27, Fikac, 1998; Document 19, Combs, 1999; Document 74, THECB, n.d.). The preferred mechanism for appropriating funds has been to consider the number of students at an institution that have successfully completed required sequences of basic courses, rather than determining allocations based

on participation (Document 77, THECB Division of Finance, Campus Planning and Research, 2002a). Outcomes-based formulas for funding are highly supported, despite the consequence that colleges and universities with highest amount of participation and need receive the least amount of financial resources.

Finally, it is important to note that the authority of a discourse of economy appears to be reproduced, at least partially, by the increased involvement of members of the business community on educational policy committees and with professional organizations. For example, Senate Bill 1, passed in 1995, mandated that reforms to the TASP proceed with the aid and advice of Texas employers (Document 18, Combs, 1996). Further, the Texas Administrative Code (Document 70) requires that the Commissioner of Higher Education appoint statewide college-readiness vertical teams to review skill standards for university entry. This advisory committee is to be comprised of "no fewer than 12 members and no greater than 15 members that include representatives from each of the six targeted cluster industries as defined by the governor" (Document 70, Texas Administrative Code, 2006, ¶ 4.175). It is possible, then, that half of the members of the team that will review recommendations for reforms in English/Language Arts will be executives from the corporate sector. Additionally, in Document 14 Bricker (2005) recognized partnerships with businesses as a best practice and a key component of strengthening P-16 initiatives, including developmental programs. Such requirements and suggestions documented in the analyzed texts lend support to TBEC's (2006) assertion found in Document 72 that the "business community [gives] credibility to the needs of the education community" (¶ 9).

Not only have market-based approaches to basic programs gained acceptance in the state of Texas over the past several years, but there is also evidence to suggest that when making decisions regarding developmental education, legislators defer completely

to the recommendations of certain actors from within the business community channeled through industry lobbying organizations. In 1999, Wiese conducted a dissertation study examining the perceptions of Texas legislators toward developmental education in which she found that "Participants' basic knowledge of developmental education appeared very limited. Some were unaware of its existence. Most were unable to define developmental education or TASP" (Document 94, p. iii). When Wiese asked the legislators to name their sources of information regarding developmental education, on which they based their votes, the majority responded that they receive information from the THECB as well as various lobbying groups. One participant stated that he "was better off as a state policymaker to give [the decision] over to employers...for what [they] think they're needing to do" (Document 94, Wiese, 1999, p. 113). Another noted, "We would be a wealthier state if [developmental students] had more job skills…I wish we had 19 million Ross Perot's" (p. 114), recognizing what he considered to be the positive contributions and direction of the business leader. In summary, Wiese's study revealed how legislators rely on industry professionals to guide their decisions regarding educational reform and the implementation of basic programs and how they to do so without critically questioning the legitimacy of the business community's authority and without participating in sustained inquiry with practitioners within academia.

A DISCOURSE OF SCIENCE

STANDARDIZED TESTING AND THE RHETORIC OF OBJECTIVITY. Values associated with business and industry are not the only ones promoted in talk about basic writing in Texas. As alluded to in the discussion of the discourse of failure, the continued prominence of high-stakes placement examinations that determine course placement based on a singular, standardized assessment is indicative of a discourse of science, one which both naturalizes particular empiricist assumptions as well as advances an ideology

of objective diagnosis of and prescription for developmental students. Throughout the body of analyzed texts, science dominates the discursive terrain in a myriad of ways; however, as noted, it is most evident in the emergence of systems of student evaluation that, in turn, figure a large number of prospective college students, teachers, and secondary schools as failures.

In describing the ways in which the relevance of science is fixed within basic writing, Lu (1999) "urg[ed] basic writing teachers and researchers to look to the 'documents of science' not only for truth but also methods of producing as well as presenting it" (p. 57). Thus, I noted during analysis not only how the narratives examined for this study repeatedly present writing as a phenomenon that is able to be measured objectively but also how the texts champion exams that attempt to quantify a student's ability to "demonstrate mechanics, word choice, style, organization, and insight" (Document 42, Le, 2002, p. 170) through multiple choice questioning and computer-evaluated responses to decontextualized essay prompts. In fact, several authors and organizations (e. g. Document 83, THECB, 1986; Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001; Document 33, Hammons, 2005; Document 1, AFEE, 2006) have claimed that these types of standardized tests are the only way to gauge student learning and predict college achievement. Richard Moore, executive director of the Texas Community College Teachers Association, described the TASP test as "critical to helping students succeed" and argued that "a failure to identify and work with those in need would be a devastating obstacle" (Document 88, Black Issues in Higher Education, 2003, ¶ 10-11). These quotes imply that standardized exams such as the TASP and equivalent evaluations exist to ensure that students will not be at a disadvantage and that they are the sole tools that might accomplish such a goal.

In enumerating the key components of effective developmental education programs, McClenney (2005) encouraged "prompt feedback on student performance through frequent testing" (Document 48, p. 11). Similarly, in Document 33 Hammons (2005) argued the solution to preparing students for college-level work is to continue "to establish more rigorous assessment of academic skills" (p. 4). THECB's Division of Participation and Success (Document 87, 2005) communicated that "frequent assessment" with standardized instruments is vital to strong developmental education programs. Further, in Document 15 Burley (1997) contended that, "Once in remediation, TASP students should have clear, immediate goals—one of these would be to raise TASP scores" (p. 91). He urged that "remediation labs should have practice tests ready so students can frequently practice" (p. 91).

In addition to simply noting the vital nature of assessment programs, the texts also offer some cursory explanations as to why they are important. In Document 91 Turpin (2003) posited, "Without assessment there can be no accountability" (p 15). Here, when Turpin used the term accountability, he was referring to a system that is poised to measure the success or failure of teachers and schools, one which is typically tied to a structure of positive or negative consequences and/or corrective actions (Document 91, Turpin, 2003). McGehee (1999) also noted in Document 50 that "effective assessment promotes educational quality, access, and the efficient use of resources" (p. 58) and that "only when placement and assessment is properly functioning will an institution stand a chance of providing both quality and access" (p. 59). After having already closely examined various social structures revealed in the narratives about basic writing in Texas, it is easy to recognize how the messages conveyed in these quotes intersect with discourses of failure, economy, and standards; however, noting that the aforementioned truth claims often stand alone—without reference to issues of difference, identity or

agency—one can also see how power is displaced as certain truth claims are objectified through science, which has been constructed as a means of "neutralizing the politics of writing, teaching, and research" (Lu, 1999, p. 56).

Berlin (1988) argued that such a scientific orientation "reinforces a meritocracy of the status quo, wherein a particular body of knowledge is constructed that supports a particular way of knowing and being." Similarly, Gould (1981) revealed how "the abstraction of intelligence as a single entity, its location within the brain, its quantification as one number for each individual, and the use of these numbers to rank people in a single series of worthiness" invariably led to oppressed and disadvantaged groups being deemed innately inferior and deserving of their status (p.24). Instead of questioning the validity of the testing instruments, the gaze of suspicion falls upon the student, and one is judged based on whether he or she conforms to a particular predetermined standard. The biggest danger is that this is done rather covertly, in that those practicing science rarely admit that this discipline is a social, human practice. Supporters have positioned standardized testing as a neutral, transcendental activity—one beyond history, culture, and values. This type of "scientific attitude," through its non-reflexive stance, "places subjects further under regulation and control as they are constructed," according to Usher and Edwards (1994). This is evident in the ways in which standardized tests like the TASP or THEA—generally focused on the recall of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and editing rules—is rarely questioned throughout the analyzed texts. There are a few exceptions and dissenting opinions, however, which do appear in the documents. Carter (2006) contended, "standardized measures like [THEA] have been well documented—in this [Journal of Basic Writing] and elsewhere. Such measures treat literacy as though it were neutral, autonomous, and completely portable" (p. 95). In Document 5 Bernstein (2004a) criticized the mandated exams for their

tendency to "emphasize mechanical correctness, as opposed to organization and content" and also questioned the testing environment noting, "Correctness is clearly a desired goal for success in student writing; nonetheless, assessing a student's writing ability based on one writing sample produced in a high-stakes testing situation is more problematic" (p. 8).

Further, Kells (1995) argued in Document 41 that the "traditional approach to developmental education evaluation by expert opinion—inherently biased with its reliance on the knowledge, commitments, and sensitivity of the evaluator—is severely limited" (p. 34). Kells' comments, as well as Carter's and Bernstein's, hint at the potential biases embedded in the mandated exams and question the political innocence of the testing regime. They recognize that a test is not merely a test but a statement of what is valued—in this case standardized exams, viewed as sound scientific instruments, as opposed to the research-based recommendations of many composition scholars.

In their 2001 article, *The Harmful Impact of the TAAS System of Testing in Texas: Beneath the Accountability Rhetoric*, McNeil and Valenzuela revealed that a discourse of science is pervasive not only through basic writing and developmental programs in higher education but also throughout the K-12 schooling system. They explained:

> Those who promote state systems of standardized testing claim that these systems raise the quality of education and do so in ways that are measurable and generalizable…The rhetoric surrounding this accountability system is that it is raising educational quality. Politicians claim that this system is "saving" the Texas schools. The system is gaining national recognition as an exemplary accountability system, because scores on state tests have, in most districts, been rising. (Document 51, p. 2)

However, despite widespread belief that the mandated testing programs in elementary and secondary schools were working and that rising scores were proof of increased quality, McNeil and Valenzuela resisted the discoursed practice of high-stakes exams, contending that in actuality an "overreliance on test scores has caused a decline in educational quality" (Document 51, p. 2).

Specifically, their analysis shows that as systems of testing become more established and normalized, more time is spent in the classroom focusing on test preparation instead of substantive curriculum. Further, they revealed that the ties between test scores and state funding cause schools that serve students with the most academic need, according to the exams at least, to receive less money. In turn, these schools face disadvantages because they do not have the resources to provide quality materials and supplies to their teachers and students. The assumed validity and value of the standardized tests, grounded in their characterization as scientific measures, compromise the integrity of the teaching and learning environment.

Even though a few strong critiques of testing and accountability systems in Texas exist, the analyzed texts reveal that they are generally being ignored in the state in favor of maintaining the status of mandatory assessment programs and adopting legislation that sanctions so called performance-based appropriations. The Texas Higher Education Board's Division of Finance, Campus Planning and Research (2002a) outlined the parameters governing funding allocations, which are "based on a new performance measure: the number of students successfully completing the developmental education test within two years of failing one or more parts of the initial attempt" (p. 6). Although retesting at the end of the developmental sequence is no longer required under the Texas Success Initiative, state funding to public institutions is still at least partially dependent on the number of students who do not meet requisite scores on the THEA placement or

its equivalent exams and the percentage of these students who subsequently complete all the requirements as designated on their individualized plans. This trend is likely to prevail as several recent articles encourage the use of formula funding to reward institutions that successfully retain and graduate students whose original test scores deemed them not college-ready (Document 13, Boylan and Saxon, 2004; Document 47, McClenney, 2005; Document 71, TBEC, 2005)

SCIENTIFIC CONSTRUCTIONS: "REMEDIES" AND "RESEARCH". Although a discourse of science is most evident in the ways in which standardized, norm-referenced tests are established as politically neutral, universally valid, and objective measures—the ultimate authority on student ability and college-readiness—the analyzed texts also reveal that scientific standards shape specific naming practices within developmental education in Texas. Particularly, the documents tend to portray basic writers and writing in terms of medical metaphors. Students are examined or evaluated, an intervention is prescribed, and deficiencies are ameliorated. In Burley, Butner, and Cejda's (2001) words, "TASP provides students with achievement diagnoses, advisement, and a remedial course of study" (Document 16, p. 768). Former THECB Commissioner Ashworth wrote that the purpose of TASP is for "testing deficiencies and prescribing remedies" (Document 93, Venezia, 1999, p. 18).

Several developmental education and basic writing scholars (e. g. Astin, 1998; Casazza, 1999; Arendale, 2005; Gray-Rosendale, 2007) have urged caution regarding the ways in which we describe students and programs. Arendale (2005) explained that:

> A consequence of inappropriate vocabulary choice is that some words take on new and different meaning based on the agenda of a few individuals. Sometimes the vocabulary becomes politicized by assuming a different meaning or value

because a small group within society has affixed a positive or negative status with the word. (p. 67)

This certainly has been the case within developmental education, particularly in terms of the ways in which basic programs are figured as remedial and students are conceived as deficient, which has caused extensive political debate as to whether they should be attending college at all or whether tax dollars should be allocated to support their education. Astin (1998) further clarified the issue:

> There are at least three aspects of the "remedial" concept that are misleading. First is the use of categorical terminology to describe a phenomenon that is relativistic and arbitrary. Most remedial students turn out to be simply those who have the lowest scores on some sort of normative measurement—standardized tests, school grades and the like…Second, the "norms" that define a "low" score are highly variable from one setting to another. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the problem with the concept of the remedial student is that there is little, if any, evidence to support the argument that these students are somehow "incapable" of learning, that they have markedly different "learning styles" from other students, that they require some radically different type of pedagogy, or that they need to be segregated from other students in order to learn. (¶ 12-13)

So not only do certain word choices connote a particular system of values but the system of values itself is determined by social constructions and relationships of power. Consider Gray-Rosendale's (2006) comments:

> Even when such work purported to be motivated by a desire to de-center the classroom or to shift privilege, the teacher's expertise and pedagogy were frequently suspiciously central to the answer provided to solve this "problem." Theoretical and metaphoric investments risked not only being instrumental in

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constructing basic writers' student identities, but also in providing the solutions to the very "problems" these identity constructions occasioned in the first place. The deficit approach gave basic writing students far too little say in the construction of their own identities or the kinds of assertions we made about those constructions. (p. 18)

Despite these well-crafted critiques and many others (e. g. Rose, 1985; Document 60, Rodby, 1996; Document 20, Crouch & McNenny, 2000) that have provided additional reasons why the diagnose/prescribe/remedy model is a dangerous way to conceive of basic writing and that have ultimately recommended that we avoid both traditional medical metaphors when describing basic writing and writers, scientific vocabulary is very entrenched in the dialogues about developmental education in Texas. Of the 94 analyzed documents, only five (Document 12, Boylan & Saxon, 1998; Documents 5 & 6, Bernstein, 2004a, 2004b; Document 48, McClenney, 2005; Document 43, Mann, 2006) do not contain these kinds of descriptors, and none of the texts actively resist such naming practices.

In addition to revealing that a discourse of science is prevalent in the construction of basic writers and writing in Texas, the analyzed texts also show how science has limited the range of possible ways to think about research. In Document 13 Boylan and Saxon (2004) enumerated best practices within the field of developmental education and suggested the importance of "establishing baselines for formative evaluation purposes" (p.12). In order to do this, they encouraged research that allows institutions to make "data-driven decisions" (p.12). This means, specifically, that colleges and universities should gather statistics from "the most recent three-year period on such things as (a) student completion rates in developmental courses, (b) students completing developmental courses with a C or better, and (c) semester to semester retention for

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developmental students" (p. 12).   The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Finance, Campus Planning and Research Division also encouraged studies that "provide benchmarks and help develop performance measures" (Document 84, p. 8).   Further, Hammons (2005) concluded in Document 33 that developmental education in Texas will continue to suffer unless there is a sustained commitment to "generating academically sound research and data on state issues" (p. 2).   This work would include correlating predictive variables with remediation and college success rates, understanding the impact of demographic shifts on participation and retention rates, and "calculating the costs of the education deficit in terms of personal costs, business productivity, social programs, and higher education" (p. 7).

Notice that what is spoken of as research in these quotes is quantitative information about students' performance and the factors that influence it. The authors of the analyzed texts generally supported the stance that policies and procedures should follow from the analysis of so called scientifically-based or evidence-based research. They do not advocate for qualitative, postpositivist or interpretive methods in the same way that they promote quantitative analyses, nor do they explicitly consider how these other types of studies might aid in our understanding of existing numerical representations of phenomena within developmental education.   Instead, we learn how the THECB and TEA have appointed "data czars who are working to make data usable across agencies" (Document 93, Venezia, 1999, p.16) and that a survey revealing the highest priorities of professionals dedicated to P-16 initiatives showed that improved channels for sharing quantitative data and statistics was the single most essential common objective (Document 81, THECB, 2005c).   The emphasis on collecting and analyzing empirical measures and using the results to drive practice is directly related to the dominance of a discourse of science and its preference for statistical inference.

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It is also important to note that quantitative studies appear to dominate the scholarly inquiry of developmental education from within the academy in Texas. Of the 25 dissertations and theses available for analysis, all but three were quantitative studies. The most prominent topics of inquiry include questioning how success rates of developmental students correlate with numerous variables, most often test scores, as well as examining how students previously enrolled in basic coursework fair in upper-level classes in terms of grades and completion rates. Other research has focused on the effectiveness of retention strategies with "high-risk" developmental students (Document 21, Crowson, 2004), consequences of changing TASP policies on developmental participation and completion (Document 24, Dodge, 2001), and the relationship between quality advising and TASP performance (Document 39, Homer, 1997), among others. A discourse of science, thus, operates on and through basic writing programs as it aids in the construction of our understanding of research and reproduces notions of what types of inquiry are valuable.

TECHNOLOGIES AND UTILIZABLE EFFECTS

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF BASIC WRITERS. Genealogy is concerned not only with naming systems of conventions or norms, produced through power relations, that define a particular phenomenon, but it can also question how these discourses operate as constructive forces to shape what we know about social structures, relationships, and identities. Just as basic writers and writing are named as such, the categorizing processes that fix these designations can be viewed as technologies that both establish and maintain conceptions of normalcy within hierarchies of power. One goal of this project, thus, was to explore how developmental students and programs are typically characterized, how certain truths about these persons and programs are made available,

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and what specific aspects or traits have been authored as natural through discursive practice.

