Against Autonomous Literacies: Extending the Work of Brian V. Street: Introduction to the Special Issue

The origin of this special issue can be traced to a panel at the 2018 Watson Conference, "Future Street Matters: Continuing the Legacy of Brian Street." The panel acknowledged Brian V. Street's passing in 2017 and affirmed his contributions to composition and writing studies. Yet the conversation did not consist mainly of glances backward. Rather, it proceeded by continuing and extending inquiries legible within the scholarly framework to which Street contributed. This extension occurred in multiple ways. For instance, although Street is not known for archival research, Jaclyn Hilberg connected archival research in literacy studies to Street's scholarship. Likewise, although Street is not known for commenting extensively on sentence craft, John Trimbur took up the topic in "Autonomous/Ideological Models of Literacy and the Politics of Style." And, finally, Bruce Horner worked from Street into scholarship more squarely focused on epistemology with "Knowledge as Social Practice." In the wake of the conversation that filled the room and overran the available time, the idea for a special issue of *Literacy in Composition Studies* devoted to Street reached the editors, who have gathered this work for you here.

This special issue is not the only publication inspired by scholars gathering to look back and extend Street's scholarship. David Bloome, Maria Lucia Castanheira, Constant Leung, and Jennifer Rowsell's 2018 edited collection, *Re-Theorizing Literacy Practices: Complex Social and Cultural Contexts,* places its origins in a two-day event held in November 2016 in which diverse multigenerational scholars from across disciplines gathered to honor Street (video recordings of these presentations can be found online[1]). For the collection, contributors returned to "push beyond [Street's work], to engage in what we eventually came to call re-theorizing of literacy practices" (Street et al. 237). In his published yet unfinished reflection on the *festschrift* seminar presentations, Street observed much expansion: expansion on what counts as literacy and expansion of various fields linking to issues and concerns related to literacy. But he also noted an ongoing need to turn research and theory into education practice and policy. Making our research legible to education policymakers, Street argues, is the next necessary step if the field is to shift conceptions of literacy away from "a narrow set of skills, to be tested by formal models" (Street et al. 239). In short, there is much more work to be done to realize the humane and just promise of the conception of literate practice to which Street made a pivotal contribution—one that, as we explore further below, is firmly rooted in the social and always already shot through with power dynamics.

The editors of this special issue come to our interest in Street's work from different avenues, but as our title suggests, like Street, we find autonomous models of literacy to be dangerously pervasive. Though they have been directly challenged in the decades that followed Street's elaboration of them in the 1980s, autonomous conceptions of literacy maintain an insidious hold on educators and policymakers across fields, including our own. They afford the powerful a pretext for affirming dominant cultural understandings of literate practices while subordinating others. Institutionalized, autonomous models uphold oppressive systems by legitimizing occlusion of access to disciplinary

spaces for people with diverse life experiences. They are in these ways inimical to our recognition of the many ways of knowing that support human flourishing. We believe it is imperative for research, practice, and policy in composition, literacy, and writing studies to combat autonomous views of writing.

The contributors to this special issue address both the complexity of turning research and theory into intentional practice and the ways that dominant-cultural valuations tend to remain invisible; writing against autonomous literacies tends to mean writing against White epistemologies and languaging. The writers in this issue address literacy as social practices and ideologies of literacy across multiple contexts and moments, employing a rich diversity of qualitative research methods to engage multiple communities. While the contributing authors in this issue take up the frames Street helped to make central to our shared work, they also find collective power in making connections with contemporaries across fields. Likewise, this introduction honors Street's unique contributions while recognizing this issue's range of voices that call for socially situated practices and research that challenge the powerful's control of literacy.

Why Street for Literacy Studies Today?

