Identity Papers

Bronwyn T Williams

Published by Utah State University Press
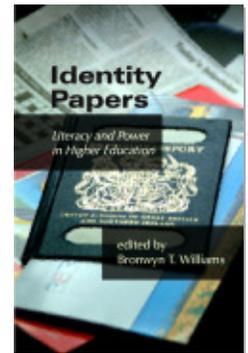
➡ For additional information about this book

11

SOME TROUBLE WITH DISCOURSES
What Conflicts between Subjects and Ethnographers Tell Us about What Students Don't/Won't/Can't Say

Sally Chandler

Embedded within Beth Roy's (1994) ethnography, *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict,* is an exploration of methods for studying how individuals remember and reconstruct contested, emotionally charged events. Roy suggests that close attention to subjects' patterns for remembering and reporting can help ethnographers understand the discourses which individuals, groups, and cultures use to construct the "realities" they report. Roy's work is not unique in using what subjects say and do to theorize culture; what is unusual is that Roy does not focus on discovering what is verifiable or true in her subjects' accounts. Rather, she focuses on what and how they remember. Through analyzing the discourses which produced both the (unverified) accounts and the processes for recollection Roy is able to infer information about the unstated relationships, assumptions, values, and beliefs which drive the conflicts she is studying. This essay uses a version of Roy's method to theorize a conflict central to teaching composition: the often unconscious difficulties students encounter as they struggle to represent themselves in standard academic discourses.

Language researchers tell us that identities are generated through discourse; they also tell us that discourse is political and that when talk places us outside dominant discourses, we are judged as "wrong," "abnormal," or otherwise unacceptable. "Each Discourse protects itself by demanding from its adherents performances which act as though its ways of being, thinking, acting, talking, writing, reading, and valuing are right, natural, obvious, the way good and intelligent and normal people behave" (Gee 1996, 190–91). Taken together, these observations predict the landscape of difficulties encountered by students as they move from home discourses to standard academic discourses. Because writing is implicitly bound to conceptions of self, changing the way one writes generally challenges the self engendered by the discourse marked for "correction" (Smitherman 2000). As a result, even when speakers

of "nontraditional" Englishes consciously contemplate what is gained and what is lost through the use of academic discourses, making the changes necessary to produce "good" writing can engender intense, internal conflicts (DiPardo 2001). These conflicts are highly personal and generally remain embedded in individual psychology and identity development (Herrington and Curtis 2000). At the same time, so long as these conflicts remain covert, they will be poorly understood, and student development as academic writers will be vexed by resistance and failure which may feel baffling both to students and to teachers.

Because psychological processes cannot be directly observed, the details of what, why, and how of students negotiate discourse change must be inferred. One approach to making accurate inferences about student processes would be to assume that individuals faced with structurally similar conflicts will respond in ways similar to students negotiating discourse change. If researchers select observable, interpersonal interactions with strong, rich parallels to the representational difficulties faced by students, the analysis of these overt processes could suggest—by analogy—patterns for students' internal, inarticulate processes.

In this essay I analyze conflicts associated with student moves from marginalized, home discourses to standard academic discourses through an analogy to patterns through which ethnographic subjects resist, evade, and appropriate the discourses ethnographers use to represent them. Specifically, I draw from work by Richard Handler (1993), Dona Davies (1993), and myself (2001) to provide a detailed account of how subjects challenge, revise, and evade representations set forward by ethnographers. Using methods suggested by Roy, I then develop an analysis of student reactions to being "taught" standard academic discourses. I conclude by considering how further study of ethnographic work, including reflective and methodological studies, might suggest possibilities for valuing and supporting student use of home discourses as they build a relationship to academic writing.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SUBJECTS, STUDENT WRITERS, AND CONFLICTS WITH DOMINANT DISCOURSES

A primary advantage to recasting students' *internal* conflicts in terms of conflicts between ethnographers and subjects is that, what in the case of students remains fused and inarticulate, bifurcates and becomes overt within the interpersonal, complexly articulated conflicts between ethnographers and their subjects. Even richly descriptive case studies of student confrontations with academic discourse rarely provide the details

of students' internal processes. For example, Anne DiPardo (2001) offers the following description of reflections by Fannie, a student writer whose first language and culture is Navajo.