I have already discussed a few examples of how basic writers have been rendered by the discourses of failure and economics as both deficient as well as potential burdens to society that drain the state's social services and financial resources. This section provides a more sustained discussion of the patterns of representation of basic writers and writing that are evident within the examined documents. It is an analysis that both outlines the pervasive suppositions characterizing developmental writers and writing programs in Texas and also describes how the particular discourses of failure, economics, and science authorize and fix specific conceptions of identity and social position. Further, I discuss how the discourses protect higher education from evolving to align its principles more closely with those of its nontraditional students.

The corpus of analyzed documents repeatedly presents basic writers in light of certain realities. In Document 52 Miller (1994) provided a summary of the key terms and assumptions operating throughout the texts, "These learners are a diverse group and have many names such as new students, at-risk, high-risk, underprepared, low-achieving, minority, developmental, nontraditional, disadvantaged, returning displaced homemakers, returning for job retraining, or for new careers at midlife" (p. 2). Such designations are utilized repeatedly—often without any discussion of the political, social, cultural, institutional, or historical contexts that have shaped these characterizations. In other words, the representations have become naturalized, readily accepted by several authors and entities as commonsense factual assertions. Additionally, several texts speak about basic and developmental students without ever explicitly defining this population. Venezia (1999), for example, spoke of Texas' commitment to ensure "all public institutions of higher education make remedial courses available for those who need

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remediation" (Document 93, p. 4). How is one to know which students are in need of remediation? In the absence of further information, it is left to be assumed that the readers already know because the parameters delimiting this group have been categorically prescribed.

For most of the authors of the analyzed documents there are two types of students, TASP/TSI students and non-TASP/TSI students, where TASP and TSI become descriptive adjectives that not only label students but also establish a relationship between the two groups of individuals, where one cohort is positively inscribed and the other negatively inscribed. Consider Burley's (1997) remarks from Document 15, "too often in remediation we separate TASP students from the best models available, their non-TASP peers (p. xviii). Here it is implied that students who do not meet the TASP cutoff requirements should aspire to reach the status of the model or ideal student, namely one who has earned requisite scores on the standardized exam. The analyzed texts, thus, present two types of students set in opposition to one another, yet the binary and its concomitant privileging of particular learners rarely surfaces as an issue of contention within these documents.

In other words, the texts clearly reveal how arbitrary TASP or THEA scores construct a line of distinction with students falling on either one side or the other and, subsequently, inheriting all the labels that go along with their remedial or nonremedial designation. Not only are developmental students repeatedly defined as those who did not pass mandated exams, but they are concurrently marked by various terms that have been established through discursively recurrent statements and larger patterns of privilege. Such identity constructions effectively limit the available possibilities for thinking about these students as well as reproduce the status quo. Commonly occurring descriptions of developmental students appearing in the documents include "functionally illiterate"

(Document 53, Moreno, 1998; Document 39, Homer, 1997), "woefully ignorant" (Document 83, THECB, 1986), "deficient" (Document 16, Burley, Butner, & Cejda, 2001; Document 15, Burley, 1997; Document 12, Boylan & Saxon, 1998), "high-risk" (Document 17, Burnham, 1983; Document, 21 Crowson, 2004; Document 8, Boswell, 2005; Document 47, McClenney, 2005), and "underprepared" (Document 12, Boylan & Saxon, 1998; Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 40, Illich & Hagan, 2004; Document 34, Haurwitz & Heinauer, 2005), among others. Additionally, we hear that developmental students lack "the ability to understand and manage complicated material" (Document 1, AFEE, 2006, p. 2), and Turkel (Document 90, 1995) contended that students who do not meet requisite scores on state-mandated tests have "poor time management and anxiety," are "passive sponges in the classroom" who set "unrealistic goals," and are "easily frustrated and distracted" (p. 100). These descriptions appear to complement the characterization of failure discussed extensively in the beginning of this chapter, and I contend that the deficit perspective promulgated by these particular characterizations further confirms that a discourse of failure figures prominently in the reproduction of narratives about basic writers and writing both in Texas and beyond.

Although the roles of both a discourse of science and a discourse of failure as constructive forces are evident in the aforementioned examples, both in the ways in which the standardized exam has been firmly established throughout the documents as a primary categorizing benchmark and in how the notion that developmental students are aberrant has been seemingly naturalized, it is not possible to connect all the characterizations of basic writers that appear in the analyzed texts to the three main discourses that this study has revealed as dominant in the Texas narratives. This point can be illustrated by revisiting the traditional or official histories of developmental

education and basic writing that appear in the literature review, which have been widely embraced within the field.

Such narratives suggest that the earliest developmental programs, including the General College at the University of Minnesota and the Special and Continuing Studies Program at the University of Maryland, were created in response to an influx of new types of students—students whose prior academic experiences, social and cultural backgrounds, and financial resources were very different than the generations of college students that enrolled before them. The traditional histories outline several waves of these so called nontraditional students: ministerial candidates recommended by their parish, unskilled workers facing the demands of an increasingly technical workplace, pioneers and beneficiaries of the civil rights movement, and veterans, among others. These students were the first to receive many of the same labels that are still used today to characterize basic writers, particularly underprepared, academically weak, and illiterate. The universities—drawing on their histories, prior relationships, and presumed responsibilities—were already operating in terms of particular norms and assumptions at the time of these new students' arrivals. The institutions did so without critical reflection of how such authoritative practices reproduced limited notions of preparedness, achievement, or literacy. Such narrow standards invariably reflected the values of those in power and, thus, the incoming students who did not fit the constructed profile of an accomplished prospect were identified as *others*, the binary opposites of the established norm. Although this type of othering is common within educational settings, it is quite problematic because subsequent designations are propagated as ultimate truths rather than social constructions and do not validate the various strengths that these new students inevitably bring to the classroom.

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The analyzed documents reveal that basic writers continue to be labeled as nontraditional students and that the many deficit perspectives that have always accompanied this label continue to be presented as factual representations despite the reality that the populations of students that frequently inherit these designations do, in fact, comprise the majority (Document 16, Burley, Butner & Cejda, 2001). The persistence of such characterizations points to the staying power of discourses and their material consequences. We continue to read that developmental students are unlike typical university students because they tend to be more economically disadvantaged, older, working, attending to family commitments, first-generation, transient, women, minorities, and underprepared (Document 15, Burley, 1997). Although there is rarely explicit contention to the idea that these students should be admitted to higher education, there is covert insinuation that they are not college material. Such statements of disapproval, however, are shrouded in a rhetoric of access. Consider the remarks of Kenneth Ashworth, former Commissioner of Higher Education in Texas, who stated, "We let students in who probably, in another society, would never have been permitted to try college-level work" (Document 38, Hodges, Corkran, & Dochen, 1997). Ashworth's assertions, which applaud the developmental programs that facilitate a highly accessible admissions system, simultaneously introduce the notion that students in basic coursework are generally unfit to pursue an education at the postsecondary level.

Further, Fox's (1999) research allow us to recognize that even though universities have acquiesced under pressures to increase access to nontraditional students, basic writing instruction functions both as a means to prepare students who lacked earlier educational opportunities and also as a "moat to protect the castle within" (Fox, 1999, p. 21). Consider the placement of developmental English, both its exams and coursework, at the beginning of the curriculum as well as its service to other disciplines. Introductory

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composition coursework, thus, can be understood in terms of its role as a "winnowing and indoctrinating tool" (p. 25) in support of a universalist or Standard English. Students either adopt and hone the discreet skills they are taught or they are forced to leave the university community. Additionally, because traditional understandings of writing proficiency have become closely tied to notions of nationalism and social mobility and a privileged status has been afforded to those who adopt the conventions of Standard English, the norms of meritocracy and middle-class values are thereby reproduced under the guise of access and opportunity. Moreover, there is little challenge to the value systems of the university, which remain intact across the years instead of adapting to reflect the values of the nontraditional students it claims to serve.

This type of cloaked ideology that readily preserves a hierarchy of authoritative assumptions while creating an illusion of inclusiveness pervades the analyzed documents. It is poignantly visible in Document 17 by Burnham (1983) who stated that the value of developmental education is that it provides unprecedented opportunities for students, which is important because "the poor, disaffected, the hardcore 'losers' will need aid in exploring the increasingly complex, hostile world" (p. 70). Such recurrent statements could serve to strengthen the discourse of failure that permeates the analyzed texts. It is important, however, to consider their operation in the context of a discourse of economy, which is also a strong reproductive force throughout the narratives, yet often appears in tension to the aforementioned traditionalist values even as it produces a similar effect of negatively inscribing students.

As noted, the strength of a discourse of economy in Texas is related to the constructed perception of substandard performance within the workforce and to arguments that enumerate how the dearth of skilled laborers impact the industry sector and, ultimately, the American taxpayer. Instead of implying that nontraditional students

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are not college material, a discourse of economy authors college as an necessity, argues that all high school graduates should attend, and contends that developmental education will help achieve this goal. Even though it may seem like this discourse is poised to challenge traditional systems of power and control, it actually serves to construct additional negative characterizations of basic writers and reproduce conventional norms for developmental learners.

For example, a discourse of economy supports the notion that there is a standard for educational attainment that follows a prescribed trajectory of a linear life plan and that deviations from this path are unnatural. The model citizen attends school as a child, graduates from high school, immediately attends college, works through middle age, and retires late in life (Document 17, Burnham, 1983). Viewed in this way, a discourse of economy actually reinforces an ideal of a traditional student through messages that argue, as AFEE (2006) did in Document 1, that "if we don't prepare *young people* [italics added] for jobs, they become a burden on our society" (p. 4). In my discussion of a discourse of economy, I have already outlined the various ways in which developmental students are viewed as potential menaces to society, especially if they do not thrive in the higher education arena. Additionally, the analyzed texts assert that "those who lack basic skills also suffer from major social and economic disadvantages" (Document 17, Burnham, 1983; see also Document 59, Ray, 1997; Document 33, Hammons, 2005; Document 36, Heinauer and Haurwitz, 2005) and that "the vicious cycle of educational disadvantage is characterized by third world living conditions, inadequate health care, and hunger" (Document 39, Homer, 1997, p. 56). In this way, developmental students are repeatedly cast as likely liabilities to society—prisoners, violent offenders, welfare recipients, tax evaders, deadbeat dads, etc. (Document 8, Boswell, 2005). The characterizations of students enrolled in basic coursework even draw on superficial

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stereotypes and biases in order to equate these learners with deviants. Turkel's (1995) study enumerates traits of TASP students, one was "a grandmother, heavy smoker…one had a tattoo and wore bulky metal chains and leather bracelets…nonconventional looking group" (Document 90, p. 92). Further, Turkel claimed TASP students have many "distractions in high school—marijuana, alcohol" (p. 95), were susceptible to "severe health problems" (p. 100), and "suffered financial and transportation problems" (p. 100). These types of negative descriptions tap into readers' prejudices about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, activities, and living conditions, effectively maintaining the distinction that developmental students are the unnatural other.

RACIALIZED REPRESENTATIONS AND CLASS PRIVILEGE. The preceding section has illustrated how the deployment of particular discourses across the analyzed texts promotes certain characterizations of basic writers that reproduce traditionalist assumptions. Several of the documents also invoke distorted truth claims about students of color and economically disadvantaged students, which ultimately serve to fix unfavorable perceptions of these learners. Just as the analyzed texts repeatedly author developmental students as deficient and deviant, they also frequently imply that the majority of students enrolled in basic coursework are Black and Latino students or students of low socioeconomic status, project that this trend will continue in light of increasing shifts in demographics, and by extension, thus, negatively inscribe racial and ethnic minorities and underprivileged students.

Within the documents there are several instances where developmental students are equated with students of color. For example, Ray (1997) stated in Document 59 that "Texas senators have voted to limit the number of developmental education courses students can take at the state's expense, but it is a proposal some fear will hurt minorities and efforts to educate minorities" (¶ 6). In Document 38 Hodges, Corkran, and Dochen

(1997) quoted former Commissioner of Higher Education Kenneth Ashworth who claimed that "a good part of [Texas'] minority student success is due to the TASP" (p. 13) and that TASP minority students previously were subject to "the old practices of the revolving door" (p. 13). Haurwitz and Heinauer (2005) contended in Document 34 that although "underpreparation is a problem throughout the nation… Texas has special challenge due to shifting demographics" (¶ 5), namely an increase in Black and Latino populations. Additionally, Dodge (2001) predicted in Document 24 that "community college will likely not be relieved from providing remedial education because…changing demographics have resulted in a drastic increase in the number of students from underrepresented ethnic groups" (p. 21), and Wiese (Document 94, 1999) asserted that the "role of TASP is to help minority students—students who just did not pick up the skills in high school" (p. 81).

The implications present in the aforementioned quotes, which conflate students enrolled in basic coursework with students of color, may be grounded in statistical data that shows that a disproportionate number of Black and Latino students enroll in developmental education. However, they also may be related to naïve understandings and stereotypes of the experiences of racial minorities such as those expressed in Document 21 by Crowson (2004) who stated that "many of these students have not ventured beyond their neighborhoods and view the world through their limited experiences" (p. 28) and McGehee (1999) who associated developmental students with the "culturally inadequate," who are "verbally inactive" and exhibit "depressed motivation, low self-esteem…poor self- concept, [and] unclear goals and objectives" (Document 50, p. 43) Either way, such perceptions are problematic because they are presented throughout the analyzed texts without critical reflection or discussion of the many ways in which students of color are systematically disenfranchised through practices of schooling that

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are tied to larger patterns of privilege and power (Oakes, 1985; Scheurich, 1997; Shor, 2001; Valencia, 2002).

When students first arrive to school, some of them may not be willing or aren't necessarily able to immediately decipher and conform to the rules and boundaries of the classroom. Teachers may decide that these students lack readiness for school and have limited intelligence or inadequate language skills. As instructors encounter behaviors that are unfamiliar to them or come to the conclusion that students' skills are not patterned according to what they know, they often respond by tracking. A disproportionate number of students of color are placed on low or technical/ vocational tracks in US schools because teachers—particularly White, middle-class ones—tend to be less knowledgeable about common practices from their students' homes and communities (Valencia, 2002). Being placed on a low track often means students will not be exposed to the same level of engaging instruction or challenging material as compared to those on the high, academic or college-bound track. It also means that they are likely to be targeted for interventions or subjected to drill and skill pedagogical approaches, which leaves them increasingly further behind their peers. Although a myth of meritocracy prevails where each student is said to have the same opportunities to succeed if they work hard and excel, tracking processes definitively interfere with the ability of many students to thrive and achieve their goals.

Basic writing itself is on the periphery of a new community, one modeled on the ideals of an upper, middle-class society. Bruffee (1984) argued that the goal of basic writing can be defined in terms of student acculturation into this new community. Shaughnessy (1977) noted, however, that some students may not wish to develop an academic discourse or vocabulary, because they view it as betrayal that "erases, cancels or detracts from their cultural identity." This is increasingly the case when skills are

taught in a vacuum without a discussion of what is occurring or why particular styles of expression are valued. Attempting to force students to learn to conform to a particular discourse community that is in conflict with their personal heritages, beliefs, and values can have detrimental effects in terms of identity development or cause a student to become frustrated and leave the arena of higher education. Furthermore, like tracking in lower schools, students arriving to the university are immediately categorized, often through the use of standardized assessments. These exams are inherently biased due to their emphasis on standard written English—"a marker of the 'educated' middle class"— and rote memorization of rules, which certainly contributes to the fact that more students of color are placed in developmental programs (Document 6, Bernstein, 2004b, p. 130). Nevertheless, the discourse of science that informs the academy reproduces the notion that students' writing abilities can be quantified and universally measured and, thus, "White privilege" is preserved as students of color and poor students "continue to occupy the position of 'other', as outsider to the 'mainstream' culture of White, middle-class schooling" (Document 6, Bernstein, 2004b, p. 130).

Just as students of color who arrive at school with language practices that are unfamiliar in the school context are expected to replace their home language practices with academic discourse, "children of the working and professional classes are to be molded to the industrial and technological imperatives of contemporary society" (Aronowitz, 2004, p. 13). This is particularly true as the discourse of economy defines basic writing in terms of its service to the workplace, a place where students might learn to adopt the values to gain power in a social and occupational hierarchy.

We might also recall the words of Boswell (2005) who, when explaining the urgent need for developmental education in Document 8, stated that "those who aren't equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs tend to drop

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out of mainstream American life" (p. 39). Here we see how the discourse of economy idealizes the ability to get a "good job", namely one that pays a good salary and secures a middle- or upper-class lifestyle. Simultaneously it defines the parameters for a status quo existence and its converse, the unskilled lower-class who are "more likely to depend on welfare, experience addiction, experience prison, experience violence" (Document 8, Boswell, 2005, p. 45).

The analyzed texts do not leave space for the possibility that one who does not obtain a college education might acquire legitimate knowledge and marketable credentials, much less a meaningful existence. Further, basic writing is figured as the first step in the transforming journey of higher education, which "provides every individual with the tools to overcome conditions of birth" (Aronowitz, 2004, p. 16). The notion that students without a great deal of material wealth must rise above their circumstances in order to have a high quality of life reproduces the hegemonic social order that defines class privilege. As developmental education is described as an engine for social mobility, social stratification is reinforced with the consequence that economically disadvantaged students continue to be marginalized within university communities and the society at large.

