



# The Development and Evolution of High-Risk Writing Instruction

THE 1960S FOUND U.S. mainstream colleges and universities presiding over an overwhelmingly white student body. Studies from the time period reveal that mainstream four-year institutions had an African American population of roughly 2 percent (Egerton, *State Universities* 6) and a combined population of “other” races and ethnicities (i.e., Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans) that was even smaller (Karen 229–30). As the 1960s progressed, however, activists involved in the Civil Rights Movement increasingly demanded through demonstrations, rallies, and protests that predominantly white campuses be desegregated. Ethnic studies scholars Thomas J. LaBelle and Christopher R. Ward recount that “charges of racism, sexism, and elitism were clearly part of the student outcry against the status quo [during this time]. These criticisms, in turn, led to the occupation of administrative offices, and in certain cases campus violence, to demand change in higher education through greater representation of the minority experience in the curriculum” (71).

In response to these activist demands, predominantly white four-year institutions across the United States began to develop “high-risk” educational programs that were explicitly designed to recruit, admit, and graduate “low-income and minority-group students who lack the credentials—but not the qualities—to succeed in college” (Egerton, *Higher Education* 7). Buttressed by large-scale federal support, high-risk programs were rapidly developed on campuses throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s in the form of TRIO programs, educational opportunity programs (EOP), open admissions programs, and other related efforts—all designed to offer “assistance in meeting basic college requirements, opportunities for academic development, and motivation [for students] to successfully complete their postsecondary education” (McElroy and Armesto 375).<sup>1</sup> One 1971 study of approximately twelve hundred predominantly white institutions found six hundred four-year campuses reporting one or more full-scale high-risk programs, along with another three hundred or so programs featuring at least some new form of support (McDaniel and McKee 1). Another 1977 study found that over 60 percent of all “senior colleges” in the United States, along with 80 percent of all community colleges, had some sort of high-risk program (Roueche and Snow 30). Even in the present day, a large number of high-risk programs continue to operate at significant cost: the current federal TRIO program, which serves a range of underrepresented students, encompasses more than 2,850 programs at a cost of nearly \$880 million (U.S.D.E., Office of Postsecondary Information n.p.). Meanwhile, its Student Support Services (SSS) program, geared specifically toward supporting disadvantaged college students, comprised 947 programs in 2009, with a budget of just over \$300 million (U.S.D.E., “Student Support” par. 1).

The proliferation of high-risk programs in turn prompted the widespread development of high-risk writing programs—which, since the mid-1970s, have been most commonly known as basic writing (BW) programs—designed to meet the purported language and literacy needs of these students. Geneva Smitherman describes this widespread development: “Programs and policies such as Upward Bound, open enrollment, Educational Opportunity Programs (EOPs), preferential/affirmative action admissions, and the development of special academic courses (‘basic’ writing) brought a new and different brand of student into the college composition classroom. Unlike the returning military veterans and other working class white students of the 1950s

and early 60s, this new student spoke a different language which not only reflected a different class, but also a different race, culture, and historical experience” (“CCCC’s Role” 354). During the last four decades of their operation, high-risk/BW programs have prompted a range of important disciplinary and institutional discussions among compositionists and high-risk/BW scholars.<sup>2</sup> At the level of the discipline, these programs have occasioned the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s (CCCC’s) “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution and statement; the authorship of books like Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations* and Smitherman’s *Talkin’ and Testifyin’*; the development of the *Journal of Basic Writing* and the larger high-risk/BW movement that this journal helped to launch; various discussions of high-risk/BW testing and assessment, including specific discussions of assessment programs such as the City University of New York’s (CUNY’s) Writing Assessment Test (WAT) and Cal State’s English Placement Test (EPT); and lively debates regarding the need for high-risk/BW “mainstreaming” and other efforts at reconfiguring programs. Furthermore, high-risk/BW programs operating within specific college and university contexts, especially well-known university systems such as CUNY, have prompted countless institutional discussions, debates, and decisions concerning how best to meet the purported language and literacy needs of particular student populations.

My goal in this book is to theorize key ways in which, during the last four decades, these disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW programs have been shaped directly by various ideologies of race, racism, language, and literacy. More specifically, I aim to analyze how scholars in composition and high-risk/BW writing within the professional literature have theorized and debated the needs of students who possess “a different race, culture, and historical experience” (Smitherman, “CCCC’s Role” 354) at key historical junctures since the late 1960s. I further aim to analyze how such disciplinary discussion has directly influenced administrative decision-making and program-building within one particular high-risk writing program, the EOP Rhetoric program at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC), Illinois’s predominantly white flagship public university located about two hours south of Chicago. EOP Rhetoric was one of the larger and more widely known high-risk writing programs of the era, but it has not yet been the subject of extensive analysis.