> Fannie pointed to the high drop-out rate among young Navajos as the primary reason for her people's poverty, and spoke often of the need to encourage students to finish high school and go on to college. And yet, worried as she was about the growing loss of native language and traditions, Fannie also expressed concerns about the Anglicizing effects of schooling. Education is essential, she explained, but young Navajos must also understand its dangers.
>
> "I mean like, sometimes if you get really educated, we don't really want that. Because then, it like ruins your mind and you use it, to like betray your people, too. . . . That's what's happening a lot now." (354)

DiPardo presents Fannie's misgivings from two separate perspectives, but even this rich description provides a limited window on the assumptions, strategies, and values which drive Fannie's conflict. In contrast, the conflicts between ethnographers and their subjects described in this essay are interpersonal, observable, extended, and—as in the case of Richard Handler's conflicts with the Quebecois nationalists he studies—articulated in writing.

Perhaps more important, the structure and nature of negotiations between subjects' resistance to ethnographers have strong parallels to student conflicts with the wish to remain aligned with home discourses and the conflicting wish to master academic writing. The positions of ethnographic subjects and students are parallel in that the power to analyze or evaluate the validity or worth of a discourse falls almost exclusively to the dominant discourse, and assessments of the authority or truth of a discourse is almost always constituted through the application of its own logic, values, and assumptions (Lemke 1995). Because of this, efforts by both ethnographic subjects and students to argue the truth of home discourses generally meet with either incomprehension or refutation.

Though these two conditions present compelling similarities, the two negotiations differ in that while ethnographic subjects may draw support from their home community when taking ethnographers to task, student writers are enlisted as the authors of their own (mis)representation. That is, to the extent to which they "want" to learn academic discourse, they "betray" their home discourse by (implicitly) joining in the academy's devaluing and rejection of the truths and values their home discourses

engender. Discussion in the final section of this essay returns to this difference; the following sections use descriptions from three different case studies to develop parallel analyses of conflicts faced by ethnographic subjects and students.

FIELDWORK IN QUEBEC: SOME TROUBLES WITH DISCOURSES

In *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, Handler (1988) deconstructs the "reality" of Quebecois nationalist cultural identities, ideologies, and practices by arguing that culture is not bounded and cannot be characterized by a fixed set of isolated features. He asserts that Quebecois nationalism, like all nationalistic ideologies, is in fact unbounded, multiple, and complex in form and expression. He points out that folk dances and other "pure" identifiers of Quebec culture are never separate from the larger cultural frames for performance. He characterizes nationalist rhetoric as embedded in naturalistic or biologistic metaphors which present the nation as a living entity and portray Quebec history in terms of life, death, survival, and pollution. His argument stresses that "such metaphors [are] metaphors, that is, a way of imagining social realities but not neutral statements of fact" (69).

Quebecois nationalists did not agree with Handler's analysis and protested his characterizations of their culture in various reviews and articles. In response to what he perceived as an unfair reaction to his book, Handler published an article in a collection of essays on how and why ethnographers and subjects confront and negotiate their different worldviews. In this essay, Handler states that reviews from ". . . French-language Quebec universities were uniformly negative," and he identifies the most striking feature of these reviews as their "uncritical recapitulation of the very ideology that the book deconstructed. . . [Reviewers] neither state [the book's] arguments in recognizable terms nor develop counterarguments . . ." and ". . . these reviews are not constructed as the rational consideration of ideas that is normal for the academic world" (69). Within the series of examples Handler provides, the Quebecois' argument does seem to offer an "uncritical recapitulation" of the ideology he deconstructs. At the same time, Handler's argument is only convincing if readers share Handler's investment in discourses for the "rational consideration of ideas that [are] normal for the academic world." In other words, Handler's critique of the Quebecois nationalist rebuttal of his argument is valid only if we assume the assumptions and values of academic discourse rather than those of the home discourse of Quebecois nationalists. Within the breakdown in communication

between Handler and his subjects both "sides" remain invested in their home discourse, such that neither will (can?) interpret the arguments of the other as valid or reasonable.