CATEGORIZING COURSEWORK AND MAPPING BOUNDARIES. Just as the various discourses that operate through basic writing in Texas serve to author students in particular ways and reproduce relationships of power, characterizations of developmental education are fixed in much the same way, and these programs become hierarchically positioned within the academy.   This is most evident in the analyzed texts in the ways in which basic classes are opposed to college-level coursework and how college-level coursework is afforded a privileged status. In Document 1, AFEE (2006) contended "the vast majority of students who take remedial courses in college do so to gain the skills and

knowledge that they should have gotten in high school and that are necessary for them to succeed in 'regular' college classes" (p. 2). Here we can see how the authors present remedial coursework in juxtaposition to regular coursework and how the latter is firmly established and clearly favored as the standard or norm as compared to the deficit view of remedial classes, which are reserved for those lacking in particular information and abilities.

The message that basic coursework is inferior to other college classes is also evident in the ways in which policymakers and state officials seem set on eliminating developmental education from four-year universities. As stated by Ashworth:

I think that remediation is best done in the community college…I also like the flexibility that permits a large university to contract with a community college to provide remediation on the university campus. Such is the cooperative arrangement between Texas A&M and Blinn College. (Document 38, Hodges, Corkran, & Dochen, 1997, p. 2)

Several studies conducted in Texas reveal that the opinion that two-year schools should be responsible for remediation is widespread and pervasive (Document 26, England, 1993; Document 67, Smith, 1997; Document 94, Wiese, 1999), because it is perceived that offering developmental courses is akin to lowering standards by allowing high school level instruction to enter into the university. Some authors, including Burley (1997) in Document 15, even likened developmental classes to Adult Basic Education and asserted "articulation of the two programs seems like a natural marriage" (p. 11).

Furthermore, it is important to consider that in the state of Texas, by law, public institutions of higher education are not to award college credit for participation in developmental classes, students may be restricted from enrolling in college-level courses concurrently with basic coursework, and individuals may be administratively withdrawn

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from a college if they do not comply with their individualized Texas Success Initiative plan. Such legislated practices further distinguish between developmental and college-level courses, creating an artificial boundary that contributes to the polarization of their representations. Additionally, we learn from the analyzed texts that it is common practice at Texas institutions to rely on part-time instructors for basic courses (Document 52, Miller, 1994) and that institutional resource allocations for developmental departments pale in comparison to other academic departments despite research that has shown that important characteristics of effective programs include the limited use of adjunct faculty and the adoption of formula funding measures that compensate developmental instructors at rates comparable to those given to faculty employed in other academic areas (Document 11, Boylan, Bliss & Bonham, 1997; Document 12, Boylan & Saxon 1998; Document 61, Roueche and Roueche, 1999; Document 45, McCabe, 2003) The customs of hiring paraprofessionals and restricting allocations also lends to the perception that developmental education is a substandard endeavor at best.

In addition to the aforementioned observations, I argue that one of the greatest consequences of the discourses of failure, economy, and science lies in how basic reading, writing, and math are figured within the analyzed texts as a single, comprehensive entity—developmental education—and both seemingly divorced from the larger disciplines of composition, reading, and mathematics as well as insignificant if independent of one another. Developmental education is conceived as the body of "courses and programs designed to remedy academic deficiencies of entering students" (Document 79, THECB, 2005b, p. 1). Specific to this project, the documents rarely discuss basic writing as a field distinct from the other developmental areas, despite the fact that basic writing has an established history of research as a distinct field of study, a

discipline-specific journal, and a professional membership organization, among other distinguishing features.

Because TASP has been defined as a program that provides an intervention for the "generation of failure in our educational system," those "who cannot read, write or compute" (Document 83, THECB, 1986, p.1), without which one might be "defenseless in this complex, industrialized society" (Document 72, TBEC, 2006, ¶ 1), developmental education has come to be authored as a totality. Just as a standardized exam can determine whether one is a TASP or nonTASP student, likewise definitions enacted through a discourse of science can demarcate and conflate an entire conglomerate of courses. The conception of developmental education in the aggregate is strengthened by studies that encourage the implementation of "comprehensive programs" where basic reading, writing, and math courses are housed in the same department along with supplemental instruction in study skills and other targeted learning assistance services (Document, 15, Burley, 1997, 175). Several analyzed texts contend that research has supported claims that centralized programs are more effective due to increased coordination and communication (Document 66, Smith, 1993; Document 77, THECB, 2002; Document 13, Boylan & Saxon, 2004), and many public colleges in Texas have restructured their programs to in order to conform to this best practice (Document 48, McClenney, 2005). In many ways, this discursive characterization of basic programs as a totality has become pervasive and may even call into question the object of this study, as it is difficult to discuss the particular discourses that operate on and through basic writing when most of the analyzed texts do not recognize it as a discrete phenomenon. This is an issue that I did not anticipate as I began this project, and I explore implications in greater detail in the final chapter of this dissertation.

SYSTEMS OF REINFORCEMENT AND POSITIVE EFFECTS. The discussion of how basic writing and writers are constructed throughout the analyzed texts reveals some of the tactics by which the discourses of failure, economy, and science are dispersed to produce specific utilizable effects. Namely, I have shown how particular discursive renderings reproduce social relationships, influence the formation of identities and representations, and advance categorical sorting processes that can limit the ways in which those who read the documents might know students and programs. The processes by which basic writing and writers are authored and fixed across and through the multiple texts represent only a few of the many technologies that serve to reproduce particular ideologies and power structures within both educational settings and the society at large. We have seen how certain characterizations and patterns of activity are encouraged or authored as natural but now we must consider in detail any additional apparatuses that further facilitate the normalization of the field and explore any material consequences realized by the study participants. This requires an examination of the systems of discipline or reward that sanction particular practices, a consideration of the history of the discipline within the context of the establishment of the social sciences, and a questioning of the level and role of surveillance necessary to maintain the dispersal of discursive knowledge and conventions.

The key to pinpointing discursive technologies lies in one's ability to explicate the conditions of existence of a particular phenomenon, being less concerned with where particular practices come from and emphasizing the practical measures or political investments that support its deployment. The tactics of discursive power dispersal may be forceful or punitive in nature but they also can be affirmative—a subtler form of coercion where the maintenance of a desired outcome is facilitated through systems of rewards. Rewards may be tangible or intangible in nature, extrinsically or intrinsically

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initiated. Their purpose is to consign an individual or institution to the efficient conservation of a discourse and to the effective promotion of positive or reproductive, as opposed to repressive, elements of lasting principles—established truth claims, norms, and authorized prolocutors— without consistent intervention.

It is easy to recognize, for example, the ways in which mandates and legislation allow particular actors—including TEA, THECB, and university administrators—to define basic writers and control aspects of basic writing programs. Educational reform initiatives, including the TASP law that legislatively established basic coursework as a requirement for students who did not attain requisite scores on placement exams, are disciplinary technologies that readily produce negative or punitive effects. The TASP law deployed tactics for identifying a particular population of students, issuing specific directives in regards to their college enrollment, and assigning sanctions for noncompliance that continue to assist in the dispersal of the discourses of failure, economy, and science. Thus, institutions face penalties if they choose to ignore the guidelines. Such sanctions range from negative publicity and ratings (Document 42, Le, 2002) to the suspension of state funding (Document 15, Burley, 1997). Likewise, students also are punished if they do not follow their prescribed course sequences or participate in planned interventions. Typically, noncompliant students are administratively withdrawn from the college or placed on probation, both which have implications for financial aid and enrollment in future coursework (Document 24, Dodge, 2001). Monitoring such processes, however, is not particularly efficient for governing bodies and, thus, other tactics have been employed in order to promote the desired outcomes and discursive practices. These systems of reinforcement are generally affirmative in nature and encourage institutions to adopt particular conventions by offering rewards or public recognition. Over time, then, institutions require less

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intervention from state education agencies as particular activities become normalized and institutions and students begin to self-surveil their behavior.

Authors of the analyzed texts repeatedly argued that colleges, universities, and students should be offered incentives on a regular basis so that they might be more willing to comply with state mandates (Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 15, Burley, 1997). The most commonly recommended incentive was "additional funding allocated to institutions based on the number of students who completed developmental education" (Document 85, THECB Finance, Campus Planning and Research Division, 2002b, p. 1). Combs (1999) contended in Document 19, "Incentive funding could entice institutions to improve programs or to contact other institutions or private firms that have proven effective in teaching remedial education" (p. 4). Of note, measures of effectiveness that are mentioned in the documents, those an institution must attain in order to claim their rewards, are always quantitative in nature—pass rate percentages, number of years spent in developmental education, number of course repeaters, etc.—which further reinforces discourses of science and economy that privilege positivist evaluations and productivity models over/against other available methods of appraising student learning outcomes and quality educational experiences. Similarly, in Document 15 Burley (1997) argued institutions should "test students frequently and reward students as they accomplish a series of immediate goals" (p. 92), and Document 13, Boylan and Saxon (2004) emphasized that "showing evidence of using best practices or recommended techniques [should be] built into the salary, tenure, and promotion systems" for developmental faculty (p. 13). Again, such directives pertaining to students and staff serve to validate only quantitative assessments and promote a rhetoric of efficiency as they simultaneously fix preferred practices on multiple levels by offering various enticements.

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In addition to offering tangible compensation as a tactic for obtaining compliance and normalizing behavior, several authors (Document 50, McGehee, 1999; Document 21, Crowson, 2004; Document 87, THECB Division of Participation and Success, 2005) suggested the establishment of best practices and public recognition for institutions that strive to adopt endorsed conventions. Such a technology is extremely powerful in that it serves both to summon dominant ideological assumptions and to reproduce them by offering attractive distinctions that accompany assimilation to exemplary achievement (e.g., widespread name recognition).

The documents reveal that best practices are constructed in a variety of ways. The state, for example, endorses a group of standards written by an appointed board of administrators, educators, industry leaders, and the vertical teams for college-readiness that were created by House Bill 1 legislation (Document 1, AFEE, 2006). The Texas Association of Developmental Education recognizes conventions that are common to a group of selected institutions that have "the highest post-developmental education TASP pass rates generally and by subject area" (Document 13, Boylan & Saxon, 2004, p. 2). Other sources (Document 40, Illich & Hagan, 2004; Document 48, McClenney, 2005) simply note that best practices should be based on "research," implying that the reader should already know what methods of inquiry and results are valuable. While such lists invoke science and professional authority, they are not beyond critique in that they frequently appear as stand-alone guidelines and do not provide the supporting evidence or reference sources that might offer convincing rationale for their adoption.

Predictably, in closely examining best practices lists as they appear in the analyzed texts, one can note the influences of the discourses of failure, economy, and science. In Document 14 Bricker (2005) recognized increased accountability in K-12 schools, partnerships with the business community, and the alignment of high school exit

standards with college-readiness standards as best practices that will improve the success rates of students. McClenney's (2005) list in Document 48 recommends, among other things, consistent exit standards and measurements for developmental courses, case management for the most at-risk students, program evaluation through statistical cohort tracking, and frequent testing. Being familiar with the dominant discourses operating on and through basic writing in Texas, then, one can see how the advancement of particular best practices operates as a technology in the context of these grand narratives both to author and to make palatable possibilities for present thoughts and actions and to reproduce desired outcomes and material consequences.

In addition to revealing particular tactics of dispersion, the analyzed texts speak to the staying power of the discoursed practices that have been endorsed through systems of rewards and recognition and, further, lend support to the notion that technologies focused on producing positive outcomes and normalizing behavior are more effective in the transmission of discourses. For example, several sources (Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 13, Boylan & Saxon, 2004; Document 87, THECB Division of Participation and Success, 2005) note that even though the laws governing developmental education in Texas have changed significantly between the implementations of TASP and TSI, there has been little actual transformation in institutional policies or day to day activities. Despite the fact that basic classes are no longer mandated by the state for students who do not attain specified placement scores and that schools are encouraged to create individualized plans for developmental learners, "More than 90% of institutions require that students complete developmental class prior to enrolling in college level courses" (Document 87, THECB Division of Participation and Success, 2005, p. 6), and "intervention is identical for most students" (p. 9).

The normalization of basic coursework, a now seemingly natural response to students with low test scores, persists even though punitive reinforcement measures are no longer in place. Likewise, institutions continue to withdraw students from college if they drop their developmental class even though the law no longer requires institutions to take such action. The perpetuation of so called continuous remediation—where a student must enroll in basic classes starting in their first semester and remain enrolled each subsequent semester until they pass the exit level and before they attempt credit-bearing courses—represents a utilizable effect of the discourses of failure, science, and economy, one which is directly related to reproductive technologies, like best practices lists, that endorse such conventions. Other visible positive effects of the discourses include the ways in which some schools have begun to be defined in terms of their basic coursework offerings. A participating college in Boylan and Saxon's (2004) study claimed in Document 13, "We are here to provide developmental education. That is why we exist" (p.7). Thus, even though the state and other authoritative bodies are no longer mandating and surveilling particular practices, disciplinary power continues to function through the positive inscription of actors and actions.

In closing, it is important to note that there are some common systems of power driving both the practice of basic writing and the larger disciplines of composition and education, which play a major role in directing what and how we know about developmental learners and programs. In other words, there are additional technologies that reinforce discoursed practices of basic writing as a result of basic writing being situated in these particular contexts. For example, the emphasis on P-16 initiatives in Texas (Document 93, Venezia, 1999; Document 35, Haycock, 2005; Document 70, Texas Administrative Code, 2006) in many ways extends the functionality of discourses

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operating in secondary school settings to developmental education. In Document 65 Simpson (2007) argued:

> Ideally, college should be part of an education continuum, a "pipeline" that begins in childhood. In many of our nation's public schools, however, the pipeline is broken. Success will come only when all education sectors advance a common mission to prepare young people for citizenship and economic success, and then build a seamless pipeline to take them there. (¶ 8)

Technologies such as shared missions and visions will continue to influence material consequences and the ways in which basic writing is authored, just as the overall "scientific attitude of the university" (Usher & Edwards, 1994) and disciplinary knowledge of the social sciences has guided reproductive tactics and shaped truth claims within developmental education. While mapping the discourses that shape composition and education writ large has not been the focus of this particular study, I would be remiss if I did not mention that their influence is widespread as conveyed by the discussions of Valenzuela, Prieto and Hamilton's (2007) and Salinas and Reidel's (Document 62, 2007) studies outlined in the sections exploring the discourses of science and economy.

Chapter 5: Intersections of Discourses and Practitioner Narratives

This chapter addresses my second research question and, namely, demonstrates how the instructor narratives collected for this study intersect, represent, or challenge the various dominant discourses that are discussed in the previous chapter. Utilizing a genealogical lens, I explored how the seven participants might be understood as subjects of the various discourses that construct basic writing in Texas as well as the many ways in which their narratives interrupt discursive mechanisms of power distribution.

All faculty accounts used for this analysis were gathered during interviews and member checks as outlined in Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology. During my initial meeting with each of the instructors, I guided the conversation by asking the participants to respond to several questions spanning a variety of topics including (a) the definition and purpose of developmental English, (b) the relationship of basic writing to other academic disciplines, (c) the effects of institutional or state policies on practice, (d) the future of basic writing in Texas, (e) the characteristics of basic writers at BCC, (f) daily classroom activities, (g) the strengths of BCC's developmental programs, (h) how programs at BCC have evolved throughout the years, (g) methods of reward and recognition within the department, and (h) professional development opportunities. These topics were chosen following my initial review of the 94 collected documents, which allowed me to begin to recognize patterns of discoursed practice and, thus, to ask questions that would facilitate an examination of the complex relationship between the two cases of study. A complete list of the participant interview questions appear in Appendix A.

It is important to reiterate prior to the discussion of the practitioner narratives that both because I chose to gather accounts from a small group of faculty at one community

college and due to the particular epistemological assumptions undergirding this study that recognize the limits of a determinate reality, the findings conveyed in this section should not be understood as generalizable grand truth claims that hold true across time and location. Rather, any conclusions might be viewed as "theoretical fictions," in that they allow us to gain some knowledge of a localized context and explore the complexities of an issue while maintaining that "the goal is to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal" (Lather, 1991, pp.12-13). My interactions with the participants, their stories, and those of other professionals within the field certainly transcend this attempt to seize an interpretive moment.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND THE MEDIATION OF "FAILURE"

When analyzing the texts of my interviews with practitioners, I first questioned whether they had adopted or rejected a discourse of failure and if they were seemingly aware of the existence or effects of such a discourse. Upon examining the transcripts of our conversations, it became clear that the participants did not view their students or past teachers of their students as failures—in fact, quite the opposite. The faculty were aware of the messages that their students were receiving regarding their inadequacies and, subsequently, positioned themselves in direct resistance to such judgments. Consider Edgar's response when he was asked to describe his students:

> They are not stupid. They do not need to be told how dumb and how wasteful they are, because much of that has come up in the past…without fail they indicate how they'll fail. They expect to fail. They think they're in this class because they are bad news to begin with—they know they're bad news, they're told they're bad news…so I have to shift this whole attitude so they trust me not to hurt or embarrass them. (Edgar, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 6)

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Edgar's comments reveal not only that his students are aware that they have been identified as failures but also how they appear to have internalized this designation and how he has to work to help the students change their perception of themselves and restore their trust in others. Smittle (2003) arrived at a similar conclusion and claimed that successful developmental instructors must "try to determine how and when students lost their motivation and help them regain their initial vision" (¶ 18).