The need for historical analysis of high-risk/BW discussion and activity is especially urgent in light of our troubling contemporary educational and political climate. As many of us know only too well, the last decade has witnessed widespread attacks both on high-risk programs in general and on their high-risk/BW writing program components in particular. For instance, CUNY's Open Admissions program was dismantled in 1999 with the justification that the program was "adrift. . . . Academic standards are loose and confused, and CUNY lacks the basic information necessary to make sound judgments about the quality and effectiveness of its programs" (Schmidt et al. 5). As a result, CUNY decided that all so-called remedial courses, including its famous BW offerings, must be restricted to two-year CUNY campuses or even for-profit remedial centers (7). Similarly, Minnesota's General College program, an open admissions college within the larger University of Minnesota campus that had been operating in one form or another since the 1930s (Detzner, Poch, and Taylor xv), was dismantled in 2005 as part of a larger "strategic repositioning" effort purportedly designed to "elevate the University of Minnesota into one of the top three public research universities in the world within the next decade" (Bruininks 2). Like CUNY, Minnesota required that all "remedial" coursework, including its own BW courses, be relegated to two-year colleges (11–13). Still further, the important recent volume *Basic Writing in America*, edited by Nicole Pipenster Greene and Patricia McAlexander, points out that program dismantling has recently taken place across a range of other four-year campuses, including the University of Cincinnati, the University of Louisiana–Lafayette, Cal State–Fullerton, and others.

It seems clear that contemporary high-risk/BW programs are presently perceived as antithetical to the needs and goals of mainstream four-year institutions. It also seems clear that, as Barbara Gleason has lamented, even remaining high-risk/BW program efforts are being "fatally compromised by the socio-political forces that . . . [gather] around the issue of remediation" ("Evaluating Programs" 582)—a concern echoed by many other high-risk/BW scholars during the last decade as well.<sup>3</sup> By analyzing in some detail the racialized nature of past discussions surrounding these programs, I hope to imagine new ways to address this problematic contemporary situation.

## The Capacity for Change and the Limitations of “Standards” in High-Risk/BW

I will focus repeatedly throughout this book on specific ways in which disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW activity have promoted an important level of egalitarian reform and change within mainstream four-year contexts. In this sense, my work reflects Deborah Mutnick’s assertion that “basic writing for all its internal contradictions, has played a vital role in increasing access to higher education, in particular for working-class people of color” (71–72). I believe that Mutnick’s point is one worth stressing. Many disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW philosophies, practices, and structures have in fact attempted to theorize the needs of marginalized students, particularly marginalized minority students, in egalitarian ways. Such work deserves to be recognized, analyzed, and celebrated for the changes that it has prompted.

At the same time, I will also focus repeatedly throughout this book on key ways in which the potential for reform present within these discussions of high-risk/BW activity over time has ultimately been limited, and at times quite profoundly, by appeals to mainstream “standards.” In this sense, my work reflects Tom Fox’s argument that appeals to standards within the context of high-risk/BW instruction and other egalitarian institutional ventures—especially appeals to the need for students to learn and use “Standard English”—have typically sought to preserve and protect the existing social and educational status quo. These appeals to standards, Fox argues, have attempted to define educational activities and achievements in terms of “essence, not contexts . . . objectivity, not values that are contingent upon historical or material needs” (4). In this sense, they have been aimed at “conserv[ing] and maintain[ing] institutions and language” (3) and ensuring that “the same students who have always gone to college still go” (7). But my work here also recognizes that these appeals to standards have also served in many instances, as Catherine Prendergast points out, to reify a racist status quo rooted in “White property interests, White privilege . . . [and] the conception of America as a White nation” (*Literacy* 7). More specifically, Prendergast argues, these sorts of appeals have been rooted in the notion that “literacy belongs to Whites” (5), thereby serving to preserve the existing racial order

under the guise of offering access to it.<sup>4</sup> I believe that these arguments from Fox and Prendergast are also worth stressing directly. Many disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW philosophies, practices, and structures have seen their attempts to promote race-based egalitarian change limited, undercut, or even undone with the help of uncritical appeals to standards and Standard English. These problems also deserve to be recognized and thoroughly critiqued.

