

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Together, the articles collected in this issue investigate a wide range of literate identities: of incarcerated people, of homeschooled students, of first-generation college students, of community activists, and of students partnering across national borders between the US, Middle East, and North Africa. While the approaches and arguments vary, the authors consistently trouble our received conceptions of literate identities, their rhetorical functions, and their consequences. The realities of lived experience here complicate our most sophisticated models. Our authors are situated in contexts for literacy that acknowledge what Antonio Bryd describes as the “ideolog[y] of literacy education” and practice, yet in each case, they or their participants are in some way flipping the script.

In “Making Citizens Behind Bars (And the Stories We Tell About It): Queering Approaches to Prison Literacy Programs,” Alexandra Cavallaro extends recent research on literacy education and citizenship by considering how images of the “good citizen” circulate in the context of prison education. Cavallaro contends that “While programs frequently invoke the language of citizenship in describing their goals, they do so without considering the particular challenges incarcerated people face in actually achieving this vision of citizenship--or indeed, if such a vision is ever possible (or desirable) for someone who has been incarcerated.” Cavallaro’s article draws from research in New Literacy Studies, queer studies, and critical prison studies to provide a framework educators can use to both question and revise such constructions of citizenship in prison education.

Following Cavallaro, Chase Bollig’s “People Like Us’: Theorizing First-Generation College as a Marker of Difference” makes an important intervention into how composition scholars have thought about class as an index for difference in university settings. In this fascinating article, Bollig invites us to “theorize” first-generation college as an “identifier” by unpacking the ways students have and have not found this identity category to be productively helping them name and describe their experiences as “literate subjects” at university. Bollig’s research, which draws on seventeen semi-structured interviews of alumni who graduated between the late 1960s and 2010s, provides insight into how students understand the “literate positionalities [such as first-generation college] that shape their encounters with campus representatives and peers.”

Like Bollig, Alicia A. McCartney also explores a particular group’s literacy experiences: formerly homeschooled students who have now entered college. “Child Prodigies Exploring the World: How Homeschooled Students Narrate their Literacy in the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives” illuminates how most of the sampled homeschoolers “reveal their family network as a place of vibrant literary sponsorship” while nonetheless sometimes confronting challenges that “may occur when they transition from this warm family environment into traditional secondary schools.” Considering themes of authority, family dynamics, and larger cultural narratives (e.g. “child prodigies”), McCartney explores how homeschoolers often position their education in response to “traditional” schooling environments, often seeming compelled to defend their literacy practices and acquisition processes through rhetorical strategies such as those M.M. Bakhtin named as “active, double-voiced discourse.”

In “Resisting and Rewriting English-Only Policies: Navigating Multilingual, Raciolinguistic,

and Translingual Approaches to Language Advocacy,” Katherine S. Flowers offers valuable insight into the tactics politicians and community activists have used to contest monolingual language policies and legislation. Flowers carefully traces the arguments—and the approaches toward literacy informing these arguments—opponents made to successfully repeal an English-only ordinance the county originally passed in 2012. The repeal campaign, according to Flowers, drew from “multilingual, raciolinguistic, and translingual orientations to language” by mobilizing arguments “flipping the economics script, linking language to race, and questioning the nature of English.” Flowers concludes by examining the value of meshing these lines of argument and considering how ethnographic analysis into communities’ responses to monolingualism “can provide writing studies with novel models of what it means to resist and rewrite English-only policies.”

Steve Parks and Ahmed Abdelhakim Hachlaf share their work developing the Twiza Project, a collaborative effort among universities and NGO education programs in the US, Libya, Morocco, Kurdistan, and other Middle Eastern and North African countries to sponsor online dialogue on civic and human rights and provide training in community organizing. “Of Rights Without Guarantees: Friction at the Borders of Nations, Digital Spaces, and Classrooms” discusses how the original vision of the program, and its assumptions about how digital technologies can facilitate transnational communication, changed as a result of the dialogue between their classes and what it revealed about “how the *reality* of differing political contexts provided an alternative sense of what a transnational dialogue might produce among students.”

This issue concludes with Antonio Byrd’s review of Annette Vee’s *Coding Literacy: How Computer Programming Is Changing Writing*. Calling the book “essential reading for its breadth of historical and theoretical application to computer programming that updates our notions of writing for a swiftly changing technological landscape,” Byrd shows how Vee’s work can inform future research into the sociocultural and material conditions of computer programming. Byrd further argues that *Coding Literacy* shows the “potential to bring together computer science education’s own ongoing research on teaching diverse students...with Writing Studies’ interests in the ideologies of literacy education and the material consequences those ideologies create.”

This is an issue that captures change--the way in which the lived realities, political contexts, and material consequences of literacy demand that we approach our theories and practices as amateurs ready to relearn what we think we know. We hope you learn as much from this issue as we did.

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