Judy and Anne shared similar perceptions as Edgar. Judy spoke about her students' "misconceptions about their own ability" that stem from, "whatever they've been fed and whatever they've accepted as truth" (Judy, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 4). She claimed that when students sense they are viewed as deficient, "they pull themselves out of the game before they've even had a shot" (Judy, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 4). Anne shared the following observation:

> So many [students] just, I don't want to say they're beaten down, but they've had so many negative experiences. So I really see [developmental education] almost as much as an emotional or psychological component that helps them see that they can do it. (Anne, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 2)

Just as Edgar spoke of the challenges of helping students build confidence in their abilities, Anne acknowledged that one of the roles of basic writing is to nurture students—not simply in terms of academics but also in terms of developing higher levels of self-esteem—so that they might believe in themselves and be successful in future college endeavors. Wamback, Brothen, and Dikel (2000) also concluded that one of the essential functions of developmental education is to tend to students' affective needs, which often "compromise an individual's ability to set and achieve personal, academic, and career related goals" (p. 3).

Judy also only acknowledged the hardships that students have encountered and her responsibility to help them overcome such barriers. Further, she emphasized that we cannot presume they are academically deficient. She stated:

> When I first started working, with my limited understanding of developmental education, I just associated it with remedial courses, that they have some basic deficiencies and they all come to the table with the same limited skills. But what I've seen and discovered is that these students don't necessarily have cognitive gaps…somehow they've hit a snag and there was an obstacle…it's not so much about 'okay you have skills A-F and we're going to categorize you like that'. (Judy, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

Based on her experiences, Judy claimed that students who enroll in basic classes are there for various reasons and we cannot assume a low level of academic ability. She argued that many have faced barriers unrelated to their mastery of particular skills, which ultimately affected their course placement. Her subsequent comments echoed Burley's (1997) claim from Document 15 that we must consider the many complex variables of the teaching and learning environment and beyond that influence whether or not they eventually participate in basic coursework.

In addition to rejecting the notion that their students are failures, several of the instructors also made it a priority to address the means by which many of the students are marked as deficient, namely the standardized assessment instruments. Unlike most of the analyzed documents that speak of basic writing in Texas, the practitioners did not consider low scores on the TSI tests as definitive indicators of failure on the part of the students or their teachers. Consider Eva's story:

> Regina and I taught a class last spring and we had 18 students. Out of the 18, five went from the lowest level of remedial English to college level. They're not good

test takers; they're not real sure about their skills. They have been told they're not

smart, that they cannot do it, they'll never go to college. (Eva, interview, June 25,

2007, p.3)

Regina and Eva believe that if they had relied solely on the results of the mandated exam,

five of their students would have paid for and attended a class that they did not need.

They explained, thus, that faculty at Bluebonnet choose to employ multiple assessments

of writing during the first week of class in order to determine if students need to continue

in developmental education. Carmen's comments reassert the necessity of utilizing a

variety of methods to determine placement:

They have very low expectations from a lot of people. A lot of people have very

low expectations of them. Quite frankly, I have had students placed in 305 and

306 [basic writing] who write a lot better than my 1301 [college composition]

students. It's just like I tell my students, just because you are here doesn't mean

you lack intelligence. It could be that you are just a bad test taker. (Carmen,

interview, June 25, 2007, p. 2)

Not only did the instructors resist the notion that their students were deficient and

discount the TSI tests as irrefutable measures of writing ability, but they also noted what

they considered to be the sources of many of these misconceptions and argued why they

should be discredited. Alita stated:

The coordinating board should not be able to dictate what's going on in the

classroom, that's what's wrong there. And businessmen dictate what we teach,

instead of teachers. Look at our public school system run by people who know

nothing about education. They have no background and they are dictating. (Alita,

interview, June 25, 2007, p. 7)

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It was evident during the critical analysis of historical texts that members of the business community have heavily influenced the dialogue about developmental programs in Texas. Alita sensed how this relationship of power has affected practice and suggested that their involvement in directing educational affairs should be limited due to their lack of knowledge about the field.

Anne agreed with Alita's assertion and also was quite concerned that many teachers were being implicated as failures despite the fact that they may have very little control over several factors influencing the learning environment. She commented:

> It's not about the high school teachers or the high schools themselves, it's about the nature of society and the whole system. My sister is an 8th-12th grade teacher and I hear from them about the laws that they have to work with and what they're allowed to do…all the various pressures, for funding, the test scores they have to have, the fact that high school teachers can't teach 5 classes with 30 students in each one and do very much writing. (Anne, interview, June 25, 2007, p. 5)

The analyzed texts that mark teachers as failures and advocate for increased government control never acknowledge, as Anne did, the various challenges that are created in the classroom as a direct result of policies put in place by the legislature. Instead, it appears that a cycle has been set in motion whereby the government substantiates its power by pointing to the purported shortcomings of teachers, when what they are really observing might be, in part, the effects of their own policies that persist without critical interrogation.

The professors in this study generally rejected the truth claims established through a discourse of failure. By offering alternative ways of knowing basic writers, challenging the authority of standardized placement testing, and denouncing government control of K-12 schooling practices and developmental programs, they pushed against a dominant

public narrative regarding the conditions of education in the state Texas. In some ways it is not surprising that these practitioners have positioned themselves in opposition to a discourse of failure. Research within the field of basic writing since Shaughnessy (1977b) has warned instructors of the dangers of conceiving of their students solely in terms of their "errors" or presumed shortcomings. Many notable scholars (Rose, 1985; Bartholomae, 1993; Sternglass, 1997) who teach developmental English have rigorously critiqued pervasive manifestations of deficit thinking about students, especially because the ways in which students are often described do not align with or dismiss altogether what these instructors have witnessed to be the many strengths that basic writers bring to the university community.

Unfortunately, despite the scrutiny of these and other scholars, Wamback (2000) revealed that the majority of studies within developmental education continue to focus on student deficiencies. The dissertations and research articles that were included in this study as texts for analysis generally follow suit, cataloguing student shortcomings and recommending specific interventions. It is studies like these that have been effectively co-opted to help government agencies and others entities wrest increasing amounts of power from teachers and schools. Chung (2005) argued that developmental education will continue to have this problem as long as there is a "dearth of scholarly research and shared theoretical frameworks for instructors and program administrators" (p. 2). He also encouraged professionals in the field to engage in sustained inquiry and discussions that articulate, critique, and strengthen the underlying shared goals and practices of basic programs. In my estimation, the participants in this study have embraced this charge, and I contend that if voices like theirs were more widely distributed and acknowledged, perhaps the discourse of failure would be less compelling and more options for knowing and interacting with basic writing students would be made available.

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REFRAMING VALUES: FROM ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY TOWARD THE "EVENTFUL, EVOLVING PROCESS"

The practitioners' interviews provide additional insight into a discourse of economy, yet their narratives do not intersect with this particular discourse to the extent that they do with the discourse of failure. While a discourse of failure is readily recognized and directly resisted by the participating faculty, this is not explicitly the case with a discourse of economy. What are visible within their responses, however, are alternative renderings of the purposes of basic writing and stories about their daily work that paint a very different picture of developmental education than the one that is made available through the analyzed texts. Specifically, with the exception of one brief reference, the participants did not author basic writing as an economic necessity or define their programs in terms of their benefits to certain members of the business community. Rather, as they described their practice, it became clear that the values that they promote are quite different than those championed by a discourse of economy.

It is stated across the analyzed texts that many individuals and organizations in Texas view developmental education as a means to prepare students for the workforce, hedge unemployment losses, and minimize both the need for incarceration and the demands on social services. The instructors interviewed for this study, however, had other understandings of the ultimate goals of their basic writing program. Although they stated an immediate objective was "to prepare students, not only for freshman comp, but for any of their other college-level courses" (Anne, June 25, 2007, p.2), they also spoke of basic writing courses as places where students become knowledgeable about academic communities. Consider Judy's remarks about her work:

> as I understand it, it's just to help students be college-ready… a majority of our population here is returning students. So we want to get them college-ready. And

we do that not only with instructional stuff, but making them aware of what

services are available. (Judy, June 25, 2007, p.2)

Judy spoke of the need to help her students navigate the campus and plug into various resources so that they are ready to meet the demands of college life. As Regina put it, echoing Judy's statement, the purpose of basic writing is to help students to be "successful in college altogether" (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 4). This understanding is quite different from many expressed in the analyzed texts that claim the sole purpose of developmental education is to impart "the knowledge and skills expected of students to perform successfully in the workplace" (Document 70, Texas Administrative Code, 2006, ¶ 4.173).

It is important to note that although the instructors asserted that their students needed basic writing courses to prepare for subsequent courses and to become acclimated to the college culture, they underscored once again that this was not because the students were deficient or failures. In fact, the instructors felt that their students often had a grasp on the material but needed guidance or support to help them activate dormant knowledge. Regina stated:

It's not that the student doesn't know how to write effectively, it's that they have forgotten, because at some point of time, they did learn it. A lot of students are returning students…The knowledge is there, it's just a matter of getting it to come back up to the surface, and for them to start using it again. So [my] role isn't really to drill them and get them to memorize it, but to get them to use their skills in a new way, so that it comes back and it just becomes a natural thing for them. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 1)

While many of the analyzed texts indict K-12 schools and faculty, charging that they failed to teach students to read or write effectively, Regina argued that her students do

have these competencies and often they just need a refresher lesson because they haven't practiced in awhile.

In addition to preparation for college success, both in composition and beyond, Edgar offered a completely different philosophy on the nature of basic writing programs. His description focused on the intangible benefits of developmental education as opposed to the practical advantages of being prepared for subsequent courses and accessing resources within the academic community. He contended:

> Developmental education is a doorway. It is an entryway into a larger world. You can call it college, but I would prefer to look at it as a world of ideas or connections, relationships. The purpose is to eventually make better citizens, but there has to be something more a little more selfish than that from the individual. They have to feel good about themselves and that they fit into society in a meaningful way. It's always a two-pronged approach, but in general, I think it broadens their horizons and gives them a power that they would not have. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 2)

Edgar described how his basic writing courses serve to empower his students, to expose them to new ways of thinking about the world and being in it. This is quite different from the purpose of developmental education as authored by a discourse of economy that calls for the development of discrete skills that could be applied in an industrial setting over against the cultivation of a student's philosophy of conscience and sense of self.

Only one of the participants, Alita, alluded to the role that basic writing plays in sustaining the economy. When asked to discuss what she thought was the future of developmental education both in Texas and nationally, she stated:

> We got a job ahead of us. We really do. In order to meet the future needs for the workforce, we need more developmental teachers. We really do. Who are highly

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sensitive to student needs, who have high expectations, and who respect students

and not talk down to them. (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 9)

Even though Alita called for additional instructors in order to accommodate more students who could meet the demands of the labor pool, there was also a tension within her narrative that was similar to a dissenting opinion noted in the analyzed texts (Document 25, Eagle Forum, 2006). She claimed, "The thing is, let's face it, the system says that we want to educate everybody to expose potential, but it's not true. If everybody had a degree, then our degrees would lose value" (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 9). Instead of arguing that as many students as possible should obtain degrees in order to sustain the economy, she essentially asserted that there should be a certain level of selectivity in order to protect the integrity of college degrees. In many ways, claims like Alita's are reminiscent of the discourse of standards that Fox (1999) described, one which indicts colleges and universities for sacrificing quality in order to increase access. In this instance, then, the discourse of economy is overshadowed by a discourse of standards, and the one reference in all of the participant interviews that figures basic writing in terms of its service to the workforce is tempered by the suggestion of a competing discourse.

Two of the instructors voiced concern regarding the amount of power and control that members of the business community has assumed over educational affairs and basic programs in particular. While Alita's resistance to the authority of corporate representatives was mentioned in a passing statement, "I don't think the coordinating board should be able to dictate what's going on the classroom. I think it's wrong when politicians do it, and when businessmen dictate what we need to teach, instead of teachers" (June 25, 2007, p. 7), Edgar offered a sustained critique expressing his discontent with the influence of industry professionals. When asked if there were any

institutional or external forces that enhanced or limited his ability to do his work, Edgar focused on the limitations, replying:

> Well, of course a great deal, and more and more it seems. The trend in our nation is for the state to take more control and, I hate to say, it has nothing to do education and everything to do with business…I'm very demoralized about that sort of connection to this business. It has become a business, we can all name those companies, you know... they have a great deal to do with what we do with our courses, with our curriculum, and internally. The various constraints, the demands made on some us each and every time we want to take a course. And then money is taken away from community colleges and not given to us, when we have more than half of the college students in the state and we're getting a third or a fourth of the higher education budget. What I see is the tragedy that most teachers have no clue about that… mostly... I'm talking about the people here. I'm talking about the people in education, much less the people out there. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

Edgar not only opposed how legislators are trying to run colleges like businesses but also he expressed fears that other professionals in the field were not noticing or not considering this to be a problem. Perhaps this is why most of the participants in this study did not discuss it as they did with the discourse of failure. Or it may be the case that some of the authority of persons within the business community has become naturalized, particularly because it has been so prevalent in both K-12 and higher education arenas for many years.

Despite the lack of overt discussion of or resistance to a discourse of economy on behalf of the practitioners interviewed, many of the instructors did advocate for particular values that appear to be in conflict with a discourse of economy and dismissed certain

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practices that a discourse of economy would favor. For example, this particular discourse repeatedly champions efficiency. It calls for increases in college participation rates and for developmental students to finish basic course sequences in a timely manner, so that taxpayers might promptly recognize their return on investment. Yet, according to Anne, policies meant to ensure these efficiencies often burden instructors as well as compromise the learning environment. Consider her remarks:

> They have made it difficult in terms of limiting funding for how many times students can take a developmental class. You start somebody out and they're in the lowest math or they're in the lowest English and the lowest reading, and it's highly unlikely they're going to get to college-level in two semesters. So it's made it more difficult in that sense. Other than that I don't know. The whole Closing the Gaps thing is part of the 12 year plan. Teachers can argue about the benefits of that or not. I haven't yet seen that it's paying off and making our students better at coming through the system…Then it's just the funding, the fact that we teach five classes and they pack them full of students… and at 25 per class, that's just a lot of students. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 6)

Anne recognized, thus, that certain policies that the legislature might view as increasing efficiency might actually hinder students' progress and success, in essence becoming counterproductive to the government's intended outcomes. Anne's argument follows a line of reasoning similar to that expressed by Salinas and Reidel (2007), who suggested that a compromised learning environment should be understood as the result and not actually the cause of legislated educational reform.

Advocacy for smaller class sizes and reasonable time allotments for completion of developmental programs are not the only accommodations championed by the interviewed instructors that are in tension with an efficiency paradigm. The participants

also recognized that their students are being encouraged to value the products of their writing over the process of writing and particularly that students are coming to college thinking that they should be able to produce quality writing in a single draft within a very short time period. The faculty surmised that this had something to do with the process of preparing students for standardized tests with high-stakes consequences that measure one's ability to produce essays that conform to an established template of purported quality writing, the five-paragraph essay, in a brief sitting. The instructors, however, viewed exceptional writing quite differently. Consider Regina's remarks:

> We stress writing as a process, trying to get the students away from the five paragraphs. You just can't sit down and write down a perfect paper, you need to go through a process, and just because you turn it in doesn't mean it's done. So we stress that a lot. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 5)

The notion of writing efficiently, along with an emphasis on final results, follows from the rhetoric of a performance-driven model promoted by a discourse of economy; however, we can see how Regina encourages writing that evolves and improves over time and values the act of writing in and of itself. The faculty at Bluebonnet also recognize that it may take several years to become an accomplished writer and that the demands placed on their students may, at times, be unreasonable. Alita shared:

> So I think that simply these students have not been shown the way. I tell them it is time consuming. Good writing is time consuming, and I give them an example of a director of the writing center of St. Thomas. She and I, whenever she writes a memo, she sends it to me so I can look at it. We work on one letter for a whole week, til we get it just right. And she told me, "I wish students would understand the time it takes to produce good writing." (Alita, June 25, 2007, p.3)

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Alita later talked about the advice she gives all of her basic writing students on their first day of class. She tells them that when she goes back and looks at papers from her freshman year, she "wants to throw up" (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 9). This is because she believes that writing is a skill that develops over time. She reminds her students that they didn't learn to drive overnight, but that it took a lot of practice.

Regina also spoke of how she encourages the writing and revision process in her classroom. Sometimes she makes an assignment where she has the students work on a paragraph for a few days, writing and rewriting after peer revision. She then purposely puts the papers away for a few days before giving them back to the students to look at with fresh eyes, "so that they think they're done with this, and then we show them, oh you can come back and add to any piece of writing" (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 5). The idea of returning to the same piece of writing on several occasions and not conceiving of pieces as finished products is in tension with both the ideas presented in the analyzed texts that privilege efficiency models and the implications of standardized exams when it is presumed that students can be placed in college writing courses on the basis of a single sample of writing produced in a controlled, timed session.

The idea that writing instruction should focus on process and not on product is not a new theory within the field of composition. In 1972, Murray presented a paper at the convention of the New England Association of Teachers of English encouraging his colleagues to embrace the process of discovery through the exploration of language. He urged:

> Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing and glory in its unfinishedness. We work with language in action. We share with our students the continual excitement of choosing one word instead of another, of searching for the one true word. This is not a question of correct or incorrect, of

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etiquette or custom. This is a matter of far higher importance. The writer, as he writes, is making ethical decisions. He doesn't test his words by a rule book, but by life. He uses language to reveal the truth to himself so that he can tell it to others. It is an exciting, eventful, evolving process. (Murray, 2003, p.4)

Process pedagogy has been advanced by many leading scholars of writing including: Elbow, Macrorie, Bertoff, Coles, Emig, Graves, Atwill, Calkins, Britton, and Romano, so it is not surprising that the instructors at Bluebonnet embrace this approach; however, this view of learning to write is quite different than the one advanced by a discourse of economy that privileges prompt delivery, conformity in final product, and the practicality of application.