Of course, I do not want to go so far as to argue that *all* appeals to standards or Standard English are necessarily problematic. High-risk/BW programs that seek to enact race-conscious reforms may well need to stress certain standards at certain times and in certain contexts—a point that Mike Rose stresses explicitly when he asserts that high-risk/BW discussions should embrace standards that are tied to “high expectations,” “good teaching,” and “democratic ends” (96). But Rose nonetheless insists that would-be reformers must identify and critique those standards that ultimately strive to “shut down rather than foster learning” (95) or otherwise to serve as “a barrier to [students’] development” (95) within high-risk/BW activity.<sup>5</sup> My aim here is similar. I embrace the pursuit of worthwhile standards, but I also seek to identify and critique those problematic standards that promote an unfair social and racial status quo under the guise of serving students’ needs.

## Theorizing High-Risk/BW

As a framework within which to understand high-risk/BW, I adapt critical race theorist Derrick Bell’s argument that attempts to promote racial justice through school desegregation programs (of which high-risk/BW is but one example) have been successful at times, but always to a degree ultimately dictated by the expectations, beliefs, and values of the white mainstream. Specifically, Bell insists that the overall trajectory of post–Civil Rights Era school desegregation “may not actually be determined by the character of harm suffered by blacks or the quantum of liability proved against whites. Racial remedies may instead be the outward manifestations of unspoken and perhaps subconscious judicial conclusions that the remedies, if granted, will secure, advance, or at least not harm the societal interests deemed impor-

tant by middle- and upper-class whites. Racial justice—or its appearance—may, from time to time, be counted among the interests deemed important by the courts and by society’s policy makers” (“*Brown v. Board*” 22).<sup>6</sup> Bell calls this concept “interest convergence,” describing it as the phenomenon whereby the “interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (22). Bell certainly acknowledges that the pursuit of racial justice for its own sake might count among such white interests, arguing that “there were whites for whom recognition of the racial equality principle was sufficient motivation” to enact change (23). But he is also careful to assert that other political, social, and economic interests—which in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* included Cold War politics, post–World War II treatment of black U.S. soldiers at home, and the need for increased economic development in the U.S. South (23)—typically play a more central role for the white mainstream. Indeed, Bell argues that race-based change occurs at the behest not only of those “whites concerned about the immorality of racial inequality,” but of “those whites in policymaking positions able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow” such change (22). Interest convergence posits, in short, that efforts to promote racial justice within a given context are typically dictated less by those various groups whom they are ostensibly designed to serve (i.e., underrepresented minority groups vying for equal opportunity) and more by those who hold hegemonic racialized power (i.e., mainstream whites and others who have the power and influence to preserve a racialized status quo that already serves their interests and needs).

I apply Bell’s concept of interest convergence here by arguing that disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW activity over time reveal a shifting dynamic of convergence and divergence between the interests of two loosely defined groups: (1) scholars, teachers, and administrators (quite often, though certainly not always, members of minority groups) espousing “race-conscious” discourses aimed at promoting egalitarian race-based change to philosophies, practices, and structures of writing instruction within predominantly white environments; and (2) scholars, teachers, and administrators (quite often, though certainly not always, white) espousing status-quo-oriented “mainstream” discourses committed to preserving and perpetuating philosophies, practices, and structures of writing instruction

that maintain existing racialized balances of power and privilege. Furthermore, I assert the following:

1. During periods of convergence, a certain amount of racially egalitarian change within disciplinary and institutional discussions did occur, albeit change that was bounded in important ways by mainstream concerns regarding the need to preserve racialized standards, including Standard English.
2. During periods of divergence, such change was thwarted or even undone, often through direct appeals to these same racialized standards.
3. Understanding these past dynamics of convergence and divergence is key to theorizing new strategies for contemporary “story-changing” work, as described by Linda Adler-Kassner, that can be used to reframe discussion about writing instruction and the students that it serves.

By analyzing these dynamics of convergence and divergence within discussions of high-risk/BW activity, alongside the hegemonic standards that regulate them, I certainly do not mean to preach despair or complacency. Instead, I believe that acknowledging the power of these standards constitutes a first step in a larger effort designed, as Bell asserts, to “imagine and implement . . . strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph” in the fight for racially egalitarian language and literacy instruction (“Racial Realism” 306). Such imagining and implementation of new strategies should be aided in particular by Adler-Kassner’s ideas about story-changing: her work can help us to imagine and develop new forms of race-conscious high-risk/BW activity that highlights its value to a range of interested stakeholders—including white mainstream institutions themselves (see chapter 6).