In her symposium piece in this issue, "Re/Engaging Street to Address Multiplicity in Composition Classrooms," Vivette Milson-Whyte affirms the observation by one of her study participants that "Street's work, especially regarding literacy as social practice, was picked up by scholar-researchers in the Caribbean in the 20th century to the point that his ideas were 'flattened'—became axiomatic." Her participant, a retired professor of literacy studies/language education responded in a survey: "I think the view of literacy as social practice is almost axiomatic now. I first encountered Street in the early 80s so anything I've written takes that orientation for granted." If a social practice view of literacy is 'in the water,' so to speak, why continue to refocus attention on this particular set of its roots? We know, as Bloome et al. point out, (citing Delgado-Gaitan; Delpit; Smitherman; Richardson; Royster; Stockman and Vaughn-Cooke; Trueba; and Woodson) that "studies by scholars of color on the spoken and written language, culture, education, and social and political marginalization of minoritized ethnic groups also played a critical role in the shift to a view of literacy as social" (4). So, why devote these pages to acknowledging Street?

In part, because we recognize that it has been useful for many scholars interested in literacy to read, recall, and cite Brian Street. It might in fact be challenging for us to discuss literacy studies without mentioning Street, particularly because literacy studies has provided a conceptual resource and field of inquiry for composition and writing studies. In fact, scholars in composition or writing studies commonly note that Street contributed much to the shared conception of literacy as a social practice made available through New Literacy Studies (Brandt and Clinton; Gee, Hull and Schultz; Pahl and Rowsell; Prinsloo and Breier; Vee; Vieira; etc.). As readers of *Literacy in Composition Studies* may recall, several of the contributors to this journal's inaugural symposium drew upon Street (Horner; Young; Vieira; Flannery), who himself was a respondent.[2]

The endurance of Street in our fields may also be due to the fact that his body of work continues

to be relevant to our aims. In decades of accelerating globalization and increasingly global Englishes, Street was an early source for the contention that language and literacy practices could never offer a neutral medium for communication, a contribution recognized in writing studies, composition, and English (Alexander; Canagarajah; Newell, Bloome, Kim, and Goff; Shapiro; Symons and Ponzio), as well as proximate fields like education (see, for example, Brooks and Alvarado; Yoon and Templeton). As a scholar who cited William Labov's recognition of Black American English and Shirley Brice Heath's early conception of the "literacy events" as reflecting "*larger sociocultural patterns*" (qtd. in *Literacy in Theory and Practice* 125), Street rejected the supposed divide between orality and writing, recognizing both its methodological distortions and its amenability to oppressive logics (24-30). As an ethnographer of writing, he revealed the constructedness of the printed text's supposedly intrinsic capacity to serve as the vehicle for a preferred Western rationality. Upon this basis, Street opposed dominant Western culture's leveraging of literacy as a tool of oppression both at home and abroad.

Our intention in the sections that follow is not a thorough or systematic overview of Street's work. Rather, we touch upon some of the most essential aspects of his early scholarship, those to which writers gathered in this issue refer, and to which Street himself frequently returned throughout his career ("At Last" 417; "Literacy Inequalities" 581; Street et al. "Changes and Challenges" 17). To better engage the emergence of Street's project, we also lift up some elements that are discussed less often, including contemporary scholars with whom he was in conversation. This recovery strikes us as important at a time when decolonial methods and antiracist practices have come to play a crucial role in our conversations, writing, and research.

Street's Transformative Critique: Autonomous And Ideological Models

As the work gathered in this special issue attests, Street's theorization of an autonomous model of literacy remains salient within the conceptual landscape of literacy studies. And there is no way to reference the autonomous "school" without affirming the force of Street's transformational critique of the study of literacy as he found it in the 1970s and 80s. In both of his first two projects, his dissertation (now published) and his first book, *The Savage in Literature* and *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, respectively, Street took issue with anthropological writings that advanced ethnocentricity in the guise of authority.