One final observation regarding the tensions between the participant interviews and a discourse of economy, which is evident in narratives already shared as well as others, is that the instructors value teamwork and collaboration in the classroom while a discourse of economy encourages competition and individual achievement. Anne described a typical day in her course:

There's a fair amount of group work; almost every day there will be something in group. And I try to keep it varied enough. Sometimes they'll look at a reading and do something with it, sometimes they'll do free writing together. And groups of brain storming or something, sometimes they'll do peer group review of each others essays or paragraphs, sometimes they'll do some grammar activities together in groups and try to sort those rules for themselves. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 7)

Regina's class also participates in regular group projects. She always pairs or groups the learners for activities and encourages them to work together and help one another with assignments. Carmen fosters a collaborative environment in her course as well. She

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stated, "So we exchange papers a lot. I also have them develop their own lesson plans. I'll give them a topic to research together. And so a group of 4 or 5 students will teach the rest of the class" (Carmen, June 25, 2007, p. 2). The ethic of teamwork promoted through the aforementioned activities is repeatedly noted throughout the interviews with faculty and is also clearly articulated in the syllabi and lessons plans that they provided as classroom artifacts, whereas the notion of competitiveness that is touted throughout the analyzed texts as an important attribute is never discussed.

The study documents reveal, just as Salinas and Reidel (2007) did with their study, that a particular set of values associated with the discipline of business and a variety of material consequences are encouraged through performance-driven policies and procedures that demand efficiency, productivity, and competition. The instructor narratives, however, generally champion practices that are in tension with a discourse of economy and its productivity standards, even if they do not explicitly resist them. By recognizing that the purpose of basic writing lies beyond skill instruction, advocating process-based pedagogy, and encouraging collaboration in their classroom, the faculty at Bluebonnet provide a counternarrative that opposes the truth claims of the analyzed texts.

TESTING? ON OUR OWN TERMS

Placement and assessment have always been a vital part of the basic writing program at Bluebonnet Community College. Edgar spoke of their existence "from the very beginning, when I came," (p. 3) which was 38 years ago. He briefly outlined the history of the testing program at BCC:

Back then we had to have a mechanism for putting them in the appropriate level and so we developed a little grammar quiz and a writing assignment, and at registration, get this, if they did not have a certain ACT score, they had to take this little quiz, and we graded it right on the spot and placed students. Of course

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this method has evolved over time in many different ways and in fact, it has been taken out of our hands. And now we have a huge testing center that administers Accuplacer and all those other exams those that are computerized. We rely completely on that placement information. But we didn't do this off hand. We would do it by periods in which we tested it out. We would use such and such a score and put students into a class and then we tracked those students through several semesters and see what grades they made. And then, if we needed to, we'd go back and adjust, and so forth. So we kept an eye on it, we kept our finger on it. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 3)

Edgar's comments reveal that assessment has always been an integral element of the developmental program at BCC even though the specific instruments utilized to determine placement have changed over time and the responsibility of test administration has moved from the content areas to the Department of Student Services. Moreover, the inclination to employ a test instead of using alternative methods of placement was evident several decades ago, which suggests a discourse of science was operationally strong even in the 1970's. Consider these additional remarks from Edgar that support a system of testing:

We are not the people that caused the state to [implement a mandatory testing program]. The reason this got passed is because some and perhaps many of the community colleges refused to have any such thing, either refusing the testing or the developmental classes. And the state forced their hand, but we were not part of the cause. So, in general, for the state and every student in the state I would say it is a good thing that has happened here. As far as what has happened here, I wish it could be better. Because I don't think it's just not strong enough. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

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Not only do Edgar's remarks reveal how assessment has been championed at BCC for many years, but they also imply that the college was a pioneer in leading efforts to establish early testing programs and that faculty take pride in this fact.

During the participant interviews, I asked each of the instructors to talk about the structure of placement at BCC and also invited them to share their evaluation of current practices, which gave me the opportunity to see if the other faculty shared Edgar's enthusiasm for the assessment process. In general, their responses revealed that they are somewhat ambivalent toward the mandated testing programs that have been subsequently adopted by the institution. In other words, they made generally positive comments about the validity of the exams, but their assertions were also qualified or tempered with more cautious remarks. For example, Anne noted of the practice:

> Ideally it doesn't seem like the best we could do, but it does seem to work out fairly well. I'm amazed that it does, to be honest, because we will say if they get a 7 or 8 on the essay, then we place them in college composition on the basis of that. Ninety percent of them get 6's or below. With six or below then it just goes by their score on the multiple choice. You would think they would have no connection at all. It actually seems to work. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 3)

Although Anne seemed weary of using a test for placement, especially when the final determination is dependent on the writing objective score and not the essay score, she admitted that the process appears to assign students to the appropriate classes. Regina's comments echoed those of Anne. She confessed:

> I'm not quite sure if I understand it. I know that some of my sons have taken [TASP], and they get done within the hour. And to me I'm amazed that that many questions or that bit time can say, "I'm sorry, you're not ready." I myself took the TASP. I'm not from Texas, so when they told me you have to take the TASP, I

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was like, "huh?" I took that, and when I took the written portion the question was a political question about someone, I didn't know who that was. I was amazed I passed the writing portion, not because I don't know how to write, but because I couldn't stay on top of it because I didn't know anything about the subject… For the most part, however, it's usually pretty much right on. But occasionally you'll have a student who was completely misplaced, especially in the writing courses. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 1-2)

It is easy to recognize tensions in Regina's reply. She is not comfortable with the length of the test or its potential high-stakes consequences, and she is concerned about the possibility that students might have to answer questions about a topic of which they have no prior knowledge. Further, she contended in her interview that the danger of TASP lies in how high schoolers and developmental writers are taught due to the mandated exams:

Because they're all being taught to the TASP. And so many students now, the only type of essay they know how to write is the five paragraph essay. There's just nothing else out there. If you want something different, "What do you mean? There's something else?" Because they've been taught that their whole life, or their whole educational lives. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

Despite her questions and reservations, however, Regina ultimately noted that the placement exams tend to recommend appropriate basic courses for students and are only in need of correction every once in awhile. Eva's remarks reinforced this notion, "Sometimes they're not developmental students, and we spot them…They're not good test takers…and since many of them have been out of school for a while, that's the level they test at…but usually they're where they need to be." (Eva, June 25, 2007, p. 3) Eva contended that even though once in awhile students who have difficulties with exams or

who are out of practice are misplaced, the test is generally accurate in recommending the correct basic writing class for students.

In general, then, most of the instructors view placement exams like the THEA and its equivalents as fairly precise indicators of whether a student needs to take basic coursework, despite the fact that they pose various objections to the content and process. By validating the tests in this manner, however, they can be viewed as supporting and reproducing a discourse of science, at least in some regard. In fact, only one of the participants directly positioned herself against the testing mandated by the legislature. Alita argued:

> It's not a good indicator, there are so many variables. When students take a test, they may not be good test takers… I don't believe in standardized testing because if students are not exposed to the material, they're not going to do well. Once they understand the topic, they can write. (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

It is obvious that Alita shares the same concerns as many of her colleagues in that she recognizes that the content of the exam as well as the testing environment may be barriers to students and cause them to have scores that do not necessarily reflect their abilities. She believes, however, that this is enough to abandon high-stakes testing methods and move towards what she terms more "authentic" evaluations. (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 4). For Alita, authentic evaluations would be writing samples collected over a period of time that have been revised and polished through multiple drafts—perhaps a portfolio that students would bring with them containing their best work from high school. Her ideas regarding writing assessment sounded similar to those endorsed by many scholars (Marino, Hansen, & Taylor, 2002; Fu & Lamme, 2002; Albertson & Marwitz, 2001; McCrimmon, 2005) as well as the National Council of Teachers of English, which states that "the best way to determine and encourage students' writing ability is to focus on

writing that is student-owned, developed over time, and guided by ongoing feedback and supportive response" (NCTE, 2005, ¶1). There is, however, no mention of authentic assessments in the analyzed documents.

One of the main reasons why most of the instructors seem so comfortable with the mandated placement exams and, subsequently, why Alita even noted she "keeps a positive attitude" (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 6) about the testing system, is because BCC has what many of the instructors termed a safeguard or safety net. Edgar explained:

> We have another step; we've always had this one also. Once the student has enrolled, if the teacher has serious misgivings about their placement, whether they need to go up or down, that teacher is free to recommend to the chair of the need for a change of course and they have to do a paper slip clearing them. They have to go talk to the chair and they have to take an essay or some evidence. And almost always [the chairs] accept it. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 3)

In addition to the mandated assessment, then, each of the instructors re-evaluates their students shortly after the beginning of the semester. Anne noted that "the chairs tell people on the first day or two to get a writing sample in order to see if anybody is wildly out of place…but's that fairly rare" (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 3). Regina and Eva also mentioned this re-placement process during their interviews and Eva confirmed, "if we see that obviously they're in the wrong level, we always meet with the chair of the English department and he will move them up" (Eva, June 25, 2007, p. 3). Each of the respondents view the re-placement process as an opportunity to allow any students who ended up in the wrong course due to the fact that they might have had poor test taking skills or not understood exam content or instructions to move into a more appropriate level based on the judgment of the instructor. Basically, this additional step allows the faculty to make the final determination in the placement process, so they are empowered

to control the practice of assessment even if the state appears to have ultimate authority over the proceedings.

In fact, it seems that the faculty are so comfortable with the re-placement safety net in place at BCC that they do not keep up with the details of the legislation that governs the state-mandated testing program. I asked each of the participants how things have changed at BCC as a result of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) that replaced the TASP program in 2003. Several of them did not recognize a difference and most of them were unsure as to what tests new students were required to take. When asked if the TSI impacted her work, Anne replied:

> No. It probably would have if I was chair, but it's been so long now, that I can't remember the difference. We had Compass and something else…We used to have to provide documentation about the placement and how we did in the classes. But other than that, I don't think the average faculty member in the classroom even noticed. I don't know if they even know the acronym…All of our students coming in take the, hmmm, names change every year, the THEA, the Compass, the whatever. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 9)

Regina's remarks serve to confirm Anne's assertions. She noted, "The first thing that all the students do is take a college placement test, either the quick THEA, or the Compass, or if they're right out of high school, I can't remember what it is, they keep changing it" (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 1).

In summary, the participants in this study generally viewed the state-mandated, standardized exams as accurate tools to place students in basic writing courses, despite the fact that they tended to object to the multiple choice format of the exam, questioned the relevancy of the content of essay prompts, and feared that some students who aren't good test takers will be registered to take developmental courses they do not need.

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Faculty also noted that students occasionally require re-placement, yet concede this is rare and remain comfortable with the system of testing because they can always re-evaluate students during the first week of the semester. I also understand that the instructors do not stay current regarding the placement practices mandated by the state government, nor do they actively seek to change them. In this way, thus, a discourse of science and the discursive practice of testing that is its hallmark face little active resistance at BCC even though there is a fairly strong movement afoot in the fields of basic writing, composition, and education to challenge the testing regime and to advance alternative approaches to placement such as guided or directed self-placement (CCCC, 1995; Schrag, 2002; Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2006). As Carter (2006) noted, "the test that places students in basic writing…works from a very different set of assumptions than do the courses that make up our programs" (p. 97).

In addition to examining the practice of assessment with the participants at BCC, I also considered whether the language of science is present in the faculty's talk about their basic writing programs. It appears that some of the instructors have adopted ways of speaking about basic writing that align with a discourse of science, while others avoid such vocabulary. All of the practitioners readily employed *developmental education* and *development writing* and used these designations interchangeably with *basic writing* when speaking about their coursework and programs. They also referred to the classes that they teach by their prefix numbers 0305, 0306, and 0307 or their respective titles *Basic Writing and Mechanics I*, *Basic Writing and Mechanics II*, and *English Improvement*.

Edgar and Judy, however, also used *developmental* and *remedial* interchangeably in various contexts. For example when discussing how his philosophy of teaching basic writing has changed over the course of his time at BCC, Edgar noted, "So, we finally

gave up, finally gave up standing in front of our *remedial* classes and lecturing to them. It took a good while, but we worked through that" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 8). Also, when talking about the post-test for English courses that was developed by the faculty at BCC, Edgar mentioned:

> We were so excited that we finally had a method of getting everybody up to some standard. All of our students in *remedial* and freshman English—everybody is going to have a just approach to this, through this instrument. And so we developed it. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 9)

Judy also tended to switch back and forth between using *developmental* and *remedial* in her conversations. Additionally, she frequently spoke of providing students with prescriptions for improving their writing. She described her work with students in the writing center during their required weekly lab sessions:

> It's about trying to gauge within thirty minutes, where did they drop the ball, how did this happen, and how did they get to this point of confusion? And you try to backtrack as much as you can and start them on their *prescription* and all that stuff to find a place where you can get them back on track. (Judy, June 25, 2007, p. 4)

Further, when speaking of how the services offered in the center are an integral part of basic coursework, Judy noted, "It's part of the curriculum, and it is a *prescription* based on results. So they're doing the same thing. You can put a different label on it. They're still aiming towards the same goals." (Judy, June 25, 2007, p. 7)

Besides Judy and Edgar, none of the faculty used language that I have identified as tied to a discourse of science—specifically vocabulary that invokes a medical model. Although none of the other instructors readily employed it, however, they also did not explicitly challenge or critique language of this kind. In general, then, it appears the

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discourse of science unfolds unevenly across this particular institutional site, both in the ways in which the faculty regard and render the system of mandated testing as well as in their adoption of particular terminology and inscriptions.

THE INFLUENCE OF DISCIPLINARY TECHNOLOGIES AT BCC

The instructor interviews have been a key component of this study, not only because they allow us to refocus basic writing and writers as the object of study but also because we might consider if and how the constructive forces that dominate public discussions about developmental education in Texas influence this group of faculty in their day to day activities. In other words, the faculty narratives allow us to question whether disciplinary technologies have been effective in reproducing utilizable effects at this location. They also serve to establish knowledge of power struggles, discontinuous accounts, individual needs, and desires as well as to restore a context to one particular site of basic writing instruction, which might interrupt the dominant claims of the analyzed texts as well as the traditional histories and grand narratives of developmental education.

In previous sections I have discussed how the study participants do not always conceive of their students in the same ways as they are portrayed in the analyzed texts. For example, they do not view their students as failures but rather position themselves in direct resistance to this characterization. They contended that they "do not have the same kind of presumptions that some people have" and, specifically, that their students "are not stupid" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 5). Anne described her students as "the best ones almost without fail because they know what it means to be here" (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 6). Additionally, the instructors repeatedly conveyed that developmental learners "come in all sizes, shapes, backgrounds and levels of preparedness," resisting the types of static representations that appear in the documents.

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Despite the fact that the practitioners' narratives about their students are overwhelmingly positive, this does not mean that discoursed representations are completely absent nor does it indicate that the faculty is not aware of the ways in which basic writers are negatively inscribed by various discursive assumptions. I noted in my discussion of the discourse of science that some faculty readily adopt particular acts of inscription, labeling some students and courses remedial and referring to prescriptions and interventions. Likewise, there are ways in which the language practices of one or two of the interviewed faculty members invoke other discoursed characterizations of students, which indicates that normalizing technologies have been at least somewhat influential at BCC. Notably, however, such descriptions were used infrequently throughout the interviews and most were followed by qualifications. For example, on two occasions Judy claimed that the majority of her students are "at-risk" and "not college-ready," which echoes assertions that are prevalent throughout the analyzed texts and traditional histories. For Judy, though, college-readiness and a student's drop out potential are not tied to test scores or perceived levels of illiteracy and academic weakness but rather to their levels of self-confidence that are arguably produced by the various discourses that have always already labeled the students as aberrant. She explained:

> In fact, what seems to distinguish developmental students from those students that can come in and hit the ground running is that developmental students have to get beyond their misconceptions about their own abilities…and part of developmental teaching is changing their attitudes about learning. (Judy, June 25, 2007, p. 7)

Judy's understanding that college readiness is tied to students' belief in their own potential is quite different than the definition provided throughout the analyzed texts that define readiness solely in terms of passing the THEA exams.

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Despite the aforementioned differences in perception, discursive representations do occasionally both influence the ways in which the faculty characterize students as well as shape how some students view themselves. Consider Edgar's comment regarding his students' insistence that they master the rules of standardized English and grammar, "You know what forces them to do it? They do. They want to know. Because they believe, wrongly, but they believe that educated people know about this stuff" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 6). This quote reveals that Edgar's students are quite familiar with how they have been authored as the other and, thus, how they continuously strive to assimilate to established norms by acquiring particular knowledge and skills. Alita also discussed how certain negative characterizations of basic writers are pervasive in public discussions about developmental education. She argued that discursive renderings are repeatedly evidenced by talk that reveals "low expectations" of students, which ultimately affects the ways in which they conceive of their own academic abilities (Alita, June 25, 2007, p.2).

Because the faculty are acutely aware of the negative messages that their students receive and the ways in which they are positioned as outsiders to the academy, many of them strive to combat potentially damaging stereotypes and assumptions. Eva shared a story during her interview that highlights such resistance:

We were determined that they would read a book by the time they finished our class and I had to stop them from reading…well we were talking to Dr. Smith about our class, we were very excited that five of [our students who initially placed in the lowest level of basic writing] had already passed the developmental exit exam, and are now going to 1301 [freshman composition]. We talked to him about our reading, *The Pursuit of Happiness* and he said, "your 305 students?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Did you have to give them study guides?" And

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we said, "No. We just told them to read seventy-five pages a week." And he said, "Seventy-five pages a week?" And I said, "Yes. We only had four weeks to get through the book." And he was planning on using that same book for his composition students, but he thought he would have to give them study guides for them to be able to understand to get through, but we didn't have to do that at all.