### *Understanding Issues of Race and Racism over Time*

My attempts here to analyze high-risk/BW activity using the lens of interest convergence and divergence is influenced in a general sense by two bodies of important contemporary scholarship. The first of these is “alternative history” work in composition that seeks, as Gretchen Flesher Moon argues, to “challenge the dominant narrative of composition history,” while at the same time “proposing alongside it a complicated and discontinuous array of alternative histories” (12).<sup>7</sup> The second is “institutional critique” work in composition geared toward what Porter et al. describe as “mapping the conflicted

frameworks in . . . heterogeneous and contested spaces [within an institution], articulating the hidden and seemingly silent voices of those marginalized by the powerful, and observing how power operates within institutional space” (631) and toward attempts to “expose and interrogate possibilities for institutional change” (631).<sup>8</sup> But in a more specific sense, this project is influenced strongly by a number of recent institutionally focused alternative histories, most of which are book length, that focus simultaneously on the reform potential inherent within specific discussions of high-risk/BW activity and on the ways in which this reform potential has been limited through appeals to standards, including Standard English.

One institutionally focused alternative history with a strong influence on my project is Stephen Parks’s 1999 *Class Politics: The Movement for the Students’ Right to Their Own Language*. This book analyzes the genesis and evolution of one of the most important disciplinary statements to inform the development of high-risk/BW programs, the famous “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL) statement within CCCC. Parks argues that early drafts of the SRTOL were quite progressive in the way that they both demanded “broad-based alliances against class and racial oppression” (5) and critiqued “the corporate economy of the United States and its treatment of working-class citizens of all races and ethnicities” (5). Parks also praises early versions of the SRTOL for the ways in which they tried explicitly to “validate languages other than Standard English” (167)—that is, to contest directly the idea that Standard English is somehow superior to all other forms of English. But Parks ultimately concludes that the potential for change present within early versions of the SRTOL was eventually undermined by the way in which its final 1974 version accepted and even embraced mainstream expectations regarding standards within language and literacy instruction. He concludes that this final version of the SRTOL focused more on “how to expand acceptable dialects within corporate capitalism, not how to use dialects to question [this capitalism]” (184), thereby undermining its important potential for promoting change.

Another of these histories is Mary Soliday’s 2002 *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional Student Needs in Higher Education*, which focuses on the genesis and evolution of high-risk/BW activity at the City College of New York (CCNY) in the CUNY system, especially the leadership of visionary administrator Mina Shaughnessy. Soliday argues that BW at CCNY under

Shaughnessy successfully began “transforming the lives of thousands of students” (139) in New York City, contributing directly to a larger Open Admissions effort that helped a significant number of “poor, inner-city whites and people of color to find and keep white collar jobs” (139).<sup>9</sup> Soliday also insists that Shaughnessy was largely successful in interrogating “the conditions of teaching and learning” writing at CCNY and in CUNY more generally in ways that served to “transform teachers and the institution, not just the students” (102). But Soliday nonetheless concludes that many of these positive changes at CUNY have been undermined over time, especially since the end of Open Admissions in 1999, through an increasingly uncritical and problematic contemporary embrace of traditional notions of standards: she asserts that “critics of remediation [and of high-risk/BW have] waved the red flag of declining standards and literacy crisis to justify the need to downsize, privatize, and effectively restratify higher education” (106).

A third history of this type is Nicole Pipenster Greene and Patricia McAlexander’s 2008 edited collection *Basic Writing in America: The History of Nine College Programs*. This collection offers a set of historical narratives detailing the ways in which specific high-risk/BW programs within sites across the country have been or are being dismantled in the present day. As they introduce these narratives, Greene and McAlexander insist that high-risk/BW efforts have successfully served as a “means of social reform” (6) within a larger “battle to grant access to groups who had not traditionally been part of academe” (6). They also laud what they describe as the “passionate concern” within many high-risk/BW programs for assuring that “students of all races and backgrounds” ultimately receive “the opportunity to fulfill their human potential” (8). But Greene and McAlexander nonetheless insist that BW-influenced reforms have been increasingly undermined by “those who wished to limit [access to] academe to the traditional student population” (7) through appeals to “standards, cultural literacy, [and] intellectual excellence” (7).

Such book-length discussions offer crucial information regarding disciplinary and institutional discussions of the high-risk/BW movement that is directly relevant to my project.<sup>10</sup> In particular, they stress the potential for reform embedded within various high-risk/BW contexts, including those surrounding the SRTOL, those at CUNY, and those elsewhere across the United States; at the same time, they stress the ways in which such reform was ultimately limited or even undone through various appeals to standards and/or