And he was in good company. Many of his contemporaries at the intersections of cultural linguistics (Heath; Scollon and Scollon), sociocultural anthropology (Wertsch), cultural psychology (Scribner and Cole; Rogoff; Minick), and other fields were undertaking situated empirical studies of literate and communicative practices with similar aims. As James Gee attests, scholars who contributed to the rise of New Literacy Studies "not only came from different disciplines" but wrote "in different theoretical languages that never became unified. Nonetheless, such work seemed to be converging on a shared view about literacy" (Gee, "The New Literacy Studies"). Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole's psychological research, for example, advanced the "practice account of literacy" and questioned ethnocentric testing regimes (qtd. in Street *Literacy* 103). Street's work should be viewed

within a broader "social turn" toward sociocultural rather than cognitive conceptions of expressive and interpretive activity (Gee, *An Introduction*). One focus of the social turn was the critique of "Great Divide" theories that advanced dualistic categories in the study of culture, including oral vs. literate, primitive vs. modern, and scientific vs. mythic (McLuhan; Olson; Ong). As they pertain to literacy, Suresh Canagarajah describes "Great Divide" theories as an "apotheosis" of the tendency to value inscribed text over spoken language, regarding text as a "static, detached product, holding transparent meanings for those who could focus on its autonomous and tightly structured status" (7).

The Great Divide, though, had been questioned well before Street published *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, even by Jack Goody and Ian Watt, against whom Street wrote at length (Goody and Watt 320; Street *Literacy* 44-65). Street's task was to point out how the Great Divide's dichotomous valuations and oppressive hierarchies became refashioned and recirculated under the aegis of certain descriptions of literacy--particularly those making the development of alphabetic writing a central explanation of cultural difference, as in Goody's version, or the capacity for objectivity, as in the work of Angela Hildyard and David Olson (Street *Literacy* 74; Vieira 26). Rather than simply mapping human capacities such as rationality, imagination, or empathetic powers onto race, ethnicity, class, or culture, the work of most concern to Street purported to be tracking, instead, the historically contingent development and distribution of alphabetic literacy as a technology. The benefits ascribed to institutional initiatives like literacy programs were in this way imagined as value-free and of universal application. Upon this basis Western elites could advance the autonomous model overseas via testing regimes in which "what was taken as proof of a lack of logical processes among 'primitive' peoples was often simply misunderstanding by ill-informed European commentators . . . " (Street *Literacy* 24). Whereas other work in the social turn questioned Great Divide thinking, it was Street who consolidated these critical efforts in the autonomous model of literacy.

Street's counter-proposal, the *ideological model* of literacy, considers meaning-making practices within social and cultural contexts to invite scrutiny of precisely those social investments an autonomous, technical view of literacy might obscure. Street would later clarify that, for him, "ideology is the site of tension between authority and power on the one hand and resistance and creativity on the other . . . " (434). In this way, Street refused to grant reading and writing a technological function manifesting attributes outside of situated social practice. The ideological model opens acts of reading, writing, and communication, however they might be imagined as instrumental processes, to social and cultural critique. Perpetuating a reductive opposition between context and technical effects, Street would later clarify, was a position held by some of the thinkers he aggregated within the autonomous model. As Street explained in his 2001 contribution to *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*:

> It is those who employed an 'autonomous' model, and who have generally dominated the field of literacy studies until recently, who were responsible for a false polarity between the 'technical' and 'cultural' aspects of literacy. The ideological model, on the other hand, does not attempt to deny technical skill or the cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but rather understands them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures

of power. In that sense the 'ideological' model subsumes rather than excludes the work undertaken within the 'autonomous model.' (435)

An ideological reading of an autonomous figuration of literacy reveals the agents that might be repressed by a fetishistic focus on text alone. As Bruce Horner wrote in the first issue of *LiCS*, the work of autonomous literacy offers it as a "neutral phenomenon" that the powerful can offer as "a gift to the unfortunate, who can thence be blamed for failing to make appropriate, grateful use of it to improve themselves" (2). Street's intervention was therefore as relevant at home as it was abroad.