For example, Handler offers Nicole Gagnon's (1989) review of his book as an illustration of writing that discredits his arguments without analyzing their errors. Handler writes,

> As Nicole Gagnon puts it, "[Handler's] analysis of nationalist thought is neither a description, nor an explication, nor a deconstruction, nor an interpretation: it is a false translation." Gagnon then quotes several passages from the book and summarily dismisses them without argumentation: "Is there any need to specify that these paralogisms . . . are the author's invention and that one would search in vain to find them in the discourse claimed to illustrate them?" (70)

While Handler dismisses Gagnon's argument because of its use of unexplicated paralogisms, *his* dismissal of these parallels as unexplicated seems to arise from the very "false translation" Gagnon cites as the book's failure. That is, Gagnon's examples (written in French but presented by Handler in English) invoke insider-knowledge which would allow the examples themselves to provide implicit analysis of what Handler has "mistranslated" (Gagnon 1989). Without knowledge of the argument implicit to the example, the reader cannot accurately comprehend Gagnon's point. What is more, because Handler believes it is not possible "to evaluate critically the values that one studies without legitimating one's critique by an appeal to scientific authority" (73) it seems unlikely he would find Gagnon's implicit argument made by analogy as persuasive. Rather, as suggested in his argument against the validity of Quebecois nationalists' self-representations, Handler seems to believe both that "neutral statements of fact" are possible and that such statements constitute a truth "more true" than what might be constituted metaphorically.

Within this particular discussion, ethnographic subjects face a dilemma. If they argue in terms of their home discourse, their arguments will not be valued or even heard. Then again, if they argue in terms of dominant discourse's rhetoric and form, their "truth" might still be denied since it would not concur with dominant discursive assumptions. It is as if, within this particular conflict, dominant discursive argument *forgets* that multiple (conflicting) perspectives containing diverse logics, assumptions, and truth values constitute not just cultural phenomena such as nationalism, but also the paradigms that would analyze and

theorize those same phenomena. That is, it forgets that truth might be represented not only in different forms, but also that it might be conceptualized and theorized through different assumptions and paradigms of analysis.

Though discourse theorists almost unanimously assert that all languages are "equal" (Lemke 1995), in general, arguments to articulate these positions appear in forms replicating the explicit coherence, consistency, and linear logics used by Handler, rather than the indirect, allusive, metaphoric argument set forward by Gagnon. So, it seems that even though academic discourses endorse the validity of different patterns for creating meaning, the fact that scholarship is almost always written in dominant academic discourses gives a somewhat different message. In other words, the validating features of academic arguments—including this one—remain rooted in the standards for consistency, coherence, closure, and linear either/or logic which are used to deconstruct discourses which do not necessarily endorse or even value these standards.

This suggests yet another similarity between the representational conflicts faced by ethnographic subjects and student writers. In both instances, academic discourse perceives itself as able to describe and theorize the discourse of the Other, while at the same time remaining unable to comprehend the Others' descriptions of themselves. This situation reiterates the ongoing contradiction that while the academy ostensibly pledges to respect diverse voices within its community, in practice, standard academic discourses continue to privilege dominant (white, middle-class) discourse (Smitherman 2000).

One final and critically important parallel between the experiences of students and ethnographic subjects can be seen in how the power to author texts perpetuates both representational forms and discursive patterns which sanction those representations (Lemke 1995). By virtue of being the "author," the ethnographer—like the writing instructor—is empowered to select and edit not only the words of subjects, but also the conventions through which those words will be interpreted.