(Eva, June 25, 2007, p. 3)

Here we can see that Eva did not refrain from assigning difficult texts to her basic writing students and holding them to a rigorous reading schedule, despite the fact that some of her colleagues did not believe that they would be able to handle the complicated material without supplementary notes. Eva's actions reassert her confidence in her students' abilities and oppose the dominant opinion that developmental students are not poised to succeed in college courses. Carmen also noted how she resists negative characterizations of her students by maintaining high expectations for all learners. She mentioned, "I offered my students the opportunity to learn with web CT and they're doing very well. So I call them my 305/306 honors students, but I remind them that nobody else knows about them" (Carmen, June 25, 2007, p. 1).

Although the analyzed texts invoke distorted truth claims about all students mandated into developmental education, this is even more so the case when the documents speak of students of color and economically disadvantaged students. Many of the documents explicitly equate developmental students with racial minorities and the underprivileged, which serves to fix unfavorable perceptions of these learners. I believed it was important, thus, to consider whether the participants either accept or oppose racialized and classist representations of their students. When reviewing the interview transcripts, however, I noticed that the faculty were generally silent on issues of race and class. This means that when asked to describe their students, they did not emphasize the

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overrepresentation of minority students or shifting demographics in Texas—two points which are repeatedly stressed in the analyzed documents—and they also did not explicitly attest to nor critique the many ways in which the dominant discourses of schooling position students of color or those of low socioeconomic status in subordinate positions of power relationships. It is difficult, thus, to draw any significant conclusions related to whether the instructors resist or reproduce the representations of students as constructed by the prominent discourses of failure, economy, and science. In fact, the only mention of race during the interviews was made by Edgar as he was describing his entrée into the academic profession:

> I didn't choose it, it chose me…And the reason for that was that I had a special background because of my ethnicity and my language background. And many of our students even today are from that background. And the chair of our department recognized that I had the kind of aptitude and perspective that were appropriate for this field. I was the first Hispanic hired in this department, although I had known for many months before that that I would be offered the job. (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 1)

Edgar alluded to the fact that many of his students are Latinos and bilingual, and thought that he was hired because he shared these characteristics with his students and would be able to relate to their experiences on a personal level. Neither he nor his colleagues, however, offered any additional commentary beyond these statements with regard to race or the ways in which poor students are figured through discursive practices. Because of this lack of data, it is impossible to infer their perceptions of race and class. I must underscore, however, that their silence may be a significant finding in and of itself, particularly when we consider this contrast to the analyzed documents that present the education of racial minorities and economically disadvantaged students as one of the

main reasons why developmental education exists. Perhaps the faculty do not conceive of their work in this way or perhaps they find it a difficult topic to discuss. There is no way to be sure; however, I do believe that my inability to more adeptly address their viewpoints stems from a weakness in methodology. The set of interview questions did not adequately explore this topic, nor did I probe more deeply upon recognition of the silence. In hindsight, then, it is clear that this area needs more serious consideration and should be the focus of future inquiries into the discursive practices of basic writing.

The analyzed texts reveal how developmental programs are, like students, hierarchically positioned within the academy. Particularly, they stress how basic coursework is inferior to college-level classes. This has resulted in efforts to have developmental education removed from 4 year colleges, decreases in funding and resources, and legislation that restricts a student's ability to concurrently enroll in basic and credit-bearing classes. The faculty at BCC seemed to be acutely aware of how developmental programs have been negatively inscribed and, further, how they face various material consequences as a result of the ways in which these programs are situated. They clearly noted how such consequences ultimately lead to detrimental outcomes for students.

Both Eva and Regina discussed how they believe that "the governor eventually wants to do away with the developmental programs" (Eva, June 25, 2007, p.7). Regina contended, "With the way funding is going and with budget cuts, I think that there will not be developmental ed at the college level. That's going to leave a lot of students out of going to college" (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 3). The instructors fear that if developmental education continues to be authored as a remedy for the failure of secondary schools, it will eventually be removed from the higher education arena, perhaps outsourced to private corporations or required prior to high school graduation,

which will effectively limit students' access to college based on a standardized examination that may not be an accurate predictor of student success (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 4).

Additionally, several of the faculty noted how a new policy at BCC further serves to conflate basic writing with high school English instruction. Carmen explained, "Now, in order to teach developmental, you just need a B.A. and one year experience teaching high school English or six graduate hours in developmental theory" (Carmen, June, 25, 2007, p. 8). The adoption of this new requirement implies that the administration at BCC both believes teaching in a secondary school adequately prepares one for teaching basic writing and views the two tasks as basically equivalent. In Anne's words:

> So the argument was, if somebody can teach comp in high school, I think it was from 8th grade up—and you could have only taught 8th grade English for a year— you would be okay to teach 307 here. But you could be Edgar and teach 30 years here with great success and not be qualified. So I think the administration's thinking was that developmental is not college-level…I guess the stupidest thing to me is …if you taught here for 30 years and you had the highest pass rate and the highest retention rate, you still wouldn't be able to continue teaching. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 10)

Anne vehemently defended Edgar's right to continue teaching basic writing, despite the fact that he would not qualify under the new administrative policy that privileges secondary teaching experience. In this way, she resists the notion that developmental education and high school instruction are the same thing.

The faculty at BCC are very resistant to the new policy regarding hiring qualifications because of the ways in which it positions basic writing courses as distinct from college-level courses. Additionally, the instructors stand against the rule because

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they perceive that its specified requirements convey unwelcome messages regarding appropriate faculty credentials, and they are fighting to have the policy repealed. Several of the faculty mentioned writing letters to the administration in protest and Anne even declared, "Unlike Edgar, I am still allowed to teach developmental courses, but I am sort of boycotting them…this summer is actually the last time I am teaching it for awhile" (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 10). Consider Alita's remarks:

> The administration has very little respect for our [developmental] classes. They throw in anybody or anyone walking down Boulder Street to teach the courses. That anybody with a B.A. could at least submit an application? The BA works! Excuse me? I have a problem with that because it wouldn't work for the freshman comp classes. (Alita, June 25th, 2007, p. 8).

Just as the National Association of Developmental Education (NADE, 2005) has advised against the widespread use of adjunct instructors in developmental courses— mainly because part-time faculty typically have less training and receive less support and resources than full-time faculty and because their overrepresentation in developmental classrooms sends the message that basic courses are less valuable than college credit-bearing classes—likewise the instructors at BCC do not believe that the hiring criteria outlined in the new job description is satisfactory because they feel it suggests both that basic writing is equivalent to high school English and that developmental students do not deserve professors with the same advanced training as students in other college English classes. Furthermore, I believe the instructors' stance on the policy is also related to the ways in which they adamantly oppose a centralized model of developmental education.

Even though the analyzed texts figure developmental education as a totality and encourage the implementation of comprehensive programs, the faculty at BCC

disapprove of efforts to reorganize basic writing, reading, and math in a single unit. Regina stated:

> I know that most colleges have developmental education departments. It's all there, and has nothing to do with other departments. Well, wouldn't it be nice, if I had that instructor in English Improvement and I can take that same instructor for Freshman Composition. I feel comfortable with that instructor. That instructor knows my writing. To me, it's a big factor in students sticking around and continuing…Because developmental English is still part of the English department and developmental math is still part of the math department, the students that are taking developmental classes don't have to feel isolated, or feel as though, "I have to go to that building over there, but everybody knows that's the developmental ed building or that's the not so smart building." So they're still part of the college community, and I really like that. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 6).

Like Regina, several of the instructors that I interviewed advocated for a decentralized model, mainly because they wanted to challenge the discursively constructed boundaries that separate students based on their TSI status and make their students feel like welcomed members of the college community. Similarly, Anne expressed that she supported a decentralized model because:

> There's sometimes the impression, from students more than faculty, that they are sort of ghettoized or actually, if they're only developmental, that they don't belong, especially if the teachers teach only that. I mean, it's like having a little high school or something. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 2)

In other words, Anne did not want to reproduce the notion that developmental education is subordinate to credit-bearing courses nor did she want her students to feel like outsiders to the college. Her perspectives, however, are in direct opposition to those

presented in the analyzed texts, which do suggest that basic coursework is inferior and that basic writers are not ready to enter college.

Overall, the interviews revealed that the faculty at BCC resist characterizing basic writing and writers in the same ways as the analyzed texts, with a few exceptions. Although their language practices at times invoked certain discoursed representations of students, they frequently qualified such remarks by highlighting the strengths of developmental learners. Meanwhile, the analyzed texts exclusively focus attention on negative characteristics of developmental learners and imply that students in basic classes are outsiders to the academy who are not likely to succeed. Of note, however, the faculty did not acknowledge the plethora of racialized representations that permeate public discourse about developmental education. Questioning this silence would be an important topic for future investigation. The instructor narratives did emphasize that eliminating demarcations between basic coursework and college credit-bearing classes is of the utmost importance, despite the fact that the analyzed documents readily reproduce boundaries between the two types of instruction. The faculty actively resist the centralization of developmental programs at BCC for this reason, so that their students might feel like part of the college community and, particularly, active participants within the department of English. Although the discourses of failure, economy, and science shape the ways in which the analyzed texts describe social structures, relationships, and identities, they do not appear persuasive enough to encourage the faculty at BCC to consistently adopt their particular manner of characterizing basic writing and writers.

Likewise, when questioning the effects of both the punitive and the affirmative tactics of discursive power dispersal enumerated in the analyzed texts—specifically legislative mandates, financial incentives, and the promotion of best practices—I found that the these technologies were only minimally influential in directing the daily activities

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and perceptions of faculty at BCC. I directly asked each respondent whether any particular institutional or state policies either enhance or limit their ability to carry out their responsibilities. None of the faculty reported that legislative initiatives impacted their work, with the exception of Anne who claimed that the laws that regulate institutional funding and financial aid, those which base allocations on course pass rates and the number of times a student has to repeat basic classes, impede student progress and, at times, limit her ability to obtain resources. Anne, however, also qualified her statement by locating blame for poor departmental funding at the institutional level. She stated:

> It's not so much the state, it's just the funding of the college…now we teach five classes and they pack them full of students…So I think we would all argue that if we taught four classes instead of five that would be much easier. But in terms of rules and laws I can't really think of anything. We come up with the final exam ourselves. I feel that we do have a lot of control ourselves over things. (Anne, June 25, 2007, p. 6)

Anne's perception that the instructors at BCC have a great deal of autonomy was shared by many of her colleagues. In fact, when I asked Alita if any institutional or state policies enhanced or limited her work, she responded, "No, we got freedom. That's what's wonderful about Bluebonnet" (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 9). Likewise, Regina noted that the various mandates and laws governing developmental education in Texas "don't really play a role at [her] level" (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 3).

Of course, the faculty at BCC are not beyond the law but rather they believe that they have effective systems of placement—both exams and in-class writing evaluations—that were implemented long before universal assessment was mandated by the state. As mentioned in the discussion of the discourse of science, Bluebonnet was one of the

earliest colleges in Texas to offer basic writing courses and even founded a stand-alone writing center over 30 years ago. Edgar exclaimed, "We are not the people that caused the state to [implement TASP]" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 4). Even if this hadn't been the case, however, the instructors made it clear that they do not approve of the government dictating localized practices and that under no circumstances should colleges and universities be "run by people who know little or nothing about education" (Alita, June 25, 2007, p. 7). Thus, despite the fact that state agencies have attempted to exercise increasing amounts of control over the practices of schooling, the faculty at BCC tend not to validate their claims to authority, effectively thwarting the imperious technologies of the discourses.

During the interviews I also questioned each participant about best practices at BCC, asking if and how they thought best practices were employed at their college. Although each noted the importance of implementing recommended conventions, their notions of such were quite different than those enumerated in the analyzed texts. For example, the faculty view the decentralization of their program as a best practice, which is in direct opposition to the suggestions of the analyzed texts. Regina noted:

> Bluebonnet employs best practices in developmental writing because developmental English is still part of the English department and developmental math is still part of the math department, the students that are taking developmental classes don't have to feel isolated, or feel as though, "I have to go to that building over there, but everybody knows that's the developmental ed building or that's the not so smart building." So they're still part of the college community, and I really like that. (Regina, June 25, 2007, p. 6).

Edgar commented that BCC best practices included "hiring some pretty good teachers" that are "dedicated and have a belief in what they're doing, and think that it's

worthy, so they pour themselves into these courses" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p. 6). He also noted, "The other thing that is very strong about this system here is that it is flexible. We select our own textbooks. We develop our own internal curriculum" (Edgar, June 25, 2007, p.7). Linda recognized BCC's e-portfolio requirement as a best practice as well as the existence of a stand-alone writing center, while Alita pointed to the departmental colloquia that the faculty create and attend each semester. None of the best practices that the faculty acknowledged, thus, appear to have origins in the discourses of failure, economy, or science, which do drive the recommendations (e.g. partnerships with members of the business community, and the alignment of high school exit standards with college-readiness standards, program evaluation through statistical cohort tracking, and frequent standardized testing) that are pervasive throughout the analyzed texts.

Instead, the instructors conceive of best practices that align with the conceptions they have developed through years of experience and professional development within their department. Anne noted, "We're a pretty close knit group and we talk a lot. And the fact that everybody teaches more than two different kinds of courses over the span of a year or two really gives us a well-rounded view of what needs to happen to strengthen practices" (Anne, June 25, 2007, p 8). Linda stated:

> We research articles and read the articles and discuss them as a staff, and we do that type of professional development at each level. And that's with student assistants, lab assistants, lab adjuncts, and the full-time instructional staff too. We also have a Teaching and Learning Center, and they have professional development opportunities in addition to the programs here in English department. We usually gather once a month. To us, it's very, very important. At all levels of the staffing, and it is to the chair of the English department.

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In addition to in-house colloquia and regular discussions of articles from the field, the participants also emphasized the importance of attending professional conferences so that they might return to campus and share cutting-edge research with their colleagues. Noted meetings included: the National Council of Teachers of English, Conference on College Composition and Communication, National Association of Developmental Education, and The Kellogg Institute at the National Center for Developmental Education.

Overall, then, the instructor interviews have shown that the reproductive tactics that construct basic writers and writing programs across the various analyzed texts are not very influential in defining the system of conventions and norms in operation at Bluebonnet Community College. We have seen how the faculty both have actively resisted discoursed truth claims as well as offered alternative renderings of their students and programs that challenge regimes of power. Focusing my analysis through a genealogical lens has allowed me to discuss not only the ways in which the practitioner narratives intersect the discourses of failure, economy, and science, but also how they interrupt them by challenging the dominant assumptions that lend credence to recognized practices. However, even though the instructor narratives tend not to invest the discursive structures that pervade the texts, this conclusion in and of itself allows for a new understanding of the state of affairs within the discipline of basic writing in Texas. Because there is little crossover between the ideologies presented in the analyzed texts and those enumerated by the faculty, there is much work to be done in terms of future research and practice as discussed in length in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Summary and Implications

This study utilized elements of Critical Discourse Analysis and genealogy as dual lenses to look closely at a corpus of historicized documents and explore how basic writing in Texas has been constructed through discursive practices across time and multiple texts. Concurrently, I examined practitioner narratives from one community college, questioning how the stories of faculty there intersect and represent the larger discourses of developmental English in the state. The findings outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 document the many ways in which the discipline is historically situated, produced, and reproductive. Specifically, I have shown how the discourses of failure, economics, and science have operated through basic writing—not as distinct influences, but emerging intertextually, interdependently, and in concert—to generate particular material consequences and utilizable effects.

The three discourses simultaneously articulate problems and offer solutions using the tools of science as they proclaim the likelihood that many current Texas students will become burdens to the economy and society at large in the absence of the prescribed interventions of developmental programs. The circulating discursive statements have served to establish systems of regulation, both punitive and positive technologies, which in turn fix the objects of educational reform. The purpose of this project was to interrogate the metanarrative of basic writing in Texas, revealing its contingent nature and tracing the political and polemical interests served by various discursive practices. Further, the critical analysis of the instructor interviews allowed me to question the categorical assumptions set out by the discourses, as the localized narratives challenged the authority and many of the norms promulgated through them. The following section summarizes the key findings that illuminate the emergence of basic writing in Texas as

well as those that subvert and/or complicate the systems of power inscribed in its practice.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

THE CREATION OF THE FAILURE NARRATIVE. The analyzed documents narrate the systemic decay of education in the state of Texas, highlighting various incompetencies of students, teachers, and academic institutions. The texts also name developmental programs, including basic writing, as both an indicator of and an intervention to prevent the deterioration of postsecondary programs. Such assertions appear frequently and are seemingly grounded in anecdotal assessments that communicate the dissatisfaction of leaders within the industry sector. Despite the fact that many of the authors claim that their work is informed by research with educators and students, the voices of these individuals appear only sporadically throughout the texts.

The documents readily establish standardized testing as the preferred means for accurately measuring student skill levels and determining the parameters of developmental programs. Further, it is argued that these exams offer proof that a majority of students graduate from high school without the writing skills necessary to be successful in college or the workforce, a problem which is steadily increasing. Although some scholars have challenged the merits of centralized, high-stakes testing systems— which do not account for domain knowledge, are artificially situated, and often culturally biased—the message persists that low test scores provide conclusive evidence of student failure and that teachers and schools are ultimately responsible for student deficiencies.