Standard English. Crucially, however, these particular examples do not typically feature an explicit focus on issues of race and racism: in fact, some of them insist that such an explicit focus may be misguided or problematic.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, my work here also draws inspiration from a number of other institutionally focused alternative histories, most of which are article- or chapter-length, that focus squarely on issues of race and racism within disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW activity. These texts reflect the assertion of race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant that “the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world. The task . . . is to explain this situation. It is to avoid both the utopian framework which sees race as an illusion that we can somehow ‘get beyond’ and also the essentialist formation which sees race as something objective and fixed, a biological datum. Thus we should think of race as an element of social structure rather than an irregularity within it; we should see race as a dimension of human representation rather than an illusion” (55). These texts also resonate with recent work in composition aimed explicitly at contesting and undoing what Aja Y. Martinez decries as “the empire of force and its historically specific racisms” (594) within contemporary composition instruction.<sup>12</sup>

One example of this type of race-conscious history is Geneva Smitherman’s 1999 article “CCCC’s Role in the Struggle for Language Rights.” In this article, Smitherman praises the SRTOL, a document to which she contributed as one of a group of original authors, for attempting to convey the work of race-conscious “intellectual-activists” in their “struggle for the wider social legitimacy of all languages and dialects and . . . to bring about mainstream recognition and acceptance of the culture, history, and language of those on the margins” (358).<sup>13</sup> Smitherman further argues that the SRTOL prompted crucial disciplinary reforms to thinking about high-risk/BW activity, particularly “1) heighten[ing] consciousness of language attitudes; 2) promot[ing] the value of linguistic diversity; and 3) convey[ing] fact and information about language and language variation that would enable instructors to teach their non-traditional students—and ultimately all students—more effectively” (359). Despite these possibilities for change and reform, however, Smitherman laments that the impact of the SRTOL was ultimately limited by the national and disciplinary invocation of racist standards during what she describes as the “Second Reconstruction” of the early 1980s, a

climate in which “the mood of CCCC, like the mood of America, seemed to have shifted from change and promise to stagnation and dreams deferred” (365). Such racism was especially rampant, she says, within articles such as Thomas Farrell’s 1983 “IQ and Standard English,” which theorized a racialized link between students’ ability to reproduce Standard English and their overall cognitive capacity.<sup>14</sup>

Another example of this type of history is Scott Wible’s 2006 “Pedagogies of the Students’ Right Era,” a text analyzing how the race-conscious thinking of the SRTOL was used to promote change by one specific pedagogical collective, the Language Curriculum Research Group (LCRG), operating in CUNY’s Brooklyn College and Borough of Manhattan Community College. The LCRG, Wible says, drew direct inspiration from the SRTOL as it “encouraged English language arts educators to see how their practices in linguistically diverse classrooms were shaped by social attitudes concerning linguistic and cultural difference” (455). Wible further argues that the LCRG embraced the critical interrogation of white mainstream standards, especially those related to Standard English, as something of a central philosophical and pedagogical goal—stressing, for instance, the need for “reflection on how, particularly for white SE-speaking teachers, acknowledging BEV [Black English Vernacular] in the classroom necessarily changed the relationship between students and teacher” (455), as well as the need for teachers to learn “from their own students’ language practices” (456). Nonetheless, Wible concludes that the promise of the LCRG’s activities was ultimately limited by mid-1970s concerns regarding the “literacy crisis” and its rejection of all non-Standard English language use—specifically by what he describes as “public perceptions that BEV’s presence in the classroom drained educational resources and hastened academic decline” (464).

Finally, a third example of this type is Nicole Pipenster Greene’s own contribution to the 2008 *Basic Writing in America* volume mentioned previously, a chapter titled “Basic Writing, Desegregation, and Open Admissions in Southwestern Louisiana,” which focuses in detail on the racialized dynamics of high-risk/BW programmatic activity at what is now known as the University of Louisiana–Lafayette (ULL).<sup>15</sup> Greene highlights the potential for change within the early-1970s version of high-risk/BW at ULL, a program that explicitly encouraged students to utilize their “natural mode of expression” such that they might become skilled in both “‘standard’ and ‘non-

standard' English" (74). She further praises the way in which the writing program administrator (WPA) of this program during the early 1980s strove "to institute a progressive curriculum that would simultaneously value process over product, preserve the instructor's 'creativity' or autonomy, and quell resistance to innovation" (79). But she concludes, ultimately, that appeals to racialized standards at ULL eventually undermined these efforts, specifically through what she characterizes as an "elitist tendency" (90) arising at ULL in the early 1990s that prompted the president of the university to eliminate all courses deemed "remedial" and move toward "selective admissions" in 1993 (90).

These latter three examples (each circulating alongside a number of other contemporary examples) usefully begin to theorize in detail how discussions of high-risk/BW disciplinary and institutional activity have managed to promote at least some level of racialized reform, but they also stress how such reform has been limited by racialized standards.<sup>16</sup> Because I am obviously interested in the racialized dynamics of high-risk/BW discussions, as well as in the important limitations imposed on these discussions by various appeals to standards, my work here is certainly influenced strongly by these latter examples. Nonetheless, I think that my project, especially in its focus on the dynamics of interest convergence and divergence, offers at least three important new insights concerning these discussions that have not yet been theorized at length within this past work.