SUBJECTS' NEGOTIATION OF ETHNOGRAPHERS' REPRESENTATIONS

In "No Kinda Sense," Lisa Delpit (2002) describes how the academy's fundamental disdain for discourses other than its own contributes to student experiences speaking and writing in standard academic discourses. Upon observing her daughter, Maya's, seemingly effortless move from academic discourses taught at her former school (and spoken in her

home) to the Ebonics of classmates in her new school, Delpit wonders how her daughter, a middle-class, African American child whose first language is a close relative of academic discourses, was able to acquire a second language in less than a semester while writing teachers struggle for years to teach students to write in standard academic English. She offers her answer in terms of Stephen Krashen's (1982) work on second-language acquisition. According to Delpit, Krashen found that the unconscious, "picking up" of a language in social settings was much more effective than rule-based instruction. He also found that, in some cases, individuals developed what he called affective filters which created effective mental blocks to learning. Delpit reports Krashen as stating that

> . . . the filter operates "when affective conditions are not optimal, when the student is not motivated, does not identify with the speakers of the second language, or is overanxious about his performance. . . ." (40)

In other words, unless learners identify with speakers of a second language (or discourse) and unless they expect that their representations will be heard—an affective filter will present obstacles to learning. This unconscious, affective response is both parallel to ethnographic subjects' response to ethnographers, and central to individual students' struggles with standard academic discourses. The following analyses of my work with an elder women's writing group and Dona Davies' work with residents of Grey Rock Harbour in Cape Breton illustrate the processes through which ethnographic subjects negotiate, resist, and appropriate ethnographers' representations of their lives.

To understand "writing group talk" it is necessary to understand both the context of my study and the ethos of writing groups. My research focused on a group of women who were both professional writers and my friends. I was a member of the group for several years before I asked them to consider being subjects for my dissertation research. They consented both out of a personal commitment to me, and out of a sense that writing about what they did at their group was important. Both these reasons reflect writing group ethos: an abiding commitment to supporting individual group members, and a firm belief in the importance of each participant's writing.

During the two years I collected data, attendance varied, but always a core membership of six women—Pam, Bonnie, Joan, Marty, Amy, and Beth—attended every meeting. Though only two of these participants belonged to the original group from 1975, all women except for me

were over fifty, and several were in their eighties. All participants were either married or widowed, and all had adult children so that talk about family, particularly children, was an expected feature of every meeting.

Talk focused on our work: the conception, revision, and placement of various writing projects. At the same time, all conversation had deep roots in our personal lives, and was governed by the rules of connection, feeling, and indirection characteristic of women's private discourses (Hall and Buckholtz 1995; Tannen 1993). The first hour of every meeting was explicitly devoted to talk about family, personal crisis and triumphs, health, travel, work, and social events, and this talk generally set "themes" for our ensuing talk about writing. While it was impossible to determine whether writing brought for discussion colored the selection and interpretation of anecdotes raised in "pre-meeting" discussions—or the other way around—discussions of writing were always interspersed with personal anecdotes and reflective observations in resonance with the content and focus of introductory talk. Elizabeth Long's (1993) study of book groups notes similar patterns among talk and "work" in book group talk. According to Long, book group talk tends to use talk about books and the interpretation of books to generate "equipment for living" (199). That is, by focusing on plotlines and characters from books, discussants explore personal aspects of their lives and who they are becoming.