Against the fetishistic treatment of text, the authors gathered in this special issue often return to and re-purpose the theoretical distinction between autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Sibylle Gruber and Nancy Barrón, in "Misguided Expectations: The Ideological Framework of the Autonomous Model," locate the autonomous model in classrooms across nations. Recounting their own encounters with the autonomous model of literacy in their undergraduate and graduate careers across transnational borders, Gruber and Barrón argue for naming and disrupting the hegemony present in academic literacies and suggest expanding literacy to include the richly diverse yet contradictory ideologies of literacy that translingual and transliterate students bring to the classroom. Anne Marie Liebel, in "What Counts as Literacy in Health Literacy: Applying the Autonomous and Ideological Models of Literacy," demonstrates the purchase of Street's critique of autonomy within healthcare, a space that has not always been associated with literacy research. In work that has attained even more immediate importance since it was entrusted to us, Liebel draws upon a social practices view of literacy to identify and critique the persistence of autonomous conceptions within health literacy research. She outlines an alternative research agenda leveraging an ethnographic approach appropriate for engaging the multidisciplinary care teams that work with patients in today's medical settings. Departing from information-based models, Liebel argues for an understanding of health literacies as multiple, multimodal, and complexly situated among locations understood as both medical and non-medical spaces. Consistent with the passage from Street quoted above, Liebel's work refuses to allow the instrumental stakes of medical care to warrant a hierarchical, autonomous view of health literacies. Even as an ideological approach provides an apt framework for her inquiry, it also encompasses Gruber and Barrón's interventions as Austrian- and Latina-identifying scholars in the cultural and linguistic marginalization effected by US academic discourses. In these ways, the pieces included here engage and extend Street's transformative critique of autonomous models.

Against Technological Determinism

Prescient for those of us making use of technologies unavailable in the first decades of Street's career is the manner in which the critique of autonomy enfolds questions of technological determinism. In taking up the mystifying effects that can follow from the framing of literacy as a technology, it is useful not only to recall Street, but to problematize *how* we recall him. In the spirit of questioning citational practices, already noted above, it is worth reconsidering what and who we lift up when we discuss canonical authors like Street (Delgado; Ahmed *Living a Feminist Life;* "Feminist Shelters"). In Street's case, it may be easy to recount an origin story in which Street single-handedly

consolidates a field from the critical wreckage of the autonomous model. As transformative as his critical work has proven, attention to it can overlook how, even just in *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Street's critique of autonomy was presented in close dialogue with compelling work by other writers of the day.

Infrequently discussed is the way in which Street elaborated autonomy's implications in robust dialogue with writing by anthropologist Ruth Finnegan. Street was not the only scholar questioning the tenability of a 'great divide' between oral and literate cultures, nor was he the first to critique Goody in print, and in these endeavors, we can recover a sense of Street extending Finnegan's prior efforts. At the outset of Street's chapter in *Literacy in Theory and Practice* directly addressing problems in the work of John Goody, Street cites Finnegan's questioning of the easy relegation of societies into "the supposed mutually exclusive 'pure' types' of oral or else literate culture" (qtd. in Street 46). Street credits Finnegan with an "explicit programme for future research" that abandons the "concept of a 'great divide' . . . in favour of detailed study of the specific characteristics or consequences likely to be associated with orality and literacy'" (qtd in Street 95). Street presents Finnegan as challenging Goody's view of literacy as the *causal* explanation of difference among cultures. She points the way to problems of how those differences were being conceived and notes, from an anthropological perspective, the paucity of evidence supporting the attributes derived, supposedly, from those differences. Her contention is not only that the opposition itself is faulty, but also that conceiving literacy *as* a technology can obscure its presence as one element among many at play within the social, political, and ideological complexity of culture. Street sees her proposals as "an important corrective to the universalistic and technological determinism arguments of the 'autonomous model'," and acknowledges his hope to develop further work in this direction (95). We note Street's engagement with Finnegan to highlight ways in which Street, in perhaps his most taught text, presents himself as extending the efforts of other scholars, whose contributions (and indeed, in Finnegan's case, long career) might disappear in our discussions of the rise of literacy studies as a field. This can happen even in conversations questioning the citational politics of returning to Street at all.