Without exploration of the many complex variables that influence teaching, learning, and evaluation environments, then, several sources conclude that school reform is long overdue and should be directed by policymakers rather than the school districts, colleges, and universities who have been unable to remedy student underpreparedness up

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until this point. The analyzed documents reveal how, over the course of several years, a discourse of failure and the legislative interventions it informs have been normalized through various technologies, including systems of rewards and public recognition, but also through the truth claims that circulate via a discourse of economy.

DETAILING THE THREAT. Basic writing is authored as an economic necessity in that it is said to address the shortcomings of students so that they might go on to be college-educated, productive members of society. A discourse of economy emphasizes that a college degree makes one a mainstream American, replete with all the benefits that such a distinction might entail. Within the analyzed texts, this portrayal of the typical citizen, or the taxpayer, is repeatedly opposed to that of students who are determined to be candidates for developmental education via standardized testing programs. Learners enrolled in basic coursework, thus, are again positioned as the delinquent other, reinforcing a discourse of failure. The symbiotic relationship of the two discourses, failure and economy, is evident in the many ways in which their promulgated truth claims reiterate the authority of one another.

Just as a discourse of failure serves to construct power relationships, a discourse of economy also encourages the transfer of control of developmental education to certain interested parties. By convincing the public that the absence of college-readiness programs will lead to more crime, addiction, disease, and welfare recipients, it is easy to rationalize the increased control of policymakers and the business elite. The analyzed texts note the augmented involvement of corporate executives on educational policy committees and with professional organizations. Further, there is evidence to suggest that legislators often defer to the recommendations of leaders of the business community, channeled through industry lobbying organizations, when drafting or voting on the mandates that regulate basic coursework.

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Additionally, the couching of basic education in economic terms naturalizes the transference of a particular set of values, namely those traditionally regarded within the business sector. Performance-driven models of developmental writing that privilege accountability, efficiency, and quality control are encouraged throughout the study documents without serious consideration of whether the ideologies of the corporate world make sense in the realm of education. Basic writers are figured as the product we are promising the taxpayer, appropriations are set aside for colleges and universities that develop P-16 strategic action plans, and statewide performance plans have become commonplace. The influence of a discourse of economy can also be recognized in the dollar-driven mentality of institutions of higher education and, particularly, the outcomes-based formulas used to fund developmental programs.

THE DOMINANCE OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE. If the discourses of failure and economy function in a reciprocal manner, working in concert to fix and reproduce one another, perhaps they are both even more so dependent on a discourse of science that normalizes many of the assumptions—the superiority of standardized assessments, the value of empirical data in program evaluation, the neutrality of positivist research—that lend credence to the particular utilizable effects of discursive practice including, for example, systems of accountability and measures of efficiency and productivity. A discourse of science presents writing as a phenomenon that is able to be measured objectively and champions exams that quantify student ability. Further, it claims practices like standardized evaluation are beyond history, culture, and values, which effectively neutralizes the politics of such acts and enables the displacement of power. Because the validity of testing instruments has been firmly established, students can be categorized based on their ability to confirm to a predetermined norm, and an agenda of objective diagnosis and prescription can be easily advanced.

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We can note, then, how the discourses inform specific inscribing processes within the discipline as illustrated in the analyzed documents. For example, developmental programs are figured in terms of medical metaphors—students are examined or evaluated, and an intervention is administered in order to remedy deficiencies. Not only do such representations reflect a particular axiology, but they also serve to fix social constructions and relationships of power. Because developmental students have been conceived as impaired, extensive political debate ensues and many question whether these learners should be attending college at all or if tax dollars should be allocated to support their enrollment.

The analyzed texts also reveal how a discourse of science has limited the range of possible ways to conceive of research within the field of developmental education. The documents stress the importance of establishing benchmarks that correlate predictive variables with remediation, retention, and college success rates. When the authors speak of research they imply quantitative analysis and few recognize the value of postpositivist or interpretive inquiry. Quantitative studies also dominate the dissertations and theses of Texas graduates. Taken together, such conventions reinscribe an empirical frame of reference that warrants the totalizing system of a discourse of science.

The truth regimes indebted to scientific objectivity, which undergird both the productivity paradigm of a discourse of economy and the categorization processes of a discourse of failure, shape what and how we know about basic writers, their social structures, relationships, and identities. Each discourse contributes to the key terms and assumptions operating throughout the analyzed texts—authoring developmental learners as *at-risk*, *underprepared*, *low-achieving*, *nontraditional*, and *disadvantaged*. A binary is created between TASP/TSI students and nonTASP/TSI students where one cohort is privileged while the other is concomitantly deemed aberrant.

THE INSCRIPTION OF STUDENTS AND PROGRAMS. Furthermore, tapping into larger patterns of representation and stereotypes within society, the analyzed texts frequently equate developmental students with students of color and the underprivileged, which reproduces unfavorable perceptions of these particular learners. The documents claim matter-of-factly that certain cultural and verbal inadequacies of racial minority students lead them to participate in basic writing without critical reflection of how these supposed shortcomings have been constructed through relationships of power. Systems of schooling in the United States tend to reflect the values of White, middle-class communities and, thus, students of color and the economically disadvantaged often occupy the position of other. The resulting truth claims about these learners inform discursive practices within basic writing and the larger arena of education and allow particular assumptions (e.g., that shifts in state demographics will necessitate increased funding for developmental education) to circulate without interrogation.

Just as the discourses of failure, economy, and science author students in particular ways and reproduce relationship of power, likewise they serve to characterize and fix developmental programs, positioning them hierarchically within the academy. Within the analyzed texts we see how basic classes are opposed to college-level coursework and how the latter is afforded a privileged status. The message that developmental education is inferior is also reinforced as policymakers and state officials push to eliminate basic classes from four-year institutions of higher education. Further, in Texas, public institutions may not award college credit for participation in basic writing, reading, or mathematics, and students who are mandated into these courses may be restricted from concurrently enrolling in college-level courses or administratively withdrawn from a college if they fall out of compliance with their TSI individualized plan. Legislated practices such as the aforementioned create an artificial boundary

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between developmental education and other college programs, contributing to the polarization of student representations.

Another noteworthy consequence of the discourses lies in how they work intertextually to figure basic reading, writing, and math as a single, comprehensive entity—developmental education—both seemingly divorced from the larger disciplines of composition, reading, and mathematics as well as insignificant if independent of one another. Specifically, the documents rarely discuss basic writing as a field distinct from the other developmental areas, despite the fact that it has an established history of research, a discipline-specific journal, and a professional membership organization, among other distinguishing features. Such a conception of developmental education has effectively become naturalized and led to a push for centralization in institutions across the state. It has also allowed for the distinction between basic coursework and credit-bearing classes to be strengthened as the discourses of failure, science, and economy work to position developmental programs and students outside the boundaries of the traditional college scope and standards.

The material consequences and utilizable effects of the discourses have been accomplished through forceful and punitive means, like the TASP or TSI legislation, but also they have been enacted through subtler forms of coercion such as systems of rewards that consign individuals or institutions to the efficient conservation of desired conventions. This is because the monitoring of mandated practices is not particularly efficient as compared to positive tactics of reinforcement that are affirmative in nature and encourage practitioners to self-surveil their own behavior. Accordingly, the analyzed texts argue that college and universities should be offered incentives and publicly recognized when they adopt endorsed best practices. The documents also reveal how many discoursed practices—including continuous remediation, statistical benchmarking,

P-16 initiatives, and others—have been reproduced through systems of reward and acknowledgement.

INSTRUCTOR NARRATIVES. The narratives of the interview participants allowed me to question whether the discourses and disciplinary technologies operating through the analyzed texts have been effective in shaping the perceptions and actions of a group of faculty at one community college. In general, the practitioners' comments served to interrupt the dominant truth claims of the study documents, revealing the contingent nature of several conventions and norms and resisting representations of reality that did not resonate with what they have learned through their lived experiences. For example, although the faculty were aware of the many ways in which their students were authored as failures, they did not share this view of developmental learners and felt it was part of their job to change this perception. Further, as the instructors described their practice it became clear that many of the principles and values that they embrace are quite different than those championed by the discourses. Case in point, the faculty did not characterize basic writing as an economic necessity nor define their program in terms of its benefits to taxpayers, and they emphasized that the purpose of their work encompassed much more than student skills mastery as measured by standardized exams.

That being said, some discursive practices face little active resistance at the study site. Placement tests, for example, were acknowledged by some participants as a strength of the program at BCC. Mandatory assessment was established over 35 years ago, and faculty who were employed there both then and now consider themselves pioneers in this area. Additionally, some instructors have adopted ways of speaking about basic writing that aligns very closely with a discourse of science, using *remedial* and *developmental* interchangeably and noting their desire to provide prescriptions and interventions. Other faculty invoked discoursed characterizations of students—*at-risk*, *not college-ready*—

which indicates that normalizing technologies have been at least somewhat influential at this site. A discourse of science and the assumptions it promulgates, thus, have been reproduced at BCC, even if they have been shown to unfold unevenly.

The instructor interviews have established knowledge of localized struggles and discontinuous accounts, at once both revealing the power of discourses and disciplinary tactics and challenging expectations set up through normative models. The faculty seem to be acutely aware of how developmental programs have been negatively inscribed and, further, the various material consequences they and their students face as a result of how their programs are situated. They fear that if basic coursework continues to be authored as a corrective for the breakdown of the K-12 schooling system, it will eventually be removed from the higher education arena or outsourced to private corporations, effectively limiting access to colleges and universities. They also advocate for a decentralized model to remain in place at BCC so that developmental students are not separated from their peers. They resist the notion that developmental classes are subordinate to credit-bearing courses and feel that boundaries constructed between the two lead to students feeling like outsiders to the college community.

When questioning the effects of both negative and positive tactics of power dispersal, I found that both types of technologies were only minimally influential in directing daily activities at BCC. The faculty reported that legislative initiatives had little impact on their work with the exception of the withholding of state funding based on course participation and completion rates. The instructors also made it clear that they do not approve of the state government dictating localized practice because those in power seldom have a deep understanding of educational issues. They are not enticed by the financial rewards offered through grants for the adoption of particular initiatives, including many outlined in the state's P-16 strategic plans. Furthermore, even though

they recognize the value of establishing recommended conventions and best practices, their conceptions of such are quite different than those enumerated in the analyzed texts. The participants have chosen to advance best practices that they have developed as a result of their many years of experience within the field, which they share during in-house colloquia. They also frequently discuss and critique articles from basic writing and composition journals and papers from professional meetings as a group and build on what they have learned during these types of interactions. In general, then, the faculty narratives not only challenge many of the discursive statements that dominate the analyzed texts, but they also indicate that the study participants actively resist many of the reproductive technologies employed through the discourses in their daily practice.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

As noted in the Chapter 1, increases in developmental education enrollment and the need for additional funding to support basic programs has lead many in the state of Texas to question the purpose and efficacy of basic writing, along with reading and mathematics, and to propose solutions to what they view as the myriad of problems that lead to or flow from the offering of this group of courses and related support services on college campuses. The purpose of this study was to contribute to these ongoing conversations through an exploration of the various assumptions that undergird the debates that surround basic writing in Texas and circulate in popular media and professional texts. This project, thus, aimed to create a broader academic space to interrogate the metanarrative of developmental education in the state, reveal its contingent nature, and trace the political and polemical interests served by its discursive practices. In drawing attention to the historicity and context of prevalent truth claims in the analyzed texts, I was able both to enumerate and interrupt the discourses of failure,

economy, and science as well as to reveal their primary technologies and material consequences.

Foregrounding the ways in which basic writing and writers are framed in the study documents reveals various trends related to the transmission of power. For example, although the implementation of basic programs was originally within the purview of local institutions, we can trace how authority over developmental education has shifted and reveal who serves to benefit from such shifts. Additionally, the texts themselves construct intersubjective webs of power by defining various social relationships. Presenting seemingly anecdotal evidence from business leaders, the documents characterize basic writers as failures and subsequently locate blame for student deficiencies with their teachers and schools. Because the systems that are supposed to be helping to prepare the students have been deemed ineffective, it becomes necessary for policymakers—under the advisement of educational agencies, business lobbies, researchers, and reporters—to wrest increasing amounts of control from colleges and universities. One can see, then, how the authors of the texts that serve to position developmental students simultaneously gain control over these learners as their representations become fixed.

To restate and build on this theory, the discourses of failure, science, and economy that operate through the analyzed texts produce troubled constructions of basic writing and writers that certain endorsed actors and recommendations might resolve. Offering solutions to the problems they define, these systems of conventions and norms create a totalizing regime, establishing boundaries for thoughts and actions that ultimately benefit the proponents of the discursive statements. Such parameters are not merely ideological but also pragmatic. Consider, for example, how the language used in the THECB report that established the Committee on Testing presents the need for a state-

mandated testing program as a foregone conclusion, which effectively limits options for action in terms of what is already implied—that standardized exams enforced through legislation must be implemented because they are the only means for ensuring accountability. Further, note how the productivity paradigm constructed through a discourse of economy serves to inculcate particular values within school systems. These same standards are those desired by employers, which makes their naturalization in the educational arena quite beneficial to leaders in the business and industry sector as they strive to ensure the future of a docile workforce.

The transmission of norms is not a transparent process, however, but one that operates rather covertly. If we revisit the traditional histories of basic writing in Texas, the stories of developmental education outlined in Chapter 2 that appear frequently in landmark essays and historical documents, it is possible to see how such narratives are presented as uncontested, decontextualized givens. There is no mention of the extensive debates that surrounded the inception of the TASP and TSI programs, and the decision to implement these mandates is portrayed as value-neutral and objective. Further, the texts employ certain vocabulary choices and grammar and text structures that serve to obscure or favor agents and position particular actors over basic writers while simultaneously claiming that their actions are serving the best interest of these same learners. In an attempt to read with suspicion the absent against the present, then, I enumerated the ways that industry leaders and legislators insidiously and incrementally have asserted authority over both educational policy as well as developmental students who have been opposed to taxpayers and mainstream citizens and authored as potential menaces to the larger society.

The repeated articulation of these subjectivities has naturalized the material consequences of the various discourses as they have travelled through institutional sites.

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It seems commonsensical, then, that students in basic coursework are approached in terms of a medical model as other so called deviants have been in the past. It can be reasoned when these learners are marginalized in university communities and provided with the least amount of resources. Arguments that these students should be relegated to community colleges or that basic programs should be eliminated altogether appear quite prudent in nature. It is not problematized when the various documents discussing the recommended future trajectories of these students do not include statements and opinions from the students themselves or the teachers that have reportedly failed them.

Despite the fact that the traditional histories and analyzed texts have functioned as reproductive tools of the various discourses that fix basic writers and writing, this genealogical project reveals that student identities and program dynamics are much more complicated than the ways in which they are presented. Critical Discourse Analysis has allowed me to articulate the other stories of basic writing in Texas by consistently questioning and interrupting the metanarrative, vivifying interpretations, and generating questions. Tracing the discourse of science, I was able both to challenge the merits of the regime of testing—the discursive practice that is most influential in the construction of the basic/normal binary, defining basic writers in terms of universal absolutes—as well as assert that the value of learning lies beyond the economic outcomes enumerated in the analyzed texts. I have addressed the distorted truth claims that equate developmental students with persons of color. Further, I have drawn attention to the dangers of conceiving of developmental education as a conglomerate that obscures the contributions and success of the specific disciplines of reading, writing, and mathematics and noted how doing so strengthens the demarcation between basic and credit-bearing courses.

The material consequences of the discourses—having persisted in part because the implications of the adoption of the discourses of failure, economy, and science have

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yet to be seriously considered—appear less necessary when the assumptions that promote their circulation are brought under suspicion. Tying appropriations to developmental course pass rates and retention, for example, is no longer the only judicious option. The emphasis on quantitative research and statistical benchmarking can be effectively interrogated. We might embrace hybrid basic writing and composition stretch courses, integrate developmental coursework with core classes such as history or sociology, and offer these classes for college credit. The reliance on part-time instructors in basic programs could more easily be criticized and poor funding models addressed. Foregrounding the contingent nature of discoursed practice, thus, expands the realm of possibilities for future thoughts and actions.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the participant narratives, which reveal how acts in localized context can interrupt discursive mechanisms of power distribution. Despite the systems of rewards and recognition, among other technologies, implemented by the state and encouraged across multiple analyzed texts to guide program practice, the faculty at BCC tend to resist the reproduction of the discourses of failure and economy at their institutional site. While this is less the case with the discourse of science, its utilizable effects are still weakened through the faculty's determination to critically reflect on their work.

By being aware of the ways in which their students are positioned as failures and actively resisting such characterizations, the instructors are able not only to work to reconceive basic writing and writers but also to question the reproductive structures that have enabled certain negative representations to circulate without scrutiny. In other

words, not only do they offer alternative ways of knowing basic writers by pushing against the dominant public narrative regarding the conditions of education in the state Texas, but they also take actions to provide options to their students that could have been limited had discursive conventions been embraced. Not only do they openly remark that they do not consider low scores on TASP and TSI tests as a definitive indicator of failure on the part of the students or their teachers, but they also build safeguards into their program in the form of authentic writing assessments to limit the material consequences of the testing regime.

We have seen how the participants work against a discourse of economy by defining the objectives of their program in terms of student preparation for future college coursework and active participation in the larger democratic society rather than framing their goals as economic necessities or business imperatives. They also recognize the dangers of employing a productivity paradigm in writing instruction—one which values efficiency in output over/against the composing process—and work to help their students understand the value of the ever-evolving text. Further, the instructors continuously advocate for small classes and encourage collaborative learning spaces, both which are in tension with the work model endorsed through a discourse of economy. Finally, I found it significant that the faculty at BCC resist a centralized model of developmental education despite a plethora of literature that figures program consolidation as a best practice. I was also struck by their determined efforts to repeal a new hiring policy that could be interpreted as equating basic writing instruction with high school level teaching. The instructors not only wrote letters in protest to the guidelines governing faculty

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credentials, but some even have boycotted teaching developmental courses until the administration reconsiders the restrictions.