Almost all of the women's objections to my representations in the dissertation draft centered on the section on Ernest Gaines's novel, *A Lesson before Dying* (1994). Gaines's book focuses on racism in a rural community in Louisiana in the 1940s. Events are narrated by a school teacher, Grant Wiggins, who has returned to his home town and is torn between a wish to fight against the racism, poverty, and hopelessness of the community where he grew up, and a wish to leave it all behind. Conversations about Gaines' novel contained exactly the kinds of personal narratives and reflective analyses Long describes, and subject material bore a logical and emotional connection to material in surrounding conversations in ways which generated exactly the kind of "equipment for living" observed by Long. Immediately preceding the Gaines discussion, Pam told a story about an older friend with bipolar disorder (115–24). In this story, the friend's self-representation is not "heard" by the doctor until Pam intervenes. Talk surrounding this anecdote included two additional stories where older women were not listened to, including a story about an older woman who had her breast removed in unnecessary surgery. While stories about the mistreatment

of mentally ill and older women are not generally accorded equal standing with stories of oppression connected to race, the women's talk suggests that the discussion of Gaines' novel provided a way for them to reflect on and rethink injustices in their own lives.

Marty introduced *A Lesson before Dying* by recounting the plot and commenting on the story's transformative power. After several somewhat less enthusiastic comments by other participants, Pam said that although—"looking at it simply from the writing style. . . I thought he (Gaines) did a successful job of getting me engaged, and me really being there, but [in the end] I didn't care" because "in the end it's the ubiquitous story of the poor . . . black victim who is being railroaded to death by a white, and the white red-necked sheriff, and I mean you know . . . that kind of bothers me because it's the same story" (121). In conversation that followed the women pointedly discussed how telling "the same story"—a story of racism and resistance where victims resist with dignity but nonetheless are put to death—presents a problem in that transformation is internal and personal, and therefore does not change power structures that perpetrate the injustice. Pam suggested, with some heat, that buying into such stories perpetuates exactly the kind of injustice the victims are portrayed as resisting.

What is noteworthy in this discussion is that these older, white, middle-class women, in the privacy of their writing group, ventured into a domain that dominant cultural discourses designate as outside of their authority. "Good, intelligent, and normal" speakers are not generally permitted to challenge or criticize insiders' stories of resistance with respect to experiences with racial injustice. There are conventions that allow "outsiders" —usually professionals such as social scientists, theologians, or language theorists—to offer alternative interpretations, but acceptable forms of speaking on behalf of a racial group almost always invoke some form of academic discourse for validation.

In this conversation, writing group women not only challenged wider cultural valuing of stories of inner-transformation and martyrdom, they did so in the language of *feeling*. Talk about the book was articulated almost exclusively in terms of personal responses; as Pam put it, the use of this same story "kind of bothers her." She sets up her critique by stating "I felt" and follows with a description of the text and an assessment of how that section of text functioned within the story. This pattern of using felt impressions as a basis for analysis is the women's most common analytic structure. While such talk is in keeping with women's talk in general and the ethos of their writing group in particular, it violates

larger cultural conventions both for what the women are allowed to say *and* how logical arguments are supposed to be formulated.

To my surprise, objections to the representation of this conversation in my dissertation chapter did not dispute the accuracy of what was reported. Rather the women maintained that because this was a private conversation; they had said things they would not have said in quite the same way for a wider audience. They did not want the conversation to be interpreted as "offensive" or to reflect badly on the group. While, at least in my mind, certain remarks might best be interpreted as harsh or unsympathetic, the language the women wanted removed did not strike me as overtly racist. In many ways, the women's concern about how an outsider might understand what was said was a quintessential illustration of the group's ethos. Such a concern reflects writing groups' efforts to ensure comfort both for individual participants and for the group as a whole, and to value feeling in a way that sometimes overrode establishing the "truth."