Technological determinism would retain its importance within Street's view of autonomous literacy when he extended the discussion to digital technology:

> All of these features of the autonomous model were rooted in assumptions about technological determinism that the ideological model and new social practice approaches to literacy have challenged and discredited. And yet, we now find the same array of distorting lenses being put on as we ask, what are the consequences of the present generation of new technologies, those associated in particular with the Internet and with digital forms of communication? . . . [I]t would be misleading and unhelpful to read from the technology into the effects without first positing the social mediating factors that give meaning to such technologies. How, then, can we take sufficient account of the technological dimension of new literacies without sliding into such determinism? ("New Literacies, New Times" 7)

This position is both echoed and crucially particularized in today's explicitly antiracist scholarship on digital technology (Noble). Ruha Benjamin notes, for example, "The view that 'technology is a neutral tool' ignores how race also functions like a tool, structuring whose literal voice gets embodied

in AI" (29). Digital and/or non-alphabetic manifestations of expressive and epistemic practices are hardly free from the slippages toward technicist instrumentality that tend to characterize the autonomous model; the challenge of reading for the values invested in technology, familiar in print-based conceptions of autonomous literacy, continues. As Horner challenges readers of *LiCS* to recognize, the historical development of autonomy in relation to print literacy may in fact invite the temptation to fetishize particular technologies or modalities of expression enabled by digital technology as somehow inherently liberatory—a re-invocation of the autonomous model (6).

Street's engagement with the question of technology in literacy is consonant with our moments' range of possible writing materials, tools, and surfaces. After citing Clanchy's work on medieval writing practices, "A particular technology of writing shapes and defines the uses of literacy in a region or culture" (qtd *Literacy* 113), Street replies, "I would add simply that the 'technology' is itself shaped and defined within the culture" (*Literacy* 113). The refusal to let technology step outside of cultural valuation is consistent with the ideological critique of an autonomous model of literacy.

This special issue's authors make productive use of current technologies in multiple ways, inviting us to consider how technologies of writing shape and are shaped by our cultures of teaching, learning and research. Taking advantage of the affordances of *LiCS*'s digital platform, two pieces featured in this special issue make available video recordings of their data. Crystal VanKooten and Elizabeth G. Allan's "Searching for Street's 'Mix' of Literacies through Composing Video: Conceptions of Literacy and Moments of Transfer in Basic Writing" presents a study of how collaborative video composition can help undergraduates' conception of writing transfer across media. Interviews and video recordings of participants' production processes reveal how collaborative composing did and did not allow students to develop an ideological view of literacy that can "widen pathways for transfer." This article highlights how even in composing video students can hold to a rigid autonomous view of digital literacies. Andrea Olinger, whose included article is discussed in more detail below, includes video clips of her interview participant, noting that "talk is never the only relevant semiotic channel; visual embodied actions like facial expressions and gestures also convey meaning," an assertion that, though widely agreed upon, continues to be prohibitively difficult to enact in published scholarship, the structures of which still privilege printed text. In their nuanced and varied engagements with the digital, these pieces amplify Finnegan and Street's early rejection of technological determinism and demonstrate the enduring relevance of the social practices approach to both pedagogy and research methods.

From Neo-Coloniality To *The Savage In Literature*

Street's critique of powerful actors' deployment of self-serving constructions of literacy is consistent at points with the commitments of anti-racist and decolonial scholarship. Below, we briefly draw connections between Street's early writing and contemporary decolonial work that seeks to parse the relationships between literacy, writing, and dominant modes of power. We aim to establish foundations linking Street's ideas to the various articles in this special issue that push back against autonomous models of literacy that reify White and Western hegemony. Gabriela Rios, reading in

dialogue with Walter Mignolo, writes that "the spread of Western literacy (as alphabetic writing and European languages) was bound by a missionary, colonial agenda that constructed alphabetic literacy as a sign of 'true' civilization . . . that persists into the present day" (63). An autonomous conception of alphabetic literacy masks such a historical relation; an ideological model surfaces it. Also invoking Mignolo, Malea Powell contended in her 2012 CCCC's address that "Western fixations with print literacy" present an obstacle to be overcome by "critical orientations to knowledge making" (401). In this way, Street's work was meaningfully antecedent to more recent literacy scholarship questioning the alignment of literacy and power.