I suppose that pursuits such as the aforementioned may be considered small acts of resistance, ones that do not provide comprehensive challenges to the discourses constructing basic writing in Texas. They represent merely diminutive fractures in the cohesive metanarrative promulgating through the analyzed texts, the stories and experiences of but a few practitioners. However seemingly inconsequential, though, they still offer a compelling case for the need to complicate that which we know about basic writers and writing and provide a jumping off point for further reflection on our work within the field. I contend, thus, that this type of work that seeks to rupture metanarratives and interrogate the assumptions undergirding systems of conventions and norms is quite valuable as state and government officials as well as professionals within the field of basic writing seek to question the purpose and efficacy of basic writing programs, with an eye toward directing future implementation and organization.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND ACTION

While I contend that the practitioner narratives provide critical disruptions to the discourses articulated across and through the analyzed texts, I believe it is also evident that their voices have been marginalized. Within the 94 study documents, their point of view is rarely reflected. The norms and values that produce basic writing in Texas do not appear to readily align with those of the participants, despite the fact that these individuals are representative of the main actors responsible for the delivery of services of which the documents speak. Because there is a resounding dissonance between widespread characterizations of developmental education in the state and those provided

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by the faculty at BCC, I argue that there is an urgent need for further investigations where we pay close attention to the complexity of the spaces within which policies are practiced and disciplines are performed.

Although increased government control of basic writing has been normalized and authored as the only viable solution to the myriad of articulated problems surrounding developmental education Texas, researchers and practitioners within the field must continue to question the assumptions underlying legislative authority and mandates—especially considering that policies first introduced in this state are now serving as models that drive the educational agenda at the national level. It is vitally important to highlight the contingent nature of the discourses that have driven reform processes to date and to open spaces for new possibilities. This study reveals that discussions in the public arena—although they frequently engage with the history, definition, and purpose of basic writing as well as consider the future trajectory of the field—rarely reflect on the conventions and norms, produced through power relations, that dictate that which can be spoken, who can considered as a speaking subject, and what is recognized as truth. It is for this reason that I specifically encourage future inquiry focused on exploring the recurrent statements that bound the options for knowing basic writing and writers.

I anticipate that critics of this project and others like it might argue its lack of validity and relevance, particularly because of my narrow focus on the state and the small number of study participants. Such appraisals, however, further confirm the staying power of a discourse of science within the educational arena that we as researchers must continue to push against. Part of our agenda should be to ask the questions that produce different knowledge and conceive of knowledge differently. It seems this is the only way we might begin to make headway against the positivist, essentializing paradigms that

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currently govern practices of basic writing and limit possibilities for understanding our practice.

Case in point, even as I acknowledge the interpretive restrictions that must be considered due to the fact that I chose to concentrate on the narratives of only a few practitioners from one community college, I cannot discount the many ways in which their stories serve to undo the normative expectations established through the discourses of failure, economy and science. Even though I am not able to assert sweeping generalizations and implications for practice based on the findings of this study, I have a sense that the issues identified during this inquiry, however obscured, are far-reaching and that the chasm between the stories of basic writing professionals and those transmitted through popular channels is great.

I base these assertions on the work of Troyka (2000) who, in an open letter to the Journal of Basic Writing and the profession, indicted professionals in the field for our "insufficient attention to public relations" (p. 113). Just as this study has done, Troyka called attention to the various profiles of basic writing and writers circulating across various texts. She noted common questions:

> What are illiterate students doing in college? Won't an OA program that attracts such students water down the value of our hard-earned college degrees? Why are public funds being spent to repeat what students should have learned in high school "if only they had paid attention"? (p. 115)

Troyka argued, however, that instead of engaging with the perceptions and assumptions underlying such interrogations, "we supporters and teachers of developmental education…simply sighed, shook our heads, thinking 'What do they know?'" (p. 115)

Instead of countering the discourses circulating in the popular press, Troyka continued, we remained silent.

We didn't write for the popular press, neither op ed pieces nor articles for widely read national magazines. We didn't try to get our story out on radio and television and radio. We didn't doggedly seek to "prove" our results to college administrators who control policy and funding. We didn't attempt to curry favor with sympathetic political candidates who were likely someday to design public budgets. We didn't lobby sitting legislators, civic leaders, or grassroots organizations like Rotary Clubs and local business associations. We failed as communicators. (pp. 115-116)

We cannot continue to make the same mistake.

While the participants in this study are not necessarily remaining silent, their alternative understandings of basic writing and writers have not been very successful in challenging the dominant discourses of failure, economy, and science circulating through the analyzed texts. Put simply, I believe this project shows, as does Troyka's, that the word is still not getting out and practitioner voices remain unheard. For this reason, I contend that we need to be proactive in our approaches to influence interested stakeholders and power players, find innovative ways to infiltrate public conversations about basic writing, and shepherd new ways of thinking about developmental education.

Goto (2002) warned, "If we remain aloof from policy-oriented discussions, we leave basic writing open to future ideological attacks from outside critics" (p. 2). Adler-Kassner and Harrington (2006) claimed, "If basic writing instructors/administrators want to have a voice in [policy] discussions, we must develop strategies and gather data to support our positions. Interpreting the findings of this study within the context provided by these scholars foregrounds the urgent need to hedge government control, which can begin to be accomplished through more research from practitioners within the field and better channels of communicating scholarship and professional experiences. This is a

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goal that more professionals within the field must attend to if we are serious about providing services that are in the best interests of our students.

I would like to close this section on a cautionary note, however, and problematize the ways in which much of the instructors' attitudes, beliefs, and teaching practices seem to be almost completely at odds with the three discourses identified in the analyzed documents. To conclude a binary exists between the thinking of all basic writing faculty and the ways in which developmental English is portrayed in texts would be erroneous. While I do believe the voices of instructors deserve more attention and the popular narratives more criticism, it should not escape notice that the two intersect. This may not be obvious based on the results of this particular study but, again, it documents the responses of professionals at one campus. And while the differences of their stories from the popular accounts may be amplified due to the manner in which they were presented in opposing chapters, we might recall that they did indeed overlap particularly when it came to talk about testing and the adoption of scientific terminology. The dangers of assuming an artificial binary would include missing the discreet tensions that exist within both narratives—the location of aporia where we might begin to engage with the various powers at play and reveal their contingent nature.

CONFRONTING INTERPRETIVE CONSTRAINTS

As I noted in Chapter 3, I kept a research journal throughout the time that I spent conducting interviews and analyzing data. The purpose of this journal was to allow me to reflect on my intentions, assumptions, and actions. It also provided an additional text for consideration, one which identified some of my allegiances and spoke to how they influenced this project. Now that the primary findings of the study have been summarized, I feel it is necessary to discuss some of the interpretive limitations that are

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evidenced in the journal in an effort to be transparent with regards to the biases that undergirded my reading of the various texts.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how basic writing in Texas has been constructed through particular discursive practices across time and multiple texts. This study focused solely on the discourses of failure, economy, and science, even though I mentioned in my discussion of technologies and utilizable effects that it is not possible to connect all the characterizations of basic writers that appear in the analyzed texts to these three main discourses. Although I recognized the strength of the discourses of economy and science, the discourse of failure was, perhaps, a harder case to make. I chose to include it, however, because of the impact it had on me as I was reading the historical texts for the first time. I wrote in my journal:

> I just finished skimming for the first time the various documents that I have collected for this study. I think the thing that stands out to me most at this moment are the ways in which the students are consistently described in a negative way, and particularly as failures—not only that this the case but how it is often stated so matter-of-factly. Are they talking about the same students that I work with on a daily basis? Many who have overcome so much to be in college in the first place? Those who have repeatedly surprised me with their strength and resiliency? Even those who haven't lived up to my expectations—would I call them failures? Most I just viewed as typical teenagers, maybe not quite ready for the college experience but not failures. (Research Journal, May 4, 2007)

Because my personal, lived experiences did not resonate with what I was reading in the study documents, I chose to focus in on a particular discourse when I could have examined other systems of convention. The discourse of failure was one that I was

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willing to challenge head-on because I already understood its consequences to be detrimental.

The privileging of my own viewpoint crops up in other areas. For example, during my time in graduate school I have come to develop a knee-jerk reaction to certain terms that have become code words for practices that I don't necessarily agree with. These include accountability and scientifically-based research, to name a two. Although these may appear to be reasonable concepts, I have come to understand that they are counterproductive when exercised in the service of particular ideologies—namely in the context of systems where the success or failure of teachers and schools is tied directly to a structure of positive or negative consequences and/or corrective actions based on the results of standardized tests or statistical inference. Because of my aversion to these singular definitions, I have a tendency to automatically dismiss texts that speak highly about them, sometimes without taking care to seriously consider the contexts in which they are used. In my research journal I was able to question my preconceived notions about these practices:

> Is "accountability" all bad? Am I just defensive as an educator whose profession is under attack? Of course we want to continue to improve upon curriculum and help students prepare for their future? How do we make sure this work gets done without erecting some sort of imposing structure? What would this work look like? (Research Journal, May 10, 2007)

I need to acknowledge that there is space for some of the processes that I critique. I also need to be honest about the ways in which I sometimes adopt the particular stances that I would reject in other contexts when it is convenient to do so. I noted the following during my critique of the THECB (1986) report:

I should be cautious in my assessment. I indict the board for its lack of empirical evidence, yet at the same time I am committed to challenging the vanguardism of scientific objectivity…There is a certain amount of tension here that I am not able to overcome. (Research Journal, May 10, 2007)

Likewise, I need to continuously problematize my dismissal of particular ideas, such as my objection to the definition of education in terms of its value in the workplace and its practical utility. I noted:

I struggle with this. Of course I want my students to graduate, get a good job and enjoy a life of comfort and happiness. This seems to be what they want too. It is evident how we have been socialized as to what is important in life. It's all we know. We don't want to live an ascetic life. But then we want to keep this from defining education? Can it work both ways? (Research Journal, May 21, 2007)

The aforementioned examples illustrate some of the tensions that exist within my work and my inability to escape the confines of my interpretive lenses. At once I both critique practices that place students and programs as subordinates in relationships of power and in some ways I recreate those imbalances. I mention in my journal:

I don't necessarily believe that we as teachers are innocent either. I know I am guilty of othering students, particularly when my intentions are to help. Sometimes we think we know best. In fact, could I consider that a motivation of this project? I know best, that's why I can be critical of the state and government agencies that I see encroaching upon my work? (Research Journal, May 10, 2007)

It is very difficult as an educational researcher to divorce myself from the rhetoric of progress that undergirds my liberal-humanist tendencies. I discussed this tension in the Preface to this paper, noting how I struggle to reconcile my professional efforts with my own experiences as a student. While I want to question my emancipatory intentions, I

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still have desires to help students in the ways that others have helped me throughout the educational journey. Such desires ground my hopes that this project will make a significant contribution to the field, which I also spent some time thinking about without firm resolution. I noted:

> What worries me is that this is so much bigger than the educational arena. While I am working to resist a discourse of economy as it operates on and through basic writing, I must recognize that it is a player in a much larger arena. These same types of values govern many interactions and institutions in the society at large. So even disrupting the discourses in educational sites may be inconsequential. More importantly, where does it leave the students? It's hard when we can't see past the logical consequences of our own thinking. (Research Journal, May 21, 2007)

This study has lead me to see the many ways in which we may get caught up in thinking in terms of the systems that are in place within developmental education, perhaps because it is difficult to envision different ways to know about our work without getting stuck in a reproductive cycle. This is especially poignant when I think about how we handle standardized testing. I wrote:

> Every day at work I hear comments like this—that the only way we can maintain standards and assist students is to continue to test them. Several of us also discuss at length the ways in which we might help them achieve greater scores by teaching them test-taking strategies and giving them practice exams—letting them in on the secrets to success. While some locate student weakness in their actual writing ability, others refuse to succumb to deficit thinking, pointing to test taking ability. What is evident is that we have been conditioned to think and to argue solely in terms of the test. We rarely question its value publicly—perhaps

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because we know we'd be accused of setting students up for failure—and as such, our possibilities for future action are always already limited. (Research Journal, May 17, 2007)

Even as this project concludes, I find myself asking how I might open spaces for additional research and extend the work of the field. I also continue to reflect on my personal experiences within the academy and question how they have affected my scholarship. As I was writing about the ways in which the discourses of failure, economy, and science position students within the academy, I asked in my journal:

So what does this say about me? As one who was a first-generation, nontraditional student who was successful, I guess I was assimilated. It was a seamless process, one that went nearly unrecognized at the time, but it was also a positive, pride-inducing experience. The influence to conform to established norms is quite attractive. (Research Journal, June 21, 2007)

What I have learned during this process is that there are so many levels of power at play when one conducts a research study. While I still feel that projects like this are important, I recognize that in many ways my work has been invested by the same technologies that position basic writing and writers as the other within the academy. Yet, it is my hope that by recording and sharing the thoughts in my journal that I have effectively "confronted my own evasions and raised doubts about any illusions of closure" (Lather, 1991, p. 84) and also that this manner of actively questioning preconceived assumptions and biases during our processes of analysis might come to be viewed as a integral component of research design within the field of basic writing.

NOTEWORTHY CONTRIBUTIONS

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize what I consider to be the significance of this work for the field of basic writing. While the project was modeled on the

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scholarship of Horner (1999), Fox (1999) and Bartholomae (1993), who focused on enumerating the powerful discourses that bound the practice of developmental education and the characteristics of the students it serves, it also extended their methods through the employment of the genealogical lens. While Horner examined the historicized texts surrounding the advent of Open Admissions at CUNY, Fox the coemergence of access and standards in the university, and Bartholomae the means by which basic writing, its assessments, and curricula have become fixtures within academic institutions, this research examined past and present texts simultaneously. I not only traced the recurrent statements, contingent acts, and political interests that direct the execution of developmental education in the state, but I also entertained localized narratives and dissenting opinions in an effort to question the authority of the larger discourse. I believe this is the first study to both pinpoint the discursive practices operating across the narratives of the discipline as employed in Texas as well as question how the discourses intersect with the stories of current practitioners.

I also believe this work is significant because although there have been a plethora of conversations regarding the history, function, and future of basic writing both locally and nationally (Arendale, 1998; Blue Ribbon Commission, 2006; Boylan, 1995; Damashek, 1999), few of these dialogues reflect on how power has been transmitted through recurrent statements about developmental education or how discursive practices limit the understandings of our field. Instead, certain truth claims are taken as givens without serious consideration of the constructive forces that shape disciplinary knowledge. It is my hope that this work can be a model for future inquiry, one which provides new options for describing where we have been and where we would like to go.

Basic writing has attracted intense public scrutiny, manifesting in public, legislative, and institutional debates over whether or not such classes and services should

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exist at the postsecondary level. There are moves afoot across the country to remove developmental education from four-year universities or eliminate services from higher education altogether, because many believe that students in basic classes do not belong in college. These ideas have deep roots in a discourse of failure, the enumeration of which I believe to be a unique contribution of this study. While scholars including Astin (1998), Casazza (1999), Arendale (2005), Gray-Rosendale (2006), and Salinas and Reidel (2007) have interrogated how economic and scientific discourses operate in educational environments, I was unable to locate articles that trace the emergence of a discourse of failure and the ways in which it facilitates the transference of power within the field. Similarly, I have discussed how the three discourses operate in concert to produce specific utilizable effects. The sustained examination of the symbiotic relationship of the discursive technologies represents an original contribution that lends insight to how certain truths claims about basic writing and writers circulate within and beyond the academy.

Finally, I noted in my discussion of the discourse of failure that although several of the analyzed texts claim that they participated in conversations with educators, their voices are mysteriously silence across the documents. This project attempts to give voice to professionals within the field regarding the state of affairs of basic writing in Texas. By privileging the instructors' stories, a distinct picture of developmental education emerges. The faculty interviews provide a sharp contrast to the traditional histories and popular accounts, yet they provide only a snapshot of the rhetoric and power relations at play within the discipline. I believe this study indicates that there is still much work to be done, and it is my hope that this project will serve as an exemplar for future inquiry.

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APPENDIX A: ANALYZED DOCUMENTS

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APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your work/role at BCC.

2. Tell me about your academic and professional background, how you've arrived here.

3. Why do you choose to teach developmental English?

4. What do you see as the role of developmental education?

5. Do you view developmental English/Basic Writing as an academic field/discipline? What is its relationship to composition, communication, and other developmental studies areas, such as developmental math?

6. Tell me about the structure of developmental education at BCC as an institution—placement, assessment, policies and procedures.

7. What is your evaluation of BCC's placement and assessment strategies?

8. Tell me about your expectations of developmental education before you began this work—have these expectations been upheld?

9. How have your ideas about the developmental English evolved since you started at BCC?

10. What role do state govt./THECB mandates play in your work?

11. Do you feel particular institutional or state requirements enhance or limit your ability to do your work? Discuss.

12. What do you see as the future of Developmental English in Texas and nationally?

13. Tell me about your students.

14. Tell me about a typical day in your classroom.

15. Do you feel BCC employs/encourages Developmental Education best practices? How?

16. What are the strengths of BCC's Developmental programs?

17. Talk about any professional development experiences you've had or organizations you belong to that directly influence your teaching of developmental English.

18. TASP vs. TSI—what changes have you seen?

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