Although I can characterize what the women wanted removed, I can't give examples because I promised not to attribute the deleted material to them in any way. Fortunately Dona Davies' essay on how her subjects responded to her book, *Blood and Nerves: An Ethnographic Focus on Menopause*, offers many illustrations of exactly the kind of objections raised by my subjects. Davies did her fieldwork in 1977. When Davies returned to the site ten years later she found residents had come to believe she wrote a "bad" book. Similar to me, she found her subjects distressed by not her interpretations or the accuracy of what she reported but by her alleged inclusion of particular words, phrases, and facts. For example, Davies related subject displeasure with a story, that

> . . . described how women had a great deal of power as individuals if their domestic domain was intruded upon. Grey Rock Harbour is a fishing village and in this story, there was a decision by village men to divert village water to a herring boat temporarily moored in the harbor that interfered with the women's after-dinner cleaning. One local woman, fed up with this, took an axe down to the pump and axed the connecting hose and threatened the men. Pointing with her axe to the cement base of the pump, she warned that they would all end up with their asses in cement if they ever tried to reconnect that hose at dinner time. (30–31)

Although when this story was told locally it always included the word "asses" as an important rhetorical element, when the main actor read the account, she was greatly put out and wanted it removed.

Writing group women also wanted me to change or delete particular words or phrases which they felt the larger culture might judge unfavorably. According to Davies, the Grey Rock Harbour women wanted words taken out that might cause them to be interpreted as "crude" or "ignorant" or "backward" (30). The conundrum here is that while conceding to discursive restrictions about the ways "good" women talk, neither group wished to revise *content* transgressing and extending cultural stories about what "good" women do. That is, while the heroine at the pump didn't want to be represented as using the ungenteel word "asses," she did not want to remove the story of her resistance. In the same vein, while writing group women did not want to be represented as talking bluntly or unsympathetically about characters or events in *Lessons before Dying*, they wished to let stand both their "felt" logic and their disesteem for stories conflating martyrdom and heroism.

So, in both cases, these different sets of ethnographic subjects resorted to strategic compliance with dominant discursive norms (regarding polite talk) in order to create stronger, more credible resistance. While this is certainly at least partially true of student negotiation of academic discourses, it does not explain conflicts described by Delpit—where students who learn Ebonics in a few months cannot learn standard academic English in twelve years. Rather, it implies that some part of the negotiation process, both for students and ethnographic subjects, is unconflicted, and the unconflicted part seems to be a wish to represent home discourse values in a way that will be received and valued by dominant discourse.

PATTERNS FOR RESISTING DOMINANT DISCOURSES

At the writing group, the standard practice was to review very long manuscripts by circulating a single copy; each participant offered written comments and within several weeks the manuscript would be returned. Because my dissertation was a very long manuscript, I circulated the draft beginning in September. Because of my teaching schedule, I had to stop attending in October and as a result I did not know that participants engaged in heated discussion of the Gaines chapter throughout fall and winter. I did not figure out that things had gone wrong until I received a call from Pam, in February. She told me that that the group "had problems" and suggested changes which the group had agreed upon. I was later told that the text circulated through about half the group, but then a particular reader held on to it and no one else read it. Because of this, discussion of "what should be changed" took place in a group where less than half the members had read the entire manuscript.

Before Pam's call, no one had spoken or written to me about what needed to be changed or why. During the conversation in February, Pam made clear that all women had "agreed" to the proposed changes, even though it was also true that every woman in the group had "compromised." The women felt strongly that everyone should feel comfortable with what was written about them *and* that I should have permission to use material which would produce a strong dissertation. Changes were negotiated without my input and directed by the values of caring (rather than values of justice) typical of both women's groups and writing groups. In many ways, the list of changes represented a radical "circling of the wagons" through which the women protected themselves from me (the academy's representative). Pam's mediated the final version and I did not speak with the group as a whole about the changes until after the dissertation was turned in. In the end, I was assured the group felt comfortable with the final version.

Contention over *Blood and Nerves* followed similar patterns. Even though Davies sent manuscripts and chapters to residents throughout composing and revising, and despite assurances that "we knew it was to be about menopause, and all you said was true, so who can complain?" many residents were unhappy (30). As with the writing group, discussion of what Davies wrote and why it needed changing was carried out in a group where many of the discussants had not read the manuscript. Also as at the writing group, individuals did not talk directly to Davies, rather, as Davies put it, they talked "behind my back." Rumors included that she had written that men of Grey Rock were good for nothing and the women were crazy. Davies explains this by observing that the year of her return was very bad for the inshore fishery and "most fishermen and all plant workers were living on unemployment." As a result, she suggested that ". . . [m]y book became a kind of mythological 'Rorschach' onto which all their worst contemporary fears about themselves were projected" (32).