### *The Value of an Interest Convergence and Divergence Framework*

To begin, the interest convergence and divergence framework that I adopt here promises to provide important and detailed insight into the subtle but nonetheless crucial power of white racism to shape discussions of high-risk/BW activity within each major period that I analyze in this book. It will show, for instance, that during periods of strong interest convergence, in which some degree of race-based change was actually taking place (e.g., the "racial crisis" era of the late 1960s and early 1970s [see chapter 2]; the era of concern with student "competence" during the late 1970s and early 1980s [see chapter 4]), white power and privilege was asserted somewhat subtly through an insistence that mainstream standards be preserved even in the midst of high-risk/BW expansion. This framework will also show that, during

periods of strong divergence (e.g., the “literacy crisis” era of the mid-1970s [see chapter 3]; the “culture wars” era of the late 1980s and early 1990s [see chapter 5]; the “excellence” era of the present day [see chapter 6]), white power and privilege was asserted more forcefully and explicitly through various arguments about the need to get “back to basics,” to uphold “excellence,” and otherwise to ensure that standards were upheld in the face of threat. By revealing the important (albeit shifting and changing) power of white racism over time, this framework of interest convergence and divergence will demonstrate that issues of race and racism within high-risk/BW have always been fundamental determinants of disciplinary and institutional discussions within high-risk/BW—and, in fact, continue to be in the present day.

Somewhat paradoxically, however, this interest convergence and divergence framework will also demonstrate that white racism has never actually been able to extinguish fully the desire for or the possibility of promoting race-based egalitarian change within high-risk/BW. Indeed, it will show that not even the strongest periods of interest divergence to this point—not that of the mid-1970s literacy crisis, nor that of the late 1980s/early 1990s culture wars, nor even that of contemporary concerns about excellence—have been able to eliminate completely egalitarian impulses or activities. The framework will thereby provide those of us interested in theorizing and enacting race-based reform within various disciplinary and institutional discussions of high-risk/BW activity some degree of hope that our desire for reform can endure even during the toughest of times.

Finally, this interest convergence and divergence framework will also prompt us to think both carefully and critically about how we can use our knowledge of the past as a foundation for formulating new race-based reform efforts in the present day. In particular, it will stress that we should explicitly attempt to promote interest convergence as a means both to imagine and to implement contemporary and future high-risk/BW reform efforts. It will also demonstrate that techniques such as Adler-Kassner’s story-changing can prove especially helpful in this regard. Accordingly, I will spend a great deal of my final chapter in this book theorizing some of the specific ways in which we can foster just such convergence by telling new stories about race-conscious high-risk/BW activity that stress its value not only to underrepresented minority students, but to mainstream institutions and their stakeholders as well.

## Gaining Access to Sites of High-Risk/BW Discussion

In order to identify, theorize, and analyze the kinds of disciplinary and institutional discussions of most interest to this project, I turn to the composition and high-risk/BW literature as it is represented within key journals (especially *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, and the *Journal of Basic Writing*), books, and edited collections. In making this choice, I echo Maureen Daly Goggin's assertion that the scholarship of a discipline constitutes one of the "most important vehicles" through which we are able to make sense of the "complex struggles in which scholars and teachers have engaged to stake a ground and construct a professional and disciplinary identity" (xiii). I agree that this scholarship serves as a kind of archival record for the field that allows us to examine and analyze the shape of disciplinary discussion concerning high-risk/BW writing program efforts over time.

In order to access the institutional discussions of most interest here, I turn to the specific context of the EOP Rhetoric program at UIUC, one especially useful for understanding institutional discussions of high-risk/BW. EOP Rhetoric was developed in 1968 as part of a larger campus desegregation effort at UIUC, Illinois's flagship campus in Champaign-Urbana, about two hours south of Chicago. This larger desegregation effort—known initially as "Project 500" for its early goal of recruiting and admitting 500 African American students and known later simply as "EOP"—was designed to help bring racial diversity to the UIUC campus of roughly 25,000 students, 98 percent of whom were white as of 1967 (Williamson 35). In its role within this larger EOP effort, EOP Rhetoric offered writing instruction to anywhere between 150 and 600 underrepresented minority students per year until fall 1994: at this time, it was abolished in favor of a decidedly color-blind BW program called the Academic Writing Program (AWP) that continues to operate.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout its nearly quarter-century history, the EOP Rhetoric program was perceived as a central pillar of language and literacy learning for EOP students. A report written in the mid-1970s asserted directly that "the success of the English Department's EOP Rhetoric program depends primarily on its ability to meet the verbal skills needs of *individuals* in the Program. Both in EOP Rhetoric 103 [the tutorial section] (where there is a one-to-one student-to-instructor ratio) and in EOP Rhetoric 104 and 105 (where the maximum student-to-instructor ratio is 15-to-1), the Program is