The later chapters of Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice* offer compelling examples of how Street critiqued the ends to which literacy was directed in the service of achieving its supposedly "functional" aims (188). Sometimes overlooked by anthologizers invested in sharing the most transportable of Street's theories, chapter seven pointedly critiqued UNESCO-supported literacy 'development' projects sponsored by the West in less wealthy countries. Working from premises recovered from Carl and Lars Berggren's 1975 *The Literacy Process: A Practice in Domestication or Liberation?* Street argues:

> [T]he concept 'functional' literacy disguises the relationship of a particular literacy programme to the underlying political and ideological framework. The earlier UNESCO input, for instance, was in fact tied to a particular developmental and economistic ethos. It subserved the interests of foreign investment and multinational companies on the premise that productivity and profits could be raised if 'literacy levels' were raised. (184)

In this scaling upward of the implications of his critique of autonomous literacies, Street found the international work of literacy programs to frequently perpetuate ethnocentric valuations of literacy in the service of Western capital. Street's writing about UNESCO-sponsored programs points out how the presumed "rates of work and allocation of labor" which "the project organisers believed was linked with literacy, turns out on closer examination to have been crudely ethnocentric in its representation of time and work and its inability to recognise indigenous conceptions" (191).

Another version of Street's commitments as a literacy scholar are evident in the published version of his dissertation, *The Savage in Literature: Representations of 'primitive' society in English fiction 1858-1920*. Composed in 1975, *The Savage in Literature* questioned the way in which popular, scientific, and anthropological discourses informed racist literary representation of non-Western, mainly African, peoples. He argued that the cultural history of this odious lineage predated the Western imperialism it could later be used to justify. "Scientific theories of race," he wrote, "provided a framework of thought with regard to primitive peoples which justified the actions of imperialists, but they arose, not out of an imperial situation, but in a pre-imperial world of science" (Street, *The Savage in Literature* 5). Rooted in historical and cultural questions, his work challenged the notion that racism might arise, perforce or "naturally," from cross-cultural contact. Tracking the circulation of crude ethnographic essentialisms which began to appear in "travelers' tales," Street noted how these representations of so-called "primitive" people were upheld by "scientifically backed metaphors," including

> the chain of being and the ladder by which all other cultures were ascribed their place in

the universal hierarchy. A people was given its appropriate rung on the ladder according to race. It was assumed that one's place in the hierarchy was determined by heredity; the ladder represented stages of social evolution with Anglo-Saxon at the top, and reporters looked for criteria by which to determine how far other races had climbed up it. (7)

Such conceits, "with European man at the top and primitive at the bottom" Street observed, were features of a longstanding social construction that was only "strengthened by post-Darwinian anthropology" (10). These principles motivated Street's project, which lifted up "the scientific ideas represented in nineteenth-century popular fiction" for scrutiny in terms of the anthropological discipline as he knew it. Street was keenly aware that such "standards are themselves embedded in the values of a particular society and will themselves be analysed in the same way by future scientists" (17). In light of such reflexivity, Street acknowledged his efforts as a "starting point" for further situated work. Many of us who have completed research and writing projects can recognize in such a stance something of our own labors, our own awareness of the limits of our efforts, and the humility that comes with realizing the truth that, even as we might strive to write in service of whatever idiom of justice guides us, our scholarly efforts to manifest it are likely to appear flawed in the sight of future judgment.