These negotiations, along with the exchanges between Handler and his disgruntled subjects, suggest four generalizations about how:

- Subject resistance is generally articulated in home discourses rather than dominant discourses. That is, subject's state objections to "misrepresentations" in terms of the rhetoric, values, and assumptions of home discourses and in that way enact the very "faults" dominant discourses identify as discrediting their arguments.

- Ethnographic subjects are keenly aware that dominant discourses devalue their home discourses and wish to present themselves so as to receive favorable judgments; that is, they have an accurate understanding of dominant discursive values, and are willing to concede to revisions to "surface" features by revising particular words or phrases; at the same time, they do not want to change "deep" features associated with home discourse identities and values.
- When subjects feel pressed, they withdraw from conversation with ethnographers and dig deeper into the values, truths, and forms of home discourse and turn to their home community for support.
- Subjects (and ethnographers) sometimes project concerns about shortcomings, inconsistencies, and other problems within home discourse communities as judgments imposed upon them by some "outside" discourse.

While Delpit's central observation that " . . . [facility] acquiring an additional code comes from identifying with the people who speak it" (2002, 39) remains uncontestable, these four observations offer possibilities for articulating some specifics regarding *how* to help students connect to aspects of academic discourses which they may want to "own."

If parallels between students and ethnographic subjects are valid, the generalizations suggest that even as students enact standardized academic discourses' judgments and demands, they remain clearly identified with home discourse. At the same time, as stated in the introduction, students' position is different in that they have a double investment as participants in both academic and home discourses. This creates a skewed, double positioning where home discourse becomes an "interpreter" of academic discourses such that if student feelings about writing in academic discourses become "high stakes"—and practices for evaluation and grading often seem to guarantee that this will be the case—Krashen's "affective barriers" may well take the form of the tautological miscommunication between Handler and his subjects. That is, to the degree that students feel excluded or devalued, academic discourses will be perceived through and distorted by the particular metaphors, values, and logics of the home discourses.

This distortion complicates the second observation—which suggests that students have a general cultural understanding of the benefits and form of academic discourses, that they know it judges them as lacking,

and that, as evidenced by their presence in the classroom, they are committed to learning it. Reflections by students like Fannie, who want to become educated without betraying their home communities, indicate that while students and ethnographic subjects both struggle to retain home discourse identities, students cannot comfortably position themselves within one discourse or the other. If we think about this difference in light of research into classroom negotiations of identity and difference, we can reinterpret the four generalizations about ethnographic subjects in ways which bear upon how teachers can best work with students to effect the unique, personal negotiations necessary to craft comfortable relationships between home and academic discourses.

RACE IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE, AND DISCOURSES IN THE CLASSROOM

In work on applying race identity theory in the classroom, Beverly Daniel Tatum (1992) observes that issues connected to race, class, and/ or gender often generate "powerful emotional responses in students" and if left unaddressed these responses can result in "student resistance to oppression-related content areas" that ". . . can ultimately interfere with understanding and mastery of the material" (1–2). Requiring students to articulate their ideas and identities in standard academic discourses implicitly injects issues of race, class, and gender into every assignment within the writing classroom. Tatum explains that if "affective and intellectual responses are acknowledged and addressed, [the] level of understanding is greatly enhanced." Educator activist Helen Fox (2001) states that race identity development can help educators place the struggles "both whites and people of color go through" within a predictable frame where the emotions and positions that arise with respect to difference become "in some sense 'normal'" (86).