designed to meet individual needs in ways impossible in the larger, more heterogeneous regular rhetoric sections” (UIUC, “EOP Rhetoric Report” 1).<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, EOP Rhetoric always featured a great deal of teacher-student contact: courses remained capped at fifteen students per section throughout most of EOP Rhetoric’s history, and EOP Rhetoric students were also guaranteed one-on-one support in the EOP writing lab. Also notable was the fact that all EOP students were strongly encouraged by their advisors to take EOP Rhetoric whether their test scores deemed them to be “basic writers” or not. This placement scheme was designed to create a community of underrepresented minority student learners with different skills and talents that could support all EOP students as they adapted to the demands of the university during their important first year on campus. Indeed, the original dean of EOP (“Dean A”) asserted in a paper that he gave at CCCC in 1969 that these sections were specifically designed to help students grapple with “the many problems that accrue to being a black student with marginal preparation and skills enrolled at a highly-selective white university” (“Role” 7).<sup>19</sup>

### *EOP Rhetoric as a Site for Institutional Analysis and Critique*

One reason that EOP Rhetoric serves as an important site for examining institutional discussions of high-risk/BW program activity is that the larger EOP program was itself so consistently racialized, in both negative and positive ways. UIUC historian Joy Ann Williamson notes, for instance, that a majority of EOP students were from the city of Chicago, generally “considered the most segregated city in the United States” at the time (3). She also asserts that EOP students met with tremendous racial hostility immediately on their arrival at UIUC, a campus that was in many ways “southern in its attitudes toward race” (3). Particularly striking was the fact that over 250 EOP students were arrested en masse during their first week on campus for protesting crowded living conditions in the dorms, an arrest described by the *Chicago Tribune* with the headline “Negroes Riot at U of I; Negroes Go on Rampage after Row” (87). But despite such rampant racism, many race-conscious student activists involved in the EOP program exercised significant power to effect change at UIUC. Not only were these student activists routinely “invited to participate in university recruitment efforts and sit on university committees” (3), as Williamson notes, but they had significant

“status and input on such important decision-making bodies” (3). The power afforded to these race-conscious activists was especially evident within documents such as the following letter from the chancellor of UIUC at the time, written in 1968, just before the larger EOP program was developed:

Sooner or later, and probably sooner rather than later, some group or other will “demand” that we provide courses in African history, Negro history, Negro culture, Negro music, etc. Could I ask you to take the leadership and quietly discuss this matter with the head of the history department, English department, and . . . others you might think would have an interest in the matter to see if we can come forward with an educationally responsible program and anticipate this demand rather than have to respond to it in a crisis situation? Since there is probably some urgency in this matter, I would appreciate your doing what you can. . . . I think it best to keep the matter quiet for a while until we can get our own plans developed. For once it appears that we are attempting to do something quite a few people will want to become involved in. However, before too long, and I would stress fairly soon, I would suggest that . . . we involve the Black Students’ Association in our planning rather than have them hear about it from the newspapers or other sources. (letter to dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 22 May 1968, 1)

We can see here the degree to which the chancellor at the time regarded race-conscious activists’ “demands” as significant and in need of immediate address: he clearly believed that activists in groups like the Black Students’ Association needed to be included directly in university decision-making processes if such processes were to be successful.<sup>20</sup>

A second (and related) reason that EOP Rhetoric at UIUC is worth studying is that discussions surrounding writing instruction within the program itself were also consistently racialized over time. For instance, one of the early directors of EOP Rhetoric argued that the goal of the EOP Rhetoric program and its writing lab should be to help students to “express themselves clearly in their indigenous forms and dialects. Only secondarily, if at all, are students expected to write in the middle-class, white tradition” (Director A, “SEOP Proposal” 1). He also used this race-conscious view as the basis for his decisions regarding issues of the writing lab’s pedagogy, staffing, and program structure during its first year of operation (see chapter 2). In distinct contrast, one of the later directors of EOP Rhetoric claimed that the way to best meet the needs of minority students in EOP Rhetoric was to

avoid talk of race entirely and instead focus on “explaining the structure and function of written Standard English” to them, while at the same time correcting their numerous “errors” (Director C, “To the Rhetoric Teaching Staff” 1). She similarly used this color-blind philosophy as the basis of a number of fundamental pedagogical, budgetary, and structural decisions relevant to the EOP Rhetoric program and its writing lab throughout the mid-1970s (see chapter 3). These two examples, alongside many others that will be analyzed in detail throughout this book, demonstrate that race mattered profoundly to discussions of language and literacy throughout the history of EOP Rhetoric, although in different ways at different times.