The Savage in Literature resonates with elements of current scholarship that have come to be central to contemporary literacy studies, such as Iris Ruiz's entry on "Race" in *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies: New Latinx Keywords for Theory and Pedagogy*, in which she argues for a decolonial methodology that can "delink the term race from its historical ties to Western hierarchies" (5). To accomplish this work, she proposes a historical critique of Western racism's scientific, religious, and discursive origins. Similarly, *The Savage in Literature* attends to the historical construction of race, arguing that its literary figuration responded to the prior thinking of a public whose ethnocentrism had been cultivated and validated by a confluence of racism in popular, evolutionary, and anthropological discourses. As a scholar of both literature and literacy, Street staunchly opposed ethnocentric valuations advanced in the guise of authoritative objectivity, social-scientific or otherwise. The possibility of transforming a field of inquiry through our scholarship, as did Street, remains a goal worthy of our aspiration.

Even so, and as laudable as his work may have been, his methods do not achieve the reflexivity of decolonial practice, as Wan describes in the first of our four symposium pieces featured in this issue. In "Making Sense of Researcher Positionality in Foundational Literacy Studies Research," she pinpoints how Street's work, despite its gains, also continued a tradition of White and typically male scholars doing fieldwork in indigenous societies that we would do well to continue scrutinizing. Wan, whose CCCC presentation on the same helped shape our approach to this special issue, here helps us consider further the question of "how does one acknowledge 'foundational' without dominance and erasure?" Following from Wan's insights, one of our aims in this special issue has been to link foundational ideas from Street's body of work to related approaches that readers can further lift up when they take up these projects in their own work.

Academic Literacies: Autonomy, Access, And Justice

Street's career included a robust engagement with academic literacy in higher education and K-12 schooling, and projects extending this work bear upon pressing questions of equity in disciplinary access. The turn toward Academic Literacies in Street's writing and collaborations may be read as one way in which he was unwilling to isolate his home contexts in the West, including the institutional spaces in which he taught, from the implications of the critique of autonomous literacies. We attend to Academic Literacies in some detail below because it is a concentration within contemporary writing studies research that, as such, features in several of the essays to follow.

Horner notes in the first issue of *LiCS*, research on academic writing in the United Kingdom "emerged at least in part as a response to teacher-scholars' encounters in higher education with new populations of students with a far greater diversity of language and literacy practices than previously" (3). In their study, Mary Lea and Brian Street identified three modes of academic literacy. First, a persistent narrow view of academic literacy in terms of possession and lack, the contention that regardless of discipline, "literacy is literacy. When they [students] arrive, if they can do it, fine, if not fix them" (Street, Lea, and Lillis 384). Simply "fixing" writing is what Lea and Street call the study skills model, which emphasizes correct grammar and punctuation (Lea and Street 261). Instructors who hold to this model believe that academic literacy is universal across disciplines, and students must adapt to the university ways with words. The second model is academic socialization, which argues students need to be acculturated into a discipline's discourse and ways of thinking; however, this model "tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning" (Lea and Street 261).

Lea and Street see the "*academic literacies*" model, the third model of academic literacy, as the most sophisticated of the three models. Academic literacies is "concerned with meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context (369). This emphasis on the "the relationship of epistemology and writing" pertained "not just in the subject area in general but also more generally, in institutional requirements (e.g., regarding plagiarism, feedback), as well as in more specific contexts such as variation across individual faculty members' requirements and even individual student assignments" (369). In other words, in academic literacies what counts as good writing depends on their cultural, institutional, and disciplinary location. An academic literacies model, when enacted as instruction, helps students learn "the shifts in genre and mode as they move between group work, speaking, note taking, presentation, more formal writing, etc." (Lea and Street 370).