In general, educators such as Tatum (1992) and Fox (2001) cite work by researchers of race identity development such as Janet Helms (1990) and W. E. Cross (1991) to assert that a positive sense of one's self as a member of one's group is important for psychological health (Phinney 1990). Helms defines race identity as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group"; this identity includes shared belief systems, assumptions, and patterns of communication (9). These systems shape patterns in student writing. According to Helms and Cross, race identity development takes place in a series of stages, each of which can be characterized by particular patterns for defining self with relation to an identity group, as well as patterns for maintaining

psychological comfort within that definition. In all models, individuals' progress from earlier to later stages takes place through recursive movement among intermediate stages.

Because of strong connections between race identity, home discourse, and patterns observed in student writing, much of what race identity researchers point out with respect to student negotiations of interpersonal issues within the classroom can be applied to student negotiations of standard academic discourses. In terms of race identity development, the "circling of the wagons," or forming close, exclusive bonds with one's identity group in order to define and explore self—observed when ethnographic subjects find themselves "misrepresented"—is characteristic of the Immersion/Emersion stage within Black race identity development (Cross 1991) and of the Contact and Reintegration stages in White identity development (Tatum 1992). For people of color, this stage ". . . is characterized by the simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one's racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of Whiteness" (11). For whites, Fox notes that "[s]ometimes whites in this stage feel they have 'tried and failed' to reach out across the racial divide. . . and will need encouragement and help to move beyond [Reintegration]" (91). Both educators emphasize that students need role models to move on to a place where they can embrace a "multicultural, multiracial America" (92).

Integrating this work with the generalizations about ethnographic subjects' relationships to home discourses suggests that understanding race identity theory and knowing where individual students are with respect to identity development will be crucial for instructors to respond appropriately to students' "affective responses" to learning standardized academic discourses. What is more, subject/student distortions of dominant discourses suggest that for effective communication ethnographers/instructors will need to "hear" and respect subject/student perspectives in terms of home—not academic—discourses.

With these general observations in mind, we can formulate specific classroom practices. For example, the observation that effective communication within both Davies' work and my own was generally achieved through a spokesperson from a home community suggests that instructors might work with student writers of nonacademic discourses through combinations of group work and mediated talk. Groups should be composed of individuals with shared home discourses so that spokespersons (who may be in a more "advanced" stage with respect to acceptance of nonhome discourses) can negotiate "corrections" to

student writing both with the instructor, the home discourse group, and student authors. Such a strategy would empower individual student authors through aligning them with a group and by ensuring that their work will be represented by a speaker who understands both the home and academic discourses. Such representation would ensure that "translation" of student ideas and forms could be explained to speakers of both discourses. Such a process could help instructors understand home discourses rather than simply "correcting" them.

FURTHER POSSIBILITIES

Because this essay primarily focuses on developing a theoretical model for student conflicts, it does not even begin to explore pedagogical practices which might derive from further study of ethnographic theory and practice. I have focused on a particular problem within ethnographic study as it applies to a single pedagogical problem. As a result, this essay cannot claim to fully explore all that ethnography might tell us about student struggles to master standard academic discourses. At the same time, compositionists who explore theoretical ethnographic works or even particular ethnographies will find rich, useful overlap between ethnographic study and the complexities of teaching writing.

For example, both Michel de Certeau's classic *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and Kathleen Stewart's *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (1996) describe how subjects live within both home and dominant discourses. These works shed light both on what students already do with their writing and on what they might be encouraged to do more of as they negotiate their double commitment to academic and home discourses. Certeau's discussion of the routine subversions of dominant cultural forms within everyday life suggests multiple models for students to own home identities within standard academic discourses; and Stewart's appropriation of the liars' tale, a form for exchanging information and signaling group membership, is a specific example of how home discourse can retain its identity and power within academic writing. Embedded within these and other ethnographic works are strategies which, to paraphrase Fannie, students can use to become educated without betraying their home communities. Creative reflection on issues common to ethnographic and composition research can invigorate both disciplines.