Still a third reason that EOP Rhetoric serves as a valuable site for analysis is that so much information regarding racialized institutional discussions at UIUC has survived in various archives in the form of administrative memos and correspondence, committee meeting minutes, program descriptions and philosophies, and course descriptions. (Furthermore, several key program administrators graciously agreed to comment retrospectively on these documents and the contexts that gave rise to them.) Given John Paul Tassoni’s assertion that such materials tend to be “absent from [official institutional memory] . . . at least as that memory is represented in the archives and in the minds of those whom the archives represent” (107), the survival of such material is significant. It affords us the sort of glimpse into the “the myriad administrative, institutional, and intellectual conflicts and decisions” (Henze, Selzer, and Sharer 6) that have far too often been lost within the history of high-risk/BW.

## Methodological and Ethical Considerations for Analyzing the Archives

My work with the institutional archives has required me to perform extensive work not only within UIUC’s public archives but also within what compositionists Brent Henze, Jack Selzer, and Wendy Sharer refer to as key “hidden archives”—that is, “the old file boxes in the attic; the yellowed, handwritten essays in the bottom drawers; the textbooks thankfully overlooked during the last office cleanings; the records of forgotten meetings; and the indispensable memories of departmental personalities upon which [a par-

ticular institution's] history could be built" (vi). Such work within the EOP Rhetoric's hidden archive, one located in UIUC's English Department, required me to ask administrators, faculty, and staff about whether they knew of the location of any such "hidden archive"; to obtain the keys to a locked basement room in the English Department filled with old file cabinets and stacks of papers; and ultimately to obtain explicit permission (first oral and later written) from the department to peruse, analyze, and cite from these departmental records—access and permission for which I remain most grateful.

My experiences with the hidden institutional archives have also prompted me to think at length about methodological and ethical issues related to naming and citation in ways that have not typically been discussed at great length within the composition/BW literature. I have viewed my work with EOP Rhetoric as engaged primarily in what composition ethicist Paul V. Andersen describes as a "text-based" critique of public institutional dynamics governed by "the taboos and institutional policies against plagiarism, and socially enforced customs concerning acknowledgement and citation" (63), rather than first and foremost a "person-based" critique (63) governed by the parameters of "informed consent" (68).<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, I have also felt a need to adhere at some level to CCCCs "Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies," requiring that research in the field demonstrate a clear "commitment to protecting the rights, privacy, dignity, and well-being" of individuals (par. 1)—especially the administrative actors who occupy such a central place in these discussions. Thus, throughout my analysis, I have felt a strong tension between a desire to offer as much detail as possible about the particular historical, political, social, and economic circumstances surrounding the EOP Rhetoric program and a desire to treat administrators within this context as unnamed institutional actors operating within this specific context.

Accordingly, I adopt throughout this book a focus on the racialized discourses used by disciplinary and institutional actors within a given context, rather than a direct focus on the purported beliefs and values of these individuals themselves. I aim to analyze, in other words, how and why these administrators articulated specific views regarding race, racism, language, and literacy within specific institutional contexts and how these views shaped disciplinary and institutional discussion; I do not want simply to label indi-

viduals as “good” or “bad” on the basis of what I read their beliefs to be.<sup>22</sup> Along related lines, I also employ here what I have described elsewhere as a “hybrid-institutional” approach to naming and citation, one that I believe is being adopted increasingly by other contemporary scholars performing similar types of institutionally focused alternative history.<sup>23</sup> In keeping with this hybrid-institutional approach, I speak at great length throughout this text about the specific institutional contexts and situations surrounding EOP Rhetoric at Illinois, but I make reference to all administrative actors by their institutional titles alone—for example, “director of EOP Rhetoric,” “dean of LAS,” “dean of EOP,” and so on—both within the body of my text and within my works cited section. In this manner, I try to do justice to the specific conditions of EOP Rhetoric at Illinois in ways that allow me to get at the situatedness and specificity of this particular context in as much detail as possible, but I try to avoid singling out identifiable individuals for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, in my works cited section, I refer to real documents by name and date, but reference all institutional actors by title alone. In this way, I try to provide some semblance of what the American Historical Association describes as a “paper trail” (par. 9) without dwelling on the identities of individual institutional actors.