Academic literacies overlaps with the study skills and academic socialization models, but it steers away from concepts of student deficit and homogenous university culture and emphasizes transforming academic discourse for a digitally connected and more diverse world. Students and instructors work to "reveal how genres create knowledge in particular ways . . . to make visible the different ways in which particular genres shape knowledge and, ultimately, offer students more control over them and over meaning making processes. In each instance, genre is made more visible"

(Street, Lea, and Lillis 388). This collaboration isn't just between teacher and student but implicates institutional-level decision making of what counts as literacy. In the last two decades, research on academic literacies has come to span geographies and institutions, as seen in the 2015 *Working With Academic Literacies: Case Studies Towards Transformative Practice.*

Contributors to this special issue take up prior scholarship decrying the way in which higher education insists on a process of assimilation into the dominant culture via learning and the practice of homogenized, supposedly neutral styles of academic writing. For example, Carmen Kynard's assessment of literacy studies, nearly two decades after the rise of New Literacy Studies, still finds that we have not understood "the social context of literacy, language, and discourse . . . from perspectives of interrogating deep political ideologies shifts that have left structured inequalities and violence firmly in place, especially in reference to, but not solely based on, race" (64).

Authors in this issue, then, take on the challenge of exposing how educators and education shape learning in the image of dominant culture, and how they may recognize, intervene in, and transform those processes toward social justice. Bringing Street's social practice perspective to the teaching and learning of argumentation in "Composing Literary Arguments in an 11th Grade International Baccalaureate Classroom: How Classroom Instructional Conversations Shape Modes of Participation," George E. Newell, Theresa Siemer Thanos, and Matt Seymour offer a rich ethnographic framework for the exploration of the construct of learning as participation. Examining how differing modes of participation evolve out of differing opportunities in their case study, they urge researchers to look beyond the selection of pedagogical materials to consider the nature of the instructional conversations in which central teaching materials are used. Andrea Olinger's "Self-Contradiction in Faculty's Talk about Writing: Making and Unmaking Autonomous Models of Literacy" shows how universal notions of "good writing" support White language supremacy and offers the theoretical tools of interpretive repertoires and variability as resources for understanding and combating the autonomous model within individual writers. In "Brian Street and African American Feminist Practices: Two Histories, Two Texts" Faye Spencer Maor re-interprets Francis (Fanny) Jackson Coppin's and Hallie Quinn Brown's philosophies of literacy instructions as Black feminist ideological literacy, one that draws on their experiences and the experiences of the Black community to valorize and respect the languages and literacy practices of Black students in schools. Maor considers what we can learn from Coppin and Brown to transform literacy through a Black feminist lens that promotes inclusive, equitable, and socially just literacy education. This work suggests that rather than assimilating racially marginalized students an inclusive academic literacies accepts students' linguistic practices as valuable and well-suited for knowledge construction and knowledge sharing across disciplines. Pedagogies that resist linguistic racism can create pathways toward consciously revising policies of access to academic literacies.

Concluding Remarks

By problematizing, extending, and re-engaging ideological models of literacy, we hope to, as in our call for proposals, to "[re-conceive] the extant and future relations to be found, imagined, and

composed between *literacy and composition studies*." Street's critical work transformed the field of literacy studies, and the pieces compiled here urge us to reflect on the work that remains to be done, from engaging marginalized communities to taking up matters of policy or direct action. This special issue came together while the United States saw its largest, most broadly supported demonstrations for racial justice ever. We hope that the articles and symposium essays in this special issue provide some generative theoretical and methodological points of departure for readers questioning how literacy upholds power for White dominant cultures, epistemologies, and languaging. The COVID-19 pandemic, too, was a backdrop for this work. At a time when faculty were responding to a worldwide pandemic, taking measures to secure the wellness of their families and shifting their teaching online, the authors whose efforts are gathered here continued to read, write, and revise. We cannot adequately thank our writers and peer reviewers, without whose patience, perseverance, and generosity of spirit we would not have been able to complete this special issue of *LiCS* honoring the work of Brian V. Street.

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NOTES

1. To view the Street Festschrift Seminar Presentations, visit the webpage here: https://cveda.ehe.osu.edu/ideas/street-festchrift-seminar/
2. Brian Street served on the *Literacy in Composition Studies* editorial board from 2013-2017.

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